Negotiating Dependence: Independent Television Producers in England

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Abstract

The thesis analyses the independent television production sector focusing on the role of the producer. At its centre are four in-depth case studies which investigate the practices and contexts of the independent television producer in four different production cultures. The sample consists of a small self-owned company, a medium-sized family-owned company, a broadcaster-owned company and an independent-corporate partnership. The thesis contextualises these case studies through a history of four critical conjunctures in which the concept of 'independence' was debated and shifted in meaning, allowing the term to be operationalised to different ends. It gives particular attention to the birth of Channel 4 in 1982 and the subsequent rapid growth of an independent 'sector'. Throughout, the thesis explores the tensions between the political, economic and social aims of independent television production and how these impact on the role of the producer.

The thesis employs an empirical methodology to investigate the independent television producer's role. It uses qualitative data, principally original interviews with both employers and employees in the four companies, to provide a nuanced and detailed analysis of the complexities of the producer's role. Rather than independence, the thesis uses network analysis to argue that a television producer's role is characterised by sets of *negotiated dependencies,* through which professional agency is exercised and professional identity constructed and performed. It offers a *networked brokerage* model of producing to identify the producer's resources as cultural, social and economic capital and the producer's function as their translation, transformation, accumulation and dissemination across professional networks. It employs the concept of *diasporic networks* to encapsulate the different contexts and outcomes of networking, arguing that the strong ties of co-working remain dormant or residual rather than being broken at the end of a working partnership and are able to be re-formed.

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Contents

List of Figures

1.0   Introduction

The focal-point of the thesis is an analysis of the role of the independent television producer. Over the last four decades, independent production has transformed the landscape of the UK's television industry and generates a current annual revenue of over £3 billion (PACT, 2019) and has a significant international dimension. However, defining 'independent' is highly problematic and central to this study is the recognition that independence in production can only be considered in the ideal or discursive sense. The independent television producer occupies a fulcrum of the cultural and financial transactions fundamental to television production and is therefore dependent upon negotiations with multiple agencies in the television production and broadcasting chain. Because these interdependencies are different for every producer, independent production is resistant to definitive categorisation, which presents challenges to those working in, reporting on and creating policy around independent production.

This basis of this study is a series of original face-to-face interviews with a range of independent producers, organised into four contrasting case studies of independent production companies. These companies were chosen for their variety and represent four different approaches to organising the business of independent television production. Taking the producer's self-representation and sense-making as starting-points, the thesis aims to investigate how independent producers interpret and negotiate their professional identities and agency in the specific contexts in which they work. It argues that the producer operates within the context and functioning of organisations – ranging from small temporary teams to multinational companies; and beyond these the milieux of politics and economics. These wider contexts exist in reflexive relationships with one another and with the agency of the producer.

The first case study is of a very small self-owned company; the second, a larger family-owned company; the third, while originally an independent company, has been acquired by an international studio; and the fourth was founded in partnership with a global corporation. The interviews are with the Creative Director of GRACE Productions; the owner-founder; co-owner-producer and a selection of staff and freelance employees of Ragdoll Productions; the Managing Director and Chief Operating Officer of Monkey Kingdom; and the co-Managing Director and three employees of Electric Ray.

From the findings of these interviews, I argue that all independent television producers in the UK rely upon sets of negotiated dependencies which are relational ties providing

sources of and outlets for cultural, social and economic capital in the form of television production resources and content. These are the development, production and distribution networks which independent producers navigate, build, and maintain in the conduct of their professional roles and identities.

The primary focus of this thesis is a study of the agency individual producers. It therefore complements studies of television institutions and studies of creative and media labour. While there is a significant amount of biographical and a smaller body of analytical literature on the film producer there is relatively little literature on the producer in television. This research seeks to address that lacuna.

1.1   Research Questions

In order to focus this enquiry, the thesis investigated three principal cognate clusters of questions which address three overlapping scales of enquiry:

> RQ1. Micro-Level. How is the individual agency of the independent producer manifest through personal self-representation and identity and how does this agency influence the organisation of the producer's negotiated dependencies?

> RQ2. Meso-Level. The producers' negotiated dependencies are manifest through teams and companies. How do these organisational structures operate and co-operate? What agency or influence does the independent producer have in regards to organisational cultures of production and how are they influenced by wider contextual drivers including geography and workforce economics?

> RQ3. Macro-Level. The independent production sector is disaggregated and disparate but operates within a shared political and economic milieu. How do the tensions in this context manifest themselves and how are they perceived and addressed by the independent producer?

Each research question indicates a potential trajectory of enquiry and is more aptly described as focus for discussion. The research is inductive rather than deductive, so the questions are asked and answered in various ways, to varying degrees and at various points through the thesis itself. The reader should not expect a sequential point-by-point addressing of each research question in turn, but, rather, a more complex reflection of the interplay of the factors addressed in each.

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

1.2.1 Chapter 2 – Literature Review

In this chapter, I discuss the existing academic literature concerning the operation of television broadcasting and production in the UK. Its three sections address the literature on the UK's television broadcasting institutions; production cultures; and the producer. The sections, therefore, address different perspectives of enquiry.

The literature on the UK's television institutions is broadly historical. There is a significant focus on the political and cultural debates surrounding key moments in broadcasting in the UK, such as the introduction of commercial television and the development of Channel 4.[1] There is a significant focus on senior figures in these debates, including politicians and broadcasting executives, but relatively little on the programme-makers themselves.

Studies of production cultures – concerned with the nature and organisation of work in the media industries – fall broadly into two categories. The first considers media labour in a political and economic context. It identifies the tensions that exist between conducting satisfying work in a creative sector and the insecure and competitive context in which much of that work happens. This literature tends to consider industrial or sectoral issues from the collected perspectives of individual workers. Studies of production cultures offer a more local and organisational perspective on how media workers understand and articulate their professional activities and identities within those groups and in their local contexts. However, there are few studies of this kind that are focused on individual companies – a lacuna this thesis does something to address.

Literature on the producer is limited and there is more which focuses on the producer in film than in television. The producer's role is complex, not only as it spans both creative and managerial responsibilities. The producer occupies a pivotal position in the organisation and execution of production, which means that she or he negotiates and navigates varied social contexts in the course of her or his profession. In this thesis, I will demonstrate the nature of the negotiated dependencies of the producer and his or her brokerage of ideas through networks of finance, production and distribution, creating economic, social and cultural value. The existing literature, from both management studies and specific studies of producers, provides some indication of the complexity of their work and professional identity, but there is little which brings this together in specifically-targeted analysis of the independent television producer in the contemporary context, as I do in this thesis.

1.2.2   Chapter 3 – Contexts: Historical

In chapter 3, I discuss the discursive nature of independence in the UK's television sector. I focus on four critical historical junctures. In the first, I consider the establishment of the BBC's editorial independence from government. Founded as a solution to commercial "chaos," the British Broadcasting Company, in becoming a Corporation, became established as a bearer of British identity both to its own citizens and those overseas. As such, its control and nature were of significant ideological concern. In the second, I consider the formation of the Independent Television Authority, a federalised commercial broadcasting enterprise. The parliamentary debates leading to its foundation make evident that the emotional conflicts between class, taste, culture and commerce were more institutionalised and prevalent than considered, evidence-based, arguments. In the third, I chart the stimulation of the independent production sector by the disruptive creation of Channel 4. The broadcasting oligarchies were challenged by the unusual ideological marriage of social-progressivism and free-market capitalism, a "free market of ideas" that gave rise to what is now commonly referred to as the independent production sector. In the fourth juncture, I consider independent production's response to creative and commercial risk through merger, acquisition and consolidation, creating organisations that not only supplied but competed with and influenced traditional broadcasters. I demonstrate that, while independence in broadcasting is nominal, the power of its discourse is pervasive and resilient. The historical bounds of this study do not extend forward as far as the impact of streaming video on demand services, such as Netflix and Amazon Prime, on the independent production marketplace. These new entrants to the television, and film, business have had an increasing impact not only upon original production but on format and post-broadcast programme sales. As I note in the conclusion, the influence of this evolution, including on its specific impact upon independent production and cultures of production, merits future study.

1.2.3   Chapter 4 – Contexts: Contemporary

In chapter 4, I argue that evoking the Independent Television Production Sector is a discursive and, ultimately, political act. I first consider the distortions which arise and are employed in defining such an organisationally-diverse and disparate area of activity as a sector. I show how independent production is undertaken by widely contrasting companies including micro-scale businesses, medium-sized enterprises and vertically-integrated studio-owned labels, with varying models of organisation, ownership and market-interaction. I discuss the problems in regulatory definition that this has created. I argue that the interplay of cultural and commercial ideals, whose synthesis epitomises

the sector, is complex and varied and ill-served by current regulation and market-interventions. I interrogate the governmental mobilisation of the discourse of the Independent Television Production Sector. Given that this discourse does little to serve the sector it purports to describe and support, I argue that, instead, it serves the UK's interests of geo-political soft-power by promoting a hegemonic narrative of the UK's cultural influence overseas.

1.2.4   Chapter 5 – Preamble to Case Studies

This brief chapter introduces the case studies by way of setting the scope and limitations of the approach taken in the collecting and analysing of the data. I outline the range of companies and participants analysed, the timescale of the interviews and the inductive analytical approach alongside the broad concepts and contributions to knowledge that emerged from these case studies.

1.2.5   Chapter 6 – Case Study 1

Chapter 6 comprises a case study of GRACE Productions, a self-owned micro-independent production company. My analysis focuses on the identity-construction of the independent producer in an occupation defined by risk as much as self-determination. I contribute the model of the producer as a *broker*, negotiating ideas and commercial deals across complex and changing networks of interdependencies that I refer to as negotiated dependencies. This supports entrepreneurial representations of independent production, but I show that there is little that is heroic or romantic about the realities of occupying such a precarious professional position. The unsecured and high-risk investment of personal resources in the development of programme and film proposals is offset by an insistent professional-identity narrative which foregrounds the cultural, creative and social rewards of independent production over the financial. I highlight, therefore, the personal commitment demanded by independent production.

1.2.6   Chapter 7 – Case Study 2

Chapter 7 features Ragdoll Productions, a family-owned company. I focus on how a particular *culture of production* is reinforced by the owners of the organisation and the *familiness* of the company. My analysis revealed that there were both facilities and tensions created by family ownership and the delineation between family and business is compromised, compounding the risks to the wellbeing of both. Not only was there an internal organisational culture which had elements of familiness, but also, the family-members' interactions were influenced by the functions of the business. This liminality was expressed through the interaction of formal professional and informal behavioural modes. This gave rise to an identity and culture quite unique to that company. I

highlight, therefore, the producer's influence on the emergence of a particular organisational culture within his or her own company or team.

1.2.7   Chapter 8 - Case Study 3

Chapter 8's subject is Monkey Kingdom, an independent production company that was acquired by NBC Universal, a large international studio. My analysis focused on how an independent identity and organisational culture was maintained in this setting. I discuss how the producer attends not only outward to potential broadcaster clients and inward to the production team but also to the owning studio. The independence of the company was manifest operationally, culturally and geographically and I discuss the site of production from these three perspectives. I explore and define the concept of the diasporic network through consideration of the international aspirations of the company, which were supported by relationships built in previous professional appointments. The producer, once again, brokered deals and ideas across networks of negotiated dependencies, offsetting risk and corporate expectation against the financial support of the owners.

1.2.8   Chapter 9 – Case Study 4 & Conclusions to Case Studies

This chapter analyses Electric Ray, a company formed by its managing directors in partnership with Sony Pictures Television, an ownership-model referred to as a 'label-indie' and considered by the main contributor as a 'third way' of organising ownership in independent production. I highlight the tensions between the roles of producer and line-manager and how these are managed through the producer's espoused identity. The habitus of the producer tacitly influenced the identity and behaviour of the company's membership, while explicit cultural workplace interventions were employed in the interest of team-building and -identity. I argue that a concern of the independent producer is fitting in – managing the presentation of self in order to reconcile discontinuities between the producer's native habitus, the dominant cultures of power in television institutions and the varied habituses of television employees. This involved very complex interactions played out on formal and informal stages which spanned the intra-organisational, the inter-organisational and the interpersonal.

1.2.9   Chapter 10 – Conclusion

In the conclusion, I summarise the research project and its findings. Given that I worked-through my contributions to knowledge in the course of analysing the four companies, I isolate, collect and fully articulate them there. I also identify areas of interest which I was not able to pursue for reasons of logistics, analytical focus or

insufficient data. As I identify in the literature review, this thesis contributes to the wider body of literature on broadcasting, television, and production studies and makes a significant addition to the small body of work concerned with the producer in general and the independent television producer specifically. Nonetheless, there are lacunae and shortfalls remaining in this field of study, which I identify as areas for future research.

1.3   Contribution to Knowledge

My primary contribution to knowledge is the presentation of four in-depth case studies of contrasting independent production companies that have not been previously considered. These case studies expand and complement the institutional histories of British broadcasting. The analysis provided by these case studies has generated three more general analytical categories which extend an understanding of how media professionals and companies operate and constitute further contributions to knowledge:

1.3.1   Negotiated Dependencies

The independent producer exists in and operates through one or more sets of negotiated dependencies. The producer depends upon agents who provide programme development and production services; upon streams of funding; and upon routes of intellectual property distribution and exploitation. The independent producer exercises agency in negotiating the makeup and organisation of these dependencies.

1.3.2   The Networked Brokerage Model of Producing

I argue that a producer's role is to add *both* creative *and* commercial value to ideas, to people and to relationships through the facilitation of the transactions between nodes of his or her network. The producer's resources are cultural, social and economic capital and the producer's function is their translation, transformation, accumulation and dissemination across networks.

1.3.3   Diasporic Networks

I expand the literature on professional networking through developing the concept of diasporic networks. These are based on the existence of previous professional relationships. I find that the former strong ties of co-working remain *dormant* or *residual* rather than being broken at the end of a working partnership. As such, they are able to be re-formed. Typically occupied by more senior members of the production workforce,

they rely on a shared and co-situated *history* and *memory* and transcend organisational and geographic boundaries.

1.4 Methodologies

1.4.1 The protocols for the case studies

Sampling

The sampling process was not conceptually divergent from the four-step process described by, for example, Robinson (2014), including the definition of a "sample universe;" deciding on a "sample size;" selecting a "sampling strategy;" and "sample sourcing." As Crouch and McKenzie state, my "respondents are 'cases', or instances of states, rather than (just) individuals who are bearers of certain designated properties (or 'variables')" (2006: 493). This prompts a further reflection that to categorise my respondents *a priori* may serve to perpetuate or justify the economically-framed taxonomisation and sector-isation of independent production. On the other hand, not to consider how different ownership-models might affect organisational culture would distort the analysis.

To that end, the sample diverges from a purely financial or ownership definition of the independent producer, referred to in the trade press as the 'true indie,' and in policy as the 'qualifying independent.' The first two of the companies addressed fall into that category, while the second two are owned or co-owned by a larger organisation. This is important as it allows the contingent nature of independence to be interrogated. I take an interest, in the thesis, not only in the financial and operational manifestations of independence, but also, and more-so, in the cultural ones.

As an academic teaching Media Production, I had a number of prior contacts who provided either direct or indirect access to the companies studied. The first two contacts were made directly to the company owners. The third came through an Executive Producer, who was not included in the study, but who served as a gateway to the Managing Director and Chief Operating Officer who were also interviewed. The fourth case study was identified through meeting a pair of its employees and making direct contact. This access was facilitated by the contributor being known to the managing director of the third case study, whose contribution was mentioned to build a sense of trustworthiness.

This was not snowballing (Conti & O'Neil, 2007: 69; Herzog & Ali, 2015: 43; Mikecz, 2012: 491) per se, as each contact was made more or less independently of the

contribution of any other respondent, although the prior relationship of the third and fourth contributors may have facilitated a level of trust in myself by the final contributor. At the second and fourth companies, the primary respondents provided access to their employees and in the third case study, the Executive Producer had provided access to both respondents. Rather than snowballing, it would be more accurate to describe the access as being facilitated by the exercise of internal company networks rather than a progressive development of access formed through connections between companies.

Chance, inasmuch as it was these producers who crossed my radar at the opportune moment, and logistics, as meetings with these producers were feasible from a geographical and time perspective, played its part in the selection of the sample. These practical manifestations of my own network led me to a particular subset of producers, working in mainstream television for major broadcasters, which were located in the southern counties of England. On the one hand, there is enough difference between the producers' circumstances, particularly in their ownership models, for the interrogation of producers' interpretation of independence from different subjectivities and industry positions to be achieved. On the other hand, the experiences of independent producers in other nations and regions of the UK no doubt have their peculiarities and nuances, as one would also expect of the experiences of independent producers working, for example, for local, religious or shopping channels.

Bring a sole researcher, time and reach were limited in this project and the thesis format itself imposes its own limitations, not least of which being its 80,000 word upper limit. Presented in this thesis, therefore, is not a definitive, wide-ranging and inclusive study of independent television production *in-toto*, but a necessarily circumscribed, in-depth, study of four interesting cases of its varied subjectivities.

Interview Procedure

The qualitative interview with the creative worker is now a core component of many case studies within production studies (Cornea, 2008: 118). The research interview seeks material that, according to Williams, can make its way into "an academic afterlife" only through interrogation, interpretation, scepticism and intelligence (2008: 134). The self-representations of expert informants reflect "particular perspectives, knowledge and objectives" (Catterall, 1999: xviii). Bogner and Menz remind us that "expert knowledge should be seen as 'analytic construction' rather than […] 'special knowledge'" that can be dug up intact by the researcher (Bogner, Menz, 2009:72). The aim of the interviews and subsequent analysis was to ask how that knowledge was

constructed (see also Meuser, Nagel, 2009: 25-26). My own professional background in television production assisted understanding professional terminology. This, and background research on the companies and principal interviewees (see Atkinson & Coffey, 2004; Mikecz, 2012: 487), using marketing materials, journalistic sources and publicly-accessible company data, aided the conduct of the interviews.

My own prior experience of working in television production (I worked in television for broadcasters, in non-owned and owned independent production companies and as both staff and freelance in the 1990s) also assisted the interview process. Firstly, I understood the jargon, both technical and organisational, of production. Secondly, I was able to find opportunities to reveal my own industry experience to the interviewee. This usually happened a little way into the interview and tended to be me recollecting something that connected with a comment the interviewee has made, from the experience of being freelance, to fitting into an exclusive culture, to remembering what it was like to working in particular places, from the BBC to Soho. This appeared to narrow the gap that can exist between the media professional and the academic, levelling, to a degree, the imbalance of expertise that is a challenge faced by all researchers of the creative industries. It is a challenge too to the community of production studies scholars to do what it can to empower and mobilise more ex-industry academics to re-enter, not necessarily their former employers, but the industrial spaces of production and to reconcile the insider-outsider dichotomy.

Kvale states, "the *inter view* is a situation of knowledge production in which knowledge is created between the views of the two partners in the conversation" (1996: 296). Welch says, the interviewer needs to be "part therapist, part spy" (Welch et al., 2002: 625). In practice, neither is possible at the complete exclusion of the other. It is helpful to think methodologically in terms of an insider-outsider *continuum* rather than a *dichotomy* (Mikecz, 2012: 492). The researcher enters slightly into the interviewees' worlds as an outsider (Welch et al., 2002: 625) and makes his or her own interpretation, informed by the work of other researchers; the documentary evidence - both the outcomes of others' interpretations and perspectives – and his or her own presuppositions and aims. This comes with a significant caveat of trust. The interviewee is aware that the material of the interview is subject to interpretation and dissemination by the academic researcher, while the researcher hopes to gather more than rehearsed corporate representations. To this end, following approval by the University Research Ethics Committee of the research methods and information and guidance made available to contributors, each interviewee was offered anonymity.

There was a range of responses to this offer, from a lack of concern to quite strict initial guidelines, including one formal non-disclosure agreement. Each company had its own sense of the commercial sensitivity of the data it was providing, including the threat from competing companies and the conditions of its employment or ownership arrangements. The protection that anonymity provides, while not total, potentially facilitates less guarded responses to questions and more critical reflections on the contexts of its business dealings. For the purposes of examination, the interview data was appended in full, and rather than anonymity, all contributors were given the opportunity to request the redaction of any direct quotations from this version of the thesis.

All of the interviews were conducted at a time and place of the interviewee's choosing. Apart from the 2013 interviews with the first contributor, these were at their own workplaces. In most cases, these were conducted in an office or meeting-room. The employees interviewed in the second case study were interviewed as I was 'toured' around the building.

Each interviewee was provided prior to the interviews an indicative agenda of questions and themes. As can be seen in the interview transcripts, there were different levels of adhesion to and digression from these. It was not my aim to conduct a survey, but to facilitate a reflective enquiry, allowing the producers' own imperatives to emerge. The questions and themes provided an *aide-memoire* to ensure the main scales of enquiry were covered, as well as providing prompts when the flow of conversation had found a natural break.

Each interview with a company owner or manager lasted around one hour. Interviews with employees ranged from a few minutes to just under half-an-hour. Each interview was audio-recorded and manually transcribed. The first case study provided an opportunity to return to the contributor five years after the initial interview. This was useful not only as the first interview was, in effect, a test for the interview methodology, informing the conduct of the following interviews, but also as longitudinal studies of creative workers are rare (exceptions including Lee, 2018 and Paterson, 2017). The circumstances of many of the contributors changed during the course of the research and, especially given the assertion that the careers of creative workers are precarious, further longitudinal study of this sort would benefit the field.

My aim in this enquiry was not quantitative but qualitative and I do not offer a generalised picture of a 'sector.' Each case study allowed new ways of considering independent producers, expanding the scope of language and concepts which could be applied in their analysis. As Crouch and McKenzie assert, for

> depth to be achieved, it is much more important for the research to be intensive, and thus persuasive at the conceptual level, rather than aim to be extensive with intent to be convincing, at least in part, through enumeration (2006: 494).

I did not seek to be definitive, but to sensitise (ibid.: 496; Blumer, 1954: 8) readers to issues, concepts and ways of looking at production. In employing a Geertzian (1973) study of culture, the analysis begins with the observation of artefacts - the term used by Schein (2010) to describe the tangible evidence, including verbal evidence, of organisational culture - and becomes more interpretive in its search through layers of espoused values and underlying assumptions which constitute what Geertz calls the "webs of significance" in which the subject is suspended. Geertz says, "anthropological writings are themselves interpretations, and second or third order ones to boot" (1973: 15). A purely *etic* (Peterson, 2001; Peterson & Pike, 2002; Pike, 1967) stance asserts that reality is objective, not cultural and suitable for deductive testing (Buckley et al., 2014 and Sinkovics et al., 2008 in Azungah, 2018: 385). A purely *emic* perspective asserts that what can be perceived socially is the outcome of the encoded, contextualised experiences of those observed (ibid.: 386). The former privileges voyeurism and measurement, the latter probing and interpretation. My analysis in this thesis was the latter.

While I collected some secondary data concerning the producers' workplaces, this research was neither observational nor participatory. It was a textual analysis of transcribed interviews. Each transcript was produced and analysed manually. The interview questions and themes provided some broad coding of the responses to ensure that the research questions were addressed and the three scales of enquiry, micro-personal, meso-organisational and macro-contextual. It was through listening to, both at the time of the interview and during the transcribing and re-reading the transcript that point of particular analytical interest came to light. Sometimes these were prompted by a particular emotional tone in the content – the sense of a realisation or synthesis made by the interviewee, a sense of conflict or challenge, a particular sense of commitment or excitement. Other trajectories were more tacit in their origin – the importance of space to the organisation of independence being the key example.

These analytical threads are fully expressed in the case studies themselves. Each case study was initially analysed prior to the subsequent interviews being conducted, so these threads emerged over the course of the research. They led, ultimately, to the three main contributions to knowledge in the thesis. Negotiated dependencies and producing as networked brokerage were strongly evident in the first case study and reinforced in the different organisational contexts of the other companies. I formulated the existence of diasporic networks through analysing the responses of the participants in the third case study and applied it in other places in the thesis.

1.4.2   The deployment of Network Theory in the analysis

Networking is a well-worn concept in the media and other creative sectors. Here, working relationships around projects which fall outside of traditionally-organised companies, involve interactions between organisational clusters of workers or individuals; and employment contracts often tend toward the short-term and freelance arrangements. While some opportunities are formally advertised, many are discovered through word-of-mouth and, either way, the informal system of professional references is based around relationships and reputations.

The independent producer's role and identity is fundamentally a networking one, in that she or he brings together or otherwise coordinates clusters of activity between people with different individual skillsets and objectives in the shared aim of programme development, production and dissemination. In order to better explain and analyse the processes of networking, it was helpful to deploy a conceptual framework describing the operation of social networks.

Networking and networks are discussed in specific detail, and in different contexts and circumstances, throughout the thesis' case studies. In chapter 6 I describe the independence of the independent producer as a set of negotiated dependencies within and between networks, and his or her activity as the brokerage of cultural and economic resources across these social networks. Here, also, the conduct of explicit, situated networking through events and also through prior relationships is considered. In chapter 7, I am less explicit in my deployment of network-thinking, but the strong ties created by the specific organisational culture of that company can also be described using these tools. In chapter 8, I consider the different networking patterns experienced and employed by employees at different career stages and with different goals, introducing the concept of the diasporic network, which can re-connect and resource co-members who share histories and memories. In chapter 9, I consider intra- and

inter-organisational networking as professional relationship-building and maintenance activities.

Together with Geertz's webs of significance that semiotically bind places and people into typological spaces of understanding or discourses, networks can help us think about the transactional nature of the connections between those people and places. Network theory (for example, Benkler, 2011; Castells, 2000, 2011; Granovetter, 1973, 1983; Nahon, 2011) has many applications, from communications theory, to the study of markets, epidemiology studies and social sciences. Social Network Theory focuses on inter-human relations both between individuals and groups, while its extension, Actor Network Theory (see Latour, 1987; 1999; 2005) considers the social functionality and agency of otherwise inanimate objects, including technology and documents (explicated in useful narrative form in Latour, 1996). Classifying agents as 'nodes' and the presence of a relationship as a 'tie' or 'link,' network analyses of the more quantitative kind often lend themselves to graphical representations of transactional behaviours. Johns provides an example of a diagrammatic representation of a production team (2010), Dovey et al. provide network diagrams of the interactions of creative clusters (2016: 94-99) while Holden considers the usefulness and limitations of using visual models (2015: 27-31). In the context of this research, the social, cultural and economic transactions which take place in the development, production and diffusion of television programmes are more complex and nuanced than might be simply diagrammatised. Here, network analysis is not performed in any deductive, and certainly not diagrammatic, way, but, instead, provides some facilitative language to forward the discussion of the role and social positioning of the producer.

A key concept in understanding the value of ties in value-generation is Granovetter's (1973, 1983) distinction between "strong" and "weak" ties. Strong ties exist where several members of a network share ties with other members, such as in a family or corporate office, creating a cluster. These are also sometimes referred to as 'bonding ties.' A weak tie is one that connects one member of a network cluster uniquely to one or more members of another cluster. This provides the linked individual to a set of resources not available to other members of the local cluster, providing potential business advantage. These are sometimes referred to as 'bridging ties,' as the holders of these ties form a bridge between otherwise unconnected groups. This is particularly useful in considering the producer's role as a convenor, bringing together agents from a number of different circumstances, be they different production departments, potential clients and contributors to programme content. The producer is expert at the formation and exploitation of the weak tie.

What happens across these ties is critical to the producer's role. On the one hand, it is an oversimplification to recognise only that the producer forms a connection with, for example, a director. On the other hand, analysing the nature of that producer's relationship with that particular director opens up levels of specific, localised detail and nuance which would be ungainly or impossible to cover definitively within a limited case study. In this thesis (see chapter 6), I employed a network-based model of the producer's activity. This model provides a bridge between the consideration of the producer as business-focused and as creative.

In contrast to Bourdieu's (1984 [1979]) conceptualisation of social capital as an outcome of closed networks with shared cultural rules and language, Burt's (2000, 2004) analysis of the operational advantages gained by workers who occupied network positions adjacent to structural *holes* - parts of the network where ties were not otherwise present between disparate clusters - identified agents' brokerage across these holes as being instrumental in the growth of their social capital. The brokerage analogy is relevant in the case of the independent producer who is not *producing* a product in the sense that a manual worker is but who is both a vendor and buyer of services - to broadcasters and from production workers. The producer's fee is, in effect, the commission gained from the success of these transactions, but his or her *value* is in the ability to bridge the otherwise unconnected milieux of the broadcaster, production teams and the public world where source material for stories resides. Burt identifies that entrepreneurs are more likely to find themselves occupying "large, sparse networks" (2000: 384) and this is demonstrated in the first case study (chapter 6).

Burt (2004) proposes that creativity may be an outcome of brokerage processes rather than individual and environmental factors.

> [C]reativity is a diffusion process of repeated discovery in which a good idea is carried across structural holes to be discovered in one cluster of people […] then rediscovered in still others […]. Thus, value accumulates as an idea moves through the social structure; each transmission from one group to another has the potential to add value (ibid.: 389).

Burt is talking about creativity in the context of business entrepreneurship, disaggregating it from the creation of cultural artefacts and talking more about the development of ideas. This provides a foundation for this thesis' conceptualisation of the activity of the producer, which spans both business entrepreneurship *and* the creation of cultural artefacts, as the process of brokering cultural and economic capital

across disparate networks. I therefore contribute a general definition of the producer, avoiding the tendency to shy away from pinning down this complex and multi-faceted role, or of resorting to metaphor, while maintaining enough flexibility for its application in the different contexts in which producers function.

The recognition that television production, and the producer's role, relies on the interaction of specialised interconnected networks provokes a consideration of network clusters – interdependent but distinct groups of activity within a sector. Network Ecology models (for example, Dovey et al., 2016; Holden, 2015; Normann & Ramirez, 1993; Ramirez, 1999) consider the co-creation of value across complex, multi-cultural (in that they occupy differentiated discursive spaces) areas of creative activity. Hewison argues that, "it is less helpful to define the creative economy by what it does, than to try to understand how it is organized… Creativity comes from being at a point of exchange" (in Holden, 2015: 1). Ramirez proposed (after Perrow, 1972, 1979 and Weick, 1979, both in Ramirez, 1999: 58) that network interactivity creates organisational environments particular to those interactions and that the managing of these fragmented interactions and interfaces "requires containment and coordination skills. […] The extent to which managers focus on these," he states, "as an increasingly important priority has not, to my knowledge, been empirically explored" (ibid.).

Network Ecology models lend themselves to considering the operation of creative economic units (Dovey et al., 2016, is a good example of this) and tend to focus on the emergent behaviours of networked agencies without pre-existing (explicit) or linear engagement protocols. Ramirez (Normann and Ramirez, 1993; Ramirez, 1999) proposes the concept of the "value constellation" as a post-industrial replacement for the linear value chain. Television production, however, for all its structural market shifts (discussed in chapters 3 and 4), flexibility in the organisation of production (discussed in chapters 4, 6, and 8), and geographically-clustered activities (discussed in chapters 8 and 9), still relies primarily on linear development, production and diffusion methods. While flexible British production practices may diverge from more standardised and demarcated American practices (discussed in chapter 8), I would argue that, rather than replacing linear Fordist and Taylorist approaches, the British approach to flexibility demonstrates the maximisation of industrial efficiency through the operation of a less-organised (less-unionised) labour market, rather than demonstrating innovative non-linear approaches to production.

While the above recognises that transaction over networked agencies is fundamental to production, *networking*, however, is a term used in a particular way and is a process

much discussed in television circles and in a number of studies of production contexts (see, for example, Barnatt & Starkey, 2005; Grugulis & Stoyonova, 2012; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010; Lee, 2011; Potts et al., 2008). Networking, in this context, is a process whereby new connections are sought, where existing connections are reinforced and where career maintenance and development occur. As Lee recognises (2011: 562), it is a powerful, normative and hegemonic discourse in professional contexts. However, there is little work which specifically attempts to categorise networking activity or to offer an analytical model which extends its dominant professional meaning. The thesis specifically contributes categorised analysis of a number of different networking aims, including identity-maintenance (chapters 6 and 9), induction and trust (chapters 7 and 8), intra- and inter-organisational team-building (chapters 6 and 9), and as a diasporic support network (chapter 8).

2.0   Literature Review

The UK's established television broadcasters have been studied extensively and historicised (for example, Briggs, 1961-1995; Crissell, 1997, 2002; Potter, J., 1989, 1990; Sendall, 1982, 1983) as has the more recently-formed Channel 4, whose history is entwined with that of independent production in the UK, has a body of work dedicated to it (for example, Brown, 2007; Catterall, 1999; Hobson, 2008; Lambert, 1982). These studies are complemented by a growing body of work considering the independent television production sector and its foundations, notably Bennett and Strange (2014 and, with Kerr and Medrado, 2012); Darlow (2004); Doyle and Paterson (2008); Lee (2018); and Potter (2008).

These provide an overarching contextual studies of the sector, on which the thesis draws, but, as Spicer and Presence argue in their 2016 study of RED Production Company and Warp Films, these institutional narratives, "do not examine in any detail how specific companies actually work or recognise the importance of particular production cultures" (2016: 5) and need to be complemented by close-up interpretative studies that "apprehend […] the relationship between agency and institution" (ibid.: 6).

This review is divided into three sections. The first surveys the general field of broadcasting history and identifies its concentration on the large broadcasting corporations. It includes studies that have a bearing on the consideration of the UK independent TV production sector, which has changed dramatically since 1982 with the introduction of Channel 4. It considers how academic studies have only tangentially addressed the concept and operation of independence in a sector which is built on interdependency and conflict.

The second section concerns itself with studies of media labour and production cultures. These study the experiences of production workers, which emerge in the institutional contexts discussed previously. This is necessary because, while these macro-level contexts are the frameworks within which the independent producer operates, the worker's perspective is fundamental to this study. The interconnectedness of these scales of operation underpins the overarching concept of negotiated dependencies, which is developed at length through the case studies.

The third section deals with studies of the role of the producer. It is significant that the majority of the studies of the producer focus on the film producer rather than the television producer. The role and identity of the producer also have many different

localised interpretations and sub-categories based on the level of managerial responsibility, position in the chain of production, and differ between film and television. As such, there is an incompleteness in the existing literature of a full understanding of the producer's role. Because there have been few academic studies of the television producer, the thesis contributes to knowledge through an in-depth analysis of the role played by four different television producers together with a more general argument about the nature of the role and how it might best be conceived and understood.

2.1 Studies of Television Institutions

Studies of British broadcasting illustrate its complex interdependency on varied economic, social and cultural interests. Briggs' first four volumes (1961-1979) historicise the birth of broadcasting from the turn of the 20th Century, the foundation of the British Broadcasting Company and, later, Corporation, through to the foundation of the Independent Television Authority in 1954. On the surface, this is a history of broadcasting monopoly. However, what Briggs brings to light is that, while the BBC was, at the time, a unitary broadcasting exercise, it was the outcome of the interaction and dependency of a great many agencies. Broadcasting's interests span the economic, the social and the cultural and, as such, are contested and contingent. Briggs' history, together with parliamentary debates on broadcasting (see Parliament. House of Commons, 1926-1954 and Parliament. House of Lords, 1952-1954) and Scannell and Cardiff's (1991) social history evidence that the United Kingdom's early solution to broadcasting was but one possible compromise out of many available options, and, as such, provided a unique foundation and influence upon future approaches to the regulation of British broadcasting.

Briggs describes how post-war television developed not only technologically but culturally. Formats and genres of programme that remain broadly familiar today became established and the principles of public service broadcasting were articulated in the context of television (see Briggs, 1979). Reith's model of public service still holds dominant sway in British broadcasting and this cultural consideration became the focus of the 1950's debates around broadcasting competition. These debates, leading to the foundation of the Independent Television Authority, are covered in greater detail in the first part of chapter 3, where the conflation of independence, critical to this thesis, with commercialism and class is interrogated. The introduction and impact of commercial television and, therefore, competition, in British broadcasting is analysed by Briggs (vols. IV-V, 1979-1995), dovetailing into Sendall (1982, 1983), Potter (1989, 1990) and Bonner & Aston's *History of Independent Television in Britain* (1998, 2002).

There is little in these studies about the day-to-day professional activities of programme-makers but they do illustrate how complex and contested the contexts of production are. These histories challenge any sense that the BBC and ITV's oligarchy was a natural or obvious outcome. The spaces of television production are contingent and contested on economic, cultural and social grounds.

While the creation of the ITV companies introduced competition between broadcasters and the ongoing question over the funding of television in the UK, the competition over the fourth television service (once it had been agreed that the new channel would not be ITV2) was played out in person and by proxy between broadcasters and producers. The debates themselves are interrogated more fully in the second part of chapter 3, as they provide the foundation for the contemporary state of the independent production sector which is central to this thesis.

Anthony Smith's (1973) *The Shadow in the Cave* is a socio-political polemic on the need for a shift in the power of broadcasting, away from institutions and state and into the hands of wider society. Broadcasting, for Smith, was "The Last Resource of Freedom" (ibid. :279-286). Channel 4 differed from the BBC and ITV companies in that it was a publisher-broadcaster, not a producer-broadcaster. This had a significant impact on the viability of independent production in the UK. Lambert (1982) provides a detailed but summary account of the key debates and primary agencies which preceded the Channel (investigated further in chapter 3). Most of the literature, having summarised the complex origins of the Channel, goes on to focus on the leadership of the organisation and its programmes' divergence from convention. Brown (2007) and Hobson's (2008) hindsight allows them to consider the Channel in operation. The key players here are Chairmen, Chief Executives and Channel Controllers. Producers are present in these narratives but as abstracted proxies for the programmes they supplied, with little consideration of their ways of working. The literature recreates the excitement of this significant intervention in the UK television landscape. It tells a story of an institution in which the established rules of television operation were frequently broken, as confirmed by founding Chief Executive Isaacs' (1989) and Commissioning Editor Kustow's (1987) accounts.

The independent producer occupies a precarious position where his or her professional viability is tested in a competitive marketplace. Darlow's (2004) account of the independent production community's challenge to the television establishment is the most substantial study, from the producers' perspective, of the Channel 4 debates and

outcomes. It provides historical background on the contesting ideological positions and, vitally, explains the federal nature of the production community. This was not a unified body but a number of, often, competing groups. Each had different backgrounds, circumstances, motivations and approaches. This is an important representation of the independent production community and one which is reflected in this thesis. I argue in chapter 4 that depicting independent production as a sector elides its variety.

This variety is best represented from producers' perspectives in Potter (2008). Potter combines historical data with interviews with producers from a range of companies. These companies vary in size and structure, in the genres they work in, and in the ways in which they exploit marketplaces. While the book provides little critical analysis, it is unique in bringing the producer's voice, via original interviews, to the historical record. It is rich in empirical detail. It identifies that independent production occurred before the foundation of Channel 4, covers a period where independent producers were uncredited by broadcasters, is concerned with how the makers of Channel 4's 'radical' new formats went about that, addresses the synthesis of lifestyle, creative and business imperatives and gets first-hand reflections on the motivator's of the wave of merger and consolidation that happened in the first decade of this century.

The Arts and Humanities Research Council funded the University of Portsmouth and the British Universities Film and Video Council to research the impact of Channel 4 on British film and film production culture. The collected articles in special editions of the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* (2013: **33**(3)) and the *Journal of British Cinema and Television* (2014: **11**(4)) considered the tensions between the Channel's commercial and cultural agendas (Blanchard, 2013: 365-376; Bock and Zielinski, 2014: 418-439), the contexts and significance of the Independent Film and Video Workshop (Long et al., 2013: 377-395), radical television (Franklin, 2013: 396-417) and the shift from "In-House 'Producer Unit' to Independent 'Package Unit' Production" (Kerr, 2013: 434-453). In this light, Lambert's description of Channel 4 as a "compromise" (1982: 84) underplays the intersectional tensions manifest not only in its gestation but its operation and impact, which spanned the cultural, political and economic.

The socially progressive, aesthetically-challenging nature of much of Channel 4's (and Film Four's) early output contrasted significantly with ITV's mainstream programming. Channel 4, the BFI and trade union the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT) also agreed, in *The Workshop Declaration* (see Holdsworth, 2017), that low-budget production should be exempted from standard union rules, facilitating a move toward flexible, project-based working practices, common in

contemporary British television production. Independent film and television production, therefore, were impacted significantly by market changes brought about by the introduction of a commercially-funded, public-service, publisher/exhibitor-broadcaster.

There is very little literature on Channel 5's foundation, which in 1997 completed the UK's terrestrial analogue television oligarchy. A further commercially funded, public-service licensed broadcaster, the Channel, like its counterparts, was tasked with negotiating a commercially viable path between mass and niche markets (Fanthome, 2003: 121). The debates preceding the Channel's foundation, collected in Blanchard's (1990) slim volume, were less protracted than those around the earlier channels. The literature demonstrates that, by then, television in the UK constituted an interdependent network of varied political, cultural and economic interests (ibid.: 19). The Independent Television Commission (ITC) oversaw the competitive auction for the licence. Initial hopes for a regionalised network (see Cornford and Robins in Blanchard, 1990: 3-21; and Fanthome, 2003) were not realised and Channel 5 became a national service based in Camden, which, as noted in chapters 8 and 9, hosts a significant cluster of television and independent production companies.

Channel 5 was created to expand the television marketplace and it stimulated independent production in a number of ways. It complemented the 'tone' of the existing channels,[2] providing a market for different styles of programmes; it pledged 40% of its output to independent production (Fanthome, 2003: 70), offered independents long-run series, fast response times to pitches, negotiated low fees in return for increased producers' intellectual property rights, and offset deals which offered only low profits for producers initially with increased opportunities for returning business (ibid.: 139). The literature on Channel 5, therefore, demonstrates the market liberalisation of television in the UK and, specifically, the competitive nature of the negotiation between broadcaster and independent producer.

The television broadcast sector was in the process of expansion, through cable and satellite in the late 1990s, digital multiplexing in the 2000s, and through digital video on demand services in the 2010s. While introducing subscription revenue to television, there is little in the literature to suggest that any of these developments *alone* significantly changed the operation of television production. Goodwin's (1998) and Freedman's (2003) analyses of the television policies of the Conservative and New Labour governments from the late 1970s to 2001 suggest little parliamentary will for top-down reform of the structure of British broadcasting. As Goodwin notes (1998: 168-9), the institutions of British broadcasting are "highly interdependent," broadly

complementary, and their programmes, largely, held in high regard. There is, he says, little public pressure to fundamentally change the status quo. The dominant discourses of these governments, however, had an undeniable effect on broadcasting and independent production. The free-market liberalisation of Thatcher's Conservatives led to the expansion of independent production in British broadcasting, assisted by the fragmentation the television duopoly and the introduction of cable and satellite broadcasting technologies. The independent production quota introduced by *The Broadcasting Act 1990* imposed this market also upon the publicly-licensed broadcasters. New Labour's neoliberal discourse of enterprise and international ambition also extended across the British economic landscape to include cultural production. "New Labour," Hesmondhalgh et al. (2015: 1) argue, "placed great emphasis on culture and the arts in their political self-presentation and also to a certain degree in policy practice […] by reconfiguring conventional understandings of cultural policy, by placing much greater stress on the economic role of commercial 'creative industries'". They contend that, firstly, cultural policy is formulated through a distinctly reflexive relationship with cultural producers, unlike other, more top-down, public policy-making; and, secondly, that cultural policy is diverse in its aims, ranging from nation branding, to heritage, support for cultural production, cultural consumption and regulatory censorship and control. As such it relies upon a great many stakeholders and has wide-reaching consequences, not only culturally, but socially and economically.

Hardy (2010: 527) argues that *The Communications Act 2003* "was the single major piece of domestic legislation affecting broadcasting during the decade," bringing further liberalisation of media ownership and charging the new regulator, the Office of Communications (Ofcom), with the promotion of competition "'to further the interests of consumers'" (ibid.). Harvey (2006) argued that, while being strategically positioned to address broadcasting from a quantitative perspective, Ofcom was largely blind to the qualitative meaning-making inherent in and incumbent upon cultural production. The Act highlighted New Labour's emerging focus on scaling and industrialising the digital creative knowledge economy (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2015: 118) by, for example, returning intellectual property rights to producers, allowing them to exploit independently international sales opportunities and attract venture capital. The wider and more pervasive creative and cultural industries discourse, as is demonstrated by O'Connor and Arts Council England's (2007) review of the literature, if not through a single policy or Act, has had a significant impact on the organisation of cultural production, including broadcasting, and, therefore, the lives of those working within it and consuming its products.

It is not the place of this thesis to discuss policy in detail, as the aforementioned have done so. The focus here is to investigate the individual meaning-making of producers, whose level of engagement with, and interpretation of, television policy, varies. However, of note is the way that the organisation of television production has responded somewhat organically to changes in the wider economic discourse, which, of course, impacts upon the subjectivities of those working within it. For example, this impact is demonstrated in the discussion of entrepreneurship, autonomy and flexibility in the first case study.

The globalisation of television ownership and distribution is a discourse concomitant with the neoliberalisation of the economics of television. To what extent and through what means independent producers individually engage with overseas ownership, commissioning, production and sales varies, as is demonstrated in the case studies. . In 2004, Steemers, identified British television overseas as a predominantly transatlantic and culturally niche affair, and format hybridisation, homogenisation and localisation were emerging traits. Chalaby's later (2016) analysis of global television finds these markets more established and bullish. As is recognised by both Steemers and Chalaby, this shift in the organisation of television production (see Chalaby, 2016: 65-130; Steemers, 2004: 22-48), is not only economic but cultural, impacting not only upon contractual relationships, but on the produced texts, a phenomenon particularly acute in the development of television formats (ibid.: 131-184; Steemers, 2004: 173-180). With similarly wide-ranging impact, the effects of the expansion of the global television marketplace are felt not only transnationally but all the way down to the local economies and cultures of specific sites of production, a topic addressed by McElroy and Noonan (2019). While not specifically addressing globalised television production in detail, this thesis engages with its impact on individual companies and producers in the case studies, and chapter 4 discusses how this complex economic-cultural, global-to-local production context is appropriated for geopolitical ends, shoring up the perceptions of British cultural influence overseas.

This literature in combination shows how the operation of broadcasting and independent production, rather than compromise or synthesis, involves the pressure-cooking of a number of *prima facie* incompatible but interdependent ingredients, such as creativity and commerce, popularity and inclusivity, independence and regulation, and flexibility and precarity. Each broadcaster occupies a particularly positioned solution to this conundrum which combines both intentional efforts, through policy, business strategy and ideology, and unintended outcome through the interaction of

complex macro-level systems from shifting societal norms to macro-economics. This complexity is felt, negotiated and navigated not only by the politicians and channel executives who feature in the above literature, but also producers and production workers, who are the object of this study. From these negotiations emerge what this thesis refers to as cultures of production – ways of thinking and behaving within working contexts over which no single agent has authority but within which each attempts to write his or her own professional narrative.

2.2   Studies of Production Cultures

The primary concern of this thesis is how production work is understood and organised, both by and around the independent producer. The site of cultural production was first critiqued by Horkheimer and Adorno (2002 (1947)), who coined the term "Culture Industry" (ibid.: 94). In the 1940s and 1950s scholarly interest in the film industry emerged. Rosten (1941) and Powdermaker (1951) published ethnographic, observational, interpretive accounts of the nature of film production in Hollywood, while the *Cahiers du Cinema* (1951-) critiqued the dominant narratives of the French film industry, stimulating the *Nouvelle Vague*, which positioned the *auteur* director as the prime creative force.

Over the past decade, there has been a resurgent scholarly interest in film and television production. The term *Production Studies* appears in a methodological appendix in Caldwell (2008: 345) just before its titular appearance in Mayer, Banks and Caldwell's 2009 edited collection. Banks, Conor and Mayer state:

> production studies examines specific sites and fabrics of media production as distinct interpretative communities, each with its own organizational structures, professional practices and power dynamics (2016: x).

As Mayer et al. assert, "the off-screen production of media is itself a cultural production, mythologized and branded much like the onscreen textual culture that media industries produce" (2009: 2). This conceptualisation lies at the forefront of Caldwell's research into Hollywood's working cultures. Caldwell defines Production Culture as behavioural outcomes of industrial self-reflexivity (2008: 32-33) together with the messy vagaries, unpredictability and contingencies of human encounters. Caldwell's notion of *industrial self-reflexivity* highlights the organisational methods by which film and television espouses its own identity, theories and pedagogies through para-texts. Workers in film, he finds, understand and articulate their own craft skills and identities through *critical practice* as *theorising agents* within these organisational

contexts. Also evident in Mathieu's (2013) study of the professional subjectivity of production workers, workers reflexively balance the rules of labour demarcation with their own professional subjectivities.

This literature shows us that production is not only explicitly organised but also reflexively understood and articulated by those who work in it. Mayer, Caldwell and Banks (2009) ask, therefore, "How do we, as researchers, then represent those varied and contested representations?" (ibid.: 4). Mayer et al.'s methodologies mix "anthropology, communication, cultural geography, film, and sociology" (ibid.) and the book's sections reflect these distinct approaches, focusing, in turn, on historiography; identity and representation; cultural geography; and cultural labour. Banks et al.'s (2016) sequel collection is less divided by discipline than by scope: technologies of production; promotional production and branding; production pedagogies; public service; and media in global contexts (xiv-xv).

Studies of production employ, therefore, a range of intersecting perspectives. Of primary concern here are *media labour* studies, which tend toward national or sectoral consideration of media work, analysing ethnographic data in a political-economy context, and studies of *production cultures*, which tend toward organisational consideration of the interaction of organisational aims and values with workers' dispositions and behaviours.

2.2.1 Media Labour Studies

Much of media labour literature is motivated by the observation that work in the media industries can be simultaneously both satisfying and precarious. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011a) find that media employment "invokes a number of desirable features of work: flexibility, safety, autonomy, intrinsic interest, skill, the blending of conception and execution, recognition" (ibid.: 5); it is also "marked by high levels of insecurity, casualisation and long working hours" (ibid.: 6). Concerning itself with workers in television, magazine journalism and music, their book plots an empirical path through the management of autonomy, creativity and commerce; the balancing of self-realisation, esteem and insecurity; the emotional labour that underpins *good* (socially and culturally worthwhile) work; and, therefore, identifies a politics of media work. McRobbie (2015) also considers the conditions of working in the creative sector in the paradoxical conditions of political enthusiasm for the creative industries concept under fiscal austerity, neo-liberal precarity, and self-actualisation narratives. Creative labour, for McRobbie, is politicised and political (2012), and infused with gendered asymmetries (2019). Together with Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2008 and 2011b), these

studies constitute a critical political economy framework for considering the contemporary nature of creative and media labour.

The above studies consider work in a range of creative and media sectors. Lee's studies, between 2011 and 2013 (Lee, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2013) specifically address independent television production. The 2011 article addresses the pressures felt by creative workers to network socially. This is a form of professional membership ritual which constitutes an additional but formally-unrecognised extension of the workplace, discussed in chapter 9 of this thesis. This can bring additional risk to those workers who are unable to engage in such rituals, damaging their professional social and cultural capital. The 2012(a) article addresses the erosion of training and craft skills development in television production, replaced by an espoused meritocracy of multi-skilling and a devolution of professional development to the television worker.

Lee's second 2012 article (2012b) investigates the pleasure-pain paradigm (see, for example, Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011a; McRobbie, 2002; Ursell, 2000) by considering the moral aspect of work in independent television production (picking up from Banks, 2006), where the insecurity and risk inherent in a self-actualised career is offset by ethical commitment and passion. The political-moral dimension which runs through Lee's work at this time is collected and appraised in his 2013 article, which frames his earlier findings in the context of historical and contemporary political economy studies of creative labour and cultural industries. As a whole, Lee's articles constitute a micro-to-macro level enquiry into the contemporary state of labour for the worker in independent television production. As such they both support and complement this thesis' study of employers and company directors.

Lee's (2018) *Independent Television Production in the UK: From cottage industry to big business*, is an authoritative overview of contemporary independent television production. Lee charts the development of the independent television production sector from its beginnings as a disparate cottage industry to becoming a significant entity in the UK's cultural economy. Situated against a "backdrop of political, social, technological and economic change " (15), it draws together the methodological and conceptual strands addressed in his 2011-2013 articles to approach the subject of the "Independent Television Production Sector (ITPS)" from three perspectives: "the political economic transformation of the sector"; "the dynamics of creative labour within the industry"; and "the cultural value of the media content produced" (ibid.: 1). Lee therefore bridges the political economy of independent production with its cultural aspects in two key ways: through his investigation of the experiences of production

workers, and, therefore, production cultures, in independent production; and through his interrogation of the development of the cultural outputs of independent production, the programmes that audiences consume and which form part of the cultural value of both their producers' and audiences' lives. As such, Lee's analysis, while taking a sector-scale perspective, does not purport to represent a sector through economic statistics alone, but to foreground the cultural impact of economic political policy.

Lee's book charts the debates which led to the foundation of Channel 4 and the emergence of the independent production sector, through the creative and entrepreneurial excitement of the 1980s, through the dawning insecurity faced by the independents in the 1990s and the rationalising strategic consolidation of the 2000s. Lee's thesis is underpinned by the concept of "the neoliberalisation of creativity" (ibid.: 47), in which the Creative Industries are held up by government as a paean for the UK's post-industrial future, while those who work in it are subject to the risks of a free market.

The second section of his book deals with those workers. Through interviews with above- and below-the-line employees and freelancers across a range of companies and genres, he investigates their lived experiences of that work, including dealing with its inherent insecurity, the development of careers and the perceived cultural value of the work. He presents a rare longitudinal study, re-interviewing many of his original 2005-2007 sample in 2016-2017. As such he interrogates the impact of neoliberal employment policy and economics through an identification of high churn-rates and inequality driven by an asymmetrical distribution and deployment of cultural and social capital, casualisation and deunionisation. The longitudinal nature of his study allowed Lee to consider not just television workers, but also former television workers as exploitation, burnout, creative dissatisfaction and meeting glass ceilings led some of his contributors to leave the industry. This study addresses a significant lacuna in contemporary television and creative industry studies. While Hesmondhalgh & Baker (2011a), Lee (2012b), McRobbie (2002) and Ursell (2000) identified the creativity-precarity trade-off which sustains many creative workers' careers, in *Independent Television Production in the UK*, Lee finds that, for some, this resilience is a finite resource.

A detailed, qualitative, region-specific study of the experiences of freelance workers in film and television was made by Genders (2019). She found that, while freelance labour is characterised conventionally by placeless nomadism and flexibility, that freelancers' interaction with place is critical. The geographic siting of production labour

creates both push and pull factors, including the concentration of creative labour around metropolitan clusters and the expense of accommodation around those clusters. Freelancers lack collaborative supportive networks, training provision is limited and there are extremely few sites for co-working. Sustaining a freelance career, she found therefore, creates a significant drain on emotional and physical wellbeing.

A key theme here is the individualisation of labour under neoliberalism and, with that, the individualisation of performativity and risk. While the perspective of my thesis is more on the employer than the employee, it is notable that those employees I interviewed valued and sought out the security of collective endeavour, either through steady employment, the closeness of teams, even the support of a Human Resources department, highlighting the exposing nature of individualist labour practices and the importance to employee wellbeing of some form of collectivised risk-management and supportive production cultures.

2.2.2   Production Culture Studies

Studies of production cultures tend toward specific organisational contexts, such as Caldwell's (2008) study of Hollywood or Born's (2005) study of the BBC. These contexts, however, are also subject to the influence of macro-scale factors. This thesis is specifically concerned with independent television producers. The nature of that independence, therefore, is scrutinised in detail and is vital in considering the case studies' production cultures. Bennett and Strange's collection, *Media Independence: Working with Freedom or Working for Free?* (2014) considers the tensions between rhetorical notions of freedom implied by independence and the actual practices it engenders. Bennett describes independence in the media as a utopian ideal. "[M]edia independence matters," he states. "[A]s a utopian ideal it motivates and mobilizes people in a belief that, as Richard Dyer has put it, 'things could be better' (1985: 222)" (ibid.: 6). This not only, as Bennett claims, mobilises change narratives, but, dialectically, mobilises the concept of *the Establishment*. The fundamental question, 'independent of what?' underpins the discussions of chapters 3 and 4, where *independence* is best understood not as an ontological state but as a discursive positioning and negotiating device. Independence in the media operates not only on intersectional levels of culture, politics and economics but also in different ways in different aspects of the media. Independence in television production, this collection demonstrates, functions differently to independence in music or film production. In each, however, independence has its establishment correlate. These establishment institutions include the State, the cultural or aesthetic mainstream, and big-business, which are often abstracted by the independence discourse. Despite these utopian

discursive abstractions, however, Bennett states, independence movements have real-world outcomes (ibid.: 8).

Media independence "is always in crises or compromise" (ibid.). Independence, the above literature shows, brings precarity; it plays into the neo-liberal discourse of self-actualised labour and the devolution of risk from the establishment to the individual; and success for the independent can be perceived as entry into the establishment. Faulkner et al. (2008), for example, address the historical and political framing of the independent producer as "artist" and the discrepancy between that and the tendency for producers to "cash in" by selling their companies to super-indies. Bennett argues, however, that independent producers may achieve "editorial independence, public service *and* profit" through "innovative, diverse and challenging content" (ibid.: 90).

The social ideals of public service are significant in British broadcasting, in no small measure because of the histories and remits of the BBC and Channel 4. Bennett's chapter *Public Service as Production Cultures: A contingent, cultural compact* (in Banks et al., 2016: 123-137 and building on work in Bennett et al, 2012) foregrounds public service as both a policy and an ideal. He considers how this situation influences the cultures of independent production companies, finding that, in the imagination if not in reality, public service and profit are considered incompatible. Bennett's argument is that public service values infuse British approaches to programme-making and engender producers' emotional commitment to them. This, he argues, requires a "contingent, conjunctural compact" between the BBC and Channel 4 and independent producers (ibid.: 123). This perceived incompatibility between commerce and public service extends to the omission of ITV and Channel 5, also licenced public service broadcasters,[3] from this list. In Bennett's chapter, the independent producers recognise public service broadcasting through the lens of its interpretation by the BBC and Channel 4. This understanding is colloquial and discursive, rather than being based on statutory definitions of public service broadcasting's scope, purposes and characteristics.[4]

The case studies in this thesis not only support the observation that there are discursive influences on the cultures of production in UK television, such as public service values, but also demonstrate that production companies have their own localised cultures of production. Ellis, in a 2014 blog post, warned of the erosion of distinct production cultures and public service values through American buy-outs of independent production companies. There is little work investigating the distinctiveness of independents' production cultures, which this thesis addresses, showing how

producers try to manifest distinctiveness. As is discussed in chapters 7 to 9, there is a difference between espoused values, as might be articulated by a company rule-book or explicit 'social activities,' and organisational culture. The latter emerges in the context of the former, but it does so tacitly and in, at-best, a reflexive relationship with the intentions of the employer. These tacitly understood and expressed rules of behaviour may be productively aligned with the corporate intention, as in the functioning of familiar and efficient *communities of practice* (Wenger, 1998), or they may be resistant to corporate professionalism. The point is that while work-places and -practices can be designed, workplace cultures cannot.

Edgar Schein's (2010) model of this system in operation identifies layers of *visible artifacts, espoused beliefs* and *underlying assumptions,* referring to the obvious incarnations of identity and activity in an organisation, its propositional value-system, and the ways in which its workers understand and mobilise their agency (25-30). Organisational culture, for Schein, is "a pattern of shared assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved the problems of external adaptation and internal integration" (ibid.: 17). The influence of tacitly-learned assumptions on this process means that, as is argued later in chapter 9, organisational and, therefore, production cultures, emerge rather than being written, although the producer has some agency in this multi-factor process.

Born's (2005) anthropological study of the BBC under Director Generals John Birt's and Greg Dyke's initiatives to increase the financial competitiveness of the Corporation in the 1990s and 2000s revealed the cultural tensions between financial managerialism and public-service values. She also identified (considered in further detail in chapter 3 and throughout the thesis,) the perceived contrast between a managerialised, nervous and staid internal culture and an exciting, innovative and creative independent production culture (133-4; 149). This thesis challenges this perceived dichotomy, as the independent producer is required to be both managerial and creative and also navigates states of anxiety and risk-aversion.

Küng-Shankleman's (2000) study of the BBC (and CNN) identified that the national-industrial perceptions of the BBC as a placeholder for conceptions of quality, and vocational commitment to public service values over pecuniary reward permeated the internal culture of the organisation (73-74, 90). A sense of stability based on tradition and associated hubris (ibid.: 73) was offset by the resultant uncertainty of changes to the market of television broadcasting (ibid.: 87), despite the BBC's supposed immunity to commercial pressures by way of its publicly-funded status.

Küng-Shankleman takes a Schein-ian approach to considering how the espoused values of the BBC matched or misaligned with the underlying assumptions of its staff (131-149; 165-186), particularly under Birt. The cultural challenge is framed in her analysis as "Reithianism versus Birtism" – which become shorthand for public service tradition versus management for commercial viability. This reveals the cultural tensions in Birt's strategic responses to the environmental challenges of increasing competition, financial pressure, and the uncertainty of a fragmenting sector (173, 178). Küng-Shankleman found that these tensions were increased for those in more strategic positions than those in lower positions, including in-house producers (ibid.: 167), whose perspectives were more focused on programme-making. The case studies in this thesis demonstrate that the *independent* producer must navigate *both* strategic *and* organisationally-local perspectives and, therefore, those tensions.

The BBC is significantly larger and has a longer and more culturally pervasive history than many other television companies let alone independent producers. This does not mean that independent production companies have less-significant production cultures. Studies of these, however, are extremely rare.

A significant exception is the study of Manchester-based RED Production Company and Warp Films found in Spicer and Presence's (2016) article. They recognise the negotiated dependencies which underpin independent production's operation and, therefore, the need to address the study in a multi-factor way. In this study, Schein provides a model for understanding the interactions of managerial and emergent factors on production culture. If Schein's model, for the authors, is too mechanical, then Caldwell's (2008) recognition of the human vagaries of interaction in the complex networks of function and meaning-making that constitute the identity-work of Hollywood, provide the researcher with an opportunity to 'thicken,' in the Geertzian (1973) sense, their study. In the middle of these interactions is the producer her- or himself, with their own messy vagaries to negotiate in the conduct of their business and identity-construction. For this, Spicer and Presence draw on Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* (1984), the learned dispositions of background, upbringing and training (in the social and professional sense) and position the producer as an agent in the *field of cultural production* (1993), seeking acceptance and patronage. In their case studies, as in those in this thesis, they recognise the situated *place-ness* of production as an important ingredient not only logistically but in terms of identity and independence. As such, this article provides a structural framework of methods for considering the factors which contribute to the emergence of distinct production cultures. The 2016 article

foregrounds the agency of the owning-or-founding producer. It is "the founders who created […] the companies' organisation and structure, […] in which creative agents […] are enabled to pursue their artistic and cultural ambitions" (ibid.: 24). This collaborative culture extends to relations with sources of production finance, which are, "driven as much by mutual respect and cultural values as by institutional remit and the need for profitability" (ibid.: 25). This is evidenced by RED selling a majority stake to StudioCanal rather than an American owner, "therefore one that might be more culturally sympathetic to RED's ethos and productions" (ibid.: 26).

In the special issue of the *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, Spicer's article (2019) highlights the importance of place to independent production. In the case of RED, this is Manchester and his analysis considers its location as concurrently a lifestyle, pragmatic and political act for its Chief Executive Officer, Nicola Shindler. RED's successful origins were supported by the existence and patronage of Granada Television (and its socio-cultural audience-facing construct, *Granadaland* – an imagining of the region manifest through its programming) which was resolutely anti-metropolitan and dedicated to high-quality, regional public service broadcasting. Spicer argues that the consolidation of ITV as a London-based broadcaster and the BBC's limited concessions to regional broadcasting do little to support RED's regionality, which underpins the company's culture and content, and therefore its brand and success. RED's location, for Shindler, represents a balancing-act between the cultural and social character of a place with its economic and logistical provision. RED's original location, in Granada's (later ITV's) central-Manchester Quay Street Studios gave Shindler not only access to "an existing infrastructure of post-production facilities, distribution outlets and, above all, creative talent that made the location economically viable", but also allowed her to work in "a place where writers thrived, where the top talent could make really interesting, innovative programming . . . There was an air of creativity in the corridor" (ibid.: 286). In 2013, following ITV's move to Media City in Salford Quays, Shindler followed suit. "I need to be in a building that has edit and grading suites and dubbing theatres, and when ITV moved I wasn't left with an alternative" (ibid.: 294) she explained. The new facility, despite all of its logistical resources, lacks a cultural quality for Shindler.

> [T]he location lacks intimacy and history[. …] I know that's ridiculous. Saying that a building makes a difference, but I kind of think it does. It's a bit blander here. It hasn't got character. Quay Street had character. It was more intimate. You could see the nicotine on the walls. That made a difference because you thought about the previous meetings that took place there. I was conscious of that history in the pores of the building (ibid.: 295).

Shindler's view is that, perhaps, RED will leave that cultural history on the walls of Media City (ibid.). Spicer's article highlights the importance of the less tangible cultural aspects of the places where production happens as well as the logistical factors of location, including the facilities of creative hubs and clusters, and the balancing of the two is reiterated by the contributors to this thesis.

In a further article in this special issue, Johnson (2019) considers how Shindler's "quietly feminist" approach underpins the company's creative collaborations and forms a professional narrative of RED's shift in the scripted drama oeuvre from male-dominated authorship to more diverse writer collaborations. Johnson's article highlights the importance of *voice* (ibid.: 329), in the collaborative process, and in the stories the company tells through its programmes and through its self-representations. The "quietly feminist" culture is one that listens, and one that responds positively to flexibility rather than exclusive "'on the nose'" feminism to which a male-dominated industry might respond defensively toward (ibid.: 332). It is also one that promotes the work of women on merit, not gender (ibid.: 338).

Moseley et al.'s (2016) *Television for Women* considers the space of television, via its characterisation as a home-based, viewer-centric medium, to be historically feminised. Their collection of essays draws together not only the consideration of female-focused television content and the female viewer's experience and use of television but also female perspectives of and experiences in television production. Jackson's essay (2016 in ibid.: 53-70) charts the female experience of working in production over a number of decades, finding not a general liberalisation of opportunities for women, but increasing opportunities in particular less male-dominated spaces, such as daytime television, allowed women to progress into more senior positions. Many spaces of production, however, such as News, prime-time television and the craft areas of production remained male-dominated, so while the female worker experienced perhaps less of a glass-ceiling to her progression, she still was bounded by glass walls. Some spaces and cultures of television production have not and still do not favour a female workforce. However, in those space of production where female leadership has established itself, it is not only in the produced texts but the emergent cultures of production that female influence can be identified, as is evident in this thesis' case study of Ragdoll Productions in chapter 7.

Woods (2019) and much of Johnson (2019) analyse the representation of the company through the textual analysis of its programmes – visible artifacts in Schein's terms. These, with some context, allow reasonable interpretation of a company's espoused

beliefs, but the interpretation from these of underlying assumptions becomes more speculative as is one is more removed from the individual creative or the site of creative collaboration.

Meir's (2019) study of RED's 2013 partnership with StudioCanal provides a case study in the exploitation by producer and studio partners of synergies and differences between them. RED's decision, argues Meir, to enter into the partnership was "prescient, given […] the growing importance of international sales and the rise in power and popularity of streaming services" (ibid.: 324). The move led to "significant changes to some of the company's long-standing practices" (ibid.: 305) but "RED has continued to make the kinds of series that it has always done […] while also expanding its artistic range and finding new industrial and creative partners with whom to produce series" (ibid.: 324). For StudioCanal, the partnership supported the "horizontal integration of its core businesses of film production and distribution with television drama production and distribution" (ibid.:309) including the creation of two further Shindler-managed companies within StudioCanal (ibid.). The "UK trade press has continued to label RED as an 'indie'," observes Meir, but "argues that the investment by a much larger multinational corporation marks a watershed moment in RED's history" (ibid.: 305).

Meir's article highlights the nuances involved in the relationship between independent producers and studio partners or owners. In particular, the ability for an independent production company to expand its potential market while maintaining much of its original brand – that being what draws the studio to be attracted to the company – together with the portfolio diversification, horizontal integration and producer-skillsets the partnership provides to the studio marks such partnerships as strategic synergies between partners rather than tactical takeovers by acquisitive corporations. How these synergies are perceived and played out in practice by owned but still so-called independents, is investigated further in the latter two case studies in this thesis.

The *Journal* included full interviews with RED CEO Shindler (Spicer, 2019a) and Creative Director Caroline Hollick (Spicer, 2019b). They illustrate the rich data that can be collected through interview enquiry. The interview data provide researchers with opportunities for multi-perspectival analysis, as demonstrated by but not limited to the range of articles in the *Journal* itself.

This thesis also analyses the independent producer through their own self-representation and reflection. Where it can, it places this interview data in a spatial

context, organisationally and sometimes geographically, and situates the collected findings in a wider industrial context, offering a detailed consideration of the work of the independent television producer in the contemporary context.

2.3   Studies of Producers

There have been few studies of the television producer. Studies of film producers are more common, but even these are far-outnumbered by studies of the film director. Part of the problem is that the role of the producer in television is difficult to define. This is because the single role comprises multiple responsibilities, from developing programme ideas, to organising production finance, forming and overseeing a production team, and promoting and selling programmes. The television producer does not even get the negative attention of the popularised image of the *Svengali* or *lothario* attributed to the film producer. Given that television producers are largely absent from the stage of academic study, the *independent* producer is yet more-so. This thesis seeks to address these significant lacunae and, thereby, contribute to knowledge of the television producer and, therefore, television and production studies more widely.

Spicer and McKenna conducted an AHRC-funded project (2010-2012) which culminated in a book-length study analysing the career of British film producer Michael Klinger and the producer's multifaceted and contradictory role. The project aimed, "to get away from the conventional caricature of the producer as foul-mouthed, louche, conservative, philistine and anti-creative financier" (Spicer, 2011) and to appreciate

> his or her ability to manipulate creatively the complex and interlocking relationship between four key factors: an understanding of public taste - of what subjects and genres could attract a broad audience; the ability to obtain adequate production finance; the understanding of who to use in the key creative roles and on what terms; and the effectiveness of her or his overall control of the production process (ibid.).

The primary focus of Spicer and McKenna's edited edition of the *Journal of British Cinema and Television* was a reappraisal of the creativity of the producer's role in negotiating these interlocking factors (Spicer & McKenna, 2012). As Vincent Porter (2012) identifies in his synoptic overview, the collected articles represent a move away from the valorisation of the *auteur* director and the produced work in academic study and demonstrates the rich nuances of the producer's responsibilities, which include an appreciation of audience and studio expectations, together with the ability to form effective creative teams around productions and the ability to do so in changing and challenging technological, economic and cultural contexts. Taken as a whole, these

disparate factors represent the *habitus* of the producer. The creativity of the producer, Porter's overview shows, has always been contingent and often contested, sometimes shifting along with industry fashion, sometimes asserted through more local or individual negotiations of power and agency. As this thesis demonstrates, producers, productions and studios operate in a broadly similar macro-level context, defined by global markets, industrial policies and social trends. The closer the perspective on the producer, however, the more varied the contexts of production and the negotiations and dependencies from which they are wrought become. This is fundamental to these researchers' and this thesis' assertion that only by appraising in detail the work of individual producers can the fog of generalisation about production and producers be replaced by sharper detail regarding their work.

In their later book, Spicer and McKenna argue that "Creativity is a commodity, central to a film producer's self-promotion, the key marker distinguishing a genuine producer from a mere business administrator" (2013: 3). Their "focus on the producer's role places film within a broad set of contexts that are industrial, social, historical, ethnic […] and cultural," constituting "a cultural history of creativity in an industrial/commercial context (ibid.). This is a significant shift away from analyses of produced cultural texts themselves, which dominate humanities approaches to both film and television studies.

However, Klinger was a film producer and, revealingly, only one chapter of Spicer et al.'s (2014) overarching study of producers considers television, which is symptomatic of the general lacuna in the subject. It proposes, however, a more generalised analysis of the producer's complex role, responsibilities and professional identity. The tensions between popular and informed perceptions of the producer and his or her role are given both historical and conceptual framing. The film producer, in the introductory chapter, is framed as both ringleader-showman and duplicitous dealer. The producer straddles creative and commercial responsibilities and sensitivities. The producer is acute to tangible and intangible production concerns, from the cost of a director to the style and sensibility she or he will bring to the screen and the team. The producer is Janus-faced, both in the diplomatic sense and also in that she or he faces both inward to the production and outward to the audience.

Engelstad and Moseng (in Spicer et al., 2014: 45-63) recognise that there are many approaches available to the producer, some of which are related to genre (and which, therefore, usefully connect the concepts of genre and business.) Producers may adapt or originate content; may be perceived as more "money-" or "creativity-" focused; may be more "blockbuster" or "art-house;" may nurture particular styles or accommodate

several. These preferences exist in a reflexive relationship with the producer's professional identity, which Long and Spink (in ibid.: 95-107) explain in part by the "often accidental and sometimes circuitous route" of the emerging producer's career and, therefore, brand. The near impossibility in pinning down an exact formula for the producer's role and identity is not only unsatisfying but also enticing, not only for the academic but also, evidently, for the producer. Long and Spink depict a world of low-budget short-film production which cannot be described as an industry on account of it not making money, which leans on unpaid or deferred-payment labour, does not recognise traditional working hours and which, for many, is a lifestyle-enhancing addition to more sustaining but less self-determined or creative, paid work. Overall, these considered analyses do much to undermine the glamorous image of the powerful film producer.

Glamour is not something commonly attributed to the television producer. This may largely be due to the association of the television producer to the civil servant - situated between corporate management and operational production staff - keeping the wheels turning according to pre-ordained practices. As Tunstall (1993: 3-16) implies, and as is evident when reading any British public service broadcaster's production guidelines,[5] this aspect of the role is still important, and, since the late 20th Century, the producer is now, on the commercial side, far more likely to have greater responsibility for and visibility of not only production budgets but in the financial trajectory of the enterprise which she or he is deemed to lead; and on the creative side, not only oversight of the execution of the production but also its editorial compliance with regulatory standards.

Born's (2005) investigation into the management of the BBC provides useful insight of the development and perception of the role of the television producer. Traditionally, producers were perceived as doing the "real job" of the Corporation, supported and even cosseted by the administrative staff (ibid.: 65, 70) and at the same time as elitist competition between departments (producers' programmes and genres) was moderated institutionally, so was a divide between the creative cultural endeavours (and personalities) of the producers and the supportive work of the administrative teams. The cosseted parvenu producer sought ever greater cultural credibility with his or her peers and superiors through the appropriation of more highbrow content for the screen (ibid.: 86-87). Through the 1990s, however, changes to the fabric of broadcasting, through technological (for example, online broadcast services; semi-professional camcorders,) economic (for example, the squeezing of the television licence fee by the Conservative government) and social (for example, a growing awareness of diversity) developments led those same superiors to require of producers

a more outward-facing attitude with a greater focus on competitive metrics (for example, awards, audience ratings) (ibid.: 92-94). At the same time, the Corporation's producers moved from 'blank-cheque' production (effectively given a corporate credit card to fulfil their programme's creative requirements) to being given a specific budget, an associate producer to run the production and a production accountant to manage the money. This division of responsibility, rather than being perceived as managerial interfering gave, to the producer, greater resource to concentrate on the creative execution of the project (ibid.: 105). This was more akin to how independent production companies were structured, but BBC budgets were still subject to an opaque 15 per cent corporate overhead, departments were required to operate as financially sustainable "business-units" and budgets continued to be eroded (ibid.: 109). At the same time, the ascendant independent production companies, several established by former BBC in-house producers, were perceived as more progressive, successful and creatively exciting (ibid.: 133).

Tunstall's (1993) evaluation of the producer's role and position has significant resonances today. The publisher model, exemplified by Channel 4 and extended through the Independent Production Quota (both covered in further detail in the following two chapters,) has led to a more project-based economy for producers to work within. Tunstall's analogy of the producer becoming more like an actor and less like a civil servant (ibid.: 200) is prescient and the performance of the producer and his or her success as a vital element of his or her identity is evident in this thesis' case studies. The consideration of television genres as "private worlds" with limited mobility between them (ibid.: 201) is also evident. Tunstall's producer is less secure but more autonomous (ibid.: 202-203). As Tunstall notes, there is definitely a (quite lengthy) career-path for the emerging producer, with a tendency to start in very junior roles, from a variety of non-elite backgrounds (ibid.: 204-205), learning on-the-job and gaining seniority with age, experience and strategic moves between employer and, potentially, into ownership. The thesis considers this in relation to the concept of entrepreneurship, a post-1980s doxa. Particularly prescient to this thesis is the role of the producer as employer (ibid.: 206-207), both a creative leader and a manager of resources.

Küng (2008) goes some way to systematising these production processes, though sometimes conflates film and independent television production. Describing both as project-based (more true for film than for television, which combines persistent development, editorial and production management teams with project-based production crews), she identifies that a form of networked brokerage happens in the

assembly of the project teams and that independent production consists no longer of producers controlling "integrated factory", "traditionally-organised value-chains" but rather of "multinetwork value chains" comprised of freelance labour and independent producers (ibid.: 174). Drawing on the work of Davis and Scase (2000) and Starkey et al. (2000), Küng identifies that "media professionals" use "sophisticated developed social processes" to achieve strategic goals (ibid.: 175).

Zoellner (2009) considers the "negotiation of decision-making processes" in independent factual production and commissioning. The article investigates the socio-cultural nature of negotiating a deal between a producer and commissioning editor. This is revealed to be an often-confounding process for the producer with unclear success criteria. Zoellner considers the development of the programme proposal (which this thesis demonstrates can take up more of the independent producer's time and resource than making programmes themselves) and analyses the producer's agency in that process. As such, this article demonstrates how emotional labour and vocational commitment are at the heart of the independent producer's complex role and identity.

Paterson's *Early independent production entrepreneurs in UK television* (2017) is a longitudinal study based on questionnaires and diaries collected for the BFI's television industry tracking study (BFI, 1999 in ibid.: 2) between 1994 and 1998 from 450 creative workers in television, including 66 owners of independent production companies. These 66 comprise the focus of his article, which studies "the individual agency of these owner-entrepreneurs in relation to creative firm foundations and development" (ibid.). In particular, there is a focus on the tensions they faced in meeting their creative aspirations while adapting their business and management structures and processes to the market realities of oversupply and under-funding in the independent production marketplace, "within a regulatory regime which was initially established as a quasi-market to reap the supposed efficiency gains of free markets without affecting the beneficial structure of public service broadcasting" (Deakin et al., 2009 in ibid.: 3).

The critical importance of the broadcaster-independent relationship, mediated through the commissioning editor, was a concern then as it remains now (ibid.: 11). "We are dependent beings pawning ideas to those who have the largesse to give us work," said one producer. "They are paralysed by indecision and ignorance of how the independent sector works. Either that or they don't care," declared another (ibid.: 12). This led to "much more time [being spent] developing proposals, most of which are

never commissioned", with "90% of time spent developing projects, networking, pitching, etc. This is not the basis for a sound industry" (ibid.: 13).

His study also highlights the producer's' concerns over the increasing casualisation of the production workforce and the importance and difficulty of securing the required talent to make programmes. The contributors attested to the shrinking of their staff teams, "Since broadcasters understandably do not want to commit to companies – rather to projects" (ibid.: 13) and "Everyone else will be on contract […] The skilled freelancers will be in demand – great demand" (ibid.: 14). Without the ability to attract staff through higher salaries, independent companies would "have to offer other things – a congenial place to work and, most importantly, the chance to work for a company which takes quality seriously" (ibid.). This cultural response to a challenging economic circumstance is also evident throughout this thesis' case studies.

Paterson found that the producers' main strategic concerns were around their inability to grow their businesses without inward capital investment, and that their inability to retain rights to programme intellectual property was a hurdle to securing this. At the time, the solution to this was to seek acquisition or partnership with a distributor studio, which provided the capital investment, and through horizontal integration, which expanded companies' intellectual property portfolios (ibid.: 15). The *Communication Act*'s (2003) revision of the terms of trade between broadcasters and independents enshrined producers' rights in their IP in statute, which, Paterson claims, "deliberately rebalanced the relationship between program buyers (the broadcasters) and the sellers (the independent production companies), leading to investment in the sector" (ibid.:16).

Paterson's appraisal of these effects as the successful outcome of a regulatory (and ideological neoliberal) intervention (ibid.: 17) identifies a general trend in the television production marketplace, but it is significant that the producers in this thesis attest to the same challenges faced by Paterson's some twenty years earlier and that statutory interventions have done little to change lot of the independent producer.

2.4   Conclusion

Independent television production in the UK has had, for decades, significant pragmatic and discursive influences on broadcasting but it is under-analysed.

Through reviewing the available literature, one can begin to make assumptions about the state of contemporary independent television production and the independent

producer's position within that. It is certainly possible to ascertain the multi-scalar and intersectional nature of the factors which impact upon the organisation and deployment of independent television production, but these either elide or 'flatten out' and abstract the world of the independent television producer.

Production studies demand a shift in analytical focus away from "naive empiricism" (Banks et al., 2016, xi) to a recognition of "the tension between individuals' agency and the social conditions within which agency is embedded" (2016: x). Born (2000: 406) highlights the importance of "the labile moment of power and potential agency in cultural production" and argues that macro-level readings of power serve to "flatten out such agency as may on occasion exist" leading to what Frith (2000) describes as a "black-box" representation of organisations. As Banks states, "the voices of multiple people involved in media production give new insights into otherwise opaque industrial processes" (2016: xi). Caldwell adds, "film and media production practices cannot be easily separated from either the communities who manage them; or from the production cultures that constantly sanction and legitimize them" (Caldwell, J.T. in Banks et al. 2016: xviii).

The study of major television institutions is well-established (although the relative lack of academic interest in public-service broadcaster Channel 5 in comparison to the BBC and Channel 4 implies a hegemonic cultural preferentialism.) These provide a strategic view of the development of television broadcasting in the UK, which is the primary context and market in which the producers in this thesis operate. This context is imbued with pragmatic and ideological economic, cultural, social and, therefore, political drivers, from which the independent producer is not immune.

There is very little literature which allows us to consider the independent producer's agency as the business *and* creative leader of a production organisation and, therefore, his or her ability to author his or her contribution to a culturally-diverse range of programme-suppliers. What literature there is suggests that this agency is present but contingent on the wider context of UK broadcasting not only as a contested market but also as a site of cultural contestation. While the media-labour literature rightly presents the sites of creative work as compromised and challenging for the employee, there is an almost complete absence of studies of the employers in these contexts.

We are left with an unsatisfying level of consideration of the independent television producer's subjectivity and agency. This thesis seeks to address that. It takes many of the building-blocks of the above literature – a consideration of the history and current

state of 'independent broadcasting and production;' concern with the politicised spaces of media labour; an interest in the organisational dynamics and cultures that producers lead; and the manifestations of space in relation to television production.

The thesis combines these perspectives with a close focus on a selection of contemporary independent television producers. It analyses the role of the independent television producer in detail and in different organisational contexts; it considers in complex detail the emergence and management of specific production cultures; and, through doing so, it not only contributes much-needed analysis of a vital component of the UK's broadcasting landscape, but contributes new knowledge to the understanding of networks of production, the nature of creative brokerage and the complex dependencies that the independent television producer negotiates.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

The following chapter provides a historical context for the thesis but, rather than re-serving empirical narratives of the development of television institutions in the UK, it considers, specifically, the vital discursive mobilisation of the concept of independence across three significant sites: the birth of the Independent Television Authority; the origins of Channel 4; and the growth of what became known as the Independent Television production Sector.

This analysis is vital to the thesis and to the understanding of the contested nature of the term *independent* not only in British broadcasting, but to the understanding of the independent television producer, the contexts she or he works in and his or her own articulations of that independence.

3.0   Contexts 1: Historical

This chapter provides the historical context of the development of the discourse of 'independence' in the UK television production sector.

Central to this thesis is the question: "What does it mean to be independent?" Taken at face value, independence is an indicator of self-determination, of agency and, as such, a virtuous goal. Defining or identifying independence in practice, however, is difficult given the fact that agents exist in networks of interactions, transactions and, therefore, interdependencies. That independence is, to all intents and purposes, an ontological impossibility does not undermine its discursive power in a wide range of contexts across the political, economic and social spectrum.

In this chapter, four historical moments in which the discourse of independence shaped broadcasting in the United Kingdom are considered: The early years of the British Broadcasting Corporation, which secured its independence from political and commercial editorial control; the foundation of the Independent Television Authority, the UK's first commercial television broadcasting service; the foundation of Channel 4, which created a marketplace for independent production in the UK; and the subsequent emigration of formerly in-house producers into independent production.

The chapter aims neither to provide a full history of these and intervening events, nor to suggest a deterministic or historical materialist view of the development of a discourse, but to identify that while independence is an ontological impossibility, that this does not undermine its discursive influence and to foreground the contingent and varied interpretations of independence in British broadcasting.

3.1   The BBC between the Wars: Independence Within the Constitution

The original *Telegraph Act 1863* (26 & 27 Vict., chapter 112) gave the British Government the right to require any licensed communication company to "to transmit any Message on Her Majesty's Service [with] Priority over all other Messages [and] suspend the Transmission of all other Messages" (ibid.: sect. 48). The *Communications Act* (2003) makes a similar provision (ibid.: sect. 336). Given the legislation, that a politically-motivated take-over of British broadcasting has never occurred is significant. It is widely recognised that broadcasting has significant propaganda potential. In the case of British broadcasting, though, government propaganda has been resisted and balanced by the broadcast of opposing views.

Broadcasting in the UK re-mediates the range of the British political and constitutional milieu.

The 1925 Crawford Committee was charged with considering the future status of the British Broadcasting Company on the conclusion of its initial licence. Its recommendations broadly aligned with those of Sykes, recognising broadcasting's "ultimate impact on the education and temperament of the country" (Crawford, 1926: cl.2). No body constituted for the profit of its owners, it stated, was adequate in the emerging context (ibid.: cl.3) and "that the United States' system of free and uncontrolled transmission and reception, is unsuited to this country, and that broadcasting must accordingly remain a monopoly" (ibid.: cl.4). As Hilmes (2003) has argued, the differing American and British approaches to the regulation of broadcasting were epistemologically similar in that each was founded on local ideological representations of national culture. A *laissez-faire* market of free expression in broadcasting was as American as a culturally-conservative high-brow approach was British. Both were re-mediations of national culture, identity and interest.

Rather than being incorporated as a limited company or by Act of Parliament, the incorporation by the Crown of the BBC provided it with "all the powers of a natural person […] in the public interest" (Privy Council, n.d.). In effect, it allowed the BBC a freedom of speech, "independent yet […] within the constitution" (Briggs, 1961: 402). As noted in the Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport's *First Report* (2004), the Parliamentary Privy Council retains "significant aspects of the control of [the Corporation's] internal affairs," which "effectively means a significant degree of Government regulation of the affairs of the body" (ibid.: para. 229). On the other hand, "The independence of the BBC is explicitly defined and guaranteed by the first substantive clause of the Agreement with the Secretary of State[6] (ibid.: para. 230). Given this tension, the Committee suggested that

> the prestige … associated with the Royal Charter … has been regarded as contributing to the BBC's effective independence from Government and, indeed, from Parliament. That this belief in independence appears to function, in part, on an emotional level is not to decry it (ibid.: para. 231).

This equivocation on the nature of the BBC's independence reveals both its indefinability and a political reticence to interfere too directly with the Corporation.

Ian Fraser, M.P., a former member of the Crawford Committee, in a *Radio Times* article on the eve of the BBC's incorporation, stated:

> I wonder if there is some subconscious thought of self-defence behind this reticence - a perfectly natural feeling that this vastly powerful agency, capable of reaching homes which newspapers seldom enter, and capable of forcing itself into all homes, may be a young and dangerous rival (*Radio Times*, 1926b: 1).

While this may have been, and may remain, the case, the independence of the BBC remains in the gift of the State, and that its continuance is not only predicated on the State's reticence to intervene, but also on the Corporation's self-regulation, compromise and concession.

The form that the independence of the BBC took, under Reith, was based on his desire to create a source of trustworthy information and broadly enlightening entertainment for an audience which was perceived to be in the majority mainstream, the middle-classes. His aim was that the Corporation would not be partisan as was the press and politics, but impartial. As such, in representing both sides of any political divide, the Corporation would always have its supporters and detractors, although it is notable that it was and remains typically the political Right, given its interests in deregulated press and broadcasting, that provides the louder critical voice, while the Corporation continues to resist or suffer continuing politically-imposed financial pressure. In the context of this thesis, the BBC is the antithesis of independent, being a publicly-funded producer-broadcaster, but its resilience and commitment to self-determination are fundamental characteristics of the nature of broadcasting in the UK which have been influential across the sector.

3.2   The Independent Television Authority: A skunk by any other name

From its inception, there were tensions between the commercial and social interests which drove the development of broadcasting. "[T]here is a lot of money in this business," noted ex-Postmaster General Hasting Lees-Smith (Labour,) reflecting on the commercial exploitation of bandwidth by "pirate" radio stations (Parliament. House of Commons, 1936: col. 961). "It is not," he said, "a question of private enterprise versus socialism," as broadcasting was already a "public concern," but whether to appropriate into the State-licenced system companies "working on the basis of ordinary commercial enterprise" (ibid.: col. 962). After the war, however, commercial pressure groups were calling for access to the television-broadcasting spectrum.

In 1951, the second Beveridge Report, that of *The Broadcasting Committee, 1949*, advocated the on-going monopoly of the BBC, citing the power of broadcasting as propaganda and the difficulty in managing power-relations between multiple

corporations as risks. But, when Churchill's Conservative Party was re-elected later that year, it was the minority report of Conservative MP Selwyn Lloyd that grew in momentum. Lloyd favoured a mixed economy of British broadcasting, with the BBC continuing as the sole radio broadcaster, television overseen by an external commission, a British Television Corporation and a small number of commercial radio and television stations (Terramedia, 2006).

As described by Wilson (1961), a small number of Conservative members formed the Broadcasting Study Group in order to promote the interests of those in the House with a stake in commercial broadcasting through their professional affiliations with manufacturers and advertising bodies. The group retained a relatively low profile in order that the largely un-organised supporters of the status-quo, on both right and left, might not form a coherent defence of their arguments until they were put before the Cabinet and the influential Conservative 1922 Committee in a report entitled, *The Future of British Broadcasting* (1952). The report, while offering tribute to the early achievements of the BBC, focused on the dangers of a monopolised system and the ways in which a commercial national network could defend the national message from overseas commercial stations. This effort resulted in the inclusion of a key phrase in the 1952 *White Paper on Broadcasting Policy* (General Post Office, 1952), which recognised that, while

> the effective monopoly [of the BBC] has done much to establish the excellent and reputable broadcasting service for which this country is renowned[,] … in the expanding field of television provision should be made to permit *some element of competition* [Emphasis added] (Parliament. House of Commons, 1952: col. 1295).

Lord Simon of Wythenshawe, Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors from 1947-52, agreed that a new corporation, while editorially independent of the Government and the programme suppliers, would ultimately be beholden to commercial drivers, suggesting, "He who controls the pocket book controls the broadcast" (ibid.: col. 543). Hare agreed that public and commercial interests were incompatible and that a new independent *public* corporation would exclude the "likelihood of a debasement of standards" (ibid.: col. 662).

Lord Chancellor, Gavin Simonds, announced that the new corporation would "be expected to give opportunities to a number of independent companies" (Parliament. House of Lords, 1953b: col.680). Conservative Peer Robert Gascoyne-Cecil provided detail on who these independent suppliers might be.

> [T]he bodies who provide the programmes will not be the advertisers … they will be independent companies. … indeed, to my mind it would be much more accurate to describe this proposal as 'competitive television' than as 'commercial television' (ibid.: cols.732-3).

When the *Television Bill* was presented to Commons in 1954, it proposed the formation of the *Independent Television Authority*. Sendall recounts the meeting of Mark Chapman-Walker, head of the Conservative radio and television department, and (according to Crisell, disgruntled (1997: 91)) ex-head of BBC Television Norman Collins: "'Mark and I met at the reform Club to see if we could give shape to Mark's idea of the Governmental agency. I suggested we could match an *Authority* against the BBC's *Corporation*, and I further suggested that it should be called the Independent Television Authority'" (1982: 32).[7] Crisell suggests that "'independent' became a handy euphemism for 'commercial', which had connotations of greed and vulgarity" (1997: 91).

Herbert Williams (Conservative) did "not mind if it is a commercial authority instead of an independent authority," asking,

> Of what would it be independent in any case? […] I do not possess a television set and what I have seen on other people's sets has not interested me very much. But let us have some competition and the opportunity for the exercise of some imagination (Parliament. House of Commons, 1954a: col.210).

Edward Shackleton (Labour), moved the amendment to replace in the Bill the word "Independent" with "Commercial". Gilbert Mitchison (Labour) agreed,

> '[A] rose, by any other name would smell as sweet.' And, of course, a skunk by any name still smells as nasty and we do not alter its nature or its smell by calling it an independent racoon. […] I hope the Home Secretary will rise to a higher sphere and call a skunk a skunk and his Authority 'Commercial' and not 'Independent.' (ibid.: cols.253-6).

The main concern was not exactly that programmes would be funded by advertising, but that, in order to deliver viewers to the advertising, the programming would need to be only of the most popular variety, with the insinuation of a lowering of general standards - an argument, again, based upon taste and class-perceptions. Patrick Gordon Walker (Labour), while agreeing that the term 'independent' was a "calm, smooth and mis-leading" smokescreen to "conceal the fact that its programmes will be dependent on advertising revenue" (ibid.: col.259), was more concerned that calling a new authority independent, would imply that the BBC was not:

> By implying in this Bill that the B.B.C. is in some way less independent than this other body, the Government will be aiding the enemies of the B.B.C. who are trying to spread that idea abroad (ibid.: col.258).

Maxwell-Fyfe, concluding the lengthy debate, disagreed:

> Our primary intention is to do two things: first, to give the people an alternative programme, and secondly, to see that that alternative programme is given by a body which is independent of the existing monopoly. That is our primary purpose. That is why we attach importance to independence (ibid.: col.284).

The question was finally put to the House that the word "Independent" stay part of the Clause and the House divided, the Ayes prevailing by Government majority - a division along party lines. Numerous subsequent opposition amendments were not enough to delay the passing of the Bill beyond the 1954 Parliamentary session nor the foundation of the Authority until after the General Election of 1955. The Bill was given assent on the 30th July of that year (Parliament. House of Commons, 1954c) and the Independent Television Authority formed a few days later. The 'commercial break' in which advertising is shown remains in-place today.[8] It at once delineates the separation of editorial programme interests from commercial ones while, at the same time, highlighting the symbiotic relationship between broadcasting and commerce introduced to the UK by the *Television Act 1954* (2 & 3 Eliz. 2, chapter 55).

While the earlier (Parliament. House of Commons, 1954a) debate on the semantics of the new Authority's independence had an air of frivolity congruent with the meaninglessness of the term, in November (Parliament. House of Commons, 1954d), the initial constitution of the ITA and its suppliers caused greater concern to the opposition. While the BBC had provided an independent alternative voice to the press, Rothermere (*Daily Mail*) and Kemsley (*Daily Telegraph, Sunday Times, Reuters*) both won bids to supply the ITA through, respectively, Broadcast Relay Services (to become Associated Rediffusion) and Kemsley-Winnick Television. The third contract, Manchester-based Granada Television was awarded to Labour Party member and cinema circuit owner Sidney Bernstein while the fourth went to Associated Broadcasting Development Company, which became Associated Television (ATV) under Norman Collins, theatre owner Prince Littler and show-business agent Lew Grade (Briggs, 1995; Sendall, 1982). While the Left claimed a political bias in the appointments, it is difficult to identify this with any clarity. What is evident, however, is that, rather than giving opportunity to the small entrepreneurial businessman championed publicly by the Conservatives, the creation of the ITA provided a new playing-field for established press barons, impresarios, agents and broadcasting executives to create new partnerships and enterprises. The withdrawal of Kemsley from, and subsequent dissolution of, Kemsley-Winnick Television highlights the precarious nature of commercially-funded television, carrying, along with its potential for high reward, a commensurate level of financial risk. The gap in the market was filled

by cinema-owners Associated British Picture Corporation trading as subsidiary ABC Weekend TV (also known as ABC Television and Associated British Corporation) (ibid.). While the companies were new formations, they were based on established concerns in publishing and entertainment.

Being a publicly funded corporation, the BBC's board and executive, while bringing significant social and cultural capital to the organisation, did not bring with them capital resources nor established entertainment networks. Indeed, as the UK's first broadcasting enterprise, the practices of broadcasting were developed on the job. The 1954 entrants to the British broadcasting sphere were significantly different in that they brought with them established commercial entertainment networks and established knowledge, both as individuals and through their wider networks. While the BBC's governance, executive and production networks drew on the social and cultural capital of industrialists, politicians and communicators, developing modes of implementing broadcasting iteratively, commerce, mass entertainment and entrepreneurialism were incipient in the ITA's network. This ability of broadcasters to draw widely on capital and cultural resources and to mobilise the networks which facilitate their flow, with a commensurate adding of economic and cultural value, while a novel way of implementing broadcasting in the 1950s has become a fundamental characteristic of independence in British broadcasting.

3.3   Channel 4: A free market of ideas

The report of the Pilkington Committee on Broadcasting in 1962 declared that it was "impossible [to] fully reconcile the commercial purpose of the [ITV] companies with the realisation of the 'purposes of broadcasting'" (General Post Office, 1962: 3). It proposed that the funding and commissioning of programmes, through the selling of advertising space, would be the sole remit of the ITA, with the programme suppliers doing just that, separating the commercial from the editorial aspects of broadcasting. The second *Draft White Paper on Broadcasting and Television* proposed, "a genuine system of 'free trade' in programmes" (General Post Office, 1962: 4). Behind this was an opinion that programme quality may benefit from an alternative to the main commercial programme, with alternative suppliers. The new service, suggested the ITA, should be ITV2, a service to complement the existing one. Its self-defensive proposal was that ITV would be "freer to explore what can be offered by independent programme makers; and to act as patrons to [them]" (ITA, 1971: 11(x)). "If the second service is not to be rag-bag," it suggested, then the ITV companies would continue to produce the majority of programmes as, "[t]here are dangers of amateurishness in production and difficulties in incorporating such programmes in a national television

service without sacrificing impartiality and editorial control" (ibid.: 26). The ITA's consultation on its proposal was a closed-shop, including only the ITV companies and their associated trade unions - hardly representative of a move toward a more open market in broadcasting. Christopher Chataway, the Minister for Posts and Telecommunications, declared,

> the ITA proposals are … opposed by the advertising industry and by many of our own supporters, who want a competing rather than complementary second ITV service [… W]e have decided … [n]ot to allocate frequency channels for the fourth programme (Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, 1972: 1-2).

The Annan Committee on the Future of Broadcasting focused debate around the implementation of a second commercial service. On one side were the ITV companies, favouring a 30 per-cent quota of independent productions, "thereby letting in a great deal of new endeavour, a new blood;" on the other, the intellectual Left, "who formed the concept of a publishing house"[9] (Hobson, 2008: 4). Resistance to the dominant structures of broadcasting had its roots in the late 1960s, when two groups in particular, the Free Communications Group, which was critical of the "proprietors, shareholders, professional communicators and Boards of Governors" who shaped the content and conduct of television (Darlow, 2004: 34-35) and the 76 Group, who thought the ITA "too feeble to influence programme policy" yet the BBC "over centralised and bureaucratic" (ibid.: 71). Both groups felt that the structures of television were undemocratic. Although both of these groups had ceased to exist by the time of the Annan debates, their basic tenets were held by a group of academics and trade unionists known as the Standing Conference on Broadcasting (SCOB), who wished to see significant reform of both the BBC and the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA)[10] (ibid.: 146). Anthony Smith (a former BBC current affairs producer,) having split with SCOB, suggested that a National Television Foundation, run independently of the BBC and IBA could,

> counter 'a widely shared feeling that British broadcasting is run like a highly restricted club - managed exclusively by broadcasters according to their own criteria of what counts as good television and radio'" (ibid.).

Darlow says three groups were significant in the subsequent debate: The left-wing Independent Filmmakers Association (IFA) who, "although suspicious of television," felt that a fourth channel, if structured differently from the existing ones, could provide both an outlet and source of revenue for their members' work (ibid.: 162); the Association of Directors and Producers (ADP), headed by Thames staff-worker and Association of Cinematograph and Television Technicians[11] member, David Elstein, demanded an improved level of income and regularity of work for freelancers and the rights of

producers and directors to 'residuals,'[12] and the Association of Independent Producers (AIP), all "eager producers or would be producers" who aspired to producing small to medium-sized budget films for "dual release in the cinemas and on television" (ibid.: 166-7).

Annan reported in 1977 and recommended that the fourth service would be administered by the Open Broadcasting Authority (OBA), an "independent 'Foundation' operating as a publishing outlet for programmes supplied by independent producers, individual ITV companies and the Open University." (*Daily Telegraph*, 25 March 1977 in James, 1997: 61). Freedman suggests that it was a "neat compromise package," satisfying Labour radicals with its plurality while not antagonising its commercial "foes" (2003: 104). Labour, however, did not enact the proposals, later losing the 1979 General Election and thus leaving the matter to Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government.

The ultimate policy decision was that the IBA, extending its remit, would be responsible for the new channel. Jeremy Isaac's MacTaggart Lecture at the 1979 Edinburgh Television Festival was both an attempt to influence the new service, which he referred to as 'ITV2', and also, in effect, an application to be its Controller (Chief Executive as it, and he, would become). According to Darlow, he, "enjoyed a charismatic reputation [with a] commitment to courageous journalism, innovative programme making and [a] consistent defence of programme makers" (2004: 213). His speech called for the proposed channel to extend the choice of programmes, to cater for substantial minorities and to encourage "worthwhile independent production" (Isaacs, 1979: 66). Isaacs' model was a mix of commercialism, plurality, regulation and creative freedom. He said:

> Up to now, independent producers have had a raw deal - but for a harsh and simple reason: no one needed what they had to offer. … But the fourth channel will suck into television a new influx of programme-makers: the BBC will lose some good people. I wish independent producers well. I hope they make a good living. I hope they will not all be in it only for the money. They will have to offer to ITV 2 the sort of programmes, in all price ranges, that ITV 2 needs. I see no reason why they should not offer programmes also to the BBC and to ITV 1 either on a wholly independent basis, or as co-production (ibid.: 67).

Anthony Smith's Channel 4 Group, formed in 1978 from representatives of the IFA, ADP and AIP, were in support of Annan's OBA (Darlow, 2004: 184) but another lobby to the IBA and Home Office was made by a group of more established independent drama producers. It described the plans of the Channel 4 Group as "'pie-in-the-sky'" and claimed that the focus on new voices and new ideas, "belittled their ideas and their

work," threatening to trap them within the restrictive confines of the first commercial channel, where "their boldest and most innovative programme ideas were not being accommodated" (ibid.: 219-220). As such, the independent production lobby was not of a single voice but, rather, a differentiated patchwork of groups representing the interests of cultural plurality, innovation and quality over commerce.

The incoming Conservative Government's interests, however, were economic. Keith Joseph, leader of the Conservative think-tank, the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS), was arguably the person who introduced into British politics the future structure of the independent production sector. Darlow describes Joseph's, and thence Thatcher's, neo-liberal philosophy as a "commitment to self-reliance, the freedom of the individual and the removal of obstacles to the success of small businesses" (ibid.: 186). Udi Eichler, a documentary and current affairs producer at Thames Television, was a supporter of the Channel 4 Group and a member of the CPS, to whom he invited Smith to speak. Eichler introduced Smith to Joseph who was impressed by Smith's assertion that a channel set up under a publisher model would create opportunities for new entrepreneur-producers (ibid.: 186-7). Brown describes how Smith, having read the Conservative manifesto, "in particular the section on encouraging small businesses and the thirst for enterprise," realised that the independents "could rebrand themselves as part of the solution - a 'free market in ideas'" (2007: 18). Joseph arranged a further meeting, with Shadow Home Secretary William Whitelaw.

Following the Conservative election victory, Whitelaw's speech to the Royal Television Society in September 1979 very closely mirrored Isaacs' MacTaggart Lecture but went further, declaring that the new channel, Channel 4, would not produce *any* of its own programmes but commission them variously from ITV companies and independent producers (Brown, 2007: 26). Brown notes the moment of synthesis, a turn for the radical left of the independent sector…

> Whitelaw's visionary decision would begin a process of transformation that is still in progress, by creating an outlet focused on commissioning programmes. Anthony Smith would later reflect: 'it is the only dialectical force in history that has taken a group of left-wing radical intellectuals and turned them into businessmen' [Anthony Smith in interview, November 2006] (ibid.).

Smith's depiction of this as a turnover is debatable, and a varied balancing of cultural and commercial interests runs through the case studies in this thesis and other analyses of broadcasting and the creative industries. The significance of the publishing model, however, was that an independent production sector was now *required* in order to supply, at least in part, a broadcaster. This could have been a straightforward

expansion and opening of the existing television marketplace, but the Channel Four Television Company, through its film and television operations, changed both the ways in which broadcaster studios worked with producers and the type of content they developed. For a short time, under Isaacs, the Channel was said to represent the views of the Left. It supported the established independent filmmakers and stood by its earlier promise to publish film to both TV and cinema screens. It established the Independent Film and Video Department, running workshops and supporting community-based production houses in bringing new previously unheard ideas and talent to the screen. It stimulated the migration of 'creatives' from ITV and the BBC to set up their own independent production companies and, in doing so, opened the closed-shop of television production to new talent. But it was not without its critics. In 1988, the Broadcasting Research Unit produced a report, *Keeping Faith* (Docherty et al., 1988), on the Channel's early years. The report accused the Channel of working to "narrow agenda, being the showcase for a dated 1960s' mindset by which personal and sexual politics took precedence over engaging with hard-edged Thatcherism" (Brown, 2007: 125). The kind of independence that Isaacs was promoting through the Channel was unashamedly political, providing the opposition to the Conservative government that, he said, Labour had failed to do (ibid). But Edmund Dell, the founding Chairman of the Channel, suggests an ideological turn in those producers who went on to establish their own companies, who

> found in managing them a new experience which influenced their outlook on life … Some commissioning editors at Channel 4 also began to appreciate, as the 1980s progressed, that there were political ideas other than left-wing ideas (Dell, 1999: 12).

Isaacs' and Dell's complementary perspectives on the purposes, nature and implementation of broadcasting and independent production at the emergence of what is conventionally regarded as the Independent Production Sector illustrate the seemingly conflicting but, in practice, often colluding and compacted priorities that the contemporary independent producer embodies. These contradicting forces were fundamental to the upheavals to the organisation of production that were to follow.

3.4   Independent Production: The conception of a sector

Independent television producers as we might refer to them now existed before the establishment of Channel 4 and the sector that has grown subsequently. Since the late 1960s, there have been producers in the UK, the US and Europe supplying broadcasters across international boundaries and with business-focused practices that

we would today associate with the "indie" sector but who were not referred to as independent producers nor, indeed, credited on-screen (Potter, 2008: 2; *Soho Stories*, 2009a). These companies, such as Gerry Anderson's AP Films (later Century 21), Beryl Vertue's Associated London Scripts[13] and David Frost's Paradine Productions were notably absent from the lobbying groups who sought to change broadcasting in the UK in the 1970s as they already had established deals with both UK and overseas broadcasters. These producers were not creatively or socially radical - their programmes had broad audience appeal in a number of markets both domestically and overseas. They were quietly independent.

The early literature around Channel 4 and independent production highlights their combined potential for social impact (Lambert, 1982: 163); focuses on the opposing interests pitched against and together with one another (Bonner & Aston, 2003; Catterall, 1999; Darlow, 2004[14]); and reveals affinity for the "quirky," "very British" (Brown, 2007: 328) Channel which "continues to evoke both affection and exasperation" (Hobson, 2008: 208). Channel 4 was not born quietly. The story told is one of radicals banging on the doors of the establishment.

What followed, according to the literature, was a chaotic period in which commissioning editors (a role invented by Channel 4's television executives) secured content and created schedules that were unlike anything that the British viewing public had seen before. It is recognised that some of this content was not of the production standard that had come to be expected, and there was a high level of controversy regarding political bias and accepted standards of taste and decency (see Isaacs' account of Conservative Norman Tebbit's concern that the counter-cultural programming of the Channel was not the "Golf and sailing and fishing," anticipated by Parliament (Lee, 2018: 36) but there was a general sense of excitement about and approval of the independent offer.

There is little literature on the commissioning editor, who is, for the independent producer, the primary gatekeeper. What there is focuses on Channel 4's original team. Michael Kustow, Arts Commissioning Editor, provides his autobiographic reflections (1987); Alan Fountain, Commissioning Editor for Independent Film and Video, is interviewed by Dowmunt (2007); and Mayne (2012) interviews the first Head of Fiction, David Rose. Hobson's history of the early years of the Channel identified that the creation of the role meant that
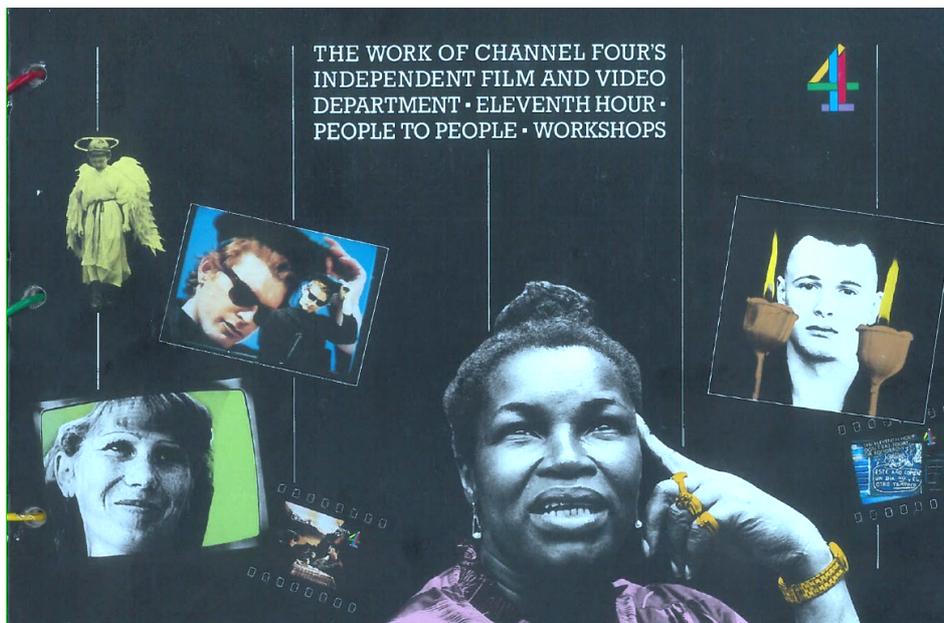
> producers and directors who normally have a major role in the creation of the
> atmosphere of a television company, [were] being put in the position of visitors,

waiting to be taken up to meet the commissioning editors who held the money and the editorial control over their future and future programme making opportunities (2008: 19).

This is the strongest indication of a change in cultures of production. Resourced and left to his or her own devices within a broadcaster, this argument runs, the producer is in greater control, albeit under the distant oversight of a department head. In comparison to the dominant in-house production model, the publishing model displaced control over production outwardly. The commissioning editor became the gatekeeper of opportunity for the producer - "a rung on the ladders to both heaven and hell" (ibid.: 53).

I argue in this thesis that cultures of production, with or without the intentional intervention of the producer, emerge around the producer and the organisation she or he constructs. A further tension in the role of the commissioning editor comes from the observation that many do not come from production backgrounds. Channel 4 employed, "a very varied group of people and rather different from the type of people who were normally in control at television companies." Many had no preproduction or commissioning experience but "what they did have were views and opinions about the potential for change in British television" (ibid.: 55). The commissioning editor, as well as being a gatekeeper, is also a cheerleader for his or her programmes and programme-makers. "Fiercely defensive of their programmes they would argue and support the work of their independent producers and their own commissioning decisions" (ibid.: 57), says Hobson because, of course, their own careers depended on the success of those decisions. This is picked up by the contributor to the fourth case study, himself a former commissioning editor. While the producer may be pivotal in the emergence of his or her team's organisational culture, the make-up of the commissioning editor population has a significant impact on the cultural output of television, and therefore the market of television. "It was to remain to a large extent," says Hobson, "the ideas of the commissioning editors and in particular Jeremy Isaacs which determined the shape of Channel 4's schedule" (ibid.: 54).

The emerging independent production model was extremely precarious, based, as it was, largely on one-off (rather than series) commissions (Lee, 2018: 40). However, the establishment of Channel 4's Independent Film and Video Department (figure 1) did much to pluralise, regionalise and open access to production and there were experiments in television form and technology in more mainstream entertainment genres, such as *Max Headroom* (Chrysalis, 1985; Chrysalis/Lakeside, Lorimar Productions, 1987-1988) and *Network 7* (Sunday Productions, 1987-1988).

Figure 1.: Channel Four Independent Film and Video Workshop productions (Channel Four Television, 1986).

The organised chaos of Channel 4 was in contrast to the relative immobility of the established broadcasters. The BBC did not suffer exceptional Conservative political intervention through the 1980s, despite some flack over left-wing bias and its coverage of the Falklands and Northern Ireland crises and the right-wing press' (led by Murdoch's News Corporation) demands for its entry into the free market to compete unsubsidised (i.e. without or with a reduced licence fee revenue) with satellite and independent companies (Goodwin, 1998: 74-75). However, the pinning of the Licence Fee to the Retail Prices Index, a real-terms squeeze on the Corporation's income, together with the appointment of a more Conservative-friendly senior team, including anti-trade union newspaper publisher Marmaduke Hussey as Chairman; BBC

accountant Michael Checkland as Director General; and LWT executive John Birt as his deputy and Head of News and Current Affairs, served to exert an organisational shift in the running of the Corporation. The BBC was not pushed so much as inexorably drawn toward a more accountable model (ibid.: 126-7). *Producer Choice* required that, from 1993, the BBC's productions would operate with financial (rather than time and resource) budgets and that its resource departments would be funded solely through the sale of their services. BBC producers could outsource production services and BBC Resources could offer production services to non-BBC productions (ibid.: 128). The restructuring, alongside independent producers' enhanced access to the BBCs commissioning heads, in order for the BBC to meet the independent production quota introduced in the *Broadcasting Act* (1990), served to expose in-house producers both to the structural limitations of the BBC and to the comparative attractions of independent production.

The freedom from the managerialism of the major broadcasters, along with the potential for financial reward exceeding broadcasters' salaries, influenced the perception of independent production by in-house producers. As Born noted at the BBC,

> 'Independent' was conflated both with 'entrepreneurialism', a term condensing the ideology of heroic, risk-taking, inventive business, and with 'innovation' [while] entrepreneurialism was conflated with creativity itself (Born, 2005: 149).

"Increasingly," says Born, "admiration was reserved for the indie trailblazers." Born describes the subsequent "vicious circle" of the pull-factor of the independent production quota and the push-factor of Producer Choice which all but eviscerated some BBC production departments. If BBC producers were going to deal with change and uncertainty, they may as well do so "hanging out in Soho" with higher earnings and more highly-valued talent. (2005: 133-4).

Almost all of the independent producers in Tunstall's (1993) study had been previously employed by the BBC or one of the ITV companies, citing blocked in-house careers, the opportunity to develop into other genres, and the ability to explore different production models as motivating their move from in-house to independent production. Some had taken golden-handshake redundancy packages while others had been allowed to take their formerly in-house intellectual property to exploit independently (ibid.: 163). Peter Bazalgette, a former BBC producer and creator of *Food and Drink* (Bazal, 1982-2015) and then freelance producer via his company Bazal, was handed

that programme to produce for the BBC as an independent deal (Mair et al., 2016: 186; *Soho Stories*, 2009b).

The 1980s and 90s saw hundreds of independent production companies spring up and almost as many disappear. "I'm looking forward to seeing the sort of masochists who actually try and make money out of television," declared businessman Sir John Harvey-Jones, in *Troubleshooter: On the treadmill* (1993: 1'17"), a film screened at the 1993 Edinburgh International Television Festival, in which he coined a popular perception of independent production and producers:

> The TV business is not a business. It is almost exclusively a lifestyle business. [Most are] in it for the lifestyle, for the kicks, for the love of the game, rather than being businessmen as such (17'19").

The film, according to Bazalgette, "galvanised a small number of us to start plotting how we could turn the tables," prompted by Harvey-Jones' former chairmanship of Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) and that company's success through the exploitation not of services but patents, a business model which attracted investment and facilitated growth (*Soho Stories*, 2009b). The development of formats, their sale into multiple territories and the exploitation of ancillary rights (such as licensed merchandise and music) became a business model for many independents.

Alongside this divergence from in-house production came concurrent convergence. At the same time as the BBC was divesting its production portfolio, the ITV companies were consolidating, ultimately to become ITV PLC in 2004, and independent companies were merging and vertically-integrating into international production and distribution groups. These responses to the risk inherent in independence were key characteristics of the organisation of the business of independent production in the 2000s.

In the 1980s and 1990s (see Lee, 2018; Potter, 2008: 2) the term 'independent' was central in the direct market interventions that strengthened not the cultural but the economic position of independent production. Through the *Broadcasting Act*'s (1990) introduction of Independent Production Quotas, and the *Communications Act*'s (2003) terms of trade, it is said that the independent sector grew from a "cottage-industry" of "lifestyle" concerns to a "sector" of "businesses" (for example, Lee, 2018; Potter, 2008: 220) with a combined turnover of over £3 billion. Independent producers, according to the trade press, became players in the globalised free-market (for example, Parker, 2012; 2014).

3.5   Conclusion: The Necessary Imaginary of Independence in British Broadcasting

The four moments considered above each offer a different example of the employment of the discourse of independence in British broadcasting. In terms of the structuring of broadcasting, the first moment provided broadcasting with independence from direct State editorialising, while containing regulation, broadcasting and programme-making broadly in the same body. The second separated the regulator from the broadcaster-programme-maker. The third separated regulator, broadcaster and programme-maker. These structural adaptations, though, serve more discursive ends. In the first, independence was depicted as representative of national identity, resilience and pragmatism. In the second, while 'independent' may have been a calming and meaningless smokescreen to temper the concerns of those opposed to unfettered commercialism, it also recognised that the BBC, in its collusion with the State, was a broadcasting monoculture and that commercialism could sit, albeit uncomfortably, beside socialism in broadcasting. 'Independent' was no-less euphemistically used in the Channel 4 case, to mean freelance, disenfranchised or radical, then, later, flipped to mean entrepreneurial - outside of the state and monopolies, but *in* on the new political economics of neo-liberalism. This redeployment of the term was completed as the progressive *modus-operandi* of the early Channel 4 and independent production became subsumed into the dominant economic model.

Independence in each of these cases, initially, evoked its Establishment counterpart. Independence provided a discursive motivator for the *alternative*. In each case, though, the independence which existed initially in the utopian ideal, in practice became compromised by, compliant with, or helped create a new Establishment.

As will be discussed elsewhere in the thesis, and as was highlighted earlier in this chapter, independence, however difficult it is to define, functions very effectively on an emotional level. The following chapter discusses the discursive use of the term 'independent' in the contemporary context of television production in the UK. In particular, it is concerned with institutional, statutory and geo-political mobilisation of the term.

4.0   Contexts 2: Contemporary

This chapter places Independent TV Production in the UK in a contemporary economic and political context, continuing the work of the previous chapter in setting the ground for the case studies of individual contemporary production companies.

The Independent Production Sector (capitalised intentionally), I argue here, should be seen as an economically-framed discursive construct rather than an actual thing that one can go out and find. The evidence I consider through this thesis leads me to argue here that there is an independent television production economy and that there are television producers whose operations are informed by this context. This recognises that interventions in the television marketplace and free-market forces that television production in the UK was subsequently exposed to have led to the organisation of production in the UK being different now to how it was predominantly organised before the 1980s. Independent production, therefore, can be considered as a particular set of ways of approaching the activities involved in developing, creating and exploiting television programme content and intellectual property.

Bennett (2014: 1-30) argues that media independence, rather than an ontological state, is a utopian discourse with socio-political, aesthetic, industrial and rhetorical facets. To varying degrees, and as I indicated in the previous chapter, each of these facets applies to independent television production in the UK. There has emerged, however, a dominant economic discourse around independent production in the UK. Rooted in quantitative sectoral analyses of national industrial productivity, the way in which this data is mobilised serves ends which are less concerned with accounting and more with global neoliberal capital and influence. Working practices and cultures are subsumed into the doxa and dogma of entrepreneurialism, success and growth. This chapter highlights the ideological construction and appropriation of independent television production by an economic hegemony.

4.1   Policy Frameworks and Independent Production

This section considers how and why the creative industries sector is defined at a national statutory level. Following a brief overview of the definition of economic sectors in UK law, it focuses, in particular, on the UK's Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport's (DCMS) working definitions. Economic analysis, it is shown, is unreliable as empirical evidence of cultural activity at anything but the broadest national level yet is employed to justify discursive behaviours and positions within fields of soft power. As

such, economic methodologies and language act as gateway tools for macro-scale cultural discourse.

'Sector' is an economic term referring to areas of activity in the circulation of raw resources into distributive capital. Each sector is a macro-level classification containing a vast array of sub-categories. In the UK, the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) system was introduced in 1948 to facilitate the collection, analysis and distribution of economic data and to promote uniformity in doing so (Office for National Statistics, 2009). Television Programme Production Activities have the classification SIC 59.11/3 and are distinct, for example, from post-production and distribution, from casting and from film or video. This level of classification (typically only to four digits, or levels of sub-category) allows for statistical data at a national-scale to be collated, such as in the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (Office for National Statistics, 2018). This data can be mobilised in the interests of macro-level reporting and intervention, such as in the quantification and publication of gender pay gaps (see ibid.: Table 16.12 Gender pay gap 2018.xls). It does not, however, have a resolution of detail that differentiates between contrasting organisational structures. Vertically and horizontally integrated companies, whereby different areas of activity are undertaken by a company - such as production, distribution and advertising; or broadcasting and publishing - are identified only by the specific area of activity which generates its largest Gross Value Added (GVA) and thereby have only a single SIC code (Office for National Statistics, 2009: 13-15). This gives rise to further anomalies. Production activities (SIC 5911) are distinguished from television programming and broadcasting activities (SIC 6020). Channel 5 and British Sky Broadcasting both have the SIC 59113 code (Television Production) (Companies House, 2019a), while the BBC does not, as a Royal Charter company, have any Standard Industrial Classification. Nor is any distinction made between the largest vertically or horizontally integrated company and the lifestyle-business operating from a kitchen table.

Government departments interpret this data to inform policy and to report on the performance of the activities falling under their remit. The DCMS's remit, for example, covers eight "sectors": Civil society; creative industries; cultural sector; digital sector; gambling; sport; telecoms and tourism (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 2019). Television production and broadcasting, along with film, music and radio, sit at an overlap of three of these sectors (figure 2), while also falling within the Audio-Visual sector, an aggregation of ten UK SICs, which aligns DCMS data with the European Union's Audio-Visual Media Services Directive (AVMS) (ibid.: 9). Statistically

identifying the independent television production sector within these convolutions is, at best, problematic.
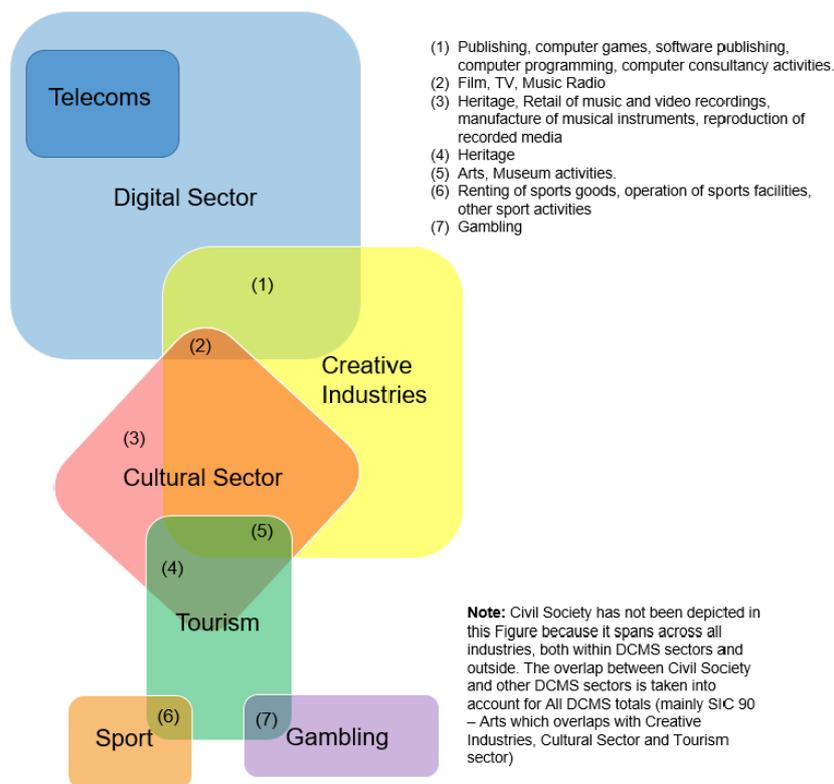
Figure 2: Overlap of SIC codes within DCMS Sectors (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 2019: 6).

The data collected under the DCMS' sectoral headings is used to report on the performance of that part of the national economy charged to the Department's oversight and to frame Departmental spending in each area.

Official reporting on cultural activity, such as that provided by the DCMS and British Council, employs economic performance as a framing device. This practice pervades both statutory documents and public events. For example, then Secretary of State for DCMS, Jeremy Wright QC's *Value of Culture* speech (Wright, 2019), following Coventry being named UK City of Culture 2021, highlights the economic benefits of that award to the city in local income and jobs. The speech stated that the cultural and creative industries contributed £100 billion to the UK economy in 2017; that investment in cultural projects will create jobs and training opportunities; and that the "UK creative and cultural sectors export 27 billion pounds worth of services to the rest of the world" (ibid.). In a very few steps, grass-roots cultural activity is extrapolated to a global scale of influence. The British Council's 2010 document, *Mapping the Creative Industries: A Toolkit*, states,

70

All around the world, the 'creative economy' is talked about as an important and growing part of the global economy. Governments and creative sectors across the world are increasingly recognising its importance as a generator of jobs, wealth and cultural engagement (British Council, 2010: 33).

The Creative Industries discourse gained ground in the late 1990s in the UK to counter the conventional view that "the arts […] tended to be seen as marginal to economic life and dependent on public subsidy" (ibid.: 15, 17). The creation of the DCMS by the New Labour government in 1997 was an intervention intended to bring cultural activity within the national economic discourse. In order to do so, the department was charged with "mapping" the "Creative Industries" (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1998, 2001). Spatializing and quantifying cultural activity, as recognised in the British Council's *Toolkit*, is not without its problems, given the wide range of activities and contexts it covers. As the 2001 *Mapping* document is divided into 13 sub-categories of creative activity, one might expect some granularity, but the data contained within the document are crude aggregations of national-level statistics. The *Mapping* exercise has been replaced by *The Creative Industries Economic Estimates*, which provides aggregative data on a national scale and which is confident in its assertion that the UK's creative economy is growing (Goulding, 2016) but lacks information on micro-scale businesses, self-employment and regional data (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2016a) and is always out of date by two years - a long time in a supposedly rapidly changing industry.[15]

The reliability of this economic data in itself, therefore, is questionable. Economic data being foregrounded in governmental reporting on cultural activity is symptomatic of the post-1980s dominance of capitalist discourse but the contribution to economic capital is not necessarily the end arrived at by these economic discursive means. The Secretary of State's speech uses economic keys to unlock a discourse of creativity and culture as beneficial to the intellectual, physical and social wellbeing of the UK both domestically and overseas. "We are a soft power superpower," he states. "The UK recently reclaimed top position in the Global Soft Power Index, driven by our artists, our writers and our cultural institutions. Now we are back on top, we need to stay on top" (Wright, 2019). The *Soft Power 30* (McClory, 2018), is an annual survey and report by liberal-left communications strategists, Portland, in partnership with Facebook and USC Center on Public Diplomacy (ibid.). The survey highlights the political importance of influence overseas. The methodology, by its own admission, is imperfect, iterative and relies on subjective data (ibid.: 30-38). It uses quasi-economic methods to quantify the value of cultural engagement in the interests of promoting and maintaining the "rules-based liberal international order" (ibid.: 12).

"Our culture and civilisation," says the Secretary of State, "are our calling card to the world, saying loud and clear that we are committed to equality, tolerance and freedom" (Wright, 2019). The contemporary message has changed little if at all from the foundations of the BBC. What has changed in the discourse is the fiscal determinism that culture can and should be economic and that cultural economics is a means to the historical materialist end of a global liberal society - a form of homogenising jingoism. This alienation of the specifics of cultural labour from its economic context and the appropriation of cultural outputs within the economic rationality of neo-liberal globalism reinforces the erosion of the "possibility of genuine and original creativity" in favour of the marketization of "recycled, formulaic and standardised goods" (Banks, 2007: 38). However local, micro-scale, diverse and differentiated the independent producers of television in the UK might be, the fact that they work in a mass-medium, in a national and transnational marketplace only further serves to facilitate this ideological appropriation.

As Banks identifies, however, the workers in these cases are not simply subjugated by oppressive asymmetries of power but through the governmental manipulation of the conditions in which cultural production takes place. This does not mean the working and management practices of corporations for, as Banks argues, corporate intentions can be moderated or usurped by the actions of subjects, "embedded in particular communities, occupational cultures and motivated by a whole plethora of non-economic social values and political attitudes" (ibid.: 40). The manipulation occurs through the application of economy "to the management and administration of populations" (ibid.: 41) via discourses. In this way, subjects are implicated in the self-exercise of the power structures in which they operate and the values of enterprise, quality, individualism, risk-and-reward, success and failure become biographically embedded in the subject (ibid.: 41-43). The neo-liberalisation of the British cultural agenda in the late 1990s, Hewison argues, led to significant diversification and growth not only in the financial status of many cultural fields of production but in their attendance at the table of political discourse (2014: 3). Cultural production becomes, in these circumstances, an identity-project - a presentation of selves. Musician Noel Gallagher's staged meeting with Prime Minister Tony Blair at Downing Street in 1997 appeared at the time to be a reconciliation of the divergent forces of culture and politics. Two years later, Gallagher reflected, "Nothing really changes does it? Same shit, different day. What was it: 'We're all middle-class now'. I find that really insulting" (Paton Walsh, 1999). The incongruity of the meeting highlights the difficulty in reconciling the economic-fiscal-value of the arts with their cultural value. The

government is charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the national culture but, eliding aesthetic qualification, the DCMS translates the cultural value of the arts into fiscal terms for the Treasury (see Belfiore, 2009: 347-349; Hewison, 2014: 4-7). Cultural producers express themselves aesthetically while navigating the neoliberal economy as exemplars of Foucault's (2008) *homo-economicus*. While these elisions and curated representations are not necessarily disingenuous, they are selective, manipulative and, ultimately, serve, on the levels of inter-departmental politics and the interface between political departments and cultural bodies, as a pidgin language between disparate communities. The cultural is not only aesthetic but is also political, and *vice versa*. The economic is not only financial and fiscal but is also cultural, and *vice versa*. The Gallagher-Blair meeting highlights, though, that fields of culture and political-economics are demarcated discursively.

To describe activities in economic terms is a discursive act. It is an act of appropriation which claims the right to define those activities and is therefore self-serving. The impression that the quantitative methodologies employed in these outputs provide is one of objectivity, providing an incontrovertible foundation for and justification of governmental activity. The inclusion of economically-framed data in public-facing reports, whether it is representative and reliable or not, perpetuates and reinforces an understanding in public discourse that cultural activity must, and does, justify itself in economic terms. As with all discursive acts, this reveals positioning and the exercise of agency within fields of power ranging from fields of cultural production to global economics and influence. "The Creative Industries" is a portmanteau term synthesising economic and cultural activity. It both presents a unified thing and a collection of interests. This paradoxical synthesis occurs also in referring to The Independent Television Production Sector. How can entities that exist in a sector be independent? As empirical tools, sectoral definitions are unreliable. Their ability, nonetheless, to depict a great many individual acts of cultural production as a homogeneous entity facilitates their appropriation for political ends.

4.2   Independent Television Production: Economic categorisation and discontinuity

This section considers how the independent production sector is defined in statute and described in trade reporting. Given that independent production occurs within a free and globalised marketplace, the financial and cultural dynamics of any company in this business are significantly impacted by the forces of trade. National-level statutory interventions into the operation of this marketplace can both meet explicit resistance or

simply be out of step with the reality of market forces. This has resulted in a shift in dynamic between Government and the sector. Where, in the 1980s, government intervention stimulated the conditions for the creation of a free market in broadcasting, this free market now leads the Government's response to it. The initiatives and behaviours of independents, broadcasters and owners are driven more by the influence of global trade than they are by local statutory intervention. Far from citing any concern over a lack of economic governance in the UK production market, the Government appropriates the outcomes of producers' work in this de-nationalised sector in the interests of an ideological and nationalistic discourse of global influence.

Independence in television production does not enter the public awareness in the way that it does in relation to many other production and service sectors such as music, film, games, fashion or retail. The provenance of programmes is typically attributed to broadcasters rather than producers. *Downton Abbey* (Carnival Film and Television / Masterpiece, 2010-2015) is 'an ITV programme', *Big Brother* (Endemol, Endemol Shine, 2000-2018) a Channel 4 or 5 show, *Have I Got News For You* (Hat Trick, 1990-) a BBC show, and so-on. Similarly, independent producers are largely invisible in listings guides, popular television publications and the press. A press article regarding *Downton Abbey*, for example, refers to the programme's "creator," Julian Fellowes[16] and the broadcaster, ITV but at no point is the programme's production company, Carnival Films (owned by NBCU,) mentioned (McCormack, 2014).

Collectively, though, these companies form a significant part of the UK's television ecology, as an economic framing of television production in the UK demonstrates: The UK's independent television production sector has a current annual revenue of over £3 billion (PACT, 2019). In comparison, the BBC's licence fee income is around £3.7 billion (BBC, 2019); ITV generates £1.7 billion (ITV Plc., 2019) and Sky £13.5 billion (Sky Plc., 2018). The sector is dominated by small-to-medium-sized-enterprises and is comprised of around 450 companies, 200 of which have annual incomes of over £1million (Oliver & Ohlbaum, 2018). The top 10% of independent production companies generate nearly half of the sector's revenues. A growing proportion of around half of the companies are owned by a larger organisation (*Broadcast*, var.). This economic framing of independent production is compelling but it simplifies something which is greatly more complex and nuanced, as the close inspection I have conducted in this thesis demonstrates. This aggregated economic picture of independent production does not describe the context in which any individual independent producer works, as each occupies a slightly different situation. Identifying

the complexities and discontinuities disguised by this representation, however, allows me to consider the heterogeneity of independent production.

In trade-journals - *Broadcast* and *Televisual* being the primary commentators - independent producers, often referred to as 'indies,' take up significant column-inches. While programme content, quality, taste, performance and narrative are foregrounded in the mainstream press, the trade press focuses more on the business contexts of production. Independent production companies are heterogeneous both financially and culturally. While the cultural characteristics of independent production companies are more the focus of this thesis, the trade press, much like the government Department above, uses economic methodologies, thereby facilitating the construction of a quantified sector and its constituent sub-sectors.

As independent production matured and grew from the 1980s to the 2010s, tensions between cultural independence and financial security played out in the trade press's stratification of the sector into true- and owned-indies and into micro-, super and mega-indies. These categorisations do not simply describe organisational size and structure, but support journalistic narrative. One pervasive narrative over the last decade has been the tendency or need for smaller companies to merge or sell-out in the interests of survival in a market increasingly dominated by larger players (for example, Parker, 2014). As such, the qualifying prefixes imply positions of relative power - mega-indies are more powerful than micro-indies, who are often depicted as "precarious" or "insecure" (for example, Lee, 2011, 2012a, 2012b; White, 2014).

Micro-indies typically consist of a small team working in a particular genre. Lacking financial security or vertical integration in terms of managing their own production facilities and distribution, they tend to have relatively low turnovers (less than £1million per year) and hours broadcast. They are often dependent on individual commissions. Larger non-owned independents such as Hat Trick or October Films have their origins in single-genre production but have diversified genre portfolios as they have grown. These companies are more likely to have regular output deals with broadcasters or distributors, increasing their financial security. Financial risk sees some indies seeking to be owned by a larger corporation. According to research commissioned by the BBC (Mediatique, 2005) there were over 1,000 independent production companies in the UK in 1993, reducing to around 800 by 2005. The *UK Television Production Survey Financial Census 2018* (Oliver & Ohlbaum, 2018) estimated that there were around 200 independent production companies with revenues above £1 million and a further 250 below (ibid.: 12). Revenues per company have, in the mid- and upper ranges,

tended to rise in recent years. This data indicates ongoing financial consolidation of independent production.

The *Broadcast Indie* Survey (*Broadcast,* Var.) and *Televisual Production 100* (*Televisual,* Var.) are annual statistical reports on the performance of independent production companies. Presenting the data as performance charts foregrounds the competitive nature of the production market. The data is also used to report on sector-wide trends, such as consolidation and acquisition. The *Broadcast Indie Survey 2014* editorial stated that of the 153 companies included, only "85 [55%] still qualify as true indies - but 15 of them admit that being bought or merging with another indie within the next five years is the only way they'll survive" (Parker, 2014). In 2011 this number stood at 76% and had reduced to 50% by 2017 (*Broadcast Indie Survey, Broadcast,* Var.). A similar trend can be seen toward mega-indie consolidation if one counts the appearances of Endemol and Shine in the survey. In 2011, the two companies had a combined total of five of the 141 entries in the survey (3.5%.) By 2014, Endemol and Shine had merged and comprised 12 of the 159 entries (7.5%) and in 2017, comprised 15 of the 141 entries (10.6%).

The top 10% of these companies turnover nearly half (46%) of the sector's revenues. The company with highest revenue, IMG, has a turnover equivalent to the 61 lowest earners on this list alone, which does not include companies who have not profited in the reporting year (figure 3).
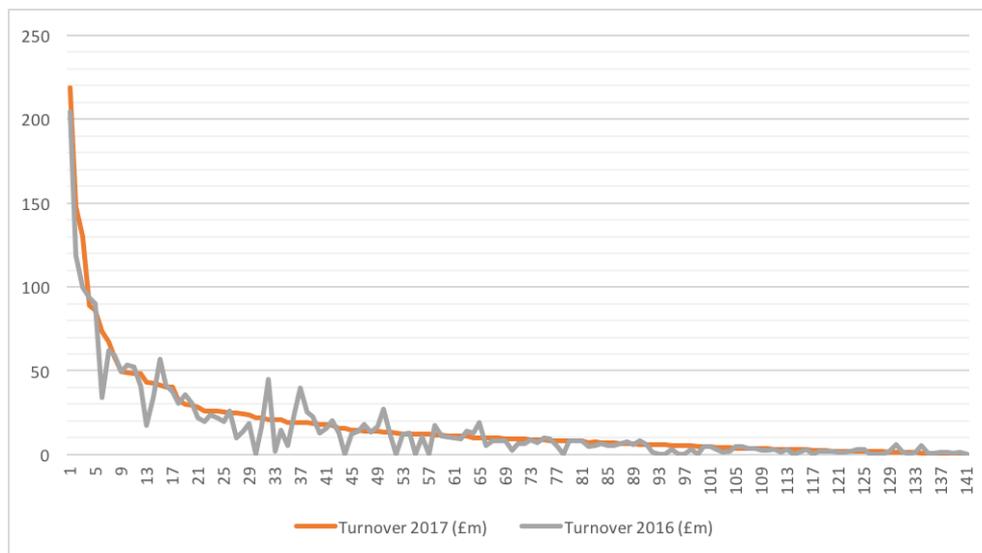
Figure 3: Broadcast Indie Survey 2016-17. Annual Turnover (y) and Rank (x).

The financial precariousness of companies at the low-turnover end of the sector is illustrated in the following graph, covering a four-year period and showing low consistency in income (figure 4).
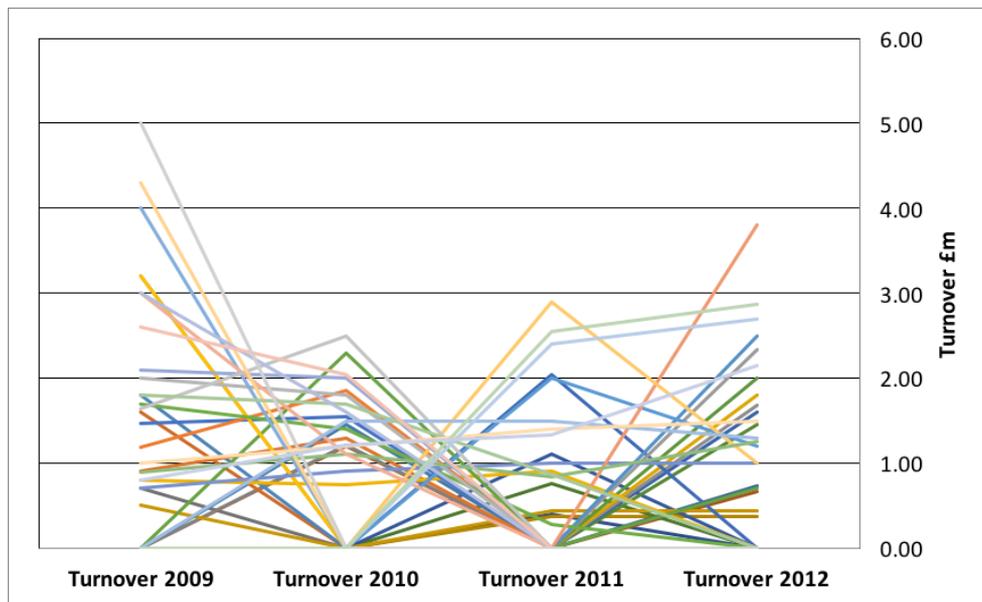
Figure 4: Independent Production Companies with Aggregate Turnover 2009-12 less than £6 million (Data: Televisual Production 100, 2009-2013).

Mergers and acquisitions can be extremely beneficial to independents. Boom Pictures' merger with the larger Twofour, for example, tripled their revenues and allowed them to move into the genres of features and entertainment (Boom Pictures, 2013; Parker, 2014). Mergers and acquisitions create what the trade press refers to as super-indies. The turnover of the largest super-indies is comparable to that of the smaller broadcasters. Mergers and acquisitions not only create economies of scale by centralising back-office and production facilities but also allow for portfolio diversification as genre-specific skills are imported into the acquiring company, or combined in a merger. Scale and portfolio-diversification are also perceived to mitigate business risk. "Mega-indies" are created by the acquisition of super-indies by major studios, such as the acquisition of Endemol, Core Media Group and Shine Group, three super-indies, by 21st Century Fox (Dams, 2014). Mega-indies have greater capital resources than the majority of UK broadcasters, are vertically integrated with global production and distribution arms and are notably more self-sufficient and, therefore, independent from a business perspective than are smaller companies who rely on the services and patronage of others.

The *Broadcasting Act* (1990) demanded that, from 1993 onward, 25% of the output of the UK's licenced public service broadcasters was "allocated to the broadcasting of a range and diversity of independent productions" (ibid.: 186(1), 16(2)(h)). Oversight of the quota was given to the Office of Fair Trading whose role is ensuring open competition in UK markets. The definition of an independent producer, insofar as it was based on companies' ownership by broadcasters, hinged upon how a broadcaster was

defined. In the *Act*, "television broadcasting service" meant, "a service consisting in the broadcasting of television programmes for general reception in, or in any area in, the United Kingdom" (ibid.: 2(5)). In the *Broadcasting (Independent Productions) Order 1991*, a "broadcaster" was, "a person who provides a television service […] whether in the United Kingdom or elsewhere" (1991: 3(7)).

That word, "elsewhere," troubled both broadcasters and independents. In the wave of consolidation, merger and acquisition that has occurred since 2003, a number of independents were acquired by overseas broadcasters meaning that they no longer technically qualified for quota hours. While it was clear that if a UK broadcaster owned part of an independent then they would no longer qualify, the status of producers with international owners was ambiguous. In practice, broadcasters continued to give over quota hours to overseas broadcaster-owned independents and the government, step by step through to the end of 2014, adjusted the wording of the Order to make it clear that only ownership by a broadcaster whose services "primarily" targeted the UK would amount to disqualification and previous legal transgressions would be overlooked (figure 5).
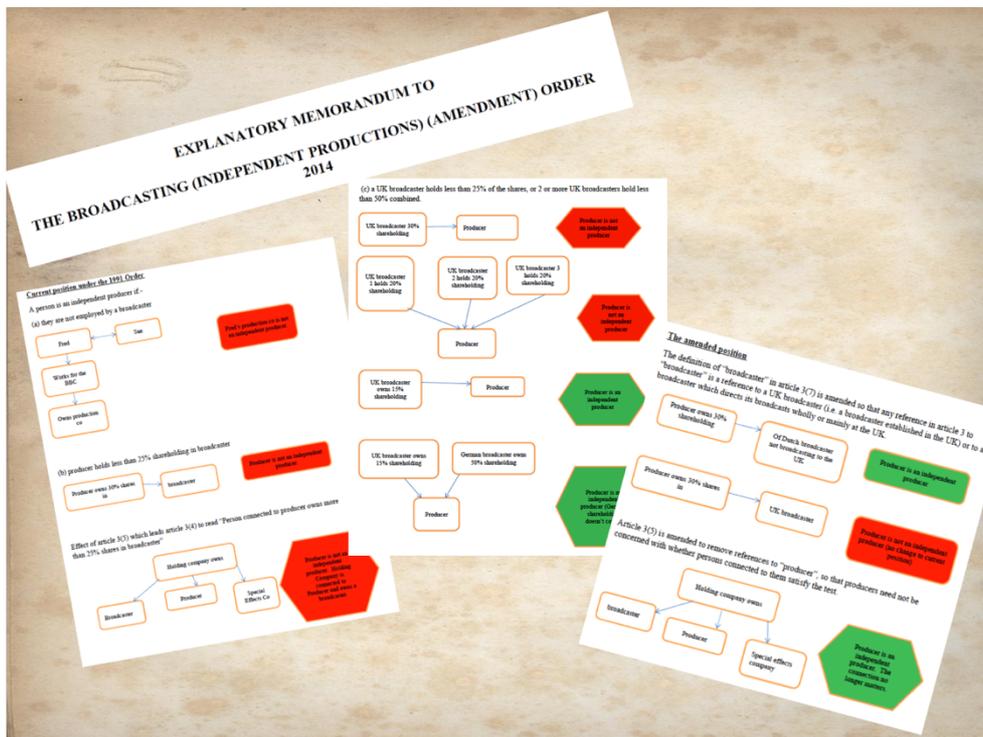
Figure 5: Flowcharts detailing the amendment to the definition of Qualifying Independent Productions (Explanatory Memorandum to the Broadcasting (Independent Productions) (Amendment) Order 2014: Annex 1).

According to the Government, the key aim of the quota is to "tackle vertical integration within the UK programme supplier market" (Edward Vaizey, Minister for Culture and the

Digital Economy in Parliament. House of Commons, 2014: col. 3). However, some argue that it now facilitates "increasing global vertical integration in the media market and the narrowing of media plurality" (Suan Elan Jones (LAB, Clwyd South), ibid.: col.6)[17] as global broadcasters such as Discovery and 21st Century Fox acquired the UK's most successful independent producers. The prevailing Government message, however, is that both inward-investment and international corporate acquisition increases opportunity and employment in a UK independent production sector which acts, according to the Minister for Culture, as "an extraordinary calling card for the UK" (ibid.: col. 9). Disregarding of the heterogeneous properties of independent production companies, this linguistic aggregation is a rhetorical device employed in demonstrating the UK's influential soft power and serves, therefore, to reinforce governmental economic discourse.

4.3   Defining independent television production culturally

This section considers the differing perspectives offered by more cultural approaches to defining independent production. It proposes that independent production, rather than as a sector, might be considered a *mode of production practices* within television. Independent production at face-value is distinct from and antithetical to in-house production. I argue that, while independent and in-house production have divergent origins, the overall cultural trend is toward convergence, with each adopting aspects of the other's modes of operation.

The independence of production companies is a contentious point. Seaton (1997: 187) recognises that "whether such companies are actually independent, except in the formal sense, is dubious." However, she considers them all somewhat equal in their circumstance and motivation:

> A [1989] survey by the London Business School showed that they were all financially precarious, with low profit margins. People set up independent television companies because they want to make programmes - not because they want to make money. The study also showed how completely dependent these companies were on the patronage of the established channels. (ibid.)

Additionally, independent production companies come in different shapes and sizes. Tunstall (1993: 157-172) identified the differing scales of independent production companies, including an "overcrowded job market" (ibid.: 158) of smaller producers and "ten or fifteen dominant independent producers" (ibid.: 169). He balanced the creative autonomy of the smaller companies against the lucrative portfolios of the larger ones (ibid.: 170). Both Tunstall and Seaton presented independent production as

a sector and the independent production company as "a supplicant, seeking to become the client of a patron" (Tunstall, 1993: 158).

Tunstall recognises the influence of the independent model of production on the organisation of British broadcasting by devoting a chapter to it (157-172). This separate treatment reinforces the dichotomy of independent and in-house production and is indicative of the rhetorical battle between in-house and independent production taking place at the time of his analysis. Tunstall's book is predominantly organised by textual genre (for example, sports; drama; light entertainment) and this othering of independent (and female) producers while, on the one hand, recognising shifting power-relations in British broadcasting in the early 1990s, suggests that these groups constituted their own coherent and somewhat hermetic fields. In fact, both independent and female producers were not separate from but part of the broadcasting marketplace. The thinking that broadcasting occurred within the walls of the established broadcasters was a perhaps inevitable outcome of the lengthy debates and investment of national resources which led to the establishment of each of the broadcasters. This thinking gives us the image of the independent producer on the outside, banging on the doors of the few broadcasters, trying to get in. In fact, the independent producer is now as likely banging on multiple broadcasters' doors not specifically to get inside, but to secure the seed funding to develop original intellectual property which she or he can exploit in the global television marketplace.

If one were to associate independent production with a particular programme genre, it would be to recognise that independent production companies have been responsible for some of the most successfully exploited game and talent shows of the last three decades and which have been developed as global formats. The development of the independent export market is largely driven by the terms of trade, a statutory instrument introduced by the *Communications Act* (2003: 285(3)), which limits broadcasters' retention of rights to independent productions' intellectual property. This both allows producers to exploit intellectual property overseas, but also drives broadcasters to only partially finance production budgets. This results in the necessity for producers to enter into international co-production, distribution or format-sales deals - so-called patchwork financing. This subsequently influences the editorial content and style of programmes (see Rohn, 2011 for an analytical model considering the impact of cultural, stylistic and production values on television programmes' capacity to transcend geo-cultural boundaries). This dependency on international sales cannot, however, be attributed as a defining characteristic solely of independent production, as broadcasters also seek to supplement their revenue with overseas sales and formats.

The BBC's revenue from exports, for example, exceeds that of combined UK independent productions (BBC Worldwide, 2018; PACT, 2018).[18]

Broadcasters are the gatekeepers to the outputs of independent producers and therefore define the economic context and cultural output of independent production. This is counter to the initial cultural aspirations for independent production in British television. Harvey notes that Channel 4 had two purposes, "to introduce stylistic and content innovations into British television, and to introduce new industrial structures for the production of programmes" (2000: 111). Founding Chief Executive Jeremy Isaacs says he

> wanted to ensure that, somehow, new ideas, wonky ideas, maybe even by conventional wisdom bad ideas, anyway different ideas, honed and sparked in other disciplines, would be put forward and to how we should operate, what we should put on air (ibid.: 35).

Isaacs' view that the Channel "should be for all of the people some of the time" (Harvey, 2000: 109) made on an hourly-budget less than one third that of the established broadcasters (Isaacs, 1989: 31), resulted not only in what Hobson refers to as "a kaleidoscope of programmes" (2008: 103) but also in approbation by the mainstream press and numerous public bodies (Brown, 2007: 66-67; Harvey, 2000: 108). The anti-establishment polemics available on Channel 4, while accepted "in a newspaper, in a railway carriage, in a saloon bar" (Isaacs, 1989: 53) had a significant ability to offend. From a business perspective, while opening the doors of broadcasting to more producers led to optimism in the production community, the reality that, "once you finished a show you went back and joined the queue" (Brown, 2007: 67) did not make for a nurturing environment in which to build a company. Isaacs was replaced by Grade in 1988 and the Channel sought to widen its appeal and increase its advertising revenue. *The Broadcasting Act* (1990) introduced independent production quotas, widening the market for independent producers to the BBC and ITV companies. Channel 4 became less unique in the British television production marketplace. The market for audiences and suppliers turned on more subtle differences between the broadcasters' business and aesthetic requirements and the market gradually became less diverse. Innovation in independent production focused less on iconoclasm and more on streamlining its business.

Lacking the economies of scale available to broadcasters and studios, independent television production operates under significant budgetary constraints. It is here that independent production innovated by necessity, drawing on new technological developments and more flexible production practices in the interests of delivering the

largest audience for the lowest cost. 'Reality' and 'fixed-rig' sub-genres of unscripted documentary such as *Undercover Boss* (Studio Lambert, 2009-), *Wife Swap* (RDF, 2002-2009) and *One Born Every Minute* (Dragonfly Film and Television Productions, 2010-), all successful UK format exports, are examples of an approach which employs documentary techniques to deliver, in effect, serialised drama. Keeping production costs down is fundamental to the organisational structuring of independent production companies. Though both have annual revenues of over £3 billion, independent production employs approximately 4,000 full-time staff in comparison to the BBC's 22,000. (BBC 2019; Broadcast Indie Survey 2018; National Audit Office, 2017).[19] The efficiency of independent production includes hiring a greater proportion of freelance staff. The BBC employs around 15,000 freelancers across all of its divisions (BBC, 2019), whereas independent production companies, including those in this thesis, frequently have a permanent staff base significantly smaller than their freelance workforce.

Since the 1990s, independent producers' practices have informed those of broadcasters. Birt's *Producer Choice* initiative at the BBC (see Born, 2005) began this trend and subsequent measures such as the Corporation's *Window of Creative Competition* (Turner and Lourenco, 2012) put in-house producers in competition with independents. In July 2014, BBC Director General Tony Hall outlined his intention to open all BBC commissions to competition by both in-house and independent producers, also allowing in-house producers to compete for external commissions (Hall, 2014). He said that the "managed competition" delivered by independent production quotas and the Window of Creative Competition had served its purpose in supporting a nascent independent sector and now it would be appropriate to allow competition to be free. Comprised of its in-house production departments, now able and expected to seek out commissions from external broadcasters, BBC Studios Productions Limited was incorporated in early 2015. In the 2018 to 2019 accounting year, BBC Studios merged with BBC Worldwide, the Corporation's distribution and sales arm, to form BBC Studioworks (BBC, 2019), reporting annual sales of £1,373 million and pre-tax revenue of £159 million (ibid.: 70). In 2018-2019 Studioworks won its first five commissions from external clients, so this independent origination aspect of its operation is modest, but Studioworks also holds equity stakes in 16 independent production companies, has first look/output deals with a further 17, and represents content from over 200 (ibid.). The horizontal-integration strategy of many broadcaster-distributors further demonstrates the erosion of the independent/in-house divide. ITV plc now owns over 30 "independent" labels as well as around a dozen of its own ITV

Studios-branded companies. A number of international broadcasters such as NBC Universal, Sony and Discovery have also added British independents to their portfolios.

John Ellis, in discussing the sale of UK TV and the prevalence of international format development, suggests that what is at stake in British television are diverse production cultures:

> Will production groups like Shine, Wall to Wall etc., all with their own cultures, be able to continue as creative units? Or is this the end of some of the UK's most productive TV enterprises? If formats are key to success, then the key to successful formats is a highly focussed, informally organised and flexible production company. That's why the UK has been so successful in the recent past (Ellis, 2014).

Turner and Lourenco (2012) say the domination of the sector by a few large independents is "lamented by critics who associate the decline of the small or 'lifestyle' indie with a loss of creativity and diversity in programming" (ibid.: 518). The decline of the small indie is arguable, as, numerically, those are in the majority. However, most of the money is turned-over by a much smaller number of larger companies. The financial risk of failure is far greater in smaller companies and lower in larger ones. As will be shown in the following case studies, not all small independents seek the security of ownership, nor are necessarily more innovative in their output. Owning studios do not simply subsume independent companies, but protect many of their self-determining characteristics. Independent and in-house production inform one another to varying degrees.

4.4   Conclusion

The dichotomy of independent and in-house production pervades debate on the topic of television production - in government, trade press and production circles themselves. However, examination of the evidence reveals that independent and in-house production exist in a complex relationship with one another.

Study of independent production in the UK reveals an initial divergence from the industrial broadcasting oligopoly in the 1980-1990s and a subsequent convergence through the 2000-2010s as surviving independent production companies consolidated and merged to mitigate risk. A divergence of social and political ideas regarding the identity and purpose of independent production occurred in the Channel 4 debates and in the Channel's early years. This was followed, again, by a subsequent cultural convergence driven by economic forces. The practices of freelance and independent

workers diversified from the Fordist practices of broadcasters toward 'project-team' production. This was followed by a subsequent convergence of independent and in-house practices as independents embraced the ownership of studios and broadcasters demanded more competitive and efficient production from their own departments. These divergences and convergences were not zero-sum. The structure of television production in the UK is different now to how it was in the 20th Century and independent production has been significantly influential in that change.

Bennett's four sites at which the utopian ideal of independence (2014: 3-4) can be seen to operate and, therefore, be unpacked, offer us an opportunity to consider the compromises and contradictions in the construction of the independent production sector. *Sociopolitically*, while all of the broadcasters considered in the previous pages, at their inception, presented notable socio-political challenges to established power constructs, their socio-political independence has tended to drift away from the politically radical through the function of a popular mass-market. *Industrially*, the operative independence of broadcasters and producers has tended toward workforce flexibility and insecurity. The responsibility for business sustainability has been re-situated, by the dominant neoliberal discourses of enterprise and entrepreneurialism, away from government and toward the individual. The *formal* traits of independent production, tied as they are both to socio-political ends and business means, are all but invisible in independent television production in the UK. Productions, ultimately, serve the ends of the broadcaster's brand identity and it is difficult to distinguish between the independent and the in-house production aesthetically. The *rhetorical or discursive* facility of the ideal of independence in mobilising wide spectra of political, ideological and personal interests remains largely undiminished. "Independent Production" has a statutory definition in UK broadcasting, but more-so, it carries an emotional resonance. Economic sectoral definitions have specific uses, less so to the sector itself than to governmental ends. Economic sectoral definitions of cultural activities are discursive instruments that deploying the ideological rhetoric of British culture and influence.

The contributors to the case studies which follow identify the existence of an Independent Television Production Sector in the UK to varying degrees and in varying ways. They also identify their own independence (or lack of it) in different ways. Each has a more or less expressed, different relationship with the sociopolitical, industrial, formal and rhetorical constructs of independence. Each has a different relationship with the debates and junctures which led to the current state of television production in the UK some more explicit, some more tacit. Each has its own reasons for and experiences of occupying its own particular variance of independent production and

each has its own way of articulating them. Each offers a different opportunity for investigating the complexity of being a television producer and of considering the great many facets which make up these professional subjectivities. Television production occurs within an uneven marketplace and is occupied by varied people and organisations. Uneven and varied is not the same as divergent and disconnected.

The independent television production sector is neither sealed nor homogeneous, and independent and in-house production are not pure opposites. The following case studies further support these arguments and problematise the rhetorical economic discourse around this field of cultural production. Independent producers are not independent and their detailed study provides evidence of the negotiated dependencies on which production relies.

5.0 Preamble to the Case Studies

The thesis centres around data collected into four case studies. The case studies are based on interviews conducted between 2013 and 2018. Each case study comprises the outcome of multiple interview encounters. GRACE Productions' Creative Director was interviewed off-site in 2013 and on-site in 2018. Ragdoll's founder and owner was interviewed by telephone in 2015 and this was followed up by a site visit in 2016 involving interviews with the company's Producer, a selection of staff and freelance employees and some further interaction with the owner. Monkey Kingdom's Managing Director and Chief Operating Officer were interviewed on-site in 2016. Electric Ray's co-Managing Director and a selection of staff and freelance employees were interviewed on-site in 2018.

The four case studies consider, in turn, a small-scale non-owned independent production company, a medium-sized non-owned company, a company that was initially founded as a financially independent production company but subsequently acquired by an international studio, and a company formed in partnership with an international corporation. This 'scaling-up' of each case study in turn is not meant to imply some sort of business trend. These companies exist contemporaneously, with distinct genealogies and with different implementations of independence. The range of ownership models considered is intended to evidence organisational variety, in order that consistencies and divergencies can be explored through the thesis.

The subjective experience of the producer is the primary focus of the interview-based approach. This offers a micro-level perspective on the role and identity of the producer. This is put in the context of his or her agency in running a production team or company from both creative and business perspectives and, therefore, concerned with production cultures. Both personal and organisational agency are situated in wider geographic, institutional, economic, social and political frameworks, which are explored as appropriate to each case study.

The expert interviewee is not only an expert in the instrumental skill or craft sense, but an expert at occupying his or her own position and identity in the context in which she or he operates. Some of this knowledge is explicit and espoused, some is tacit and assumed. The interpretative, inductive, approach taken in these case studies seeks not so much the knowledge itself, but its genealogy and its meaning to the independent producer. It asks how that knowledge came to be constructed and what that might tell us about the independent television producer in the UK.

The primary contribution to knowledge arising from the study is comprised of the case studies themselves, as unique records and analyses of specific independent producers and their companies not previously studied. In addition, further contributions to knowledge are made in the course of the case studies themselves. The first case study (chapter 6) introduces the concept of negotiated dependencies, fundamental to the producer's role and identity and also critical in re-assessing the nature of independence on television production. That case study also considers the producer as a creative broker, adding value to ideas and opportunities through their brokerage across the diverse social networks which constitute the television production process as a whole. Both negotiated dependencies and creative brokerage are evident, although manifest in a different organisational culture, in the second case study (chapter 7). The third case study (chapter 8) introduces the concept of the diasporic network, a tacit resource of former colleagues and previous relationships which can facilitate business innovation or development. Here, and in the final case study (chapter 9), the networking practices of workers in intra- and inter-organisational contexts are considered in detail as these are significant practices in gaining, maintaining and re-building production communities. Throughout, the case studies demonstrate that, while independence for the producer is only nominal, given his or her reliance on negotiated dependencies, that each is part agent part passenger in the structuring of television production in a wider context. Each independent production company is distinct and recognisable as a discrete organisation, but crucially interconnected with other organisations and subject to broader contextual or environmental conditions. The case studies offer insights into how this discrete but connected quasi-independent state is constructed, maintained and navigated by the independent producer.

6.0   Case Study 1: "Fresh air and a prayer." GRACE Productions. Micro-Independent

This first case study focuses on the so-called micro-indie. That is, a non-owned production company formed around an individual or very small number of managing directors. Micro-indies tend to have sub-million-pound turnovers and derive income from one-off productions rather than series. This chapter highlights the precarity of this position within the sector and the persistence, flexibility and entrepreneurship required to maintain a viable business. Without the backing or security offered by ownership or employment, the micro-true-independent is exposed to high levels of financial insecurity and risk. Further to this, as there is little to distinguish the company from its owner, there is a high degree of existential threat to the producer's professional identity and the professional and domestic impacts of the role overlap. The thesis' titular concept of *negotiating dependence* is central to the arguments in this chapter. The existential impossibility and even threat of actual independence to the producer highlights the vital nature of the producer's dependencies - on clients, production teams and contributors and on capital resources ranging across the economic, the social and the cultural. The number, complexity and importance of these dependencies places the independent producer in an extremely asymmetrical relationship with the broadcaster. Whereas the broadcaster has strong established organisational networks and resources, the independent producer is in a constant and expensive process of negotiating these relationships. The concept of negotiation is used to both mean *reaching agreement* and also *navigation* in a quasi-spatial sense.

The first section, "Becoming an Independent Producer," describes the career trajectory of Ray Tostevin, Creative Director of GRACE Productions, identifying drivers influencing his work and in the construction and maintenance of his professional identity. It highlights the precarity of work in this area of the television production sector and finds that, because of its unpredictability and discontinuity, high levels of resilience are required to maintain stability in the professional identity and self-representation of the producer.

The second section, "Independence: Entrepreneurship, Autonomy and Flexibility", interrogates the nature of these terms in describing the independent producer's context and finds the concepts relevant but bi-faceted and complex in practice, each offering and denying agency depending upon the working context. Creative autonomy is counterbalanced by financial autonomy and lack of security. Entrepreneurship and invention are both creative processes but also responses to unpredictable

circumstances, making prescriptive strategising difficult. Flexibility provides the producer with a level of self-determination, but is also a necessary response to uncertainty.

In order to articulate the work and responsibilities of the producer, network theory is mobilised in the third section, "Networks and Ideas Brokerage." Here, *networks* are considered as ontological things, social spaces in and between which the producer conducts work. The independent television producer, it is demonstrated, occupies a pivotal or hub node between broadcasters, production teams, talent, contributors and ideas and is responsible for the forging, maintenance and navigation of ties between all of these components. A spatial metaphor is employed whereby the producer negotiates 'upward' to potential buyers, 'downward' to production team members and 'outward' to talent, contributors and ideas. It is argued that *creativity* is the *brokerage of ideas* between these agents and the subsequent *adding of value* that occurs as a result and this is contributed to the knowledge of the producer's role and identity.

The fourth section, "Networking as Identity Maintenance" shows that the process of networking, through trade events, social media and keeping up with past colleagues is shown to be less vital to the construction and production of project-based work than it is in the reconstruction of memory and identity. The act of maintaining contact with a wider production milieu and of the re-collection of shared histories and memories contributes greatly to the performed identity of the independent producer. This effect is heightened in the case of the micro-indie, with no stable network within which to perform. It is argued that the diasporic networks and residual ties created through the performance and cessation of earlier roles, even though they are no longer the sites of business transaction, still act as a form of cultural capital inherent in the performed professional identity of the producer.

<p align="center">***</p>

GRACE Productions is a production company based in Yeovil, Somerset. Set up by its Creative Director, Ray Tostevin, in 2004, the company has produced factual current affairs and documentaries for network television, alongside work for local corporate and education clients. Tostevin's career began in local press before moving into television, leaving ITV West in 2003 to set up what was, then, Grace4Films. Tostevin wrote and directed the feature documentary, *Charlotte: A Royal at War* (GRACE Productions, 2008) and directed *Panorama: I Helped my Daughter Die* (BBC, 2010) before securing a commission for the BBC documentary, *My Brother the Islamist*

(GRACE Productions, 2011). Two sequels to *My Brother the Islamist* followed: *My Brother the Terrorist* (GRACE Productions, 2014) and *Welcome to the Mosque* (GRACE Productions, 2015). Since then, GRACE has secured only one network commission, *Invented in the West Country* (GRACE Productions, 2017). While Tostevin is still actively pursuing new production opportunities, he supplements his income through teaching at his local Further Education college and has moved out of his rented offices and now works at home.

I first interviewed Tostevin in March 2013, an optimistic time for him and the company, at which point he was hoping that a sequel to *My Brother the Islamist* might be achievable. These first interviews allowed Tostevin to describe his history, motivations, attitudes and approaches to production. Given that longitudinal studies of media professionals are rare, and that Tostevin and GRACE had encountered varying fortunes in the intervening years, I re-visited him in 2018. This follow-up interview revealed that, while GRACE's financial performance had changed for the worse and the company no longer employed staff, Tostevin's belief in the possibility of a positive change in fortunes and his ongoing development of new ideas and pitches continued. In terms of his professional self-identity, little had changed in terms of his self-representation and motivation as a producer and, while this was not convincingly supported by ongoing broadcast production work, it was supported by his espoused attachment to communities of ex-colleagues and other workers in the field of production.

6.1   Becoming an Independent Producer

Tostevin began his media career in 1979, leaving grammar school in Guernsey with A-levels, as a trainee at Turret Press, an independent newspaper publisher in north London. Having turned down a two-year journalism course at the London College of Printing, he considers the two years spent at Turret as a fast-track apprenticeship covering a wide variety of roles. Following this with some voluntary work in hospital radio and cutting a demo-tape, he was accepted as a freelance reporter by BBC Radio Guernsey. Again, the variety of tasks he was engaged in was wide, including reporting, producing and presenting. From there he moved to Radio Devon and then into local television at TSW in Plymouth, and later, ITV West in Bristol, where he spent ten years in the News and Current Affairs department. This gave Tostevin his first experience of independent production when, commissioned to produce a series of investigation pieces for Channel 4, ITV West set up a "fig-leaf" company, Brislington Productions, "to keep the accountants happy at Channel 4" (Tostevin, R., 2013: 7). Feeling that he had

done as much as he could within a broadcaster, Tostevin left ITV West in 2003 to set up Grace4Films.

Tostevin's early career is characterised by relatively high mobility between employers and a variety of job roles. A decade at ITV West, and certainly in the contemporary television employment market, represents very low inter-company mobility and there was a diminishing level of variety of roles as Tostevin became a news and current affairs producer. This reduced variety and mobility, it appears, became a motivating factor in Tostevin setting up his own company, allowing him the flexibility and autonomy to make (and reinvent) his company and his professional self.

The multi-faceted aspect of the producer's identity is clearly evident in Tostevin's self-representation. As Creative Director of (renamed in 2004) GRACE Productions, Tostevin describes his role as "in a sense, a kind of ring-master" (ibid.: 5), "with my experience and some connections and determination to make things happen […] overcoming obstacles" (ibid.: 5-6). He is circumspect about his official title.

> The website still says I'm Creative Director. I could almost say, 'Bollocks! What does that mean?' Creative Director, when you're responsible for a large organisation. 'Creative,' 'a creative creator,' film-maker-producer, agony-aunt, -uncle […]. When asked, 'what do…,' I think I say I'm a filmmaker, I produce and sometimes direct films. Some for television and some for online and […] I would say I'm a media mentor as well. […] I think I can see talent […] and hopefully steer, nurture, encourage, inspire, cajole [it]" (Tostevin, R., 2018: 49).

In a sense, he has returned to a level of variety and flexibility that he experienced in his early itinerant career, but as a mentor rather than the mentee. Tostevin chose, rather than was pushed, to leave regular employment in favour of independent production. In doing so, he left a relatively predictable working environment for one much less so. Throughout the interviews, he projects a sense of excitement about what opportunity might be around the corner. Most of his work as an independent producer, in fact, is in trying to find and develop these opportunities.

Projects "centred around exclusive access to people with stories […] on a […] controversial subject" (Tostevin, R., 2013: 8). Abortion, assisted suicide and radicalisation are all topics covered in films produced by Tostevin. Giving, "a voice to the voiceless," Tostevin admits, is something of a cliché in news and current affairs, but, he says, "very often we find we're speaking to people that have no other […] outlet to tell their story and we will provide it" (ibid.: 9). "If a story excites me and if there's an element of injustice or unfairness that I think needs exposing then yes, I'm up for that" (Tostevin, R., 2018: 54).

It is the editorial development process which takes up the majority of Tostevin's resources - time, energy and money. In both the 2013 and the 2018 interviews, he describes a portfolio of potential projects, ranging from ideas in their initial stages through to projects with talent attached and possible broadcaster or distributor interest. They range from, in 2013, the follow-up film to *My Brother the Islamist* and a number of other speculative one-off or series for network television through to, in 2018, some early work into digital platform content to two proposed feature-length films, including his first proposed foray into scripted drama. Tostevin identifies that he is…

> … trying to spin quite a few plates here, I suppose and hopefully not spreading myself too, *too* thin because […] you have to have a number of projects on the go and then one or two might take off at a particular point (ibid.: 60).

The enthusiasm and belief expressed by Tostevin in discussing his ideas also belies the energy and emotional investment it takes to develop them, and to keep doing so.

> I think we have to be optimistic when we pitch these ideas and believe, at least for this small pocket of time, that they could really happen - visualise them on screen - because if we can do that then, hopefully, get that across to the commissioner and if they can see it then you're on your way to a meeting which could then take us on to the next step (Tostevin, R., 2013: 16).

> I think if you can make something creatively brilliant - compelling, so that people are talking about it, […] that then leads to a commercial return I believe. So, if we can do more programmes like that, then we'll start to make more money, which can then be put into development, rather than just doing it on fresh air and a prayer (ibid.: 17).

Tostevin's metaphorical descriptions of his own lived experience and sense-making of his identity as an independent producer - spinning plates and spreading himself thinly on "fresh air and a prayer" - are not entirely out of step with the perceptions of independent producers revealed by Born (2005). The realities of what it means to be "heroic, risk-taking and inventive" creative, however, also entail a great deal of emotional labour in the maintenance of a professional and upbeat outward-facing demeanour.

While commissioners may approach some independents for returning series, in the case of one-off factual production or ideas for original series, the responsibility is on the producer to approach the broadcaster, much like a direct-seller. Building relationships with buyers is critical but was, in 2013, says Tostevin, becoming more difficult, particularly with pitching taking place electronically rather than face-to-face. Known as e-commissioning, or e-comm.

It's about relationships and, sometimes, it's trying to strike up a relationship with the commissioner that you've not worked with before and if all they will do is refer you to e-comm [… and…] you know it will go into a void (Tostevin, R., 2013: 24).

My Brother the Islamist, the story of Robb Leech, a first-time director from Weymouth in Dorset, investigating how his step-brother had become radicalised, was initially pitched to Channel 4, with no reply. It was then pitched to BBC Religious Affairs, again with no reply. Tostevin eventually managed to show the taster-reel (a short overview of the proposed film) to the then Head of BBC Factual Programmes, Charlotte Moore, who, within 48 hours, "fast-tracked" the project into a scheme for new directors. Tostevin believes that, "you just have to keep pushing if you believe in something" (ibid.: 10).

This pushing incurs costs including running an office; travel and time for meetings; the production of 'taster' or 'sizzle' reels; and the coverage of legal and contractual issues. These development costs are covered in whole or part by the interested broadcaster only once a project has received initial interest, and most do not. At the other end of the production pipeline, and an important source of residual income for independent producers is post-broadcast distribution. For a micro-indie like GRACE, without an established global distribution network and infrastructure, the costs involved in self-distribution exceed the potential benefits. All distribution rights in films GRACE has produced for the BBC are retained by BBC Worldwide.

While *My Brother the Islamist* eventually recouped its £100,000 budget through sales, the follow-up film, *My Brother the Terrorist* made only a third of that. *My Brother the Islamist* was sold for as much as $AUS15,000 to ABC in Australia to as low as €200 for a screening in Holland, but Tostevin values the bargaining power that a larger distributor can bring.

They are the biggest distributor in this country. They are one of the major players globally, they have a massive reach (ibid.: 26). […] We had an approach from ABC Australia […] and I think they wanted to offer 8,000 Australian dollars which sounded a lot. Now, we got double that in the end, and I think it was because they've [BBCWW] got other things they could have offered alongside our programme, so they've got […] enormous clout, and I'm very happy for them to do that on our behalf (ibid.: 26).

Overall, though, the time and money involved in developing a portfolio of proposals, alongside the precarious and unpredictable nature of making a return on that investment means that Tostevin's endeavours are, arguably, more of a lifestyle or identity performance than a business. I asked him, in 2018, if he currently makes a living.

> Not from what I'm doing currently, not enough. […] At times, I've felt like packing up. I've thought, 'This is ridiculous.' And having that kind of light-bulb moment - in not a great way - with my book-keeper at the back-end of 2016 saying, 'Ray, you cannot continue like this, it is not sustainable. You are putting a lot of your own money…' and I remember […] my sister, who worked with us in the past, had said, 'It looks like a hobby, from where I'm standing.' That's brutal! […] I suppose, for me, making films and the kind of films that we've done was never about earning lots of money it was about making great content, great films, great documentaries that get people talking […] It provides a service, but does it make lots of money? No. That may change, you know. Hey, we live in hope (Tostevin, R., 2018: 44-45).

At the time of the final interview, Tostevin said he was, "holding [GRACE] lightly. I'm not thinking, 'Oh God, I gotta make this work. If GRACE doesn't succeed then I'm finished. It's the end,' you know. Actually, it's not" (ibid.: 47). For all the discontinuity in the financial performance of the company in the period between the interviews, there is a high degree of continuity in Tostevin's own self-representation and espoused identity as a multi-faceted creative.

Hope and opportunity are two ends of a see-saw for the independent producer with no regular or guaranteed output streams. Tostevin's dedication to a personally-held vocation is, in relation to traditional notions of workplace security and financial benefit, extremely risky. In maintaining his identity as a filmmaker and media-mentor he asserts his own membership in a community of filmmaking practice. This membership is the one continuous and reliable element in Tostevin's unpredictable profession. The fact, though, the majority of his work, in terms of time and energy, is spent in developing project proposals rather than in production itself and, therefore, not in actual income-generation suggests that occupants of this low-turnover area of the independent production sector do not constitute an industry but, rather, a loose collective of optimistic, energetic, persistent and resilient creatives - in it for the story, not the money, although the money would help.

6.2   Independence: Entrepreneurship, Autonomy, and Flexibility

> KR: Do you feel that you've got more autonomy as an independent producer than if you were an in-house producer?

> RT: Um - yes, I have more autonomy to not make as much money! (Tostevin, R., 2013: 37).

As discussed previously, independence is a utopian ideal conflating self-determination, creativity, innovation and risk-taking. Clearly, independence from a stream of revenue is not an enviable position but, for those willingly embarking on independent

production, the revenue problem is weighed against the professional and creative autonomy the position offers. An enthusiasm to solve the revenue problem inventively - taking low-cost but high-risk 'punts' on ideas and iteratively, sometimes doggedly, working through and developing prospects while remaining optimistic in the face of infrequent success - appears to underpin the entrepreneurial activity of the independent producer. I asked Tostevin if he saw himself as entrepreneurial.

> RT: If, by entrepreneurial, you mean 'take risks,' absolutely. I probably am a little bit cavalier. I'm always trying new things and if that is at least one hallmark of an entrepreneur… […] You only need one to really kick off. […] Most of what James Dyson did in his early 20-plus years was hobby-esque, a bit sort of whacky, didn't make any money, and then he invented the vacuum-cleaner that he did […] and suddenly it's a massive success (Tostevin, R., 2018: 45).

Successful invention in manufacturing leads to patents and mass-production. In television production, the equivalent would be format development - where a single successful prototype (pilot) leads to the ongoing production and licensing of a single core intellectual property, as in entertainment formats such as Celador Productions' (1998-) *Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?* This kind of production is not the realm of the micro-indie but of the larger super-indie or vertically-integrated mega-indie and is not primarily motivated by the desire to make programmes but also to maximise profit. It is clear that Tostevin is not profit-averse, but one-off factual programmes provide neither economies of scale nor scalable intellectual property revenue. Every programme is a new invention with a limited-edition run. In this genre, for the independent producer, each project becomes its own business with its own start-up costs. Developing a portfolio of products requires each to be invested in and the overall chance of return on those investments is low.

Tostevin attests that "It's about being flexible, being resilient" (ibid.: 47). This flexibility runs two ways. On the one hand, being independent gives Tostevin control over his working hours and the projects he wants to work on. "It's good to feel that we can work on projects that we want to work on [and not] necessarily the ones a boss has said we have to do" (Tostevin, R., 2013: 37). On the other hand, the world of portfolio working means that often, as suggested by Handy, a fee is associated with a *product* rather than the worker's *time* (1995: 176). The flexibility the worker has in terms of how efficiently she or he uses and distributes his or her time, in an occupation where the majority of time is spent in trying to develop and secure an opportunity to get paid, is offset greatly by the limited revenue that this development process recoups.

Conceptualisations of portfolio working (for example, Handy, 1995, Mallon, 1998) tend toward a reading which assumes that, in taking on different guises and approaches to self-marketing, the portfolio worker creates a contiguous patchwork of opportunities based around his or her skills, knowledge and experience. However, freelance employment is not always serial or sequential, but uneven and fragmentary. As Platman's (2004) study of the experiences of freelance workers in the UK media industries found, the freelance labour market predominantly advantages the employer. Such advantages included the agility with which the workforce could be designed and manipulated around varied and specific tasks. The experienced freelancer constitutes a ready-to-go skill and knowledge resource, reducing the requirement for training. There are also advantages to the resource-limited client in not having to pay overheads and staff benefits to hourly-paid staff (ibid.: 581). The person who bears these costs is the freelancer themselves. For the freelance, independence *both* provides *and* demands flexibility, whereas for the client company, the flexibility facilitated by a freelance workforce works only to its advantage.

Unless the freelance producer is producing work serially for a regular client, the relationship between employer-client and the worker becomes transactional rather than relational (see Mallon, 1998: 181-183) in that it occurs within distinct finite boundaries within the worker's portfolio. The employer has no investment in the continuing development of the contracted worker, who is also excluded from the ongoing internal corporate narrative of the organisation for which she or he is working. Mallon found that for some portfolio workers this dis-entrenchment from workplace politics, the ability to just walk away when a task was complete and the increase in self-determination was advantageous to his or her sense of wellbeing. For others, though, being an outsider could be frustrating, given the lack of investment in the person, through systems such as training and workplace feedback that staff employees would receive.

For Tostevin, though, having achieved as much as he thought he could at ITV West, embarking on an independent career was about creative independence more than money. Even as, in 2018, he admits he doesn't make a living from his endeavours, he is cautious when considering a return to employment in a larger company. I proposed a scenario whereby he would be fully employed as a producer by a company which would have control over his output.

> If my wife was sitting here, she might say, 'you take the job.' […] It would have to be a bloody good job and pay a shedload of money. [… E]ven then, I'm not sure I'd be comfortable with that. […] If they want someone to just do their bidding then get someone out of [university] or get a younger person that doesn't really care, that doesn't really have a voice yet themselves and they're

quite happy to be directed on what they should and shouldn't do (Tostevin, R., 2018: 55).

In not wanting to be dictated to by an employer, Tostevin wants his skills, experience and voice to be recognised. Tostevin holds others' skills in high esteem - he enjoys working with people "who are better," in his terms, than him. His own skills, in part, he says lie in nurturing, guiding and "cajoling" this talent in the interests of making good content and developing others' careers. Tostevin does not present himself as one with nothing more to learn, but putting himself in a position where he was the one being cajoled and guided contradicts his self-representation. As will be discussed in the latter case studies, the financial security and organisational infrastructure offered through ownership by a larger company is, for some independents, a welcome trade-off against true self-ownership. For the self-owned independent, the burden of support, which is not only financial but emotional, is borne by the producer and those closest to them. In this way, the self-owned producer is most detached from the support of broadcasters, even those whom he has previously produced for, and the burden of support comes closer to home. "[I]f I didn't have the understanding wife that I do who's working in a proper job, in the health service, saving lives…" (ibid.: 45) then he would have to consider alternative ways of making an income. Here, therefore, he evidences a case of the negotiated dependencies upon which he relies transcending the space of production, occupied by broadcasters, distributors, producers and production teams, into the space of family. The dependencies a producer negotiates, therefore, extend beyond the contexts of production into more personal spaces. This extension is also demonstrated in the following case studies, through the family nature of the business (chapter 7), as a motivation for mitigating the financial risk to producers' family and employee dependents (chapters 8 and 9), and in the complex interaction between the lived and professional habituses of the producer (chapter 9).

Habitus, in that it includes not only professionally-defined but also personal disposition should be distinguished here from professional track-record and reputation. In his interviews, Tostevin commented that he could not rely on past track record in the securing of new contracts (Tostevin, R., 2013: 3; Tostevin, R., 2018: 48). This is counterintuitive. It would seem logical that a track record in successful production would be beneficial in building a portfolio, and relationships with broadcasters, as an independent producer. However, experience, according to some of Platman's findings (2004: 588-589), can actually hamper the chances of gaining commissions. Over time, one becomes known for making certain genres of programme in certain ways and with a certain style. This is a finer-grained extension of Tunstall's (1993) concept of "genre-worlds," between which producers seldom move. Within genres there are styles and

tropes which become identifying features of certain producers' work. Rather than expanding the opportunities available to said producers, their options become more and more limited and, at worst, become unfashionable.

One of Tostevin's previous work colleagues said to him, 'I've had all this experience and yet it still doesn't seem to get easier' (Tostevin, R., 2018: 48). Aged, at the time of the last interview, 57, Tostevin is aware that he is "older than many of [his] peers in the industry than was the case thirty years ago" (ibid.: 40). Tostevin presents no sense of resentment towards younger talent. Indeed, he actively seeks to work with new and emerging professionals. These include Robb Leech, the director of the BBC trilogy, a current student of his who is an online journalist, a young Lebanese director, Christian Abi Abboud, Loic Tanson, a young Luxembourg director, among others. It is a relationship of, Tostevin would have it, mutual benefit. The younger talent benefits from Tostevin's experience and connections, while Tostevin himself is fronted by someone less established, less predictable and, therefore, potentially, more appealing to commissioners. Tostevin, therefore, uses GRACE Productions as a mechanism to construct series of *compound* identities built around talent and content, countering the typecasting - unintentional inflexibility - that comes with accrued experience.

Flexibility is a two-edged sword for the micro-indie. The independent status grants autonomy in that the producer can choose to develop whatever content for whatever medium with whatever talent she or he has access to. However, over time, constant reinvention becomes a requirement as established opportunities and streams of income and employment dry up and novel ones must be sought. As such, independence both offers and demands flexibility. That "the price of maximum freedom […] is maximum fragmentation and uncertainty" (Platman, 2004: 18) and that work "has become a vulnerable zone, one in which continued employment must ceaselessly be earned" (Rose, 1999: 158), while not unique to, is particularly dominant in the freelance portfolio creative labour market. For Platman's older participants, "Freedom was not a final destination, but a perpetual act of (re)negotiation" (2004: 20).

Entrepreneurialism, for the micro-independent producer, takes the form of investing time and resources in the process of invention, not only of product-packages, but of a professional identity which maintains some stability in the face of discontinuity. The building and maintenance of relationships and the constant re-invention of a brand which *includes the self* are central to the independent producer's role. The following section discusses the first of these - the construction and maintenance of productions

and production teams - and the final discussion considers the work involved in the construction and maintenance of professional identity.

6.3   Networks and Ideas Brokerage

For the purposes of this study, it is assumed that it is impossible for the independent producer to work alone. While there are some areas in media production where a sole operator can originate and distribute his or her own material, such as in the online space, in television production, production labour is generally clearly demarcated - with some grey areas around multi-tasking in smaller companies and hyphenate positions such as self-shooting director or producer-director. In television, the independent producer must forge links with commissioning editors or their equivalent in broadcasters or studios. As has been discussed previously, these links are based around proposed content, which often has a source of information, access or talent attached. The producer's role is to package these skills and content in a way which convinces the commissioning editor that the project is worthy of investment. In the case of series production, these packages persist through multiple projects. However, in the case of one-off productions, each project requires the construction of a new package, being, as discussed above, an organisation in itself. While it is feasible for a persisting (and persistent) team to develop multiple project proposals, often, the producer is drawing on new connections to create a diverse portfolio of potential projects - as in Tostevin spinning "quite a few plates" (Tostevin, R., 2018: 60). Throughout a long career such as Tostevin's a great number of connections are forged. Some of these may persist over time, either continuously or intermittently, while others persist only in memory and history as connections drift apart and become non-transactional. In this section, the negotiation, that is, the construction, maintenance and navigation of transactional production networks, is discussed. It is demonstrated that the independent producer acts as a connecting node between sources of content and otherwise separated networks of client-broadcasters and the production team.

6.3.1   Negotiating client networks

As discussed in the opening section, forging relationships with commissioning editors is a critical and challenging part of the independent producer's role. This is not to say that commissioning editors are hard to find or contact. Every UK broadcaster has information online covering the pitching and commissioning process and, often, indications of the type of content it is looking for.[20] Since Tostevin's negative comments regarding e-commissioning in 2013, several broadcasters now provide relatively direct links and email addresses for, if not individual commissioners, then relevant genre-

team mailboxes. While this method of initial contact creates an even playing-field for producers, where geographic location is not a factor, it is an asynchronous connection. Most broadcasters state that they will acknowledge proposals quickly - generally within a few days or less - responses to electronic proposals may take from one to two months. In the case of pitching *My Brother the Islamist*, Tostevin recalls,

> We pitched it to Channel 4 and - I'm just trying to remember - did we ever get a reply? I don't think we ever got a reply. […] We then went to the BBC's Religious Affairs department thinking, 'Well, it's about radical Islam' - you know - he would surely take it on. Didn't get a reply from him either (Tostevin, R., 2013: 10).

In his study of independent television production employees, Lee was told that workers' CVs "often lie in a pile unread" (2011: 555) and a similar fate may face electronic pitches. In the case of *My Brother the Islamist*, it was direct contact with the BBC's Head of Documentaries and a tangible reel of sample content - the so-called taster-reel - which secured positive action on behalf of the broadcaster and the beginning of a relationship.

There are also occasional opportunities at film festivals for producers to seek funding for projects in different stages of development. Tostevin applied to be included in one of these events, Sheffield Doc/Fest's *MeetMarket*.

> *MeetMarket* is like speed-dating for filmmakers[. …] So, you've got filmmakers, you've got directors, you've got producers, you've got commissioning editors, you've got distributors and then you've got the creatives and basically you pitch for a slot. […] So, if we're successful, it will probably entail […] going around the room meeting people that have expressed an interest in [our film …] and then, based on the meeting, [they ask,] 'What do you want?' What we want is funding to help us with post production and to finish off the film (Tostevin, R., 2018: 60).

"Speed dating" is a telling analogy for the commissioning processes as experienced by Tostevin. A high number of short, summarising meetings with prospective future partners, with little expectation of commitment and very much a buyer's market. The speed-date is a short transaction of ideas and aspirations, which may or may not lead to an ongoing relationship. Mallon's (1998) distinction, for portfolio workers, between transactional and relational arrangements at work, discussed in the previous section, is terminologically problematic as transactions, by definition, are exchanges of resources between two parties and, therefore, relational.

Constantly having to forge new relationships is a challenge for Tostevin and draws on his limited resources. Each new attempt involves the sometimes-one-way transaction of cultural capital (the proposal) and draw on economic capital (the time and expense

involved in constructing the proposal.) His view that broadcasters have suppliers that are, in some way, "preferred," points to the indication that, for the commissioning editor also, building new relationships is a resource-heavy exercise. Strong relationships, meaning low-friction conduits for the exchange of cultural and economic capital, this view suggests, are built by frequent and ongoing mutually-beneficial transactions between the commissioner and the producer. Over time, these repeated transactions allow what Wenger (1998) refers to as a "community of practice" to develop - with both parties learning how to work together, constructing shared meaning and complementary identity - becoming 'known' to and trusted by one another. This is a condition observed in the following case study, which considers a larger company with a more consistent and persistent organisational grouping.

For the independent producer with a fragmented and irregular relationship with clients and production personnel, however, the inability to strengthen relational ties through repeated work over time constitutes a considerable drain on resources. The inability to develop work and communication efficiencies and to benefit from the resilience of a shared culture or community of practice means that the flexibility and resilience referred to in the previous section are not simply required qualities but actual resources and, therefore, come at an additional cost.

6.3.2   Negotiating production networks

When a client-commission is gained, the producer becomes the focal point for the assembly of the production team. In the case of researchers and assistant producers, these may already be part of the independent production company. GRACE has always been a micro-indie, with a staff of, at most, two or three people. These constitute the editorial development team, conducting research, making contacts and generating leads for stories, ultimately generating the pitches that go to broadcasters. These team-members typically have a variety of production skills, often including basic camera operation and editing, but when it comes to actual production, then higher-level technical craft skills are demanded. While a number of websites exist,[21] which allow freelancers to publicise their skills and availability and producers to find them, traditional press advertising for below-the-line crew is now very rare. When asked if he had ever advertised for crew in the trade press, Tostevin replied,

> Only once, and that was with South West Screen. I put an online ad saying, 'Junior Editor required,' and we were inundated - I mean we had sixty or seventy applicants and in the end - what happened? - we interviewed a couple. We went a different route - we didn't hire any of them - not because they were no good…

KR: What, so you went back to word of mouth? Recommendations?

RT: Yes. Recommendation. Terrible, isn't it? [laughs] (Tostevin, R., 2013: 20).

While Tostevin has, at times, employed crew that he worked with during his time at ITV West, typically, geography and availability will define who he takes on. For locally-based non-broadcast projects, Tostevin has employed young local filmmakers, recent graduates, and there is a modest pool of other talent in the region. At other times, typically in the editing and online finishing process, the location of the post-production facility - Tostevin cites projects finished in Plymouth and Birmingham - will define whom he works with. Sometimes, the broadcaster will determine a particular crew…

> There were quite a few new people that I'd never worked with, not least because the broadcaster, BBC, wanted certain […] camera crew that were used to working on network shows (ibid.: 19).

Networking, as an activity based around building and maintaining relationships, does not play a significant role in Tostevin's engagement of crew-members. Since his move from Bristol to Yeovil, these networking opportunities are becoming increasingly scarce.

> I used to feel that a lot, when I worked as part of an office-based creative community, at ITV West, for example. There was a very definite sense of working together and then relaxing together. […] When I worked for about a month in Bristol last Summer it felt completely natural to be socialising with the editor I was working with, in terms of we went out for lunch and we had a drink together outside work (Tostevin, R., 2018: 41).

In his current circumstances, working from his home-office, the workplace is intimately connected with Tostevin's domestic setting. Additionally, at the time of the 2018 interview, without any employees, there is no need for the cultural-maintenance of out-of-hours socialising of the type discussed by Lee (2011). So, whereas for the below-the-line production employee studied by Lee, networking to secure employment and maintain working relationships is a highly important exercise, for the micro-independent producer, networking with such potential employees is far less of a priority. Indeed, given that any production role is likely to be oversubscribed with potential takers, this can be seen very much as a buyer's market.

The competitive marketplace of independent television production creates an asymmetrical relationship between the client and the producer and the producer and the potential employee which is not only about the economics of over-supply and demand but, critically, about the lived cultural experiences of the agents involved. The soft power mobilised by procurers in controlling the flows of capital through relational

social ties is not only economic in nature but highly personalised by agents on both sides of the relationship, with greater potential negative impact on the vendors. Frustration, disappointment, fear and hope are all deeply felt negative manifestations of the asymmetrical relationships on which independent television production at this scale is founded.

6.3.3   The producer as network brokerage hub

In his position as a micro-independent producer, the exploitation of weak network ties (see section 1.4.2) is critical. Indeed, in his business context, Tostevin has few strong ties. In a traditional organisational context, an individual may choose to develop weak ties in the interests of improving his or her chances of increased pay or promotion. These weak ties supplement the strong intra-organisational ties of the, for example, office-based role, by *uniquely* expanding that person's network. For Tostevin, the development of weak ties is not a luxury but a necessity. What may constitute a business advantage to the former individual is, to Tostevin, a fundamental and compulsory component of his work.

Tostevin's analogy of his role as "ring-master," with "some connections," "overcoming obstacles, finding ways around problems," while "allowing these others - either producers or directors or editors - to have the freedom and the environment to make great programmes," (Tostevin, R., 2013: 5-6) provides an illustration, in lay terms, of his transactional activity in working to create structural bridges ("some connections," "overcoming obstacles") and inward to facilitate the production team's needs and ambitions. This inward-facing activity is based on mutual respect, skill and trust ("the freedom and the environment to make great programmes,") whereas the outward-facing activity is entrepreneurial and inventive in nature.

The independent producer must navigate, or construct, and maintain a number of otherwise unconnected networks, including the production team, the client team and potential sources of stories. The independent producer is a pivotal node or agent in a number of critical bridging ties and it is across these ties that the fundamental transaction of cultural, social and economic capital occurs. In transportation network terms, the independent producer is a hub and the producer's value resides in exactly this rarefied network position. Without the separation of source and client, there is no value to be made in the brokerage of what is ring-fenced as the producer's intellectual property. Without the producer's ability to broker that property between agencies, there can be no value added to it.

Burt (2004) identified the professional advantages found by managers who were able to make productive connections with agents in otherwise separated networks, such as in the disparate parts of a supply chain. Burt found that these brokers were more likely to have their ideas adopted and be promoted by senior managers. Burt goes on to propose that this brokerage may be connected with perceptions of creativity. Creativity finds different definitions in different contexts. In the context of the creative industries, it is most usually associated with the creation of original texts or artefacts. It is often, also, contrasted with the imperative of commerce. A television producer's work must span both creativity and commerce. This dichotomy is a hinderance in defining the producer's role. Considering, instead, *value*, allows us to synthesise these disparate elements.

Tostevin's role is to broker ideas between sources of stories, on-screen talent, the production teams and the broadcaster, therewith adding value, both cultural and economic, through each social transaction. Using this *networked brokerage* model, I propose that the producer's role is 1) to broker ideas across the structural holes separating the sources of those ideas from potential clients; 2) to construct, facilitate and maintain a production team, ensuring the team's network closure and to act as the intermediary node between that team and the content and the team and the client; and 3) to add cultural, social and economic value to ideas through their brokerage and to recoup that added value by virtue of acting as a pivotal node or hub through which the networked transactions occur.

The navigation of networks discussed so far focuses on their *transactional* quality. Network ties in this model are predominantly bi-directional, in that forms of capital are exchanged between agents and often asymmetrical, in that the form of capital that flows one way along a network tie is different to the form of capital that flows the other way - as in the exchange of economic capital (a fee) for cultural capital (the performance of a skill).

Distinct from, but connected to, the networks and related networking activities discussed above is the practice of *networking*, identified by Lee as a "powerful discourse" and, therefore, a "hegemonic and normative force" in independent television production (2011: 562). Networks and networking, I argue here and later in the thesis, are fundamental forms of identity construction and maintenance.

6.4   Networking as Identity Maintenance

> KR: Have you actually had deals which would not have been made unless you had been to that [networking event? …] Has it actually tangibly resulted in a deal?
>
> RT: No, I'm not sure I can honestly say it has. I think it's about maintaining contact, because that's the thing. A lot of deals, it seems to me, come about as a result of a relationship that's started at one point and then developed […] but, I - no - I'm not sure I can say that I've been to *IDFA*[22] and we've struck a deal (Tostevin, R., 2013: 34).

As noted in the closing of the previous section, networking is perceived by media professionals as a fundamental element of the role but one that sits at the periphery or outside of the actual production process. In the context of the producer or production worker, networking is an additional, often out-of-hours, responsibility where the outcomes are generally less tangible, less transactional and more provisional. In networking, money is not exchanged for services, but symbols of identity are shared as a form of co-surveillance in the interests of reinforcing group-membership and securing future employment. Networking happens in semi-formal ways - socialising after work, for example - and at more formal networking events. Semi-formal networking tends to occur within organisations, whereas networking events are intended to bring individuals from different organisations together. This provides us with an initial taxonomy of networking in the television production sector: *Intra-organisational networking*, semi-formalised and primarily focused upon group reinforcement and *inter-organisational networking*, formalised and primarily focused upon building new relationships.

One of the most formalised sites of networking is the film festival which brings together new content and its makers.

> Festivals - I love them, I wish I had more time to go to more of them. […] If you're fortunate to win awards, then of course there's a brilliant opportunity to schmooze with people that will say well done. […] I went to the Grierson awards, because *My Brother the Islamist* was nominated for best newcomer, Robb [Leech] being best newcomer. Didn't win, but what a fantastic opportunity to meet people like John Pilger (ibid.: 32).

Given the relative isolation of the micro-indie producer, which, in Tostevin's case, ranges from being a sole trader to his geographic location, then a sense of belonging must be constructed. In Tostevin's case, his previous experience of belonging in production offices was not always positive, including "the kind of dog eat dog atmosphere that I used to sometimes feel[. … T]here's a sort of, 'Let me walk all over you to get to that job that we're both pitching for' [laughs]" (Tostevin, R., 2018: 51-52)

and the aforementioned expectation of long working hours in a corporate environment, "expected because others would be doing too" (ibid.: 52).

Networking events and festivals, however, while they have competitive elements and there are commercial opportunities suggesting themselves and sought out, provide a less corporate setting for relationship-building and identity maintenance. Tostevin discusses Sheffield *Doc/Fest*…

> [I]t's the documentary community coming together, physically, in a series of venues. It's amazing. I don't always find it easy to do the whole sort of networking thing but, […] even though we don't see each other for month after month, we're part of something bigger. And then […] you realise that, yes, we're all part of that community that's feeding in programmes that are being watched and talked about. And […] then you really feel like you're part of a community (ibid.: 58).

Such communities also transcend geographic boundaries…

> I'm also part of something called the European Documentary Network, which is a loose affiliation of European filmmakers which, […] when you go to an event like the *IDFA* film festival in Amsterdam you feel part of this global community, where Britain is just part of it (ibid.: 59).

Another form of inter-organisational networking Tostevin performs is through social media, not only promoting GRACE's work but interacting with other programme-makers, sometimes as a second-screen activity during broadcasts.

> We're monitoring Twitter and Facebook and YouTube. We've got presences on all of those. We will make it our business to comment on programmes we like - to join in the banter. So, when Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall was presenting his *Fish Fight* [(KEO Films, 2011, 2014)] series for Channel 4, GRACE Productions was corresponding speaking to various people on Twitter - to River Cottage and so on (Tostevin, R., 2013: 14). I use Twitter a lot […] and I do see social media as being part of the networking umbrella, definitely (ibid.: 32).

Infrequent and loose affiliation between parties with shared and complementary interests extends the social network theory concept of the weak tie, which does not interrogate the temporal properties of the relationship. Indeed, in Burt's and in Granovetter's discussions, a weak tie may be one through which extremely regular and transactional behaviour can occur - only that it is not shared by other members of the 'home' network. There are clearly pragmatic logistical reasons why certain members of a loose network may meet only infrequently, but there may also be advantages in the maintenance and presentation of the self as professional identity. To those close to the individual - tied strongly and frequently - the narrative of the individual is there to be observed on a quotidian basis, and, in Goffman's (1956) terms, more likely to reveal

inconsistencies in "front-stage" performance and, if the relationship is strong enough and the life-work boundary is permeable, to reveal unguarded "back-stage" behaviour. The individual, therefore, is less able to perform the narrative of themselves as she or he would have it and, potentially, reveal vulnerabilities, as in Tostevin's sister's description of his work as a "hobby" (Tostevin, R., 2018: 44). Conversely, with looser and less frequent relations, the individual agent is far more able to write (and re-write) and perform the narrative of themselves which is most advantageous to them, given his or her audience. This constitutes a potential business advantage from the perspectives of competition and impression management and is, in relation to stronger tie-building, a lower risk activity.

Given Tostevin's long and varied career and the eclectic nature of his activities, his ability to selectively (re-)assemble significant episodes in his professional life in the form of a coherent narrative allows him a degree of control over his self-presentation to others. Somers (1994: 616-619) describes this process and how it allows the individual to subjectively "emplot" themselves against narratives on a micro-ontological scale, whereby she or he gives themselves a particular individuality and sense of self, on a meso-scale of public narrative, which is where the outward-facing professional identity is performed and on a macro-scale whereby meta-narratives of values and beliefs are presented. To "emplot" in this sense, is "to create a plausible and intelligent plot or storyline" (Down, 2008: 20) and, according to Giddens, a person's identity is to be found "in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going" (1991: 53-54). The maintenance of identity, "constructing an understanding of the self that is coherent, distinct and positively valued" (Alvesson et al., 2008: 15), including when there are high levels of self-doubt, anxiety or uncertainty, or when triggered through encounters which challenge the understanding of self (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002), should be considered "Identity work" (see Ruane, 2013), a no-less vital (and unavoidable) but certainly less explicit and un-resourced form of labour for the producer.

Tostevin's career and the fortunes of GRACE Productions are rife with discontinuities. In the 2018 interview he concurs with my image of GRACE as a "rollercoaster" (Tostevin, R., 2018: 49), concedes that he has felt like "packing up" and found his circumstances at times "ridiculous" (ibid.: 44). While, in the 2013 interviews, Tostevin displays concern over the unpredictability of his situation, there was none of the sense of existential threat to the company at that time. Despite these discontinuities and threats, Tostevin presents a coherent and relatively consistent picture of his own identity. While the actual episodes that form the narrative of his professional life are characterised by unpredictability and a relative lack of agency in the wider milieu of

television production, Tostevin maintains his sense of agency and autonomy by foregrounding more micro-level ontological aspects of his identity. These are based less around the company or the programmes and more around his values as a filmmaker, risk-taker, creative and mentor.

Distantiated in space and time, but, I argue here, still a form of networking activity, is the recollection of Tostevin's former colleagues and contributors. In the 2013 interviews, Tostevin recalls several notable - as in well-known in industry circles and potentially in public circles - television names. Jeremy Vine, Brian Redhead, Edwina Currie, Fiona Bruce, Charlotte Moore all appear as players in Tostevin's narrative.[23] These are all agents in Tostevin's previous projects, but, whereas at the time of production, there would be a recognisable, measurable bi-directional transaction between either Tostevin or the broadcaster and the named party, those transactions are now closed. How, then, are we to conceptualise the value that remains to Tostevin in these recollections? Certainly, they form part of his performed narrative - they allude to his professionalism, track record and credibility as a producer. For a producer with few current transactional ties to broadcasters, the assertion of previous ties alludes to the possibility of such ties being created again. In terms of capital, while the social capital of 'live' ties to these agents has declined or been lost, that the cultural capital of these associations remains. Without revealing itself to the named individual, a uni-directional transaction of cultural capital is drawn on by Tostevin. As such, rather than considering these once active ties now redundant or broken, there remains a residue of connection which, without any more maintenance than Tostevin evoking them, which he can exploit as a capital resource in the service of his own performed professional identity. I therefore propose adding to the taxonomy of ties in Social Network Theory - strong- and weak- (or bridging-) ties - *residual ties*, defined as formerly bi-directional socio-cultural-economic transactional ties (which may have been strong *or* weak at the time of previous transaction,) which have degraded to a uni-directional source of cultural capital and that perform as an identity resource for one of the individuals in the original pairing.

In lay terms, this might be referred to as 'name-checking.' Tostevin uses this term himself: "Charlotte Moore - I will name-check her again! She hasn't left yet! Three mentions!" (Tostevin, R., 2013: 11). This is a form of, in Goffman's terms, impression management, in Foucauldian terms, a technology of the self, in Bourdieusian terms, social-turned-cultural capital. Tostevin is saying, 'I have been there. I have belonged there. I know this space and language. I am part of this culture. I carry this with me. This is part of who I am.' *Residual ties* are a key component of professional self-

presentation and may confer a business-advantage. Residual ties to institutions may also be invoked. Tostevin's prior associations with broadcasters: ITV West; Channel 4 News; BBC Radio Guernsey are all drawn on as evidence of his cultural capital. Once part of Tostevin's quotidian work - the exchange of services for fees - their current passivity as nodes in his historical network does not undermine the resource they represent in his identity-presentation.

Yet more passive but no less a resource are recognition and awards, such as through his recollections of his programmes being talked about on social media…

> Lots of people talked about [*I Helped My Daughter Die*] and, you know, it's still being talked about now. Interestingly, on our website - our YouTube channel, more comments have come in about that one film than almost any other (ibid.: 9) …

… or *Beeching's Tracks: Somerset* (GRACE Productions, 2008) winning the Royal Television Society West Television Award for best Regional Documentary in 2008, GRACE receiving a nomination for the Best Newcomer Documentary at the Grierson Documentary Awards 2011 for *My Brother the Islamist* or its director, Robb Leech receiving the Edinburgh Television Festival 2011 Best Debut Director of the Year. These symbols of recognition all enhance Tostevin's professional identity and cultural capital. Seen through the lens of Actor Network Theory (see Latour 2005), these symbols of recognition are actors in Tostevin's narrative.

There is another historical but less-visible network which Tostevin draws on and which forms part of his identity and narrative, and that is people with whom he has previously shared formative professional experiences. These are not part of his unsolicited narrative, but are shared when directly enquired about. They include a colleague who Tostevin worked closely with at ITV West who, in the week prior to the 2018 interview had passed away. Tostevin's sense of belonging to that particular community was "emphatic" in that when he learned the news from old work-colleagues via social media…

> I was surprised by my response and the emotion that I felt. […] the people telling me about it, via Facebook, yes, but all of them people I've worked with. I've known them, worked closely with them, socialised with them at ITV West […] and, yes, I felt… I feel part of that community (Tostevin, R., 2018: 57-58).

These relationships bridge the professional and personal aspects of Tostevin's identity. In terms of memory, time and emotion, they form part of Tostevin's inner narrative - his own sense of identity. In terms of Tostevin, and his colleagues, developing their own cultural capital, they form part of his professional identity…

> Because these were people that I developed my skills with. Wouldn't be the person that I am now if I hadn't worked with them. By working with them I am the professional producer, director, creator, creative, that I think I am today, and hopefully they would feel the same about me. When individuals work in groups, at a certain point, I don't think any of that's wasted (ibid.: 61).

In certain cases, however, previous ties, which have become passive through time and circumstance, can be re-activated and transactional once more…

> One of those individuals, I'm having a meeting with about a possible story in three or four weeks' time. Another colleague who, again, I worked with very closely at ITV in Bristol, who I still work with on intermittent projects, even though we've not worked on a paid project recently, I feel connected to her. So, even though we are geographically separated, I feel that sense of community (ibid.: 58).

Some residual ties, therefore may be dormant, able to be re-woken and to become transactional given a particular set of circumstances. This is almost always the case between living human agents. Others will remain non-transactional but will retain their value to one or more of the connected parties as cultural capital. This would apply to inanimate actors such as awards, institutions or the deceased.

This phenomenon is discussed later in the thesis in the third case study, where the concept of the diasporic network - formed of individual agents with former strong ties, but who have lost their day-to-day connection while sharing history and memory - is proposed as a contribution to the knowledge of how producers and others identify and draw on different types of network structures in different circumstances and at different times in their careers.

6.5   Conclusion

This chapter, in its attention to the truest and most risk-inflected subsector of independent television production, the micro-independent producer, has highlighted the importance of relationships. The producer is dependent on building, negotiating and maintaining these relationships both in the assembly of project-pitches, teams and outputs and in the construction and maintenance of the producer's professional narrative and identity representation. These are the *negotiated dependencies* on which the producer relies not only to produce but also to embody being a producer. This embodiment of the producer's identity underpins every relationship the producer builds. The producer is the visible brand of the independent production company and carries the weight of the successes and failures of that company from the smallest to the

largest. Studies which concern themselves with the nature of producing by considering a sector are less able to explicate the very personal and emotional aspects of this professional embodiment, and the lived experience of hegemonic concepts such as vocation, entrepreneurship and creativity.

Tostevin's decision to leave employment in favour of starting his own production company in the early 2000s was fuelled by his own creative ambition and desire to move beyond the limitations imposed by in-house production, rather than forced redundancy or any failure on the part of his previous employer. As such, he was 'pulled' by a sense of opportunity rather than 'pushed' into it. This highlights the desire of independent producers for autonomy and self-determination. However, given the subsequent exposure to macro-level forces in the political economy of broadcasting, it is questionable quite how self-determining the micro-independent company can be. With little momentum of the sort that can be achieved by larger companies, through their expanded portfolios of productions, returning series, and resources to cover development work and overheads, GRACE and Tostevin occupy a more precarious space in the sector, relying on the chance hit rather than track record. Tostevin's development work is predominantly self-funded. This includes not only the investment of his own cultural capital, built over decades in broadcasting, but his own time and economic capital. The typical investment model of entrepreneurship sees external stakeholders staking resources on a potential return. The financial risk lies with the investor, while the investee carries the reputational risk. Tostevin is investing in himself and his company, so carries both financial and reputational risk. This is highlighted by his accountant's insistence that this model was unsustainable and his sister's depiction of Tostevin's work as a "hobby," which de-professionalises and re-personalises Tostevin's work.

Flexibility is a dominant discourse in the neoliberal economy. This research has shown flexibility to be asymmetrical between the client and the supplier. For the independent producer, the facilitative effect of flexibility - related to autonomy and self-determination - is balanced by the *demand* of flexibility. This reinforces this chapter's assertion that the inability to prescribe a long-term strategy, given the unpredictability faced by Tostevin, results not in the development of a planned long- or medium-term strategy but in patterns of behaviour which, although built of the same structural elements - sourcing stories, talent, seeking development opportunities and pitching - are different in terms of their actual content and, in effect, new businesses. So, in Tostevin's case, the core activity which is the greatest draw on his own resources is invention – an aspect of entrepreneurship. It would not be unreasonable to state that the core

business of the micro-independent producer is the assembly and pitching of prospective projects rather than programme-making itself. Certainly, more time and resource appear to be spent on the former over the latter. When a pitch is successful, the company changes its focus to the development and production of the programme itself. In the case of one-off films, given that each project or programme is constructed from scratch, we can consider each production to be an organisation in itself, in a similar way to how independent film production operates. In this way, Tostevin is conducting project-based work akin to film production. In contradistinction to much independent film production, however, Tostevin maintains a persistent company presence and identity, which is more common in television production.

To further describe the *creative* work of a producer, it is not sufficient to imagine the individual seeking out inspiration. The producer's role, this chapter asserts, is to broker ideas between agents, adding value through each transaction until, ultimately, the cultural capital of the idea is converted into the economic capital of the programme sale. This brokerage occurs between the producer and sources of stories, whether they be documentary, such as newspaper articles, or personal, such as individuals with compelling stories. It occurs between the producer and production team, individuals who can use their specific skills in camera work, editing, presenting and the other practical forms of storytelling on television. Ultimately, the producer is the node through which the assembled programme package (ideas and individuals) is brokered to the client broadcaster. The producer acts as a hub or pivotal node in a network of ideas brokerage, leading and taking responsibility for this process. This significantly develops descriptions of the producer's work in bringing a production team together. She or he does this, but it is important to consider to what ends and under what criteria these teams are assembled and *what the producer does with that team's elements in bringing an idea to fruition as a programme*. Each step an idea takes between agents in a production network involves the translation and transformation of cultural, social and economic capital. The process is complex, nuanced and different every time, influenced by the dispositions and abilities of each member of the network and their relationships. There are clues in this modelling which will help us to consider why particular working partnerships persists and others do not, and the differences in these processes when making one-off programmes or ongoing series.

As opposed to the negotiation of networks, *networking* is a form of intra-organisational group reinforcement or inter-organisational relationship construction. For the micro-independent producer, for whom intra-organisational networking is neither a priority nor, often, a possibility, inter-organisational networking plays an important role in

professional identity maintenance. One of the most striking findings through the longitudinality of this study is that, despite the unpredictability and change in Tostevin and GRACE's fortunes over the five years, Tostevin maintains a consistent, coherent and positive professional narrative and identity.

In no small part, Tostevin's prior relationships form a part in this consistency. Through the re-collection of former relationships, he builds his own cultural capital and a sense of belonging to a wider community. A novel and key concept in studying this form of network maintenance, and an addition to the taxonomy of social network theory, is the *residual tie*, a formerly bi-directional transactional relationship which has degraded to a *non-transactional residual tie* and a form of cultural rather than social capital. In some cases, *dormant residual ties* may become transactional once more. This concept is explored further in the third case study.

This chapter has highlighted the dependence of the independent producer on external stakeholders. These negotiated dependencies are a fundamental characteristic of the independent producer's role. At the scale of production discussed here, there is little to protect the individual from the whims of the free marketplace and, at stake, fundamentally, is the professional identity of the producer themselves. In the following case study, internally-strengthening group bonding strategies are employed to mitigate the risk of independence through actual and metaphorical familiness.

7.0   Case Study 2: "Like working for some crazy family." Ragdoll Productions. Family-Owned Independent

Ragdoll Productions is a family-owned company specialising in comedy for pre-school children. Formed in 1984 by Anne Wood, the company is well known to both UK and overseas audiences for programmes including *Pob's Programme* (Ragdoll Productions, 1985-1990); *Rosie and Jim* (Central Independent Television, Ragdoll Productions, 1990-1996); *Brum*, (Ragdoll Productions, 1991-2002); *Teletubbies* (BBC, Ragdoll Productions, 1997-2001); *In the Night Garden* (BBC, Ragdoll Productions, 2007-2009); *The Adventures of Abney and Teal* (BBC, Ragdoll Productions, 2011-2012); *Dipdap* (BBC, Ragdoll Productions, 2011-2013); and *Twirlywoos* (BBC, DHX Media, Mackinnon & Saunders, Ragdoll Productions, 2015-). Ragdoll Productions has a published annual turnover to March 2017 of around £2.4 million. The company is based in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, in facilities that, at the time of the interviews, accommodated ten full-time staff and a varying number of production freelancers depending upon the projects at hand.

In this chapter, the concept of production culture is explored in the analysis of meetings with the owner, Producer and employees of Ragdoll Productions. In analysing the data, it became apparent that each layer of observation and interpretation revealed another below, moving from the tangible, explicit and performed to the interpretive, tacit and believed. As such, it may seem suitable to map the findings of this mining exercise to Schein's "Three Levels of Culture" (2010) but the rich interoperability and permeability of the layer of visible culture and its implied underpinnings at Ragdoll suggest, at least in this case, limitations to the appropriateness of Schein's orderly taxonomy as an interpretative tool. In employing a Geertzian (1973) study of culture, the analysis begins with the more observational - or at least the verbally espoused - and becomes more interpretive.

The analysis begins with an exploration of the interpretation of *production culture* as understood both by the participants and the researcher. It becomes clear that the expressions of an organisational culture at Ragdoll are only barely, if at all, interrogated by the employers and employees, but the uniformity of their reflections on it demonstrates a high degree of shared rule-, and rule-making, systems. Rather than being couched specifically in the language of culture, the staff articulate their organisational approaches in terms of professional activities and outcomes.

There follows a discussion of the gatekeeping processes facing the outsider researcher in attempting to see below the surface appearance of such a tightly-knit organisation. The generosity of the participants in allowing access into the organisation is balanced by a protective stance, which is understandable given the competitive and risky nature of running a small or medium-sized creative business. The united front of togetherness observed by the researcher not only highlights my outsider status, but also reveals self-defensive mechanisms and resources which are brought to bear tacitly through the organisational culture rather than being explicitly articulated as "company values." Non-formal communication and inter-personal alignment processes are seen to construct and maintain the group with a high degree of loyalty, increasing the belonging of those already inducted and accepted, while also mitigating external risks to the group.

Television production is a time- and cost-critical activity with low profit margins. As such, its management demands high levels of efficiency and organisation. These managerial processes are visible throughout the organisation but it becomes apparent that they are strongly complemented by non-hierarchal or de-formalised behaviours which are, in the traditional goal-oriented or corporate understanding of professionalism, atypical but which are no-less focused on or contributory to company performance. These alternative professionalisms are highlighted as being relatively overlooked resources within organisations and in management studies.

Ragdoll is a family-owned and -managed company and this not only defines the company typologically (although family business scholarship does not share a common definition of what constitutes a family business) but also culturally. The *familiness* of the company is a powerful but, potentially, double-edged quality. The socioemotional wealth of *both* the business *and* the family demand attention and there is a relatively high degree of emotional labour involved in balancing these demands. The aforementioned informal elements of management organisation and communication are balanced by the hierarchical nature of the family's ownership and management while, at the same time, being suffused by the symbols of family. What becomes apparent, and as other research shows (Cabrera-Suárez et al., 2011; Chrisman et al., 2005; Dawson & Mussolino, 2014; Frank et al., 2010; Frank et al., 2017; Gómez-Mejía et al., 2011; Harveston et al., 1997; Hedberg & Luchak, 2018; Irava & Moores, 2010; Stenholm et al., 2016; Zahra, 2005), is that family companies are not like non-family companies. Further, the *familiness* of a company determines the interaction of a greater number of operational determinants and resources, suggesting that family companies, because of this increase in variables, are not likely to be alike and that the cultural dimensions of the family have a formative influence on the culture within the

organisation. As such, the *actuality* of the owning-managing family in the organisation creates a subsequent embedding of the values of family (both specifically *that* family and family *in general*) in the organisational culture to the extent that the company becomes a *simile* of the family - it is *like a family*. Thus, to attempt to separate the family and the company becomes conceptually and practically more difficult. The distinctions between family and business and culture and production, even between productivity and playfulness, blur significantly. Finally, given the heterogeneous genealogies and cultures of organisations, the need for a more complex typology of *independencies* is asserted.

The data was collected in a telephone interview with Anne Wood in December 2015 and a site-visit to Ragdoll's facilities in February 2016, which is where my analysis begins.

7.1   Recognising Organisational Culture

I am on the upper floor in Ragdoll Productions' offices, being given a tour of the facilities and a chance to meet and talk to the employees by Christopher (Chris) Wood, the company's Producer and son of owner and founder, Anne Wood. During an initial discussion with Chris in the ground floor's 'Red Room,' in which we talked about his work, his leadership style and some of the operational details of the company, I told him that I was interested in the idea of "Production Cultures" and finding out about the "culture" at Ragdoll. At the time, I described this concept in the broad terms of "what is it like to work here?" Inevitably, but with good and seeming genuine humour and ironic masquerade, the employees reported, with their boss, the son of the owner, smiling and laughing along, that it was "great."

Architecturally, the building, apart from a small company logo above the front door, lacks any identity that would make it stand out from the other office, sales and manufacturing units on this industrial estate on the outskirts of Stratford-upon-Avon. Inside it is functional, not opulent, and the memorabilia of the company's productions are occasionally scattered with little fanfare around the peripheries of the rooms and corridors. Each area of the building is given over to one of the three stages of production. The upper floor is for pre-production and production teams. This is where stories are devised, written and storyboarded. It is an open-plan area but for one small office housing the company's lead creative[24] and writer, Steve Roberts. In the other open-plan area I meet the production team: Production Manager; Production Designer; and Location Manager. The two primary activities carried out on the ground floor are

post-production - where programmes are edited and audio-dubbed - and administration - which includes the delivery and archiving of completed programmes. It is a mundane observation to make that the arrangement of the internal spaces of the company is formalised around production processes and departments.

> John, Storyboard Artist: I mean we do phone people, but we can just walk downstairs and chat to them.
>
> Joe, Storyboard Artist: My last email was three weeks ago (in Wood, C., 2016: 103).

I had asked John and Joe, the Storyboard Artists, how the company staff communicated with one another as a starting point for gaining an insight into the specific culture at Ragdoll. Their answers offered an initial clue pointing toward an informality that subverted the architectural demarcation of space and, with it, production operations, suggesting a specific *production culture* at Ragdoll.

The term *production culture* implies a focus on the study of how production is organised - production is the outcome of the organisation. 'Production' is the activities that are undertaken in the production of the cultural artefact; 'culture' is the rules (sometimes espoused, sometimes tacit) that govern the behaviours involved in that production. I am interested in *the organisation itself as an outcome of its culture*, which just happens to be collected around the production of television programmes. Instead of asking, 'What are the rules governing the production of these cultural artefacts?' I ask, 'Within this environment of the production of cultural artefacts, what are the rules governing human behaviour and why may they be so?' As such I consider the production of a culture in a culture of production in ways suggested by Salaman (1997) and du Gay (1997). These authors consider the explicit imposing or espousing of organisational culture and cultural change by *design and intervention*. The case study here allows for the study of the development of a culture of production that has determinants and imperatives which are economic, certainly, and explicit, to a degree, but which are inseparable from and symptomatic of the particularities of family ownership. This is not organisational culture by design but by genealogy.

It is one thing for an academic researcher to problematise and manipulate conceptualisations of culture and its methodological implications and entirely another for the contributors to the research to do so. Industrial self-reflexivity and ways of organising work teams, focal points of Caldwell's (2008) study into production culture, were both evident in a discussion with the live-action production team at Ragdoll, but

the discussion also highlighted the separation between how an academic may conceptualise culture and how production professionals may, or may not, do so.

> Chris Wood: Do you guys have any ideas - you don't have to answer this - but one of the things that Karl's talking about was our culture here. Does anyone have any idea what that is?
>
> Nigel Harris, Production Manager: What does that mean?
>
> CW: Well, I suppose it's the way we work and how we operate with each other. It's obviously different in different places.
>
> KR: For example, it doesn't seem to me to be a very managerialised kind of culture it doesn't seem to be a very corporate kind of culture - what does it feel like?
>
> NH: It's very much a team effort, so…
>
> Bill, Live-Action Production Designer: It's from the drama world that we're from.
>
> Helen, Location Manager: It's more relaxed.
>
> Bill: It's more relaxed and fewer personnel.
>
> NH: Yes [laughs] (in Wood, C., 2016: 116-117).

Given a Geertzian (1973) conceptualisation of culture, and if it is not just to be observed but to be interpreted, asking my contributors for their own descriptions of the culture at Ragdoll reveals only their own observational, un-interpreted and relativistic experiences. That is not the aim of this research, but it is a starting point. Television production, in the most general terms, follows a number of industrially standardised processes from the development and pitching of ideas, commissioning processes, the three phases of production itself (pre-production, production and post-production,) programme-delivery, broadcast and rights exploitation. As such, there is a shared language between different companies in different places - a Location Manager's responsibilities are, in general terms, the same across production companies - so we can identify, in a diversity of separate organisations, a shared language, the usage of which defines the boundaries of the field of British television production. This shared language allows for professional and economic functioning such as employee mobility, career development and inter-organisational communication. However, interactions at an intra-organisational level are heterogeneous, contingent on complex factors such as, but not limited to, organisational structure and ownership, business and employment models and interpersonal memory and history. As such, it is in the connecting of clues that point to how the organisation - the group of people - perform their professional identities. This is not to ask, 'What do you do here?' but to consider 'How do you behave here, what are the rules and *what does that mean*?' As Geertz

states, "Analysis […] is sorting out the structures of signification […] and determining their social ground and import" (1973: 9).

A conversation with the Storyboard Artist, Joe, and his colleague, John, elicited a relatively thin, in the Geertzian sense, description of *how they did storyboarding* - the explanation and demonstration of animatics,[25] the technologies they chose to work with, the importance of their work to the controlled efficiency of the production process, the hours they kept and so on - but the lines, "We can just walk downstairs and chat to them," and, "My last email was three weeks ago," tell us far more about the behavioural rules of the culture of production at Ragdoll. While the separate office areas demarcate general phases of production, and everyone has his or her place, defining his or her individual role, these explicit manifestations of work did not prohibit less formal communication strategies. The explicit architectural symbolism of the work-place, with its visible division of labour, did not fully reflect the organisational practices of those who occupied it.

> John, Storyboard Artist: We're always saying, 'come and have a look at this new animation' or stuff like that - which is again quite cool about us all being in an office together. Sharing influences and stuff like that, really. Not necessarily related to what we're doing here (in Wood, C., 2016: 107).
>
> Steve Roberts, Creative and Writer: I find it very inspiring, it's a nice group of people, we all work closely together. It's really nice we're in this room together working. […] It's […] that you're working closely together on a project, therefore you care about it and you talk about it amongst each other all the time, so it becomes part of your daily routine, and then you internalise the kind of rules of the show, in a way. The more you work together with people on it, the more everyone understands it, and then there's sort of like a short-hand (ibid.: 114-115).

These descriptions of the culture of communication at Ragdoll are professionally-focused: sharing influences, the rules of the show, working closely together are, in effect, efficiency-savings. Fordist production-line standardisation and division of labour and Taylorist time-and-motion surveillance are not uncommon in television production, where time, money and quality-control are critical. Production at Ragdoll is also navigated non-hierarchically and collaboratively between departments. This agility and the ability to respond to change and challenge with flexibility where "the interactions of relatively autonomous employees [determine] the management process," is, according to Davis and Scase, a characteristic of successful small to medium enterprises in the creative industries (2000: 21) and is promoted through Chris Woods' espoused leadership style:

> We've got an understanding together - we've got enough experience, let's say, where we know the times when we think 'I need to talk to you,' and the times when we can just get on with it. So, it isn't like this formulaic corporate culture where you've got HR and you've got your annual assessment. We have that conversational dialogue on a daily basis about things (Wood, C., 2016: 98).

It is a way of working seemingly appreciated by the production team, who describe the company as "close-knit" (ibid.: 105).

> NH: It's a very lean machine. [W]e can't afford to have any middle management or people that don't do anything. […] Everybody has a purpose. It's not like a big film shoot where you have loads of people standing around just in case (ibid.: 117-118).

> Bill: [H]ere, you're very much a together company, you know […] I guess, the smallness of the company, it's much better and also the ideas of what they want are more together when we start (ibid.: 118-119).

The impression created during these discussions and descriptions was of an organisation that pared any inefficiencies away. It ran on the minimum number of full-time employees, bringing in freelance production staff exactly when needed and with an exact brief, down to individual shot timings, that sent extremely detailed animatics to the animation company which, again, had an extremely tight brief and little in the way of creative freedom which would constitute an additional expense. Everything was as exact as possible. Ad hoc conversations were used to share and solve problems collectively. The rapid, regular sharing of information was critical in creating a shared understanding, a shared vision, with no waste. This can be rationalised from a business perspective as the flexible efficient working practices demonstrated by effective team-work.

The discussions here, identified by Caldwell as a common mode of disclosure, are "task oriented and nontheoretical" (2008: 15). The workers judge Ragdoll based on how it interacts with their own technical competences, expectations and industrial norms. The recognition of the tightness and efficiency in the organisation of the company is practice-performance-focussed rather than cultural in the interpretive-semiotic sense. The self-representation here is pragmatic and mundane and it belies the highly specialised knowledge, patterns of activity and interpersonal communication and relationships which are required in production. These processes, as recognised by Caldwell, are *always* deeply theorised, but the theory is never espoused as such. It's just what we do here.

As Wenger (1998) indicates, communities of practice have often-complex and tacit cultural systems in place which must be negotiated, agreed and learned for each new

member of the community. The community, in effect, becomes an exclusive network with its own initiation rites and rules. The upshot of this, at least within the targets set by the community itself, is resilience, efficiency and effectiveness - high-functioning organisational behaviours. Wenger makes it clear that communities of practice do not always align with what we refer to as "teams" or "groups" or "companies," but are informal collectives. As such, their true identity is somewhat tacit. They may not advertise themselves overtly and their existence may, often, only be inferred.

7.2   Organisational Culture, Trust and Gatekeeping

KR: What's it like working here?

John: Um great! [laughs]

CW: He will say that 'cause I'm standing here!

[Laughter] (in Wood, C., 2016: 102-103).

The site-visit to Ragdoll was granted several weeks earlier at the conclusion of a telephone interview I conducted with Anne Wood, Ragdoll's owner and founder. She had requested anonymity because, she said, while she was sure that I was not in search of controversy, there were those "out there" who were. The conversation contained a great deal of fascinating detail and reflection on a long, successful and influential career in broadcasting. Wood painted a (familiar and well-exercised, both by independent producers and academics,) picture of an organisation driven by creativity in the context of a failed market, with risk-averse clients, for original children's programmes. The conversation was enough of an introductory ice-breaker for me to be granted access to the site of production. I was required to sign a non-disclosure agreement, requiring me not to reveal anything that might harm the company either reputationally or through the disclosure of business intelligence. The tour of the facilities and meetings with staff were conducted by Wood's son, Christopher, the Producer-by-title and in-effect Head of Operations to Anne Wood's leader of strategy. It was helpful for me to recall some of my own experiences in television production (having worked at the BBC - the primary client for original children's programming - and in children's television) and as the father of two children (both viewers of Ragdoll programmes) to create bridges between myself, the academic, and the professionals at Ragdoll. However, this did not mean that while I was *physically* inside Ragdoll Productions and able to employ some shared points of reference, that I was *an insider* at Ragdoll Productions. Several levels of gatekeeping were in place. Given the competitive nature of the sector and the risk involved in revealing business-sensitive information to an outsider, a level of anxiety is understandable, pragmatic and, as will

be discussed later in relation to family businesses, likely inevitable. This, in itself, is not as clearly problematic to the research process as it may seem.

Research is a process of interpretation. Interpretation is always positioned at the cultural site of the interpreter - in relation to his or her own aims, experiences and expectations. My initial enquiry, 'What is the culture here?' asked of workers in the context of their workplace and workplace practice, was interpreted as the question, "What is it like to work here?" I had, however inadvertently, asked for professional judgements regarding the operation of the company and the employees had performed their outwardly-acceptable professional identities to the outsider. These, though, do not reveal the underlying principles and imperatives that underpin the shared construction of a workplace culture. As Geertz says, "anthropological writings are themselves interpretations, and second or third order ones to boot" (1973: 15). The researcher clarifies, for themselves, his or her aims and objectives, interpreting these as planned interactions with his or her subjects. These interactions are interpreted by the subjects and responses are formulated (in consideration of the context and import of the interaction) and delivered. The researcher interprets these responses in relation to the context of the research. There is no mind-reading. There is no simple transfer of fact. There is always translation, elision and hyperbole. The interpreted representation of the object of cultural interest does not reproduce the views of the object of interest. My interpretations of the data I collected at Ragdoll Productions are not the same thing as the self-perceptions of Ragdoll Productions' team. As a way of rebalancing my analysis' magnification of some of the more challenging facets of running this company, the reader is reminded that Ragdoll Productions is one of the most established and highly-respected producers of pre-school television in the UK if not worldwide and is a relatively small company which has maintained its values and independence for over 35 years in an extremely challenging marketplace. I am interested in any mechanism which contributes to this resilience.

In working with this data, in order to avoid merely thin descriptions of professional minutiae, it was necessary to look past and between the very informative explanations of production activities and their professional contexts for something else - something revealing not of explicit business intelligence but of more tacit cultural significance. In looking sideways at the data, identifying parts of the conversations that were somehow transgressive of 'what was to be expected,' both elisions and unexpected candour begin to reveal a particular culture of production at Ragdoll and lead to a discussion of the specificity of this business.

The opening exchange of this section ("What's it like working here? Um great! [laughs]. He will say that 'cause I'm standing here! [Laughter]") is a record of me, an outsider with an audio recorder 'doing research,' asking an employee to provide a value-judgement of his employment while his employer looks on. The words alone in the exchange could have several meanings - the answer could be sarcastic or taken at face reading. The laughter cues Chris' comment which both asserts his seniority while cueing more, shared, laughter. Chris implies that the answer, if unmediated because of his presence, might be the opposite, or at least more nuanced. This segue of faux sarcasm and irony performs to the outsider, 'We are not telling you,' while, at the same time, saying, 'It is not perfect.' Chris Wood later admits: "It isn't always utopia - there's times we're absolutely stressed, there's difficult times, it's hard" (Wood, C., 2016: 140), but the details of the sources of stress and hardship and how the company and individuals *inside* it express or resolve any difficulty or conflict is not revealed. As Anne Wood says, "It's a small family company and, you know, it runs like a family. It has its ups and downs like any family, but it's still a family" (Wood, A., 2015: 91). There are clear hierarchies and mechanisms of control evident to the outsider looking at the surface presentations of the company and its workers, but it also became clear that no-less vital but far less-formal and less-traditionally professional behaviours were significant resources in Ragdoll's organisational maintenance.

Later, I am being shown post production on the ground floor and meet Adam, an editor who has been at the company since he was a runner five years ago. He is recording some voiceover with Anne Wood in preparation for an Additional Dialogue Recording (ADR) session. After some conversation with Adam about his time and work at Ragdoll, I reflect back to Anne Wood my impressions of the communication culture at Ragdoll:

> KR: This culture - people are talking, things are visible, across and through.
>
> AW: Oh absolutely. I mean the great thing - I love gossip, I love them all gossiping together because things come out of that. And I think that's the other thing, if you haven't got space for people to interact… I think gossip's a great thing, and I always join in. We often have all sorts of discussions and then we get back to work. But it's a very good thing (in Wood, C., 2016: 130-131).

Gossip is a form of communication not usually associated with professionalism. Wood asserts, however, that gossip is actually a vital part of the communication and, therefore, production culture at Ragdoll. She introduces a dimension of reflexivity that transcends the purely industrial and which foregrounds interpersonal human relations and behaviour. What does it mean, then, that Wood perceives gossip to be so vital?

The foundations of gossip lie in the covert female resistance of paternal power. Gossip was a space and mechanism in which patriarchal rules of behaviour were at once subverted and re-written. According to Capp, "Among their gossips, women were temporarily unsupervised and ungoverned. Men predictably wondered what they discussed, imagining older women teaching the tricks of deceit and subversion" (2004: 376). But, Capp expands, the gossip network did not only function as a mode of female anti-patriarchal resistance, but created boundaries "based on exclusion as well as inclusion," being not only a "tool for survival," but also, "an offensive weapon against […] outsiders" (ibid.: 381). Because the gatekeepers of accepted and dominant forms of communication are traditionally male, feminine forms of communication are, relative to masculine forms, demeaned. Gossip is depicted as transgressive, scurrilous and lacking worth. This is not the way that it is depicted by Wood, who foregrounds its productive benefits.

Foster, in his taxonomic analysis of positive gossip, defines four functions it may carry out: "Information;" "entertainment;" "induction and trust maintenance;" and "influence" (2004: 84-85). As such it consolidates group resources and behaviour with benefits to the whole group (Johnson, 2016: 308). Wood recognises that "things come out of that, [gossip]" - information, friendship, consensus, entertainment - all positive contributions to an effective happy workforce. There is also a conceptual separation between *gossip* and *work*: "We often have all sorts of discussions and then we *get back to work,*" eliding the fact that the gossip happens *at work*, *in the workplace* ("space for people to interact…,") between colleagues ("them all,"), and with the owner present ("and I always join in.") The rules of work - the contracts, roles and responsibilities, working hours, managerial structure and the relationship between office-space and work discussed above, are rewritten, subverted, if only momentarily ("we get back to work") by the facilitation and practice of gossip. In effect, this inverts the space (conceptual location of activity) and place (actual location of specific activities) at Ragdoll. The specific production-places become spaces for the construction, reinforcement and testing of inclusion in and, therefore, exclusion from the Ragdoll Family.

Gossip builds solidarity and trust, which are essential characteristics of a resilient team. Gossip also serves an internal regulatory function. It is an activity through which newcomers learn the group's rules of engagement. Negative gossip provides information about external risks to the group and gives warning of the impact of exclusion from the group - a member would not want to become the subject of negative gossip. Positive gossip promotes generosity between group-members. Gossip is a reputation-management and evolutionary survival mechanism (Kuo, Chang et al.,

2015; Wu et al., 2016). In these ways, gossip can be seen to be productive working practice, and one appropriate to Ragdoll's context of high internal efficiency and high external risk. Gossip is also a *symptom and indicator of group socialisation*, congeniality, conformity, consensus and shared privacy, without which, according to Kuo, Chang et al., (2015) gossip would not occur.

Providing the space for gossip is a far more nuanced method of cultural construction, maintenance and co-surveillance than the enforcement of explicitly articulated 'company values.' As Chris Wood states:

> I think values are a very interesting area, because […] you cannot impose values on people. […] By imposing the values, they are rote. You either buy in to that or not. And also, if you start to talk about these values, I think there's a danger of it becoming a virtuous kind of thing and it catches you out, you know. It's never black and white (Wood, C., 2016: 100).

Wood, here, is discussing company values as they might manifest in explicit forms, in which they become a form of rule-book - an idealisation which, for all those rules it contains which may happen to be congruent with individual employees' own beliefs, will contain those which will inevitably create tension and even be expressly resisted or broken. This relates back to Davis and Scase's (2000: 21) argument about the importance of the interactions and employees in determining management processes as, in doing so, they are not just determining the instrumental form of activities - who has to do what, how and by when, but discursively coming to a shared understanding of their own negotiated rules of engagement with one another throughout the workplace and its projects - in other words, *the culture of production.* It is therefore important to consider the seemingly throwaway nature of gossip in the workplace as a crucial cultural process. Foster's psychological survey of the functions of gossip concludes:

> As a general psychological strategy, people passively and actively use gossip to determine their view of the world and to convey it meaningfully to others. To no small extent, *we learn how to behave, think, and communicate from and with gossip* (2004: 95, emphasis added).

Gossip as a feminine form of communication and group reinforcement can, therefore, be seen to complement the traditional dominant masculine forms of communication and professionalism which are dominated by goal-oriented, competence-based, efficiency-saving and regulatory language. These masculine forms do also have their place in a business environment and form much of Chris Wood's discussions of the operational processes at Ragdoll, but they are contextualised for members of the group within less formalised trust-forming language. Gossip at Ragdoll can be interpreted as

a socially-constructed meaning-making device, it can be shown to be professionally, socially and personally productive – provided that one is included in the gossip group - and it both fosters and indicates conditions of sociability, trust and privacy. It is rapidly responsive, because it can occur at any time (it does not wait for, or occur in, 'meetings,') to changes in both internal and external conditions. It temporarily subverts traditional or dominant power-structures within the group while it strengthens the group against those who might threaten it. "The strength of what we do," says Anne Wood, "comes from who we are" (in Wood, C., 2016: 131).

It is crucial that it is Anne, not only one of a very small minority of women in the building but also the owner and strategic leader of the family business, who validates gossip as a productive activity. In contrast, here is an extract from Chris Woods' discussion of his leadership style:

> I might just say, 'right, we're here now, we need we need to achieve x to that, so either we need to either lift our tempo,' or I might say, 'ok, so I'm going to reorganise you, because this is how I sense that we're going to get the best productivity - does everybody agree with that? Yes, fine,' and then we motor (ibid.: 101).

This is not to say that all of Anne's language foregrounds the feminine and Chris's the masculine, they both present with subversive humour, a strong sense of togetherness and are goal-oriented, but perhaps it takes a (powerful) woman to not only openly give respectability back to an otherwise degraded form of communication and culture, but also to recognise the value of doing so.

As identified in a survey by the National Foundation for Women Business Owners (1994) by Harveston et al. (1997: 381), while male managers "to a greater extent than female entrepreneurs, stress logical thinking, analyzing, processing information methodically, and developing procedures for getting tasks done," females tended to "think of their businesses as families and their professional relationships as networks." It is, therefore, vital to recognise how these espoused attitudes toward what constitutes professionalism and performance are grounded in gendered attitudes toward social organisation. While the more masculine hierarchical mode is more obviously related to workplace performance, the feminine, seemingly informal mode is no less performance-related. The distinction between the act of gossiping and getting "back to work" masks the actuality that the gossip occurs in the context of the workplace and

that it is no less a constituent of and contributor to professionalism than overt task-completion.

The cultural alignment which gossip promotes is, in this organisation at least, critical to its social- and business-wellbeing. The level of existential risk in a creative small business is high and gossip, as a form of community-building and cohesion, acts, as do support networks, as a bulwark against multiple threats, whether they are internal or external. Gossip, therefore, is a business-activity in itself. This leads us to question dominant masculine models of "professionalism" themselves and suggest future research interrogating the impact of seemingly 'un-professional' feminine behaviours on work culture and performance. The hypothesis suggested here is that, rather than informal, feminine, workplace cultural practices being counterfactual to professionalism, they have a positive impact on business performativity and therefore extend and enrich the accepted definition of professionalism.

7.3   The Family as Business

The cultural maintenance of the organisation through both hierarchical and traditionally Fordist and Taylorist organisation *complemented by* non-hierarchical, *alternatively-professional* communication, presents an interesting dyad of seemingly opposing approaches to business management, but it is clear from the above observations that without either approach, the other would not most effectively serve the interests of the organisation and its occupants. A further and more fundamental dyad is now explored and that is the nature and effects of Ragdoll being a family-owned and managed company, a *family business*.

> KR: So, you're a family company. The company feels like a family,
>
> CW: Yeah, yeah - well, that's good.
>
> KR: …or there's elements of that.
>
> CW: Well, it's inevitable really (Wood, C., 2016: 139).

The Woods' relationship is bi-located in both the space of family and the space of business. Indeed, the specific places where both family and commercial business is conducted, the Ragdoll offices and family homes, become conjoined through space as family matters are discussed at work and business matters at home, and vice versa. The reversal of the term "family business" to "business family" allows for a shift in perspective that foregrounds the performance of identity in a culture whose rules not

only allow but demand the survival of both elements. Rather than work-life balance, which linguistically and functionally separates the two spaces of activity, exemplified here is work-life symbiosis.

Defining a family business is not as straightforward as it might seem. The operational factors of ownership and strategic management having intra-familial and inter-generational succession appear on the surface to be the fundamental requirements for a business to be considered a family one. However, business management literature, as recognised by Chrisman et al. (2005), has not settled on a unified baseline upon which to build research into the field. As such, a number of different approaches and starting points are available. This thesis is somewhat resistant to operational taxonomies of business, management and culture and asserts that the positionality of the researcher and the specific lived subjectivities of the contributors present variables and outcomes which are unique and atypical in each case. With that said, the initial testing of a relatively essentialist definition of family businesses against the collected data mobilises the analysis by opening the door for a more nuanced discussion to follow. As such, the discussion here begins with some positivist approaches and attempts at explanation but only in order to set up and facilitate the less managerial and more cultural study of the nature and effects of familiness at Ragdoll.

Research into family businesses identifies a range of characteristics that distinguish them from their non-family counterparts. Kenyon and Ward summarise that,

> Family controlled firms are more diversified and more vertically integrated. […They] take a longer-term view regarding strategy, use less debt, but have a higher rate of reinvestment in the business. […They] are not just superior financial performers but, despite all the extra family challenges that they must face, also on average exist longer than their counterparts which become victims of merger and acquisition trends (2005: 2-3).

This all rings true of Ragdoll, whose diversification extends to letting space to local companies, such as rehearsal space to the Royal Shakespeare Company, running the Ragdoll Foundation, a charity organisation founded by Anne Wood and chaired by her daughter, Katherine, and further community-engagement such as *The Story of Children's Television*, a touring exhibition in 2015-2016 created by the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum and supported by the BBC, ITV and Warwick University. Its vertical integration, outsourcing only the most tightly-controlled aspects of production, is relatively high. Anne Wood's long-term vision for the organisation is in its fourth decade, making Ragdoll one of the oldest independent production companies in the UK, and the company has maintained its financial independence throughout that time. Unlike most production companies, though, where the balancing of risk and reward, or

of creativity and commerce, are the key tensions in the running of the business, a family business has the added consideration of the family itself. Kenyon and Ward identify that, whereas decisions in non-family businesses are considered from a management perspective, with, perhaps, the added viewpoint of shareholders, the family business must consider decisions from all three perspectives of management, ownership *and family* (2005: 6). Kenyon and Ward's model is illustrated as three overlapping circles, with special consideration being needed when dealing with the overlaps - how is the company ownership distributed among the family? Is the company managed by a family member and, if so, which? How and to whom will the ownership pass-on?

I asked Chris Wood how he and Anne balanced their family and professional relationships.

> Well, I don't think we do, to be honest with you. It's part of who we are. Maybe she'll have a different view, but my view is it's just who she is. There isn't that kind of separation. The relationship with my mum is that she's a colleague, I work with her; she's my mum, she's brought me up. […] But our relationship - there is just no separation. When I go over to the family - we go over and see my mum and my dad - we'll talk about work […] I mean, sometimes, listen, it isn't always utopia - there's times we're absolutely stressed, there's difficult times, it's hard having a family because you can't separate it. It's not easy, but it's just the way it is, you know? I don't know any different I suppose (Wood, C., 2016: 139-140).

This constant rehearsal of relationship maintenance, learning, discussion and decision-making, essential to family cohesion and, so, the cohesion of the business' senior team also facilitates the agility of the business itself. Running a family business reliant on ongoing commissions in a competitive and, arguably, with just one customer - the BBC - for original pre-school content, failed market (Steemers, 2017), constitutes a high level of risk. However, Stenholm et al.'s (2016) survey of entrepreneurial activity in family businesses hypothesises that risk-taking is less associated with business growth in the family firm, potentially because of the long tenures of its CEOs (Zahra, 2005). The careful strategising of Anne Wood, 'CEO' for three and a half decades - always with a programme in distribution, one in production and one in consideration (Wood, A., 2015: 83) - illustrates the desire for a level of predictability and, with both the welfare of the business and family at stake, a sustainable approach to the development of the business rather than serial risk-taking. However, she reveals a very high perception of risk in her interview, describing it as "huge" (Wood, A., 2015: 67).

Under the UK Independent Production terms of trade that allows producers to maintain rights in their intellectual property, broadcasters will typically only fund 25% of

production costs totalling, in the case of Ragdoll, around £7 million per series. The rest of the investment comes from business (and, therefore, family) capital.[26] Its return relies on the unpredictable success of the programme first in the domestic market and then internationally. It would be appropriate to describe Wood's approach not as risk-avoiding but as risk-aversion, in that while risk-taking is inevitable, its existential threat to the family is extremely high. But, as Stenholm et al. (2016) argue, risk is taken not with the goal of business growth, which Wood describes as "the capitalist view" of independent production (Wood, A., 2015: 67), but with the maintenance of what the company does and believes in - in this case the production of high-quality pre-school children's comedy. Sometimes, says Wood, it "has to be more lifestyle than you necessarily would choose to be" (ibid.). This "lifestyle" alignment is, according to Heelas (2002), a form of soft capitalism, which favours narratives related to commitment, identity, initiative, creativity and emotional labour. It impregnates *work* with *life* in a way which resists the dominant, instrumentalised, economic work ethics of 'hard' capitalism. As such it is not only a symptom, or logical outcome, of prevailing economic contexts, but an intervention into them which is a declaration, in itself, of difference. This atypicality, in the case of Ragdoll, will be discussed later.

As well as high levels of external risk, the complex nature of family businesses carries significant internal risk factors. Family business research identifies how the *familiness* (Habbershon, Williams, 1999 and see Frank et al., 2010 for a comprehensive literature review) of a family business, defined as a set of resources created by the three-way interaction of the *family system*, its *individual members* and the *business* itself (Habbershon, Williams, 1999: 11), while often providing competitive advantage, requires all three of these resources to be maintained if the family business is to thrive. If they are not, there is consequential risk to the wellbeing of any or all three of them. Chris Wood illustrates how these factors were managed in his entry into the company:

> Anne said, 'Look, you can do this. I'd rather you do it because, ultimately, you'll do as you're told, ultimately!' [laughs] 'I'll put my son in there, this is how I want him to work, just listen to me,' and I did and, through that experience, I learned a tremendous amount. […] I think she felt reassured. For her, the risk was greater bringing someone else in that she had to teach […] because I'd grown up with the company, there was an understanding of the culture (Wood, C., 2016: 140).

This is interesting as Wood identifies that his initial lack of knowledge in regard to how to produce programmes was counter-weighted by his understanding of the Ragdoll *culture*. In effect, he had a lifetime of 'training,' as Anne's son, in 'how we do things here,' in the context of the family system. This then performed as a critical resource

transferrable to the business. His training in producing programmes was then performed, 'on the job.'

> So, from that, I went out – *Boohbah* [(GMTV, Ragdoll Productions, 2003)], I was associate producer on that - went out to Spain, shot live action sequences. I worked on *Abney and Teal*, on *Dipdap*. I did some work on *Tronji* [(BBC, Ragdoll Productions, 2009)]. I worked as a 1st AD on *Teletubbies*. So, I've had quite a fair bit of experience. […] The success of *Teletubbies* means I've been to *TV Globo* in Brazil. I've been over to America. I've travelled the world, basically […] The opportunities I've had has been unbelievable (ibid.: 140-141).

Of the employees that I spoke to, many had years of experience and on-the-job training and several of the less experienced workers spoke of the training opportunities the company provided, but the difference is that their employment and job-security was reliant entirely on their own merits. This is different to Chris' status, who was brought in as a family member who would 'do as he was told,' who understood the company culture and who benefitted from mentoring by the owner, his mother.

> I feel very much that the work that I do now is perhaps the investment that she's put in. […] I've made edits that have been rubbish, a lot of mistakes have been made [laughs] to get to where I am now. And it's difficult for her, because when I come in to the business, […] they obviously see me as a connection, and that was difficult to start with, but I think now with the experience that I have, and the understanding of the business that I have, I know, that everybody upstairs, everybody around me knows that it doesn't matter who I am - son, whatever… am I taking responsibility, do I understand what I'm doing? (ibid.: 139-140).

This is recognisably behaviour demonstrating the maintenance of the family, individual and business resources in a company with a high degree of familiness *through performance* - not only target-related performance but also the *identity performance* of professional competence. Clearly, if the production workers do not trust or respect Woods' professional skills, then the business and its culture, the individual wellbeing of the family members (and employees) and even of the family-system itself are put at risk. Research into succession in family businesses asserts that succession is a process (Handler, 1994) requiring conscious planning (Kesner and Sabora, 1994) and potentially highly emotional and capable of causing rifts both in the family and the business (Harveston et al., 1997).

Chris' dedication to proving himself to the employees and the family through high standards of performance and leadership is not only about proving and protecting his own capital, but the whole tripartite family-business complex. He becomes the locus of a number of overlapping tensions and must, as Kenyon and Ward state, "consider all stakeholders including […] family members, employees and the outside world (suppliers, client, banks)" (2005: 71). Nor may it be easy for Anne Wood, who founded

the company from scratch, to pass on her responsibility. Kenyon and Ward, again, identify that a further degree of tension may be experienced by founders, who

> have been neither followers nor successors [and for whom] giving up what may be close to an obsession is extremely difficult. To watch someone, even one of one's own children, do things differently is even harder" (ibid.).

Gómez-Mejía et al. (2011) state that, "personal pride and self-concept of family members tends to be intimately tied to the business [and] the ability of family members to exercise authority and control over the business represent[s] an important source of emotional satisfaction" (ibid.: 654-5). This satisfaction, however, comes at the cost of emotional labour.

The *emotional labour* conceptualised by Hochschild (2012: 20) and further developed in the contexts of television production by Grindstaff (2002) and Hesmondhalgh & Baker (2008) is determined by the suppression of workers' feelings in order to sustain outward appearances (professionalism) or to disassociate one's own feelings from those of external stakeholders. The Woods' dealings with the "times we're absolutely stressed," (Wood, C., 2016: 140), and Chris' anxiety when taking over production are mediated within the family *whilst also* maintaining outward appearances both within and beyond the bounds of the company adds a dimension to the cited conceptualisations above. The emotional labour intrinsic to running a family business has both outward, business-facing elements and also inward, family-facing elements. It is to be wondered where the space exists, as it does for the non-family-business worker, to drop this particular weight and leave it behind. The emotional labour is performed not only for the individual and the organisation but also for the family itself. It is, therefore, critical to the maintenance of the *socioemotional wealth* of both the organisation and the family. Gómez-Mejía et al. argue that,

> family owners are likely to see potential gains or losses in socioemotional wealth as their primary frame of reference in the management of the firm. Therefore major managerial choices will be driven by a desire to preserve and enhance the family's socioemotional wealth apart from efficiency or economic instrumentality considerations (2007 in Gómez-Mejía et al., 2011: 656).

This suggests that preserving the socioemotional wealth of the family takes precedence over the functioning of the business. However, given the interoperability of the family and the business, it is difficult to imagine a sustainable family business which can overlook poor or damaging management by a family-member. Furthermore, in the event of unwelcome management decisions needing to be made, such as down-sizing

the company, the close interface between family and business means that the family is not insulated from the socioemotional impact of redundancy on employees.

> AW: I had people I had to let go that had worked here for twenty-odd years. It was awful. It was awful, I hated it, but I had to do it (Wood, A., 2015: 91).

There is a complexity to this transaction, demonstrating that, whatever the effects on the socioemotional wealth of the family, the sustainability of the business is paramount - connected as it is to the economic foundations of the family. There is an evident high level of two-way commitment at Ragdoll - employees are nurtured through on-site mentoring and off-site training; they tend to stay for extended periods of employment or return to the organisation serially; and the espoused company image, discussed next, is that of an extended family. But this two-way commitment does not equate to equality of agency between family-member-owners and employees.

Hedberg and Luchak's (2018) model of the relationship between founder attachment, socioemotional preservation and human resource management provides a heterogeneous typology of family firms and familiness. The case of Ragdoll - with an HR strategy based, when possible, on long-term *commitment* (rather than hierarchically-flat *collaboration* or hierarchically-steep *compliance*) and a dynastic approach to succession suggests that the founder's attachment style is "anxious." 'Anxious' is a pejorative term which should not be taken at face-value. The Woods do not emanate nervousness or skittishness - far from it - but it is possible to see at Ragdoll that social exchange is foregrounded; person-organisation fit around values is emphasised; there is a focus on firm-specific training and shared competencies and accountability emphasises trust and strong work-group norms (see Table 1 in Hedberg, Luchak, 2018: 38). Maintaining a medium-sized business, in an extremely competitive and risky market, on which employees and family alike rely is a sure source of anxiety, but there are many ways of achieving the social exchange, values, competence and trust to which Hedberg and Luchak refer.

7.4   The Business as Family

> AW: [O]ne American I had here, he couldn't get over it. He said, 'it's like working for some crazy family!' And it probably is, because we are a crazy family and we do run it, but… you needn't say anything, Adam [laughter] … but it is a family company which makes a difference as well. There's a huge difference there. We're not typical is what I'm saying (in Wood, C., 2016: 131).

It would be difficult to define what a 'typical' company might look and behave like, but Wood's assertion that Ragdoll is atypical indicates at least an awareness of and

perhaps even intentional maintenance of its particular cultural approach. Anne Wood articulates a clear linguistic and behavioural connection between the real family and the family of the company and, like Chris before, suggests the inevitability of cultural transference between the two. From the nurturing and support of both family members and employees, to the years-long relationships between individuals at the company, to the communication culture and gossip, Ragdoll, the Wood family and family as an idea are intertwined and co-constitutive. This supports Sánchez Marin et al.'s (2016) hypothesis that family businesses, where the family is directly involved in the running of the company, tend toward *clan*-like organisation, demonstrating team-work, loyalty and mentoring and "strong human relations, affiliation, and an orientation towards internal organizational relations" (ibid.: 101). These companies "usually adopt and maintain the early values established by the owner-manager who takes the role of founder and creates the basis of the organizational culture" (Denison et al., 2004; Gersick et al., 1997 in ibid.).

The assertion by the American, perhaps articulating to Wood an outsider's view that was previously not visible to her but that she has since owned, repeated and validated, implies a subversive benevolent 'craziness.' While there is no implication of psychiatric pathology, and while Chris maintains the masculine, patriarchal, oversight of the operation, Anne's humour subverts this through what Bakhtin termed the carnivalesque (1984 and in Tincknell, 2005: 147). The carnival inverts the conventional power-structure for a finite period, as do, for example the gossip events discussed earlier. As Tincknell observes of the family sitcom, this process "is not a permanent disruption of power structures, simply a brief and pleasurable overturning of them" (ibid.: 148). However, there is more to this, it appears, than simple pleasure. In subverting conventional power, Anne Wood asserts her own character and authority. In the first interview with her, she reminisced of an earlier, less risk-averse, time in television production:

> AW: In the old days, I can remember Huw Weldon […] with a friend of mine working in the BBC at that time, you know, when Monty Python and everything was going, and, he would go, 'Ah, mischief, how lovely! and that would be the attitude, you know, 'What can we do, what can we do you know? There was really excitement about what we could do. Not about, 'Oh God, how much is that going to be?' And there's been a… there's been such a shift away from excitement about the idea (Wood, A., 2015: 85-86).

There is a tension between the enthusiasm for creativity and fun which tonally underpins the culture of Ragdoll and the challenging, risk-averse, context of contemporary independent production. Children's television, in particular, faces significant challenges as the marketplace for original content is so limited. Wood has

lived through the transition from children's television production largely occurring in ring-fenced in-house public service broadcasters to it becoming exposed to an extremely competitive and limited global market. For Wood, while the spirit of children's television may remain, its business has changed significantly. "We specialise in comedy," she says, "so making people laugh is our business, but you have to be [laughing] very serious about it" (ibid.: 78).

As is also evident in the following case studies, the owning producer can be influential in the emergence of a particular culture in his or her company. This can have a mitigating effect on the influence of threatening external factors on the company's employees and, in effect, create a protective organisational or production culture which feels more independent of those factors. This is predominantly an emotional exercise, as those external factors form the context of the negotiated dependencies upon which the independent producer relies and, therefore, are no less real for being dampened. The construction, though, of an emotionally secure space for the creative teams to work within may have benefits to creative productivity, team coherence, and company identity. As such, the influence of the producer on the internal production culture of his or her company can be employed to engender the independence of the company. If the cultural manifestations of this independence are positive, then this helps to promote the image of the company, not only to clients but to current and prospective employees, the benefits of working with the company.

A key influence of the culture at Ragdoll is the extension of the family of the owners to the family of the company. Anne and Chris Wood extend their explicit family with an implicit one, the employees. Carnivalesque mischief, playfulness and excitement carry through from the family to the company, its employees, the work they do together, and the programmes themselves. The tangible activities, the espoused values and the underlying beliefs, here, seem, in Osland et al.'s terminology *congruent* (2007: 136) in that they are aligned in a common cause with a common underlying paradigm. This alignment promotes organisational wellbeing, good communication, productivity and tangible production outcomes. Chris describes how a family night out might translate, through shared familiarity, into a tangible outcome:

> We might go and see something together and there might be a point of reference that we might refer to later on. 'Oh, you remember that thing? ... Ohh yes, yes!' So there's kind of a shorthand that occurs (Wood, C., 2016: 140).

This was mirrored in the discussion, in the opening section, of the production team's sharing of influences, bouncing of ideas, being very 'together' and other manifestations

of working so closely together that 'shorthand' appears - a closeness of understanding and synergy of operation that facilitates effective efficient and creative production and which is an outcome of and also co-constitutes family culture. Another tangible manifestation of the symbolic family culture occurs in that the *actual* families of the employees are, in ways, subsumed into the presentation of Ragdoll as a family, with Anne Wood referring to employees' children as "Ragdoll children."

> AW: We've got a lot of Ragdoll children, which is really nice… [notes some children of employees] … my two are a bit older now. Chris' two I should say, they're not mine! My grandchildren. We call them 'our girls,' my daughter and I. Our girls, but they're Chris' girls really.

> Adam, Editor: We seem to be good at making girls.

> AW: Yes, they're all girls! Very good! (in Wood, C., 2016: 132).

While the more masculine imperatives of hitting deadlines, producing high-quality work, winning commissions, financial turnover and efficiency are imperatives for the running of the business, it is notably the feminine qualities of family that define and drive the culture at Ragdoll. As Wood stated, "we're not typical." Hedberg and Luchak's model of founder attachment and its relation to human resource management highlights the importance of the early family relationships of the owning family. There, bonding and attachment are created, along with emotional and behavioural patterns which "tend to persist through adulthood and into the workplace" and "imprint" on the whole organisation (2018: 34-35). No family is typical, therefore no family business can be typical either, given the tendency of the latter to become an image of the former.

This recalls Geertz' explanation of the concept of the *exemplary centre*, the Wood family, and Anne Wood specifically, is "not just the nucleus, the engine, or the pivot of the state: it is the state" (1973: 332). It represents an image of the company on a smaller scale which is replicated outward culturally and becomes Ragdoll - not just a company or a place of work, but a way of being - a set of rules of behaviour. The culture, therefore, has a feeling of timelessness and continuity and it is deeply embedded, fundamental. Ragdoll has survived many challenges over its long existence - significant changes in the workforce and creative teams, a difficult market, several changes of premises - but the Ragdoll culture is resilient because of the conceptual matrix, the image of the family in the organisation, "paradigmatic, not merely reflective of social order" (ibid.: 332).

Bringing this back to the concept of independence and, also, its relation to cultures of production. Anne Wood, in my first interaction, stated that, "you can only be

independent if you are in control of the money and of the editorial" (Wood, A., 2015: 67). This taxonomic definition of independence - based on ownership and intellectual property rights - delimits the statutory definitions of and interventions in independent production in the UK, as well as much of the trade discourse. But the constitution and maintenance of the culture at Ragdoll is equally if not more-so a determinant of its independence. The extremely high levels of loyalty fostered there, its own particular formal and informal manifestations of professionalism and the imperative that the family culture is maintained through generational succession constitute a cultural demarcation of space which is at least as tangible as any economic determinant of independence. This suggests the need for a more complex typology of independencies, not only based on the *economics* of ownership, but on the *culture* of ownership *and* management.

7.5   Conclusion

This case study reveals significant differences in the operational and cultural arrangements of self-owned independent production companies and producers. From a functional perspective, the main phases of programme-making, development, pre-production, production, post production and delivery, are universal. However, organisationally, the companies and producers' situations are different. Whereas GRACE's Tostevin serially built new combinations of cultural and human capital around projects, there are more stable relational arrangements at Ragdoll, with production teams employed full-time or employed serially over extended periods as productions demand. This stability provides the context for a recognisable and relatively stable organisational culture to emerge – a process hindered by the peripatetic nature of Tostevin's work. Producers in both contexts are still responsible for maintaining the networked relationships which bring together the various agents required in the development and completion of programmes and these relationships face both inward to the production teams and outward to external stakeholders including clients and sub-contractees. The producer is a brokerage hub in both cases.

The independence of both companies, from a financial perspective, is similar and the line of financial risk in both cases can be traced directly to the owner/producer, crossing the notional line between business and personal life. The more significant difference becomes apparent when one considers the impact of this line-crossing on the culture of the organisation. In Tostevin's case, the business and the family are in tension, with little synergy operationally or culturally between the two. GRACE and Tostevin operate despite the tension between business and family. Ragdoll's family-business tensions are a significant element of how the company operates culturally

and as a business, with very high synergies between the business and family elements. Tostevin's cultural influence over his operation is based on his own experience and demeanour – influenced heavily by his background in news and current affairs and his belief in talent. The Wood's influence over Ragdoll is also borne from production experience, but also informed by the familiness of the business. This indicates the influence over organisational culture that the managing-producer may have on a company. This may also depend on the influence of external factors. GRACE is a more porous and fluid organisation, built on a great many weak ties, subject to, therefore, a high degree of external cultural influence. Ragdoll is much more hermetic, with fewer and more-consistent external connections. This facilitates a form of cultural concentration.

This concentration serves as an influential form of gatekeeping and the fact that the image of the company is manifest so uniformly across all of its aspects and by all of its occupants suggests a high level of shared responsibility and commitment to the organisation. The high level of familiarity between the individuals and groups in the organisation is explained (and believable) as a driver of efficiency. However, when not only the surface actuality is observed, but the underlying culture suggests itself, the underlying influence of familiness on the organisation of the workplace is revealed.

The importance of gossip as a feminine and subversive form of communication, facilitating value-alignment and -reinforcement, belies conventional approaches to and commentaries on management-strategy, revealing socioemotional wealth to be a key driver in, and metric of, success, challenging the dominant economic discourse. Finally, the imprinting of owner-family values and behaviours, including attachment and commitment, upon the whole organisation, together with a dynastic approach to succession, serves to maintain the wellbeing of both the family and the business while also revealing an underlying fundamental anxiety regarding the wellbeing of each. In extending the actuality and simile of the family throughout the organisation, the level of internal risk to the wellbeing of the actual family and its members, the individual workers, the collective workforce, and the business itself is increased because the socioemotional investment in each is higher. This leads to the avoidance of short-term high-risk, high-reward strategies in favour of less-risky and longer-term planned development. Internal succession processes stabilise and normalise the dominant cultural model, exemplified by the attachments and behaviours of the owning family. In the first case-study the individual identity of the independent producer is at risk. In the case of Ragdoll, identity-risk transcends its roots in the founder-owner and embeds itself throughout the family and the organisation.

The embedding of a family culture in a work-group, though, is a problematic and somewhat essentialist concept and the processes by which this might occur are worthy of further study. Is the particularity and peculiarity of family itself in this embedding process instrumental, or can it occur in other, non-family, circumstances given the meeting of certain conditions and the interaction of the right sets of resources? It is not uncommon for companies or groups of workers to refer to themselves as 'a family,' regardless of any association or lack thereof with an actual, biological, family. In these cases, how does the embedding of a family-like culture occur and is it actually an underlying assumptive paradigm or simply an espoused set of values? At what point does a family business become one? Tostevin's GRACE Productions, in the standard definition, is not a family business, but the connection of the business to the owner's family is evident. Has Ragdoll always been a family business? Until Chris' appointment as Producer and the establishment of the Ragdoll Foundation with her husband and daughter, both around 2000, Anne Wood was the only family member with direct involvement in the company, although her move from a contracted career in television to independent production would suggest that a considerable level of family commitment and investment - emotional as well as financial - was involved. A further question arises regarding what constitutes the conditions of attachment and behaviour symptomatic of family in the absence of a biological connection. Given a shared genealogy, history and a level of longevity and memory analogous to that experienced within a biological family, can a community, real or imagined, of individuals share a frame of reference to the extent that it culturally imprints others' behaviours? The question of the inevitability of the emergence of cultures within work organisations is worthy of further study. It is not only in organisations with explicit value statements that work cultures are formed. They are always-already there and have a high degree of momentum, which is perhaps what makes the difficult process of 'change management' a common topic in management training. However, the degree to which cultures can be imposed is highly questionable. While working practices can be developed with some agility, the resources required to change the underlying assumptions of heterogeneous groups of individuals to effect cultural change cannot be picked 'off-the-shelf.'

In the following chapter, a different sort of organisational parenting is investigated in the case of Monkey Kingdom, formerly a 'true indie' and now owned by 'parent' studio NBC Universal. Places and spaces of production, discussed briefly in this chapter, are more fully explored. The question of how sites of production are both managed by and have a managing effect on the culture of production and the maintenance of

independence is raised. Networking in independent production is considered, in particular the way in which the resources of genealogy, history, longevity and memory are mobilised through diasporic networks.

8.0   Case Study 3: Places, Spaces and Diasporas of Independent Production. Monkey Kingdom. Studio-Owned Independent

> Not being in the [NBCU] building was really important to us. We didn't have ultimate control. If they'd said, 'You're in our building,' then we would have had to have gone, but they didn't and they've let us stay here.
> David Granger, Managing Director, Monkey Kingdom (Granger, D., 2016: 145).

Shoreditch, London E1, is *cool.* Within sight of the City's iconic Gherkin tower, its warehouses, refurbished and decorated in graffiti and murals, sit alongside a faux-beach open-air cinema complete with deckchairs and Box Park, a mall of repurposed shipping containers offering an "independent and revolutionised retail experience" (Boxpark, 2017). Once home to Edwardian theatres, textile manufacturers and commodity storage houses, the area now houses a high concentration of creative industry businesses.

I feel strangely displaced here. A suit and white shirt seemed appropriate for meeting the Managing Director and Chief Operating Officer of a company, but I feel as if I look like a stranger in a strange land, that I should have landed in the City a few streets away. I bump into a former production student of mine. Strong eyeliner, tattoos visible, dressed bohemian. She fits right in. She works here. I don't.

The 1930's Tea Building, an eight-storey structure once home to the Lipton tea-packing operation, is now occupied by a number of service-sector businesses. Many of the building's original features remain. The bare brick, wooden hinged-door elevators and exposed pipework speak of the building's industrial heritage but serve as post-industrial ironic trimmings for the post-modern activities that it now houses. As a promotional website about the building declares, "The Tea Building used to be full of tea. Now it's full of ideas" (Teabuilding, 2017).

Monkey Kingdom (known internally simply as Monkey) was formed in 2001 by David Granger and Will Macdonald after leaving Chris Evans' Ginger Productions (*TFI Friday*, 1996-2015; *Don't Forget Your Toothbrush*, 1994-1995; *The Priory*, 1999-2002). Monkey specialised in non-scripted factual and entertainment programmes (*My Kind of Town*, Monkey Kingdom, Embassy Row, Greengrass Productions for ABC, 2005; *The Charlotte Church Show*, Monkey Kingdom, 2006-2008; *A Comedy Roast*, Monkey Kingdom, 2010-2011). In November 2010, NBCU International announced that it had acquired Monkey following the studio's previous acquisition of the UK's Carnival

Television (*Downton Abbey*) and the launch of its joint-venture with Working Title, a British film-production company, WTTV (Andreeva, 2010).

I meet David Granger, the Managing Director (listed on the company website as Creative Director) and am taken through the otherwise open-plan office-space to a glass-walled break-out meeting place - the Engine Room - furnished with sofas and a coffee table. As I set up my recording equipment, David is talking about the importance to him - the company (who don't wear suits) - of the physical separation from NBCU's Bloomsbury offices. This arrangement means that NBCU executives have to arrange meetings by email. There are no surprise drop-ins. The most senior people in the Monkey offices are the Monkey team, not the NBCU studio staff.

> DG: The independence you get, I suppose, well, it's two things: One is running your own company, which gives you independence because you are the architect of your own pitfalls or success; and the other bit is the creative aspect. Those two dove-tail, really, around the creative side of it, which is you can sort of think up what you like - no-one's telling you what to do. […] Before NBC we could make any show we wanted. Now we have to be more careful that we are making shows that will have IP value beyond the UK. […] They are an aggressive American company who set tough targets and expect results and if you don't deliver those than they come and will have a view on whether you are working effectively or not (Granger, D., 2016: 144-145).

Granger's reflections on Monkey's period of so-called 'true' independence, between 2001 and 2010, reveal the importance of the concept of negotiated dependencies - associations that facilitate agency - and how, when these dependencies are broken, the risks of disassociation which may follow…

> DG: We absolutely went through moments with [pre-owned] Monkey, going, 'If we don't get a job in, then we can't pay [the employees] this month.' You know, 'Do we pay ourselves this month, do we not?' It absolutely got very close sometimes, and scary. […] It's quite daunting, definitely, because I think you think, 'It's creative and just come up with some ideas and make a show,' well, no, you know? And I think that when you come out of the back of working with Chris [Evans] who just walked into Channel 4 and said, 'I think I want to do a [show], and they went, 'Fine, go on and do that,' […] and you realise it's not like that. And once you emerge from the shadow of a big beast like Chris Evans, then you think, 'We made *TFI Friday,*' and, of course, people *don't* think that. They think, well, 'Yes you did, but you were working with Chris and Waheed Ali [Granger's former employer. Co-founder and Managing Director of Planet 24 (*The Big Breakfast*, 1992-2002; *The Word*, 1990-1995)] and all these other people who are brilliant, and now you're Dave and Will sitting there' […] and you think, 'Shit, they might not give us 200 million quid for a series,' because they might think, 'They've got no idea what they're going to do!' (ibid.: 156).

In this chapter, cultural geography is used to consider the demarcation of space and place, both physically and culturally, that helps to define the behaviours and identities

of workers in the independent production sector. In the interview segments and observations above, the importance of both physically situated and bounded locations in which activity takes place - offices, geographic locations - and also conceptually shared and meaningful spaces - socially produced and consumed fields of knowledge and agency - can be identified. Through the production offices of Planet 24 and *The Big Breakfast*, through to Shoreditch itself, studios' and broadcasters' facilities, between independent and in-house production, and team-membership, the situated-ness of production activity, professional identity, and agency is revealed. As such, the power of the concept of independence is related not only to discursive fields but also to physical places and conceptual spaces.

The chapter is divided into three sections. *Place* considers those areas which can be physically identified, including buildings, office-spaces, geographic regions and countries. Through places' architecture, interior design, town-planning or the construction of inter- and intra-national boundaries, the assumptions, beliefs, behaviours and identities of their occupants, and thereby cultures, are both formed and formative. *Space*, taken as defined by Scott (2000) as sectoral networks and transactional inter-dependencies which define sets of cultural norms and practices, considers the culturally-bounded situations of production, including the transactions between independent and studio production models. Spaces of production crystallise and are made distinct and local (I use this term not only in the regional sense but in the sense of the creation of distinctly identifiable agencies) through tangible *place-ness* and intangible ideology (attitudes to independence, creativity, commerce,) while retaining the trans-local networked characteristics fundamental to economic and knowledge exchange. While the localisation of place facilitates the construction of a particular culture, the networked characteristics of *space* demand inter-cultural transaction and, therefore, translation. As such, a layer of culture which provides a semiotic common ground facilitates these transactions. *Production Diasporas* considers the existence of such a shared trans-local culture. History, memory, time and distance become resources which facilitate creative and economic transactions, which transcend place-ness through their networked nature.

The visit to Monkey took place in June 2016. I met first with David Granger, Managing Director, and secondly with Jason Crosby, Chief Operating Officer. The meetings each lasted one hour and were audio-recorded and transcribed in full. In addition to the interviews I observed and photographed the area surrounding the company offices and the exterior and interior of the building and the offices themselves. The interviews are

inter-woven and taken out of sequence in order to address the particular themes of analysis.

8.1   Place: An architectural semiology of difference

Shoreditch, over the past decade, has experienced both residential gentrification and also commercial occupation by a number of creative and digital enterprises. It has, if not replaced, then come to represent a younger, more distinct and vibrant contender to Soho, in London's West End, as a centre for film, television and advertising production. (see, for example, Creamer, 2015; Hemsley, 2005; Woods, 2011). "Soho's a bit touristy really and you just go there to work," said Duncan Weston, joint-Managing Director of post-production facility, Splice TV, on its move from Soho to Shoreditch. "What's happening round here is so much more vibrant" (Televisual, 2008). While the direct contribution of the audio-visual industries to this vibrancy is not externally apparent, that of the aforementioned pop-up stores, murals (figure 6), the coffee-shops, bars and nightlife venues and the people, squeezed into islands of intimacy between the busy main roads that divide and bind them (see Martins, 2015: 130) is.

Figure 6: Shoreditch murals. (Photographs by author.)

Shoreditch's architecture is not conventionally attractive. It is a hodge-podge of industrial, commercial and infrastructural in seemingly-accidental juxtapositions. It is busy, noisy and dirty, even the food (figures 7, 8).
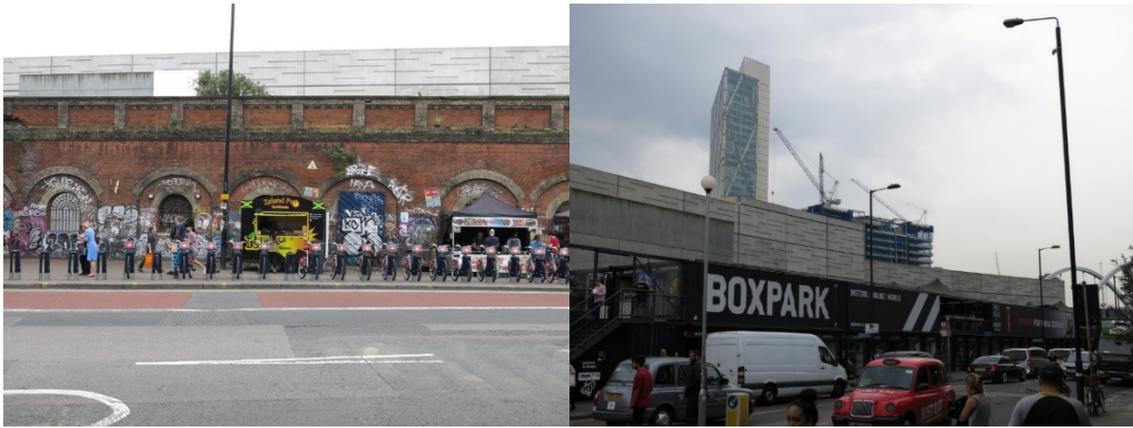
Figure 7: Shoreditch food-stands and pop-up shopping mall. (Photographs by Author.)

Figure 8: Shoreditch flyover and food. (Photographs by Author.)

What, then, might be the appeal of working in such an environment? Shoreditch is a mixed mashup or intersection of economies that appear to work together to sustain one another and those who occupy them. While it is certainly relevant, as in economic analyses of creative clusters (for example, Porter, 1998; Scott, 2000), to consider the appeal of rent differentials between different districts, the concentrations of specific resource and skill-sets, and the "regenerative" influence of the appropriation of once-industrial Shoreditch by the creative service economy (see, for example, Pratt, 2008a, 2008b, 2010), this thesis focuses on the cultural aspects of production - not so much how political and economic forces construct these environments, but in how those constructions govern and are governed by those who occupy and act within them. As Ross notes, "a low-rent ambience [can be] as much an aesthetic virtue for the employees as it [may be] an economic necessity for the owners" (2003: 125), citing Kotkin's definition of skilled high-tech employees as "'sophisticated consumers of place,'" seeking "high-quality stimulation and services" (Kotkin, J., 2000 in ibid.: 135).

It would not be accurate to describe Shoreditch as a television production *hub*. While it is home to a number of production and related businesses, it is just one part of London in which production takes place, others including Soho, with its concentration of post-production facilities, Camden, home of MTV Europe and several independent production companies[27] and the studio operations of west London, the so-called "TV Triangle" (*Broadcast*, 2014) from Hammersmith to Osterley.[28] As such, television production in London is not built around a central hub but rather, in Boix' et al.'s (2013: 757, 767) terminology, occupies a "cluster cloud" - overlapping, multicentric, concentrations of activity over a wide metropolitan area and its surroundings. Rather than the 'hard' characteristics of a production hub, purely based around the economics of the primary business activity, Shoreditch offers a diversity of social and cultural places and symbols that complement the subjectivities and activities of its consumers (see ibid, 755). This is not a monoculture of production, but an ecology comprised of different revenue streams which interact with and support one another through economic, social and cultural synergies. Cafés and bars, for example, provide socialising and refuelling services for the creative workers who, through their patronage, support catering workers and shop-owners. Road and rail services are supported by and facilitate the movement of local workers and tourists. These services also demarcate, through roads and lines, the almost island-like locale of Shoreditch itself.

Martins' (2015) analysis of creative workers' activities in Shoreditch identified the ways in which these relatively densely-packed and accessible islands of creative activity - represented by areas of no more than a half-kilometre across and with light traffic on small roads surrounded by major through-routes - allowed people to find a variety of environments to 'break out' into. These may be pubs, which, while busy during the evening, offered quiet daytime meeting areas, to coffee-shops that catered for work activities through the layout of their interior spaces (tables large enough to have meetings, solitary booths and sofas for lone-working and chatting) and IT infrastructure, members'-clubs, as well as plenty of options for relaxing with food or having a night out at the end of the day. This is a District Economy (Branzanti, 2015), a series of synergistic enterprises. This physical arrangement of places also facilitates what Martins refers to as "the extended workplace," a continuum of place-based activity-relations stretching from formal work in the office, to formal work outside it, to semi-formal work-related activities such as networking to social activities with colleagues. In contrast to Weston's view of Soho (contradicted in the following case study) as just a place to go and work, this is a place that facilitates the extension of that work into the social. As such, it performs a very tactical, localised, level of what Scott

refers to as "space-time filtering" (2000: 156, 168), concentrating and concatenating actors' cultural milieux. This occupation of the work-life liminal space by bars and clubs also, according to Mattson (2015), serves to connect the cultures of local 'gentry,' workers, and varieties of subcultural activity drawn to the place not for work but for entertainment. The workers, extending their professional activities into these social spaces in the evening, therefore interact with, whether directly or through observation, the local 'colour' and enrich their own cultural experience and identity through association.

Figure 9: The Tea Building, Shoreditch. (Photographs by author.)

The Tea Building's architecture and interior design (figure 9) juxtaposes the social and the industrial with its stone and concrete floors, exposed plumbing, electrical and ventilation ducting and painted I-beams. Refectory areas continue the impression of a factory, with long rectangular tables and benches. These elements are not only practically functional but semiotically so – they say something. As Baldry states,

> Architectural semiotics suggests that the way in which people artificially reorder their environment will invariably involve signs and symbols of visual communication, representation and expression. The building itself will give out signals, a typological code (Eco, 1980), subtly communicating the kind of building it is and what kind of social activity is appropriate within it (Stimson, 1986). (Baldry, 1997: 366).

Industry, functionality, egalitarianism, openness and exposure are present in both physical and symbolic forms. As Hesmondhalgh argues, the cultural industries are not the only places where symbolic meaning is created (2013: 20), and this building's origin as a packing site for the makers of Lipton, with tea's associated cultural (and colonial) history, is retained not only in its name but its interior signage. Now, though,

rather than packaging dried leaves for consumption by the masses, the building's occupants now package media - ideas - for consumption by the masses.

Architectural design also signals to non-occupants (Baldry, 1997: 367). For all the appropriated industrial, perhaps ironic, styling of these work-and-social spaces and places, there is little evidence of what happens within the individual units into which the building is divided. There is no exterior signage and even inside the building you need to know what you are looking for and where to go in order to find anything. It seems almost that the companies within do not *want* to be found. This is not a high-street accessible to the casual browser. You need insider-information in order to access the content. For all of the open egalitarian, proletarian styling, the impression to the uninitiated is one of exclusivity. It is like the hidden coffee-shop referred to by Martins - "'It's tucked-away in a gated lane behind an old building amongst a sea of refurbed warehouses and is near impossible to find'" ("Welcome—Taylor Street Baristas" 2013 in Martins, 2015: 142). Each office inside acts as an "'oasis in the middle of industrial-chic Shoreditch'" (ibid.). Shoreditch may lie adjacent to the City of London, but it is distinct and separate. Within Shoreditch itself there are plenty of places to "get away." Its architecture is representative of the industrial complex, but Shoreditch at least gives the impression of the ability to escape from it.

What, then, does the Monkey office interior signal to occupants and how do these signals "relate to the way the internal space is used, allocated and furnished" (Baldry, 1997: 367)? Inside Monkey, in the small reception area, one is greeted by the company name and logo on the walls (figure 10), so one now knows where one is. The area beyond reception, though, is predominantly open-plan and relatively lacking in identity. The place does not immediately connote "television production" to the observer. The same exposed infrastructure dominates the ceiling above regular rows of identical long desks, each with a computer screen, some with personal belongings, most not. It is as empty of dividing walls as it is people - I see maybe ten employees in the space of two hours. The kitchen area looks out over the office space, as the office space looks into the kitchen area. Seemingly from anywhere, one can see almost everywhere.
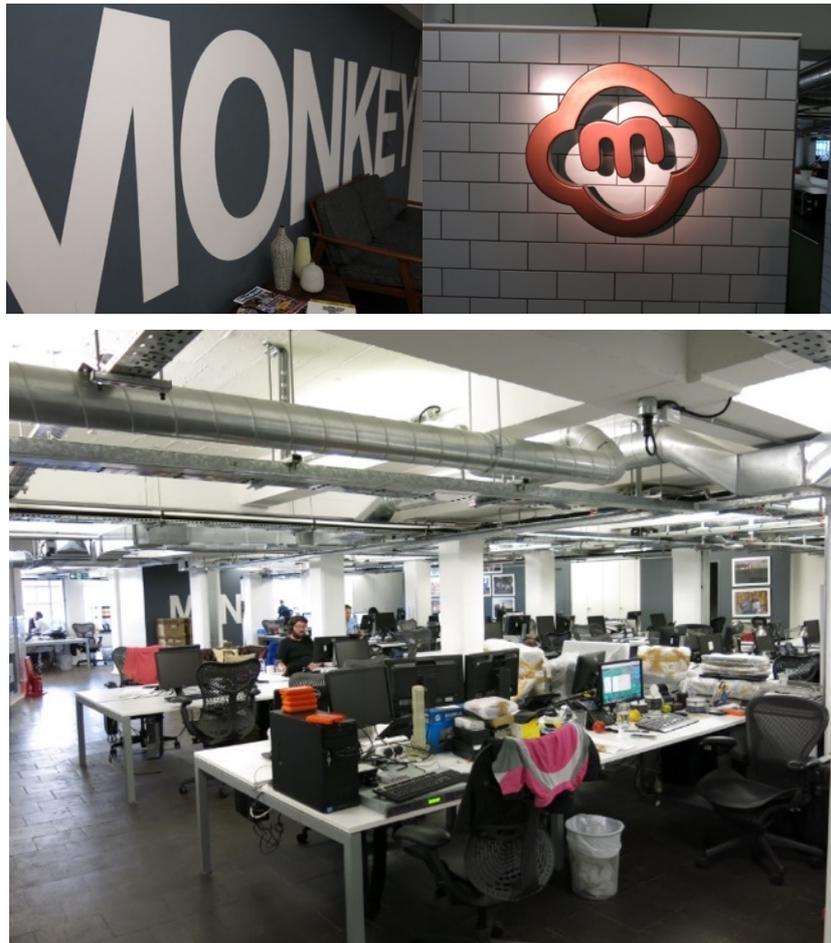
Figure 10: Monkey branding and office-space. (Photographs by author.)

As Baldry states, "Space and built structures have both a functional and symbolic relationship to social organization" (1997: 365). It is not possible to consider fully the physical and aesthetic organisation of the place in relation to the workplace culture without direct observation of production-in-practice, but some questions are raised: What functions do the relatively identity-less and regular organisation of the open-plan place serve and what are the effects on the culture of the workforce that occupies it? Does the regularity represent organisational egalitarianism, promoting the rights of the individual, or flexibility, facilitating the organisation and reorganisation of the human resource? Does the open-plan organisation facilitate surveillance or ease of communication or both and between whom and in which directions? Pitt and Bennet (2008), say:

> Steiner (2005) recognising the benefits of flattened hierarchical structures, argues that good space planning and design will stem from business trends that influence work-style, such as knowledge-sharing, collaborative work, a flattened hierarchy, employee churn, increased mobility and technology innovations and tools (ibid.: 297).

Following Baldry's factors of "the social contours of office space," and the post-war *Taylorisation* of the office space (ibid.: 367-70, italics in original), an outsider's observation of the Monkey office reveals that: 1) *The degree to which space is personalised* is limited. There are no dividers between the desk-spaces that might serve to pin pictures to, nor any adjacent wall-space for pictures or shelves; 2) *The amount of space* which is allocated to individuals seems equal. There is no correlation between the area occupied and staff seniority; 3) the *décor* is austere, unvaried and functional to the point of invisibility; and 4) *social configurations within space* are "sociopetal" in that the desks are arranged in close proximity and there are no dividing walls, though "sociofugal" through the linear arrangements of the rows of desks, producing dividing corridors between them, and the ubiquitous computer screens interrupting workers' eye-contact. The place offers no privacy but likely facilitates sharing and conversation, where, as Gladwell identified, "ideas arise as much out of casual conversations as they do out of formal meetings" (2000 in Ross, 2003: 136). This does not, then, represent the "bull-pen" office of the typing pool, designed for "visual superintendence" (Baldry, 1997: 369), but, more-likely, a visual-spatial approach promoting flexibility, communication and being able to see who's around and what's going on, as Ross puts it, "like a suggestion box writ large" (2003: 145). At the moment, though, there aren't many people around and there is not much going on.

> DG: It's weirdly quiet… *Made in Chelsea*, which is normally here, is away filming in the south of France so the whole production team are down there. So, we keep looking out of the window - we've got sort of a management area over there - keep looking, thinking, 'God, it's just so quiet,' and it's so not, because there's three or four things going on at once. It's a lot of fun (Granger, D., 2016: 158).

If, as Pitt and Bennett claim:

> The physical setting of a workplace […] and the allocation of space, equipment and furnishings all have the power to express and communicate messages to the workplace employees about corporate values and how the business values their employees (2008: 295),

then the "management area" is not as exclusive as it sounds. Communication and collaboration are key factors, according to Chief Operating Officer Jason Crosby:

> JC: I sit next to Dave. We all sit in a very open-plan office, so there's Will and Dave, there's all three of us in a line, basically, pretty much sharing the same desk. […] The whole idea here is keep it relaxed and friendly and very open. In terms of a structure I think it's a very flat structure, in terms of management. Everybody pulls together as much as they can. […] So, it's very open and approachable and that's how I've always liked working in production. […] So,

it's a very collaborative environment, and it has to be in TV (Crosby, J., 2016: 185-186).

With production and related activities happening in both London and Manchester in the UK, on both coasts of the US, and in Europe, and given the serial contract nature of the programmes and production teams, not only does the environment need to facilitate communication and collaboration, it also needs to deal with a high level of workforce flexibility.

> JC: [We] are able to scale up and scale down as we see fit (ibid.: 180) […] So, *Chelsea*, for instance, employs 35 people in the office and then probably another 35-40 on the technical side of things, so that would be our base. Housewives probably has 20-25 people in the office and then another 15-20 in terms of the edit and technical. So, each of these will have between 50 and 70 people, depending on what the workflow is. We're doing an event at the moment, […] that'll have 15-20 people in the office. It will go nuts for a week where we have 80 other people in the crew and then just fold up again (ibid.: 186).

This could explain the relatively impersonal but ultimately flexible and open place that constitutes the Monkey office. Baldry (1997) observed that "the office is being designed as a flexible shell within which, in theory, teams can be located and relocated as required (the frequency of such relocation being known to space planners as the 'churn rate')" (ibid.: 373), which, at Monkey, is high.

There are a number of, if not contradictions, then complementarities in the consideration of Monkey's *placeness*. Rather than locating the offices at or near to NBCU headquarters, drawing on the economic efficiencies of hub-type placement, a conscious decision to remain in Shoreditch is based upon the assertion of an independent culture and identity distinct from the studio. Rather than creating spaces of individual concentration and uninterrupted creative activity, interior dividing walls are removed to foster collaboration and a shared responsibility for problem-solving.

So, given the peripatetic nature of production at Monkey, across its various physical sites and with a frequently-changing workforce, while the planning and design of the Monkey office facilitates these behaviours, the sense of *identity and purpose* conferred to individuals by the *places* they physically work within is complemented by the cultures engendered and defined by the knowledges and behaviours which are situated in shared and negotiated *spaces* - socially produced and consumed fields of knowledge and agency.

8.2   Space: The conceptual construction of independence

The fundamentally networked nature of television production, involving, as it does, both economic and creative transactions between high numbers of organisations (and departments within them,) demands systems of shared knowledge and language (see Scott, 2000). It is one thing for an organisation to develop and maintain its own internal culture (as discussed in the previous case study) but it must also adopt levels of conformity with wider sectoral cultures. Whereas, in the case of Ragdoll, the *family* constituted a further set of resources and risks to negotiate, in the case of Monkey, the *parent studio*, NBC Universal (NBCU), does so. How, then, is Monkey's culture of production and its creative independence defined and maintained across numerous physical places and distinct from, while connected to, the structures of business ownership?

> KR: Was it Planet 24 you started at?
>
> DG: Uh… basically, yes.
>
> KR: OK, and then having Ginger, and then Monkey as an independent, and then the transition to being bought by [NBC Universal]. Is 'bought' the right word?
>
> DG: Acquired, I think…
>
> KR: Acquired…
>
> DG: …Makes it sound more polite (Granger, D., 2016: 144).

What is acquired in a deal such as this? From a commercial and business perspective, everything, from intellectual property rights to the furniture - as Granger puts it, "lock, stock and barrel" (ibid.: 145). However, the appeal of the acquisition to the buyer is in the expansion of its portfolio into a specific niche - high-end drama in the case of NBCU's acquisition of Carnival Film and Television (*Downton Abbey*), unscripted factual entertainment in its acquisition of Monkey. As Tunstall (1993) identified, television production occurs within genre-specific worlds, but it is not the genres (of produced texts) per-se that define these worlds, but the specific skill-and-knowledge-sets of the workers who occupy them. In this sense, these genre worlds are spaces of understanding and identity. Because of this, it is in the interests of neither producer nor studio to disrupt these spaces. The maintenance of a specific, possibly historical (in that it was present before the acquisition,) culture of production becomes a vital part of the partnership.

As such, there are tensions inherent in the relationship between Monkey and NBCU, between creativity and commerce, the independent and the studio, tensions that are grounded in identity, explicitly,[29] and culture, implicitly. David Granger:

> The way it works, […] there is an NBC business affairs department, so, broadly speaking, Monkey, outwardly, creatively and editorially is all of us, here, Monkey. As soon as you hit finance and business affairs, then you hit NBC. So, the idea of the deal is they've got their own back office and that's how they support us. And that means we can flourish creatively, I suppose (Granger, D., 2016: 151).

Whereas Granger faces outward from production to the consumers of his programmes, Crosby faces inward from production to NBCU, the studio, managing an extremely flexible workforce.

> JC: [A]ll the crews are freelance. There's 15 of us on the corporate payroll, as such. And then the crews go from anywhere from 50 people to 300, depending on the time of year, or the year, basically. So yes, we scale up or scale down very, very quickly (Crosby, J., 2016: 176).

The acquisition of Monkey by NBCU meant that the former-independent was subject to the compelling corporate forces and business dynamism of the owning studio. Moving from the imperative of paying the wages of a fairly steady population of employees to constructing and then maintaining a culture of production among a workforce that changes to such a great extent, within an owning corporate organisation, meant that the challenges of managing that change were not just logistical but cultural.

> JC: I think Will and Dave got that things had to change here. Some people didn't get that at all. That was the first line of conversation, not who's staying and who's going but who's actually going to get what we're trying to do with the business and how it's going to be scaled-up. […] There was a lot of jarring, to be honest, between the different teams. The creative teams didn't quite get the studio aspect of NBC. At the same time, to be frank with you, NBC's centralised teams were getting up to speed with what we were trying to do (ibid.: 174).

The creative teams are sandwiched. On one side they have the studio, their ultimate employers, and on the other they have broadcasters, the target for the shows they devise and produce. This is a position of great tension and risk - their livelihoods and professional identities rely on it - but great effort is maintained by, on the studio side, Crosby and, on the broadcaster side, Granger and Macdonald, to limit the visibility and effects of these forces (see Ryan, 1991: 128-129), on the creative employees.

> JC: There's politics with NBC, to be frank. We're dealing with a big studio that will have a certain view about certain things, we'll have a different view about how we do certain things, so that's one aspect of it. There's the relationships with the broadcasters and networks either here or in the US, so Dave and Will,

the more senior members of the exec team, will sort of hold those relationships and talk to them on a day to day basis. So, a lot of it is trying to make sure that there isn't that massive distraction for the teams here and that they can just create and produce programmes[. … F]or a lot of freelancers coming in, you probably wouldn't know, on the creative side, that you are part of a much bigger engine [...a]nd, to be frank, Monkey is a very small cog in what is a beast of a studio (Crosby, J., 2016: 184).

The "politics" Crosby refers to identifies the cultural differences between the closely-connected yet distinct working environments of the production company and the studio. His role, in part, is to protect the culture of creativity from what he refers to as the "distraction" of the studio's business imperatives. The creative space, in this illustration, is a cultural construct created and maintained by the business operations and programmes' executive team-members. What it means to 'be' creative and *a creative* in this situation relies not only on the understandings of the creative themselves but how these understandings are articulated and mobilised by more senior staff. This understanding challenges the notion of the creative as privileged and self-determining. While the employees will be aware of the economic transaction they are engaged in with NBCU, if only through their payslips, they perform their professional identities through the protected production culture of Monkey. There is an intentional blinkering employed at an operational level of the production company, which at once elides the wider economic context of its work whilst highlighting its creative and independent one. This challenges the dichotomy of creativity and commerce by demonstrating their co-reliance and interconnectedness, while also providing an example of that dichotomy being discursively reinforced through managerial intervention.

When Crosby refers to "feeding into a much bigger machine," and to the rapid scalability of the creative workforce, he highlights not only the embeddedness of the creative processes within corporate commercial structures but also indicates that creativity satisfies the needs of the larger corporate structure rather than vice versa. Christopherson, discussing the nature of US entertainment television production, recognises that while the vertical integration of the owner-conglomerates mitigates their risk and maximises their investment in the creation and exploitation of original intellectual property, it also serves to disempower the creative individual or group, the producer (2008: 78). Rather than the corporate structure fuelling creativity, the creative teams behave as fuel within the corporate structure itself. This is a pessimistic representation and it is important not to elide the agency that Monkey's employees have in determining their own responses to the rewards available in their work context. Granger's decision to trade the existential risk of true independence with the relative security of ownership was not done at the expense of all creative agency.

Here, creativity is positioned concentrically within its commercial partner rather than in opposition to it. In a necessarily over-simplified model, on an outer ring, Granger faces outward to broadcaster clients and inward to the creative teams, who occupy the middle ring. Crosby occupies an inner ring, looking both out to the creative teams and back inward to the studio itself. However hierarchical the financial relationship between the studio and the independent may appear to be, Granger and Crosby are able to construct cultural fire-doors between the studio and the company for the purposes of enabling creative production with a spirit of independence. It is a form of bracketing, in the phenomenological sense, in as much as if it looks, feels and works like an independent production company, then it is probably an independent production company. This suggests that the performance of independence is as compelling as its realisation is impossible.

The discursive field of independence or independent production can be seen to fit concentrically within the studio and broadcasting systems, rather than in opposition to them. Crosby delineates a taxonomic continuum of independence:

> KR: Do you recognise the 'independent sector' as such?
>
> JC: Yes. Yeah-ish. I kind of go, you have the real indies, the Hat Tricks of this world, and there tend to be a lot of smaller companies down from there. And then you have the genius term, the NQIs - the not qualifying independent - basically, lots of indies have been bought by studios, so you have that sector - so I kind of recognise a sector. Everyone calls themselves indies and it's probably not the best way of describing themselves, to be honest, but it seems like people are describing themselves that way so yes, why not? (Crosby, J., 2016: 189).

The discursive usefulness of the term 'independent,' and its ongoing usage, without regard for the actualities of business-ownership or statutory definitions, was discussed earlier in the thesis. As was also discussed earlier, the divergence and subsequent convergence of studio-broadcaster and independent modes of operation question the adequacy of defining production in the dichotomous terms of independent and in-house. The facility of *thinking* in these ways, however, retains its traction.

North and Oliver (2010) discussed managers' perceptions of the relationships between independent companies and their owners, comparing these with the perceptions of non-owned independents. Their findings on the relationship between ownership and creativity (or its perceived loss) were inconclusive. While, they said, there was a feeling (generally held by non-owned independents) that consolidation and acquisition had an adverse effect on creativity, managers of owned companies did not report this adversity in their own experiences (ibid.: 15). Their research recognises that, "Along

with the ability to deliver a quality product, ideas are the major currency in television"
(ibid.: 32) positioning creativity within, and driving, commerce. However, it is important
not to overstate the stability of such business-creative partnerships as there are clear
tensions between ownership and tenancy in the context of wider market forces.

> JC: I think the main challenges are going to be actually in terms of the indies
> that are owned by studios are how far the studios are going to push those
> indies to get bigger and I think there's a lot of that. […] I think the companies
> are under pressure to perform by their corporate parents. What is going to be
> interesting is if all of the creatives for those companies stick around with their
> corporate parents or they start to leave to form another company and flip it
> again (Crosby, J., 2016: 189).

Financially underpowered in relation to studio-broadcasters, independent production
companies, whether non-owned or owned, exist concentrically within the power
exerted (actively and passively) by those corporations, who, in turn, exist in the milieu
of the global media market and wider economy. Further developing the idea of
negotiated dependencies, which suggests a bi-polar - *that* indie with *its* co-dependent
broadcaster clients - structure, Crosby's image is more akin to a more organic,
ecological, image of manifestations of independence whose identity, situatedness and
trajectory is governed by forces exerted collectively by the studio-broadcasters and, as
such, is dynamic. Organisations may and do migrate and evolve in their adaptation to
changing markets and economic foundations, as has been demonstrated by the
changes to the structuring of production in the past few decades and as discussed in
chapters 3 and 4. However powerful a studio is, it can never completely negate the
agency of the independent, the market, nor the economic foundation. So long as the
culture and aspirations of independent production remain intact it is within the gift of the
producer to resign from the parent and emerge as a newly branded independent entity.
Macro-scale economic and political trends, including the functioning of markets, (de-
)regulation and globalisation, create conditions for certain types of behaviour at the
meso-scale level of the studios, such as company acquisition, vertical integration and
portfolio diversification. These effects change the marketplace for the producer which,
in turn, effects change in the conditions and behaviours of the production workforce at
the micro-level.

The independent producer in the dynamic field of independent production never
entirely loses his or her agency, nor can she or he afford to. She or he is responsible
for attracting the best production teams and finding the best opportunities to exploit
through his or her programmes. This agency is maintained even in the face of
insurmountable macro-level effects. In a way, the studio mitigates these effects,
creating a tide pool for its owned independent to operate in, while the studio bears the

brunt of the ocean. Within these fields of considerable external power and hierarchy, British independent producers exercise both their identities and cultures of production, both at home and overseas, which indicates that the discursive field of British independent production can impart a significant agency of its own as a relationally-defined set of understandings and practices.

> JC: In the UK, we have much more of a tradition of being able to produce high-end content with a much lower scale budget and lower level of resources, just because we can't afford anything bigger. And we have tried, in the US for instance, to change the American way of working. […] *Made in Chelsea* is a really interesting one, where we've brought the show to the US twice and we've hired half an American team to work with our English team. For the first three weeks, normally, they absolutely hate it because they're going, 'Well it's not how we work over here,' and we cannot shift that mentality and actually after two to three weeks they're like, 'Oh, you actually do know what you're doing! […] It is that thinking outside the box. So, I think […] from a process point of view we're much more creative here and much more commercial than in the US. In the US, it's a business that is going to have to change sooner rather than later (ibid.: 190-191).

Crosby reinforces the idea that creativity and commerce need not be inversely proportional to one another but may, rather, be co-productive (and it allows us to think of creativity in the non-romantic sense, as pragmatic problem-solving activity, including production management.) Also, he delivers, from his perspective, an optimistic view of agency for the British independent overseas - the ability to influence working behaviours and, ultimately, the production marketplace. British independent producers, in Crosby's estimation, are *The Mouse that Roared* (1959) in which a small independent country invades the United States with the intention of immediately surrendering in order to benefit from generous reparations, only to accidentally shift the balance of power in its own favour.

In the next section I argue that conceptual spaces of production - knowledge sets, shared understandings, histories and memories - are a far more resilient and constant manifestation of where types of production happen than physically determined, designed and bounded places. In the case of Monkey, an itinerant workforce and the ability to transpose its culture of production across diverse geographies, to invade and infect other established practices, not only represents the persistence of a set of identities and ideals but is also a fundamental element of its business-model. In doing so, I reconsider the professional discourses in television production of networks and networking.

8.3   Production Diasporas: Re-membering places, spaces and practices

The itinerant nature of the production workforce and the professional journeys of Granger and Crosby highlight the inconstant nature of employment in television production. The precariousness of labour in the creative industries has been discussed at some length (see, for example, Lee, 2012a). Central to the maintenance of these ongoing careers is the somewhat over-familiar concept and practice of networking. I describe this concept as over-familiar because of its prevalence in both professional and academic discourse (see, for example, Barnatt & Starkey, 2005; Grugulis & Stoyonova, 2012; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010; Lee, 2011; Potts et al., 2008). In television production's professional discourse, networking as a vital practice and skill-set is a hegemonic 'fact-of-life' (Lee, 2011). However, the value of networking is questionable. In the earlier discussion of GRACE Productions' Ray Tostevin, when asked if, from all of his attendance at commissioning briefings, festivals, awards ceremonies, trade shows and events set up by organisations such as the Royal Television Society (RTS) or the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA), whether his networking had resulted in any actual work, he reflected that it had not, but that it was important to be visible and seen to be around. This questioning of networking as a practice demands the definition of a network. Network theory, or Actor Network Theory (see Castells, 2000; Granovetter, 1973, 1983; Latour, 1987, 1999; Podolny, 2001) draws on scientific methodologies including epidemiology and information technology to represent the social ties between people, the collected web-like connections between individuals in groups being described as a network. Across these network connections passes information, influencing behaviour and agency. This conceptualisation of an actor's connections to other actors as a graphical web is useful to an extent - in identifying clusters of knowledge, for example - but says little about the qualities or genealogy of these ties or, indeed their maintenance and/or decay. In the context of this particular research, the quantitative (often diagrammatic) mobilisations of network theory elide the cultural qualities of these dependencies.

There is no doubt that networks exist and are related to agency and inclusion or exclusion, and the work-life-blurring social networking of keeping up and keeping in outside of traditional working hours and places is familiar across a number of work contexts not limited to the creative industries. However, beyond the discussion of why networks exist (for their inhabitants) and what they might appear to "look" like, there is less discussion of *how* they come to be and yet less on networks that are geographically and temporally dis-located yet still effective fields of agency. I argue here that *networking events do not create networks*, and there is little evidence to suggest that they create meaningful new strong ties but, rather, that they draw on

existing networks, many of which are only tacitly inhabited by their members, and may serve to reinforce them.

An example of an explicit network, referred to by Granger, would be the "New Independent Programme Producers' Association," he and a number of other small independent producers set up:

> DG: [I]t was us and companies of a similar size - small to mid-sized independents. It was really to meet and bitch about how awful it was being independent and how terrible and tough and all that sort of stuff. [T]here were six or seven companies in it. It was great. Actually, I was talking to someone yesterday and we thought we should start another one, again. It was more a sort of drinking club, I suppose, to be honest, but there was some value in it (Granger, D., 2016: 159).

On a larger scale, can the independent production sector itself be deemed an explicit network? In that it is statutorily defined and part of the trade discourse, certainly. More importantly, though, it is recognised as a space of occupation by its members. The statutory definition of the independent production sector did not create it. As discussed earlier in the thesis, it was already a membership - disenfranchised producers and freelancers - waiting for the opportunity to *emerge.* I asked Granger if he recognised the contemporary independent production sector as such:

> DG: Yes, I do, I really do. And it is around personalities, a lot of it, I think. [We] were talking about *The Big Breakfast* earlier. I mean, that room was extraordinary, and you go back to that and you track back who was working on *The Big Breakfast* and what they're doing now and so many of them became independent producers. […] I mean, that's an extraordinary generation of people, and has seemed to enthuse and encourage and you know inspire, I guess, other people […] to come and do the same thing now. There's all those famous people who have made a fortune. […] Because it's an industry which, you know, it is quite charisma-driven, I suppose (ibid.: 155).

This genealogical perspective highlights how *place* (the *Big Breakfast* production office,) over time and through the dissemination of structures of knowledge and agency (discourse) becomes transposed into *space* - the subjectivities physically dis-located but still connected. *Connected* is not to say that these people are *networking* in terms of communication activities, but that they occupy a network formed as a field (of cultural production) constituted by shared experience and memory. This network does not have an explicit name or require, necessarily, any organised inter-agent activity and, therefore, as such, *it is a tacit network*. While there is no published list of members, the members themselves know who is included and who is not.

It is important that Granger is remembering the stories of personalities at certain times and places. His construction of this tacit network is founded not only on roles and periods of employment but also on *personality* and *charisma*, on qualities such as enthusiasm, encouragement and inspiration. He weaves, from intangible subjectivities, a structure, a sector, a network of shared identity.

Hall says that,

> Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of selves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past (1990: 225).

But, he reminds us, these cultural identities and membership are not only formed on a vector of similarity and continuity, but, critically, on one of difference and rupture (ibid.: 226). This tacit network of independent producer agency-knowledge may have origin as a seed in *The Big Breakfast*'s office but it *emerges* only through the dis-assembly of those people-place relations when they *leave*. This migratory or dispersive aspect of the genealogy of networks demands that we recognise not only the connective nature of shared identities and culture in the network, but also the fundamental importance of disconnectedness, fracture and distance. The network, and its value, exists only through its ability to allow its members to recognise and order one another as a *space* when they no longer occupy the same *place*. The memory of a shared historical origin; a dis-location; and a re-membering, through identifying and deploying norms of belonging (see Fortier, 2010) are three key components of a diasporic model of the network.

The diasporic network model foregrounds the cultural identity of networks over their connectedness. This allows us to consider the cultural influence that a diaspora may have, not only within its own cultural boundaries, but on adjacent cultural structures with which it interacts. Granger mentions several British producers who are now based in the United States and who have facilitated what he refers to as a "British invasion,"

> DG: Michael Davies, who you may or may not have come across, is a British bloke, who runs a company called Embassy Row, which is entirely based in America, he had a lot of success… we used to work a lot with him, and people like Mark Burnett, another British producer… So, we first went there with *Don't Forget your Toothbrush*, in 1993 or -4 or something. [N]o British people were going there selling those sort of shows at that point, really at all. And then, when

we set Monkey up, that was starting to happen, because […] *Strictly Come Dancing* [(BBC, 2004-)] had been sold, *American Idol* [Fremantle, FremantleMedia, 19 Entertainment, American Idol Productions, Fox Television Network, Levels Audio, 2002-)] you know, all of that was going on and suddenly the non-scripted market, which is ours, was growing really quickly in the States and, as a result, there's been this enormous British invasion over there […] There are lots of people like us who are now selling ideas over there […] and there are also a lot of British producers who are going over there and finding their fortune (Granger, D., 2016: 145-146).

Even when developing for NBCU in the US, Granger favours working with those whom he shares a cultural connection with:

DG: Yes. So, we're developing with them. We're doing another pilot with them. That's a healthy relationship, you know, we like the people that work there - another Brit, Paul Telegdy, who runs the non-scripted side in the network, who we get on well with. You know, it's harder work, the network. The stakes are higher (ibid.: 152).

Here is a diaspora in the traditional sense of displaced nationality, but with additional specific situatedness within the production sector. This diasporic network demonstrates the three key components discussed above: the shared historical memory of Britishness and British television production; a physical dislocation from Britain itself; and the re-membering of a group which mutually develops and reinforces agency and cultural identity.

Can this model of the diasporic network be applied to the itinerant freelance production workers who variously "scale-up" only later to "fold up" Monkey's operations? In the two previous illustrations of the diasporic network, it is important to recognise the seniority and concomitant agency of the members of those networks. Where they have been dis-located from their origin, it has been through their own will. For the most part, the production worker seeks to join organisational structures, not to leave them, and to stay for as long as his or her contract allows. Contracts at Monkey, according to Crosby, tend to last anywhere from 8 to 18 weeks:

JC: A lot of people revolve between the contracts, quite happily. If we like working with them we'll absolutely keep them here. A lot of people want to actively stay at Monkey, which is a great thing to do. Once in a while we'll want to refresh the teams also, you don't want the teams stagnating […] On a big show like *Chelsea*, it's very safe and people love working on it, which is great, but actually [you] get to a certain point where you just need to turn those wheels around and get some fresh blood in once in a while.

KR: And will those people be out of the door, will they be on to a different production?

JC: No, no, they might move on to a different production, so it really depends. A lot of the time - there's your go-to people, and actually most people that we

have here will be our go-to people that we like working with, and you always want to have a new production, if you can, for them to go on to. That's just not a practical fact, sometimes, but nine people out of ten will come back here and enjoy working here (Crosby, J., 2016: 186-187).

Here, the agency lies primarily with the employer and the membership of the group is of Crosby's making. This is different to the self-identifying and self-selecting groups of the more senior producers discussed above. This model still follows the shared origin (working on a Monkey show,) dis-location (end of contract,) and re-membering (new contract on the same or another production) model, but with agency displaced outside of the group itself. It is too dichotomous to refer to this difference as *active* and *passive* diaspora, as there are scales of agency involved. Some insight is offered in the next case study, which provides some evidence of diasporic re-membering behaviours in employees. However, whereas in the previous examples the diaspora activates itself by looking within at its own members, the diaspora of production workers is primarily activated by outsiders (employers) identifying the origin and dis-located nature of a production workforce and re-membering it into its own organisation. The freelance workforce is fundamentally diasporic, but its agency is less explicitly evident. Employers have greater agency in identifying suitably-skilled employees from their own database and through the identification of experience gained by workers in similar companies and use that agency to employ and re-employ workers.

KR: So, will people work here, take a break, come back…

JC: Come back, have a bit of work at another company or whatever it is. I mean, it's a freelance world. People do that a lot. *Chelsea*'s a good testament to where we had people who were at a very junior level five years ago and now they're Series Producers and Senior Producers and have come back and have grown through the ranks and gone and done a show at Lime[30] or wherever and come back to Monkey. […] There's a mass of cross-pollination. […] It's a very small world. With us, you can see that there are only about 3 or 4 other producers that make structured reality - there's Lime, so a lot of people come through there. A lot of the execs at Lime have come through *Chelsea* and vice versa (ibid.: 187).

As Tunstall (1993) observed, producers occupy genre-specific worlds. This is not to say that all production workers do so. However, when one considers employers' outside-in observation of and agency over diasporas of production workers, we might develop Tunstall's observation into a more critical discussion of the forces governing high intra-genre mobility and low inter-genre mobility. In this specific instance, Lime's London offices are based in Camden, in the north west of the city, and Monkey in East End Shoreditch, so place is less of a hindrance to employee mobility than space - workers are more likely to occupy, through their careers, more geographic locations, whether in part-localised cluster clouds or further afield, but fewer conceptual-creative

ones. The diasporic network of employees works via three elements: 1) Employers perceive the historical origin of the member of the diaspora based upon his or her previous work-experience; 2) short contracts and dislocation beyond the agency of the worker create high mobility for the worker; and 3) an employer re-members those it recognises as belonging based upon a high level of parity between the worker's history and his or her own genre-specific world. As the employee gains experience and seniority, she or he also gains agency over the diasporic nature of his or her work, as did Granger between his time at Planet 24 through Ginger to Monkey and NBCU, and, rather than trying to be accepted into a tacit diasporic network, actually contributes to its constitution and operation.

I argue, therefore, a more complex model for the study of production networks, constituting three tiers or stages of networking and based around the concept of membership. The first stage is *gaining* membership, as experienced by new entrants into the field. Processes of initiation, the building of experience and the construction of an agreed and approved (by the existing network membership) identity are key elements of this stage, alongside high degrees of challenge and competition from others outside of the network. The second stage, and the one most analysed in the existing literature within studies of production, is *maintaining* membership. Visibility, ongoing viability, availability and currency of cultural capital are the key drivers in this phase and competition is still high, but now from other members *within* the network. The third stage, using the diasporic model, is *re-membering.* History and memory are the required elements in this stage of drawing on past relationships in order to overcome new challenges. However, while competition with *other* membership groups is high, mutual benefit and assistance within the diasporic network is also high. Workplace precarity, with short-term contracts and uncertainty a source of anxiety and emotional labour (see Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2008, 2011a), and the neo-liberal concept of the new cultural worker as self-branding 'president of me' (see Ross, 2003: 158) places great responsibility on the employee to maintain and develop his or her own career. The risk inherent in the now normalised high-mobility, low-security model of employment in television production is partially offset by a greater incidence of employees who leave employers, later to return with greater experience, new skills and in more senior positions.[31] The concept of *diaspora* helps to describe the workings of this phenomenon.

8.4 Conclusion

If unavoidable exposure to external risk and the inability to create a supportive community culture was a key element of the first case study, and the second demonstrated the implementation of a strong communal culture while the external risk of independence remained high, this case study illustrates a trade-off between independence and security.

The idea of independence can be seen to be a strong motivating factor both for producer/managers, who wish to retain the agency and identity of their organisation. Financial independence carries existential risk to the company and also decreases the security of its employees. Granger and Macdonald's decision to sell Monkey Kingdom to NBCU mitigates the financial risk, although the requirement for programme sales and success remains, but it also carries the potential of limiting independent creativity and agency.

The methods employed by Monkey in maintaining the sensation and practice of independence are spatial. The physical location of the Monkey offices is not only geographically separate from that of its owners but the location also bears semiotic indicators of independence and difference. These indicators form part of the employees' experienced professional identities and are resolutely non-corporate. In addition, the bracketing of NBCU back-office corporate functions and culture from those of Monkey serve to create a space of independence which, while not isolating the creative workers from their true employers, creates conditions in which that relationship is downplayed in relation to the creative work of the production company. This is a very practical example of independence being a powerful discursive device, far more-so than it is a definable economic state. If you say that you are, and act like you are independent, this approach goes, then you are independent.

The picture emerging of the independent producer is a rather lonely one. Caught in the middle of development, production and sales, between creatives and executives, the support networks available to the independent producer look very limited. The diasporic nature of this more senior stratum of the production workforce, on face value, is its greatest weakness. As shown in the final case study, it is important to realise that most independent producers are in competition with one another, so it is not unreasonable to expect a lack of community spirit. However, there are synergies created by the shared histories and cultural experiences and approaches of these senior figures, many of who emerged from the same or similar roots. These commonalities form not only an imagined community but, at times, come together as

real partnerships and supportive networks. In a different but connected way, the itinerant nature of employment in production for less senior workers also creates a diasporic community. This serves as an identifying and selection resource for potential employers. Not only are these diasporic networks the source of production employees, their diasporic nature, by definition, broadens the experience-base of the workforce. These workers, rather than becoming indoctrinated in single ways of working, learn new skills and approaches which may then facilitate their development into more senior roles through this mobility.

Diasporic networks are not explicit manifestations of familiness but familiarity and trust are key factors in their functioning. Television production operates in relatively small and genre-specific worlds with groups of producers and production workers coalescing and dissolving repeatedly over time and space. This itinerant nature of working in production is primarily represented in the existing literature as precarity and uncertainty. These are not unreasonable representations but their negative depiction of these circumstances can be complemented through considering the positive opportunities of the widening of experience – in effect a sharing of training opportunities among companies – and the potential for diasporic networks to be fundamentally supportive rather than competitive in nature. An individual's perspective on this value-judgement would be based on his or her own agency over this itinerancy.

Networks and networking do not only occur between tangibly and consciously connected groups. Networks may be tacit and part forgotten, based around cultural or historical commonalities, even shared language. This does not reduce their agency to nothing. The right circumstances can re-constitute or conjure new tangible connections, opportunities and support. Network ties, this analysis shows, are very hard to break entirely, retaining a residual, often dormant, facility. Networking has different meanings, functions and risks in different career stages. It is not only (and may not even be) a process in securing a job or retaining one when you have it. It is a process of cultural sharing, comparison and trust-building through the occupation of communicative space with others. In this way, it is not dissimilar to the function of gossip in the previous case study.

A great deal of the work of the producer and the production worker, therefore, is about fitting in. The producer also has the responsibility of fitting different agencies together, around or through his or her company. This is not nuts-and-bolts assembly, but a far more complex, messy and fraught interaction of culture and identity. In the following case study, this process is examined further. Following the trend in the case studies of

examining the mitigation of the risk of independence through organisational and cultural means, I look at how an independent production company can be formed, from its inception, within an owning corporation.

9.0   Case Study 4: "A third way." Electric Ray. Label-Independent

Electric Ray was established in partnership with a studio from the outset, rather than being founded as an independent company and later transferring ownership as was the case in the previous chapter. The study of Electric Ray offers the opportunity to interrogate the contexts, drivers and ambitions underpinning such a decision given that it represents a significant strategic shift in producers' attitudes to, and management of, the balance between creativity, organisational culture and commerce. What becomes evident is that the construction and maintenance of organisational independence is possible within bounds set by both the owned and parent organisation and which, while not separated completely from the financial arrangement, has much to do with the sense or culture of independence facilitated by the senior staff.

The analysis is based on interviews with one co-Managing Director of the company, two staff employees and one freelance employee and the chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section begins with the individual. The background and disposition of the producer can be argued to be significantly influential not only in his or her own career strategies and outcomes, but, as the employer-producer is a gatekeeper of the production and its workforce, in the company culture which forms around them. This highlights the close interface between the creative and managerial responsibilities of the independent producer – an interface through which the main contributor to this case study has recently passed. This prompts the appearance of tensions between these two quite different identities. This and the identity work conducted in the process of fitting in through a career in the institution of British broadcasting allow us to consider the convolutions of personality, disposition and motivation which producers and production workers undertake in order to develop their careers.

The second investigates co-existing cultures in independent production. It initially looks at the establishment of Electric Ray in partnership with the Sony Corporation. The motivation behind this strategy and its practicalities is discussed with the co-Managing Director, and then how that partnership is perceived is discussed with the company employees. As in the previous case study, there are conscious methods employed in order to maintain the notional and actual independence of the production company from the owning organisation.

The maintenance of this sense of independence and the interaction of the production company with the Corporation's teams form the next discussion. Intra- and inter-

organisational networking, bonding and communication strategies are identified and investigated. This leads us from the interiors of production offices to the exterior settings of these interactions, this time in London's Soho. As in the previous case study, the location offers various facilities to the company and its employees which extend beyond the processes of production and intermingle with the social and cultural aspects of being a production worker. Building on the foundation of the diasporic nature of the senior production community, there is discussion of the relationship between collegiality and competition in this field.

Electric Ray may represent a third way of thinking about and implementing independent production. Neither fully independent nor fully in-house, the final discussion asks whether this intentional positioning represents a capitulation, compromise or compact between the independent producer and the corporate studio.

9.1   The flexible habitus of an independent producer

9.1.1   Fitting in, habitus and diversity

Electric Ray was founded, in partnership with Sony Pictures Entertainment, by Karl Warner and Meredith Chambers in 2014. Having worked for broadcasters and independent production companies, neither had previously managed their own firm. The decision to enter into partnership with a backer was the outcome of an evaluation of the economic and cultural environment of television production in the UK.

Chambers left his position as Creative Director at Twenty Twenty to join Warner at Electric Ray in April 2014. Previously he was executive editor for factual and music at BBC Wales and commissioning editor for five years at Channel 4. All of Chambers' work has been in factual, including as Deputy Editor of an ITV current affairs series, with his more senior previous roles in documentary. In 2011, he won a BAFTA and an RTS award for Best Single Documentary, *Between Life and Death* (BBC Wales, 2011), and received a BAFTA nomination for *Frankenstein's Wedding* (BBC, 2001), "a unique live musical event for BBC3" (Electric Ray, 2019). While referred to through this chapter, he was not available for interview.

Karl Warner graduated with a degree in politics from the University of Nottingham but, eschewing potential careers in politics, law and finance, he took up a runner's position on reality entertainment format *Bar Wars* (Initial, 2001). Moving on to researcher roles for *Big Brother* (Endemol, Endemol Shine, 2000-2018) and other shows, he secured a development role at the BBC in 2004, as part of the team behind *Strictly Come*

Dancing (BBC, 2004-). He left the BBC to take on assistant producer positions at companies including Wall to Wall and Endemol, where he became a senior producer before joining Monkey Kingdom as Head of Development in 2006. In 2008, aged 28, he returned to the BBC as its youngest-appointed commissioning editor and commissioned a number of entertainment programmes including *Michael McIntyre's Comedy Road Show* (Open Mike Productions, 2009) and *John Bishop's Britain* (3 Amigos Productions, Objective North Productions, Objective Productions, 2010). In 2013, it was announced that he would leave the BBC to set up an independent production company, which would, in 2014, become Electric Ray. Culminating in his appointment in 2018 as Channel Controller of E4,[32] in the space of seventeen years he has held the full gamut of editorial positions.

Warner is described as "one of the brightest, most highly thought of entertainment minds in British television" with "vision and flair" (Wayne Garvey, President of International Production, Sony Pictures Television, in Barraclough, 2014), "a true creative as well as a natty dresser." (Danny Cohen, then BBC Director of Television, in *Ariel*, 2013) and "inventive, intelligent and impish" (Ian Katz, Channel 4 Director of Programmes, in Channel 4, 2018). On his appointment as the BBC's youngest commissioning editor, he described himself as, "inexperienced, lucky, inexperienced." He asserts, "The priority for me and my job is to enable and support people out there to have the best ideas" (Parks, 2012).

Born in Hastings, which he describes as, at the time, "the most impoverished part of Britain," he was raised by his mother in various squats in North London. His mother needed work to support her children and, as the estranged father was an electrician (nicknamed "Electric Ray,") convinced a contractor that she could do electrical wiring, learning from a library book on the job. "She's clever, my mum," says Warner. "She worked on building sites in the 80s as a woman - as a lesbian." She later qualified as an electrical engineer and lecturer, going on to head The National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC).[33] "So, she's like a mad inspiration. Amazing to take one tiny little opportunity and go from there and we'd grown up in a sort of working-class environment where we were pretty poor," states Warner (Warner, K., 2018: 195-196).

Warner's early upbringing, at a time when working and middle-class families lived side by side in North London, exposed him to social difference. At school,

> you'd have these two ends of the social, cultural, political spectrum and it meant that […] I was able to glimpse a life that I might like alternatively. […] That's driven me (ibid.: 196).

That drive is evident in his quick career progression.

> I was lucky in that I made quite rapid progress between each of the roles. […] I researched for, like, a year, moved on, became an [assistant producer] for a year. Moved on to become a producer. I was lucky (ibid.: 194).

A degree of itinerancy is typical in television production but Warner's "meteoric" (Parks, 2012) career trajectory demonstrates a commitment to challenge and change.

Warner's background could not be described as privileged, but it appears to have influenced in him the development of significant social resources. Rather than causing social immobility through the imprinting and reproduction of its working-class dispositions, Warner's unconventional upbringing, and the diverse perspectives it offered, provided or encouraged in him the agency to learn an alternative habitus.

As such, Warner may have departed from his working-class heritage in the pursuit of middle-class career goals, but, in his own reflections on diversity, his socio-economic origin still plays an important part in his identity narrative.

> I think people make the mistake of thinking about diversity only in terms of skin colour and, of course, that is massively relevant in lots of ways, but I, personally, think it's mostly about class [… W]hen I first got into television, particularly when I went to the BBC, I spent quite a period of time worrying about fitting in and being like everyone else. […] My whole life I've always wanted to fit in because mum's so different. There used to be this guy, George Entwistle at the BBC, […] he reminded me that it's about bringing your differences to television and that's what makes television interesting, rather than trying to fit in or be like everybody else (Warner, K., 2018: 197).

Fitting in involves a great many social factors, some more recognised than others. A 2018 report cited, in order, gender, ethnicity, disability and social class characteristics as the most commonly researched aspects of diversity in the screen industries, with sexual orientation and religion and belief "seldom explored in detail" (CAMEo, 2018: 15). Social class, states the report, is not one of the characteristics protected by the *Equality Act* (2010), and, therefore, is less well researched and discussed (CAMEo, 2018: 38). In reality, diversity issues are often intersectional in that issues of location, gender, ethnicity and class operate simultaneously (ibid.: 39).

The Puttnam Inquiry, *The Future of Public Service Broadcasting* (Puttnam, 2016), cited both on- and off-screen diversity as areas of systemic failure (ibid.: 11), suggesting

statutory and regulatory interventions, including an amendment to the *Equality Act* (2010) that would bring commissioning and editorial policy within its purview. Ofcom's (2019) *Diversity in UK Television: Freelancers* report identified an overall lack of reporting on diversity statistics by employers, although the data that is available suggests that the relationship- and trust-based nature of gaining freelance employment in television tends toward reproduction rather than increasing diversity (ibid.: 10-11). The report also found differences between genres, with the lifestyle, entertainment and reality sub-genre decreasing in on- and off-screen diversity in recent years (ibid.: 30).

The 2018 AHRC-funded report, *Panic! It's an Arts Emergency* (Brook et al., 2018), found that those in gatekeeping positions of power in the arts felt that the field was a meritocracy, while those in lower-level positions seldom did. At the heart of the AHRC report's findings was a high degree of middle-class and upper-middle-class system reproduction in the senior ranks of the arts, including television, making "getting in and getting on" (ibid.: 3-10) more challenging for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This reinforces Taylor and O'Brien's (2017) findings that workers in the creative industries are no more meritocratic than those in the general workforce and that the existence of meritocracy in creative career-development was most reported by those who had acquired senior positions. This was also a finding of the *Panic!* report:

> [O]nce people have achieved major success within the sector they become most committed to talent and hard work as explaining that success. Those who most believed in meritocracy in the sector […] were least likely to believe in social reproduction" (Brook et al., 2018: 7).

Malik (2013) argues that the contemporary discourse of "Creative Diversity" serves to mask the particularities and intersections of particular protected characteristics through realigning itself away from issues of, for example, race, gender and disability toward a meritocratic neoliberal economic imperative - a perspective also very much to the fore in BAFTA et al.'s (2017) report. Resistance to inclusion can take the form of "subtle acts of elitism" (Waterson, 2018), cultural expressions of exclusion experienced by some television workers from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

There is a tendency to treat cultural capital as a resource when thinking about fitting in in relation to class, and to do so quantitatively. Does someone have *enough* cultural capital to fit in and get on? Considering, however, the *expression* of cultural capital in different groups, as in Friedman's (2016) discussion of social mobility, suggests two things. The first is that cultural capital is socially localised. That is, each social caste has its own trappings, its own symbols of belonging. As such, these espoused signifiers can be lost, as in Friedman's contributor who was told, "If I was to lose the

chav earrings, or dress […] more appropriately," then she would get on better (ibid.: 115), or acquired through 'picking up the language.' The second is that the local social caste, exercising its rules of membership, tends to reproduce and reinforce its own sign-systems. This reinforcement and reproduction can occur through friendship or familial relationships and also through professional communities.[34]

Warner's upbringing may have brought about both the necessity to adapt to changing socio-local sign-systems, such as deciding which social groups to fit in with during his schooling, *and* broken the strong familial influence through both his separation from his father and also his observations of his mother's own difference. As he says, he has been trying to fit in throughout his life. He mobilises a deficit model of his own origin, which, in Morrin's terms, functions as a psycho-social "ghost," unsettling and dislocating its owner between belonging and not belonging in past and present contexts (206: 125). This may lead to what Bourdieu referred to as the *habitus clivé* (Bourdieu, 2004: 161 in Friedman, 2016: 110) - the cleft habitus - whereby the original habitus is repressed while another learned habitus is adopted to fit into a new context. Ingram and Abrahams (2016) suggest, however, that a third space may be occupied in which, rather than the repression and rehearsal of conflicting habituses, a reflexive synthesis of two narratives occurs, accommodating and challenging both. While this does offer an optimistic picture of identity agency, it is a further form of emotional labour and identity work which may not need to be conducted by those from more privileged backgrounds.

Now, as co-Managing Director of a production company, Warner is a gatekeeper of the make-up of the creative workforce. He does not appear to be explicitly redressing a class-imbalance in production. "You might appear to have had a very privileged lifestyle but there's something else that has gone on in your life that gives you a point of difference and it's celebrating that," he says (Warner, K., 2018: 197). It is an interpretation of diversity which side-steps the statistical or legal definitions of protected characteristics and which is more based upon the interaction of different personality-types. As a managing director, these interactions occur under his responsibility and, as a managing director, he gets to decide what diversity looks like and how it is addressed in his workplace.

9.1.2 Tensions between creative producing and management

> I never wanted to be an MD. I don't think it sounds sexy at all. A Creative Director sounds more fun, but I never thought, 'Oh, I want to be a Managing Director' (ibid.: 199).

Warner, from being a runner to running his own company, has developed his agency in defining and applying his own discursive rules to the organisation around him but the title of Managing Director comes with its own expectations. Warner's initial impression that running his own company would involve "hustling, selling shows and pitching" (ibid.: 200), was confounded by the reality that, "In the start-up process, there's a space that says, 'Managing Director,' and the investors expect you to manage the business. […] Managing the business is *it*" (ibid.).

Chambers' and Warner's initial ambitions were expressed in creative rather than managerial terms. At the time, Warner stated,

> Our plan has always been to bring the best of factual and entertainment together. We've been working towards this for ages and at last Meredith and I will be in the same place at the same time (Hassan, 2014).

Chambers added,

> Karl's an exciting creative and great fun to be around – I can't wait to get started with him. With support from the team at Sony Pictures Television I hope that we can combine our reputations for producing innovative shows and build a successful slate for the UK and international broadcasters (*TBI*, 2014).

Warner and Chambers worked in different genres. Genre worlds are not simply defined by on-screen conventions, but behind-the-scenes cultural dispositions.

> [W]e're both from very different backgrounds, very different people[. …] We talk in a different sort of language. Not only because of who we are but because of the genre specialisms that we've come from[. …] It is like from two countries (Warner, K., 2018: 199).

Their coming together is a good example both of weak ties in operation and of the functional resource of reputational capital.

> We'd known each other for four or five years. We were introduced by Danny Cohen, because Danny had worked with Meredith when he was at Channel 4 and Channel 4 Docs. We'd always hit it off. We were creatively excited by each other's work and really liked each other and felt that there would be a really good complement of skills. Meredith's background in factual and docs, mine in entertainment and that it would open up every door to us, which it has done, and that the coming together of those skillsets would, hopefully, and has, I think, create lots of interesting work rather than being quite rigid around genre. Because it's the hybrids, the meeting in the middle, I think, that people are interested in. So, he was saying that he was curious about starting up and then the timing just worked (ibid.: 211).

In practice, Warner and Chambers oversee different slates of programmes. In line with their previous experience, Warner's slate lies more within the entertainment genres,

Chambers' more within factual genres. Their influence, as is discussed later, on not only the content produced by Electric Ray but on the organisational culture, combines their dispositions. As Managing Directors, it is this influence over the organisational functioning and culture where the bulk of their responsibility lies, rather than in the details of production itself.

The tensions between managerial responsibility, creative leadership and production increase with seniority. Warner says, "Whether we are running companies or exec producing, we all miss being APs or runners" (ibid.: 199). It has taken him "two or three years" to understand what being a Managing Director entails, not only in terms of where he has to take responsibility but also where he has to delegate. He is "responsible for delivering the creative and commercial success of the company" and his role, as described to him by a former colleague and mentor, is to be "like a helicopter," going up to "look above the city" and then down to get "right up close to […] the landmarks." His activities range from "managing the health of a production to looking at the numbers with our Chief Financial Officer," attending development meetings, board meetings, pitching, and overseeing post production. "It's sort of everything," he says (ibid.: 198). The Managing Directors, to the owning company, *are the company*.

> In the first few years I sort of fell into the default position of exec producing,[35] but thinking that was MD-ing, and it's not. Or feeling like I have to be Head of Development at some point and come up with all the ideas, and it's not. Actually, managing and shepherding people to do their best work is more about, I think, what it is, and representing the company as best as I possibly can (ibid.: 198-199).

Warner's declaration that he misses hands-on production points to a sense of relative care-free-ness in earlier career posts. There appear to be advantages in having a limited field of view of the operation of an organisation. To use Warner's analogy, the higher the helicopter flies the more responsibilities and potential threats come into view. The lower the helicopter flies, the more limited the field of view and the more definable particular areas of activity are. At play is an organisational structuring which works to break down any particular individual's view to an angle commensurate with his or her seniority. The tension between production, creative leadership and management increases with seniority as the initial relative freedom of early-career positions is replaced by the responsibility to ensure that the teams now responsible for those activities are working effectively. In de Leede et al.'s conceptual model of organisational responsibility (1999: 209; figure 11) Warner's responsibility lies at the uppermost level, ensuring the adequate resourcing (of both capital and information) and guidance of the teams. This involves interfacing between the parent organisation,

from where the resources and values of the organisation are sourced, and the team itself. The development, editorial and production teams can only be expected to take shared responsibility for the completion of tasks within the limits of the resource and information available to them. This normative responsibility - the expectation that the team will complete a task (ibid.: 205) - is therefore limited. At an individual level, the responsibility is both normative (there is an expectation to complete this task for the team) and descriptive (this individual caused this outcome.) Descriptive responsibility can be a source of positive impression and reward or of negative impression and sanction. This relative risk is mitigated by team solidarity and heedfulness (ibid.: 207). As such, semi-autonomous teams, such as programme-project teams, not only facilitate effective task-delegation but also act as a supportive network for their members.
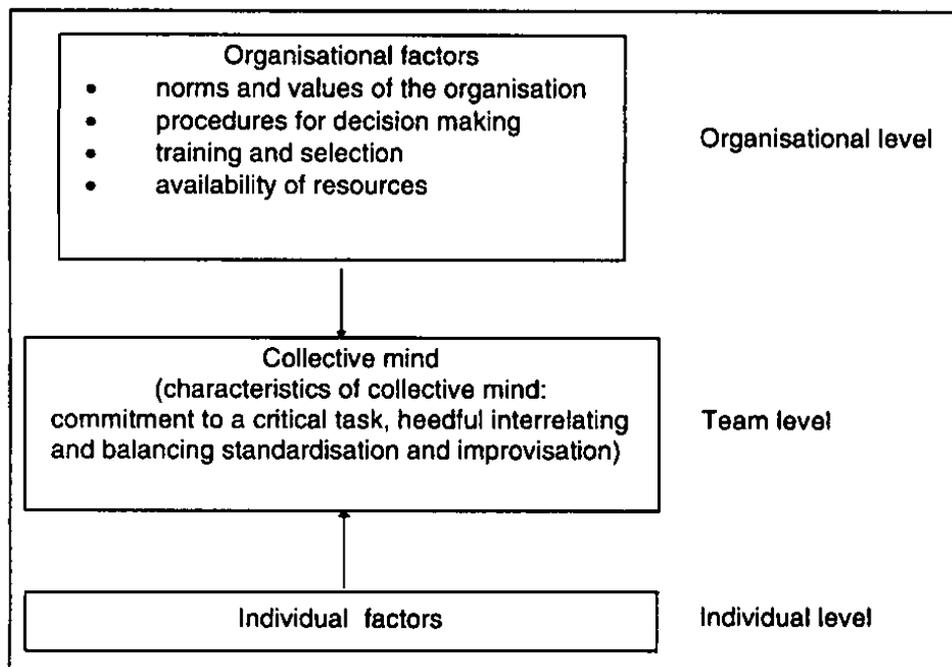
Figure 11: Conceptual framework of preconditions for team responsibility (Reprinted by permission of Springer Nature. Journal of Business Ethics. de Leede et al., 1999: 209.. Copyright, 1999).

While production teams have explicit job-descriptions, there is evidence that the person-specification for the role extends beyond skills and into personality.

> It's been useful as a […] benchmark for people - do they radiate something? They don't have to all be massive characters - I mean we've got big characters here - you don't have to be loud […] but they radiate an energy… I think that's really important (Warner, K., 2018: 203).

Warner is "incredibly charismatic," according to one employee and, given a later allusion to partnerships in television being akin to dating, it follows that he looks for the

same qualities in those he works with. This is further evidence of the relationship between habitus and organisational culture and also of Warner's efforts to reflexively (re-)assemble his own habitus and *the field in which that operates* – his own company.

This relationship between personality and culture is reflected in several studies. O'Reilly et al. (2014) found empirical evidence of team-based organisations benefitting in terms of employee's attitudes, financial performance and reputation from CEOs with open and agreeable personalities. Tsai (2011) found that positive and supportive interaction between leaders and subordinates promoted task-completion and job satisfaction. A good fit between personality and organisation, such as extrovert characteristics within team-based organisations was found by Anderson et al. (2008) and Mallinger and Rizescu (2010) to impact positively employee influence and work satisfaction.

A person-centred approach to managing is partnered with high professional expectations which, according to Warner, are not only focused on the company's outcomes, but on the sense of agency which that professionalism confers on each employee.

> I would like them to think that they do good work, that they're proud of the work that they're involved in, that they're excited by the work and that there's a level of professionalism expected of them, coupled with a playfulness - that it's fun. I think creativity lives and breathes off that feeling of playfulness, that freedom to experiment, take risks. […] I think we're quite exacting about standards or working principles. […] We feed back to people about what we're expecting of them and what they can expect of us. So, I'd like to think that they feel really engaged and valued as well (Warner, K., 2018: 203).

Warner states that, "Managing the people is probably the hardest thing […] and keeping them engaged" (ibid.: 199). Warner's approach to management means that the employees are given enough responsibility to feel that they play a direct role in the fortunes of the company. One employee recognises that fact that, "they don't have the time to micro-manage people" (Weber, R., 2018: 234). Another says, "I do feel like I give a lot of myself to the company [laughs] and have, therefore, helped shape it. So, I do feel like I'm important here" (McArdle, N., 2018: 216).

> We generally work in small teams so everyone really owns what they do. As an extension of everyone's voice being heard, we're also given a lot of responsibility. I think that adds to the feeling of being valued (Douty, R., 2018: 225).

Organisational cultures are always emergent, in that they are unavoidable outcomes of complex social interactions. At Electric Ray, Warner and Chambers take an

interventionist approach. Rather than feeling like one of Sony Corporation's 117,000 staff, or the Pictures division's 9,000, the Electric Ray employees are made to feel like one of its own 14-or-so-strong team. The person-centred space within Sony that Warner and Chambers maintain creates for the employees a recognisable and ownable context with its own targets and expectations. The division of the company into supported and self-supporting teams, as suggested by de Leede et al. (1999), mitigates their exposure to professional risk whist increasing their sense of responsibility and job satisfaction. This suggests that production cultures not only emerge through tacit behavioural responses to the work context but also may be influenced by explicit managerial intervention. These interventions may shift employees' perceptions of the workplace.

It is conventional wisdom that employment in television production is highly competitive. The academic literature on cultural labour (for example, Banks et al., 2013; Hesmondhalgh, 2013; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Lee, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2013) tends to focus on insecurity and the tension between creativity and commerce. Given the prevalence of short-term and freelance labour in television production, such observations and arguments have merit. However, the evidence presented by the contributors here offers a different perspective, wherein there is high competition *between employers* to secure "talent" - the best employees.

> [W]hen people do leave, they get upset because they want to come back and a lot of people that work here are returners, so that speaks volumes, I think, for how nice a place it is for people to work, really. Some places you can't wait to get out of, can you? (McArdle, N., 2018: 217).

This is evidence of the importance of organisational culture to employee attraction. Warner attests to the competitive nature of the employment marketplace.

> We're all trying to keep the best people. That's the thing I never expected or I knew about but hadn't felt it as keenly as I've felt it the last few years. The competition for production talent is fierce. So, winning commissions is fierce and getting people to make the shows well is fierce (Warner, K., 2018: 201).

Recent years have seen a number of reports regarding skill shortages in film and television production in the UK. Some cite the UK's impending withdrawal from the European Union (for example, Mayes, 2017), others, the impact of streaming video on-demand services and tax breaks for high-end production (for example, Creative Skillset, 2017), over-estimation of competition for jobs (for example, QA Education, 2017) and a lack of training opportunities (for example, BAFTA, 2016; Creative Skillset, 2015). These macro-level contexts have an impact not only at the meso-level of

organisations and their ability to respond flexibly to production opportunities but also and at the micro-level of individual employees. Those with high skill- and experience-levels occupy a high-opportunity marketplace. As one employee states, "if you're good, they want to retain you, so it's much more of a staff culture, really" (McArdle, N., 2018: 214). Freelancer Weber's experience is of serial employment.

> It helps being [in] production,[36] because there's not as many people doing it and, without sounding too big-headed, I'm quite good at what I do so I tend to stay and work longer. Places tend to keep me on, extend me, or offer me other gigs (Weber, R., 2018: 229).

Weber had an opportunity to return to a previous employer - a fully independent production company - but, instead, took the position at Electric Ray, partly based on the dates of the contract but also that he "wanted to be here" (ibid.: 227-228).

> The job went up [on *The Talent Manager* website] and it was what I was looking for. I applied and I just knew I was perfect for it. It was really funny. I sent the email off and I'd barely hit the browser close and I had a call from […] the Talent Manager here (ibid.: 228).

While this is limited evidence, it demonstrates that competition for labour is not only between employees but also employers. Maintaining an attractive production culture in an organisation is one way in which employers can improve their chances of securing a high-quality production workforce. The following section considers how Warner came to establish Electric Ray in partnership with its co-owning Corporation, the cultures of those two organisations, and how they interact from the perspectives of both Warner and the employees.

9.2   Co-locating cultures

9.2.1   A third way? The production company inside a company

Warner occupies a pivotal node in the ideas brokerage network between the production teams and the parent company. He is jointly-responsible, with Chambers, for the production teams. Whilst he is responsible for ideas being developed and having value added by their transaction across networks, he is less involved in their origination. This allows us to nuance further the articulation of what a television producer does. GRACE Productions' creative director was required to manage and negotiate ideas through the whole networked brokerage process. The relatively larger scale and complexity of Electric Ray and its positioning within a parent company limits Warner's involvement in development and production activities. Instead, he oversees

the overall performance of those processes and picks up the brokerage at the points where it interfaces with the parent company and broadcasters.

Warner has experienced both sides of this brokerage and is frequently asked about the difference between being a producer and a commissioning editor. He offers an alternative to the conventional perception as to where creativity, autonomy and risk are situated in each role. He says, "The psychology is definitely different, and the dynamic is different […] but, mostly, it's the same. I'm still selling [. …] It's still trying to talk about good ideas, or find good ideas and do your best work, so there's lots of things that are the same" (Warner, K., 2018: 200). This challenges the model proposed in the first case study (and in Zoellner, 2016) where the selling producer carries the greater risk in comparison to the buying commissioning editor, who occupies an over-supplied and relatively low-risk market. Warner's perception of this relationship, as a former commissioning editor, is inverted.

> There's more risk, weirdly, buying than there is selling, in some sort of weird way, because, when you buy, you only get to say 'yes' once, twice, three times a year. When you're selling, you're just trying to fucking sell as much as you can (Warner, K., 2018: 200).

Warner's implication is that, given that commissioning editors' success relies on commissioning successful programmes with a high audience-to-cost ratio, there is an inherently high level of risk in the role given that the commissioning editor commissions only a small number of programmes each year. In comparison, a production company risks relatively low levels of resource in the pitching of a great many ideas.

At the time of the interview the company had four shows and two pilots in production, "two or four" funded developments, "five or six" in the process of being commissioned and, "beneath that, there's ideas - loads and loads of ideas" (ibid.). Warner's responsibility is to ensure that his company is always oversupplying ideas relative to its production capacity, offsetting risk. Conversely, as a commissioning editor with the responsibility for a small number of production budgets per year, the risk-to-opportunity ratio is greater. It should, however, be considered that firstly, commissioning editors are able to spread their own risk by maintaining a number of projects in different stages of development, only a few of which will successfully complete the commissioning process, and secondly, that the ability of independent producers to pitch projects is limited by the level of development resources they have available to them. The less financial backing the production company has access to, the fewer development resources it is able to deploy. This suggests that independent producers with greater access to development funding, such as those partnered with larger organisations,

therefore, may be more able to mitigate the risk in the commissioning market. The producer-commissioning editor relationship is a key television industry discourse but its academic study is limited and overwhelmingly presented from producers' perspectives (for example, Paterson, 2017; Zoellner, 2009, 2016), inviting further study that includes the perspective of the commissioning editor.

Like the previous case study, Warner faces not only outward to the commissioning editors, but also back or inward to his owning studio. To provide a sense of scale, Sony Corporation, as of March 2018, employs 117,300 staff, has annual revenue of almost £60 billion and a stock value of £6 billion (Sony, 2018a). It is a vertically-integrated corporation producing and distributing technology, film, television music and games in territories worldwide and has recently launched a financial services division. Electric Ray has a core team of approximately 14 employees (Warner, K., 2018: 201) with an annual turnover of around £4 million (Companies House, 2019b).

Through the 1980s and 1990s, Sony decentralised its business into divisions, each with a president responsible for, in effect, his or her own company, reporting to the Corporation. Sony's aim was to foster business innovation, more rapid response to local change, and to flatten the corporate hierarchy to reduce the number of management layers between entry level employees and top management (Sony, 2018b). The controlling share of Electric Ray is held by Columbia Pictures Corporation Limited. In turn, this division reports up to Sony Corporate Services Europe Limited, which reports to Sony Entertainment Holdings Europe Limited, which reports to Sony Corporation (Companies House, 2019a). This companies-within-companies structure of Sony, while decentralising responsibility, may also facilitate more localised management cultures.

Warner moved in relatively prompt succession between a number of independent production companies and experienced in-house development and commissioning at the BBC. "Some of my experience," he says, "is a bit shallow because […] I short-cutted my way to the next level and I think if you spend a longer time at a place and you develop with them, I think it's a richer experience" (Warner, K., 2018: 202). His experience, though, constitutes a 12-year reconnaissance activity. In particular, his position as a commissioning editor provided him with a diverse stream of independent producers to assess.

> [Y]ou see lots of different people coming in - all shapes and sizes - doing things well, doing things badly and you sort of go, 'God, if I was going to start my own company, I wouldn't do it like that,' or, 'I'd do it like that' (ibid.: 204).

Warner identified a number of options available to him. At one end of the spectrum would be to take a salaried position as the creative director of an existing production company. At the other, to start up a fully independent company with his own money or with private investment. The former option did not align with his ambition, whereas the latter presented too much personal risk. He was approached with an offer by a parent company and, he says, "It sort of woke something up inside me. I don't know if that's […] that drive or that competitive streak to try and win some investment. It became like a game" (ibid.).

News of his desire to set up his own independent production company spread and he was approached by a number of companies to which he pitched. He realised that, given competition from super-indies in the entertainment genre, "You'd be mad to start up a production company without some sort of investment or backing" (ibid.). He had noticed in his role as commissioning editor that he was more likely to want to commission projects from companies that projected confidence.

> It's like dating, right? You want to date the people who are really confident and I think having financial backing […] gives you an air of confidence (ibid.).

Warner refers to the deal feeling like "a third way" (ibid.: 207). "I'm sort of employed by Sony, I've got a department […] but I have equity in it" (ibid.). Electric Ray is 50.1 per cent owned by Columbia Pictures Corporation Limited,[37] while Warner and Chambers each own 24.95 per cent of the company. This, says Warner, gave him the "comfort and, therefore, confidence to do what I'm doing," with, "enough security to continue living my life the way I want to live it," and, "still enough at stake that made it exciting and kept the edge" (ibid.: 208).

Warner says that he set up Electric Ray, "just at the time before there was a sort of glut of start-ups" (ibid.: 204) and, according to *Broadcast*, "the rush to launch new independent production companies shows no sign of slowing" (Curtis, 2018). Many of these start-ups have backing from distributors (ibid.), while other companies are offering less restrictive venture capital deals (Ravindran, 2018). The possible drivers of this include the tax relief for high-end television production introduced in the UK in 2013 (HM Revenue & Customs, 2007-2018) and the subsequent competition between transnational distributors to attract domestic production talent in order to qualify. Curtis (2018: paras. 9-10) asks whether in-house staff positions, especially for those at either end of their careers, are less attractive financially and culturally than the opportunities offered by studio backing with creative independence. It can be seen that the drivers of this behaviour are simultaneously political, economic, cultural and personal. The label

of independence (and the independent label company) provides a differentiating identifier in a marketplace where brand identity at personal, organisational and corporate levels functions in the construction of a cultural representation of a business operation. The label and the brand associated with it humanises the underpinning commercial mechanics of that operation.

Warner's reference to "a third way" is interesting. While not directly referring to the political interventions of the late 1990s, the 'free market with a safety net' articulated by Giddens (1998) is analogous to the partnership between Electric Ray and Sony. Electric Ray is able and expected to take responsibility for its operation within the marketplace, but Sony provide financial backing and managerial support. "We don't get free money," says Warner. "I think people often think, because we're part of Sony, we get free money. We obviously have a security, or safety net, but that only lasts for so long" (Warner, K., 2018: 207). The financial backing takes the form of an intra-group loan from the Sony Corporation to Electric Ray ranging from £1 million in 2016, to nearly £2 million in 2017 and just under £0.4 million in 2018 (Companies House, 2019b). The Corporation reserves the right, although it has not exercised this right, to demand redemption of this undertaking at any time. For Electric Ray, this funding covered the business start-up and continues to cover development costs. Where this funding sits within the Corporation's own accounting strategy is, however, less clear, given that Electric Ray has declared an operating loss of between £0.5 million and £1 million in each year of its operation so far. Financial underperformance does not seem to represent a threat to the production company's existence in this case, nor in Monkey Kingdom's, whose accounts show an annual loss in the £1-2 million range (less so in 2016) every year since 2012 (Companies House, 2019c). These British production companies, despite their apparent financial loss, continue to make British content, with British production teams, for domestic and international markets, year on year. From this perspective, mediated through public corporate accounts, international media corporations appear to subsidise domestic cultural production.

It is important to consider independence not only financially but also creatively. For the financially independent company, the levels of creative autonomy and financial risk are both high. The conventional view is that owned independents have a high degree of financial security offset by lower levels of creative independence. Regarding the feared creative convergence attributed to the mergers and acquisitions of super- and mega-indies, Warner says, "That doesn't bother me so long as the people in them are having their creativity supported in the way that Meredith and I absolutely feel like" (Warner, K., 2018: 209). Here, then, Warner attests that the lack of financial independence of

Electric Ray is offset by the creative confidence that the backing and culture of Sony provides. According to Warner, the relationship with the directors at Sony does not, he says, feel like "us and them."

> I sort of think we're in it together and we're trying to make this thing called Electric Ray succeed and we're all trying to do it the best way we possibly can because it will suit all of our interests (ibid.: 206).

Gershon and Kanayama (2002) investigated the blending at Sony Corporation of consumer electronics with media entertainment enterprises. Motivated by the failure of Sony's *Betamax* domestic videotape technology, with the purchase of CBS Records Inc. in 1988, the Corporation committed to "software development as a critical leverage for selling its technical equipment" (ibid.: 112). In doing so, it also committed to managing two very different types of corporate culture: one based around technology research and development; the other around cultural creativity. "As an organization comes to embrace both kinds of subcultures," Gershon and Kanayama state, "it can be expected that such changes do indeed create cultural schisms" (ibid.: 115). Sony's solution to this schism is not to attempt cultural synthesis, but to facilitate difference. The diversity of cultures at the Corporation, according to Gershon and Kanayama, is evident at its annual meetings, where, "the full spectrum of the company's worldwide operations" are represented and

> open clashes are not uncommon. People are encouraged to state their opinions. […] [The Chairman] is promoting a change in culture where conflict is ok […] and internal competition is supported so long as it does not become destructive" (Liguori, A. 2000, pers. comm., 7 April in ibid.).

Even before its entry into the entertainment market, the Corporation had employed the "business group system," a model of companies within companies (Sony, 2018b), each responsible for its own business performance and, by extension, organisational culture. In this way, the precedent for the formation of Electric Ray as a notionally independent company within the Sony Corporation was established. The 'label' nomenclature, while not used in official documentation, is a seemingly natural extension of the Corporation's historical ownership and creation of a number of record labels.[38]

These companies may operate at a financial loss but they represent very small proportions of the owning corporations' overall portfolios. Sony-owned Left Bank Pictures made an operating profit of £14 million and NBCU's Carnival Film and Television £9.6 million in its most recently available accounts (Companies House, 2019d, 2019e), so loss-making owned-indies are not necessarily the norm.[39] They may be loss-leaders, generating content which drives consumers toward other elements of

the corporate portfolio; legal tax avoidance strategies, supplementing the UK's creative industry tax reliefs (HM Revenue & Customs, 2007-2018); or investments which, at the time of writing, are unprofitable. Regardless, these intra-corporate companies form part of their owning corporations' overall business plans. Electric Ray's majority shareholder, Columbia Pictures Corporation Limited (CPCL) has investments in subsidiaries including but not limited to around a dozen television production companies collectively worth £352 million. This includes an additional £59 million of investments made in the year to 2018. CPCL's pre-tax profits in that year were £32.7 million, on which the company paid £4 million in UK tax (Companies House, 2019f), a rate of around 12 per cent (around half the rate of income tax paid by a typical UK employee.) In comparison, ITV Plc. paid 19 per cent in 2018 (Companies House, 2019g).[40] CPCL's annual return on its overall investment was around eight per cent - a rate which compares favourably with long-term stock-market investment (see, for example, McCrum, 2018). In one way, consolidation and vertical integration concentrate and facilitate the mechanisms of making and distributing television. Portfolio diversification at the production stage mitigates that risk by spreading or hedging the investment. The return on any single element in the investment portfolio is less important than the performance of the portfolio as a whole.

There is a further cultural perspective to consider, though. As Berra (2008) observes, the term 'independent' subordinates the smaller company to the "giants of the industry," while, in doing so, discursively subsuming independent production into the mainstream of cultural production, reinforcing the major studios' dominance (ibid.: 17). The increasing concentration of media ownership and, therefore, power, over the last three decades has seen corporations vertically integrating the mechanisms of cultural production through the creation of business portfolios which span the development, production, distribution and consumption of content, including, in some cases, the technology used in these processes (ibid.: 18). For the independent producer, this integration localises and facilitates the mechanical infrastructure of production. For the owner, it gives them agency over the construction and distribution of culture. The degree to which the owning conglomerate intervenes in the development and production process may vary, however. Sony Corporation's "autonomous" Sony Pictures Classics (1992-present) predominantly focuses on the distribution and acquisition of independently-produced, auteur (aesthetically independent) film (Schatz, 2013: 137; Sony Pictures Classics, 2019). While this refers to a different medium and British independent television, with some exceptions in the early 1980s as previously discussed, does not have a distinctive aesthetic, it offers existing, albeit limited, evidence of Sony Corporation's approach to the independence of its subsidiaries.

The control which Sony Corporation maintains over Electric Ray is financial rather than creative. Electric Ray forms part of the Corporation's wider business portfolio. In this way, the entrepreneurialism associated with independent production remains present, but it is distributed between the owning partners. Warner, Chambers and Sony are all engaged in entrepreneurial business activity. For the co-Managing Directors, co-owning Electric Ray dominates their entrepreneurial activity, whereas for Sony, Electric Ray is a very small proportion of the Corporation's entrepreneurial activity. The motivations, functions and management of corporate entrepreneurship in independent production, including owning corporate directors' perspectives on the independence of their owned producers, is worthy of further study.

In owned companies, the production workers are employees of the owning corporation. At Electric Ray, there was an opportunity to interview three of these employees and to collect their reflections on the Sony-Electric Ray partnership, their perceptions of it and to investigate whether the partnership either facilitated or limited their sense of independence and whether for them, the partnership was an effective 'third way.' Johns (2010) identified that film production was undertaken by "project-based" teams (cf. Whitley, 2006) which were temporary and fluid in nature and which relied upon, for higher-level activities such as funding and distribution, connections to extra-local networks situated in global media hubs such as London and Los Angeles (see Scott, 1999, 2005). Electric Ray, however, is not only project-based but slate-based, developing and producing a number of projects concurrently. As such, the *development* and *editorial* teams at Electric Ray are relatively stable, a "captive labor force" in Scott's (2000: 162) terms, whereas the *production* teams are itinerant and project-based. These three elements of the production cycle form local sub-networks within the wider network of Electric Ray, which, as detailed previously, operates within the networks of the Sony Corporation.

Upon joining Electric Ray, staff are set up as Sony employees so, according to Rhia Douty, Assistant to the Managing Directors, "Their welcome is quite Sony-tinged," (Douty, R., 2018: 223). It is in the interface between the Sony systems and the Electric Ray ones that Douty finds herself and she deals with the communication and translation that needs to occur between the two. "We are slightly governed by them but we do things slightly differently," she says (ibid.: 222). "I love the fact that we have our own separate systems but we can't deny the fact that we are looked after by Sony" (ibid.). "You've got corporate backing from Sony," says freelance Junior Production

Manager Rob Weber, "but it feels like an indie and I like it" (Weber, R., 2018: 235). The corporate backing has tangible benefits in terms of resourcing.

> As it's owned by Sony you've got big backing, so they've actually got an HR team. (ibid.: 230). You need a bit of structure and, I know it sounds stupid, but just having a stationery cupboard and little things like that […] which [one company] didn't have. (ibid.: 231). [*Corporation x*] is too far the other way. I had to go this meeting where I had to sign a form to say I'd been to this talk about what a document was, that was then going to be stored for eight years in Burbank, California. And it was just, like, what on Earth? This is too far that way. It's far too stiff (ibid.).

"I think you do need that corporate side," says Weber, "but […] it just feels at a good level here" (ibid.). There is, then, a balance to be struck between the support a corporation provides and the administrative culture that it imposes.

There are not many interactions between Electric Ray employees and Sony staff, partly facilitated by the physical separation of the offices. Electric Ray are situated next door to the Sony Pictures building. "We're Sony Music in this building," says Douty, "so it's not like you pass people, and we're on our own floor… so, yes, we do feel very, very, separate from them" (Douty, R., 2018: 223). "We're linked to them," says Head of Development Natalie McArdle, "but I think that's [Karl and Meredith's] culture that they've imparted on us, as well, that they want us to feel like we are an indie, really and that's their vision for it" (McArdle, N., 2018: 214-215). "[Karl and Meredith have] been quite keen for us to have our own identity. It's their company and they're backed by Sony, but, yes, we're Electric Ray" (ibid.: 215).

I asked the staff, given their employment by Sony, who they feel they are actually working for. Without exception, all of them answered "Karl and Meredith." "It definitely feels like you're working for Electric Ray and Karl and Meredith" (Weber, R., 2018: 231). "A hundred per cent Karl and Meredith. Yes. Definitely" (Douty, R., 2018: 222). "Um… Karl and Meredith [chuckles]" (McArdle, N., 2018: 214). "I feel like Sony's a big machine and I work for Electric Ray" (ibid.). The evidence here is that, for the employees, there is a clear boundary between the Sony management culture and the Electric Ray production culture. That the Managing Directors are routinely referred to by their first names reveals a perceived informality in the internal relationships. Weber refers to his first day at work.

> On day one, Karl came up to me and was, 'Rob, nice to meet you!' and I didn't have a clue who he was, because I'd never seen him before, and then I found out he was the owner, and it was just so nice (Weber, R., 2018: 230).

Making a good first impression appears as important and effective in staff-engagement for managers meeting employees as it is vice versa. "You feel like they are invested in what you're doing as well," says Weber (ibid.: 231). The affable nature of the relations between staff and management are a fundamental factor in the development of workplace culture.

When setting up Electric Ray, Warner and Chambers "talked a lot about […] the company culture and how people feel about being at work" (Warner, K., 2018: 198). He recognises the impact of culture not only on the organisation and the day to day experiences of the people in the organisation, but also on their future memories.

> I think long-term, long-term, we want to be […] one of those companies that not only people regard as being excellent in terms of the output, the shows, but that people love working for - that people look back and go, 'God, that was the company where I really learned to do *x* or *y* or had that brilliant experience'" (ibid.: 197-198).

I explored earlier the impact of shared history and memory on future diasporic behaviours, and this will be developed further later in this chapter. What is evidenced here is a set of aims that promote the building of future positive residual ties *as a conscious strategy.* This further reinforces the importance of the concept of residual ties as resources. While the appreciation of the existence and operation of residual ties may be tacit and shared history and memory are unavoidable and automatic outcomes of organisational labour, it can be seen that *pre-emptive intentional work* can be done to maximise their future activation.

9.2.2   The functions of space in team identity

At Electric Ray, structured social activities are employed in the interests of employee solidarity and morale. Semi-formal social activities, typically occurring outside the formal working time and space, are employed to reinforce relationships within the production company and also between the production company and the parent. Here, the location of the Electric Ray and Sony offices plays a role in facilitating employees' social engagement. Informal networks and communities are also important.

> There's a lot of nice things that they do for people that work here so, unlike other places where I've worked, there's Bake and Buy once a week, so, they bring people together in that way. Cocktails and canapes on a Friday, so drinks and nibbles and things (McArdle, N., 2018: 215).

Each of the three employees interviewed independently mentioned the Bake or Buy[41] and Friday Cocktails. These structured activities give the staff "something to look forward to once a week" (Weber, R., 2018: 232) and demonstrate Warner's

interventionist approach to the organisational culture. They supplement the ad-hoc lunchtime and after-work socialising of friendship groups and the positioning of these activities *within* the working time and space also, according to Douty, supports diversity and inclusivity.

> I think it's quite clever bringing it in so that you don't feel that you have to or that you're missing out if you don't want to stay after work (Douty, R., 2018: 221).

These at-work events are non-hierarchal and accessible to all staff regardless of their personal circumstances. Rather than extending the workplace outward both spatially and temporally in order to accommodate less-formal social interaction, less-formal social interaction is brought within the work space.

While the intra-organisational social activities reinforce the sense of an inclusive and playful culture at Electric Ray, out-of-hours activities are also perceived as valuable. It is recognised by Douty that the pressures of work within the office limit interpersonal trust-building.

> I think the more that you do socialise and spend time with the company outside of working hours, the better your relationship becomes. [… A]ny time that you spend outside, […] you're talking about other things other than work and I feel like that's when you find a connection with someone [-] you start finding out the other bits (ibid.: 220-221).

Cultures are spatially and temporally specific. During after-hours intra-organisational social activity, there are particular sets of rules and behaviours even if they differ from those applied during working time. These rules of behaviour can be disrupted by changing the time and space of interaction allowing different facets of behaviour, belief and personality to come to the fore. "Talking about other things other than work," and "finding out the other bits," represent an activity and an aim in the interests of greater bonding and trust-building within groups, thereby facilitating the development of communities of practice, as discussed by Wenger (1998). An element of the office culture remains and, so, this should be considered not *extra-curricular*, but *supra-curricular* social activity in that it extends the professional aims and functioning of the social group. In Goffman's (1956) terms, the location may have changed but, in that the activity is work-related, they are still on-stage.

Another form of extension to the office curriculum is *inter-organisational* social activity, whereby semi-formal activities outside of formal office hours are employed to build stronger connections between Electric Ray and Sony employees. McArdle discusses a quiz that has been organised between the two companies.

> I think if you didn't want to go that would be totally fine, but I think, for my job, it's good for me to go and meet […] commissioners and so I've been encouraged to go because it's good for me and it's good for the company (McArdle, N., 2018: 215-216).

It is important to recognise, as discussed by Lee (2011), the pressure that out-of-hours networking places on employees in relation to the development of career and cultural capital. McArdle's motivation for engaging with the above activity is expressed in more professional and less personal terms. While supra-curricular activity involves only Electric Ray members, inter-organisational activities bring together the Electric Ray and the Sony communities, each with their own cultures. This presents a social challenge in that measures are required to recognise and respect the different cultures of the two organisations, as discussed by Shaban (2016). In this case, a formal container with its own explicit rule-set - a quiz - is employed as a form of legitimate liminal space. In this instance, in Goffman's terms, the place of encounter is different and each community is playing on its own stage while simultaneously sharing a third, neutral, stage. This interaction would be a rich source of observational data to the cultural anthropologist but, unfortunately, beyond the reach of this study.

These social interactions are facilitated by the offices' location. "Being in Central London's really good," says Weber (Weber, R., 2018: 235).

> When I was in West Norwood, which is like SE17 or something - just had Tesco, Sainsbury's, that was it. [… E]ven if you're working late, when you do leave, the pubs are [here] and my friends are here […] I feel having a good location is great, as well, because you just feel in the mix of stuff (ibid.).

Soho and Fitzrovia (adjacent to the north of Soho) are Weber's favoured locations for employment. As well as the accessible pubs, he cites ease and speed of travel to the area as being factors in this preference. With friends working for other companies in the sector, the centrality of Soho facilitates socialising.

Soho is widely recognised as a hub for the UK's film and television industries, including distributors, production companies and post production facilities. As discussed in the previous chapter, other clusters of activity in London include Shoreditch, Camden and West London. The West London cluster is dispersed over a large area, whereas Soho, Camden and Shoreditch are central metropolitan areas, densely populated and contained within areas easily traversed on foot.

The economics and stimulants of cluster formation are various. The film industry in Soho was founded by entrepreneurial vendors swapping their trade in fashion, fur and furniture for celluloid in the 1910s, converting shops into screening rooms and developing the origins of the distribution business (Betts, 1967). The wider media industry, including television, occupied Soho from the 1980s onwards (see Mort, 1995), bringing in new money and, in turn, contributing to the renovation of buildings and improvements in communications infrastructure, such as 1995's high speed data network, Sohonet (Durmaz, 2015). Contained within the less than square mile of Soho are companies serving every stage of the film and television production process. Unlike regions surrounding so-called "anchor companies" or "lead firms" (see Johns, 2016), Soho's accretion of companies was less stimulated by policy intervention and more by the relative ease by which individuals could traverse the space. As noted by Betts, the earliest form of film distribution involved the manual porterage of film canisters between producers and cinemas in the area and deals were struck in face-to-face meetings. The porous nature of Soho's lanes (see Durmaz, 2015: 112-113) facilitates both the manual transportation of resources and meetings along the way. That companies in all stages of the production process are situated within such a small area makes Soho, according to one of Durmaz' interviewees, "a one-stop shop; if you come to Soho you can have all your work done" (Int-S14 in 2015: 108). As Christophers states, Soho facilitates flows of media commodities, while concentrating the economic power associated with distribution (2009 in Flew, 2010).

It is vital to recognise Soho not as an *a priori* creative cluster but as a cultural-economic element of what Scott (2011) refers to as a Global City Region. Through imperial trade and urbanisation, culminating in neoliberal deregulated global capitalism, these densely-populated areas have formed concentrations of human, cultural and economic capital and facilitate the *flow* of these capitals between one another, forming a global network (Robinson et al., 2016). Many of the world's largest concentrations of media power are situated at the locations of the world's most established ports - New York, Los Angeles, Mumbai, Sydney, Tokyo, for example - rather than simply at the centres of state policy-making.[42] As such, the cultural labour and trading, venture capital and communications infrastructures established in and between these places from the 18th to 20th centuries provided a network ready for occupation by the 20th and 21st centuries' global media corporations. Scott argues (2014) that, in the context of globalised cultural commodification, direct policy intervention has little positive impact on the redistribution of cultural or creative capital - an indicator that cultural-economic agglomeration is a longer-term process than policy-making alone.

From a cultural perspective, and from the perspectives of the individual creative workers in Soho, the *quality of place* (Durmaz, 2015; Florida, 2004) is important. Florida identifies that flows of creative resources, technology, knowledge and human capital differ from those of fixed stocks such as land and raw materials. Areas which are open to diversity, both in terms of trade but also population, such as "immigrants, artists, gays, and racial integration," have a high degree of talent-harnessing qualities (2004: 7). It is, he says, "the ability to attract human capital or talent that creates regional advantage" (ibid.: 50) and that

> regions that are open and possess low barriers to entry for human capital gain distinct economic advantage in the competition for talent or human capital and, in turn, in their ability to generate and attract high-technology industries and increase their incomes (ibid.: 92).

As well as economic and socio-cultural benefits, Scott (1999) identifies that spatial agglomerations of creative and associated occupations result in learning effects whereby business and craft intelligence is shared or observed in both altruistic and competitive networks. For Soho's transient populations - workers, tourists and those seeking leisure activities and street-life - its cosmopolitan, bohemian and permissive history (see Mort, 2010: 197-280) also provides diverse opportunities for entertainment and self-expression. Soho is now less 'seedy' than in its post-war years, but it maintains something of an edge. As noted in *The Economist*,

> To be "cool", all these villages had to strike a delicate balance between holding on to enough of the danger, the seediness and the ethnic and cultural mix that made them chic in the first place, while surrendering enough of it to make it safe for incomers to enjoy (2000).

As Florida recognises, "capitalism has absorbed and integrated what used to be thought of as alternative or cool" (2004: 116) The diverse lifestyles of its inhabitants are integrated into the contemporary creative economy. The clustered production and leisure facilities of Soho support a community of creative workers whose members, in their diverse professional and personal engagements, share a sense of belonging in that place. Weber's attraction to feeling "in the mix of stuff" is testament to this. As Mort identified (2010: 197-280) Soho performs a carnivalesque function for working Londoners and visitors. Within its bounds, perhaps less so now than in the past, diversity, bohemianism and deviance find a permissive home. For the Soho worker, his or her employment there provides proof of belonging in that mix. As such, Soho not only works as an economic network, but comes to embody a particular culture. The *idea* of Soho is as important as its function.

As mentioned above, though, considering diversity and inclusivity is not only about recognising protected or well-documented characteristics, but also about the complex intersections of difference. It is not only explicit employment and Human Resource practices that may have a negative impact on the ability of employees to access work in a particular industry, but also factors such as geography. "We've got lots of people travel quite far and, yes, it's too much to expect everybody to go to the pub in the evenings," says Douty (Douty, R., 2018: 223). The expense of living close to a creative hub, particularly in the Capital, is prohibitive for a great many people. Also, the "quality of place" sought by Florida's (2004) creative workers may not only change over time and circumstance, but be multi-factoral. The qualities sought of those places may not be the semiotic expressions of cool, but the functional qualities of affordability, transportation, educational and welfare provision, and public security. The "constant job search" and insecurity reported by Lee's (2018) contributors means that the concentrated accessibility of creative hubs becomes a necessity for serial employment. This significantly limits affordability of working in television, which tends to be clustered around major cities (see CAMEo, 2018: 34). As such, there is a process whereby the creative hub, once an accessible melting pot, erects a barrier to entry.

9.3   Conclusion

Creating a label indie is, in part, a *capitulation* to the domination of the market by large owning studios and a subsequent lack of ability to compete on equal terms. It is also a *compromise* position offering a degree of creative freedom and self-determination with a financial safety net within a free market. There is, I would argue, a third way of recognising such partnerships, as has been alluded to by Bennett (2016), as a *compact*. The partnership between the owned independent and the owning studio is mutually exploitative and supportive. The negotiated dependencies upon which independent production relies are not uni-directional, purely supplicating the independent producer, but are co-dependencies between producers, studios and broadcasters, who rely upon one another for the completion of their business portfolios. That is not to say that these dependencies are symmetrical, and the relative lack of financially independent resource available to the independent producer, which leads so many into corporate partnership, is in contrast to the very high financial resource available to studios. Offsetting this, however, is the cultural independence and identity of the independent producer which is able to nuance the corporate brand identity of international conglomerates. Independent producers may need the economic capital of owning studios, but owning studios also need the cultural capital of independent producers.

While independence in statute and much of the literature is defined in financial terms, this chapter has identified the interrelationship between financial and creative (and thereby cultural) independence. Rather than a correlation between financial and creative independence, financial dependency is shown, in this case, to provide the resource and confidence to support creativity. This, though, needs to be supported by an ownership culture which promotes this cultural and creative autonomy. More critical, though, is the question of what is done with this autonomy. The autonomy of the independent producer provides opportunities but also challenges. Autonomy separates as well as providing freedom. Independent producers, in representing autonomous and, therefore, seemingly diverse interests, do not form a congruent body. Quite the contrary, they are in a position of continual economic competition with one another, no matter how much their cultural values may coincide.

"I think we could celebrate each other's successes a bit more and support each other's failures," Warner says, "because I worry, the more people criticise failure, […] the more risk-averse broadcasters will become" (Warner, K., 2018: 210). As such, he says, "weirdly, the production community fights against itself" (ibid.). It is in the nature of the free marketplace, that competition in various forms is severe and that there are concomitant cultural effects of this. But creative risk-aversion, the difficulty for workers to access production through its centrality to corporate hubs and the decreasing budgets symptomatic of a fragmenting and efficiency-driven marketplace make the commitment to contemporary television production a hard-sell. The difficulty of accessing television work, I argue, has a restrictive effect on the potential workforce it can draw on, reducing rather than increasing the diversity of the television workforce and, therefore, of production cultures and, therefore, on production outputs.

In this way, independent production, both in its dispersed nature and in its need for the support of the financial and creative infrastructures with which it interacts, is disempowered in its cultural ambitions to diversify and pluralise television production and also to innovate. Warner's experience of partnership with Sony, for him, has been a positive one, a third way of thinking about the organisation of production which provides the balance of financial, creative and cultural independence he, like many other independent producers, feel is a sweet-spot – a Goldilocks zone for independent television production. There are clearly many ways of facilitating this balance, some of which have been considered in this thesis. However, the cultural and social ambitions of a single independent company appear difficult to scale-up on an industrial level.

The significant finding of this case study, and one which I develop in the thesis' conclusion is that, whether production companies are owned-by or in partnership with a larger organisation or self-owned there are always financial dependencies between the producer and other agents. The financial is just one factor in the determination of independence in production. Where Electric Ray and all of the previous case studies demonstrate their independence is in the agency that they have over the *cultural* properties of their organisations. This is the same for a company and for a company-within-a-company. This, therefore, means that the leading executive, managing director, creative, or producer has primary agency over the development, articulation and implementation of the cultural objectives of his or her organisation. This agency, however, is limited by the very interdependencies that the producer negotiates in articulating his or her independence. The independent producer, despite his or her agency over the cultural independence of his or her organisation, does not operate in a hermetic bubble but in combinations of political, economic and cultural negotiated dependencies. The cultural ambitions of independent producers, and for independent production in the UK, may be realised only through the collective interventions of the many agencies who are gatekeepers to the resourcing and implementation of television production.

10.0 Conclusion

In this thesis, I have considered the agency and identity of independent television producers in the UK, including their role as negotiators of deals; organisers of production resources; and their balancing of creativity, commerce and risk. I have identified ways in which these responsibilities are understood in different ways by independent producers. Independent producers, I have argued, are not independent, but, with varying degrees of agency, construct and navigate a number of complex negotiated dependencies.

10.1   Findings of the Research

In order to understand the contested nature of the concept of independence, I first addressed how that term had been mobilised in UK broadcasting historically. Across four key junctures, I found that independence was interpreted differently, shifting in meaning but retaining its power as a discourse. This mutability of the term facilitated its deployment to differing ends, ranging from resistance to government control, to supporting economic liberalism, to promoting cultural pluralism. I showed that the ideal of independence carries an emotional resonance that reinforces its discursive power.

I went on to show how, in the foundation of Channel 4, the discourse of independence was deployed in an attempt to synthesise radical social politics and free market economics. This was referred to as a 'free market of ideas' and broadened the market, both culturally and economically, for what became known subsequently as the independent production sector. This cultural shift was not only to be seen in the content produced by independents, but in the ways in which independent production operated. Independent production, in contrast to in-house production, became conflated with editorial and entrepreneurial innovation and risk-taking.

The cultural progressiveness which underpinned many arguments for the development of Channel 4 and independent production was subsumed from the late 1990s by the UK's Creative Industries discourse, which foregrounded economic performance. This discursive shift reinforced the positioning of independent production within the context of a global free market. Economic performance, however, is not the only motivating factor in the operation of contemporary independent production companies, as the case studies in my thesis attest to. Each company operates in a different specific context and each independent producer responds to that context differently. The four companies studied not only had differing degrees of independence due to their

ownership arrangements, but also employed varied approaches in expressing that independence through their companies' cultures.

The first case study highlighted the producer's role in negotiating professional dependencies. This included the deployment of symbolic capital through the narrativization of professional experience and the emplotment of a coherent professional identity narrative. The employees in the second case study, a family business, developed what they referred to as a "close-knit," non-formulaic, and understanding culture. The evidence showed how this aided communication, workplace efficiency and trust and was consistent with Wenger's (1998) model of a community of practice. The third company had rejected the risk inherent in financial independence in favour of ownership by a large international studio. This was not merely a capitulation given that the owning studio provided the company access to international resources and markets, which aligned with the producers' aspirations. Despite these shared aims, however, the ways in which the two organisations approached them culturally differed. I showed that the company's transition from independent to owned involved change-management in both organisations and from both procedural and cultural perspectives. In the final case study, I further examined the idea that maintaining a culture of independence had benefits to both producers and represented a "third way" of organising independent production. The producers in this thesis approached independence from differing sets of circumstances and, while there were similarities in their responsibilities, they expressed differing perspectives on and approaches to organising their companies' independence.

Through these four case studies I have highlighted the complex interconnectedness and interdependency of individual agents and organisations in the business of television production and shown that these interdependencies are not only transactional but relational. I have presented a way of thinking about independence in television production which does not only consider financial ownership models but which also demonstrates the importance of considering independence from the perspectives of identity and organisational- or production-culture. These perspectives are essential alongside commercial considerations when considering the complex negotiated dependencies upon which the independent television producer in the UK relies.

The identification of these *negotiated dependencies* forms my first contribution to knowledge. The producer depends upon agents who provide programme development and production services; upon streams of funding; and upon routes of intellectual

property distribution and exploitation. Primarily, this concept is useful in providing a clearer articulation of independence in independent production. It also helps to articulate the producer's role in innovation, entrepreneurialism, and management. The first two of these can be understood as the construction of combinations of negotiated dependencies, while the third can be seen in the deployment and maintenance of these dependencies, particularly within the producer's own team.

I have shown that these dependencies are neither passive nor *a priori.* The independent producer exercises agency in negotiating the makeup and organisation of these dependencies, and then exploits them in the conduct of the development, production and dissemination of their work and in the maintenance of their professional identity. I have demonstrated that the spectrum of dependencies a producer negotiates ranges across his or her own families and personal dependents; members of the public; peers; television executives; production team members; professional bodies; festival organisers; and even students. The producer must construct these dependencies, at the right time, in the right combination and at the right price. I have shown that the level of negotiation required of the independent producer varies in inverse proportion to the number of full-time employees in the production company. For the very smallest companies, such as in the first case study, the number and frequency of new dependency negotiations is very high, whereas for companies with larger full-time teams, there are less frequent new dependencies to build, and the balance of the producer's work is in deploying and maintaining these dependencies.

My second contribution to knowledge is the *networked brokerage* model of the producer's role. This builds upon the negotiated dependencies concept as it articulates how the producer deploys those dependencies. Rather than categorising a producer as more creative or more business focused, through the networked brokerage model, I have argued that a producer's role is to add *both* creative *and* commercial value to ideas. The producer's function is the translation, transformation, accumulation and dissemination of cultural, social and economic capital resources across his or her dependency networks. At the simplest scale, the producer uses his or her financial resources to turn ideas into programmes which, in turn translate back into financial resources. This requires the deployment of workers skilled across a wide range of specialisms; the translation of ideas into forms understandable within specific genre or geo-cultural territories; the interpretation of ideas into outputs which align with broadcasters' needs and expectations; and their exploitation beyond the initial broadcast. I have shown in the case studies how this requires the producer to operate at different levels of oversight, from the strategic – being acute to industry trends and

opportunities – to the granular – overseeing actual production activities. At whatever scale of operation, the producer is constantly overseeing the translation of economic to cultural, through social capital and back again. Through this contribution to knowledge, I have overcome the commercial versus creative dichotomy common in studies of producers and have demonstrated that the independent producer must be both commercial *and* creative.

My third contribution to knowledge is the identification of the existence and operation of *diasporic networks,* which expands the literature on professional networking. Current studies of professional networking in creative and media industries have focused on networking as job-entry and career-maintenance activities, typically, therefore, based on building new or strengthening existing working relationships. Diasporic networks are based on the existence of previous professional relationships. I showed that the former strong ties of co-working remain dormant or residual rather than being broken at the end of a working partnership. As such, they are able to be re-formed. Typically occupied by more senior members of the production workforce, although shown also to be in operation through career mentoring and word-of-mouth recommendation, diasporic networks rely on shared and co-situated history and memory and transcend organisational and geographic boundaries.

This model is of particular importance in independent production, which fundamentally operates across disparate sites, is itinerant in nature, and where career progression frequently involves employee mobility. The dissolution of teams is a near-unavoidable fact of independent production. Fundamental to understanding the importance of diasporic networks is the producer's expertise at exploiting the weak tie. The producer's agency increases through having access to resources unavailable to other producers and not shared by members of his or her own network. Over time, the drifting apart of former teams means that the members find themselves occupying different networks, with access to different resources. To one another, the members of these diasporas become gatekeepers to these otherwise disassociated resources and, therefore, a potentially valuable weak tie. This builds further on the concepts of negotiated dependencies and networked brokerage and completes a triptych of concepts which develops existing knowledge of the work of the independent television producer.

10.2 Further Work

The thesis has demonstrated that independent production is disparate and varied. There is much further work to be conducted in analysing other producers and companies. Since the selection for study of the four companies in this thesis, seed-funding and incubation opportunities for independent start-ups have been established by both broadcasters and private investors. The resulting forms of organisational cultures that emerge from this new financial model are worthy of analysis. A great many factors other than financial ones, however, influence the cultures of production to be found in independent production companies, providing a wide range of opportunities for further study.

The second opportunity for further study is to conduct more longitudinal investigations. Not one of the companies included here is currently operating under the same circumstances as they were when the initial interviews took place. Contributors have changed their roles within or with different companies and one company has physically relocated. The thesis has clearly shown that working in independent production is precarious. Independent production, subject to macro-, meso- and micro-scale change, remains in flux not only from an industrial perspective but also from the personal perspectives of those who work in it. The itinerant nature of production careers is not only an outcome of this precarity but also regularly provides its occupants with new perspectives, which, in turn, influence their own career decisions. Longitudinal studies of this industry are few, and more work in this area would provide a greater degree of understanding of the fluctuating careers of creative and media workers.

The third area of further study I propose is to conduct similar culturally-focused studies of commissioning editors. Given the power and influence they exercise, which are themselves shaped by industrial and organisational contexts, such studies would complement studies of independent producers. The final case study suggested that the conventional view of commissioning editors holding a power-privilege over producers may be inaccurate and this, at least, justifies their study. In addition, apart from in some of the literature around the early Channel 4, the commissioning editor has otherwise not been studied by academics. Correcting this omission would provide a fuller and more-balanced picture of independent television production.

Finally, while this project was in progress, the impact of streaming video on demand services (SVODs), including Netflix, Amazon Prime, Apple TV and Disney+ on the television marketplace increased. These relatively new entrants have provided new opportunities not only for producers of original programmes, films and formats, but also

for the sale and redistribution of post-broadcast material. They are, therefore, not only competition but client to many traditional public service broadcasters. As the structuring and methods of independent production influenced the organisation of broadcaster-based television production in the UK, so, too, have the acquisition and distribution methods of the SVODs influenced those of the public service broadcasters, who now compete in the global online subscription-based market through the recently-launched BritBox.

As with any structural shift in the television marketplace, the effects may be widely felt, from policymaking to production, and this provides many opportunities for the television scholar. In particular to the scope of this thesis, the cultures of production which emerge within these changed contexts are worthy of study and, as little as is understood about the commissioning processes of traditional television broadcasters, even less is known about how those deals are stuck by the SVODs. The dynamic contexts of television production continue to provide fresh ground for the interested researcher.

11.0 Notes

1. Whereas Channel Four includes the Company's film operation and television channel portfolio and Channel 4 does not, "Channel 4" and "Channel Four" are used inconsistently in much of the literature and in policy documents. I recognise the ambiguity of this and, for the purposes of clarity and ease of reading, throughout the thesis, "Channel 4" refers both to Channel Four Television Company (to 1993) and Corporation (1993 onward) and to the television channel. Where "Channel Four" is specifically referred to in a referenced text, then that articulation is retained.

2. Channel 5 pitched itself as a "modern-mainstream" broadcaster. BBC and ITV were, according to their evaluation, "dated-mainstream"; BBC2 "dated-niche"; and Channel 4 "modern-niche" (Fanthome, 2003: 121).

3. Ofcom states, "The public service broadcasters are those providing Channel 3 services, Channel 4, Channel 5, S4C and the BBC. While all BBC public service television channels are PSB channels, only the main channels of each of the other public service broadcasters have this status" (Ofcom, 2020).

4. Ofcom says, "The term 'public service broadcasting' is often used and abused. It has at least four different meanings – good television, worthy television, television that would not exist without public funding, and the institutions which broadcast this type of television" (Ofcom, nd.: 2). Ofcom defines, based on the *Communications Act* (2003), the *purposes* and *characteristics* of public service broadcasting and conducts periodic reviews (see Ofcom, 2020).

5. See, for example, https://www.bbc.co.uk/commissioning/tv/production.

6. The 2006 Charter states, "The Corporation shall be independent in all matters concerning the content of its programmes and the times at which they are broadcast or transmitted and in the management of its affairs."

7. See also Black, P. 1972 *The Mirror in the Corner. People's Television* London: Hutchinson (pp.46-62).

8. Product placement was permitted in British public-service television from 2011.

9. See Smith, A. (1973) *The Shadow in the Cave* London: George Allen & Unwin [pp. 268-278]. It is notable that Smith felt that the Netherlands, who had started up a publisher-broadcaster were "prouder of their system than their programmes." He says, "An air of earnest dullness surrounds the entire output," and that, "The content of the screens is therefore for much of the time identical with that of every other network in the world" (ibid.: 276).

10. The Independent Television Authority became Independent Broadcasting Authority, overseeing commercial radio and television, following the *Sound Broadcasting Act* (1972) (National Archives, The, n.d.: para. 4).

11. The trade union of workers in independent television (ITV).

12. Income from repeat broadcasts and overseas sales. In America, residual payments were standard. In the UK, producers and directors were paid a single fee.

13. Vertue is Producer and Chairman of Hartswood Films, producers of *Sherlock* (Hartswood Films, BBC Wales, Masterpiece Theatre, 2010-2017).

14. Darlow's dichotomy is flawed as several of those he champions were significant establishment figures in broadcasting (For example, Kennith Trodd, Roger Graef, David Elstein), politics (William Whitelaw) and academia (Anthony Smith, who had also been a broadcaster).

15. "DCMS hopes to develop an approach to modelling more recent data so that GVA estimates can be produced with a shorter time lag. This would be like producing a forecast for the current period. E.g. In early 2016 it would be possible to have an estimate of GVA for 2015" (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2016b: 10).

16. Fellowes is an executive producer and writer of the series and its 'creator.' The executive producer grade is akin to that of the commissioning editor, with an oversight of the series'

production rather than a 'hands-on' producer charged with the day-to-day running of the show. IMDB lists a further nine people with production credits, including executive producers, series producers, line producers, associate producers and producers (IMDB, 2019?).

17. See also Dams, 2014.

18. BBC Worldwide revenue 2017: £876.3m; "Independent TV sector" international revenue 2017: £802m.

19. The 2016 BBC Annual Report is referenced here in the interests of temporal parity with the National Audit Office report. The *Broadcast Indie Survey 2017,* covering the 2015-16 period, shows a similar proportion of turnover to staff (£2.3bn turnover, 3,900 full-time staff) as that quoted above.

20. An online search for "[name of broadcaster] commissioning" will generally take you to the relevant area of the broadcaster's website.

21. For example, Mandy [https://www.mandy.com/] and The Talent Manager [https://www.thetalentmanager.com/].

22. The International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (https://www.idfa.nl/en/) is an annual festival and networking event.

23. Brian Redhead introduced an item on butterfly conservation that Tostevin produced for Radio 4's *Today* (BBC, 1957-); Tostevin produced talk-show *Currie Night* (2002-2003) for ITV West; Fiona Bruce presented two GRACE / BFM co-productions for BBC's *Real Story* (BBC, 2003-2007); Jeremy Vine presented *Panorama: I Helped my Daughter Die*; Charlotte Moore commissioned *My Brother the Islamist.*

24. Roberts is an illustrator and writer and was formerly a comic-book artist for *2000AD.* He is the creator of *Dipdap*. He has a number of co- and lead-writing credits including *The Adventures of Abney and Teal*, *Dipdap* and *Twirlywoos*. The term *creative* covers a range of roles from illustration through to ideas generation and story/visual problem-solving.

25. Storyboards, sometimes animated, edited together to provide design and timing information to the animators.

26. The funding for *Twirlywoos* was raised by the sale of the Ragdoll back-catalogue rights to distributor DHX Media in 2013 (http://www.ragdoll.co.uk/news/).

27. Independent television production companies based in Camden NW1 at the time of writing include: Acamar Films; Dragonfly Film and Television; Emporium Productions; Fulwell73 Productions; Hat Trick Productions; October Films; Optomen Television; Oxford Films; Plum Pictures; Roughcut Television; Shine TV; Talesmith.

28. For example, Riverside Studios; Sky; IMG; Discovery; Endemol; Red Bee Media.

29. It is notable that in the many acquisitions and mergers undertaken in the UK Independent Production sector over the last two decades, the great majority of independents retain their original branding, albeit suffixed with '… part of *x* group,' or hyphenated with their new partner's name.

30. Lime Pictures, London, Liverpool. *The Only Way is Essex* (2010-)*, Geordie Shore* (2011-)*, Hollyoaks* (1995-).

31. My own experience of working in television in both studio and independent companies in the 1990s was that leaving an employer was seen as an act of disloyalty and that once a company had been left, one was not welcome to return. This was offset by the existence of much longer contracts and, often, should one wish, jobs for life - all but unheard of now.

32. This appointment was announced one week after the interview for this case study took place (Goodfellow, 2018) and does not form part of this study save for its inclusion here.

33. See http://www.niceic.com/

34. This also relates to the signifiers of the meaning of a geographic place as discussed in the previous case study.

35. An executive producer is responsible for the oversight of the programme producer and the delivery of the programme or series to the client within the agreed budgetary, editorial

and technical specification. While this is a form of creative management, it excludes responsibilities such as organisational finance and human resource management.

36. Production here refers to the execution of the programme-making process as opposed to development, which refers to the development of programme ideas and the associated background research and pitching.

37. Ownership was transferred from Sony Pictures Television UK to Columbia Pictures Corporation Limited in February 2017. Both are owned and controlled by Sony Corporation.

38. For example, "Several of the company's more notable labels include Columbia Records, Epic Records, and Sony Classical" (Gershon and Kanayama, 2002: 110).

39. A survey of the available accounts (data from Companies House, 2019a) of the highest-turnover (data from *Broadcast Indie Survey 2018*) owned independents shows a higher occurrence of net profitability in the top 50 and of net loss in the lower 50.

40. Evaluating corporate financial performance and strategy is complex and worthy of further enquiry. NBC Universal International Ltd., for example, reported pre-tax profit of £6m but claimed a tax credit of £787,000 in 2018, while for 2017 reported a pre-tax loss of £7.3m and paid £1.3m tax.

41. Each month, four names are drawn at random and each week one of the chosen employees brings in cake which either they have baked or bought and the rest of the team have to guess which it is.

42. London is obviously both a creative and policy-making centre.

12.0 List of Interviews

Ray Tostevin. Creative Director, GRACE Productions. 11th March, 2013 at Yeovil College Campus.

Ray Tostevin. Creative Director, GRACE Productions. 13th March, 2013 at Yeovil College Campus.

Ray Tostevin. Creative Director, GRACE Productions. 29th March, 2018 at Tostevin's residence, Yeovil.

Anne Wood. Founder and Creative Director, Ragdoll Productions. 17th December, 2015 by telephone. 29th February, 2016 at production company.

Christopher Wood. Producer, Ragdoll Productions. 29th February, 2016 at production company.

John. Storyboard Artist, Ragdoll Productions. 29th February, 2016 at production company.

Joe. Storyboard Artist, Ragdoll Productions. 29th February, 2016 at production company.

Josh. Writer, Ragdoll Productions. 29th February, 2016 at production company.

Steve Roberts. Creative and Writer, Ragdoll Productions. 29th February, 2016 at production company.

Nigel Harris. Head of Production (Freelance), Ragdoll Productions. 29th February, 2016 at production company.

Bill. Production Designer (Freelance), Ragdoll Productions. 29th February, 2016 at production company.

Helen. Location Manager (Freelance), Ragdoll Productions. 29th February, 2016 at production company.

Rob Caithness. Technical Coordinator, Ragdoll Productions. 29th February, 2016 at production company.

Joe. Editor, Ragdoll Productions. 29th February, 2016 at production company.

Adam. Editor , Ragdoll Productions. 29th February, 2016 at production company.

Lynne Hawkins. Post Production Coordinator and Company Administrator, Ragdoll Productions. 29th February, 2016 at production company.

Rob. Head of IT, Ragdoll Productions. 29th February, 2016 at production company.

David Granger. Managing Director, Monkey Kingdom. 07th June, 2016 at production company.

Jason Crosby. Chief Operating Officer, Monkey Kingdom. 07th June, 2016 at production company.

Karl Warner. Co-Managing Director, Electric Ray. 19th June, 2018 at production company.

Natalie McArdle. Head of Development, Electric Ray. 19th June, 2018 at production company.

Rhia Douty. Assistant to the Managing Directors, Electric Ray. 19th June, 2018 at production company.

Rob Weber. Junior Production Manager (Freelance), Electric Ray. 19th June, 2018 at production company.

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