Animating Community: Reflexivity and Identity in Indian Animation Production Culture

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Abstract:

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Animating Community examines the cultural practices of animators in India, and particularly the role of practitioner testimony in conceiving and negotiating social structures underpinning the nascent Indian animation industry. Recognizing a tendency in practitioner accounts towards theorization of contested industrial discourses, this research takes as its object the reflexive practice of animators in trade texts and interviews. These reveal how local practitioners understand production culture as an emergent phenomenon, resulting from learned processes of negotiation and collective action. However, practitioner testimony also reflects dramatically different degrees of agency in cultural production and discourse. Focusing on the identity work of diverse creative professionals – corporate elites, freelancers, teachers, and students – reveals underlying tensions between global industrial constraints and local social capital.

Based on discursive analysis of testimony, this thesis asks how Indian animation practitioners conceive of their creative activity and identity in relation to negotiating a culture of animation production, and how the shared discourses and modes of engagement that result both shape and are shaped by institutional structures. These questions are addressed through practitioner accounts in three sectors of Indian animation: first, the context of production – considering large outsourcing firms and smaller studios; second, the provision of education – instruction in skills and social norms supplied by the public and private sectors; and third, the creation of dedicated community structures – professional organizations and trade information networks. Animating Community is most interested in how local media professionals articulate different discourses from aesthetic to economic value in order to approach an imagined sense of cultural identity. This sheds light on the way practitioners make sense of their creative and professional worlds. Ultimately, the conclusions offered in this project argue for a more nuanced conception of the relationship between critical practice and creative labour, and greater understanding of the different contexts where this may emerge.

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Notes for the Reader:

Names: All the names included in this dissertation are real. Research participants who consented to a formal interview gave approval for their testimony to be attributed on the record. As is the case in the Bollywood industry, several Indian family names, including Chaudhuri, Mukherjee, Rao, and Sharma are quite common. Unless indicated, the reader should not assume that individuals who share last names are related.

Citations: References are included in accordance with the APA Manual of Style in parenthetical format. Materials from recorded and transcribed interviews are cited by number with reference to a full listing of interviews in Appendix 1. In instances where interviews were conducted with more than one individual at the same time, these are distinguished by the addition of a letter (Name, Interview [number][letter]). Quotes are verbatim except for minor edits for clarity and length. Materials provided to interview participants are also included in Appendix 2.

Quotes from my own field notes are cited as (Field notes, (day)/[month]/[year]). These include conversations that were not recorded and are reproduced as closely as possible.

Statement of Word Count:

The length of this thesis including references but excluding appendices is: 98,090 words.

List of Tables and Images:

Introduction:

"How do you define a community? A community is defined as a social organization which nurtures itself." R. K. Chand, *CGTantra*.com/Digitales Studios (Interview 18)

"We realize that there are a lot of people that are excited by what has been created and they feel that needs to be shared. When we started sharing with people we realized there is not just a need there is a proper raging thirst and I think also a need to redefine ourselves." Chetan Sharma, Animagic India (Interview 26)

Over the past four years, the responses to my Indian animation research from colleagues in the UK and US have been more or less consistent. At first, most are puzzled and surprised that there is such a thing as Indian animation. "There is animation from India?" they ask, "I have never seen any!" Those more familiar with Bollywood, the most famous of India's cultural industries, also call to mind notions of internationally-known movie stars, lavish musical numbers, and perhaps also India's rich tradition of mythological stories and characters. While this broad characterization may not be entirely fair; such interpretations do not represent most animation practice that occurs in India. Indian animation *has* been overshadowed by larger industrial sectors, not only Bollywood but also India's ascendant Information Technology (IT) Industry, and dominated by outsourcing practice closely linked instead to the Global Hollywood industry.[1] Although Indian animators do also produce their own content, they have done so with scant resources, as well as sometimes minimal creative autonomy and economic control. Nonetheless, facing an undeveloped market, leveraging educational, professional, and trade communication networks that are only now beginning to emerge, has not prevented the development of a unique 'culture' of animation production. Negotiated discourses of Indian animation in the slow process of evolving into a viable industry and sustainable cultural practice are increasingly easy to find, but challenging to study.

In this dissertation, I investigate the cultural practices and professional identities of animation workers in India. The relationship between animation texts and the lived experience of the creative workers who produce those texts is a growing area of concern in animation studies, reflecting a wider trend in studies of the cultural industries more generally, as well as a growing recognition of the need to bridge critical gaps between analysis of practitioner accounts and the socio-economic conditions of practice.

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[1] Many casual animation viewers in the West have unwittingly seen a lot of Indian animation – or at least content created in large part by Indian creative practitioners.

Examining how individuals make meaning out of experience, then construct, articulate, and negotiate identity in order to form interpretive communities has been an important aspect of audience studies since the 1980s (Mayer, 2011: 21). Extending this examination to the full range of symbol creators not only informs understanding of cultural texts, but also how cultural labour both produces and is produced by social order. In this respect Indian animation presents an ideal case study. The circumstances of Indian animation production are in state of constant flux, marked by its ongoing process of development as an arena of creative and economic practice. It is this self-defined concept of 'emergence' that suggests the necessity to develop grounded theoretical interpretations about what it means to be an animator in India, as well as their process of defining and *redefining* themselves, *nurturing* their own communities. I ask: how and to what extent do practitioners conceive their creative activity and professional identities in relation to a distinct production culture? In brief, this is a study of how animators respond to social and economic forces and make meaning of their own experience.

In the first section of this introduction, I provide an overview of developments within the practice of animation in India, paying particular attention to their implications for conceptions of social and professional identity. Second, I introduce the terms and concepts that define my own intervention into practitioner discourse. In the third section, I briefly outline the scant research touching upon Indian animation, before turning to a larger body of literature concerning the structure and organization of media industries more widely; in particular that which addresses the experience of creative labour. Recent work in this area has raised a debate between a predominant focus on representation or social structure. My project, while seeking to engage directly with the lived experiences of creative practitioners, fills in this gap by showing how reflexive practice both shapes and is shaped by wider social and economic frames. Fourth, I outline my methodology, firmly positioning my dissertation's intervention within a production culture research framework. This included in-depth interviews and participant observation in Mumbai and Ahmedabad, supplemented by analysis of industrial texts. I also elaborate on specific analytic processes drawn from Kathy Charmaz and Adele E. Clarke's constructivist and situational approaches to grounded theory, or rather the 'constant comparative method,' and explain their contributions to this research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Lastly, in the final section, I briefly define the structure of my dissertation and outline the major arguments of each chapter.

1.   *Indian Animation Culture*

Despite a legacy of creative practice, it is revealing that Indian animators see themselves as relative newcomers to animation as an industry. Over the past twenty years, Indian animation has departed from its origins as a cottage industry under the auspices of the post-independence Indian government, and a globally-engaged production sector has begun to emerge. Some large Indian studios have built global reputations securing Hollywood outsourcing contracts, while other firms have made strides in both production capabilities and content for local television audiences. While outsourcing still represents the majority of entertainment animation business, many work-for-hire contracts have given way to more sophisticated coproduction agreements. International brands have also set up shop in India, from the major content and distribution conglomerates, the Walt Disney Company, Time Warner's Cartoon Network, and Viacom's Nickelodeon, to the animation studios DreamWorks and Rhythm & Hues. In striking contrast to these developments, there are indications of artisanal and sometimes explicitly non-commercial production, from the advertising work of Vaibhav Studios to the independent films of Gitanjali Rao.

This industrial transformation has largely escaped attention from global animation audiences, critics, and scholars alike. Such notice as has been taken tends to focus on the arrival of domestic animated features, ignoring both the greater proliferation of marketing, television, visual effects, industrial content, and animation for international festival audiences, as well as the range of social and economic implications of these developments for local animation practitioners. Despite relative scarcity of scholarship addressing Indian media culture per se, this is a rapidly expanding field and there is a growing foundation of theory on the global impact of Bollywood (Thussu, 2006). Bollywood, engaged in the mass export of identity, provides a compelling case study for commoditized cultural exchange (Rajadhyaksha 2008: 198; Govil, 2008). However the animation sector is dwarfed by its giant neighbour and its own identity formations are completely absent in such narratives. This constitutes a glaring gap in research, strange given the cultural prominence of both creative labour and animation, but one which I directly address here.

As the initial flourishing of animation outsourcing has subsided, a small but vocal group of practitioners have called for industry to foster more local production while allowing greater creative control. At the same time, voices from across the animation sector have called for radical changes in education, addressing both perceived labour shortages and lack of instruction in animation fundamentals, and for substantial advances

in both institutional development and professional networking to create formal entities that speak for community needs. These debates are the focus of the three sections of this research: the orientation of production narratives, educational practices, and community organization. While this negotiation unfolds in the face of growing challenges – global competition, damaging booms and busts in production, and a string of prominent bankruptcies – there are also signs of experimentation in solutions; Indian animators seeking new ways of working, engaging, and organizing. The interplay of these not only shows how participants interpret their practices and negotiate objectives, but also suggests this negotiation is a learning process central to maintaining a professional community (Wenger, 1998).

My research is rooted in the observation that some members of the supposed community extend their identities somewhat further, calling for 'animation culture'. In an interview with Mohini Kotasthane, Ram Mohan noted, "There is no animation culture in India as it is in the west. Institutes like NID, J.J. School of Arts, IDC, FTI Pune, Films Division and TASI should come together and form this" (2005).[2] With a career spanning 57 years, filmmaker, educator and 'father of Indian animation' Mohan has an almost uniquely extended tenure over the changes in Indian animation. In calling for animation culture, he refers not only to the desire for a professional community, but for concrete efforts to build social infrastructure that facilitates original content and cultivates a more animation literate audience to consume it.[3]

This account encapsulates the main tensions at the heart of this research. It raises the question, what is this animation culture and what is the role of animation practitioners in generating it? Like Mohan, I observe that the answer to this goes far beyond the animated content they produce, and extends to the process of negotiation by which Indian animators begin to answer these and other questions themselves. I propose that while Indian animation production is certainly subject to the powerful economic forces of global cultural industry, it also creates the conditions for local communities and cultures

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[2] The National Institute for Design (NID), Sir JJ School of Art, the Industrial Design Centre (IDC) and Film and Television Institute of India (FTI) are government institutes for media and design education. The Films Division is the media production unit of the Government Ministry of Information and Broadcasting while the Animation Society of India (TASI) is a body for professional networking and advocacy.
[3] While essential to understanding the focus of this investigation in practitioner testimony, in neglecting to draw distinction between production and consumer culture, Mohan's remark inevitably opens a Pandora's Box. While this particular project is not directly concerned with audiences, this idea closely corresponds to Vaibhav Kumaresh's call in Chapter Two to establish a self-sustaining 'ecosystem.'

structured around the production and consumption of animation, entities with growing capabilities to define and ultimately reproduce themselves. The ongoing course of development in Indian animation provides a unique opportunity to observe, participate in and interpret these processes at they occur. To achieve this, this research brings together analysis of subjective interpretations of Indian animation practice in the midst of industrial transition, and in-depth study of the processes of identity formation and modes of engagement that underpin its economic and cultural organization.

2.   *Definitions and 'Sensitizing Concepts'*

My dissertation examines the cultural practices of animators in India, and particularly the crucial role of practitioner testimony in conceiving and negotiating the social structures that support a nascent animation industry. Recognizing a tendency in practitioner accounts towards theorization of contested industrial discourses, this research takes as its object the reflexive practice of animators as expressed in trade texts and research interviews. I argue that these reveal how local practitioners understand a culture of production as an emergent phenomenon, resulting from learned processes of negotiation and shared spaces of collective action. However, practitioner testimony also reflects dramatically different degrees of agency in both cultural production and discourse. Most scholarly texts that discuss media practice focus upon either macro-level structural issues or representations made by prominent and empowered creative professionals.[4] My project, instead, focuses its attention on the 'identity work' – a term I will unpack shortly – of a diverse range of creative practitioners: from corporate elites to freelance artists, teachers and students, revealing underlying tensions between global industrial constraints and local forms of capital. By investigating the constructive role practitioners play in negotiating discourses of economic, cultural and symbolic value, privileging certain specific practices, approaches to education, and a growing range of professional identities, I extend previous critical analyses of the role of 'industrial reflexivity' in organizing the material conditions of animation production (Banks, 2006; Caldwell, 2008; Mayer, 2011; Ortner, 2013).

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[4] For examples of the former, see Govil's account of Hollywood outsourcing in India (2008) or Hesmondhalgh's comprehensive analysis of global industrial change (2013). Representations of elites are even more widespread, from Gitlin's (1983) broadcast industrial analysis to the long tradition of 'auteur' cinema studies.

This study stems from an interest established during earlier research in how the experiences of Indian creative practitioners might compare to my own, how their social and economic conditions shape their work. This has evolved through the process of investigation into an effort applying analysis of practitioner testimony to bridge critical gaps between micro-scale cultural ethnography and macro-scale political economic analysis. Aiding this, my own subjective interests have brought together the key concerns with 1) industrial reflexivity, 2) learning, and 3) identity that permeate the work. While this research adopts a hybrid methodology drawn from both media industry studies and grounded theory (a qualitative approach favouring inductive analysis) it is rather these three "sensitizing concepts" (guiding concerns or premises) that provide a point of origin for the dissertation. These facilitate both the conduct of research – gathering testimony about Indian animation – and interrogating it as discourse (Charmaz, 2006: 16). As this differs from other forms of qualitative analysis widely used in animation and media industry studies, I proceed by unpacking the critical assumptions and terms upon which this research is founded.

Reflexive Practice

This research is principally concerned with industry self-analysis and critical reflection. This is based on the assertion that the statements and dialogues of animation practitioners, both public and private, individual and institutional, should be considered the key sites where their culture is conceived, interpreted, negotiated, and reproduced (Caldwell, 2008; Mayer, Banks & Caldwell, 2009). This, according to the production studies approach, is their industrial reflexivity. Reflexivity is an extremely useful and problematic term. In addition to its use in media industry studies, it is an important concept across sociology, in Harold Garfinkle's ethnomethodology (1967), Donald Schön's educational theory (1987), and for Pierre Bourdieu (1992) and Anthony Giddens (1987), a crucial quality for evaluating the project of sociological research itself. Yet these applications call upon different overlapping meanings. The Oxford English Dictionary provides four basic variations of 'reflexivity – the property of being:

> 1. "Of a mental action, process, etc.: turned or directed back upon the mind itself; involving intelligent self-awareness or self-examination; introspective"
> 2. "Capable of, inclined to, or characterized by reflection or serious thought"
> 3. "Of a method, theory, etc.: that takes account of itself or esp. of the effect of the personality or presence of the researcher on what is being investigated."
> 4. "Self-referential, self-reflexive; spec. (of a text, artwork, etc.) that consciously calls attention to itself or its process or production." (OED, 2013)

Setting aside briefly the fourth variant and the status of reflexive practice as text, the subject of analysis here is reflexivity in the first sense – that of introspection, and the

reflexive practitioners themselves in the second sense – of being regularly engaged in inward-directed thought. It is this is property of creative workers at the nexus of what John Thornton Caldwell asserts are a range of interpretive practices, amounting to self-ethnography and ultimately, "critical industrial practice," or industrial theorization (2006: 105; 2008: 5). Elevating industrial reflexivity to the level of cultural theory is certainly controversial across academic culture; however Caldwell is not alone in conceiving of reflexivity in this way. He cites the work of Clifford Geertz, linking reflexive practice to, "local knowledge" (1983), the tacit means by which individuals make themselves comprehensible to each other. Even more directly relevant to this research is Ellen Seiter's use of the related concept of 'lay theory'. Lay theory is a term within sociology and anthropology referring to the 'common sense' worldviews of people under investigation, the "[i]nformation that people select or reject, and how they use this information to examine or test various hypotheses" (1999: 59). These informal theoretical interpretations vary considerably, and need not be either coherent or internally consistent. However, importantly for this dissertation, they are almost uniquely grounded in local experiences and understandings.

Striving to understand reflexivity has substantial implications for my research approach. For Ethnomethodologists, drawing upon symbolic interactionism, reflexivity is conceived as the root of social order, itself created through interaction between member practitioners, through talk:

> It is through their own actions that members display how they understand their own actions as well as the actions of their interactional partners. Hence, the ethnomethodological concept of 'reflexivity' relates to the self-explicating, self-organizing character of members' actions. (Czyzewski, 1994: 163)

So while typically reflexivity is used to describe how practitioners reflect, interpret, and even theorize about their social conditions, here I expand my use of the term to suggest this theorization has an important role to play in producing social reality; the culture of production. There are many possible interpretations for how this might occur, and these too affect our understanding of reflexivity and especially the notion of the reflective practitioner.

Creative practice in animation, as in other sectors of the cultural industries, necessitates occasions when practitioners must deliberate on the conditions of their practice and engage in self-critique to address complex challenges. This suggests a relationship between reflexivity and learning; as practitioners further narrow the gap between theory and practice by making sense of their own actions theoretically, "We reflect on action, thinking back on what we have done in order to discover how our

knowing-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome" (Schön, 1987: 26). Here reflexivity is again constructive, as the 'reflective practitioner' gains experience, engages in introspection, both during and after action, and applies new understandings towards further action.[5]

As Giddens emphasizes, this introspective understanding is important both for the individual and for the group to regulate and control its own development (1987: 37). Reflexivity also calls for the researcher to account for their own knowledge, membership, and position in the social field, to bring together observation, analysis and empirical theory in touch with the social reality under investigation (Giddens, 1991: 30; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 34-35). Analysis in this research emphasizes the relationships revealed in different understandings of reflexivity, between animators' local knowledge, creative practice, industrial theorization and social learning, just as my methodology stresses responses to new knowledge and my own social position in the research. Finally, returning to the fourth sense of reflexivity, that of self-referential texts, if as Geertz suggests, "the culture of a people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles" for the researcher to endeavour to read, it follows for the purpose of this research that these must certainly be analysed in methodologically self-aware manner (1973: 452).

Identity Work

An important part of what I investigate throughout this dissertation is how practitioner reflexivity reveals the role identity plays in the complex social structures underpinning animation production. Like reflexivity, identity is also an expansive term with divergent and often ambiguous meanings across conversational use and academic disciplines. Rather than intervene across a range of these as I have with reflexive practice, this research is best served by focusing narrowly on the relationship between identity, practice, and social structure. This may be achieved through adopting the concept of 'identity work.' Within organizational sociology, identity work refers to the processes of defining and constructing a sense of identity (Beech, 2008: 51). These processes are by the standard defined above, reflexive, in accordance with the symbolic interactionist

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[5] In education theory, reflexivity refers to the process of understanding connections between past and future action. Schön also distinguishes between reflecting *on* action and reflecting *in* action (1983), the latter of which is conceived as a "higher order skill" (Jolly and Radcliffe, 2000: 360). While this distinction is useful, I for the most part use reflection and reflexivity interchangeably, recognizing that during the interview conversation the researcher and participant engage in both processes.

notion, after Erving Goffman (1961), that these are opportunities to perform and enact identity:

> Identity work is not only how people categorize themselves and are categorized by others. It is also concerned with how the images and representations (physical, symbolic, verbal, textual and behavioural) become imbued with meaning and are taken as being part of one's identity. (Beech, 2008: 52)

This is a particularly useful sensitizing concept for this research as it emphasizes several important aspects of identity formation. Firstly, focusing on the representations that go into them recognizes the tendency of identities to be multiple and overlapping, between personal, public, and professional manifestations. As with the lay theories that articulate them, these identities may be conflicting. Finally, they reveal negotiation between interpretations of self-identity and the normative controls of organizations and institutional membership, bringing together 'one's own story' with adapted discourses and narratives from others (54).

Culture, Community, and Industry:

Beyond reflexivity and identity work, the approach I have taken here is to start from the representations of practitioners to assess how meaning is constructed locally, whenever possible to adopt the terms that participants and other members of the community under examination themselves use, and analyse how they articulate these for their own purposes. However, the appearance of these key terms in the analysis also reflects my own preconceptions and understandings stemming from a variety of research traditions. One of the most problematic expressions, broadly used both colloquially and technically, is culture. Here my starting point is to follow Arjun Appadurai and approach culture as "situated difference… in relation to something local, embodied and significant." (1996: 12). Further, the 'cultural' must also "either express, or set the groundwork for, the mobilization of group identities" (13). Like Appadurai, I recognize culture as predominately descriptive rather than substantial possession, or as Brian Street puts it, "culture is a verb" to be defined not by what it is but by what it does (1993: 25). It seems less troubling to reflect on Indian animation practice as a set of activities with a *cultural* attribute than to claim that these practices *are* culture as some kind of social object. Nonetheless, I do not entirely restrict my use to the adjectival form. Instead, my intervention is to use the two forms to refer to two specific cases: *culture* of production, being a descriptor of a range of situated practices that produce *cultural* artefacts: discourses, texts, and other commodities that activate group identities, and thus have an explicit cultural component. As is expounded in the following literature review, this interpretation intervenes in several different academic traditions: symbolic interactionism,

the organizational production of culture, production culture and other mid-level approaches to media industry studies.

Like culture, the terms 'community' and 'industry' have come to stand in for a variety of social structures which participants deem significant to their animation practice in India. These are terms recognizable by the apparent obviousness of their object, yet hide considerable cultural and economic heterogeneity. As my analysis reveals, over the course of investigation the terms used vary considerably, from describing groups of people working in a 'fraternity', 'discipline', 'space', 'sector', 'cottage industry' or 'profession' to more complex processual structures such as an 'ecosystem' that may feature 'cycles', be 'nurtured' or 'evolve'. If only as a starting point, it is helpful to distinguish umbrella terms that confer membership into practitioner networks from terms that describe actions those networks might be subjected to or undertake, 'who is in the community' from 'how they behave.' While I analyse the former as descriptions of different aspects of community, from descriptions of uniformity and cohesion to situated difference and fragmentation, here I generally defer to participants' own reflexive interpretations of community or industry. That is, as much as possible descriptions of structure arise from within the situation of analysis itself.

One exception is my use of the umbrella term 'cultural industries' to refer to the industrial creation of symbolic goods. This does create some challenges compared to the alternative term, 'creative industries,' owing to the adoption of an extremely broad definition of culture (Smith and McKinlay, 2009: 4). While this necessitates subjective choices of what to exclude, highlighting situated difference encourages these boundaries to be drawn and changed at need. 'Creativity' is similarly broad yet the positive connotations of the term (especially in policy) tend to paper over the competing forces at work in industrial practice. Paraphrasing Barney Glaser, to avoid presupposing meanings in data, these and other social concepts must "earn their way into" the analysis (1978). It is important to recognize that these terms emerge within the very social and economic situation that they describe and must be analysed as they move spatially across it, are repeated and adapted to different contexts.

I assert in this dissertation that the ways that practitioners articulate these and other terms across their reflexive practice both shapes and is shaped by their material conditions. Choice of language reflecting local interpretations of meaning both reveal and conceal subjective affinities between different practitioner understandings. It is in how these are negotiated through the process of research that more solid areas of consensus and conflict may emerge for analysis. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, this

reflects how these people actively create the structures around them through engaging in creative processes of meaning making (Charmaz, 2006: 189).[6] This draws from a range of scholarly traditions, although I do not take their theoretical interpretations at face value. Research frameworks developed to explain practice in the cultural industries have contributed useful perspectives and ways of understanding complex negotiations of creative, social and economic power: political economic approaches to globalized creative industries, cultural studies of industrial representation, as well as sociology of organizational management to name just a few. Given a relative lack of prior research into Indian animation practice, this research engages instead a vigorous ongoing debate around critical industry studies.

3. *Literature review:*

Previous academic analysis of Indian animation practice is extremely sparse. Several brief academic interventions include a four-page historical survey in Gianalberto Bendazzi's *Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation* (1994); two chapters in John A. Lent's *Animation in Asia and the Pacific* (Lent, 2001a; Kenyon, 2001), and Harvey Deneroff's tantalizing examination of a single Mumbai animation studio, Famous's House of Animation in *Asian Cinema* (2003). While any literature is valuable, the focus here is extremely narrow. In part, these pieces all trace very much the same history, recounting that continuous animation production began in 1956 with the foundation of a Cartoon Unit within the Government Films Division, under the tutelage of former Disney animator Clair Weeks. Each contribution goes on to highlight the struggles of a nascent industry quietly subsisting in the shadow of Bollywood, but also places itself – as I too go on to do in this research – in a particular moment of transition. Lent recounts the early stages of growth in what would soon become a large outsourcing sector, while Deneroff hints at a nascent "independent animation community" sustained by government design education (120).

Perhaps what is most enticing are the fleeting glimpses of practitioners themselves, animators like Khurana, Mohan, and E. Suresh. Even if little more than a simple survey of names and dates, these hint at the lived realities of the people engaged in

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[6] Symbolic interactionism is a pragmatist perspective in sociology which asserts that social reality and meaning are constructed through interaction. It is consistent with the observation in this dissertation that participants are both reflective and active in their environment. Symbolic interaction provides the basis for more qualitative forms of Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) that inform my methods here.

Indian animation; the creative practices, as well as complex political, economic, and social forces that shape their lives. Expanding the scope of a literature review to seek accounts from practitioners reveals a great deal more work is being done. Published accounts from animators like Jayanti Sen (1999abc; 2000ab), Nina Sabnani (2005), and Shilpa Ranade (2008abcd) not only fill in major details in the historical record, they offer examples of practitioners making sense of their own environment, or in other words, reflexive theory. When symbol creators transgress neat divisions between theory and practice, critics tend to treat their accounts with scepticism if not outright denial. My own argument assumes that such distinctions are no longer helpful – if they ever were – in an era when academics hardly have a monopoly on the tools of critical analysis. Indeed, a recurring objective throughout this dissertation is to consider the reflexive accounts of Indian animation practitioners as theoretical interventions in their own right. This raises new challenges, such as parsing out the relationships between individual representation and social structure, and how to best evaluate what is uncovered by this mode of analysis.

Critical Industry Studies

This dissertation is implicated in what is increasingly mooted as an 'industrial turn' in contemporary media studies, a trend in scholarship to redress a perceived lack of industrial research in favour of the study of texts and audiences. This includes recent work by Sarah Baker, Miranda Banks, John Caldwell, Nitin Govil, Tim Havens, David Hesmondhalgh, Amanda Lotz, Paul Macdonald, Vicki Mayer, Sherry Ortner, Alisa Perren, Serra Tinic, and others. The perspectives offered range from micro-social or ethnographic studies of particular industry 'scenes' like American independent cinema (Ortner, 2013) to more conceptual but equally reflexive investigations of the practices and organizational structures that constitute and allow us to "recognize" cultural industry (Govil, 2013). Each of these makes critical contributions to media industry analysis, revealing that while industry studies are hardly a new phenomenon, its object remains in flux. Its recent rise to prominence draws on growing interdisciplinarity in cultural, film and media studies to integrate longstanding critical traditions from a broad range of different areas of scholarship, including cultural anthropology, economic geography, and management studies. Yet this has the potential to paper over lingering critical divisions between institutional power and individual agency at different scales of analysis.

The study of 'cultural industry' as a source of social meaning emerged in the 1940s as a critique of the commodification of culture in the work of Frankfurt School émigrés Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer. Beginning as a diatribe against the growing dominance of mass-produced communication in twentieth century social and

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political life, this initial thesis was adapted by later sociologists to describe the more "complex, ambivalent, and contested" attributes of multiple evolving cultural 'industries' (Hesmondhalgh, 2013: 25). Later still this was taken up in the intellectual tradition of the political economy of culture, concerned with the uneven operation of power in the hands of those who control the means of production. Critical political economy offers a frame for analysing the manufacture, distribution and consumption of cultural goods, "how the economic dynamics of production structure public discourse by promoting certain cultural forms over others" (Murdock and Golding, 2005: 75). While perhaps overstating hegemonic power on the supply side, such an approach crucially addresses the close interactions between political, economic and social life across culture, as well as how conditions may change over time.

The political economic cultural industries approach is often criticized for over-emphasizing the influence of large-scale capitalist power and industrial structure over every day meaning making and practice, leading to a loss of critical insight on "the role of human agents" and the "micro-politics" of how creative workers function day-to-day, and I offer a variation of this argument here (Havens et al 2009: 236-238). The clear power relationships political economy suggests – at macro-scales of analysis – become increasingly contradictory as analysis approaches micro-scales, and active human agents become implicated in creating and managing the very structures that supposedly dominate them. Nonetheless these contradictions are less problematic than they are revealing, and economic framings do in fact have much to offer analysis of creative labour across scales of analysis. Political economy calls for the researcher to pay attention to the part played by the social structure within which these actions occur. This is what Havens, Lotz, and Tinic call critical political economy's "jet plane" view, as compared to a meso-level "helicopter view" provided by critical media industry studies (240, 245). Arguably, by adopting the hybrid grounded approach I describe in the methodology, I have perhaps inadvertently proceeded on foot. My analytical tack is to maintain this contextual awareness of power while reducing the scope, accounting for economic structure through fieldwork in a local cultural frame.

Ortner describes ethnographic studies of media production as a field of inquiry that crosses anthropology, sociology, film, television and media studies, necessitating extensive "immersion" at the site of media production:

> These studies may include information on the mechanics of production, but they are primarily oriented toward understanding the culture and the politics that shape what the public is offered (or not offered) by way of news and information, advertising and marketing, and art and entertainment. (2013: 24)

Like cultural industry, these ethnographic approaches to media production studies also emerged in the 1940s, with the foundational work of sociologist turned screenwriter Leo Rosten (1941) and anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker (1950). Both recognize tensions between creative and commercial interests across production hierarchies, noting processes of negotiation inherent in industrial practice. Moreover Rosten makes the crucial observation that production is located within both "social and economic networks" (Sullivan, 2009: 50). His analysis of empirical data drawn from interviews and participant observation set a precedent for production culture fieldwork still valuable almost 75 years later. However such sociological methods did not find a place in subsequent development of film studies, a discipline focused more often on the histories, aesthetics and ideologies of prominent texts, practitioners and national cinemas (McDonald, 2013: 147).[7]

More recent developments of ethnographic work in cultural industries take a dramatically different turn in order to address a perceived crisis of practitioner representation, asking: "how do media producers represent themselves given the paradoxical importance of media in society? How do we as researchers, then represent those varied and contested representations?" (Mayer, Banks and Caldwell, 2009: 4). Mayer argues that analysis of production offers an opportunity to "ground" social theories on the operation of power in local realities (2009: 15) and this is also the root of the production culture approach advocated by Caldwell.[8] In examining practitioner expression as a source of reflexive critique and theorization, associated with local knowledge or lay theory, he seeks insight into decision-making processes, reflecting practitioners' every-day working world. In particular, Caldwell's account of industrial reflexivity and practitioner representation emphasizes two key concepts, what he terms "self-theorizing talk" and "deep texts" (2008). The former comprises interpretations and understandings practitioners generate to make sense of their work, while the latter deep texts and artefacts are "mediated, textualized, and produced forms of trade communication" that likewise "seem strongly predisposed to critical analysis" (26).[9] The

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[7] This necessitated that they be re-discovered later, concurrent with the rise of television studies in such work as Todd Gitlin's *Inside Primetime* (1983). However Gitlin's interviews focus upon high-level executives and producers. I address the limitations of this in the following methodology section.
[8] It must be noted that this is not yet strictly 'grounded theory.'
[9] In my methodology I, like Kevin Sanson, notice that these latter textual forms of critical practice provide a useful comparative device to 'ground' practitioners' self-theorizing talk across different registers of analysis (2011: 30-31).

emphasis, as in my own research here, is in the situation of production as a culture, with its own codes, discourses, and meanings.

However, the critical importance of representation alone as the object of inquiry is not entirely satisfactory. As Caldwell acknowledges, that expression must be understood as, "embedded within broader cultural commitments, economies, and industrial traditions that in turn inflect and transpose those very expressions" (2008: 14). Others, like Hesmondhalgh, remain sceptical:

> While culture, representation, and discourse are vital for analysis of the social, systemic and structural factors still need to be considered in order to provide the kind of explanatory and normative orientations vital for any critical social science worthy of the name. (2010: 10)

Beyond the compelling level of detail offered by recent cultural studies approaches, I also recognize that practitioner testimony does not offer a means to uncover so-called 'authentic truths' about the experience of production.

Instead my aim is to examine the cultural theorization of industrial conditions from animation practitioners' experiential observations, and develop an understanding of how these perceptions shape action at the same time as being subject to normative structures. In this, my objectives are also largely consistent with those of the related 'cultural economy' approach from economics and organizational management, drawing on earlier work of Paul du Gay and Michael Pryke (2002) in which economic forces are interpreted as inherently cultural (Havens et al: 245). The key point where my research intersects with cultural economy is in reference to du Gay's concept of the "circuit of cultural production" (1997), in order to assess how Indian animation practitioners themselves adopt this term to make claims about relationships between representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation.

Another recent advance that helps bridge this gap between representation and structure is Havens, Lotz, and Tinic's Critical Media Industry Studies approach. Influenced by both Production Studies and Cultural Economy, theirs' constitutes an effort to bring the growing range of cultural industry approaches together within a single research paradigm. Conceived as a form of middle-range theory, they emphasize the role of human agency in local practices, noting interaction between economic structure, social practice and textual meaning (2009: 234, 243). Seeking to address relationships between different kinds of value, they productively build upon sensitizing concepts from sociological theory, most notably Giddens' ontology of structuration, which emphasizes ongoing negotiation between agency and structure, and the need to recognize implicit contradictions between economic and cultural analysis (248; Scott and Marshall, 2009:

740). This also reflects an effort to move past longstanding methodological binaries, between political economy and cultural studies. Crucial to recent innovations in media industry research has been the assertion that ongoing debate between these is no longer a productive way to distinguish what are in fact closely related approaches to studying social and economic power.[10] Hesmondhalgh asserts that some of these oppositions amount to oversimplification (2013: 59), while Govil argues that too much attention to "ossifying" differences in focus between enumerative structures and personal agency elides consideration of the object of analysis, industry itself:

> Despite their diversity, lurking at the heart of many approaches is an attention to social and economic practices that happen within media industries rather than the activities and competencies that are constitutive of industry. (2013: 173)

Govil's challenge to unpack the wider situation of industry by investigating the practices, conditions, economic structures, and cultural infrastructures that together make up what we call a cultural industry is of particular relevance to my dissertation. This is not only because the case that he calls upon is drawn from an Indian film context, the Indian Movie Stunt Artist Association. He asks: "How does such a group understand its activity, and how does it frame its authority? How is the association constituted?" (174). These questions are fundamentally reflexive concerns. Here, in the Indian filmmaking context, industry is "achieved" where formal processes of government and corporate economic policy, and informal practices such as identity work intersect. Crucially, Govil adjusts Caldwell's focus from the 'production of culture' to the 'production of industry'. Rather than being something taken for granted, industry is just another, "way of figuring things out" (176). By the terms set out in the opening of this chapter, it is a reflexive political economic construction, subject to negotiation and processes of identity work. Industry is cultural too (Caldwell, 2013: 158). This realization opens up industry as a set of complex phenomena that may be interpreted textually, as it interprets itself (Geertz, 1973). As I pursue in my grounded production studies methodology below, it also suggests that industrial structure may be understood as to some degree constituted of these interpretations.

The notion of industry less as a rigid self-evident structure and more as another changeable product of creative, economic, and social practice has parallels beyond media scholarship, especially in the area of organizational studies, drawing on the sociological

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[10] Caldwell goes so far as to suggest that they are "inseparable" (2013: 158).

concepts of the creative 'field' (Bourdieu, 1993), and the 'community of practice' (Wenger, 1998). Rather than draw further distinction between economy and culture, Bourdieu's field is a structured site of conflict over the accumulation of resources and influence, that is 'capital,' not only economic power, but cultural, social, and symbolic value as well, the negotiation of which also defines the field itself (Bourdieu, 1985). The logic of capital is closely tied to the identity work of practitioners and their reflexive understanding of their position within the field. Bourdieu's preference for objective relations and structures over empirical social relationships that might constitute those structures leads him to reject the more symbolic interactionist premises that underpin my methodology here (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bottero and Crossle, 2011: 101). Yet, his fields framework still offers a valuable precedent for interpreting the relationship between structure, value and practice, while recognizing that each are subject to ongoing negotiation and change.[11] Further, guided by assertions of the relative newness of Indian animation, I approach this negotiation less as a struggle between entrenched positions than an ongoing process of social learning.

Finally, developing from my concern with learning as a sensitizing concept, I also engage with culture of production as a frame to interpret relations between the reflexive construction of identity and collective action, reflected in Étienne Wenger's model of the 'community of practice,' a group of people constituted by shared activity, knowledge and repertoire (1996). This sense of community is founded on mutual engagement and participation as processes of social learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). While locally situated within organizations, Wenger's typology emphasizes negotiation that occurs between communities of practice through joint enterprise, and participation in wider 'social learning systems.' The community of practice offers yet another useful framework to interpret possible relationships between identity work and social structure, in this case emphasizing specific kinds of interaction – participation, knowledge sharing and engagement. Consistent with Wenger's own preference to describe larger systems as 'constellations' of smaller social structures, I do not conflate the testimony of participants with a monolithic community 'of practice,' preferring instead to ground analysis in the

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[11] While Bourdieu asserts that emphasizing interaction over position in the field confuses cause with effect, Botero and Crossle suggest that Bourdieu's analysis implicitly relies on interaction more than he recognizes. Allowing for the mutual influence of structural positions and interactions produces the "differential association" which is the root of both Bourdieu's fields and interactionist 'social worlds' (102).

more nuanced participant metaphor of a community "ecosystem" (Gurnani, Interview 10; Kumaresh, Interview 19).

The present moment of development in the field of critical industry studies presents a wide range of overlapping opportunities for analytical intervention. However the scope of the work to be done here calls for substantial collaboration across research sites to develop this research approach, well beyond the scope of a single dissertation case study. According to Havens, Lotz, and Tinic, what is required is not further abstract or high theory but empirical research into the operation of social power in specific cases of industrial discourse (249). They intentionally leave open the specific methodological strategies that might be used. The nascent state of research on micro-level industrial practice, let alone its application to the context of Indian animation, only serves to multiply the interventions that are possible. I assert that a grounded theory approach, emphasizing not only the situational aspects of the specific case study but also the reflexive conduct of the research itself, offers both valuable empirical interpretations and open-ended development of more modest substantive theories of industrial meaning-making by situated practitioners.

4.   *A Grounded Production Studies Methodology:*

I return to my primary research question to ask: how Indian animation practitioners conceive their creative activity and professional identities in terms of culture of production. Fundamental to my argument is the notion that knowledge of how animators interpret the conditions of their practice reveals how discourses of creative and professional identity shape social and industrial structure, both from the bottom up and along-side normative pressures from the top-down. This theoretical supposition is the basis for the project as a whole, but also emerges from the methodology. I begin by briefly outlining the research design before reflecting on the two main constituent approaches: industrial ethnography based in cultural studies of production, and the constant comparative method drawn from grounded theory.

Research Design

This dissertation covers research conducted from the spring of 2008 to completion in the summer of 2014. Fieldwork in India and to a lesser extent Los Angeles and London comprises the central methodological focus. More specifically, my analysis integrates intensive interviews, participant observation, and ongoing discourse analysis. The majority of data collection took place during a short period of study in Ahmedabad and Mumbai, India from October to November 2011. Over the course of this research, I

conducted 42 interviews with 51 individuals, people with many different, sometimes overlapping relationships to animation practice. Generally speaking, these comprised: eight animators, including project heads, lighting artists, effects artists, riggers, and technical directors (TDs); 18 directors and two CEOs, including five founding directors, three creative directors from large international corporations, seven from smaller local studios, and three independent animators; 11 teachers and educational administrators; ten students; and three journalists. Many participants engaged in multiple roles including: community organization, educational outreach, visiting faculty, and indigenous arts activism.

While in India, I also participated in four community events: the NID's Chitrakatha International Student Animation Festival in Ahmedabad; a seminar of the Animation Society of India (TASI) at Whistling Woods, Mumbai; ASIFA-India's International Animation Day (IAD) celebrations at the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA); and Damroo: Creating Content(ment) for Children Seminar at the IDC on the campus of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Powai. Numerous tours of production spaces and educational facilities make up the major part of my remaining data, supplemented by textual accounts generated by practitioners, studios, professional organizations, as well as the trade and popular press. Overall fieldwork for this research produced well over 250,000 words of transcription and three journals comprising a further 200 pages of handwritten notes, corresponding to approximately 45 hours of formal interviews, and 12 working days of participant observation. A fuller account of all interviews and field work can be found in Appendices 1 and 2.

My approach to interviews, participant observation, and texts draws heavily on lessons learned from recent cultural studies of production, emphasizing practitioner reflexivity and the negotiation of identity. Specifically, these include the need to account for representation as theory or self-ethnography, balanced with attention to the constructed-ness of accounts, and variations in cultural power. Particularly attractive is the method of cross-checking between accounts and instances of discourse from different sources. Here I draw clear strategic parallels between Caldwell's robust "integrated cultural industrial method" and the rigorous processes of Charmaz's (2006) and Clarke's (2005) "constant comparative method." While not all studies of production culture are strictly grounded theory, I argue grounded theory offers a particularly unambiguous way to go about production culture. Accordingly, it is to Caldwell's proven framework that I append the logics of constructivist grounded theory, filling in what is left unstated in the former methodological toolkit with specific approaches to gathering and analysing data:

conducting intensive interviews, coding accounts, theoretical sampling, saturating categories, and reconstructing theory.

'Integrated' Production Studies Approaches

As production studies as a distinct field of inquiry has only recently begun to re-assert itself, a useful starting point for this dissertation has been to adapt from the parallel field of reception studies. The affinity of this work with audience research, beyond its long and established qualitative tradition in cultural studies, is an interest in the balance of power in the interpretation of culture, in voices "who have not yet been heard" (Banks, 2006: 21). Although this research is not directly concerned with audiences, many of the underlying concepts remain applicable to producers of content as well. To paraphrase Janet Staiger, I illuminate the cultural meaning of actions and events, that is, "interpretations or affective experiences" in specific social conditions to members of a given community (2000: 162-63). Because I am looking at Indian animation practitioner accounts as cultural practice, I am in one sense initiating a reception study in reverse, coding identifying 'traces,' in written and oral accounts, to inductively develop a sense of the 'object' or situation to which they respond. Further, I am interested in approaching this object as intertext, what Barbara Klinger describes as the "network of discourses, social institutions, and historical conditions surrounding a work" (1997: 108).[12] While the intertextual object and its traces are all different forms and instances of the concerned culture of animation production, this method provides an advantage of highlighting the cycle of consumption, interpretation, negotiation and reproduction in an evolving cultural situation.

The work of production studies scholars concerned with reflexivity and industry narrative has informed my own decision to use practitioner accounts as a primary source of data for my analysis.[13] However, these come in a variety of forms, which may be subject to different research approaches. Caldwell proposes an "integrated cultural industrial method of analysis" across four different modes or registers: textual analysis, interviews, participant observation, and economic analysis, each one kept in check through ongoing dialogue with the others (2008: 4). My analytic tool kit is broadly

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[12] In symbolic interactionist ecologies this same concept could easily be termed a "social world" (Clarke, 2005: 10), or even, switching emphasis to Bourdieu's structural relations, a creative 'field' (1992).
[13] See: Banks (2006; 2009), Caldwell (2006; 2008; 2009; 2013), Mayer (2009; 2011) and Ortner (2009; 2013).

similar, comprising: 1) initial examination of extant texts produced by individuals and institutions: studios, schools, and the Indian animation trade press, followed by; 2) in-depth research interviews with animators, teachers, students and other kinds of practitioners; and 3) observing them at animation festivals, educational outreach events, and other trade gatherings over more than a month of primary fieldwork. Although it generated a considerable amount of rich data, the duration of this fieldwork was by ethnographic standards very brief. The approach taken here has necessarily been to supplement a shorter period of fieldwork with complementary textual analysis, continued data collection, and constant comparison throughout the whole research process, as I describe in the following section.

Like Caldwell, I follow Geertz's (1973) methodological premise that all cultural activities can be understood as ensembles of reflexive texts (2009: 170). My approach to these is to consider them as instances both of situated sense-making and professional theorization. I recognize that these occur in different contexts, which I code into three overlapping categories or scales: first, interpretations that emerge either during or after practice; second, those that are to varying degrees private or public; and third, those that are either spontaneous or elicited by the process of research. The first, which I equate with Schön's reflections in and on action, includes discoveries and knowledge that emerge from animation practice itself, highlighting both the affective experience of social conditions and the role of situated learning in interpreting them. The second, which I equate with Caldwell's principal rubric of 'deep texts,' range from those that are completely hidden to those that are publicly disclosed and most open to observation, refers to how these understandings are enacted, reproduced and circulated (2008: 346). For the purposes of this research these texts include everything from storyboard sessions to public seminars, from design school admission exams to industrial reports and trade interviews. I add the third scale as a reflexive check on the analysis, making a clear distinction between extant texts whose construction has not been affected by my research and those which I have been an active participant in creating, like interview conversations. Analysis of existing publicly available materials before, during, and after field research and constant comparison between them, have allowed me to shape my own understandings and define the emerging categories of testimony that were then further developed using data drawn from elicited accounts.

The way I appropriate interview testimony into this research as data is also heavily influenced by Geertz, in this case drawing specific inspiration from Ortner's anthropological attitude to practitioner accounts, termed "cultural ethnography through

discourse" (2013: 31). I am not interested in calling out inconsistencies between accounts purely for their own sake. Instead, here as in Ortner's study:

> At the level of discourse, informants are always right, that is, regardless of their intentions or their subjective relationship to what they are saying, they nonetheless say what they say, and what they say is, from this perspective, an instance of a particular discourse. (ibid)

Initially I approach interview responses as stories that individuals are telling about their experience. Leaving these more or less intact, I analyse how these fit in with other similar or conflicting narratives I have encountered. Understood as assemblages of texts, both practitioner testimony and my own responses in field notes to it can also be "taken apart," allowing closer qualitative coding and discourse analysis (2013: 26). This entails comparative analysis of distinctive language and strategies, reflecting both 'common-sense' and 'theoretical' understandings of power and ideology within conversational accounts (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009: 215). Subjecting my own notes and impressions to analysis alongside formal interview testimony highlights the assertions about reflexivity that underpin this research.

One of the most striking lessons learned from fieldwork is that there are substantial cultural, economic, and political differences between the conditions of Indian animation and those of Hollywood or American independent cinema. I could not, even if I wanted to, replicate Caldwell or Ortner's methods. For example, Caldwell's experience suggested that "filmmakers (as opposed to theorists) seldom systematically elaborate… in spoken or written forms" on questions of how film or video works, how viewers respond to it, or how its culture is formed (2008: 26). My experience in Indian animation is dramatically different in that these are precisely the issues that animation filmmakers, and even more so educators, students, and community organizers I spoke to, seemed most inclined to discuss, having spent a substantial amount of time and effort considering them in a theoretical context themselves, with far less outside scrutiny. Although the full range of factors that might inform this observation are beyond the scope of this or any other qualitative study, such dramatic differences do highlight challenges to cultural industries analysis.

While many prominent studies take as their object, at least in part, the reflexivity of producers of content, there are two major problems to overcome. First, for reasons of access these various methodologies still often privilege a top-down approach, focusing on

'studying up:' analysing the testimony of prominent above-the-line creative talent and other kinds of industrial elites.[14] These are certainly valuable and revealing perspectives, but I suggest that they offer an incomplete picture. Rather than only telling part of a story, such testimony offers at best only one side of a complex negotiation of production culture.[15] Other voices, including not only the below-the-line practitioners common to animation production itself, but also educational practitioners, students, and those engaged in professional trade bodies, have much to offer in both their experiences and their theorizations of emergent production culture. These have been largely neglected in industry studies, but they have the advantage of being socially and economically much closer to the researcher, suggesting an opportunity to 'study sideways.'

Studying sideways calls for the research to consider "groups to which they themselves belong" and to reflexively consider the commonalities between investigator and informant (Mayer, 2008: 143). It is based in the recognition that research participants may have substantial commonalities, shared objectives and identities with the academic researcher to the benefit of both fieldwork and analysis. As Ortner describes:

> These folks are not 'up' relative to us, they are… us. …studying sideways means that we and our informants occupy more or less the same social space… We all more or less share a habitus, including not least a taste for film, literature, art, and the good life. (2009: 184)

This understanding obliges to researcher to consider ways that relationships with participants influence how the data is collected. As I explain in the following section, I achieve this by constantly feeding my positions and understandings as an animation researcher back into the shared spaces of social action – from interviews to community events where data collection is taking place. Reflexivity of this sort provides a productive frame for analysis. However the subjective tension that this reveals also constitutes a major challenge to production studies approaches. It is unclear how similarities or differences in understanding should be accounted for, as I remedy through the addition of constant comparative methods.[16] Attendant issues of reflexivity, the 'embodied' and

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[14] This is reflected in the development of production studies as an area of research from Rosten (1941) and Powdermaker (1950), to Gitlin (1983).

[15] Banks' incisive elaboration on the Hollywood production culture ethnography set out by Caldwell goes a long way to remedy this imbalance, focusing on below-the-line industrial narratives of gendered labour (2006; 2009), as does Mayer's analysis of factory workers as professional media practitioners (2011).

[16] Similarities between the researcher and participant cannot be assumed (Charmaz, 2004: 684). Instead, both commonalities and differences must be 'discovered' and accounted for theoretically starting with detailed coding of the data.

subjective researcher become all the more critical and cannot be easily disregarded. All this raises the question: if it is necessary to account for the position of the researcher within the situation of the research, why not also that of the participants themselves?

The other major challenge I observe in production studies approaches is one of methodological ambiguity. Given an 'integrated' mode of analysis it is to some extent difficult to work out where methodological boundaries may still be drawn. Caldwell's warning that scholars must avoid the temptation to focus on any one method (2008: 3) could be misinterpreted to suggest an 'anything goes' attitude to industrial analysis. While too narrow an approach inevitably yields simplistic understandings that paper over cultural and economic difference, too many different approaches may obscure the object of study completely. Focusing purely on how practitioners represent themselves may distract from the stated objective to assess the fullness of the "lived realities" they describe, raising the question of what understanding such analysis ultimately provides (Hesmondhalgh, 2013: 56). One alternative, again from the literature, is to consider the local conditions of practice in context of larger-scale industrial analysis, and draw upon a range of methods from both political economic and cultural analyses. However, my objective in this thesis is explicitly more locally situated, to investigate the role of reflexive practice in constructing participants' social and economic reality.

Given empirical relationships between theory and practice, meaning and social order, it is useful and necessary to extend the object of inquiry in production culture, beyond representation, to the interaction between meaning-making and social structure, through the creation and negotiation of discourses (Clarke, 2005: xxviii). This provides an opportunity to evaluate relationships between social and professional identities, organization, and power as they operate discursively within the culture of production. Based on these concerns, while I situate my work in close dialogue with production culture based industry studies, I prefer also to explore interactionist approaches to generating theory about the situation of production – directly engaging with practitioners' own representations on both experience and order in their social worlds. The analysis of disparate fragments of practitioner testimony, whatever the source, as texts necessitates a qualitative approach, concerned with both action and discourse. The challenge remains to approach this testimony as textual practice within the social situation where it occurs, what Geertz describes as "strain[ing] to read over the shoulder of those to whom [texts] properly belong" (1973: 452-53). The concordance of textual analysis, intensive interviews and participant observation with reflexive grounded theory research methods

has supported my investigation of Indian animation practice, and how practitioner perspectives interact to generate culture of production.

Inductive Industry Studies – Constant Comparison

My purpose in utilizing the constant comparative method in addition to the integrated production studies approaches described is above is not only to fill in a few gaps in an otherwise robust toolkit, but to implement this methodology in a way that is explicitly inductive yet still flexible enough to account for the varied set of interviews, observation, and textual analysis. Devised by Strauss and Glaser (1967), grounded theory is not a description of a specific kind of theory at all, but a method for conducting qualitative research, based on creating conceptual frameworks out of the data itself:

> Grounded theory has also been known as 'the constant comparative method' wherein comparison cases are explicitly sought out by the researcher to provoke analysis. (Clarke, 2005: 170)[17]

> [Constant comparison] generates successively more abstract concepts and theories through inductive processes of comparing data with data, data with category, category with category, and category with concept. Comparisons then constitute each stage of analytic development. (Charmaz, 2006: 187)

The specific approach I have chosen follows principles outlined by Charmaz and Clarke, as they diverge from the positivist roots of much grounded theory research, highlighting instead the need for attention subjectivity and reflexivity in discourse.[18] These adaptations also move constant comparison closer to the style of industrial ethnography proposed by Caldwell and Ortner.

As I utilize it here, constant comparison comprises a process (table 0.1) of gathering data in texts, field notes, and interview transcripts, coding that data into preliminary interpretations, and then sorting those codes into increasingly formal conceptual categories, further developed through "theoretical sampling" to the point of 'saturation' and refined through memos and relational diagrams. Below, I briefly describe how each of these steps has been implemented in this research.

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[17] The combination of this approach combined with its theoretical roots in symbolic interactionism results in what she terms a versatile, "theory/methods package" (2005: 4).
[18] Specifically, I draw upon Charmaz's 'constructivist' framework and Clarke's compatible 'situational analysis.'

Table 0.1: **A Constant Comparative Method for Data Collection and Analysis:**

1. Develop phenomena of study, accounting for disciplinary assumptions, reflexive positions and sensitizing concepts.
2. Generate data: from extant texts, field notes and detailed transcriptions of intensive interviews
   a. Use notes and journal entries to develop initial categories that inform further interviews and participant observation
3. Coding:
   a. Open Coding: examine interviews and textual accounts for testimony reflecting practice and what is happening in the data, informed by sensitizing concepts but not limited to them.
   b. Focused and Theoretical Coding: Develop analytic categories around these themes using descriptive 'in vivo' understandings directly informed by testimony or other data.
4. Compare emerging categories across different sources of data.
   a. Focus analytic categories through use of theoretical sampling to saturation.
   b. Develop memos, structural outlines, analytic diagrams and situational maps.
5. Link categories into coherent analysis approaching substantive theoretical observations.

What I have found most useful about the constant comparative method is that the source of theory is the data rather than any formal theoretical framework imposed upon them, using collected testimony and texts to simply test pre-conceived hypotheses. Instead, my analytical frameworks emerged as I focused on the area of interest, and gained situational awareness through designing and conducting field research. This has implications for the power relationship between the researcher and participants. Practically, embracing this approach allowed me to follow the reflexive premises of production studies techniques like 'studying sideways' to their ideological conclusions, while also accounting for their methodological challenges.

Intensive interviews are an established data-gathering method, and their use is hardly unique to grounded theory. They are particularly useful to develop a large basis for comparison between individual accounts. However this brings risks, like asking leading questions, mistaking uncertainty for certainty, and failing to account for unintended consequences (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011: 17). Constant comparison helps address some of these problems. Approaching interviews from the assumption that both interviewer and interviewee are active makers of meaning (Holstein and Gubrium 2004: 141) necessitates an interest in how responses are constructed, as much as what is recorded (Fontana, 2004: 166; ten Have, 2004: 77). While practitioners related narratives and theorized on those aspects of their work that they deemed most significant, I also asked them to evaluate my existing understandings based-upon earlier accounts and texts. As a result my transcripts and field notes frequently include participant reflections on my process to provide a check on analysis. Accordingly, while studying sideways facilitates

rapport, constant comparison offers the means to reflexively account for the shared authorship of the resulting text.

One of the core principles of grounded theory research is that analysis must begin as soon as there is data. It is this process that reveals the mutually constitutive relationship of data collection and analysis, occurring simultaneously throughout the life of the project (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). This begins with coding transcripts, field notes, and extant texts as data. Codes represent the initial categorization of segments of data in this dissertation, moving from initial open coding, to more subsequent wider and more theoretical focused coding:

> [C]odes are immediate, are short, and define the actions or experience described by the interviewee. The goal is the development of categories that capture the fullness of the experiences and actions studied (Kvale and Brinkman, 2005: 202)

From the start of this research, initial informal field notes evolved through the process of interview transcription into more formal codes, based, as elsewhere, on the premise that interpretations should emerge from the data rather than the other way around. Coding of individual words and phrases served to preserve practitioners' language within my analysis, and specialized terms used by practitioners to "condense meaning" of significant actions, experiences or social structures were coded separately as "in vivo codes" (55). These include, for example, descriptions of: "creative sensibilities" (Madhavan: Interview 2), "geographically agnostic" practices (Seshaprasad: Interview 15a) and individuals as "ecosystem catalysts" (Gurnani, Interview 10). I subjected each of these, whether a description of action, process or situated meaning making, to further comparison, constantly reworking and developing those that seem to be the most significant.

Rather than building the analysis from coded categories that were still primarily descriptive, writing memos further defined abstract categories into a substantive theoretical argument (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 37). Memos address under what conditions the descriptions in conceptual categories arise, the understandings of participants, the consequences of changes in situation or perspective, and crucially how such categories relate. I have used memos to follow up on ideas, to revisit early texts and interview transcripts, but also to guide 'theoretical sampling' of the data towards saturation, producing the earliest instances of the chapters in this research:

> By writing memos on your focused codes, you build and classify your category by examining all the data it covers and by identifying variations in it and between other categories. You also become aware of gaps in your analysis." (Charmaz, 2006: 93)

Although I have not made use of qualitative analysis software, one final critical tool adopted over the course of this research has been the use of diagrams, specifically,

Clarke's 'situational maps.' Diagrams provide a concrete visual representation of individuals, groups, discourses, and events in a social situation and offer means to quickly tease out relationships between them (2005: 83).[19]

Initially this research applied a simple snowball sampling method to identify individual practitioners by their participation in Indian animation, or affiliation with specific institutions where research was taking place. Later I used theoretical sampling as a means to continue information gathering after formal fieldwork had taken place, refining and testing the recently identified core concepts. Given the impracticality of follow-up in-person interviews in India, informal messaging with key participants and theoretically targeted analysis of new extant texts and spontaneous discourse gained in importance during this phase of research. The objective was to expand and generalize theoretical concepts to better interpret to the central relations between reflexive practice and social structure, while at the same time fill gaps in the analysis and seek variation or unexplained complexity not yet accounted for in the categories already developed (Charmaz, 2006: 109).

Using the constant comparative method, categories are 'saturated' when gathering new data does not generate new theoretical insights. 'Theoretical saturation' is thus the point when new data collection stops, and conceptual relationships between existing categories have been accounted for analytically with reference back to data (Strauss and Corbin: 1990). Taking seriously the constructivist notion of grounded theory by which all research findings are subjective interpretations, all readings partial and culturally situated (Clarke, 2005: 8), I stop short of claiming that the categories on which this analysis is based have been truly saturated. Here, the practicalities of research necessitated that initial readings and analyses be formed into preliminary outlines and drafts as soon as there have been compelling ideas to convey. Subsequent memos and revised drafts with more substantive theoretical arguments certainly moved categories closer to saturation, but given the richness of the social setting these could still be reopened in numerous different ways both within the scope of this research and beyond.

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[19] For examples of diagrams used in the process of this research, see Appendix 3.

A Note on the Ethical Conduct of this Research

Ethical questions are intrinsic to media production studies and arise throughout the duration of research. I have taken potential concerns into consideration from the initial design, to the collection and analysis of practitioner accounts, and the final assembly of the dissertation. Here I briefly address how I have interpreted three key ethical issues that shape this investigation: the necessity of informed participant consent, the potential importance of insuring their anonymity, and the need to account for my own ideological stance in the research.

University regulations and academic best practices call for research that is based on participants' informed consent. For this reason, whenever possible I have clearly communicated and documented the purpose of the investigation, the scope of voluntary participation, the right to withdraw at any time prior to the completion of the study, as well as the publication of the resulting research. This information was included in interview request letters and an information sheet provided to all participants. In the case of interviews, formal consent was obtained in writing.[20] Many participants expressed unease at the need for such procedures, especially in contrast to more informal trade press practice, and this did present a barrier to developing rapport. However such constraints are not without advantages; including the opportunity to emphasize individual consent over organizational coercion. To the extent that key leaders, employers, and faculty often facilitated access, it was desirable that all subordinate participation also be transparently voluntary, especially in the case of animation students.

The major departure of this dissertation from normal ethnographic convention is that I have not assigned pseudonyms to anonymized research participants. Instead, I take a cue from Tejaswini Ganti's work on Bollywood; adapting a hybrid approach that reflects the varying kinds of interactions I had with participants across a range of different social contexts (2012: 36). I use real names when quoting from formal recorded interviews, extent press accounts, and public events. In contrast, interactions where participants had a reasonable expectation of privacy, as well as instances when individuals asked that disclosures be taken off the record are not recorded in the research, at least not directly. These experiences nonetheless shaped my understandings of actors

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[20] Examples of all three documents are included in Appendix 2.

and events in the social environment and are thus reflected in subsequent interviews and analysis.

Although a small number of Indian animators have achieved national and even global recognition within industrial circles, this is not the experience of most of the professionals, educators, and students who participated in this research. Nonetheless, given the small size and semi-public face of the animation community it is unclear that anonymity, even if ethically desirable, would be practical to achieve. Topics under discussion, including personal backgrounds, education, or professional activities could identify a subject to an informed reader who might recognize many of the participants without need of additional identifying information. While I remained prepared to use pseudonyms in any circumstances that might be understood as socially or professionally harmful, in practice most participants, as habitual storytellers, were eager to be included on the record. Ultimately my use real names is shaped by the judgment that strict adherence to confidentiality would restrict individuals from elaborating on their personal experience, preventing them from engaging in the very reflexivity that is the subject of this dissertation. While anonymity might protect participants from some of the consequences of disclosure, it also robs them of an active voice in the research and reduces my accountability for the veracity of both testimony and analysis.

Among the most fundamental ethical considerations for interview-based research is that it should be designed to ensure both integrity and quality, in order to make the greatest possible contribution to knowledge. In media industry studies this is often posed as an imperative to "represent… the unrepresented" (Cornea, 2008: 119). As an investigation of cultural practices in Indian animation, this research not only addresses a gap in scholarship, but also interrogates the interpretive practices of Indian animators themselves. However, as Brett Mills writes, this approach can generate ethically fraught and changing power relationships between interviewer and participant (2008, 149). In response, I adopt methods to encourage continued engagement throughout the process of analysis.[21] My ideological position relative to this practice is itself an ethical concern. I respect the efforts of practitioners seeking self-actualizing labour and understand increased diversity in cultural production as a potential social good. However, while I

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[21] I made the decision not only to provide participants with copies of interview transcripts for review and comment, but to extend this to also include both the preliminary and completed research. Again, see Appendix 2.

empathize with the people who contributed to this research, and although a major aim is to draw these voices into the academic record, it is my own critical voice that is central to assessing the social and industrial significance of these accounts. I return to this question of collaboration in the conclusion of this dissertation to reflect on the potential of these methods for future research.

5. *Chapter Organization:*

As I have set out above, this dissertation examines the cultural practices of animators in India. I ask how Indian animation practitioners conceive and make meaning of their experience and identity in relation to negotiating a culture of animation production, and how the shared discourses and modes of engagement that result both shape and are shaped by institutional structures. To address these questions, I have selected three settings of reflexive practice that illustrate the how participants articulate their identities and negotiate social and economic order, 1) the situation of production, 2) education or training, and 3) socio-professional networks.

I argue that analysis of reflexive practice reveals how the diverse range of practitioners within Indian animation conceive their emergent culture of production, through engaging in identity work, negotiation of symbolic value, and construction of spaces for collective action and communication. My critique encompasses three parts. Part One examines the organizational context of production, and the variation in reflexive practices between large and small studios or independent artists. Differences in how these individuals and groups articulate identities illustrate how their practice is oriented towards social and economic structures. Part Two looks at the educational infrastructure of animation, and the relationships between learning specialized trade skills, and formation of professional identities that might shape production culture. Part Three considers the creation and management of formal community structures – professional organizations and trade information networks, spaces for negotiation of shared knowledge, further defining the boundaries of Indian animation community.

Instead of mapping the hypothetical relationships between participants' identity work and social structure onto established theoretical models, organizing chapters on the basis of theoretical preconceptions imposed from outside the culture of production, my project instead focuses on conceptual categories related to community structure that emerge from interaction with symbol creators. Although the organization of the analysis is not devised to correspond to that suggested by participants in the research, it is similar to it, comprising analysis of large and small studios, distribution channels, design and

commercial education, support organizations, and the trade press (Kumaresh, Interview 19).[22] The organization of analysis, like the interpretation of discourse presented here, is my own.

Part One:

   Part One, 'The Situation of Cultural Production' sets up the range and scope of animation production in India, while offering two contrasting narratives on the orientation of that practice: towards global growth or local cultural relevance. Chapter One examines how the legacy of animation outsourcing continues to be reflected in practitioner testimony, especially within the large studios and distribution networks that have emerged from it. Here participants' efforts to reclaim creative and economic agency embrace the structures and processes of established global industry. The chapter begins with an analysis of underlying discursive conflicts over outsourcing: lingering tensions between new and established participants, anxieties over the loss of creative control, and criticism of attempts to develop local content. It is revealing that even as original production has increased, industrial logics of outsourcing have persisted. Participant accounts stress a constant linear process of development, gaining creative and technical capabilities through projects with increasing returns on investment. To compete on an uneven playing field, they describe the importance of strategic collaboration founded on trust, management expertise, and emerging brand identity. While the de-emphasis of local origin superficially suggests a one-way flow of culture, I argue that these accounts are more conceptually complex, suggesting instead the negotiation of narrow areas of control, as global production structures adapt to local needs.

   Chapter Two also examines the way that practitioners interpret and represent their practice in relation to industrial discourse, in this case contrasting accounts that emerge from practice within smaller studios. Whereas in the large outsourcing and coproduction studios, the concept of emergence of Indian animation tends to refer to its status within global markets, within the testimony of smaller and independent producers this refers instead to the capacity of Indian animation to develop its own distinctive cultural identity targeted to the needs of local audiences. Such accounts strongly emphasize the development of a continuous cycle of local production over global expansion,

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[22] Categories in the data emerge from practitioner testimony, but are based on my comparative analysis. Still, practitioners occasionally reflected on what those interpretive categories should be, even to the point of recommending chapter breakdowns that would 'fit' my emerging data.

encapsulated in the concept of the complete "ecosystem" (Kumaresh, Interview 19). The analysis in this chapter then serves to present a case study of reflexive practice as a kind of critical theorization, in which I argue subjective positions are mobilized into identities and social actions. Taken together these accounts suggest collective attempts to theorize an alternative discourse of animation practice towards self-sustaining cycle of production and consumption, rooted in Indian or even explicitly personal understandings. This necessitates striking a balance between commercial and personal work, developing notions of animation literacy, theorizing continuities of cultural practice, and collaborative practice.

These chapters offer a useful survey of concerns and anxieties central to understanding the reflexive positions of animation practitioners – tensions between creativity and commerce, global and local, small and large organizations, short-term and long-term. The way participants respond to these conflicts reveals the stakes involved in community and industrial transformation. The remaining four chapters examine distinct aspects of the industrial and organizational construction of identity, assessing how practitioner reflexivity and identity work interact within institutions dedicated to teaching professional skills and social norms, as well as spaces of engagement between practitioners, organizations that formalize and leverage collective identities, assemble and circulate shared knowledge.

Part Two:

Part Two, 'Animation Education' expands upon earlier narratives of community and industry development to investigate the processes of socialization and identification within one of the most contested spaces of Indian animation, training. Analysis here addresses not only the methods by which knowledge and skills are conveyed – from traditional apprenticeship to online tutorials – but how teachers, students and other participants interpret and make meaning of these processes, and negotiate from substantially different economic and social positions. I argue that it is through this negotiation that much identity work and substantial learning about social norms and practices in Indian animation takes place. This analysis is divided into two case-studies, the first examining government design institutes: The National Institutes of Design (NID) and Industrial Design Centre (IDC) and the second examining commercial animation training institutes.

Animation practitioners call for instruction that transfers both technical skills and fundamentals of animation practice: storytelling and design. However schools are also crucial spaces for understanding identity formation through social learning, with

consequences for the creation of both social and professional networks in later practice. By rooting instruction in discourses of purposeful design and traditional narratives, the NID and IDC produce graduates, who identify not as animators but as designers, committed to original animation practice across a range of media. This does however suggest conflict with employers seeking primarily specialist staff. Chapter Three considers the processes of identity formation that take place within the design institutes, examining the symbolic values expressed in the testimony of faculty, students and graduates: not only 'rooted' design, cultural continuity, and creative control, but also discourses of interdisciplinarity and entrepreneurship, regional and gender identity. I argue that these reflect efforts to respond to the challenges of the current workplace, deemphasizing engagement with existing structures in favour of professional communities of their own devising.

Chapter Four presents the contrasting case of the commercial training institutes: competing brands, operated by hundreds of franchises in cities and towns across the country that offer a range of different levels of training up to university degree courses. Participant accounts describe a semi-autonomous training sector under tension between the demands of studio employers and fee-paying students seeking who seek access to it. The chapter begins with analysis of the critical practitioner discourses that surround commercial training. These contest the importance of creative and technical skills, engagement between institutes and industry, as well as questions of return on investment. However, these concerns differ greatly from those of students, whose testimony instead stresses professional access, engagement, and a path from technical employment to creative agency. Comparing conceptual categories across accounts, I argue that the way decision makers within the institutes respond to these conflicts further reflects growing variation in professional identity formations. Reframing challenges to student aspirations as opportunities for innovation, they stress a diversity of employment outcomes and individual choice, transferring ultimate responsibility for learning to the student. This negotiation of identity is not limited to students, but also animation instructors. Moreover, the institutional changes in training correspond closely to the terms of debate voiced in participants' reflexive practice.

Part Three:

In Part Three, 'Social Networking and Collective Action,' I turn from reflexive practice and identity work to formal organizational structures that manage identity and shared knowledge. Having identified differences between reflexive practices occurring in different kinds of studios, and analysed the ways that participants conceive identity

formation in education, here I question how once established, these identities are not static and consistent, but remain active and contested. Chapters Five and Six examine industrial theorization that takes place as negotiation between established institutional structures, giving rise to professional organizations and trade information networks.

Chapter Five scrutinizes the range of organizations that claim to represent Indian animation as a community or industrial sector, including both grassroots professional associations and pan-industrial bodies, both of which provide crucial links between reflexive practice and social structure. I argue that while all cultural production impacts on social order, some reflexive practices are specifically concerned with the creation of dedicated structures for engagement between practitioners. These not only serve communal needs, but 'catalyse' ever more engagement and negotiation. This chapter begins with analysis of how informal spaces for reflexive exchange have evolved into more formal structures that capitalize on 'belonging' and identity alignment. These efforts stem from perceived isolation, accentuated by geographic distance between practitioners and production clusters, as well as assertions of the potential economic and social value of shared knowledge. Comparative analysis of accounts reveals emphasis on the value of access to debate – especially for new members and sustained collaboration over short-term interaction, requiring participants to balance engagement against competitive concerns. As these organizations become more formal the demands upon them also change, producing debate on how the assembled 'fraternity' should regulate itself and engage with the public. Here in particular, professional organizations become the means to implement reflexive narratives: building public awareness and animation literacy in the local 'ecosystem,' or approaching government to regulate training, efforts that require the emergence of a single shared 'voice.'

Continuing analysis of community knowledge resources, Chapter Six analyses the Indian animation trade press sector. This comprises both traditional ink-on-paper periodicals and emergent digital platforms that report on animation practice. The reflexivity of what I term 'trade information networks' encapsulates several different conceptual attributes that emerge across this research. Like the professional associations, they collect and manage repertoires of shared knowledge while also providing platforms for experienced practitioners to debate positions and engage in self-critique. However, as in education, these also reveal the increasing flexibility, even fluidity of practitioner identities upon which these structures are founded. Trade practitioner accounts describe efforts to fill in gaps in information relevant to community needs, aiding student practice, professional collaboration and awareness of industry events. As "ecosystem catalysts,"

the trades act as a source of cultural coherence in the community. However, this conceals areas of tension and outright contradiction. While the trade networks make knowledge available, both the quality and utility of that information is subject to critique, as is the audience they reach. Comparing categories across accounts – particularly emphasis on learning, multiplicity of communities, and rejection of specific identities – I argue that the significance of the trade information networks is not in fixing collective identity, but in revealing how identities are not reducible to any one activity or role. Writing about animation in particular seems to be inseparable from design, learning, international collaboration, local advocacy, and organizational development. These multifaceted identities place press participants in the centre of the chaotic and emergent social and economic structures of animation industry and production culture.

In the concluding chapter, 'Reflexive Constructions of Creativity and Commerce,' I summarize the major themes of this research in order to reconsider the empirical and theoretical relationships between representation and production culture. Building upon the discourse, textual and economic analysis of practitioner representation in the preceding chapters, my analysis returns to the major questions asked here concerning the constructive role that practitioner reflexivity plays in the interpretation and articulation of identity, that is, identity work, and the negotiation of social and economic order. Although the theoretical intervention here is substantive, and focused on specific experiences and cultural conditions, I consider the wider implications of this analysis for researching and understanding cultures of production, the possibilities of reinterpreting practitioner theorization, collective identity and knowledge management for scholarship across communities and industrial contexts.

Part One: The Situation of Cultural Production

In this thesis I examine relationships between the industrial reflexivity of Indian animators, their culture of production, and the material conditions of their practice. Researchers across many disciplines have contributed insights into the interaction of social and economic forces at various levels of the cultural industries, from the rise of a new international division of cultural labour (Miller, et al. 2001) to the increasing localization of multinational brands (Lustyik, 2010). However, there has until recently been little attention paid to how such developments are directly reflected in practitioner experience, and specifically the stories that symbol creators tell amongst themselves as they make sense of their conditions. As Caldwell argues, media studies has thrived by embracing narrative theory, but this mode of analysis can and should also be applied to production culture (2008: 37). Focusing on practitioners in this way privileges both subjectivity and engagement, as Govil aptly puts, restoring to industry its proper place as a "form of doing" (2013: 173). These activities and understandings do not merely occur in an industrial context. They are the substance out of which industry is constituted and managed. Looking specifically at Indian animation, I unpack this representation without also marginalizing the systemic application of power that both structures it and is inflected by it.

In Part One I investigate how practitioners represent the circumstances that inform their work, asking what it means to describe Indian animation as both trade and creative practice. I foreground how tensions between artistic and commercial imperative are embodied across creative labour and critical practice. My key observation is that animation professionals seem to locate their activities within a predominately global or local frame of reference, and that this distinction has significant consequences for practices and institutions. In Chapter One I analyse discourses of global engagement, practitioner narratives that draw upon the Indian experience of animation outsourcing and subsequent efforts to recoup creative agency and economic power by embracing the methods of international partners. In Chapter Two I examine a second set of narratives that are engaged with the first, but in which participants instead turn inwards to develop a self-sustaining cycle of production that prioritizes explicitly local and even personal concerns. These contrasts are often used to suggest an antagonistic relationship between large globally-integrated corporations and smaller domestic animation producers. Much of the industry, press, and academic talk I cite in this research is focused on this apparent conflict. Industrial Design Centre (IDC) Associate Professor Nina Sabnani uses this analogy:

> It is said that animation in India is a sleeping giant and once it awakens, will take the world by storm. Maybe this will happen. Or perhaps there are two giants: one has woken up, while the other still is fast asleep. The one that has woken is the sweatshop industry, providing production facilities to film companies from abroad, while also providing job and training opportunities to many in India. It has eyes peeled and fixed longingly outside for partnerships, and is happy to create some original work now and then, provided there is time and money. The second giant has its eyes tightly shut, and is scared to open them. (2005: 100)

Sabnani's second giant is a nascent domestic industry:

> It can finance, distribute, and showcase quality animation and still go singing to the bank. It can create jobs for students who emerge from animation institutes aspiring to create a revolution, and it probably can provide work for many production houses throughout the country. (101)

From this description it is clear that these giants are not only different kinds of animation practice, but also ways of representing that practice, two potential industries to which participants ascribe distinct characteristics. The outsourcing industry is associated with job growth and economic opportunity, but plagued by accusations of outside exploitation. The somewhat utopian alternative carries strong associations of cultural relevance and innovation, but suffers from a lack of institutional support.

An opposition between the global and local is not itself unusual. Superficially it maps closely onto Bourdieu's basic conflict between commerce and art, large and small-scale production, the mass market and the niche (1993: 82). However, we see animators lay claim to a measure of creative or professional authority in even the most heteronomous globalized production. In contrast, autonomous production addressing even a fraction of the billion-strong potential Indian audience may not be niche. What this then describes is also an opposition between the cultural legitimacy of industrial and neo-artisanal practice, although there is considerable overlap between even these positions. Instead of engaging in a simple two-sided debate, practitioners articulate a more complex understanding of their field than commonly supposed, balancing symbolic and economic capital in inventive ways. I suggest the means by which symbol creators critically navigate strategic narratives not only shape their culture of production but also implicate them in the evolving material situation of their practice as well.

Chapter One: Globally Oriented Discourses – From Outsourcing to Transcreation

"[A]nimation has to be global. The product that you create has to be global." A.K. Madhavan, CEO Crest Animation Studios (Interview 2)

Introduction

In 2000 the Mumbai-based commercial graphics firm Crest Communications acquired the struggling Hollywood studio Rich Animation. Bolstered by new investment, in 2005 the combined companies signed a three picture distribution deal with Lions Gate Entertainment, to begin with the 3D feature *Alpha and Omega* (Bell and Gluck, 2010). Purchasing an established Western studio and becoming a truly multinational operation, Crest Animation, was an audacious move for an Indian studio that had only recently entered the market for outsourcing contracts. Likewise, in 2001 the pioneering El Segundo California-based animation and visual effects studio Rhythm & Hues opened an office in Mumbai and soon after a second in Hyderabad. These operated not as outsourcing hubs, but fully-integrated parts of an in-house pipeline that briefly spanned five countries. These and similar moves by competing firms signalled newfound confidence in the creative and technical capabilities of a vibrant production sector, suddenly poised to crack a lucrative market, not the long sought after domestic audience, but Indian-made content for a "Global Hollywood" audience (Miller, et al. 2001). Although in 2013 both Crest and Rhythm & Hues would face bankruptcy, what happened up to this point has been not only a transformation of animation in India, but the subject of ongoing reflection about Indian practitioners' place in a globalized production environment.

In this chapter I argue that even as Indian animators seek greater control over their own cultural production, the industrial logics of outsourcing linger to favour the articulation of globally oriented narratives. These emphasize the integration of domestic practices into international structures that tend to perpetuate a separation of creative and technical practice. Earlier outsourced work, while associated with rapid sectorial growth, has not led to the autonomous success that many practitioners envisioned. Yet rather than spur a rejection of global engagement, this has instead precipitated new variations on the same narratives used to justify even closer integration; replacing simple outsourcing with coproduction, the naturalization of Western firms, and the localization of imported brands. Through enacting such pairings of discourse and practice, producers represent the achievement of even relatively narrow areas of local creative and economic control as

increasingly contingent on long-term strategic negotiation with global partners, and a corresponding assimilation of their industrial methods.

The 'Future of Communication'

To give a sense of the scale of international engagement and its relevance to practitioner reflexivity, in 2005 approximately 90 percent of revenue for Indian animation companies came from "global services," that is, from outsourcing (*Economic Times*, 2009). Indian animation studios like Crest Animation, DQ Entertainment, Toonz Animation, and Pentamedia Graphics were jostling for global film and television contracts, and it seemed like there would be more than enough to go around. According to the National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM), total revenues of the Indian animation industry in 2008 were $495 million, still driven by outsourced production (Ernst and Young, 2010). Despite the onset of a global recession, the 2010 Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), KPMG Report, released March 2011, projected an 18.5 percent cumulative annual growth rate (CAGR) and a combined market for animation and visual effects of $1.5 billion by 2015.[1] If these numbers alone suggest a thriving sector, they are invariably accompanied by testimony that attests to an equally active community discourse around production. The projections provided in the FICCI report are immediately and conspicuously followed by enthusiastic remarks from Crest Animation CEO A.K. Madhavan:

> Animation is the future of communication! In an ever evolving and burgeoning market space transcending geographic and demographic limits, IPs [Intellectual Properties] are imperative to success. The matured markets have proven that Creation, Development and Distribution of original brands are the way forward for sustainability and profitability of business. (KPMG, 2011, 100)

This fragment of practitioner talk, with its industry jargon and motivational tone is just one example of a whole range of reflexive practices; occasions when practitioners theorize about what they do and create trade narratives to justify and promote their interpretations. Madhavan not only describes the economic impact of the growth of animation practice in India, he attends to its meaning. In this respect, such testimony is far more revealing about the industrial practices emerging from the service-based economy

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[1] The representational value of numbers alone is strongly contested, largely for concealing tensions between creativity and commerce that are also central to my analysis. As Gitanjali Rao explains, "It's all numbers; it's all figures; it's all animation as a trade… which has very little to do with filmmaking or animation" (Interview 3).

than any predicted revenues. By describing a "way forward" for animation production, he enters a debate over the merits of original content against continued outsourcing. Doing so, he invokes several features of what I identify as a narrative of global engagement: a concern for sustained growth, a tendency to rationalize creativity as a tangible economic asset, and an assertion that access to global markets is ultimately the key to long-sought-after creative and professional autonomy. Superficially talk of brands presents the impression that this success might come in the form of a local market for domestic animation. Although a long-term objective, this is by no means certain. Instead Madhavan and others envision circumstances where the distinction between local and international production is increasingly difficult to discern, yet Indian producers have the flexibility to manage their own resources across "geographic limits." This suggests an ongoing shift in industrial reflexivity, and how it is expressed is integral to understanding the emergent culture of production.

Approach

This chapter presents my analysis of practitioner testimony linking reflexivity with creative agency and economic power, and here specifically a structuring narrative of global engagement. While largely drawn from accounts collected during field research in the autumn of 2011, much of this focuses on practitioner understandings of a chain of events beginning many years earlier: the origins of international investment in the early 1990s, the subsequent technology-driven growth of the outsourcing sector, and three more recent trends of the mid-to-late 2000s: the first an attempt to harness outsourcing success to a new domestic feature market, the second a contrasting effort to consolidate alliances overseas, and the third the localization of multinational television networks in the Indian market. These developments have led to markedly different results, which as I detail below, have been understood by practitioners in different ways – from frustrations at a 'feature bubble,' to precarious confidence in global professionalism, and for a few, optimism in the emergence of original brands.

The core of this chapter is drawn from conversations with 12 key participants: studio and department heads, creative and technical directors, animators and designers; representing six large animation firms, from diversified media conglomerates like the Walt Disney Company and Turner International India, to globally-engaged studios like

DreamWorks, Rhythm & Hues, and Crest Animation (table 1.1). Since the disclosures in these accounts are inevitably subjective or even contradictory, I subject them to comparison with other registers of analysis: including participant observation, industrial texts from studios, professional organizations, and the trade press.[2] Nonetheless, in recreating a narrative of global engagement across practitioner accounts, I present the critical assertions individuals make about their work largely intact (Ortner, 2013: 27). Ultimately, I seek to interpret these as theoretical texts in their own right, directly comparable to other sources of cultural testimony, rich in distinctive modes of expression and ways of thinking about the world.

Table 1.1:   ***Large and Globally Engaged Producers***

Crest Animation Studios
-   A. K. Madhavan – CEO (1999-2013)
-   Kedar Khot – Art Director (2001-2013)
-   Dibyalochan Chaudhury – Department Head, Character Effects (2003-2013)
-   Dilip Rathod - Project Head (1999-2013)
-   Pramita Mukherjee – Senior Rigging Artist (2007-2013)
-   Sushant Acharekar - Lighting Technical Director (2006-2013)

Disney India
-   Arnab Chaudhuri – Director Content and Creative (2010-2013)[3]

DreamWorks Animation
-   Shelley Page - Head of International Outreach

Green Gold Animation
-   Rajiv Chilaka - Founder and Managing Director

Ram Mohan Biographics/RM-USL/UTV Toons
-   Ram Mohan - Founder, (1972-2001)

Rhythm & Hues
-   Seshaprasad A. R. – Head of Digital Production (2003-2013)
-   Amit Aidasani Manager: Education, Camera Tracking, Fx & Technology (2004-2013)
-   Jason Scott - Lead Lighting Technical Director

Turner Broadcasting
-   Rajat Dasgupta – Associate Creative Director (2008-2013)

I begin by engaging with the origins of global outsourcing in context of local practice; from the conditions in Hollywood production that make contracting out animation desirable to those that have made it possible in India. I detail how longstanding industrial discourses have been reconstituted in Indian practitioner accounts. It is clear industry veterans are deeply conflicted about outsourcing. They extol its benefits; bringing an end to stagnant growth and creative isolation. Yet in the same instance, they implicate it in a growing rift between technical infrastructure and creative development;

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[2] These comprise published interviews in *Animation Xpress* (Gurnani, 2005b; 2007; 2009), interviews with practitioners did I not interview like Rajiv Chilaka (ABAI KAVGC, 2013e), as well as my own field notes from industry presentations and informal conversations at events like the NID's Chitrakatha (Field notes, 10/22/2011).

[3] While Chaudhuri was working at Disney India, he spoke to me in his capacity as director of the UTV-produced, Disney-released feature *Arjun: Warrior Prince* (2012).

short term profit and long-term goals. Doing so, they introduce a persistent discourse of creative and professional legitimacy. Moving beyond outsourcing, I examine how practitioners at some firms, rather than abandoning international efforts, increasingly seek means to recoup creative and professional autonomy through practices that blur the lines between global and local industry.

Across two cases, Crest Animation and Rhythm & Hues, I reveal how Indian managers have learned to embrace the 'sensibilities' of their international partners, simultaneously emphasizing institutional knowledge while diminishing local origin to buttress new conceptions of collective creativity and professional expertise. Finally, I scrutinise how these narratives have shaped the new relationships Indian practitioners and firms have established with major multinational distribution conglomerates, the powerful brands that have not only emerged as the principle customers for globalized labour, but now increasingly also dictate local practice. I conclude by considering what the continued evolution of a discourse of global engagement reveals about the parallel development of Indian animation's economy and culture of production.

1.   *Initiating Global Engagement*

A casual observer might be forgiven for assuming that the history of Indian animation begins not with the 1890s magic lantern shows of the Patwardhan family (Jones, 2012), the 1915 stop-motion shorts of Dhundiraj Govind Phalke (Bendazzi, 1994: 404), or even the 1956 founding of the government Cartoon Films Unit, but in the early 1990s with the first major service contracts for Hollywood studios. Some prominent accounts suggest that this is true; asserting that the sector is as young as "eight years old" (Madhavan, Interview 2). What is certain is that the explosive growth of outsourcing has led to a reinvention of Indian animation, its structure, as well as the strategic narratives of its practitioners. However, at least the last of these cannot be said to be entirely new. Although as a global phenomenon outsourcing can be separated from labour disputes at its origin, it cannot be easily divorced from those the practice has itself elicited as it has moved from one place to another. Familiar conflicts set in place discourses that have lingered in practitioner narratives ever since.

Rethinking Outsourcing

Animation outsourcing refers to the strategy of contracting expensive and time-consuming tasks beyond the boundaries of a firm, most often to offshore suppliers. Pioneered by Hollywood studios in the 1960s in Japan, then South Korea and Taiwan, it is part of a much larger trend termed by globalization scholars as a 'new international

division of labour' whereby large numbers of people can work on a project without sharing a location or social context (Miller, et al. 2001). Animation outsourcing follows in a tradition of other kinds of runaway production, subcontracting labour-intensive production to nations where firms can provide competitive pricing while maintaining quality.

The traditional procedure was designed with all projects originating in-house (Lent, 2000: 4). Scripts and storyboards were created by animation workers in Southern California. Following this, all materials would be sent to an Asian subcontractor for completion of production tasks; inking, in-betweening, colouring, and filming. Lastly, completed materials would be hand-delivered back to the client for approval and post-production. Much has changed since Hollywood's first forays into outsourcing. Many new countries have entered the competition: Australia, North Korea, The Philippines, and India, and recently China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. Procedures have also changed. Instead of contracting the purportedly low-skill tasks of hand-drawn animation, today's international labour involves complex computer-based workflows for 3D animation and effects, instant collaboration and deliveries across dedicated data-lines (Scott, Interview 1). However the bottom-line logic has remained increased volume at reduced cost. As a result, outsourcing can never be separated from a history of labour relations.

Animation is characterized by an uncommonly labour-intensive production process (Furniss 1998: 17-19; Lent 1998a: 241; Bendazzi 1994: xxii). The innovation devised to address this is division of labour, sharing the many tasks required to produce animation across specialized professions. This has not changed with the rise of computer-based 3D modelling, texturing, lighting, rigging, and animation. Each of these is a necessary and time-consuming craft, requiring both creativity and technical expertise. Yet, introducing his overview of Asian outsourcing, John Lent suggests that, "animators have been some of the most exploited creators in the arts and media for many years" (Sussman & Lent 1998: 9). In Hollywood this has been based in their problematic status 'below the line,' an artificial boundary delimiting contributors who are to be individually rewarded for their creativity from those whose contribution is regarded as primarily technical, who are rewarded collectively. It is this distinction that has been most exacerbated by the conditions of outsourcing.

Hollywood has looked to Asia to find inexpensive labour without demands for credit or benefits, but purely as work for hire. This has almost always been justified in the same ways: outsourcing creates relatively high-status jobs that otherwise would not exist.

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This logic has been adopted as much by Asian employers as their Western clients. In an oft-quoted interview from the early days of Indian outsourcing, studio founder Ram Mohan explains, "I don't see it as such [exploitation]. From an Indian perspective, if I do animation for Hollywood, it is an opportunity for young people to find a career" (Lent, 1998b). Nonetheless, as Matt Stahl points out, these new animation workers are exploited in that they are excluded from much of the creative process, and stripped of incentive to interpret their contributions as significant to their identities as creative professionals (2009: 64). This interpretation is central to the opposition of many participants in this research:

> Everybody is running, and they are not doing original ideas. They are just guided by the agencies or TV so they're all doing the sweatshop jobs. (Mehul Mahicha, Interview 6b)

> The Indian animation industry is a sweatshop industry because there is nothing Indian about it – nor is it addressing Indians in any significant way. (Sabnani, 2005: 100)[4]

The term sweatshop generally connotes socially unacceptable working conditions, but in this context is also associated with a lack of meaning in that work. These accounts highlight a sense of alienation that practitioners feel across different registers of experience; from forfeiting control over the quality and pace of labour, to the loss of a cultural frame of reference, and the "masking" of ethnic and linguistic identity (Govil, 2005: 109). However most critical here is the asserted imbalance of cultural and economic power, and through the separation of creative and technical labour, a failure to negotiate any sense of creative autonomy or professional agency.

The bargain made by Indian animation workers has been superficially different from that of their Hollywood contemporaries. Instead of trading authorship for collective benefits in an established market, they receive ostensible economic security in a new field with potential for growth. This is the wager made by Sabnani's first 'giant' in the 'burgeoning market space' described by Madhavan in the FICCI-KPMG report. It is common among narratives of animation outsourcing to suggest that contract work for foreign studios aids domestic development; that rather than constraining Indian firms to a junior role, outsourcing actually catalyses home-grown production (Tschang and Goldstein, 2004: 2; Lent, 2000: 5). Unlike outsourcing destinations like China or the

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[4] As I assert in Chapter Three, this appears especially true of those involved in design education.

Philippines, India has a ready model for this in its ascendant Information Technology (IT) sector, where growth is ostensibly driven by the increasing "knowledge capabilities" of key firms (Tschang, 2011: 5). That the mechanism to apply this to animation is at best uncertain has not weakened the appeal of what NASSCOM has termed the outsourcing "ladder" local producers are rapidly climbing to international recognition and success (Chatterjee, 2003). Turning now to the subjective practitioner accounts that are the main focus of my analysis, I demonstrate how the separation of technical and creative capabilities has led to growing ambivalence about this ladder, occasioning the evolution of new narratives for globally-engaged development.

From Isolation to Overreach

The stories that Indian practitioners tell about outsourcing experiences serve a variety of purposes, all somehow attending to the balance of creative and technical labour. The above accounts from Mahicha, Sabnani, and colleagues outside the service sector read largely as justifications against "paths not taken" in a sweatshop industry, leading to a narrative of self-sufficiency. Other accounts have more of the quality of what Caldwell terms "genesis myths," validating the key strategic decisions that have precipitated widespread global engagement (2008: 47). Describing the benefits brought by outsourcing, these stories handle themes of sectorial growth, infrastructure investment, and international exposure with a tone of irrevocability, emphasizing the necessity of outside capital and expertise for both creative and technical development. However such positive accounts draw only narrow distinctions from cautionary tales that follow swiftly in their wake.

India was a relative late arrival to animation outsourcing. For most of its history, the central government had favoured protectionist economic policy, only disrupted by recession and rising deficit spending in 1990. Under pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government response was widespread liberalization (Hesmondhalgh, 2013: 148). This had a dramatic effect on India's unregulated cultural industries, culminating in 1998 with the granting of official industrial status to domestic film production (Ganti, 2012: 41). Prior to these changes, the tiny Indian animation sector emerged slowly, developing its own local practices, based upon government communication, small-scale advertising, and credit sequences for Bollywood films. As Mohan told me:

> [A]t that time, we didn't even think of animation as an industry. It was more an art form that some people who liked it came in and wanted to be a part of it, but we did not think of it as something that could grow into an industry; not a

template created by Disney or Warner Brothers. It was not going to develop that way. (Interview 31)

Here is an expression of the value of informality to creative autonomy, albeit paired with a lack of infrastructure. Although Mohan's testimony must be understood as only one perspective on a long and complex history, he and Films Division colleague Bhimsain Khurana are perhaps the only ones whose experience spans practice from the advent of commercial studios to the present day. His account is also notable because it suggests a brief if largely unsuccessful effort from animators to approach outsourcing on their own terms (table 1.2).

Table 1.2: **Ram Mohan**
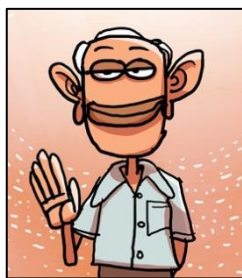
Courtesy of TASI, 2014

Ram Mohan is an animator and educator considered to be the father of Indian animation (Boatwala, 2014a). Trained under Disney animator Clair Weeks in 1956, he contributed to many of the publicity shorts created by the Cartoon Unit of the new government Films Division. After leaving the unit in 1968, he went on to found one of India's first commercial animation studios, Ram Mohan Biographics. Having created sequences for feature directors like BR Chopra and Satyajit Ray, he co-directed India's first animated feature *Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama* (Sako & Mohan, 1992), and from 1997, in collaboration with UTV, became an early adopter of outsourcing. RM-USL contracted with US producer Saban to produce episodes of the *Adventures of Oliver Twist* (1997), and with Disney for *101 Dalmatians: The Series* (1997). In 2002 he joined Graphiti Multimedia as Chairman and Dean of the Graphiti School of Animation. Mohan is also President Emeritus of the Animation Society of India (TASI). In January 2014 Mohan was awarded the Padma Shri, India's fourth highest civilian honour, for services to film animation.

I met Mohan at his studio and school in Mahim West, Mumbai in November, 2011.

Mohan's intervention in the outsourcing debate emphasizes the need for both continuity and progressive improvement. In an earlier interview with Mohini Kotasthane he recalls:

> I thought it was a good idea because I found at the end of twenty-five years I had reached some kind of dead-end. There was no scope of growing any further because we didn't have the infrastructure to grow any larger. (2005: 4)

This is a strong statement of personal authority, implicitly balancing creative and economic development with institutional constraint. Although early commercial animators may have enjoyed aesthetic and professional freedom, this was economically precarious. Later speakers have regarded change as unavoidable, as Vaibhav Studios' Vaibhav Kumaresh suggests, "The earlier world was maybe interesting work but the money was also quite tough to make" (Interview 19). The key idea here remains infrastructure, that growth-oriented ventures would offer greater security, augmenting but not replacing informal structures of the cottage industry with closer links to outside

capital and creative expertise. Accordingly, Mohan asserts that "exposure" to clients using new animation tools was a boon to learning; resolving decades of "isolation" that had been imposed upon them over years of economic neglect (Interview 31).

What both accounts describe is Indian animators slowly moving in from the periphery of global animation industry, for the first time having the opportunity to observe practices and gain confidence across an established global pipeline, not only production capabilities but tasks fundamental to learning the "shared repertoires" of global production (Wenger, 2000: 229). Outsourcing has remained useful so long as it has aided creative and social development. However, while Mohan emphasizes his own contribution to initiating this process, he also has strong reason to downplay his influence. The subsequent association of rapid infrastructure growth with short-term profit and technical rather than creative labour means that those identifying with the earlier 'art form' view these events with regret:

> [O]nce we had a team of trained people we should have taken up original content, doing our own shows and putting them on the world market or at least the Indian market, but that was not something that was happening. Because once you get into this group of getting more business/work from abroad in dollars that becomes the temptation. (Mohan qtd. in Kotasthane, 2005: 5)

> [W]hen Ram Mohan as a company went big; the financial aspects obviously mean that you cannot spend that much time and resources doing your own stuff. So it's a huge company, you've got to get in work to make sure that people get paid. (Sumant Rao, Interview 39)

These accounts establish a clear dichotomy between creative and economic motivations. To begin with this manifests as a tension between animation practitioners themselves. However, when exacerbated by a rapid rise in outside investment, it comes to represent a vestigial animation production sector increasingly subsumed by the neighbouring Indian IT outsourcing industry. Not coincidentally, it is the bursting of the dot-com bubble in 2000 that practitioners like Animagic's Sumant Rao associate with the most rapid growth of animation outsourcing:

> [T]here were lots of people with buildings with central air-conditioning and lots of computers and nothing to do with those assets. So they are saying all we need is softwares [sic] and we hire people to work on the softwares and we can make animation films… So you suddenly had companies with 200, 300, 600 employees who were supposed to do animation. (Interview 39)

There is a tendency where critique emerges in practitioner narratives for the perspective to switch from first to the third person. This is a distancing technique, appraising the mistakes of others in prioritizing this new technical infrastructure over creativity, even to the point of having the physical resources to solicit outsourcing contracts, but no trained animators to execute the work (Interview 31). Implicit is the assertion that the long-term

desire to move up the 'value chain' from outsourcing to domestic production has been appropriated by the short term growth demands of the IT industry, rather than the long-term interests of animation practitioners.

Accounts of outsourcing practice highlight substantial barriers to crossing-over from contract to original animation, and that the initial revenues provided by contract work provide little incentive to venture them.[5] However, as competition for dwindling skilled animation labour increased, producers like Mohan observe that animators themselves have begun to view practice in different ways. Rather than an informal craft, this became both a viable career and an increasingly lucrative investment opportunity; from the perspective of animators, a business "formula" based around the acquisition of technical assets, rather than a creative process (Kumaresh, Interview 19):

> [I]t was a period when there was also a lot of enthusiasm for getting into this business, but more for the money rather than for the heart… outsourced work in itself could not sustain large studios for a long time unless they did it very cheap, and then, they were not able to pay good salaries, and that is when people started talking about IP. (Mohan, Interview 31)

This critique introduces a clear discourse of authenticity to narratives of global engagement. For Mohan growth is tied to sustainability, no different from prior decades of subsistence practice. In contrast, the very changes brought about by outsourcing have also made it precarious. As more studios enter the market, employers face shortages of trained animators to meet international project demands (KPMG, 2011). Talent poaching between studios contributes to ever-rising labour costs, placing an upper limit on revenues. In response, one-time service producers experience growing pressure to move up the outsourcing ladder. Yet, despite strong technical capabilities, the major challenge facing service studios attempting to transition to original production has been a lack of experience with precisely those creative facets of production that have not been outsourced: conceptual tasks of pre-production, story and character development. This resulted in the "feature bubble" (G. Rao, Interview 3).

The 'Feature Bubble'

Superficially the emergence of widely-heralded domestic theatrical films would seem to validate the ladder narrative of a simple progression from outsourcing to original

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[5] Export "technical service providers" are also entitled by statute to substantial tax relief (Kohli-Khandekar, 2010: 127).

production. However this is not what practitioner testimony suggests; recounting instead an embryonic audience flooded by the wrong content at the wrong time. Percept Picture's *Hanuman* (Samant and Ukey, 2005) was the first to market, and while the film was a success for its distributor, it is unclear how much was actually spent.[6] The film is credited with setting off a surge in feature production, and by the following year 85 films were in development (Prasad, 2009). The well-publicized disappointment of subsequent films, most notably Yash Raj and Disney's *Roadside Romeo* (Hansraj, 2008)*,* brought an abrupt and painful end to most feature development.[7] Investors wrote off their apparent losses and very few other features have been distributed.[8] Numerous veteran animators I spoke to attribute this to a failure to understand animation's creative process:

> It was a time when some moneyed guys would come to my studio and say,' my daughter has a dog. Can you make a feature film on her dog?' It became that easy, but people had money to make. They thought it's a very easy thing to do. (E. Suresh, Interview 23)

This is a critique in which practitioners draw a distinction between perceived outsiders and themselves over economic priorities and creative knowledge:

> It was like trying to jump into the race without having practiced at all and expecting to win. Most of us knew this would happen. All of us who had been around in animation for a little longer knew that this was not going to last. (G. Rao, Interview 3)

> What works, what doesn't work, they don't know it because they are trying to use paradigms from some other industry and apply it to animation. (S. Rao, Interview 39)

Animators have rationalized the setback of the feature bubble a number of ways, from the absence of popular stars present on screen, to an overreliance on public-domain mythological stories with little "compelling storytelling" (KPMG, 2013: 151). Yet, common across all of these critiques is the assertion of that technology has taken precedence over content, driven largely by investors from Bollywood and the IT sector who have mistaken animation as a predominantly technical process.

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[6] By some estimates Percept pictures made ₹115.8 million ($2.56 million) on an investment of only ₹30 million ($666,000) (ibos, 2008), while others assess this as $1.4 million on a total budget of $1.1 million (Kohli-Khandekar, 2010: 128).

[7] The film made money globally, ₹475 million ($8.2 million) on a budget of ₹110 million ($1.9 million) but was deemed a critical and commercial flop (*BoxOfficeMojo*, 2008).

[8] Few outliers include Eros Entertainment's *Toonpur Ka Superhero* (K. Khurana, 2010), UTV's *Arjun: Warrior Prince* (A. Chaudhuri, 2012) and Krayon's *Delhi Safari* (Advani, 2012), although none were hits.

What these critiques do not do is confront the logic of the outsourcing ladder itself, the underlying IT-derived strategy of scaling the value chain by upgrading capabilities, but rather the legitimate balance of what those capabilities are. Mohan asserts, "The main problem is that we don't have good story writers, people who... know the medium well enough to write for a feature" (Interview 31). Speaking to *Animation Xpress*, Turner International India Executive Director Krishna Desai concurs:

> I don't feel there is lack of talent, technology or skill in India at all, what we have learned over the several years is to put everything together in a proper streamlined manner. If there are processes set in place, things will become much easier. Personally I feel one thing in which we really lack is writing for animation. (qtd. in Iyer, 2014b)

In contrast to critiques on more aesthetic grounds, the emphasis here is on how creativity can be stimulated and rationalized in pursuit of a successful formula for domestic production. In this light the feature bubble may be better understood as a turning point in practitioner theorization towards more nuanced approaches to global engagement through the active management of creativity.

Given the infrastructure that is the legacy of outsourcing, there is disagreement as to how more marketable creative capabilities may be developed. One response to the feature bubble has been a shift towards low-cost television, addressed in the third section of this chapter. However, another approach has been to look beyond the Indian market altogether.[9] Recognizing that outsourcing has been founded upon the division of creative and technical practice, many have reasoned that service contracts fail to develop the necessary skills to scale the outsourcing ladder, much less compete in the undeveloped local market. Instead, firms have pursued a path to global engagement through acquisition and integration, gaining access to creative autonomy and professional agency by sharing it with established partners.

2.   *Coproduction and the Assimilation of Global Industry*

So far I have addressed accounts of how outsourcing has brought change and growth to Indian animation, but also a separation of technical and creative labour, at great cost to local autonomy. In the second section of this chapter, I examine how some practitioners have conceived means to recoup that authority, not through a rejection of

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[9] Still others have retreated from large-scale production altogether, preferring artisanal approaches that offer more creative control. These invoke a narrative of self-sufficiency, which I investigate in Chapter Two.

international engagement but the incorporation of Indian labour into global production networks, not as service providers but integrated parts of a larger enterprise. In contrast to the feature bubble, consolidating alliances with Western firms has allowed producers to literally buy into the global market, but largely on its own terms. I present here two testimonial cases: Crest Animation and Rhythm & Hues, that reveal how Indian professionals represent efforts to learn the "sensibilities" of their more established partners (Madhavan, Interview 2), while managing technical and creative resources more holistically, to the point of becoming "geographically agnostic" (Seshaprasad, Interview 15a). With access to global markets based on a combination of personal trust and institutional success, the result has been a tenuous balance that has allowed professionals at large Indian firms to claim a degree of collective autonomy and control.

Acquiring 'Creative Sensibilities'

Coproduction refers to the practice of firms working together, sharing resources and risk across institutional boundaries. Compared to outsourcing, such agreements ostensibly provide a more substantive creative role in production, transfer of expertise, government incentives, and most importantly, the possibility of a much higher return on investment abroad (KPMG, 2011).[10] Responding to the slow maturation of the domestic market, Indian practitioners have viewed coproduction as a path to creative and economic control, asserting that Asian studios and their western clients do not play on a level field (Yoon and Malecki, 2009: 257). For industry veterans this provides yet another reason the feature bubble represented such a severe miscalculation:

> The market doesn't exist for the consumption of the product's cost… So, you have to cut corners to make a really cheap film to see any money for the Indian industry... the kind of people you are targeting, whom you are expecting will go and watch your movie in a vernacular language, are people who are already exposed to the Pixar and the DreamWorks movies. (Seshaprasad, Interview 15a)

The result is that Indian-made films have not been able to compete, either in metropolitan areas where audiences are familiar with imported content or in rural communities where animation tends to be priced out of the family entertainment market altogether (A. Chaudhury Interview 22a; D. Chaudhuri, Interview 27; Page, Interview 42). By contrast, the reasoning of coproduction is that, rather than compete against established studios, the

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[10] Terms may be contingent on government treaties with producing nations. Leaders like Madhavan and Reliance Animation CEO Ashish S. K. have used trade associations to advocate for such "proactive intervention" in order to "stabiliz[e] the industry" (KPMG, 2013: 148).

resources gained from outsourcing may be reinvested higher up the value chain in collaboration with foreign producers who are themselves eager for capital investment and access to growing markets (Yoon and Malecki, 2009: 254). As with other trade narratives or 'genesis myths,' this is thought to lead to increased recognition and growth, and Crest CEO A.K. Madhavan has been a vocal proponent (table 1.3).

Table 1.3: **A.K. Madhavan – Crest Animation**

A.K. Madhavan was CEO of Crest Animation Studios from 1999 to 2013. Madhavan has sat on numerous industry committees including the NASSCOM Animation and Gaming Forum (NAGFO) and FICCI Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics (AVGC) Forum. I met Madhavan in London July 2011 and again at Crest's Ghatkopar West headquarters in November.

Founded in 1990 by Shyam Ramanna as a graphics and post-production firm, in 2000 Crest moved into long-form animation, first contracts like *Jakers* (Young, 2003) for Mike Young Productions and later coproductions like *The Little Engine That Could* (Bour, 2011) with Universal Animation. Crest also purchased Rich Animation for $5 million and negotiated the distribution deal with Lions Gate that resulted in *Alpha and Omega*. Despite this, hopes for long-term success were not realized. While a low budget meant that the film was a moderate success for Lions Gate, recouping distribution costs left little for Crest, which had invested half the budget, (a year's total revenues) in the film (Thomas, 2010).[11] The company had faced shortfalls before, having been rescued from near-default in 1999, and weathered multiple years of annual losses. By July 2013 some workers faced nine months without pay. 250 were asked to resign, leading to a tense standoff between management and a local workers party (Sadhwani, 2013). The company was ultimately delisted from the Bombay Stock Exchange on 9 July 2014 (*Animation Xpress*, 2014).

Like leaders at other large animation firms, Madhavan asserts that the future is not in technical work-for-hire but in access to higher-value creative work. For Crest this means developing the specific 'sensibilities' required to climb the value chain, to participate in all aspects of the global market for animation, and gradually leverage this to build a domestic animation industry from the current relatively undefined "space" (Interview 2). While Madhavan is clear in avoiding direct comparison between emerging Indian practice and established Hollywood product, he nonetheless makes the contentious assertion that long-term success is only possible through developing the ability to create stories and characters able to compete for established international audiences, moving from providing a service to owning a distinctive global brand that can more easily

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[11] The film achieved $50,507,267 on a production budget of less than $22 million (*Box Office Mojo*, 2011).

circulate across borders (Lash and Lury, 2007: 5). Meeting global standards remains a process of incremental growth, demonstrating the ability to "deliver good quality" to clients in each distribution channel, from television, to DVD, and finally theatrical animation. For this reason Madhavan prefers to reframe the outsourcing ladder as a "learning curve," beginning with service work, then as experience allows graduating to progressively higher levels, "co-owning some of the DVDs in a business revenue model," taking a share from the distribution of the product, and finally creating IPs from scratch, first for the international market and then for the matured Indian market (Interview 2).

What has allowed Crest to make this transition from outsourcing to co-ownership of IPs is an attribute he terms the "creative sensibilities" of the studio's staff, drawing upon their earlier experience producing graphics for Indian television. In this context creativity suggests far more than simply the ability to produce content, but rather a tangible institutional asset:

> [T]he facility had competence of a very unique combination of talent which understood the creative space and which understood technology. To put it short, they understood filmmaking, though it was a 30 second spot or a 60 second spot. They understood pre-production. They understood production. They understood post-production. (ibid)

Creative sensibilities offer Madhavan a means to distinguish Crest, as a former commercial production house, from service firms that emerged during the outsourcing boom. Rather than separate the technical and creative aspects of animation production, Madhavan addresses them side-by-side, asserting that this more holistic combination of skills placed Crest in a better position to develop its own properties in a global market for long-form animation. Doing so, he explicitly addresses creativity not as an end itself, but in a management context, as an essential resource requiring strategic investment. This testimony makes clear that leveraging such sensibilities for growth also involves a range of factors that might not ordinarily be associated with creativity at all. Instead, for Madhavan creative sensibilities are implicitly tied to the dynamic cultural attributes of institutional reputation and personal trust:

> *Jakers* put us on the map in terms of understanding those sensibilities... That gave confidence to a lot of independent producers in the Unites States that Crest can deliver on time budgets and quality which has been asked for. That is a great credibility that we hold in Hollywood. They respect us for that. (ibid)

By cultivating relationships in Hollywood, Crest side-stepped the hard-learned lessons of the feature bubble, recognizing that the firm could not expect to navigate the transition from commercial graphics to long-form animation alone. This is because creativity and confidence, understood as knowledge of the market, has not been developed in India, but

crucially may now be acquired abroad. However, the way that this has been achieved challenges the limits of what may be termed Indian animation:

> [W]e didn't have the skill sets in India to understand creative sensibilities for a global animated product. So we had an opportunity, a window, where we went and acquired a small studio in Burbank, in Los Angeles, called Rich Animation. (ibid)

Developing capabilities by acquiring companies in OECD countries has a long history in the Indian IT sector, including prominent examples like Infosys or Cognizant. From a political economic perspective, such strategic partnerships have a lot to offer animation firms as well: taking advantage of the transfer of institutional knowledge, technical expertise, and the larger profile of Western brands (Govil, 2005: 106). Retaining infrastructure in Hollywood allows Indian companies to compete for work at Western rates and in US currency, while still leveraging cost savings at home. In return, for an established Hollywood producer of traditional animation like Richard Rich, Crest offered not only inexpensive labour, but the technical expertise and institutional investment to survive in the post-*Toy Story* industrial climate. Indeed as Character Effects Department Head Dibyalochan Chaudhury suggests, by taking over a 2D company, "we were not getting any talent or technical know-how" but rather exposure to a "bigger network" (Interview 22a).

This too has a cultural dimension. Madhavan advocates a strategy for gaining both capabilities and influence from within the global structure that has driven animation outsourcing and now provides a forum for more sophisticated collaboration. What he describes is Indian animators reasserting a degree of control, albeit collectively and largely symbolically. This extends down through the studio hierarchy, as Chaudhury and Art Director Kedar Khot reveal:

> The moment we knew that now we are part of it – we are actually working side by side rather than just getting work done – it was really a morale boost, and slowly we feel equal… We used to feel that people from outside know everything and we don't know anything, but now we feel very confident and know we can also deliver… So now we feel we are on par with our partners also. (Interview 22a)

> [N]ow you have a feeling that you own a product. With *Alpha and Omega*, it was more like that… [Richard Rich] was the final call… but we also had a chance to give our inputs wherein we could enhance and we had this freedom where we

could voice our concerns and maybe do some validation from our point… (Khot, Interview 21) [12]

Although from a practical perspective differences in the production process are quite small, the "validation" that they describe does seems to be based in a degree of self-realization, suggesting that at least Crest's senior production team has felt less alienated from creative authorship. Nonetheless this collective agency is contingent on the logic that the ostensibly senior Indian partner adopts practices from the established global industry. Such an achievement appears at odds with a continued geographic separation of creative and technical practice, in which pre-production, design, and post-production still occurred in the US under the supervision of American directors. Replacing outsourcing with coproduction still engages the global market on a deeply uneven basis, with Hollywood creative sensibilities the standard by which the capabilities of Indian firms are to be measured by themselves and others.

Becoming 'Geographically Agnostic'

Other companies in the Indian production environment have adopted different strategies to enter global production workflows. Large firms like Crest and Toonz that have emerged from outsourcing into coproduction of original properties are today increasingly joined in India by fully-owned subsidiaries of nominally Western firms like Prana, Technicolor, and Rhythm & Hues. The early success of Rhythm & Hues and its flat management hierarchy allowed it to develop a unique global in-house production pipeline that has served as a model for other studios. The impact of this on practitioner identities is significant, as opportunities to participate in global processes and local management appear to offer increased sense of professional agency within the institutional culture of the firm (table 1.4).

Table 1.4:   Jason Scott, Seshaprasad A.R., and Amit Aidasani – Rhythm & Hues

Rhythm & Hues was founded in Los Angeles in 1987 by John Hughes and other former employees of Robert Abel & Associates. The studio won three Academy Awards for *Babe* (Noonan, 1995), *The Golden Compass* (Weitz, 2007), and *Life of Pi* (Lee, 2013) as well as four Scientific and Technical Achievement Awards.

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[12] Khot is now a Lighting Supervisor at Prime Focus in Mumbai. Chaudhury is COO at Giant Wheel Animation a London-based CGI studio with production facilities in Bhubaneshwar, Odisha.

Table 1.4 (cont.)

In 2001 Rhythm & Hues opened its first international studio in Mumbai, followed in 2007 by a second in Hyderabad, Kuala Lumpur in 2009, Vancouver in 2011, and finally in Kaohsiung Taiwan in March 2013; only weeks after the company had declared bankruptcy in the US and a majority of staff had been terminated. The company had struggled to balance increasingly narrow margins and the expenditure of expansion with government incentives and the cost savings of international labour.

The company, was purchased at auction by a subsidiary of Prana Studios, another US headquartered company with production facilities in Mumbai, for $1.2 million cash (but a total value of $30 million) backed by Indian investment (Verrier, 2013).[13]

Jason Scott has held numerous roles at Rhythm & Hues, joining as a Visual Effects Supervisor in 2007, later becoming a Lighting Technical Director, and Senior Educator at the Indian and Malaysia offices. At time of writing, he remains with the company in Vancouver. Seshaprasad A.R. managed operations as Head of Digital Production in India, and at the time of field research was also Vice President of ASIFA-India. Aidasani joined Rhythm & Hues in 2004 as a matchmoving artist and managed several different departments: Camera Tracking and Matchmoving, FX, and Education (Linked In, 2014). Seshaprasad is now a Production Executive at the DreamWorks Dedicated Unit (DDU) in Bangalore, while Aidasani is an organizer for ASIFA-India (*Linked In*, 2014).

I met Scott at Rhythm & Hues El Segundo headquarters in April 2011, and Seshaprasad and Aidasani at the Malad Mumbai office in October 2011.

The leadership at Rhythm & Hues present creative practice within an explicitly global frame of reference. This is a result of the company's longstanding position as an independent production services firm in a market dominated the major multinational brands it serves, including Disney, Fox, and Universal. For Hollywood visual effects firms, as for their animation contemporaries in India, the production process is largely defined as technical labour. Rhythm & Hues as a "service provider company" of both effects and animation has sought means not only to increase its economic stake in content, but to legitimize its creative practice as well (Interview 15a). This is apparent in the testimony of long-time staff. Head of Digital Production, Seshaprasad draws a clear link between the company's private status and global profile:

> [W]e don't have any big sugar daddies or big corporate backing us. We are forced to be innovative, to look at how things are going to be five years down the line…

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[13] Backing Prana's bid included Mahindra Group's Anand Mahindra, Reliance Industry's Mukesh Ambani, and venture capitalists Naren Gupta of Nexus Capital, and Sherpalo Ventures' Ram Shriram (Cloutier and Rothman, 2013). Even as Indian creative practitioners struggle for creative agency, economic power is increasingly vested in a relatively small number of Indian hands.

we thought that the talent was global, and we also realized the world is going to become a global marketplace. (ibid)

Although the context is undoubtedly different, at the root of this comparison between Hollywood 'sugar daddies' and a smaller and agile firm we can make out the same discourse of distinction between money and creativity that repeats across narratives of global engagement. Further, as in the case of Crest, this definition of creativity is extended not only to comprise the process of production itself, but also how labour is managed and made meaningful within the firm's Indian operations.

At the time of field research the production staff at Rhythm & Hues India principally worked on animation and visual effects sequences for Hollywood feature. However the studio leadership has been clear to distinguish their process from more common forms of contracted labour:

> [T]ypically, in an outsourced model, there is a sequence in the film, I just throw it across the wall, which is an outsourced company and expect it to be done completely, but here, every stage of the work we totally are dependent on everybody else. So, it's basically like working in the same building, maybe two different buildings or three different buildings, but this building is half way across the globe. (Aidasani, Interview 15b)

Seshaprasad refers to this approach to production as "geographically agnostic" in that "every single shot [and] every single discipline can be done anywhere across the globe" (Interview 15a). What sets this conception apart is the invocation of mutual interdependence, based in the firm's well-publicised flat hierarchical structure that incentivized open and informal communication between departments (Scott, Interview 1). As an "artist-friendly company" (Cohen, 2013), Rhythm & Hues rejected more "militaristic" reporting structures in favour of relatively humane management practices (Caldwell, 2008: 133, 143). A tangible way this has been enacted has been both the increasing number of managers located in India and the authority they have been able to exert, working in small autonomous teams that report directly to senior management in California (Interview 15a). The combination of these factors has allowed staff in India to conceive their professional contribution not only in terms of production but also the institutional culture of the company. This is reflected most clearly in the in-house development and training used to expand the multinational production pipeline:

> [W]hat happens is that curriculum and the content that we developed in India, we leveraged that to bring our [Kuala Lumpur] facility up, and similarly now, Vancouver is coming up or some new hires come in Los Angeles, then, they use our curriculum that we developed, the content that we developed for them. (ibid)

> I think that was very exciting for everybody to see that it wasn't that the LA office was better, and things only float downhill. It wasn't that kind of a mentality. It

was, ok, we're just two different offices. Things can go either way. (Scott, Interview 1)

No longer what Stahl terms merely "wrist[s]-for-hire" (2009: 62), long-term employees like Seshaprasad and Aidasani are called upon not only to leverage their creativity but also their management expertise. Here we get a glimpse of a changing relationship to industrial authorship, not creative autonomy per se but meaningful participation, or professional agency in clearly defined terms. While Rhythm & Hues may not have survived as an independent company to see its own global production pipeline fully realised, much of this has been replicated at other firms. At DreamWorks, Rhythm & Hues has provided a model for how to retain local creative management, such that local creative practitioners have a vested interest in success. As Head of International Outreach Shelley Page explains, it comes down to a conscious effort to replicate and sustain the existing institutional culture or "ethos" of the California studio in a new work environment:

> [E]verybody is encouraged to build their careers. They're given a lot of training and a lot of support, more than you would find at most studios, certainly not in India. As a result, people feel a sense of loyalty and dedication to continue to working at the studio. (Interview 42)

While increased exposure to the global market has not lessened the precarity faced by the vast majority of creative practitioners, it has brought Indian management into the heart of global production networks. These managers have also been drivers of the development of professional organizations, including Seshaprasad at ASIFA-India and Technicolor Country Head Biren Ghose at ABAI.[14]

The downside of flattening power hierarchies in this way is the extent to which the effect may be localized within the firm. Creative workers may be empowered to make creative contributions to Western content as well as to contribute to the institutional culture of the organization itself, but they are in the process separated not only from much of the creative process of work originating in overseas but also the rest of the production sector in India. Scott speculates that Rhythm & Hues employees might be seen to be freer to engage in community organization activities with Indian colleagues as they are not in direct competition (Interview 1). The economic cost is that they are effectively unable to interact with the Indian market because the pricing structure is so different. Seshaprasad

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[14] I return to these accounts in Chapter Five.

observes, "…all my other clients will start asking me for Indian prices" (Interview 15a). This division between the lucrative but high-risk global market and the underdeveloped local market has been problematic for globally-engaged firms operating in India. Hollywood projects with their higher budgets and more extended time frames attract senior practitioners not only with higher salaries but the opportunity to work on high-quality content, but this overhead makes it difficult or impossible to "compromise" for the needs of the local market:

> It has to be a combination of [international and local production]. Every big company over here in India, they have to contribute something to local market, because as we all can see there is an up and down in the international market… If we want to sustain in the long run we have to develop that content, though it is not making money now, it's eventually going to make money. (D. Chaudhury, Interview 22a)

For staff at both Crest and Rhythm & Hues, reliance on the upside of the international market ultimately cost them their jobs. Despite recent management gains, the experience of practitioners in Western firms in India still demonstrates a large degree of separation not only between creative and technical practice, but the maturing animation sector within the country and its own domestic audience, which it is increasingly creatively and economically ill-suited to address, except through multinational intermediaries.

3. *Engaging Global Brands*

Having outlined narratives of two dominant practices of India's globally-engaged animation sector; outsourcing and coproduction, I now investigate how tensions between the creativity and economics of animation production continue to change as producers turn their attention back home to low-cost children's television. In the final section of this chapter I examine the emerging relations between these practitioners and global brands like Disney Channel, Cartoon Network, and Nickelodeon. These have not only exerted influence on Indian-produced animation for the global market, as they have established themselves as the major distributors of animation content on Indian screens they have imposed similar standards on domestic content. Here, another set of globally-oriented discourses concerning localization have a profound effect on Indian practitioner narratives. Upon arrival in India, global networks have leveraged their extensive libraries of imported content, with initially little local investment. Yet as market-share and competition have increased, these strategies have begun to change. Some regional divisions have gained considerable autonomy, at first to localize their brands, then to develop regional content. For studios seeking partnerships, logics of volume, quality and cost become even more crucial in order to match global brand standards. Success in this

new environment is increasingly presented in terms of maintaining relationships with these global brands while negotiating the trust and clout to exploit brands of their own.

From Legacy Content to Localization

Like Rhythm & Hues and DreamWorks, whose operations in India have supported core business interests abroad, the strategies of the multinational television networks have been to balance efforts to develop the Indian market with wider brand priorities. The very concept of transnational television superficially suggests a degree of uniformity. However global conglomerates have often had to invest far more than anticipated in efforts to adapt their offerings to Indian cultural and linguistic tastes (Banerjee, 2002: 161). Children's television has for some time been considered the exception, representing one of the most "standardized and uniform categories" in broadcasting (Lustyik, 2010: 175), and this "universal appeal" has in turn been tied to the prevalence of animation. On this point, the testimony of many practitioners and scholars seem to be closely aligned:

> [A]nimation just works in any language and it lends itself to dubbing. So kids watching it don't feel it's imported, or it has been dubbed or it's a layer or it's a Band-Aid over the product because it just works so naturally. (Arnab Chaudhuri, Interview 27)

> Kids love *Ben 10*, *Tom and Jerry*, *Chhota Bheem*, etc. equally and don't differentiate whether they are local or international shows; they adore them irrespective of their origin. (Krishna Desai, qtd. in Iyer, 2014b)

This adaptability draws on a range of attributes, from the relatively low cost of dubbing, to the lucrative merchandise revenues of existing properties (Havens, 2006). Chief among these is the "long shelf life" of imported content; a boon for the profitability of networks, but a critical blow to domestic production (Thussu, 2006: 147).[15] Indian practitioners observe this in the continued popularity of programing like *Tom and Jerry*, a property with origins in the 1940s that still airs daily on Cartoon Network (Interview 15a):

> Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon, Disney, they preferred to bring in their own work from outside, dub them in local languages, so that for them, it was much cheaper to do that than to invest in original content. So, unless one was prepared to do shows at a very, very low cost, it was impossible to compete with them. (Mohan, Interview 31)

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[15] Even in India, in 2006 an episode of animation still costs $60,000 to produce (NASSCOM, 2006). As Chaudhuri describes, "when we buy animation from Japan or Korea; people are buying them at $400-500 for a half-hour and they are buying hundreds of episodes. No Indian studio can match that price" (ABAI, 2013a).

Again, implicit in these accounts are the same tensions between creativity and commerce that recur throughout accounts of globalized practice, and I return to these below. However it is important to note that while the initial experience of many producers has been a "lack of support" from multinationals for local series production (ibid), this does not prevent them from being associated with accounts of local creativity. I argue in the following chapter the growth of television has created unprecedented opportunities for artisanal commercial practice, yet the process of localization has also created opportunities within the multinational brands themselves.

The degree of localization adopted by the children's media networks differs between brands, but has generally increased over time. As with multinational studios, this has comprised investment in creative staff with both the local knowledge and learned familiarity with globalized industrial practice to manage these brands; tailoring language, demographic, programing, genre, and promotional strategies to maximize local audiences and revenues (Havens, 2006). Indian operations have had some leeway to launch or acquire regionally-specific channels, such as Disney's Hungama TV or Turner's Pogo, the latter targeted to be more "format-agnostic" and "local at heart" than the core channel Cartoon Network (Desai, qtd. in Iyer, 2014b). Here, accounts of the process of adapting brands and content for a local audience are posed as a blend of creativity and management savvy. Turner India's Executive Director Desai and Associate Creative Director Rajat Dasgupta both use the term 'transcreation,' in the sense of creative translation, specifically to refer to adapting content for local audiences, "It is not a pure dub. It is not a literal translation. It is key to how a lot of content culturally flies in India" (Field notes, 22/10/2011). Others like Arnab Chaudhuri (table 1.5) are more circumspect, suggesting instead, "There is smart dubbing and there is not smart dubbing. There is literal translation and then there is interpretation" (Interview 27).

Table 1.5:   Arnab Chaudhuri

After studying animation at the NID, Arnab Chaudhuri joined Channel V in 1994, before moving to Turner's Cartoon Network and Pogo offices in Hong Kong, and later Disney India as Creative Director. There, his responsibilities included, "local content acquisition, local production, animation projects, interstitials and on-air promotions" for Disney Channel, Disney XD and Hungama TV (Business Standard, 2010). Chaudhuri's *Arjun: Warrior Prince* was produced by UTV and distributed by Disney World Cinema.

I interviewed Chaudhuri in Lower Parel, Mumbai in November 2011. Since leaving Disney, Chaudhuri has collaborated with a new production company Banabo, set up to produce a sequel to *Arjun*, *Circle of Fire* with Nishith Takia's Bioscopewala and Prana Studios (Boatwala, 2014b; Dear Cinema, 2013).

Instead of presenting the localization of global brands as a simplistic case of cultural imperialism or homogenization, practitioners within the multinational channels are keen to emphasize instead the negotiated blurring of cultural boundaries brought about by the integration of Indian programing into international brand strategies. At Disney India this has been associated with efforts to develop localized content that is both consistent with the brand and meets quality expectations, and Chaudhuri has been in a unique position to appreciate different sides of this issue:

> [T]here is the big impression that it's a blending down; one size fits all, lowest common denominator kind of approach. It isn't that at all. It's about setting our bar very, very high and every local market has to be able to hit that bar. (Interview 27)

According to this interpretation, it is neither in the interests of the networks or local producers for local brand initiatives to be understood as "standardization," a diminishing of local relevance in order to meet arbitrary measures of international appeal. As Chaudhuri explains, imported programs like *Phineas and Ferb* (Povenmire and Marsh, 2007-) that have succeeded in India have not been specifically designed for a global audience. As the multinational brands increasingly tailor their offerings to local tastes, such "international links" become less important than the right balance of production efficiency and compelling story in local production:

> There are two things... Volume, which is a tough one, it's nobody's fault really, volume is a tough one to crack and the second one is design, basic story and design is I think where a lot of Indian products fall short. (ibid)[16]

As in each of the previous narratives of global engagement under consideration in this chapter, volume, the cost to produce episodes, and quality of storytelling, invoke the same tension between economic and creative attributes that have troubled Indian practitioners since the earliest days of service contracts. The success of breakout content like Green Gold Animation's *Chhota Bheem* (Chilaka, 2008-), suggests that the content that strikes such a balance does not need to be particularly complex, but the strategies and brand relationships that underpin that success are sophisticated.

Chhota Bheem depicts the adventures of a little boy in a dhoti with extreme strength. Broadcast on Turner's Pogo TV, it has represented the first significant success

story for a domestically produced series. The way that Green Gold has represented itself in response to this success is extremely revealing about the narrative strategies that Indian practitioners have adopted to position themselves in relation to the multinational networks. These include taking substantial risks with inexpensive and technically unsophisticated original content and prioritizing working relationships with the distributors over initial revenues. In exchange Green Gold has the freedom in the market to develop its own brand. While effusive in support for the achievement of local content, Indian animators I spoke to are divided in their feelings about *Chhota Bheem's* balance of quality and cost (Interview 23). While many studios have aggressively pursued 3D animation, *Chhota Bheem* is very simply designed and animated in 2D. "While artists seek recognition and appreciation of their work, the producers need the reassurance that they have a commercial success on their hands" (Udiaver, 2011). Green Gold responds with partners' corporate logos and testimonials central to its public and online communications (Channel Partners, ca2014). Founder Chilaka (table 1.6) is very clear about the benefits of this positioning:

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Table 1.6:   ***Rajiv Chilaka – Green Gold Animation***

Rajiv Chilaka trained in animation at the Academy of Art in San Francisco. In 2001he founded Green Gold Animation which following the breakout success of the series *Chhota Bheem* has become one of the largest and most recognizable animation brands in India. As a result, Green Gold claims to be the only Indian animation firm that has been able to leverage its original content production into comics, theatrical features, licensed merchandise, franchised Green Gold stores in Indian shopping malls, and even Theme Park attractions at Agrigold's Haailand Resort (Green Gold, 2014a).
I draw here chiefly upon an interview published by ABAI from its KAVGC Summit, held in Bangalore 28thAugust, 2013, where he received a the organization's Leadership Excellence Award for "building India's first iconic animation brand" (ABAI, 2013h).

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> Thanks to this industry, once you make one big hit, no matter what you make it'll get sold. At least if you make it decently... The opportunities are never going to exhaust once you have a successful show. So the good things about the post-*Bheem* era for us is that, if you are short of work, you just have to make a few calls. You have to make new pitch, new ideas, you have to pitch and it happens. People take us seriously and of course we value our word, what we say we have to do. (ABAI, 2013e)

To understand the impact of these reflexive statements, it is important to recognize that they are not simply meaningless self-promotion, but may be better understood as distinctive discursive acts, not without impact on how local producers and their emerging brands are viewed both by partners and others across the increasingly globalized animation sector. Repeated at industry events like ABAI's KAVGC Summit and circulated in trade and popular publications like *Animation Xpress* and *DNA*, the

comments made by Chilaka may increasingly set the agenda for the industrial conversation around original production and brand management. Much of this discourse is based upon legitimating a strategy of prioritizing merchandizing and licensing after the example of international brands, over sophisticated design and production values that might be more directly comparable to some imported content.

That Chilaka so closely associates Green Gold's success with the working relationships that it has established with distributors reflects lessons learned of the coproduction process, as well as a willingness to accept considerable risk in return for security. As he told ABAI in 2013, "We built a fort around *Bheem* that is a fort of merchandising and fort of licensing" (2013e). Like Madhavan, he has recast the role of animation producers to look beyond any single distribution platform, concentrating instead on creating simple and iconic characters that can be exploited widely and finally make local creative labour economically sustainable. In framing *Chhota Bheem* as a brand as well as standard bearer for local creative practice, Chilaka's statements blend earlier claims about the balance of creative and economic sensibilities. This indicates a flow of industrial methods from the global industry into local practice.

Chilaka and Green Gold's achievement of merchandising success highlights one final undercurrent of these trade stories that is a discourse on the 'maturity' and 'development' of Indian animation as legitimate industrial sector. Practitioners speak of Indian animation as a sector in the early stages of development, with original production as part of a "natural evolution" from a "teenage phase" to a mature industrial sector (Krishna Desai, qtd. in Iyer, 2014b):

> The IT industry took 15-20 years to become an industry. Bollywood took maybe a hundred years to become an industry, the film industry. Colloquially one wants to call it an industry, sure. But… the animation revenue models are not just airing on television or theatrical releases. It's about merchandise. It is about toys. It is about direct-to-home videos. It is about publishing. It is about games. The other revenues – that would become an industry (Madhavan, Interview 2)

In the absence of reliable domestic audiences and lacking the scale of the IT industry, the longevity of Bollywood or the revenues of television, Madhavan terms Indian animation not an industry, but a 'space.' In describing the nascent character of the animation space, he identifies several characteristics that are at the centre of this investigation, first the scale and revenues of the outsourcing sector, second the lack of experience with original production – the creative sensibilities of Indian practitioners and firms, and third the need for institutional infrastructure, both the educational capacity needed to support original local production, and a central organizational forum for regulation and communication

between practitioners. I return to these concerns throughout the remainder of this research.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have considered accounts of outsourcing, and later coproduction, and the localization of multinational brands, not only as a series of steps on a ladder of industrial development, but as major turning points in an ongoing and still evolving narrative of industrial power and professional identity. Based on this detailed investigation, I observe how the logics of volume, quality and cost central to the management of international production workflows and brand management are repeated in local production discourses as the main criteria for success, secured not by contract but dynamic cultural factors like personal trust. I conclude here by considering what the continued evolution of a discourse of global engagement reveals about the parallel development of Indian animation's industrial infrastructure and culture of production.

I began by describing the origins of animation outsourcing, arguing that the persistent conflict caused by the alienation of creative control from animation practice has been introduced as an inevitable consequence of contract animation. I showed how Indian animators use reflexive practice to engage with the existing narratives of industrial development, and how they have negotiated and revised them to support an evolution towards coproduction, and through developing original content for the global market, not only recover a degree of creative autonomy and professional agency, but develop some capabilities to develop domestic content. Tracing the interaction between Indian animators and the globally engaged animation industry reveals a diverse range of different practices, from outsourcing, to coproduction, localization and creation of local content for global brands. The development of each of these in India has led to substantial changes in industrial structure, dramatic growth, and considerable debate. However, beyond simple changes in practice, what this experience reveals is the negotiation of major structuring discourses of animation in India, linking local developments in practice to international industrial precedents.

Local interpretations of global narratives are characterized by a concern for incremental but sustained growth, adapting production processes to gain competitive edge and meet global standards, prioritizing both client and partner expectations, while focusing on intellectual property and long-term brand priorities. This reflects narratives of industrial development and sustainability across reflexive testimony from a wide range of animation practitioners, and suggests ways in which animators respond to global

pressures on their practice, reproducing and creating new ways to both present their identities and articulate them in the production community as social structure. I have argued that it is the experience of outsourcing and the resulting embracing of a ladder approach to industrial capabilities that have continued to favour globally oriented discourses, and a top down view of industrial practice that places domestic creative practices into a framework of existing international industrial practices.

Despite the often well-founded tendency to view outsourcing and globalized production in terms of the exploitation of local creative labour – a one-way flow of both culture and capital, that is not exactly what the testimony in this chapter reveals. The coproduction of industrial identity narratives does not result in a perfect copy. Rather than engage in a relationship of simple imitation with Western practice, practitioner theorization is deeply inflected by subjective experience and personal interpretation, increasingly critical to securing an emerging sense of creative and managerial agency. With few notable exceptions, creative and technical production on an industrial-scale remain largely divided across geographic lines, suggesting that attempts to frame globalized practice as nonetheless autonomous, creatively rewarding, and professionally meaningful are likely to persist into the foreseeable future. However, at the level of artisanal production, both the circumstances and narratives of practice are dramatically different.

Chapter Two: Discourses of Self-Sufficiency – From Local Ecosystems to Personal Animation

"A silent revolution has been sweeping across the Indian animation industry over the past decade. While media attention has been firmly focused on a handful of big studios like Crest, Prime Focus, DQ Entertainment and Rhythm & Hues, more than a thousand small, artist-driven 'boutique' studios have established themselves across the country." Akshata Udiaver (*DNA*, 2011)

Introduction

Central to debate over Indian animation production is the precarious balance of creative freedom and commercial risk. It follows that this can be linked to "mutually constitutive" relations between the culture and economy of media work (Coe, 2000: 391). Although reflexivity as a form of critical industrial practice allows us to interpret how practitioners make sense of these conditions, it also complicates our understanding of relationships of power and control, raising questions of how such self-theorization is used to make decisions. Up to this point, the testimony I have collected from large globally-engaged firms has presented Indian animation as a nascent part of a greater international cultural industry. While this reveals the extent to which the centre-periphery logics of outsourcing persist in practitioner narratives, it also begins to suggest areas of professional agency, as well as the importance of dynamic social factors like trust and local knowledge in securing this. As I have suggested, the success of efforts associated with a narrative of global engagement has been mixed. However this testimony only constitutes one aspect of a wider debate. What of Sabnani's 'sleeping giant;' the potential local industry in waiting (2005: 100)? In this chapter I turn to testimony from smaller so-called 'boutique' studios to reveal a narrative of self-sufficiency, and analyse how these practitioners theorize the balance of risk and reward, commercial appeal and niche cultural specificity, and finally personal autonomy and collaboration. I argue that for some practitioners boutique production represents not a business strategy but a lifestyle choice, founded upon the subjective associations of local relevance and self-actualizing cultural labour.

The continuing presence of small studios in media spaces dominated by large conglomerates has been the subject of considerable scrutiny across media industry studies. Both the persistence of boutique firms and independent entrepreneurs and the

roles they play in the evolution of the cultural industries have complicated analyses of organizational management and economic geography. Perhaps as a result, the industrial positioning of small firms has long been contested.[1] The dismantling of unified systems of production and distribution that marks the end of Hollywood's 1950s classical era has been described as a transition to 'post-Fordism,' a rejection of the assembly line model of cultural production characterized by individual vertically-integrated firms, in favour of 'flexible specialization' and diversification, characterized by subcontracting between large firms and growing networks of smaller firms (Christopherson and Storper, 1986). These attributes have been of particular interest to geographers studying the management of creativity in mutually-interdependent clusters (Scott: 2006; Grabher, 2002a). This has given rise to analysis of distinct spatial distributions or 'ecologies' of creativity and cultural production (Cole, 2008; Hearn et al, 2007).[2] Such scholarship has also corresponded closely with public policy, as optimistic politicians around the world have imagined their own "creative cities" bolstered by a new class of autonomous professionals who will ostensibly drive economic growth (Florida, 2002; Landry, 2000). As Raymond Williams noted in 1961, it is difficult to conceive a negative characterization of creativity (19); romantic notions of cultural labour and entrepreneurship have long been and remain extremely potent.

Increasing scholarship in cultural industries management suggests that celebration of entrepreneurism belies wide variation in the labour conditions that creative workers in small firms regularly experience. This ranges from individuals who may be effectively 'forced' into freelancing – termed "survival entrepreneurs" – to enterprising owner-operators seeking to effect change in the marketplace, embracing greater risk for creative reward (Davis, 2011: 167-8). However despite policy aspirations to the contrary, neither of these is necessarily directly associated with industrial growth so much as personal sustainability. Instead, I suggest it is preferable to interpret small firm practice in terms of more subjective incentives, consistent with the tentative resurgence of a more artisanal mode of cultural production (Eberts and Norcliffe, 1998). Such a model reflects both the

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[1] The significance of small firms cannot be reduced to market rationality. Trade discourses draw in cultural associations such as creative autonomy, innovation, and attention to local tradition, which lend social capital to such forms as 'independent' cinema or 'underground' music (Hesmondhalgh, 2010: 14). Similar accounts surround small Indian animation studios.
[2] India features prominently in this scholarship, from the concentration of software development in Bangalore (Scott, 2006: 108) to the professionalization of Bollywood as a global production hub (Lorenzen and Täube, 2008).

social organization of boutique practice and its emphasis on local self-sufficiency. While they may or may not drive growth, boutique studios are aided by recent innovations that have reduced cost and increased access to niche markets. This 'neo-artisanal' production is illustrated by the association of creative freedom and the flexibility of short-term projects, product differentiation, latitude to subsidize other endeavours (Hesmondhalgh, 2013: 210; Yoon and Malecki, 2009: 258), and in some cases even to engage reflexively with local consumers (Norcliffe and Rendace, 2003: 247).

What then does investigating the reflexivity of boutique studio participants add to understanding of Indian animation practice? If the organizational management and economic geography literature on entrepreneurism sheds light on vertical disintegration, the disaggregation of labour, and wide-ranging impacts on infrastructure, these nonetheless omit consideration of how such processes are filtered through practitioner understandings. The above academic accounts of small studio practices are matched by self-ethnographic accounts from entrepreneurial professionals themselves, comprising individual critical analysis as well as more collective sense-making. Both research interview and trade press textual analysis yield examples of practitioner theory that are not only personal and performative but inductive, speculative, and substantive (Caldwell, 2008: 18). In the case of animation practitioner narratives of self-sufficiency, I argue it is also relatively inclusive and systematic, with correspondences to more conventional sources of theory. The aspirational metaphor of a local animation ecosystem shares much in form and substance with similar industrial 'ecologies' (Cole 2008: 892; Grabher, 2002b: 246), while the underlying model of the self-sustaining local cycle of animation also suggests clear affinities to the familiar 'circuit of culture,' stressing the need to account for meaning at various stages in the circulation of content (du Gay et al, 1997).

Approach

In this chapter I piece together a conceptual narrative of self-sufficiency to further develop understanding of the relationship between practitioner reflexivity and social structure, interpreting how this draws together a range of similar perspectives. Developing comparisons between positions not only illuminates differences in reflexive practice between symbol creators at large and small firms, how they make sense of their experience and develop individual identities, but in the way they then articulate social identities more widely. The volatility of animation production in India makes constant demands on practitioners' ability to proactively interpret their environment. However this chapter reveals the ways in which the concepts that emerge in this largely autobiographical narrative – emphasizing sustainability, local relationships, and cultural

continuity – circulate as shared knowledge within an emerging professional community. Finally, as throughout this research, my approach is to build on the strengths of recent production studies emphasizing the reflexive negotiation of culture, while also accounting for how creative practices are linked to normative frameworks.

The recent success of boutique studios has been one of the most significant developments in the organizational structure and practice of Indian animation. Although relatively small in size, they constitute one of the most diverse and interdisciplinary areas of production. Prior to the explosion of the outsourcing sector discussed in Chapter One, there were only a handful of animation producers of any size. Today there are hundreds of small studios and creative service providers. Because of the range of different practices, the core research data for this chapter is coded from interviews with 12 key participants – animators, designers, directors, and studio heads, representing seven different companies and two independents, from relatively diversified firms with 40 or more staff like Mumbai's Studio Eeksaurus to microenterprise design partnerships like Delhi's Vivi5 or Pune's Roaming Design (table 2.1).[3] Where possible, I let individuals speak for themselves by engaging with quotations that reflect the many different voices in a diverse cultural environment. Additional sources of data include collaborating organizations, studio marketing materials, industry reports, and accounts in the trade and popular press.

Table 2.1:	***Small Studios and Independent Producers***
Boutique Studios	Roaming Design
Animagic India	- Pradeep Patil and Shraddha Sakhalkar
- Chetan Sharma and Sumant Rao (Asst. Prof. IDC)	Studio Eeksaurus – Suresh Eriyat [E. Suresh]
Digitales Studios	Vaibhav Studios - Vaibhav Kumaresh
- R.K Chand and Abhishek Chandra (*CGTantra*)	Vivi5 Animation/Art/Design
Graphiti Animation	- Rita Dhankani and Mehul Mahicha
- Ram Mohan, Tilak Shetty, and Jitendra Chaudhuri	***Independent Animators***
	Gitanjali Rao
	Shilpa Ranade (Asst. Prof. IDC)

To begin this analysis I delineate the work of small studios, and examine how boutique studio producers, independent animators and trade writers represent the practice of smaller firms as a distinct area within the social world of Indian animation production, characterized by niche markets, creative autonomy, and personal control, each

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[3] Four participants were initially selected based upon the pilot study of trade interviews. Subsequent interviews were based on referrals and theoretical sampling to add depth and detail (Glaser, 1978).

contributing to a narrative of self-sufficiency. This understanding of common experiences, perspectives, as well as how the production process is organized, informs my readings of reflexive strategy in the sections that follow. Second, I interpret the conception of ecological cycles, how practitioners explain relationships between sustained original production, and other points on the circulation of content, including proactive engagement with industry stakeholders, and efforts to establish a reflexive relationship with a local audience. In the third section, I identify this as a discourse of passion, prioritizing cultural continuity and personal relevance over economic growth and financial stability. Finally I consider the tensions resulting from this narrative of self-sufficiency taken to its logical conclusion; the conceptualization of completely personal animation, against growing calls for professional collaboration.

1.   *The Artisanal Work of Boutique Animation*

To untangle a narrative of self-sufficiency from the critical practice of boutique animators, it is useful to return briefly to the negotiation of risk. All business based on the circulation of symbolic goods is inherently unpredictable and therefore risky (Hesmondhalgh, 2013: 27). This risk depends on decisions made throughout the cycle of production and consumption; but tends to be unevenly shared across participants (Bilton, 1999: 20). Major networks like Disney or Turner are able to offset the risk of failure by acquiring a wide repertoire of properties and distributing them widely across global markets. In this respect, many of the same economic factors that have driven both the growth and challenges of outsourcing have also created conditions conducive to boutique practice. That is, the vertical disintegration that has allowed large studios to outsource animation production to places like India for reasons of cost, also lets them devolve the riskier initial stages of content development to outside entrepreneurs who, lacking the resources to 'go it alone,' are incentivized to seek partnerships to minimize their own exposure. As Susan Christopherson asserts, "worker identity and the work process itself changes in conjunction with the strategies of firms and organizations… and as the workforce adapts to new forms and levels of risk" (2009: 73-4). These changes are immediately apparent in how Indian boutique animators differentiate their practice. In taking up niche project work, they have enjoyed considerable autonomy, including discretion to make decisions over many aspects of production, what projects to take on, with whom, where and when. All of these are open to critical reflection, and it is how practitioners theorize and narrativize this balance that concerns me here.

Niche Production

Given variation in content, size, and organizational structure, the key factor that unites boutique producers is the premise that they can operate in market niches that larger studios cannot, and this perception circulates widely among practitioners. Consider the following definition of "artist-driven boutique studios" by writer, designer and community organizer Akshata Udiaver:

> With teams from 5 to 50 artists, they are buoyed by the burgeoning demand for animation and visual effects in domestic advertising, television and regional film industries. While the big studios were preoccupied with riding the outsourcing wave, the small studios took on projects that were too small to interest the big guys. (*DNA*, 2011)

Such a comment sets clear cultural and economic distinctions between outsourcing and boutique production. She characterizes these studios by their manoeuvrability and capacity to diversify in response to local conditions; their adaptability in contrast to the constrained activities of larger firms. By targeting local projects, they are freed from the necessity of operating only in global hubs and more able to target customers in regional markets and languages, "Clients prefer them because they don't have to go far to get their projects animated" (ibid). These interpretations map neatly onto a popular discourse of entrepreneurism that suggests small firms are more responsive to emerging local trends (Hesmondhalgh, 2013: 73). In short, they are presented as everything that outsourcing studios are not: dynamic and both locally situated and managed. This is reflected in accounts of a range of different kinds of production, but perhaps most evident in the growth of television advertising.

While large studios have focused on scaling 'value chains' into IP ownership in international feature and television production, boutique producers have sought flexibility and continuity through work for local consumption. Although India's economic liberalization in the early 1990s had dramatic consequences across the cultural industries, changes in television were especially drastic, as the number of outlets increased from two public Doordarshan channels and a handful of regional language options in 1991, to over 500 in 2010, and over 800 today (*Press Trust of India*, 2010). A proliferation of cable and satellite services not only created opportunities for major networks: News Corporation's Channel V, Viacom's MTV India and Nickelodeon, and later Cartoon Network and Disney, it also created a niche demand for animated content in the form of distinctive station branding, as Arnab Chaudhuri describes at his first job out of the NID, at Channel V in 1994:

It was promo idents, channel idents, logo formation, so just stupid little stories… but it was good learning. It was just basically very dirty hands; no technology, no money, just cheap and cheerful production. (Interview 27)

In many respects, commercial work and high-visibility interstitials for the ever expanding number of domestic television channels, especially Channel V and MTV India, replicated the success of small Western studios for the same types of clients in the early 1980s (Deneroff, 2003: 128). There, the animation-heavy branding of MTV has been associated with a revival of television animation into the 1990s, from Klasky-Csupo's *The Simpsons* (Groening, 1987, 1989-) to MTV Animation's *Beavis and Butthead* (Judge, 1992, 1993-97). Following this precedent, station idents made at studios like Mumbai-based Famous's House of Animation, including *Poga* (Suresh, 2001) for MTV India and *Simpu* (Kumaresh, 1999-) for Channel V created the initial public and client exposure that allowed this and other studios to survive (table 2.2).

Table 2.2:

| *MTV Poga* (Suresh, Oshidar) For Madness Unlimited, Courtesy Studio Eeksaurus | *Simpoo - Ask the Pankazz* (Kumaresh) For Channel V, Courtesy Vaibhav Studios |

Autonomy

The benefits of niche interstitial practice far exceeded the economic impact of exposure. Rather, this practice also put in place the conditions for artisanal production to take hold by creating a learning environment for a new generation of animators to practice producing original content, particularly the skills to develop a project from scratch. Growth in short-term work for station idents and other short-form branded content created employment opportunities for recent design graduates, from a generation that had grown up with Anant Pai's *Amar Chitrakatha* comics (1967-), attended design schools like the NID and JJ School of Art, and were now interested in learning to create their own characters and stories. One of the most vocal exemplars is Vaibhav Kumaresh (table 2.3).

Table 2.3:   ***Vaibhav Kumaresh – Vaibhav Studios***

Courtesy of TASI (2009)

Vaibhav Kumaresh is the founder and director of Vaibhav Studios in Mumbai. After graduating from the NID in 1998, Kumaresh went to work at Famous's House of Animation. He and wife Suranjana founded Vaibhav Studios in 2003. Kumaresh is known for a number of television campaigns and promotions including Channel V's *Simpoo*, *Sagar Cement*, and the *Buladi* AIDS campaign for the government of West Bengal.

He also contributed one of two animated sequences to the Bollywood feature *Taare Zameen Par* (Khan, 2007). Kumaresh is a visiting faculty at the NID and a member of the committee of the Animation Society of India (TASI), serving as Hon. Jt. Secretary from 2010-11.

I met Kumaresh at the 2011 Chitrakatha Student Animation Festival at the NID, and later at his studio in Kandivli, Mumbai.

Kumaresh stresses the importance of commercial practice during his time at Famous's House of Animation, in learning to execute each stage of production from conception to final delivery:

> The best part about Famous is that we had to do everything ourselves… That is something that we had learned, to make films and tell our own stories. I was very happy that this was a place that we could continue doing that. In fact, eventually we had to go and get the jobs. We had to meet with clients. We had to pitch concepts. We had to bring work in. We were doing everything. We had to create the scripts in many cases. We had to produce it. (Interview 19)

Here we perceive the basis for a trade narrative of self-sufficiency. This account, describing the work of producing advertising content in the 1990s "design boom" (A. Chaudhuri, Interview 27), is effectively an origin story for a distinctive kind of animation practice, like Mohan's account of the beginnings of outsourcing only a few years earlier. As such, it emphasizes common attributes and legitimizes strategic practices shared by boutique and independent animators. Like Chaudhuri, Kumaresh reflects on both the crudeness of early commercial production and the creative freedom it offered, but also focuses on how this has represented a substantial departure from contemporary practice, wherein, "The homework was done by someone else and given to us, and we only executed the film" (ibid). Key to this account is the artisanal control boutique animators have been able to exercise over pre-production in advertising work, claiming "no separation of conception from execution" (Eberts and Norcliffe, 1998: 122). This conceptual 'homework' is a critical link in Kumaresh's model for a self-sufficient ecosystem, and he asserts these are practices conspicuously absent in the outsourcing sector. Gernot Grabher, writing on the organization of the British advertising industry, notes that such a correlation of boutique firms with both creativity and autonomy has

drastic implications. "Even if this association were hardly more than a kind of trade folklore, the career decisions of people in the trade are based largely on these perceptions" (2001: 356). In other words, the entrenchment of this kind of reflexive narrative has consequences for cultural organization and economic strategy.

In the wider context of this research it is significant that the other consistent attribute of this narrative is the centrality of learning. On one hand this reflects similar educational backgrounds among the specific individuals I spoke to.[4] On the other, these values reinforce a career progression for boutique production that explicitly links creative skills and professional authority to a particular set of experiences, learning gradually over time, or what Animagic director Chetan Sharma terms "submitting to the process" (Interview 26). By this means artisanal practices are positively associated not only with originality but with acquired "patience," in contrast to outsourcing which they characterize by impatience, boom and bust (Interview 3). While large Indian animation studios have been quick to develop standardized production pipelines, responding to a desire to create content that adheres to global 'sensibilities,' the underlying narratives of boutique production place an emphasis on slower proliferation of diverse practices resulting in highly differentiated products that are much more closely identified not only with the local market but the artisans that have created them.

Differentiated Design

Practitioner testimony closely links a professional foundation in advertising with today's strong emphasis on differentiated design. The stop-motion aesthetic pioneered by Famous's House of Animation in campaigns like *Poga* clearly represented a departure from the imported content then prevalent on Indian screens, but studio director E. Suresh points out the practical necessities underlying such innovation. Suresh frames his efforts at Famous's House of Animation specifically in terms of diverse product from project to project, "We had to be very strong in [marketing and brand development] and had to create a differentiator. And that differentiator is our strong design approach to do our storytelling, where form follows function" (qtd. in Khandelwal, 2013). A particular way of doing things is a key part of organizational identity, but this does not equate to a predictable house style. Likewise, Suresh's more recent venture, Studio Eeksaurus (table

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[4] While Rao and Patil both attended Sir JJ School of Applied Arts, Patil, Kumaresh, Suresh, Dhankani, and Mahicha are all alumni of the NID. Ranade studied at the IDC and Royal College of Art (RCA).

2.4) emphasizes a "design-centric" approach to brand communication as the core of its own filmmaking process:

<table>
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Table 2.4:   ***Suresh Eriyat – Studio Eeksaurus***

A 1997 graduate of the NID, animation director Suresh Eriyat [E. Suresh] has founded two different boutique studios. In 1998 he joined Mumbai's Famous Studios where he set up
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Courtesy of Studio
Eeksaurus (2014)
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Famous's House of Animation to produce branded communication. In 2009 Suresh founded his own Studio Eeksaurus, initiating more ambitious and "experimental" commercial projects (qtd. in Khandelwal, 2013: 68). His output has been marked by variation in style and approach, from 2D to 3D animation, stop-motion, and live-action. Studio Eeksaurus is now one of India's most prominent boutique studios, and has created campaigns for a wide range of Indian and multinational companies, from USHA Sewing machines to Google.
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I met Suresh at his studio in the Santa Cruz neighbourhood of Mumbai. On the wall of the lobby was Udiaver's *DNA* piece profiling small animation studios, surrounded by character models from numerous television campaigns.
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> Studio Eeksaurus is a film production company that uses design fundamentals as the key driver to create its films as per the client's requirements, ensuring that every product emerging out of this place is a unique one, thus making sure that it is elevating the standards of the films coming out of this country. ("About" *Facebook*, ca2013)

While differentiation of design has become a key part of the cultural identity of boutique practitioners, it has done so not as a creative indulgence, but as a sign of competitive advantage in a business strongly built upon reputation and personal trust, embedded in the power relations between producer and client. For Suresh in particular, animation design is a rigorous problem-solving process within defined constraints – time, expense and client demands, and it is by taking on risks to expand storytelling capabilities within those limits, that producers can secure greater confidence and control. It is for this reason that diverse practice is increasingly also characterized by a discourse that, like Suresh here, associates the process and interdisciplinarity of design with positive industrial change; a defining feature common to boutique studios, creative partnerships and independents.

Given the asserted differences between them, it may seem incongruous that, like larger globally-engaged Indian animation firms, many of the boutique animation studios are also organized on a service model of production, providing clients with variety of bespoke design products. Boutique animators, comparable to other artisanal symbol creators, have largely flourished in niches that depend on novelty in order to sell products and tell stories. Integration of different kinds of production demonstrates the often permeable boundary between animation and other forms of design, from films for theatrical or television release, to advertising, pre-visualization, and illustration. Designers have strongly asserted their own individuality within the confines of a creative

services framework, having experienced considerable autonomy in both conceiving and executing project work. For some, this unique ability to move between disciplines from project-to-project relieves inevitable tensions that grow out of the relationship between practitioner and client, as Gitanjali Rao describes in shifting from advertising to illustration:

> If you look for personal space [in ad work], you are just doing the wrong thing, which we all do in our young age. We all want to create the best animation for this client who doesn't want it most of the time. He just wants his product to sell but you want to create that animation for it which is going to make you famous. It's like a personal agenda. It is healthy. It has to happen, but it clashes. (Interview 3)

For Rao, the crucial response is to "compartmentalize" the commercial and the personal, another skill that can only be learned over time. However to resolve this tension and achieve the level of control that she and other boutique animators ascribe to themselves, requires the creation of wholly original content. Without this, Suresh cautions, "we are not living life on the edge like great inventors and innovators do. We have the challenge to do storytelling to bring out a culture which is progressive" (qtd. in Khandelwal, 2013: 69-70). While boutique production has emerged from and been nurtured by advertising, as elsewhere in Indian animation, a latent evolutionary narrative invokes wider cultural concerns; interests in experimenting with different ways of working. Here the apparent narrative of self-sufficiency takes the form of an overt appeal to risk, assuming economic control over production and negotiating access to local audiences.

Self-Funding

A narrative of self-sufficiency extends to strategies for implementing change in the production environment. This is possible as the growth of the boutique design sector has not only provided a platform for experimentation, but also for new practices and organizational structures. As they have become more established, many boutique studios and animators who have built their reputations in advertising and design are now making sustained forays into producing their own original content. As in other industrial contexts, it is increasingly common for Indian animators to use contract production services to subsidize their own in-house projects. They differentiate these efforts in a variety of ways; from work that is done principally to pay the bills, to their "real" creative work (Hesmondhalgh, 2013: 210). In most cases the distinctions are more nuanced, yet self-funded projects do seem to be characterized by areas of common emphasis: for boutique studios, on long-term goals such as long-form television and series production, and in the rare cases of completely independent practice, on explicitly personal rather than

commercial considerations (G. Rao, Interview 3). Crucially, it is also these efforts that animators present as their long-term contributions to production culture.

Three leading boutique firms in Mumbai, Studio Eeksaurus, Vaibhav Studios, and Animagic have all pursued variations on this strategy, which has been to develop their own projects using resources from advertising work. Both Suresh and Kumaresh have their own speculative short films in production, *Tokri* (Suresh), and *Return of the Jungle* (Kumaresh). To underscore the risk of such an endeavour, in 2011 Vaibhav Studios entirely ceased taking on commercial work in order to concentrate on *Return of the Jungle*, which represents a dramatic increase in the scope and scale of production:

> …For us to be able to pull that off, we can't afford to do a commercial as well as this battle. Over many years we have been saving money to work on our film. Thankfully, now it's ten months since we've done any commercial project. We've been just blowing up all our savings and now we are backed up so we will start taking up work again. (Kumaresh, Interview 19)

Developing original content is an expensive and complex process. Consistent with earlier efforts in television advertising, strategic moves towards creative control – studio ownership, self-funding, and both the increased autonomy and risk that come with these, are justified as further opportunities for learning, and the ability to tell a story in a longer form as a further technical challenge and skill that must be developed over time (ibid).

While contract design has allowed boutique animators to build reputations, success in original production is dependent on the ability to secure an audience through distribution contracts for their projects. Not everyone is convinced that a wholly speculative approach to original content is viable. Accordingly, others have made their efforts in collaboration with other organizations. One resource has been to apply for production support from the Children's Film Society of India (CFSI), as with Animagic's short *MAAA-aaa* (C. Sharma, 2006), Graphiti's serial *Krish, Trish and Baltiboy* (Shroff and Shetty, 2009) and Shilpa Ranade's feature *Goopi Gawaiyaa Bagha Bajaiyaa* (2013). Screening such original work at major festivals like CFSI's biennial International Children's Film Festival, or the Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF) can be associated with increased reputational effects, seen as drivers for exposure and future business, "when we make a great pre-production and a great product, we win a lot of awards. We win a lot of business, and that business sustains us…" (Suresh, Interview 23). In rare cases, this has been an avenue towards increasing collaboration with larger studios and the major distribution networks, balancing risk, control and commercial opportunity. Examples include Animagic's Tripura*: The Three Cities of Maya* (C. Sharma, 2011), in collaboration with Amar Chitrakatha and Cartoon Network, and

Swammi Ayyappan (Vettiyar and C. Sharma, in production) with Toonz Animation. However such collaboration, engaging with more industrial production pipelines is a major point of contention within the boutique production sector, revealing lingering tensions between individual creativity and community networks. To understand why, I consider the conception of authority within boutique production.

Organizational Authority

Given moves towards self-funded production in the aftermath of the 'feature bubble,' many boutique practitioners I spoke to have targeted their efforts at domestic television. This shift reveals an underlying concern with creative and economic control within the emerging niches where boutique studios have staked their claim. Citing a lack of readiness to execute "feature quality," producers like Kumaresh are excited instead by "small stories" (Interview 19). Feature films are not only incredibly risky and resource heavy, for small producers they are also relatively ephemeral, offering little possibility to develop a market over time.[5] Suresh adds, "You need a constant feed to people. You can't just have one thing coming up and going. It has to be a very planned effort" (ibid). Television, in comparison, provides opportunities for long term strategy.[6]

It appears self-funding is part of a wider discourse of control in boutique production. This testimony poses an increasing emphasis on continuous relationships. Rather than structure boutique production around temporary social arrangements between autonomous artisans, as is common in advertising work – what Grabher terms the logic of a 'project ecology' (2002b), boutique producers describe a shift towards greater organizational coherence between projects. Whereas project ecologies cultivate diversity through rivalry and the constant negotiation of control between participants, more long-term relations foster the evolution of practices over time through organizational learning. Nonetheless, boutique animation firms are "both project and project-infrastructure," representing a spectrum from ad hoc to more hierarchical structures, dictated by the peaks and troughs of project-based production and the informality of management by creative practitioners (2002a). At one end are individual practitioners, often working with a small

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[5] This is especially true as boutique producers currently have little control over the distribution of their content.

[6] It is an oversimplification to assert features as the standard for studio success (See Yoon and Malecki, 2009: 263). Nonetheless, the "big screen experience" is symbolically important (A. Chaudhuri, ABAI, 2013a).

network of trusted collaborators on a project basis. Moving along this range are studio filmmakers like Kumaresh, Suresh, and Sharma, calling for continuous practice under the creative supervision and management of a single director, privileging work on original content, completed by close-knit teams who maintain a degree of autonomy over their own labour. In the case of Vaibhav Studios this consists of a core team of seven augmented with a pool of freelance collaborators as needed:

> As a filmmaker I have a certain style/flavour of working. Over a period of time that flavour tends to get a bit monotonous. Therefore working with different artists with different flavours is the best way to constantly refresh yourself. When directing a film, our team mates play the audience. I like to share every stage of work with everyone and seek their instant reactions. It allows me to see my work from different perspectives. Finally I work on the critical feedback that I agree with and ignore the ones I don't. (Kumaresh qtd. in *11 Second Club*, 2012)

Kumaresh describes a strategy that maintains significant aspects of a project ecology within a firm-based organizational structure, most notably elements of temporary collaboration and improvisation (Grabher, 2002b). By varying the creative team that works on different projects, Kumaresh's intent is to deliberately disrupt established ways of working. Shifting creative roles serves to maintain both a diversity of practices and viewpoints. This reflects Kumaresh's own personal concerns with promoting reflexivity throughout the production process, reinforced by his theoretical interpretation of an interconnected local ecosystem.

Suresh in contrast, manages a larger permanent staff that offers him as studio director greater consistency over time, balanced against increased labour cost. This approach trades a degree of creative insularity for a more consistent internal evolution, less reliant on the strength of a nascent local network. This is an assertion not only of organizational continuity, but of his creative authority:

> I need to have people on board all the time, so that even if there is no work, there are people here… I believe that people who come on contract can't give that amount of justice because we evolve every project. It comes as a brief, and from there, I take it to some other level… but what happens with our people, they are adaptable. They adapt and they become malleable because they have been with me. They can understand, 'This is the way he is thinking.' (Interview 23)

Both approaches address a key challenge in the management of creativity in small-scale project-based creative production, that it is a collective activity requiring development and maintenance of a team of individuals with diverse skills and expectations (Flew, 2002: 7). While large studios display a sometimes substantial disconnect between creative leadership and organizational management, in the context of small-scale boutique production the distinctions between these roles are effectively blurred, or even completely erased. As Suresh puts it, "I don't have a management guy who is running the company.

Fortunately or unfortunately, it is me… which has worked for the last 12 years."
(Interview 23) These accounts present the boutique studio as in many respects an extension of the individual artisanal director, as he or she is the focus and arbiter of creativity and authority within the firm. This kind of functional 'auteurism' matters in that they are also the defining public face of the (often eponymous) organization within the professional community. Finally, such uncertainty reflects what Chris Bilton calls a crucial moment in the "life cycle" of a small creative firm as it expands, reaching a point where the informal organizational logics that hold the creative team together become increasingly vulnerable to economic and social pressures (1999: 30). In this we see the complexity of a developing narrative of self-sufficiency as it accounts for changes in creative practice and artisanal identities in both ad hoc and increasingly formal production environments.

The strategies of boutique animators respond to a dynamic industrial context in a growing but still unproven market. However these are not strictly economic decisions, but are inflected with cultural values and identities. To summarize this section, smaller animation studios may be characterized not only by structural and creative differences from larger studios, but also how these distinctions are represented in practitioner narratives. These understandings of personal and professional experiences as well as organizational practices, inform my reading of more specific discourses of self-sufficiency in the remainder of this chapter. My analysis is framed by two key areas of interest, how animators interpret self-sufficiency within both an economic and cultural context, and how they make sense of their understandings reflexively relative to other stakeholders in a self-contained animation ecosystem. As the next section examines, these practitioners also develop theoretical models to interpret the conditions of production in that wider system context. The cultural dynamics of sustainable production, distribution, and consumption cannot be understood simply in terms of economic rationality, but also within cultural constraints that are continually being interpreted and redefined.

2.   *A Local Animation Ecosystem*

The strategic positioning of small animation firms and independent producers not only distinguishes them from other kinds of animation practice in India, it also embeds boutique production in its own locally constituted networks of economic and social relations. In the second section of this chapter I examine the in-vivo conception of localized cycles and their consequences for understanding interactions between boutique practitioners and other participants within a local ecosystem. These exhibit varying

degrees of coherence. While commercial clients show growing familiarity with animation, the creative risks embraced by boutique producers remain challenging for more risk-averse distributors and policymakers. Responding to these challenges, practitioners I interviewed conceive the complete ecosystem as an aspirational model, a means to take into account relationships between all the critical processes of animation – from production to consumption. I draw particular attention to how Kumaresh, Suresh and others use cycles to explain possible relationships between producers of original content and a growing animation literate audience, as well as assert their own responsibilities to manage their shared animation culture.

Ecological metaphors have become a common feature in cultural industries scholarship. The root is obviously biological, drawing upon the scientific study of interactions among organisms within an environmental system. Likewise, in sociological terms ecologies are the network of relations between participants, individuals and organizations. In both a cultural and economic context, ecologies are concerned with reframing understanding of industrial process from linear value chains where one stage simply leads to the next, terminating with the consumer (table 2.5), to closed loop systems where relationships are more dynamic:

Table 2.5:	*Basic Creative Industries Value Chain*

Concept Development → Production → Reproduction and Distribution → Consumption

(See UNCTAD, 2010: 78; Pratt, 2004)
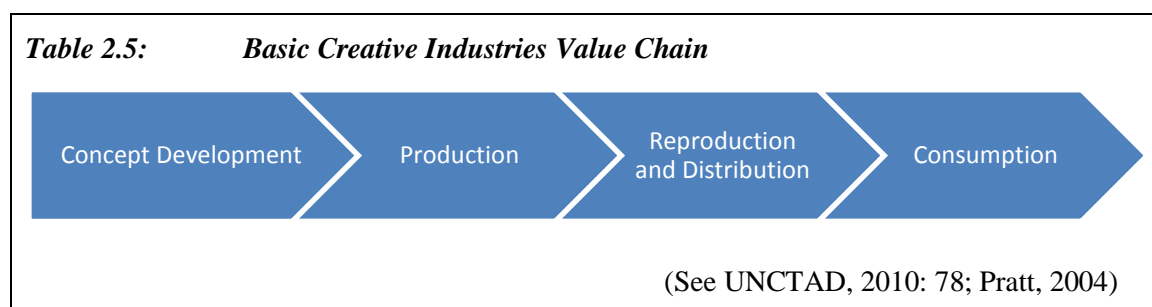
For Andy Pratt and Paul Jeffcutt, one of the defining attributes of cultural industries is that they possess a structure, "better characterized as an ecosystem" (2009: 7). Scholars of industry policy use the metaphor of the ecosystem to describe perceived links between creativity and innovation in the wider economy, and impacts on so-called non-creative sectors like urban regeneration (O'Brien, 2013: 76). For that reason, the ecosystem model also applies quite well to the tendency of creative practitioners and organizations to cohabit in networked clusters. These are the focus of Grabher's 'project ecologies,' where temporary collaboration contributes to lasting shared knowledge and social capital

(2002b).[7] However, as creative practices are so place and context-specific, these clusters themselves exhibit considerable variation. While some ecologies may be clearly defined, with definite boundaries and relatively homogenous practices, they may just as easily be more distributed and diffuse, especially in nascent stages of development (See Cole, 2008).

Highlighting the interdependence of actors, processes and stages of cultural production within an ecosystem invokes the logic of the circuit of culture (du Gay et al. 1997). Like the circuit of culture, ecological metaphors are founded on interconnectivity, suggesting 'heterarchy' rather than hierarchy, a diversity of forms and organizational practices in production (Grabher, 2002b), and an explicit recognition of the role of consumers as co-contributors in "value creating ecologies" (Hearn et al. 2007).[8] What unites these comparisons is a more sophisticated framing of how creative practitioners operate in relation to other participants in the creation, circulation and consumption of animated content. Critically, what we observe from practitioners is broadly similar, although understandably more grounded, situational, and pragmatic. For Indian boutique animators, the ecosystem offers a means to interpret the conditions of practice holistically, as a system that remains to be completed:

> I feel that we still don't have a self-sufficient ecosystem. Like in science, we heard the word, ecosystem, for the first time when there would be a water cycle. Everyone depends on the other, and the cycle is completed… I feel that we are yet to close the circle. (Kumaresh, Interview 19)

Facing a rapidly changing industrial context in an emerging economy that is itself under-researched and relatively poorly understood, Kumaresh does what many outside observers have also done, and adopts an ecological and broadly evolutionary perspective in order to explain it. However as an animator and designer, he not only engages this question in spoken or written form, he elaborates it visually in the form of a cycle (table 2.6):

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[7] In this, ecologies also invoke logics of situated learning in communities of practice (Wenger, 2000).
[8] Numerous ecological theories have been used to explain diverse phenomena of competition and collaboration within the cultural industries. Examples include John Dimmick's theory of the niche (2003) and John Howkins' 'creative ecologies' (2009).

Table 2.6:   *Visualizing an animation ecosystem*

(Kumaresh, 2011)

When it comes to conceptualizing animation, industrial reflexivity cannot be limited to analysis of self-theorizing talk. Given that the creative practice is inherently visual; it is not surprising that the objects of reflexivity that practitioners habitually use to make sense of their practices should be too. Caldwell utilizes such artefacts or 'deep texts' to tease out complex meanings that might be concealed in a research interview or informal conversation (2008: 26). In this case, the interplay between testimony and artefact is more nuanced, as this superficially familiar image underlines a complex interpretive process. Du Gay sets out five critical positions for understanding: representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation. Building upon the structure of a circuit of culture, I approach this as a way to understand meaning-making as an ongoing process between different stages and stakeholders, and a model to conceive and begin to shape those cultural relationships.

Kumaresh uses this image to communicate mutual interdependency in animation production, and the need for a complete circuit in order for local production to be sustainable. While drawn from a presentation in which he presents a linear timeline of Indian animation, Kumaresh instead chooses the form of a water cycle. Yet, the absence of rigid lines of dependency suggests the possibility of more complex relations between participants and stages. Broadly, at least five of the eight points on the cycle: from "Film maker>Concept>Idea" to "Sound & Music" refer to stages of production; factors broadly shaping the creation of content. Two: "Funds" and "Film," also invoke regulation and representation; forces that influence what meanings are may be made available to

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consumers. The last two: "Audience" and "Feedback," refer to processes of consumption and identity work; the meanings audiences create and the cultural ends these serve.

In so much as a continuous cycle begins anywhere, Kumaresh starts with the filmmaker's 'original' idea. While for du Gay it matters little where you begin, both ontologically and from the perspective of producers, it makes sense to join the cycle at the point when a new cultural artefact appears and becomes a focus of meaning (Born, 2000: 416). Here we see a visual summation of the concerns with autonomy and control presented in the previous section, stressing individuality within a collective production processes, especially the creative labour and authority of the director. Consistent with calls for animators to do their 'homework' the candle in the image suggests the time required for pre-production, 'burning the midnight oil.' One of the key features of these narrative explanations of practice is the range of obligations they place upon themselves as creators of content, to account not only for the process of production, but the understandings of other key participants in the circulation and reception of locally produced animation. The correspondences between Kumaresh and Suresh's cycles and 'circuits of culture' are most clear in how they call for attention to be paid to each stage of the circulation of animation. Just as du Gay asserts that the analysis of any given text must pass through the entire circuit in order to for it to be adequately understood, boutique practitioners increasingly subject their own activity to a similar standard.

Educating Stakeholders

Perhaps the most telling images in Kumaresh's cycle are not those that directly relate to the production process, but rather suggest relationships with other ecosystem stakeholders: negotiations for funding from investors and distributors, and reflexive feedback from the audience. These stages represent particular challenges for boutique producers; breaks in a self-contained production ecosystem. Kumaresh specifically isolates 'Funds' and 'Production' to suggest that without access to outside resources local production is not possible. Likewise, distributing content without engaging an audience cannot stimulate further production. In keeping with accounts in the previous chapter, the perceived domination of distribution by multinational networks, investors and Bollywood producers largely unfamiliar with animation means that these participants are increadingly regarded as gatekeepers, and it is through the success of engagement, or lack of it, with them that the ecosystem is in effect governed.

Kumaresh describes how the same experiential learning processes that animators apply to themselves also apply to others in the ecosystem, "Our clients are not animation literate. We ourselves are not literate so how can we blame them? It is up to us to take

them through the process" (Interview 19). This engagement between designer and client makes the reflexive practice and identity work of boutique animators available to outsiders, creating alignment between specialized groups within a wider industrial environment (Caldwell 2008: 149). As with clients, Suresh places the responsibility on animators to create the regulatory conditions conductive to their practice, to directly engage policymakers averse to action, "Every time we have a meeting the minister says, 'I don't know what [animation] is. You guys have to educate me'" (Interview 23). In the intellectual tradition of Florida's 'creative class' (2002), the policy promotion of creative work within a 'cultural ecosystem' is seen as crucial to the stimulation of a wider knowledge economy, yet as Stewart Hall suggests, such markets require policing (1997, 229). Advocates call upon regulators to act proactively to provide environments that nurture creativity, connecting public funding of innovative to a content-hungry commercial sector. However, boutique animators' engagement with regulators reveals an atmosphere that can be at best described as benign neglect.

To develop this further, consider Suresh's testimony of a "self-sustainable cycle" of animation (Interview 23). Like others I spoke to, he begins with the need for government action to reserve a broadcast allocation for locally produced content. It is through such policy initiative that many boutique practitioners feel they could target a wider and increasingly "animation savvy" audience. Appealing against regulatory hesitance, Suresh asserts that building a "massive audience" would in turn not only produce "massive revenue for the government," it would support further local production, leading to new producers entering the market, an increase in animation employment for young people, and growth in revenue from the core market for advertising, all of which would recoup initial investments and sustain a continuous cycle:

> That's my theory. These are things I am thinking on my own. I am also working on some TV series that could be produced at a small budget but pushing the quality level really high and then trying my luck with the channels. If they can air them, that is some starting point. I am not relying on the government to do much. Until we try and take those first steps I don't think there is a point in waiting for big daddy to come and give you some funds. (ibid)

Quotas such as Suresh describes are contentious in Indian animation, not largely because practitioners cannot agree about their utility, but rather whether or not such aggressive government action is to be expected. As Madhavan suggests, in a country with lingering concerns with poverty, hunger, and corruption, there are many issues that take precedence over extending a "helping hand" to animation (Interview 2). Suresh's invocation of "big daddy" also resonates with accounts I analysed in Chapter One, in which outside interference has been associated with a loss of creative autonomy (Interview 15a; 39). In

that light, the positions taken by Indian boutique producers suggest a new aspect of self-sufficiency, not only balancing risk and reward, but also personal accountability.

Audience Reflexivity

The other gap that boutique practitioners have identified is between Indian animators and a local audience for original content. This draws upon the experience of outsourcing in which the relationship between the producer and consumer has been largely severed. Kumaresh describes how the, "[outsourcing] ecosystem starts abroad, comes to India for a while, and then, ends abroad" (Interview 19). Central to his model of a local ecosystem is the need for direct feedback from the consumer to the filmmaker. This model is built upon the premise that there is not only a geographic and cultural, but also a reflexive relationship between artisanal practitioners and 'their own' audience:

> [W]hen we are doing service-based work, a majority of the films are not being seen by our audience. They are either for the European industry or for the American industry. They would probably come to India after a while, but the primary audience is not the Indian audience. So, the film makers are not getting their feedback… that feedback is what inspires a film maker to make more stuff, and that culture is still not grown in our country. (ibid)

Here, Kumaresh's assertions closely match outside assessments of the sustainability local cultural production, what the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development terms "critical feedback mechanisms" based in "the promotion and sustenance of a viable civil society" (UNCTAD, 2010: 83). There are some promising indications that such a critical culture of feedback is growing, accompanying Indian studios' moves into locally produced content. Some of Kumaresh's characters like *Simpoo* have developed a strong following YouTube and other social media (ibid). Opportunities for reflexive engagement between neo-artisanal producers and literate consumers are also exemplified by the recent success of Comic-Con India (Norcliffe and Rendace, 2003: 247).

Consistent with other aspects of neo-artisanal practice, this testimony reflects a rejection of an industrial disconnect between producers and audiences (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011: 200). For some, audience response has a significant impact on their sense of meaning and relevance in their work. Suresh associates an understanding of audience with depth of character and storytelling, "If I try to see you as a person and try to see you as an animated character, I need to know much more about your culture, your background, various aspects about you" (Interview 23). Implicitly, the affinity and mutual understanding between producer and audience is fundamental to a sense of self-sufficiency in the animation ecosystem.

This interpretation of a close relationship between animation producers and local consumers of their content expands upon Indrajit Banerjee's assertion that imported Western content does not enjoy unchallenged dominance with Indian audiences (2002). Instead, given a choice, local content may achieve greater popularity by operating "at a cultural discount" (521). What this testimony suggests is that very much the same is also true for local practitioners. As Kumaresh indicates on his website, "We are most happy creating animated content for the Indian audiences" (Vaibhav Studios, "About Us" 2013). This distinction between global and local audiences subtly integrates the contrast between creativity and commerce. Global work may be more lucrative, but local work operates on a 'discount' of personal cultural relevance. Here again, emphasizing a need to understand both how practitioners reflexively understand the circulation of local practice is absolutely central to narratives of self-sufficiency. As with the need to engage with regulation, this too is defined in terms of responsibility, to, "[increase] local audience expectations, and elevat[e] them to more literate animation audiences. These are some of the duties I feel I am bound by" (Suresh, Interview 23). Ultimately this comes back to Kumaresh's earlier assertion that producers must do their 'homework' to improve the product to better engage with the audience that is closest to them.

In this section I have shown how boutique producers have developed particular understandings of how animation moves within a local system, reflecting how practitioners engage with a range of different participants in the creation, distribution and reception of original animation. These practitioner-devised framings of cultural practice suggest parallels to comparable cycles and ecological metaphors used by academics, in particular the 'circuit of culture.' Conceiving relationships between creative practitioners, clients, distributors, and in particular the emerging local audience, reveal the importance of accountability within a narrative of self-sufficiency. This cannot really be explained with recourse to economic rationality. Instead, in the next section I examine the patterns of non-commercial motivations that underlie this practice, particularly that locally specific personal animation is conceptualized as both an imperative and a reward of creative autonomy, one that allows animators to place themselves within longer continuities of cultural production.

3.   *Discourses of Passion*

Having characterized boutique and independent animation practice by a narrative of self-sufficiency, socially embedded relations between participants in a local animation ecosystem, and uncovered accounts attesting to a discourse of personal responsibility, in

the third section of this chapter I turn to other non-commercial motivations for practice. While accounts within the globally-engaged outsourcing sector provide a sophisticated narrative on the boundaries between creative or professional legitimacy and economic exploitation, this ultimately comes down to a balance between creativity and commercial rationality. From the point of view of local boutique and independent local production, this is extended to what Ortner (2013, 34) terms a "discourse of passion." As Chaudhuri asserted at the KAVGC summit, "Niche is the market, by definition. That's the only way to do it. Do it small…Without passion we're dead. If you were to analyse this with business sense, we shouldn't be doing this" (ABAI, 2013a).[9] Just as Bourdieu (1993) divides cultural production the mass market and the niche, practitioners distinguish between commercial and passion projects. Across accounts, passion for animation practice belies economic reality, a craft rather than a career, and allowing projects to proceed even when it may be financially untenable to do so. Even *Hanuman,* the very film that spawned the feature bubble, was "one man's passion" (G. Rao, Interview 3).

Given challenges in securing distribution for local production, original projects created by boutique and independent animators suggest passion or intense personal commitment. Here, I analyse how passion counters short-term commercial considerations, as a key factor that allows participants in small Indian animation studios to conceive and engage in the high risk activities of maintaining a local animation ecosystem. Rather than emphasising industrial growth, here long-term sustainability is explicitly associated with cultural specificity, continuity of creative practice, and personal fulfilment, even perhaps at a cost to depth of engagement between participants in the ecosystem. To paraphrase Bilton's account of small studio practice, conceiving non-financial rewards for creative risks, represents an 'unbusinesslike anti-strategy' (1999: 29). This presents the impression of a self-described community of people who forgo financial security out of dedication to the practice of animation: or as Sumant Rao asserts, "Passion for animation, period. I mean if you are in it for the money, then you are not the fraternity. If you are in it for doing animation, then you are, no matter what your job profile" (Interview 39). Again, this is a division between authentic work that prioritizes creativity, and asking, "What is the market share? …It's not animation; it's marketing" (ibid).

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[9] This account is particularly striking given Chaudhuri's previous work at Disney India.

As in the previous chapter, it is worth pausing to consider the consequences of this discourse for understanding of the structure of Indian animation as a cultural practice and commercial enterprise. While many practitioners agree in the assessment that animation is not an industry, they do for fundamentally different reasons:

> I have never considered animation as an industry. My view of it is this. If you fall ill… you are taken to the Intensive Care Unit, and you are going to be operated on. You are in the operation theatre, and you are asking this doctor, are you a good doctor? And he says, yeah, yeah, I have been in this medical industry for a long time or he says oh yes, I have been practicing medicine for a long time, okay? ...Which one would you really prefer to get operated on by? The guy who says this I'm practicing medicine or the guy who says medical industry because you have no idea what a medical industry is. The guy who is practicing animation knows what animation is. So, animation is a profession. It's not an industry. The output of animation can be an industry. (Sumant Rao, Interview 39)

In contrast to accounts that emphasize Indian animation as an 'space' for commercial leadership or focus of emerging brand identity, are perspectives that explicitly separate creative practice from cultural commodity. While the way artisanal practitioners prioritize creative practice may be superficially associated with "art for art's sake" (Caves, 2000, 4), such an interpretation belies the extent to which this reflexivity also invokes cultural citizenship, collective memory, and anxieties about personal identity in a globalized production environment.

Cultural Specificity and Continuity

As in many countries and cultural industries, globalization has profoundly shaped both creative and reflexive practice of Indian animation, as symbol creators seek the means to define their place in a continually changing media environment. Many independent practitioners that I spoke to specifically indicated a high degree of self-realization through a lifelong commitment to creative work in a long tradition of Indian artistic practice. This is also overtly reflected in studio mission statements, as at Animagic, founded, "with the belief that an animation studio needed to be a place where we searched for our artistic and national identity" (Animagic, "About Us" 2008). Similarly, Pradeep Patil and Shraddha Sakhalkar of Roaming Design integrate a visual representation of continuity, relating a cultural affinity, sense of place, and contemporary practice (table 2.7). The forthrightness with which many practitioners responded to questions about the local relevance of their practice requires some analysis. That local practice should draw upon local social traditions, iconic characters and so on is hardly surprising (Scott, 2005: 7).

As the UNCTAD report suggests, "The foundation of the creative industries in any country is the traditional knowledge that underlies that country's distinctive forms of creative expression" (2010: 38). What is significant is that across these accounts this is posed not as a commercial advantage, but largely in opposition to it, in terms of cultural continuity:

> What I was ten years back is not where our history starts. It starts where our civilization started, which is so huge that you become just a speck. A larger history of things that have lived or survived for longer are for me more precious than trends… Of course there is change and there is a new medium to start, but you cannot forget all this. (G. Rao, Interview 3)

This responds to what many practitioners perceive as an absence of an 'Indian idiom' of animation (Ramnath, 2014) or indigenous graphic popular culture more generally. As Sharma (table 2.8) describes, "You're taking hand-me-downs from the west, but you're not necessarily able to see this is also a hand-me down. Let me see what hand-me-down is resonant with me. What is it that I come from?" (Interview 26).

Continuity is strongly associated with patience, stressing long-term development. Invoked by Rao when she remarks, "it is going to take really really long. Our kids might benefit from the relentless pursuit that we have right now" (Interview 3). As I investigate in the following chapters, this attitude towards cultural continuity has substantial consequences for design education.[10] Yet, specific to this discussion here, it also invokes a wider cultural conflict between individual and collective identity that rises in discourse of personal animation in contrast to sustained collaboration between boutique practitioners:

> Europe and the west have a sense of individual identity. In the east now we are confused. It used to be about us, now we think it is about I, but we are not really sure. Because somewhere in-between we are caught, between wanting to have our family and not have our family, wanting to be completely independent and not being completely independent. People are so caught up in this that the identity is lost. (C. Sharma, Interview 26)

Sharma's observation sums up a great deal of the ambiguity in the conception of shared identity in animation practice: a possible overlap in identity between 'us' and 'I.' While both the strategic practices of boutique animation production in India, and the reflexive understandings and narratives of self-sufficiency on which they seem to be based suggest the development of a sophisticated social infrastructure. However the balance of individual creativity and engagement is very much contested. This combined with other local cultural conditions, factors into the proliferation of far more distributed and intermittent networks that are still becoming embedded in the social landscape.

'Personal Animation'

The term 'personal' applied to animation practice appears in a number of different places in Indian animator discourse. However, I first encountered it in Gurnani's interview, or "artfelt conversation" with Gitanjali Rao (2005a), referring to a desirable form of animation practice (table 2.9). As an independent artist with creative agency representation in the west, Rao demonstrates the degree of dispersal of production made possible both by communication technologies and loose management of symbol creators. The compartmentalization of personal animation from commercial practice, whereby

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[10] Asserting a connection to aesthetic and craft traditions invokes practices of continuous learning. Sharma suggests that it is awareness of a legacy that enables continuity of practice, which makes the apprenticeship form of learning a, "transformational act" (Interview 26). I return to this concept in Chapter Four.

contract animation serves as a means to an end, represents creative freedom and by extension self-sufficiency as rewards of cultural practice:

Table 2.9:	*Gitanjali Rao*
Courtesy of Gitanjali Rao (2011)	Gitanjali Rao is a Mumbai-based independent filmmaker. Graduating from the Sir J. J. Institute of Applied Art in 1994, she is a self-taught animator in addition to work in illustration and design. Her *Printed Rainbow* (2006) premiered in competition at Cannes Critic's Week and won awards for the best short film in addition to being shortlisted for an Academy Award. Her most recent short, *True Love Story* (2013) won the Golden Conch for animation at the 2014 Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF).
Rao finances her independent art film production with animated commercial production, under representation by the American agency, Acme Film Works. Rao has had two feature films in production and maintains an international profile, serving on the 2011 Critic's week jury for short films (G. Rao, 2013).	
I met Rao in her home studio in Mumbai, October 2011.	

> Personal in a sense, nobody is interested in financing it therefore it becomes personal… Since we don't have funding for films, at least for me how it worked is I didn't find funding for a short film which I had ideas to do, [so] I funded it myself. I become the producer; I become the director; I become the animator, which allows me to tell my own story exactly as I want to. (G. Rao, Interview 3)

Such testimony reflects an attribute commonly ascribed to symbol creators, as "suspicious of the bureaucratic control of creativity" (Hesmondhalgh, 2013: 33). Accounts suggest a wide range of risk that animators are willing to take on in order to maintain creative control. Rao sees operations and economic concerns as a distraction, "I've seen a lot of creative people get lost in the administration and economics of running a place and clog their creative skills in the process." Central to the optimism of several practitioner accounts is the expectation that this freedom from bureaucratic control is becoming easier to achieve as technologies to enable self-distribution of personal content become more accessible:

> The technology of distribution becoming truly democratic; once that happens then the possibilities are endless. And it's gonna happen [sic]. So young animators can make stuff on their own - can distribute stuff on their own… It's already happening. My wish list would be to get more people out there who want to do it this way. Do it with their minds rather than thinking about what an audience wants, what the business plan would be. Do it for yourself first. (Arnab Chaudhuri, KAVGC, 2013a)

In contrast, the way that Ranade invokes the personal is subtly different. What sets her apart is that she extends personal animation to be an end in itself, grounding creative practice in a range of environmental, social and political frames:

> You need to have a world view; you need to experiment with the medium; you need to push the medium. We always try to fit in somehow with what the west

requires. There is no platform for personal animation, makers of art animation, or animation that addresses needs of communication beyond entertainment. (qtd. in Gurnani, 2004)

Ranade appears to follow Wayne's call for the "critical practitioner" who is self-consciously accountable for their practice and contextually aware of its position in relation to social power (2002:2). She places personal animation within a cultural tradition of individual art practice, and considers the position of industry, institutional authority, cultural point of view and individual creativity.

As Ortner asserts in her investigation of independence in American cinema, "independence does not mean isolation" (2013: 33), but instead membership in a community of people defined by their opposition to mainstream commercial practice. While boutique practitioners do invoke just such a 'fraternity,' the coherence of this is very much open to debate. With a strong emphasis on individual creativity, and the personal as the ultimate representation of local relevance, the prominent narrative of self-sufficiency within boutique animation complicates the development of wider networks between individuals and firms. Understandings that promote creative isolation come into conflict with the need to sustain a networked ecosystem through collaboration and knowledge exchange. This is reflected in practitioner testimony that suggest patterns of both introverted creative practice and social engagement, professional and cultural affinity and disavowal, reflecting different inflections of identity and identity work. The position of the creative individual is strongly contested in the literature of the cultural industries. While it is individual entrepreneurism that supposedly drives innovation and economic growth, it is left unclear how this activity translates to the kind of social and professional changes that we observe.

While one of the key innovations of the boutique animation sector has been use of contract work to self-fund in-house creative projects, there are challenges to such a production strategy, especially in that it exposes boutique producers to the speculative risks of going it alone, without input from distributors. Some key participants maintain reservations about this strategy. Producer, director and educator Ranjit Singh critiques the assertion that going it alone is the only option:

> It is a misplaced perception that channels are closed to content creation locally. The thing is that every channel wants a collaborative process. Now I think the mistake that people make here is that rather than making it collaborative they will make a finished end product and then try to sell it, thinking that when I have a finished product it will be easier to sell. (Interview 28)

Animagic has for some time embraced a production model based on collaboration, working with client organizations and funding bodies to produce their films, and more

recently partnering with larger studios and distributors. In contrast, other boutique practitioners have been extremely reticent to adopt the practices of larger firms, associating outsourcing with exploitation, and objecting to the notion that, "if you want to get up somewhere you have to step on somebody's toes." (G. Rao, Interview 3).

Reflexivity among cultural producers has become key to success in artisanal clusters. However circumstances differ and no two settings are likely to be the same. While boutique Indian animators have developed quite sophisticated interpretations of their own strategic practices and long-term relations with the animation ecosystem as a whole, reflexivity amongst producers has proven a challenge, and relational networks are only beginning to emerge. Despite tentative steps towards the development of an embedded social economy, what many commentators see as lacking is the persistent collaboration that has often accompanied project ecologies in other relatively artisanal clusters, such as Toronto's computer animation scene (Eberts and Norcliffe, 1998) or London's advertising village (Grabher 2001). Practitioners advocate efforts to increase the impact of small-studio production through subcontracting work locally, developing a mutually self-supporting social and economic structure. Digitales' Chand makes the comparison to the project ecologies of the advertising industry explicit:

> Advertising has created a supply chain of the agency, production house, animation house, sound house, TV crew, voicing, as different sectors. And they do a full project and still there's entire different subsections of the industry cater[ing] to itself. (Interview 18)

In committing to a project ecology, the discourse of self-sufficiency under consideration here describes a far more complex interaction of different identities that accommodates both a strong 'introverted' drive for independence, and a matching commitment to social engagement on carefully negotiated terms. Building on the project-based organization of boutique production, some producers have experimented with increased creative collaboration, on either a formal or informal basis. There have been attempts to develop collaborative production pipelines for original content. 2NZ Animation's feature film *Toonpur Ka Superhero* (K. Khurana, 2010) was produced between four different studios (Udiaver, *DNA*, 2011). As Udiaver optimistically suggests, "It won't be a big surprise if the first big success story in Indian animation comes not from one, not two, but a group of studios putting their heads and hands together" (*DNA* 2011).

Conclusions

I conclude here by returning briefly to the theme of organizational discourse, the contrasting narratives of that set apart the globalized outsourcing sector from boutique

practice, and their consequences for a wider culture of Indian animation production. I question if this narrative of self-sufficiency has indeed produced the second giant of Indian animation that Sabnani envisioned in 2005? If so, what has it learned from the first giant and its narrative of global engagement? I suggest that given a close examination of evolving practitioner accounts, perhaps there may soon be little demand for giants after all. The creative autonomy that artisanal symbol creators have experienced to innovate and address new niche markets has encouraged them to also explore new ways of interpreting the conditions of that practice as well. Indeed, given the tenuous balance of creativity and risk inherent to entrepreneurial practice, such reflexive strategizing would seem to be an essential part of their work. I have observed how the theorization of self-sufficiency is inclusive of a wide area of cultural practice, comparable to extant academic theories of industrial ecology, addressing complex patterns of collaboration and competition in a dynamic cultural and economic environment – yet framed by practitioner understandings, uniquely grounded in local conditions.

I began by outlining a narrative of self-sufficiency, describing a boutique production sector that seeks to maximize both creative opportunity and sustainability. I examined how boutique studio producers, independent practitioners and trade press writers have represented the practice of smaller firms as distinct, characterized a strong emphasis on pre-production, and originality creative autonomy and economic control. I then interpreted aspirational cycles or ecosystems of production and the correspondences between these and academic models of cultural production. By conceptualizing relationships between artisanal producers, industry stakeholders, and literate audiences, I revealed how a narrative of self-sufficiency subsumes commercial considerations beneath a complex range of cultural and personal motivations. In section three I examined these specifically non-economic rewards, framing practice in terms of local aesthetic traditions and even overtly personal concerns, and finally how these balance with efforts to develop collaborative social networks within an ecosystem of boutique practice.

It is somewhat paradoxical to observe that the same conditions that have produced such innovative creative practices as well as the network effects of that innovation – increasing social capital and opportunities for engagement – also offer some of the biggest challenges to the cultural and economic cohesion of a boutique production sector, that a narrative of self-sufficiency provides both a template for introspective evolution and social exchange. These challenges are symptomatic of the social and industrial conditions that structure the work of Indian animators even as they both invoke and implement them through their labour and critical practice. As a result, those best

positioned to empirically interpret these experiences and resolve the tensions between risk and reward, commercial viability and cultural relevance, creative freedom and collaborative engagement – are the creative practitioners themselves. A key feature of this practice is how animators propose these challenges should be resolved, and I have argued that these solutions serve not only to justify their own choices but to provide a course of action for others to follow. While their origins may be in the interpretation of personal practice, theoretical narratives of self-sufficiency in boutique practice circulate as shared knowledge within personal and professional networks, reinforced in spaces of negotiation and collective action within the social world and beyond. This provides an opportunity to observe the creation of animator discourse, moving from private to public, pairing and blending theory and practice, addressing challenges, migrating to new areas of practice, and possibly helping to reflexively define the order of that practice within the bounds of an emerging culture of production. Each of these features shapes understanding of past practice, and informs future activity and entry of new practitioners into Indian animation practice.

While this investigation has so far centred on situation of Indian animation practice, its findings must also address the social and economic structures that surround and sustain this cultural production. Having described theorization of self-sufficiency as a source of strategies to evolve animation practice, it is useful to also consider how these strategies are enacted, and their arguments institutionally reproduced. Beyond the individual social interactions I have addressed so far, in the following two chapters I describe two key venues where these concepts are first instilled, institutions for education and professional development.

Part Two: Animation Education

The preceding analysis has exposed a wide discourse on how animation practitioners define and represent their identities in the face of industrial and cultural transformation. In Chapter One, I presented a narrative for sectorial growth, through which large firms have negotiated narrow areas of control within multinational power structures. In Chapter Two, I explored neo-artisanal practice, asserting the emergence of a contrasting narrative of self-sufficiency that rejects this engagement in favour of a local 'ecosystem.' I revealed how this responds to the perceived loss of creative autonomy and identity in India's rise as an outsourcing destination. However, while such developments might suggest an effort to create a wholly separate social framework for boutique production, pragmatic relationships between participants observe no such distinctions. No matter how great the desire is to work outside an established industrial power structure, Indian animation practice is very much entwined with it. In short, rather than neatly resolve social and economic tensions, I have argued that the emergence of opposing practitioner narratives forefronts the ongoing negotiation of a dynamic culture of production, balancing creativity, and commerce. While the positions these participants take on are very different, they nonetheless describe rigorous attempts to collectively interpret the conditions of practice. It is this reflexivity that I have identified as a kind of theory which practitioners mobilize throughout their social and professional lives. Much of the resulting critical debate is focused upon education.

In Part Two I investigate the how institutionalized learning takes place within Indian animation; not only in how practical skills and technical knowledge are shared, but how this experience shapes identity. As elsewhere in this research, I am most concerned with how this is reflexively expressed, not only in the accounts of industrial elites, but those of students, teachers, and other professionals. Many approaches to teaching animation have been tried in India, and, at the time of this research, animation education may be roughly divided into two categories: government-run interdisciplinary design education and specialized animation training by commercial academies. These feature dissimilar organizational structures, cultures, and instructional methodologies. My analysis is likewise divided into two chapters. In Chapter Three, I examine the National Institute of Design (NID) and Industrial Design Centre (IDC), while I investigate the numerous competing franchise academies in Chapter Four. In both chapters, I consider the ways of belonging that define membership in educational communities, in contrast to growing individualism, leading to potentially drastic impacts in later professional life.

Chapter Three: Towards Indigenous Education – The Design Institutes

"We have been taught here design and we are teaching other people design." Sumant Rao, Associate Professor, IDC (Interview 39)

"[B]eing designers we have a responsibility of creating our own content, to tell your own story for India or for anything; what you like." Mehul Mahicha, Vivi5/2004 NID graduate (Interview 6b)

Introduction

The sustainability of any organizational structure in the cultural industries is contingent on learning. This includes such diverse activities as how individuals and groups of practitioners begin to develop the technical and creative capabilities needed to compete in the global market for outsourcing contracts, as well as the experimentation in short-form storytelling that spurs the growth of boutique studios. Just as practitioners learn to create sophisticated animation content, they also acquire the skills to participate in and contribute to a culture of production, including all the varied cultural expressions, social arrangements, and symbolic practices that communities use to generate identity, negotiate consensus, and reproduce themselves (Caldwell, 2008: 2). They learn how engage in reflexive practice and to theorize about their experience in nuanced and challenging ways.

This educational reflexivity also conceals a practical imperative. Among the most critical concerns for any industrial sector is the need to attract and develop a new generation of workers (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2009: 135). Not only must a system of learning transfer requisite creative and technical skills, but it also involves a process of socialization whereby students develop the norms, cultural competencies, and attitudes needed to access further knowledge and work in an evolving production environment. Just as the organizational conditions of production continue to undergo transformation, so too do the schools and training centres that the community designates and holds accountable for instruction. As animation work becomes increasingly project-focused, many of the traditional mechanisms for skills acquisition and socialization in the workplace begin to break down (2011: 343).[1] Nonetheless the fundamental demand for skilled creative workers continues, and places increasing pressure on educational

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[1] As novice and expert practitioners are separated, earlier skills transfer mechanisms based on experiential learning become difficult to sustain. I return to these phenomena, particularly the '*Gurukul*' apprenticeship, in Chapters Four and Five.

institutions to fill the gap. Much of this falls upon two government-run schools: The National Institute of Design (NID) in Ahmedabad, and the Industrial Design Centre (IDC) at the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IITB) in Powai, Mumbai.

In this chapter, I consider how socialization occurs in animation design education. I reveal how the students, faculty, and alumni understand social and creative practice within the institutes as fundamental not only to the development of their individual identities, but also the interpersonal networks through which they navigate their professional lives. Design institutes are among several distinct institutions where participatory learning occurs and, they have the potential to be crucial spaces for observing initial identity formation and the creation of imagined communities. As Lisa Henderson puts it, "while the cultivation of professional repertoires does not end with school, schools are increasingly where people first encounter those repertoires in a variety of professional fields" (1990: 12). Modes of belonging practiced in these settings persist in other aspects of professional life, both in the professional settings I examined in the first part of this research and in the community spaces in the following chapters. Given the proliferation of debates over what it means to engage in animation practice, it is useful to ask where different positions originate. Accordingly, I locate social learning at the very centre of this research.

The process of identity formation that accompanies design education is unusual in three senses. The first is due to its political context: the NID and IDC integrate animation instruction in a wider curriculum of 'purposeful' design, itself embedded in a project of national cultural development. Second is that teacher and students present animation as a design skill, based on the principle that design solutions must be unique to the creator, to the project, and to a local cultural context. Accordingly, the NID and IDC tend to produce animation graduates who identify not as animators but interdisciplinary and autonomous designers. This exchange also highlights an activist rhetoric, whereby students are socialized to not only accept but embrace occupational flexibility as a virtue of their profession. However, while this creative independence is corroborated by alumni, they also face persistent challenges to support themselves in animation practice against dominant industrial frameworks.

This reveals the third unusual feature design education, its self-imposed distance from industry. It is clear that the prestigious design institutes produce talented graduates who are adaptable, independent, and able to find professional outlets for their skills. However their ideals are not aligned with the stated needs of major animation employers, where a conceptual focus on individual creativity in social context conflicts with the

industrial division of labour. A commitment to interdisciplinary design does not necessarily result in positive outcomes if graduates lack the skills required by the sector they seek to enter, if indeed they are interested in industry in the first place (Ball, 2002: 10). The design institutes do not provide either the volume of graduates needed to supply demand for entry-level technical employment needs, or people who can afford, against economic or family pressure, to start at the bottom of the current industrial hierarchy.

Approach

In this research I follow a hybrid approach to cultural and industrial analysis, based in constant comparison between interview accounts, participant observation, and textual analysis. For this chapter I also integrate Wenger's Social Learning System as a sensitizing framework to aid understanding of identity formation in institutional context (2000). The notion that novices learn and develop identities through social participation is well supported by educational literature. However, my preference is that existing models earn their way into the analysis only as they describe observed data (Glaser, 1978). Social Learning helps reveal how the NID and IDC operate as a communities of practice, featuring shared domains, close interaction between participants, and a formally defined 'knowledge base' (Wenger, 2006: 2).

Moreover, this allows me to look beyond formal instruction towards observation and practice. As Irena Grugulis and Dimitrinka Stoyanova suggest, social learning blurs the boundaries between learning and doing through an emphasis on participation. "[T]he designer is prompted to new and innovative activity by observing the designs of others" (2009: 139). Further experience leads to not only greater competence, but also social identity through fitting that experience into a community frame. Wenger describes three 'modes of belonging' or ways of participating in social learning systems that I also adapt here: 1) engagement – participating in practice together with others; 2) imagination – placing oneself in a social context; and 3) alignment – coordinating individual actions and understandings with collective objectives (2000: 228).

My research for this chapter centred on two key events where I could directly engage with participants: the NID's 'Chitrakatha International Student Animation Festival' on 19-23 October 2011, and the 'Damroo: Creating Content(ment) for Children Seminar' at IDC from 10-12 November 2011 at the IDC. These occasions presented several key advantages for study, bringing together a range of stakeholders from across the country. These included not only members of the immediate school communities, but alumni and professional contacts from industry. Design faculty acted as 'key informants' who could facilitate contacts across these networks. The resulting data for this portion of

the project comprised collected texts, extensive notes, and 16 intensive interviews with 19 participants: five teachers, five students, five recent graduates and a number of prominent industry alumni (table 3.1).

Table 3.1:   *Government Design Institutes:*

The National Institute of Design (NID) Ahmedabad	*The Industrial Design Centre (IDC), Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IITB)*

Faculty
  - Sekhar Mukherjee, Director of Animation Film Design
  - Ajay Kumar Tiwari
Alumni/Visiting Faculty
  - Arnab Chaudhuri
  - Suresh Eriyat (Studio Eeksaurus)
  - Vaibhav Kumaresh (Vaibhav Studios)
  - Pradeep Patil (Roaming Design)
  - Dhimant Vyas (Zynga)
Alumni
  - Shraddha Sakhalkar (Roaming Design)
  - Rita Dhankani and Mehul Mahicha (Vivi5 Animation/Art/Design)
  - Debjani Mukherjee (Bandyopadhyay) (Bol, The Language of Children)
Students
  - Nalini Bhutia
  - Krishna Chandran and Manasi Parikh (Bechain Nagri)
	Faculty
	  - Shilpa Ranade, Associate Professor
	  - Sumant Rao, Associate Professor (Animagic)
	  - Nina Sabnani, Associate Professor
	Students
	  - Dharma Rao Balaga
	  - Piyush Kumar Verma

In the first section of this chapter, I examine the trajectory of design education, introducing the politically charged position design occupies in the conception of national identity. The interdisciplinary design instruction favoured by the government institutes not only places them in a wider context of prestigious creative skills education, but also asserts a meaningful connection to the local environment. This manifests in simultaneous reflexive assertions of cultural affinity and personal autonomy. I build on this in the second section by investigating how students articulate their developing identities. Here, they reflexively account for the professional realities faced by autonomous designers in the market for animation labour, but do so at an overt distance from industry. Many devise their own social and economic networks and seek to maintain them into professional practice.

Accordingly in the third section I examine challenges to a design-based education approach, the limitations of training in a highly individualistic mode of creative practice, and how the process of socialization in the design institutes might hinder graduates. I conclude that despite the crucial role the design institutes have to play in generating and sustaining innovative practice, their main contribution is as laboratories for identity that

students, teachers, and alumni draw upon as they radically reimagine the culture of production.

1. *Design, Animation, and Cultural Development*

Design education occupies a politically charged position in the modern conception of Indian national identity. The way animation is taught as design at the NID and IDC complicates the already contested role of education in the evolution of the cultural industries, and the emergence of animation in particular. Billy Matheson (2006) investigates the interaction between education and industry, with a focus not only on economic growth but the social outcomes for design professions. He asserts a growing tension between design education and cultural change. For Bourdieu, "the role of educational institutions is to see the 'reproduction' of culture as it is" (58). However, these same institutions exist within a capitalist tradition of promoting cultural change, not only (as Matheson suggests) through discourses of technological innovation and creative trends, but also through dissatisfaction with the cultural and economic status quo, educational reform, and advocacy for evolution of industrial practice. Further, in order to foster innovation, design education must empower students to take control of their own learning experience, providing them with opportunities to practice "the art of making decisions… and blurring the boundaries between learning and working professionally" (60).

I begin by critically examining the stories teachers tell about how animation came to be part of a tradition of purposeful design. The government institutes' approach to design is concerned with aesthetics and problem solving, but also improvement and utility. According to publicity materials provided by the IDC:

> A Designer is a professional who creates new products and environments or improves those that already exist. A designer by nature is a highly creative person and enjoys solving problems. Designers constantly keep in touch with new materials, processes and technology and readily understand aesthetic, social and functional needs of users. (IDC, "Admission FAQ" 2012a)

To interrogate the processes of socialization and identity formation that go on throughout animation design education, it is necessary to understand what these institutions have been set up to achieve. Animation curricula at the two design schools emphasize content creation and storytelling in an imagined cultural milieu, utilizing an interdisciplinary problem-solving approach. The stated objective is to introduce students to a broad base of design skills and how they may be applied to animation within Indian narrative and aesthetic traditions:

The Animation program in IDC strives to create people with expertise who will eventually emerge as leaders to influence the future of Animation … India will soon be a player in the international framework of animation production. This turning point brings with it huge responsibilities. We are a newly born, yet unnurtured potential animation culture without a substantial animation history. It is an important time [for] learning and practice that is informed by an indigenous sensibility. ("Animation at IDC" IDC, 2012b)

Consistent with my analysis in the preceding chapters, this account invokes both global and local relevance. Considering their status as government-run schools, what is most striking about the institutional cultures of the animation design is the extent to which they embrace change. Students are encouraged to develop practitioner identities based not in the current demands of industry but in the traditions of the nation and the possibilities of animation in the future. In the absence of a substantive animation history, this narrative calls upon a history of Indian design, whose relevance I discuss below.

Purposeful Design

Comprehensive design education has been a project of Indian national identity from its inception. The first art schools in the country emerged in the 1840's (*Design in India*, 2005:1).[2] Design as a discipline can be credited to polymath and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore and the aesthetic and intellectual revolution of the Bengali Renaissance. In 1958, a decade after independence, American designers Charles and Ray Eames were invited to produce the 'India Design Report' conceiving design as a fundamental tool of nation building, fostering quality of life, industry, and communication. The result of that report was the 1960 founding of the National Institute of Design (NID) in Ahmedabad. In his biography of NID teacher RL Mistry, Prakash Moorthy, the first graduate of the animation program, describes the founding "committed to the ingenuity of the Lota [a simple metal-ware jug]. Committed to design, as a vehicle to social change," (2005: 59).[3] This was followed in 1969 by the addition of an Industrial Design Centre to the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) campus in Mumbai, including for the first time a postgraduate program in design.[4]

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[2] Among these, the Bombay Art School founded in 1857 would later become the Sir JJ School of the Arts.
[3] Charles Eames noted, "Of all the objects we have seen and admired during our visit to India, the Lota, that simple vessel of everyday use, stands out as perhaps the greatest, the most beautiful" (1958).
[4] The institutes featured communication design quite early in their histories and pioneers like Ishu Patel and N. N. Patel were making animated films at the NID from the 1960s. Yet formal animation programs have been a relatively late addition.

While the institutes place themselves within a long tradition of design, students and faculty within them also invoke the histories of the institutions themselves. This is particularly true of Nina Sabnani (table 3.2) who has been closely involved in both animation programs.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Table 3.2:   Nina Sabnani – IDC</td></tr>
<tr>
<td>

Mukand and Riaz (2005)
Courtesy of Nina Sabnani
</td>
<td>
Nina Sabnani is a filmmaker, illustrator, author, and Associate Professor at the IDC. Like Ram Mohan 24 years earlier, she trained with Clair Weeks, and soon after was instrumental in setting up animation instruction at the NID. She coordinated the program from 1985 to 2003.

Sabnani's films include *Mukand and Riaz* (2005), a story based on her father's experience in the partition of India and Pakistan, and *Tanko Bole Chhe* (*The Stitches Speak*, 2009) an animated
</td>
</tr>
</table>

documentary integrating the narrative embroidered work of Kutch artisans.

Sabnani completed her PhD at the IDC in 2011 and conducts research on the intersection of creative practice and anthropology, with an interest in learning within craft communities ('Research' Sabnani, ca2014). Her 2005 article "The Challenges of a Sleeping Giant" was one of the foundational texts analysed in the preliminary design of this project.

I met Sabnani at her office on the IIT campus in November 2011.

Between 1980 and 1984, Weeks and Roger Noakes conducted workshops at the NID, in the belief that "animation could become indigenous to India" (Sabnani, 2005: 96). These culminated in the founding of a new program in Animation Film Design. Sabnani notes that the initial workshop group consisted of four students: Binita Desai, Chitra Sarathy, Sham Patel Subash Kotwal, and herself. The two men, Patel and Kotwal "left because they had to… they had family pressures. They had to make a living" (Interview 37). The women, Desai and Sabnani, remained to set up the program (with existing faculty RL Mistry and IS Mathur). "We were not under that much pressure, so we were quite happy to carry on doing things." As I reflect in the third section of this chapter, similar demands from family members still shape educational practice at the institutes today.[5]

Sent to observe courses in Europe and North America, Sabnani describes two basic "strands" for animation education: schools with a filmmaking basis like Canada's

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[5] Female animators in India report that their gender has both restricted and opened up their educational options. This echoes similar experiences across a range of animation contexts (Furniss, 1998: 234). Investigating this critical problem satisfactorily would be a project in itself. However, my interview transcripts provide ample data to support this.

Sheridan College, training students for industry, and those teaching animation as art practice or personal experimental film like the Royal College of Art (RCA) in the UK. Animation programs in India would be different:

> We were there [NID] as well as here [IDC], a design institute primarily, and our mandate or order was that it should also be of some relevance to society. It should have communication aspects to it... So initially for our films in NID, everybody was encouraged to make films that were socially relevant, so to speak, and they were quite didactic in their approach. (Interview 37)

The NID and IDC were encouraged to follow a third way: something between strictly industry and arts based curricula, centred upon a social mandate. Communication design was seen for its potential for national cohesion, and "animation was a language that crossed barriers or regions" (ibid), a particular advantage in a nation of over 1.2 billion with over 20 spoken languages. Here, perhaps uniquely, design is contingent not only on innovative practice but on innovation in the culture of education.

Engaging Cultural 'Roots'

The government institutes' charge to support national development through useful design is reflected in the explicitly politicized approach that they take to animation education. This in turn shapes the engagement, imagination, and alignment of students as they develop their creative and professional identities. The core tenets of this approach are a self-guided exploration of cultural context and parallel development of an interdisciplinary design skillset. I analyse accounts of these in practitioner testimony, from teachers and students in the midst of the experience, to alumni who reflect upon it long into professional life.

Course descriptions emphasize "social and cultural contexts" (NID, 2012a) and "learning and practice… informed by an indigenous sensibility" (IDC, 2012b). These are notions intrinsically tied to the historic sense of purposeful design. However members of these unique learning communities seem to extend this further, likening a developing sense of identity with a personal journey of national discovery. Moorthy, writing about Vaibhav Kumaresh's 1999 diploma film *Whose Reality?* equates this positively with, "a simple understanding of our layouts. There are scores of other films in the NID archives that exhibit this hugging of our landscapes and people. Films that explore the varied styles and narrative traditions of our land" (2005: 57). Further, he suggests that the NID has perhaps "evolved differently" because, "Ishu Patel, RL Mistry, and Naranbhai who were our first people who grappled with the rostrum [animation camera] at the gate, had roots deep in the rural ethos of our country" (69). They created a learning environment that facilitated emerging practitioners imaginatively exploring their own roots.

It appears that much of this understanding of the wider landscape occurs through engagement. The design institutes put their students in contact with a range of differentiated Indian cultures within the student body. 2006 graduate Pradeep Patil of Roaming Design describes the initial experience of arriving at the NID:

> [T]hey get us out of our shells. If I am a kid brought up in Maharashtra… a place like NID which makes it a point to get people from as many diverse backgrounds as possible… opens up our minds to a lot of other cultures, and breaks up a lot of clichés. You have an image of some culture in mind and it definitely helps to break it. (Interview 5a)

Patil's account not only acknowledges the process of identity formation taking place, but also how it serves to disrupt preconceptions, replacing them with something more complex. This implies that this more nuanced identity is beneficial in skill formation for design problem-solving and animation storytelling alike. Different elements of personal background, that might previously have been taken for granted, are seen as malleable building blocks for creative expression. The discourse of cultural relevance starts from a foundation in exposure to a wide variety of viewpoints. However where this process ultimately arrives is actually a much narrower conception of culture, returning to the position of the individual within it:

> Roots in animation – I think that it helps to me to question myself – okay – Where I come from, what are the stories I like? What are the conditions where I belong? From there I can pick up a story and I can tell that kind of the story to the world, and be original. (Mahicha, Interview 6b)

The premise of the educational approach favoured at the NID, which Mahicha sums up, is that students place themselves within a chosen tradition to which they can belong and use to contextualize their practice. In some respects the apparent contradiction between socialization into the diversity of Indian culture and the subsequent return to personal roots evokes Chetan Sharma's assertion of ambiguity between 'us' and 'I.'[6] It can be better understood as a call for reflexivity, corresponding to what IDC Associate Professor Shilpa Ranade (table 3.3) terms animation that is both "rooted and evolved" and made by "thinking animators" (qtd. in Gurnani, 2004). To be a thinking animator is to "engage with the medium on many levels," from the collective to the personal (Ranade, 2008c). This is in all but name a call for design students to theorize their culture of production.

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[6] The history of the design institutes is likewise contradictory, mixing individualistic methods drawn from Western schools like the RCA with a collectivist national project.

Table 3.3:   Shilpa Ranade – IDC

GGBB (2013) Courtesy of
Shilpa Ranade

Shilpa Ranade is a filmmaker, illustrator, author, and Associate Professor at the IDC. She studied at Sir JJ School of Art, IDC, and apprenticed at Ram Mohan Biographics, before travelling to the UK to complete an MPhil thesis at the RCA, entitled: "Indigenous Images and Narratives for Socially Relevant Animation" (IDC, "Shilpa" ca2011).

Ranade's recent CFSI-produced feature *Goopi Gawaiyaa Bagha Bajaiyaa* (*The World of Goopi and Bagha,* 2013) premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) and later screened at the International Children's Film Festival India (ICFFI). Ranade is a founder of Damroo, a project to support the creation of content with and for children. Like Sabnani, Ranade's writings on Indian animation history (2008b) and 'thinking animators' (2008c) shaped the early design of this project. Ranade's subsequent invitation to participate in the Damroo Seminar at the IDC defined the end of my fieldwork in India.

I met Ranade at her office on the IIT campus in November 2011.

Participation in a social learning system is at once an extremely communal and personal process. The imaginative process that the students undergo asks not only what communities they belong to but who they are, their identity, which is 'how they know' (Wenger, 2000: 238). This is how a tradition of practice can be made to support new practice. In the next section I investigate the institutes' emphasis on interdisciplinarity and creative autonomy and how student-led learning appears to lead to student-created professional communities.

2.   *Imagining Design Communities*

While many educational institutions serving the cultural industries offer students a choice of disciplines to study – from animation, to advertising or fashion design – most offer relatively little latitude to move between rigidly defined professional specializations. Moreover, these distinctions are often imposed very early in the learning process.[7] This is in many respects a false choice. In contrast, at the NID and IDC the "the umbrella is design" (Ranade, Interview 35):

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[7] NID students enrol for a four-year Graduate Diploma (GDPD) or a two-year Postgraduate Diploma (PGDPD) in design. Across the institute one hundred students are selected at undergraduate level for a foundation year in interdisciplinary design, which "provides the necessary direction, stimuli, facilities and experience to foster creativity and thereby help each individual to discover their own identity and potential" (NID, "GDPD" 2012d).

> Maybe they could do an elective in Bamboo and get an experience of that and then bring some of that back into animation… we are okay with any of that as long as I think they build into anything that they're doing a whole thought process, where they start with research and have, they kind of have it all worked out why and what they're doing. (ibid)

This is what Matheson terms the interdisciplinary "way forward" for creative education, wherein students are empowered to take initiative over learning, while developing more holistic understandings of creative process (2006: 60). In the testimony of students, faculty, and graduates of the NID and IDC, to be 'interdisciplinary' is to follow a reflexive problem-solving approach, applying the appropriate medium – be it animation or bamboo – to the task at hand. This necessitates creative autonomy.

It is through interdisciplinary experience that thinking animators find solutions. Their observed world is a product of imaginative belonging, their engagement is interdisciplinary. The NID curriculum calls for "scope for opportunities to integrate experiential and explorative learning in order to understand and achieve a high degree of creative innovation and quality" (NID, "Curriculum Objective" 2012b). In practice, 2002 graduate Rita Dhankani credits this exploration for her professional flexibility.

> Whatever medium is best suited for a subject you have to go further and learn it and do it. And NID will help you. It is like that. NID is like a parent. You must first build up your base strongly, like come out with an interesting story, and what is original about it, what is new about it, and see which medium works best for the story, not the other way around… Design allowed me to play on all platforms. (Interview 6a)

The consistent message from the students and teachers is that a story must be told a certain way, in alignment with the identity and practice of the storyteller. Beyond summarizing the core ideals of the animation curriculum, Dhankani synthesizes a range of ideas about how she conceives her own work, and how that has been influenced by her time at the NID: design with purpose; originality is linked to both individualism and an Indian design tradition; a commitment to interdisciplinarity.

Entrepreneurial Learning

Skills development in the cultural industries traditionally draws upon the transfer of skills to take up professional practice, and integration into the social networks that support practice by providing access to collective knowledge. Within the model of a coherent workplace community of practice, these two distinct processes have taken place side-by-side (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2011: 349). New networked forms of organization built around flexible labour have placed more pressure on formal educational institutions to provide skill formation, but are notably silent on the latter. It is significant then that the students at the design institutes enter into a learning network where they develop both

creative skills and social norms. However the time any one student spends as a full time member of this community is short. A school is by definition an impermanent or transitional community where participants socialize and learn then depart to enter other networks. This is why it is so significant what kinds of practices and identities are most represented in institutional testimony. In particular, I observe a repeating cluster of student and alumni accounts that pose their work in terms of independence and entrepreneurship, strongly suggesting that these are learned aspects of emerging creative and professional identity.

This testimony reveals how students and graduates have used their shared educational experiences to shape their own group identities, forming networks that persist into professional life. The strong alignment between these perspectives reinforces not only the existing institutional community, but provides a base from which to explore new modes of practice, learning across boundaries. Here, 'boundary processes' are interactions between the learning environment of the school and "broader learning systems such as an industry" (Wenger, 2000: 226).[8] Learning on the boundaries presents opportunities for new information to enter the knowledge base. This might be reflected in how participants respond to outside challenges or reach out to other learning communities, adding complexity to their emerging identities. The school provides them with tools to help them make the transition, as Linda Ball puts it, "a shift towards an outward-looking culture providing a bridge with the real world" (2002: 11). The challenges surrounding the creation and maintenance of these boundary connections with career and professional identity are among the central concerns of this chapter.

Although faculty at both the NID and IDC are very clear about the kind of priorities they try to instil in their students, neither program prescribes a specific professional trajectories for their graduates:[9]

> Graduates of this programme find rewarding careers as animators, character designers, story-board artists as well as creative directors, producers, consultants and designers in many organizations such as Channel [V], MTV, Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network, Tata Interactive, Infosys, Cognizant to name a few and also as individual designpreneur or as faculty/designers at various design schools in India, including their alma mater, and abroad. (NID, 2012a)

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[8] These are the contested 'industries,' 'spaces,' 'ecosystems,' or 'fraternities' or 'ecosystems' described by participants in this research.
[9] This is in stark contrast to commercial training institutes, in which students are 'counseled,' 'groomed, or 'profiled' into very specific professional roles.

That the neologism 'designpreneur' finds a place at the heart of the NID curriculum hints at where the balance of alignment within the learning community resides, and as a result how many students begin to conceive themselves in their future professional identities. In testimony on campus, the practice that is most valorised by students (and, to some extent, faculty) is independent animation supported by freelance design. This is the arrangement that gives graduates like Debjani Mukherjee (table 3.4) the most freedom to create and have control over their own content, telling stories drawn from their own cultural perspective:

> Let me do something else, and then, I will fund my own films because anyways, I have to do it because I thought I have to give birth. It is like I will burst. So, if not by this way, I will have to give it in some other way. (Interview 11)

Table 3.4:   *Debjani Mukherjee – Bol: The Language of Children*

Debjani Mukherjee graduated from the NID in 2009 and has continued making fine art animation by self-funding her own work. Her film *Shabdhane* (*Take Care*, 2011) was recognized at TASI Anifest India. She supports her personal work with advertising content, as well as design and illustration for educational publishing, including pop-up books for alternative visual learning. In 2010

Courtesy of Debjani Mukherjee (2014)

Mukherjee and her husband Sayak Bandyopadhyay founded Bol: The language of children, a non-profit education organization to conduct creative workshops with children.

I met Mukherjee at the NID in October, 2011.

As addressed at length in the preceding analysis of boutique and independent practitioners, the way many approach autonomy is by supporting personal work with commercial contracts. The first step on this path is freelancing. Students feel a measure of confidence in their predecessors' success. "Most of the seniors, a lot that I know, will go for freelancing. They are doing pretty well at it" (Bhutia, Interview 12). In freelancing design alumni don't limit themselves to animation practice. Mukherjee has conducted workshops with children, moved into illustration and educational pop-up books. These areas have also been identified by students at IDC. Piyush Kumar Verma hopes to pursue illustration for the European market, and Dharma Rao Balaga sees potential in a growing market for e-learning materials:

> I see in future a lot of things happening through new media… In the educational area animation is very big industry. So I am going to do that… Actually, particularly I am going to my own set up. (Interview 41)

As in the case of the institutes' interdisciplinary focus, this attribute also puts them on the forefront of educational design. More and more design graduates are habitually working outside the confines of formal employment. Student accounts suggest that NID and IDC

establish professional autonomy, not as Ball would have it as an "option" to be considered, but a norm (2012: 12). Indeed, this conditioned independence, like interdisciplinarity, reflects their identity alignment as students. This sets the design institutes apart from industry – where "we work on a particular thing, but here we can explore so many things – a lot of creative things" (Balaga, Interview 41).[10]

'Bechain Nagri'

To many students it is clear that the institutional culture they perceive 'in industry' is not consistent with the identities they have established in school. An individual sees little opportunity to work against this. There is no obvious pre-existing social learning network for them to socialize into as design professionals – and yet, they are encouraged not only to seek these out but also to develop their own. A case study in how students have set out to devise their own social networks to accommodate their newfound membership in an interdisciplinary design tradition the NID student collective 'Bechain Nagri' (table 3.5).

Table 3.5:   *Bechain Nagri*

Courtesy of NID

"Bechain Nagri [or Restless City] is a StudioShop project, where we make and sell art on products, and offer design services. Our team is a bunch of young creative professionals, who believe in strong collaborations and building good visual content. Our backgrounds are in illustration, animation, and everything to do with storytelling and design. We work on Bechain Nagri in our spare time, and hope to create a space where people with similar interests can meet and work on things they love and truly care about, along with finding the right audiences for the same." (bechainnagri.com, ca2013)

I met Bechain Nagri members Krishna Chandran and Manasi Parikh at the NID in October 2011.

This follows Matheson's call for students to "practice the art of making decisions" by "creating their own learning environments" (2006: 60). As member Manasi Parikh explains:

> It is just a bunch of restless people waiting to do something, to come together, pooling their ideas and get something good out there… we call it a space where

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[10] Notably Balaga, like many students, hopes to combine independence with security, following the path set by respected practitioners and alumni by opening their own boutique firms.

people can come and collaborate, and basically get to know each other on a work level. (Interview 7a)[11]

Final year students at the NID, Manasi and Chandran are critical of Indian producers who they see as favouring proven content that does not reflect original storytelling or design, an implicit failure to trust storytellers based on an overemphasis on profit. However they also recognize that creative freedom comes from controlling one's own funding, and this is not possible without both a social and economic support structure:

[W]hat we really want to do is be able in the next few years to produce our own content. So we don't need to run to people and worry about producers. And because we know we can do really good stuff. And in the next five years through this project we hope to collaborate hopefully. See when you do good work… other good people will come to you as well. (Interview 7a)

What sets the Bechain Nagri concept apart as an entrepreneurial social network is the extent to which it seems to replicate the conditions of social learning that Parikh, Chandran, and their collaborators have adapted to throughout their design education experience. The foundation of their practice is multi-media, leveraging experience across different disciplines of design they have experienced at the NID. The members produce sketchbooks and t-shirts featuring their designs which themselves draw from a range of aesthetic traditions. They support future goals in animation by looking beyond the institutional community for a framework to hold this practice together. The first example they cite is the crowd-sourcing funding site Kickstarter:

We are very inspired by that idea as well because – nobody in India would fund online projects that way so we need to look at another model. We were thinking of something wherein artists can earn their own money through merchandise so you do an illustration and the illustration is printed over various products and it keeps fetching you money through royalty. (ibid)

In citing the models they wish to apply and emulate in their own practice, Parikh describes the way that these actions draw predominantly from outside Indian animation which she perceives to be limiting and unconducive to innovation and taking risks with original ideas. By creating their own networks modelled on outside examples, students and graduates hope bypass current industrial structures by pooling their own technical creative and economic resources, just as Arnab Chaudhuri predicts in Chapter Two. It is not possible to simply apply an approach from one community in another without learning, adding new information to the knowledge base, or making changes based on

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[11] This matches almost word-for-word the language that community leaders use to describe professional associations like TASI in Chapter Five.

local conditions; boundary processes such as these require learning. Based on their experience at the NID Parikh and Chandran recognize these design challenges:

> There was Threadless which was a huge success, where there is the collaboration of communities that came together to do something. So a lot of those things that we think are still very young in India. Forget young, they're not even there yet. There are people who have directly copied the Threadless model. There are people who are just doing things here because they work there, and I think that is stupid because India is a different country. (Interview 7a)

This is a reflection of design rooted in a specific cultural context, a hallmark of the NID educational approach. It is a specific example of how Parikh and Chandran have socialized and used their newly acquired skills to build competence at problem solving in a particular Indian context. These experiences build an identity: Bechain Nagri is their own innovation, a boundary process, extending that social learning into new areas.[12] For those attracted to an entrepreneurial approach to animation design, this presents a path to career development. Those who develop a sense of belonging within international traditions of independent art filmmaking face potentially greater challenges:

> In India there is no government support for independent film. There is nothing like that so we have to support ourselves. I don't see it happening soon, at least not from the government… Sekhar [Mukherjee] likes to encourage independent film from his students… My biggest desire is to become an independent filmmaker, but I don't see it happening anytime soon. (Bhutia, Field notes 25/10/2011)

Recalling the testimony of Gitanjali Rao in Chapter Two, students like Nalini Bhutia report feeling that their identities are out of sync with what industry requires. [13] This is based on very personal convictions but creates a clear anxiety that persists into their professional lives. This is a specific challenge to the design approach to animation education in India. In the same respect, emphasis on design becomes a cultural challenge to assumptions of service-based industry.

Perhaps the ultimate reflection of this approach is the objective that when graduates depart the institutes they are dispersed across the country. That some graduates might return to their homes in rural areas to practice fulfils the hopes of retired professor RL Mistry, who "pushed his students to look in in their own backgrounds, to draw out styles and narratives of the regions they represented" (Moorthy, 2005: 73). From the

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[12] A similar merchandising model has been utilized by Patil in his project *In Divine Interest*. Whether prompted by faculty or not, the next generation of animators has simultaneously arrived at the same solutions as many established practitioners and firms.

[13] Troubling for independent animation in general; it is even more-so for the predominantly female animators like Bhutia creating abstract and tribal-inspired art.

perspective of students and professionals today, it seems that such an idealistic vision of local may be difficult to achieve in practice. Bhutia, from Darjeeling, asserts just the opposite. "Whenever you finish you cannot go back there because there are no opportunities. That is the saddest part. You have to go to the cities: Bangalore, Bombay" (Field notes 25/10/2011). As I investigate in the following section, entrepreneurial practice is possible, even necessary, but even here the educational narratives and developing professional identities explicitly conflict with industrial demands. All this adds up to a mode and community of animation practice that students are socialized into. Having developed such an identity, it remains to be seen what they may do with it and what they might add to it. It is through student entrepreneurism that it is possible to observe how the social networks generated at the design institutes emerge into the wider production environment.

3.   *Distance from Industry*

I have examined the trajectory of animation as design education; students' reflexive engagement in cultural relevance and personal roots; alignment to interdisciplinarity and independence as cultural norms; and imagination of professional communities, all defined in practitioner testimony as progressive advances in pedagogy. Now I turn to challenges. In the final section of this chapter, I investigate the pitfalls of such an imposed distance from industrial practice and the limits of a culturally-rooted yet individualistic mode of education, both in a social and economic context.

Not 'Industry Ready'

A widespread criticism of the design-based animation education provided by the NID and IDC, and the one implicit in the apprehensions of students like Bhutia, is that students are prepared to work as self-sufficient designers, but their skills and expectations are at odds with industrial conditions. They have learned to draw on their cultural experiences, first to create a unique cultural identity as an artist and storyteller, and then to create their own content from scratch.[14] But this is not consistent with the present demand for technical practitioners. Consistent with trends in design education worldwide, there is little or no funding for graduates' output as art or creative practice for its own sake. While students may develop substantial creative talents, they lack specific skills and

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[14] This is not to say that students create content without regard to a client or customer. Consistent with a 'purposeful' ethos, many NID students produce their films in collaboration with NGOs.

social understandings tailored to the conditions in the industry they are entering (Ball, 2002: 10). Maya Academy for Advanced Cinematics (MAAC) CCO Sanjiv Waeerkar describes his experience with design graduates:

> They were in their own world. They were in their own particular styles and limitations, which of course, is a wonderful thing. The National Institute of Design is not on physical structure of a character; they will go on distorting and doing very I would say design-oriented animation. Now, the outsourcing work which comes to India is not on those lines. (Interview 30)

This is unsurprising. NID and IDC students are not specialists. They laud their faculties for encouraging them not to conform to convention and expectation but as a result, find difficulty in taking direction and conforming to defined client constraints. As both Ranade and Crest CEO A. K. Madhavan agree, they are not even exclusively animators.[15] Frameboxx founder Rajesh Turakhia notes that these same skills have made small numbers of design graduates suitable for work as creative directors (Interview 29). However this requires students to work closely and cooperatively in teams, yet another area of criticism to which the design institutes have had to adapt:

> The feedback we got from the industry was your students are very bright. They have very good ideas, but they are very bad on time management. They really cannot complete anything on time, and they cannot work in teams. (Sabnani, Interview 37)[16]

Design faculty and students recognize the need for industry specialists and several draw clear distinctions between those skills and what they have themselves been taught to do:

> What tends to happen here is that you tend to do a little of everything, and get not so good at everything. You can just about manage to do everything, but to do something really good I think it is necessary that you have people who know their job. (Parikh, Interview 7a)

This suggests a division of labour between different kinds of animation skills, design and technical competence – self-contained and industrialized production. These are in turn reflected in the starkly different commercial institutions I investigate in the following chapter.

These concerns are repeated across student accounts that demonstrate uncertainty as they view industry from a distance. "We don't really know what is happening in the

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[15] "[W]hen you look at NID it is more in design. It is not in animation specifically" (Madhavan, Interview 2)

[16] "I don't think they're prepared [to work in an industrial pipeline]… We don't have something in mind about where they should go once they're out of here, which is why we don't do that really" (Ranade, Interview 35).

industry because we're here" (Chandran, Interview 7b). This has the effect of disrupting knowledge transfer between educational and professional communities, while further aggravating students' difficult transition between them. An exception to this appears to be where graduates gain work experience with alumni. Given the long-standing engagement of prominent practitioners like Chaudhuri, Kumaresh, Suresh, Dhimant Vyas, and others, it is perhaps unsurprising that this is the case. Parikh's experience as an intern at Vaibhav Studios is particularly revealing. "[Vaibhav] is among one of the nicest people we know out there. So our picture of industry is very rosy and nice because we enjoyed working at his studio and it was a very nice work culture" (Interview 7a).[17]

The separation from industry is not only an attribute of student life. It is also a reflection of faculty experience. For Ranade, IDC provides a setting which allows her to engage in the same reflexive practices she asks of her students:

> I came here to teach because it allows you to do research, reading, writing, and make your own thing, do projects and teach, alongside teaching, consultancies, everything you can do. So I thought it was a good space to be in rather than do… commercial things you don't like. (Interview 35)

The perspective that academic work could offer creative opportunities impossible in commercial practice is repeated across faculty testimony. The NID's Sekhar Mukherjee (table 3.6) came to teaching following professional experiences that he found intolerable:

Table 3.6:   *Sekhar Mukherjee – NID*

Chitrakatha 2011 logo, Courtesy of NID

Sekhar Mukherjee is a cartoonist, illustrator, and Coordinator of Animation Film Design at the NID. He graduated from the program in 1992 and joined the faculty in 2002. He organizes the biannual international student film festival Chitrakatha and writes regular Sunday comics for the Kolkata newspaper *Ananda Bazaar Patrika.* He also serves on the editorial board of *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* (NID, "Sekhar Mukherjee," ca2014). Mukherjee's invitation to participate in Chitrakatha 2011 defined the beginning of my major fieldwork in India.

I spoke to Mukherjee at his residence on the NID campus in October 2011.

> I got a call from NID. The director has changed. We are looking for young faculties. By that time I was so tired of this whole boring stupid monotonous psycho frenzied industry where they're saying: 'I draw Hercules perfect' and I do rickety drawing so 'you are not animator.' I was frustrated. I said I will. (Interview 14)

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[17] Again, how this experience of engagement with industry professionals differs between the design and commercial institutes is one of the points of investigation in Chapter Four.

Frustration with a perceived industry status quo shapes a lot of faculty perspectives. Coupled with a long tradition of purposeful design, this helps explain why these programs aren't shaped by industry needs but by a perception of what kinds of animation practice are possible and how innovative educational practice might produce change in the conditions of industrial practice.

I have asserted throughout this research that practitioners widely agree that Indian animators must generate more original content. Yet there is disagreement on how this is to be achieved and the role that educational institutions will play in this process. Students emerge from the design institutes with both the skills and desire to tell their own stories, whether the industry demands them or not. Again, this is consistent with the role models these aspiring design professionals choose to emulate, largely the alumni boutique practitioners I analysed in Chapter Two. As Mahicha asserts "NID has a big role… to produce our own identity of animation. I can see very few animators doing that. Vaibhav is doing that. Suresh is doing. Apart from them nobody is doing that" (Interview 6b). This comes down to an activist effort to change the cultural conditions of animation practice in favour of a unique identity based on local conditions.

Economic and Cultural Challenges

Finally, I suggest design education also faces challenges quite apart from the industry itself. One of these is fairness of access, which may radically shape professional outcomes. This is an issue born in large part from institutional success. The NID and IIT are ranked by international publications as among the top design and engineering schools in the world (*Business Week*, 2007; *US News and World Report*, 2008). In order to maintain the quality of education within their institutions both the NID and IDC animation programs are extremely selective. At the NID only 15 students are selected for the animation program (NID, 2012d).[18] Although both institutes offer scholarships or fee waivers, the costs of attendance also represent a significant barrier, up to more than ₹250,000 ($4,103) per year. These have increased significantly over time, and NID instructor Ajay Tiwari admits that this may cause a change in the student population,

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[18] This is out of 40 students in communication design who have already passed the Design Aptitude Test for GDPD/PGDPD, studio tests and a competitive interview process. Significantly, there are a number of spaces reserved for students from tribal or caste communities. At IDC all animation students are at postgraduate level for a two-year M.Des or a PhD and admitted on the basis of a Common Entrance Exam in Design (CEED), admission test, and interview. Fees total ₹210,800 for the GDPD; ₹255,800 for the PGDPD per year ('Fees Structure' NID, 2012c).

"The students who cannot afford it really won't come now … [The cost is] 4 to 6 lakhs [$10,000] for the whole course. For six lakhs you can buy a house in some places" (Field notes 25/10/2011).

Another reason for this is the family pressure on students to pursue high-status employment. Both the NID and IDC are internationally prestigious institutions, in the wider field of industrial design. Relatively speaking, and in the case of animation in particular, they still comprise a notably unknown and largely undervalued educational sector:[19]

> When students come to a certain age, you either become a doctor or an engineer or a chartered accountant or take care of the family business. These are the options that you have got. Art [and] filmmaking are not a part of these options. (S. Rao, Interview 39)

This pressure has a marked impact on the identities of those who attend. In order to compete, prospective students have generally excelled in secondary education. High marks on college exams open up career options in fields with high social standing, in particular engineering and medicine. This means that these students have to counter enormous social pressure and considerable personal risk in order to pursue a design education, regardless of institutional reputation. Debjani Mukherjee presents a particularly illustrative example:

> I completed my graduation in EcoStatMaths… I did very well, and then, I had to fight with my parents. I told them 'okay, I have done my graduation. This is what you wanted. So, now, I'll do what I want,' and my father was, you know, 'okay,' and then he came with me here during my exams… You don't have good colleges. You do not see that it's also recognized by people. So, once my father came here, saw and met Sekhar and other people around, he said, 'no, it's as good as that.' Once he saw this, he was fully game for it, and from there till now they are really supportive. (Interview 11)

From the outset relationships between students and faculty are shown to be crucial. Debjani Mukherjee describes the important role played by faculty in not only bringing them into the NID community, but bridging the gap between their emerging identities as designers and the cultural expectations of their parents about design education, the arts and animation.

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[19] Animation is not a subject that requires strong academic performance to pursue except at the prestigious government design institutes and a small number of high-end commercial academies. Instead admission is based on ability to pay.

IDC Associate Professor Sumant Rao perceives this as not only a challenge of animation, but also as a barrier for design students to overcome in their own identity conceptions. To Rao, the educational and industrial spaces of animation and engineering are not mutually exclusive.[20] A student can be both animator and technologist. These may not be mutually exclusive but do stretch the current boundaries of belonging and identity to the limit. These learning systems may require substantially different kinds of participation – especially when it comes to generating an imagined community and aligning practice with it:

> So, they go through a lot of trouble to get into an institute like IIT because IIT assures you a good job… So, my way of looking at it's, if they have got in, they have got the brains because it's really tough to get into IIT. If you have got the brains and if you want to do film making, but you are supposed to do engineering, use engineering to do your film making... there are not too many people out there who can do that. So, it's a niche that does not exist in India… You can become a filmmaker where nobody can touch you. (Interview 39)

A student who can imagine and construct an identity as a practitioner within the cultural confines of both animation and engineering would not only be more competitive professionally; he or she would contribute to a productive expansion what it means culturally to be an animator, and a member of the animation community.

Those students who are best equipped to thrive in this demanding environment are those under the most pressure to pursue other conventionally respectable and reliably lucrative careers. What Rao proposes is a pragmatic solution. Within one of the world's most prestigious engineering universities, Rao's boundary crossing practices shows the potential of expanding social learning in animation into new areas, for education becoming an agent of change through constructing new student identities. This is at the heart of the design project of animation. Tiwari points out that the potential interdisciplinarity of animation practice may be much wider still: noting that design is the only constant in an evolving medium across industries: "If you communicate through stories you communicate far better… They are doing new kinds of jobs you could not imagine fifteen years ago. They realize the importance of critical thinking" (Field notes 25/10/2011).

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[20] Rao teaches animation to B.Tech engineering students at IIT and coordinates a Video and Animation Support Team (VAST) to create instructional engineering films (Interview 39).

Conclusions

A summative example of how design instruction is reflected in creative and professional identity formation can be seen in my interactions with IDC student Piyush Verma. The family pressure he describes to follow a set career path, and his sense of personal responsibility in diverting from it, are considerable:

> My father and mother both appreciate my work, but they don't want me to go into the animation field, because they think – they are not exposed to this business. They only want me to be an engineer or a doctor, clichéd things… I told them that, 'I know mom that in India there is a lack of opportunity in the animation field. People are not doing a really good job in animation, and they are not paying also very well, but for me, for my happiness, please try to live on your pension.' (Interview 40)

To a student like Verma, particularly interested in art design, the differences between career options seem particularly stark. He has developed a creative identity that is inconsistent with the technology-based employment availed to him by an IIT graduate diploma. Beyond family pressure he feels no incentive to engage, imagine or align with a new way of belonging.

Based on the accounts of a range of practitioners from within the design institutes and the animation industry, it is clear that the prestigious programs at the NID and IDC produce skilled and adaptable graduates, who nonetheless face a mismatch between educational and industrial demands. This includes the national studio success of prominent animators like Kumaresh, as well as the designers and freelance animators who have followed his example, including Patil, Mahicha, and Dhankani. It also provides the basis for ambitious entrepreneurial efforts like that of the Bechain Nagri collective. The ideals of this educational approach are not aligned with the stated needs of the largest parts of the Indian animation industry, where the ideal of interdisciplinarity design conflicts with specialized proprietary workflows. Absent funding for graduates' output as art in its own right, the industry still lacks the capacity to commercially produce and distribute their creative output. This raises additional questions: What will it take for industry make the best use of Design graduates? Can the highly individualistic animation practice espoused here ultimately be integrated into commercial practice? By assessing the accounts of graduates like Kumaresh and Suresh (as I have done in Chapter Two), I have already provided one possible answer, but the experience of new graduates like Parikh or Verma may be different.

Lacking either commercial infrastructure or business model, neither the NID nor IDC provide education as a product that is directly responsive to either industry or student market demand. It is significant that both the NID and IDC cater to a small number of

exceptionally talented students. Accordingly neither caters to students across a range of aptitudes. Finally, each student at the design institutes makes an important trade-off. They engage in an experiential learning environment that helps them develop unique identities as design professionals, but they face substantial professional risk with little cultural precedent and no promise of success. To varying extents, each of these is instead the domain of a range of commercial animation training institutes under analysis in the following chapter.

Chapter Four: Making Education Pay – The Commercial Training Institutes

"We may be very good in creating exceptionally skilled technicians, and I am choosing my words very carefully here, because that's what we are doing. We do not have a culture, unfortunately, of creating wholesome professionals." Ranjit Singh (Interview 28)

Introduction

In the previous chapter I investigated how, despite their small size, the NID and IDC have contributed to the development of unique social and professional identities within Indian animation's emerging culture of production. This has been achieved through the negotiation of self-contained communities of practice, emphasizing autonomy and entrepreneurism within a context of personal and cultural reflexivity. While the testimony of practitioners from these schools reveals substantial clout within the wider professional community, it remains the case that they only account for a very small portion of the new professionals who enter the work force. The large majority of students pass through a completely different system of vocational training offered by commercial animation institutes. Quite unlike the NID or IDC, these function on a market-based model of supply and demand. They comprise a range of competing brands, operated by hundreds of franchises in cities and towns across the country, and offer a wide variety of courses to meet both industry and student needs.

In this chapter, I examine how practitioners within the franchise training institutes frame animation education as an explicitly commercial enterprise, and ask how they articulate their complex professional identities in relation to the wider production networks around them. While institutional leaders and students emphasize a close relationship between training and industry, critics attribute the 'failings' of animation training to the lack of such engagement, some even suggesting that training constitutes a separate and lucrative industry all its own. The social pressures on commercial training are even more complex; as a result the sector exists in a constant state of tension. Leaders within the franchise training institutes describe conflicting demands upon them from both industry employers who seek technical staff and students who seek access to creative but secure employment. I reveal how institutional leaders respond to criticism by reframing challenges as opportunities by developing training that increasingly blurs the line between education and employment, and also creates new opportunities for self-exploitation. What is at stake is not simply the precarity of employment, or the flexibilization of professional identities, but the sustainability of a culture of production that is founded upon such a tenuous balance.

Recent literature in the study of cultural industries education emphasizes a trend towards engagement between learning and work, but leaves substantial latitude in how this is to be achieved. Ball (2002) asks, how well does higher education prepare student for careers in the creative industries, and what is the appropriate role of education in relation to industry? Working within a British context, she investigates student concerns, confidence, and the skills they require for employment. She observes that educators and industry must find new ways to collaborate in order to provide students with opportunities first to engage with industry and then a clear "transition to the real world" (11). This is consistent with my own findings with regards to the commercial animation training institutes in India. For example, education providers emphasize their close working relationships with industry to identify needs and place students in employment. I twist Ball's question - to reveal less the economic importance of such collaboration, and more its significance for social structure and the identity work of participants; asking instead how students and educators talk about achieving their objectives, and how they perceive their role in a wider, evolving cultural context.

Approach

By some estimates, the commercial training institutes comprise the largest, fastest growing, and most profitable sector of Indian animation (Interview 24). Given the scope of this growth and the sheer number of different institutional branches across the breadth of India and into neighbouring countries, it would be impractical to address them all during the course of mere weeks of field research. By necessity, I have focused on Mumbai, the home of one of India's major production hubs for both outsourcing and original animation. It is also where several large animation training brands are headquartered, taking advantage of close proximity to employers in the wider Bollywood cultural industry. Here they form relationships with practitioners within various local production clusters. Not coincidentally, my research methodology and focus of analysis are both based upon exploiting the role these relationships play in reflexive practice.

My first exposure to commercial training was through published course materials, press releases, and trade reports. While my investigation of the commercial institutes began in parallel with the government-run design institutes, my observations and interviews at the institutes fell between events at the NID and IDC. The order in which I conducted this research is extremely significant for how it revealed the structure of debate that surrounds animation training. Access to commercial institutes including the major brands: MAAC, Arena, and Frameboxx came through other key participants – mostly practitioners from within boutique studios and craft associations – who are almost

uniformly critical of commercial institutes' performance. Principle investigation for this chapter comprised nine interviews with 11 participants affiliated with five different institutes. These include a range of different levels of seniority and professional roles: executive administrators, advisors, visiting faculty, and three students (table 4.1). It is notable that both educators and students were well versed in the major critiques levelled against commercial training in Indian animation. Institutional leaders were also familiar with the trajectory of my research; both the places I had been and people I had already interviewed. As a result these accounts have an iterative quality, highlighting the differences between largely shared narratives from different institutional perspectives.

Table 4.1: *Commercial Training Institutes:*

Aptech Computer Education
  Maya Academy for Advanced Cinematics (MAAC)
    - Sanjiv Waeerkar - Chief Creative Officer
  Arena Animation
    - Puneet Sharma - Technical Advisor
  Students
    - Bhavika Bavishi, Saurabh S. Mazumdar and Shreyans Pithwa (Arena Andheri)

Frameboxx
    - Rajesh Turakhia – Founding Director
Graphiti School of Animation
    - Ram Mohan – Chairman/Dean
    - Jitendra Chaudhuri – Centre Head
    - Tilak Shetty – Director and CEO
Independent Educators
    - Ranjit (Tony) Singh
    - Ajit Rao

If Chapter Three was concerned with individual voices within a community of creative practitioners, this chapter addresses the challenges of finding a place within an industrial structure. In the first section, I investigate accounts of the origins of commercial animation training within animation studios, and relate this to the ongoing shift of skills acquisition and professional socialization out of the workplace (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2009). I also assess what distinguishes the instruction provided by commercial enterprise and how the debates revealed in practitioner testimony have emerged. In the second section I develop a new conceptual frame; a narrative of proximity between the institutes and industry. I trace this across three different groups of practitioners: institutional leaders, students, and prominent critics from the professional community.

In the third section I assess how practitioners within the commercial training sector respond to the pressures upon them by offering a set path to an increasing range of employment options. These developments tend to shift responsibility to students to shape their own learning outcomes. As students follow such a prescribed process, I question how much students are empowered to make sound strategic decisions. I pay particular attention to recent workplace experience programs designed to blur the boundary between school and work, and how such opportunities may entail self-exploitation without

ultimately increasing security. I conclude by returning to the wider narratives of Indian animation, and reveal how the fraught negotiation of identity by both educators and students in commercial training may take the culture of animation production in new and unexpected directions.

1.   *From Workplace Learning to Franchise Training*

The observed distinction between design 'education' and animation 'training' is not just one of institutional structure; it also emerges from practitioner accounts. In accordance with my methodology, rather than define this based on outside criteria, I trace how the commercial institutes and the debates that surround them have developed side by side. Access to training in order to produce a skilled workforce has been limiting factor throughout Indian animation's transformation from a cottage industry, to an outsourcing hub, and beyond. This ongoing process is reflected in the testimony of veteran practitioners like Rajesh Turakhia and Sanjiv Waeerkar, who participated in the development of the first commercial training programs in the 1990s and early 2000s. It is also reflected upon by Mohan, whose unique perspective encompasses almost every major milestone of industrial development since the 1950s. In comparison, today's commercial training sector – like the animation industry it serves – is a recent phenomenon, as Arena technical advisor, Puneet Sharma (table 4.2) describes:

Table 4.2:   Puneet Sharma – Arena Animation

Puneet Sharma is an animator and education manager. He is a technical advisor at Aptech Computer education, working on the Arena Animation training brand. He was previous creative director at Purple Halo Productions, and later general manager and business head at Zee Institute of Creative Arts (ZICA), located inside the Essel World theme park in the northern suburbs of Mumbai. His role at Arena is to "network or connect them to the industry," and to develop new training initiatives and best practices in marketing, sales and student job placement (Interview 24). Sharma is also a former Hon. Jt. Secretary of TASI and a member of the society's managing committee.

I met Sharma at Aptech House in Mumbai in November 2011.

> [I]t's like a two-decade old industry, 20 years max. People who have come into animation sector 15, 16 years back had no institute or training as such except NID [and] they were 10 people. So, it was on the job that they learned… a lot of people who have more than 15 years' experience have actually learned the skill on the job. (Puneet Sharma, Interview 24)

Prior to the development of outsourcing in the late 1990s and outside the confines of the NID, training was conducted informally by a handful of existing commercial studios. The most prominent of these was Ram Mohan Biographics. Mohan stresses that his studio was

not a school; he simply kept an 'open house' for art and design students. He welcomed prospective animators to contribute to production, practice skills, and progress through a range of tasks of increasing complexity:

> [F]resh people could come in, interact freely with the senior guys, learn a lot by taking on responsibilities voluntarily, and executing them… there was a nice atmosphere there where people could learn and develop their own skills… this is the old Indian Gurukul system. (Interview 31)

The system that he describes is a traditional educational methodology with origins in the ancient Vedic period. The Sanskrit word *Gurukula* refers to residential learning, literally acting as the extended family (*kula*) of the teacher (*guru*). Part of this tradition is that the guru is not generally paid, but receives remuneration in the form of tasks performed by the students within the ashram (Kashalkar and Damodar, 2013: 81). At Mohan's studio, this took the form of aspiring animators like Chetan Sharma and Gitanjali Rao taking on entry-level tasks such as clean-ups and in-between animation. Unsurprisingly, the professional apprenticeship conceived in these terms has much in common with Lave and Wenger's conception of situated learning through "legitimate peripheral participation" (1991). While now supplanted by other approaches, this earlier on the job training model remains a major point of debate, especially given recent trends towards simulated studio experience. Accordingly, I return to the enduring appeal of situated learning throughout this chapter.

The conditions of animation training changed fundamentally with the outset of the outsourcing boom. This occurred in the absence of large-scale training infrastructure, and accordingly, the results were mixed:

> We did not have that many people who were well trained or even had picked up the fundamentals of animations on their own. So, initial attempts, for example, of going and getting work from abroad; they were not able to deliver the kind of quality that was expected. (Mohan, Interview 31)

Faced with short time frames and contractual obligations, studios created their own commercial training programs to quickly bring animators into production. When Mohan partnered with UTV to set up the outsourcing studio RM-USL in 1997, he created a six-month program with 30 students that maintained some attributes of his earlier apprenticeship approach. Initial demand for employees was so high that training had to be extremely fast, even compared to contemporary offerings. As a result, new animation courses called for candidates with a baseline of artistic skills. Mohan describes handpicking students, with a focus on the highest possible output: 300 people over four years. Turakhia (table 4.3), in a similar situation at Maya Entertainment in 2001,

describes even larger turnaround that could be achieved by concentrating solely on required software platforms and processes:

Table 4.3:	Rajesh Turakhia - Frameboxx

Rajesh Turakhia is an education entrepreneur and property developer, the founder and director of Frameboxx Animation and Visual Effects. From 2000 to 2007 he was CEO and Executive Director of Maya Entertainment, the studio precursor of the training brand MAAC. More recently Turakhia has diversified training offerings into multiple divisions, including Frameboxx and the Indian Institute for Financial Management (IIFM), both under the banner of Ideacount Education (ca2014).

I met Turakhia at his office in Worli, Mumbai in November 2011.

> [W]e started a vocational training course for only 4 months. Within a matter of 2 years I had put out maybe 10,000 students into the market. Of course the drive and the desire to do animation came from the student. Without that there was no scope of them learning so fast. What we did was create techno-artists. They were already artists. (Interview 29)

Maya Entertainment formed a dedicated commercial training division, the Maya Academy of Advanced Cinematics (MAAC). The commercial training institutes were then based, from their inception, on a completely different principle from the government institute: they did not focus on transferring a range of skills tailored to the needs of the individual student, but instead a set of technical procedures for that student to enter an established industrial pipeline.

Establishing training programs would turn out to be a sound business strategy for the growing outsourcing studios, but the initial labour shortage meant they faced more immediate incentives to enter the training sector. They needed to rebalance the power relationship between studios and employees in the face of rampant poaching of talent.[1] As recounted in Chapter One, Mohan describes this as the moment that students began to see animation as a lucrative career prospect, and were empowered to play potential employers against each other for the best possible offer. Given the need for skilled labour, studios were providing training to new employees only to lose out on that investment to competitors.[2] The result has been studios setting up their own commercial training

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[1] "We would poach from here. We would poach from there. And it just created a very bad atmosphere in the industry" (Turakhia, Interview 29).

[2] "If that is what we are going to do ultimately – train people – then why not make it a formal education institution?" (Mohan, Interview 31).

programs, which include: the DQ School of Visual Arts, Graphiti School of Animation, Green Gold Academy of Animation, Toonz Animation Academy, and the Zee Institute for Creative Art (ZICA). While affiliations between many studios and schools remain, training has become a business in its own right, evidenced by the entry of technology training conglomerates like Aptech Computer Education.

The success of external training vendors, like the growth of outsourcing, has drawn on the tremendous expansion of India's IT industry, and the demand it has generated for employees with various technology skills. In animation, this has severed the connection between training and production conducted by studios, replacing it instead with a far more fragmentary approach. The structural attribute that distinguishes the commercial institutes is the rise of a franchise model, meaning affiliated centres are distributed across the country, from major metropolitan cities, to smaller cities, and towns. The curriculum is provided by the institute then administered through extensive partnerships with owner-operators of the centres themselves. Major brands like MAAC, Arena and Frameboxx run fully-owned and operated flagship branches or model centres in major markets like Andheri in Mumbai. By its own estimates, the two Aptech-owned brands, Arena and MAAC, account for the largest share of the market; according to Waeerkar (table 4.4), 70 percent of Indian animation education, with 10,000 to 15,000 students (Interview 30).

Table 4.4:	Sanjiv Waeerkar - MAAC

Sanjiv Waeerkar is an animation director and illustrator, currently the Chief Creative Officer at MAAC. Trained as a commercial artist at the LS Raheja School of Art, Waeerkar is the son of Shri. Ram Waeerkar, artist for *Amar Chitrakatha* and *Tinkle* comics (TASI, 2008). In 1991 the younger Waeerkar joined Ram Mohan Biographics where he would direct episodes of *Meena* for UNICEF. When Mohan's company joined with UTV to form RM-USL and later UTV Toonz, Waeerkar became Creative Director (Interview 30). As a result he has been instrumental in the development of both outsourcing and commercial animation training.

I met Waeerkar at his office at MAAC Andheri in November 2011.

MAAC itself has more than 80 centres, while Arena animation has locations in more than 100 cities. Frameboxx has 55 centres. ZICA has more than 30 in 15 cities, Reliance Animation Infotainment and Media School (AIMS) has 14, and DQ has eight. Many other commercial institutes have also begun offering animation courses. Numerous single-

centre institutes of various sizes have also emerged, from the Graphiti School of Animation in Mumbai to the College of Animation Bioengineering and Animation Research Centre (COABARC) in Amravati.[3]

Offering a variety of courses at different levels and prices, the institutes provide a hierarchy of clear economic divisions, serving different industrial needs and student demands. The technical specifications, software packages, resources, and placement offerings for these varying courses are superficially quite similar between different institutes, especially at the higher end of the market, where students might be paying as much as a Lakh – ₹100,000 ($1,620) or more per year in tuition.[4] As I investigate in the second section of this chapter, leaders speak of maintaining close industry relationships to the benefit of students, while the students themselves seek access and exposure to establish their own professional relationships. More can be learned from how the practitioners involved (both the institutional leaders and their students) differentiate different brands, programs and educational outcomes, and how they engage in the heated community debate that has emerged around their practice.

Criticism of the Commercial Institutes

As has become clear across Indian practitioner accounts, approaches to animation instruction are divisive. The discourse around the commercial institutes is dominated by debate about how to properly conduct training and determine standards of learning. The needs of large and small producers, the conflict between outsourcing and original production, and the very identity of the government design institutes are all informed by and presented in terms of critique of the practices of commercial animation training institutes. The testimony of Crest CEO Madhavan is typical. He critiques the commercial institutes (with two notable exceptions[5]) on the duration and quality of instruction, emphasis on software training, lack of faculty industry experience, and resulting low-quality graduates who require further in-house training:

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[3] The later brands itself as India's only Gurukul animation school (ca2013).

[4] Arena student Bhavika Bavishi reports costs from one lakh to one lakh 20,000 (₹120,000 or $2,000) for her Arena Animation International Program (AAIP), which lasts three years (Interview 25a). Mohan reports tuition of one and a half lakhs ($2,500) for Graphiti's 11 month foundation and specialization course (Interview 31).

[5] Madhavan singles out Whistling Woods International in Mumbai and DSK Supinfocom in Pune for praise due to their multi-year courses allowing time to teach a progression of animation skills. However annual tuition at DSK Supinfocom is around six lakhs (₹600,000 or $10,000) per year over three years, 12 times the 2011 national per capita income (TNN, 2012).

> Most of the schools and training institutes have had a six-month program or one-year program which doesn't entail the student learning very much. He learns a few keys of the software like Maya or Studio Max so they learn a little but about how to handle the computer rather than creative sensibilities. (Interview 2)

This introduced two key themes: a focus on procedural technical over creative skills, and the efforts to create uniform standards for faculty and training.[6] Madhavan specifically addresses the tendency of studios to enter the training space themselves, initially as a burden to supplement inadequate earlier instruction, but later as a business model in its own right. Madhavan was my first Indian practitioner interview, but these arguments were quickly reinforced over field research in Mumbai and Ahmedabad, where Ranjit Singh's (table 4.5) assessment was also typical:

Table 4.5:   **Ranjit (Tony) Singh**

Courtesy of Ranjit Singh (2014)

Ranjit Singh is a creative producer, director, author and educator with a particular interest in production management. He has presented classes at Frameboxx, Arena, Whistling Woods and many other institutions ("Masterclasses," Singh, ca2014)

He has contributed articles to *Animation Xpress* (2004-2005), *Studio Systems* (2004, 2011), and other publications. His book *The Art of Animation Production Management* was published by Macmillan India in 2013.

Singh is a founding member, trustee and former Hon. Secretary of TASI. I met Singh at a TASI seminar at Whistling Woods, Mumbai November 2011.

> [W]e are faced with a situation wherein a student who completes these courses is left in the lurch. He is neither qualified as an animator nor does he have sufficient software experience for him to be useful to the industry from day one ("Part VI," 2004).

To Singh, it is both the studios and students who suffer wasted effort, giving rise to a demand for so-called 'industry ready' graduates. Many of these thoughts are shared by producers from smaller boutique studios: Kumaresh critiques the absence of teaching of storytelling and pre-production skills, informed only by the short-term employment needs of outsourced animation. "Training institutes would teach what it takes to get a job. That I feel is a very stunted approach. If suddenly the job changes then all that the training institutes have taught will be redundant" (Interview 19).

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[6] The later takes the form of calls for a government-funded National Centre of Excellence, which I return to below and again in Chapter Five.

Criticism of training informed by short-term studio needs and students' desire for immediate employment suggests two themes at stake in this chapter. Almost every animator I spoke to was critical of the commercial institutes, or as the NID's Sekhar Mukherjee describes them, "factory-like training institutes made for cash cows" (Interview 14). Fluency in these criticisms seems more-or-less universal among professionals. In certain settings (notably my interviews at Chitrakatha), personal anecdotes on institutional shortcomings even seem to offer a means to enact shared identities. The apparent ubiquity of these criticisms sets the terms of a well-practiced debate, anticipating accounts from the commercial institutes themselves where equally experienced practitioners respond to them with similar fluency.

This debate can be placed specifically within the context of how the institutes have developed. These institutes have shifted away from origins within outsourcing studios to join with established multimedia training brands, and develop their own distinct business models. As a result, their earlier relationship to the practice of animation has changed. Central to the critical discourse has then been questioning the proper relationship between the commercial institutes and the wider community. One of the most prominent expressions of this critique comes from Singh in a twelve-part white paper published in *AnimationXpress* entitled: "The Importance of Industry Based Training in Animation" (2004). There he identifies the moment of crisis – a continued shortage of skilled labour, exacerbated by a failure to teach fundamental animation skills. Training new professionals requires experienced animators to be pulled away from production work, and places the studio at risk of losing its investment to poaching. 'Industry-based' training is Singh's proposed solution:

> External vendors best run training programs as these can cater to specialized needs of the entire spectrum of industry. However such players need to be constantly in touch with industry and its developments as only then can they provide raw material that is useful. Companies dislike the idea of spending money on employees especially when employees claim to be carrying qualifications from training institutes, and rightly so. ("Part VI," 2004)

In this account, he explicitly recognizes the need for independent educational institutions because studios themselves lack time and resources. But, in order to be successful, training institutions must still be as close as possible to industry. In the next section, combining Singh's account with those of other practitioners, I expand upon this narrative of 'industrial proximity' and examine how this is reflected across the testimony of institutional leaders, students, and institutional critics alike.

2.   *So Close Yet So Far*

The most striking attribute of testimony from the elite practitioners within the commercial institutes is the demonstration of the tensions between two different sets of customers: the industry whose employment needs they serve and the students who pay to seek access to it. Initially, the balance of discourse seems to heavily favour industry, with institutional success contingent on the strength of commercial relationships. Individuals like Turakhia and Waeerkar are forthright about the close links they have developed with major domestic employers, and also how these relationships have evolved in the face of industrial change. To take these relationships further, they must also be seen as constitutive of how these individuals conceive their work in relation to others. Turakhia in particular highlights personal contacts, fast turnaround, and institutional agility to differentiate his business from his competitors:

> We can change anything and we change it to the benefit of the student. I have my ears to the ground… and I talk to the industry people because I used to be in the industry also at the time. Now my colleagues are in the industry… We are very fast at taking decisions on those things because we are a small private institute. And the private institutes have that advantage over any large institute… Traditional institutes are like big ships. They take a long time to turn around. (Interview 29)

Such accounts unpack how the competitive imperative to respond to studio trends has fundamentally shaped the courses they provide – favouring highly specialist and semi-skilled technical vocations. These include visual effects specialties: compositing, rotoscope and roto-paint, and especially the large numbers of workers required for the outsourced 3D conversions of Hollywood films:

> The industry is saying 'we need a thousand Roto artists,' and suddenly, the institutes are being now woken up and saying we don't have Roto artists in those numbers, but the industry is saying 'no, we require them' …So, now we are looking at 1000 placements in Roto, and then institutes are actually working out a [three to six month] program where the industry is given those skilled people… This is what the industry is looking at a very short term. (P. Sharma, Interview 24)

This provides an opportunity for job placement from the institutes, even if it is not the employment outcome that many all students have in mind when they think of animation as a secure and creative career. This rapid change in demand also raises significant challenges for curriculum design:

> Last year, the trend was to have specialists… Now, this year, the studios are looking at generalists. They would like to have the same guy who is doing modelling, can also give a hand in rigging as well as a bit of texturing…This is what always happens with the studios. (Waeerkar, Interview 30)

It is clear from the practitioner testimony that the institutes also use industry trends as opportunities to differentiate their training offerings from others on the market. For example, Jitendra Chaudhuri and Tilak Shetty assert that it has been Graphiti that first pioneered specialization training, to end the need for remedial job-specific training by employers (Interviews 32; 33).

Specialist training that emphasizes either technical vocations like rotoscopy or higher-status professional roles like modelling, rigging, and lighting differs in length and complexity. Yet both are subject to debate for the extent to which they foreground short-term industry needs over long-term community goals. The ability to anticipate this critique is a key part of practitioner discourse. Responding to the employment needs of the industry as it is (rather than what it could be in the future), Waeerkar sets MAAC in line with what he observes to be the economic realities of both the Indian and global animation industries:

> [W]hen you come to hire a guy who has made his own 2D art film or whatever, and you want a modeller, do you hire the 2D guy who has made his own film or do you hire a modeller? That guy ends up hiring a modeller because his requirement is for a modeller... who can model his character which the outsourcing studio has given him. I have to be fair to my students because the students may ask the institute today, 'make us ready for the industry who can give us a pay check.' (Interview 30)

This testimony highlights the way in which leaders at the commercial institutes see themselves as being closer and more responsive to the industry than their more distant counterparts at government institutes like the NID and IDC. As I investigate below, students at the commercial institutes also place themselves in closer proximity to industry, though for very different reasons.

Access to Professional Knowledge

Though the accounts of institutional leaders are dominated by responses to studio needs, the discourse of supply and demand that they present is not just limited to one set of customers. Sharma and Waeerkar point out that the process also begins from the other side as well: in offering and seeking to deliver on specific employment outcomes, they identify the student as both commodity and customer, whose needs must be met in balance with those of the studios. This occurs in dialogue with the students themselves and must be understood alongside students' own accounts of industrial proximity, specifically their desire for 'exposure' and access to professionals.

Accounts from three aspiring professionals at Arena's flagship centre in Andheri show that their own aspirations draw upon a very different set of discourses from veterans'. In contrast to the blunt industrial realities posed by Waeerkar, Sharma and

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Turakhia, Bhavika Bavishi, Saurabh S. Mazumdar and Shreyans Pithwa all conceive of future professional practice characterized by varying degrees of both financial security and autonomy. Rather than pose their relationships on the macro-scale of labour supply and demand, the exchanges they describe are personal and subjective. They too conceive the commercial training institutes in terms of their close proximity to industry – but expect a substantial return in exchange for their tuition: vocational skills and 'professional knowledge' gained through direct interaction with industry professionals. They seek experience and confidence from observing professionals in an industry setting. Bavishi, who has supplemented her income doing freelance architectural visualization, describes the relationship between knowledge and access:

> [W]orking on freelancing; that's the point where I understood, 'no, I need proper profession. I need to get a proper job to know what they are doing.' I was going through a very long process and people outside are doing it in just some days. So that's the point when I realized I need a professional knowledge. (Interview 25a)

This speaks to what students want, and how they see the trajectory of their careers. Bavishi, a student completing a three-year program at Arena Andheri, seeks to develop her skills in lighting (Interview 25a).[7] Pithwa, on the same course is interested to do the same in visual effects. Both hope to one day establish their own studios, but "before that," Pithwa explains, "I'll do a definite job, gain some experience, and some references…We are doing for money definitely and to live a good life, so I have to do the research to see where there is good work" (Interview 25c). These students have both creative and financial aims in mind, and look to balance the risks of creative work with the most secure professional opportunities.

In order to learn from industry, it is necessary to first gain access to it, and it is these points of access that students emphasize in their institutional training experiences. They highlight competitions, national competitions like MAAC's 24fps, Arena's Creative Minds, and local competitions like Arena Andheri's Aakruki, "because the judges are from industry" (ibid).[8]

> [I]f you win something the judges who came from the outside they give us job opportunities to work with them. (Mazumdar, Interview 25b)

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[7] I would like to go for lighting because I have a very keen interest for lighting. Majorly right now I would like to go for lighting and maybe in future build up my own studio if Gods – luck coordinates. (Bavishi, Interview 25a)

[8] Other competitions mentioned include the Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF), TASI Anifest India, and ASIFA International Animation Day (IAD)

> [A]ll the competitions where you go, you have better networking happening… We get to know feedback. For me my work is the best, but when I go show it to the professionals, when they point out, 'this is the problem' 'this you can improve' and when you go through that improvement, your work really stands out of the crowd. (Bavishi, Interview 25a)

The way in which students place such high personal value on competitions over other activities like studio visits reflects their understandable desire for meaningful professional access opportunities. It also underscores a valuable feedback mechanism which occurs when their work is exposed to a professional audience.

Not unlike the modes of belonging I observed at the government design institutes students' sense of proximity to industry is reinforced by their socialization within communities of practice within the institutes themselves.[9] They negotiate with and participate in narratives of industrial growth, career opportunity, and financial security that are fostered by the institutes themselves. The extent to which they make the same arguments reflects a tension they share with the leaders of the institutes, responding to the anxieties and expectations not of the students themselves, but of their parents.[10] Consider the following comparison between the accounts of Pithwa and Waeerkar:

> The first thing my parents told me is they don't know animation, what is it? Where are you going to do the job? Because they read the newspaper, there is job vacancy for engineers, for MBA, where is the job for animators? There is nothing there, so they are worried about our future. (Interview 25c)

> [T]he parents who normally come with the students are very keen to understand what job prospects this particular career can give them. So, that the counsellor very clearly defines to them about the possibilities of the past alumni of MAAC, who have been placed to give them a case study. We also talk to them about the growth pattern about how a person after he joins a particular studio… The salaries also, as per what the studios pay, are mentioned to the candidate. (Interview 30)

These accounts share a focus on job prospects. However, while Pithwa's account is one of ambiguity, the key word in Waeerkar's statement is 'possibilities,' which projects a sense of security. The apparent certainty of institutional narratives and their ability to allay parent anxieties is founded almost entirely on the promise of stable employment, as

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[9] After all, these are also venues for extensive situated learning. Lectures may up to three hours, but students describe staying at the institute working on their films all hours of the day and night (Interview 25c).
[10] Mohan asserts that parent expectations are simple, "[M]iddle class families expect their young people to go out and start earning and supporting the family, and they think that if you go and study animation for a year or so, you will probably get a good job" (Interview, 31).

evidenced by their asserted relationship to industry. However this is challenged by institutional critiques that suggest such relationships do not exist.

A Separate Training Industry?

While institutional leaders and students speak about commercial training in terms of its close relationship to industry, and the opportunities it provides for professional access, criticism of the institutes is based on the contrasting assertion of distance. According to Singh, "The success of an industry-based course is directly proportional to the level of involvement of the very industry it aims to cater" ("Part VIII,' 2004). Yet, in what he sees to be symptomatic of a lack of engagement he asserts there is "miniscule to negligible coordination" between the two ("Part IX"). It is this lack of proximity that other commentators use to suggest further distinctions between animation training and animation industry.

One major critique is that the commercial training institutes don't need to be responsive to industry needs at all. This is based on the notion that the institutes are a self-sustaining commercial enterprise, hiring their own graduates as instructors to train the next batch of students. Institutional leaders concede that this is often the case, with up to 50 percent of teachers at MAAC drawn from ex-students referred by their own instructors (Waeerkar, Interview 30). This is an argument based not only on the social and economic distance between the institutes and industry, but also the very real geographic distances between them:

> [F]or a place like Gorakhpur, which is like some corner of India…an animation centre is looking for a good faculty. He is not finding one. Nobody is willing to go all the way there because you are not paying that well in there. So, you have to look for somebody from that place or some student who is based out of Gorakhpur, who can be trained, who can be certified, and then, he can [teach] a class. (P. Sharma, Interview 24)

This practice suggests the ways in which animation training draws on the cultural cache of creative employment. Although there may be relatively little animation production occurring far outside the major cities, aspirations to work in a growing creative field creates a lucrative business opportunity that extends far beyond the direct economic reach of production. Given the continued growth of the commercial institutes which sometimes outpaces the industry which they ostensibly exist to serve, a simple discourse of supply and demand becomes increasingly problematic, and the status of the commercial training institutes relative to the studios subject to question and debate.

Critics ask, 'just how big is the franchise training sector?' and question the extent to which the actions of the institutes might dictate the direction of industry as a whole. As

Ajit Rao asserts, "Right now, the people who are making most money out of animation are the training institutes" (Interview 38). While, Sharma confirms this discrepancy in scale as a major area of concern across the 'whole' animation industry (Interview 24), others are less circumspect.[11] Turakhia is unabashedly proud of financial success, defining commercial training as integral to animation's industrial development:

> When we started the industry… there was a mad rush to get people… If we had not done what we had done they wouldn't have had animators. So yes they have been cribbing because they didn't make money, but they didn't make money because they didn't have jobs. It is not [that] they didn't make money because we were making money... The industry would have collapsed if people like me had not come in. (Turakhia, Interview 29)

Waeerkar offers a middle ground by asserting that the education sector just appears larger. Much current animation production is relatively invisible, either outside of the entertainment space, or comprised of freelance and informal labour; "just two or three guys in a garage" (Interview 30).

Waeerkar and Singh are largely in agreement in suggesting that it is inappropriate to criticize the commercial studios for responding to the current needs of the market. Rather than a reductionist view of industrial conditions, Waeerkar implies that this is a necessary stage in industrial development, and to do otherwise would be unfair to his students:

> I have to be realistic with my students. Tomorrow when the industry starts taking in a story guy, yes, I will definitely go all the way out to do story-telling with all my franchise centres. Why not? I would love it. I mean, India should be into this…The industry leads the style fashion, which is going on in the institutes. (Interview 30)

While this is an effective summary of the criticism levelled against the commercial training system, the crucial distinction in Singh's narrative is that he spreads the blame around. Commercial training is folded back into the shared social and economic space of animation production. He returns blame to producers for expecting training institutes to diverge from their own reliance on a service-based economy:

> The training sector alone cannot be blamed for this. The blame has to be shared by the industry as much as it has to be shared by the training centres. See the training sector is a business. If the business finds that there is a demand in a particular

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[11] Sharma estimates IT education makes up between two and five percent of the total IT industry "around ₹10,000 or ₹15,000 crores [$16-24 billion]. But if you compare it with animation education… the animation education market is more than the animation industry which is a big area of concern" (Interview 24).

area, it would be nuts not to supply that demand. So how can you point a finger and say, 'well the training institutes are doing this wrong?' …What demand have you created? You have gone ahead and created a service sector based industry where what you need is not thinkers, you need doers, because the thinking comes packaged for you ...Now the same industry turns around and says, 'oh well, we are not creating filmmakers.' Excuse me, you never asked for a filmmaker. (Interview 28)

What emerges is the notion that the relationship that exists between commercial training and the industry fails to meet the long-term needs of their shared stakeholders. What's lacking is an emphasis on possible relationships between best practices in education and industrial change. In the last two sections of this chapter I investigate the innovations proposed by institutional leaders to directly address these concerns.

3.   *Responsibility and Choice*

In the third section, I assess how practitioners within the commercial training sector respond to pressures and critiques ranging from the conflicting demands of students and employers, to increased competition between the institutes themselves. I reveal the process of counselling put in place to shape employment outcomes, and how institutional leaders have reframed outcomes like freelancing and teaching as success stories in their own right. Previously perceived to be less desirable, these aren't the types of creative employment that many students initially expect, nor are they the stable middle class careers that parents demand. I emphasize how the process of placement counselling necessitates transferring responsibility and risk from the institute to the student. Yet, while these processes are posed in terms of student-led learning it is quite unclear how much freedom students actually have.

Placement Counselling

To commercial institute leaders like Sharma and Waeerkar, the critical role of student counselling is seen as a fixed set of procedures and a range of options based on aptitude. Recognizing the restrictions on industry employment, they describe methods used to 'screen' students for different kinds of work. Students are then provided with the appropriate level of guidance and access to employment based on their skills. This regimen is presented in terms of an objective discourse of fairness; acting upon those

opportunities is left up to the student.[12] The effect is of a clearly defined institutional rite of passage:

> When a student is about to graduate within the next three months, they have to fill a placement form... Then, they meet our placement counselor [Zonal Technical Head]... they end up counseling the student about what the industry status is right now, what the industry is looking at. The child or the student gets his demo reel with him is shown to the zonal technical head with the technical person himself. He looks through the story what the student had prepared by that time. He gives his point of views and feedbacks on which areas he should go on making his show reel better. The student then for the next three months, builds up his work, and again comes back at the end of his graduation to the [placement] team, who then forwards his show reel across to the studios, which have openings. The placement cell gives three interviews or three opening options [or] chances to every candidate who applies to the placement team. (Waeerkar, Interview 30)

Major training brands like MAAC claim to provide their students with "100 percent placement assistance" (ibid). The kinds of interviews available are contingent on both the employment opportunities and evaluation of the student by the placement teams. Sharma terms this, "screening" of students based on the jobs that fit their course specialization and skills (Interview 24). While a full time animation student might be put forward for trainee positions in character animation, a student in a short-term course would be counselled towards more technical work such as rotoscopy. Accordingly, this process serves a gatekeeper function for industry, and reinforces accounts of close collaboration between institutes and major employers.[13]

Redefining Successful Outcomes

Although commercial institutes are closely concerned with fitting animation students with the needs of employers across a range of professional roles, they also market alternative outcomes as equally successful and legitimate. Students are counselled to recognize both freelance work and full-time employment as viable professional options, or to find work in non-entertainment fields such as architecture and industrial design. Graduates are also encouraged to see teaching animation as a legitimate career (which also meets institutes' internal staffing needs). The following accounts represent different student outcomes as positive, but are based in a need for a secure income, regardless of what earlier creative aspirations might have been:

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[12] Of course, the level of instruction the student has been provided seems often directly proportional to how much they have paid.
[13] Waeerkar calls this "grooming" (Interview 30), while Shetty's term for a similar process at Graphiti is "profiling" (Interview 33).

> There are lots of people who want a job because of finding a source of income. [laughter]… Some people are not interested in 3D because after they have done the half course they realize that they can't do the 3D, so they do a job in graphics. (Pithwa, Interview 25c)

> Yes they come in and they want to be in the film industry. When they go out they take what they can get… 'yes I am not going to get that much from the film industry, but here I am going to get a stable job from this jeweller.'(Turakhia, Interview 29)

One of the best ways to guarantee employment for commercial institute graduates is to hire them back as trainers, especially in rural areas. This practice is the subject of one of the strongest critiques of commercial training – after all, courses taught by industry professionals are a strong marketing point. It reflects an effort to revalue teaching as itself a legitimate professional identity. It is significant that leaders within the commercial institutes do not shy away from criticism of their methods concerning teacher training, or even the perceived problem of graduates becoming trainers themselves. Instead their positions adopt language of solutions:

> [A]at the centre level, a good student might be taken in as a faculty because somewhere the centre also feels that firstly, the student starts earning something [and] supports his or her family, and secondly, they are also getting a good student who can get developed into a good teacher (P. Sharma, Interview 24)

> [T]here is a difference between faculty and a guy who works as an animator. The faculty has a desire to teach, and has the communication skills, and is relatively an expert compared to his other peers. He may not be a great animator… but he can explain the process much better than anybody else can… the teacher should teach." (Turakhia, Interview 29)

Practically, efforts to wholly revalue teaching as a profession will be extremely difficult to achieve until animation instructors receive greater compensation. Accounts suggest that this is either a virtuous or vicious cycle. It is the most profitable centres that are able to offer the highest salaries and therefore attract professional instructors. Institutes like Frameboxx seek to fill this compensation gap by encouraging their instructors to do additional freelance work, which has the added advantage of conveying a closer relationship between industry and the classroom. As Turakhia explains, "So many of the studios are giving my faculty work and I encourage this so they are always in touch with the real world" (Interview 29).[14] This effort is consistent with what Ball terms

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[14] The understandings of students at the Arena flagship centre in Andheri support this point, as they ascribe to their teachers six or seven years of professional experience (Interview 25a). Relative to smaller cities, in Mumbai there is no such shortage of potential faculty.

"knowledge of the world of work" (2002: 22), and what Matheson calls the practiced "art of making decisions" (2006: 60). However what seems problematic here is the degree to which this actually results in student empowerment. According to Waeerkar, the key to effective advising of students is to "groom" them towards their most marketable skills; to advise but not to force:

> Right now, in the opening, for the next two months, are maybe in these particular areas. After that, it will go to this. We think you should, maybe, push more in your skill set only and wait for two months and join when the industry booms over there... instead of just speculating on whether the industry is doing great… that I think is the strategy of false hope. (Interview 30)

Students have to strategize between short-term options and long-term objectives. Yet a question remains: are students well equipped and prepared to know how to do this?

I look at how these counselled paths actually transfer responsibility and risk to the individual student, despite the commercial institutes' emphasis on assurance and opportunity. Turakhia defines success by the amount of "passion" each student brings to their own training. Likewise Sharma reports, "that seriousness has to come from the student level" (Interview 24).[15] While this is consistent with calls for students to manage their own learning, it is unclear how much latitude they actually experience. Students can choose from a range of different courses roughly tied to different employment outcomes but beyond that, there's little indication they have agency over their own success. These choices appear superficial, as the clearly defined process of commercial training – and placement guidance in particular – are not really optimized to support student-led learning so much as a linear progression from beginning to end. 'Student-led' learning need not be so sequentially rigid (Matheson, 2006: 60), and is generally proactive, rather than reactive. As Singh suggests:

> Our entire approach has never been from a standpoint of taking a student and first finding out what the student wants to do. Somebody says, 'I want to make a film.' Alright, make a film. What will happen? You will go wrong. That will be a bigger learning for you than if I teach you everything. I'll say ok, 'now you make a film' and you make a film exactly how I want you to make a film. I am not then creating a filmmaker, I am creating a clone. (Singh, Interview 28)

The very existence of guaranteed placement assistance suggests more jobs are available than actually exist. Nonetheless institutes have been able to leverage their industrial

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[15] Here, Sharma is specifically referring to a lack of attendance from his students at TASI events, signaling challenges with instrumental participation that I investigate in Chapter Five.

relationships to suggest employment outcomes; all but promising work to successful students. But as the most desirable jobs become ever scarcer, the institutes have had to become more innovative in their offerings, resulting in new forms of 'premium' workplace learning that blur the boundary between the world of training and the world of work. This complicates the discourse of security and regularization in marked contrast to the increasing risks and individualization of animation careers. Still, to an extent, the commercial institutes promise a dream that they cannot deliver. More students mean more revenue in the short term, but this can be sustained only if there is work for them to do upon graduation.

4.   *Returning Training to the Workplace:*

In previous chapters, I have shown how discourses of innovation constitute a critical element of practitioner testimony and identity – within outsourcing, boutique studios, and government design institutes. This raises the question; to what extent does it feature also in commercial training? In this final section I investigate how leaders within the commercial training sector respond to changing student and industry demands, competition, and criticism by developing new qualities of commercial training, premium courses, greater standardization and institutional oversight, and, most significantly, professional 'incubation' programs.

Responding to changes in demand, the institutes are now increasingly competing to upsell student experience – suggesting that a larger financial and time investment in training will provide the greatest likelihood of employment even as demand for graduates appears to fall. A recent trend has been to supplement four to six month software training with longer, more sophisticated offerings. As Turakhia explains, "Industry is now at a pretty stabilized state, we do not need to supply the numbers. We don't need to put warm bodies onto the machines just to get the foreign contracts" (Interview 29). Established brands increasingly compete with each other to provide both quicker tool-specific training and longer, more advanced courses – the later increasingly often in partnership with a university degree program.[16] Arena Animation's two-and-a-half to three-year course is

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[16] MAAC's offerings range from individual software modules and the two month 'Short Program in Animation, Design & Visual Effects (SPADE)' up to the career courses, from six months for 3D stereoscopic filmmaking (S3D) to 27 months for the AD3DEDGE course (MAAC, 2013). Frameboxx offerings range from the three-and-a-half month Art of Roto and six month 'Archiboxx' Architectural

affiliated with Manonimaniam Sundaranar University (MSU), MAAC with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), and Frameboxx with Sikkim Manipal University (SMU). However Singh asks how such partnerships are themselves made accountable:

> My question is, 'who is certifying the degree?' You have some obscure university in some god-forsaken place in the country from where you have a collaboration that says degree in animation. Who has looked at your course? Who has developed your course? (Interview 28)

Many from across the Indian animation community call for 'Train the Trainer' programs – standards for admissions, teacher qualifications, and learning outcomes – administered by a Government Centre for Excellence.[17] As Ball asserts, the most successful strategies for innovation in creative training requires collaboration between a range of different stakeholders, not only the schools and employers, but government agencies, community organizations, and industry professionals themselves (2002: 12). Sharma in particular sees government intervention as a way of increasing successful placements, while at the same time protecting the schools from ephemeral employment trends and parental expectations:

> [T]he parent is coming and saying I am paying this amount, and I want my kid to do this program. We, from our end, would say okay, 'let him give a test. If he clears this, then he will take an admission, but the center of excellence, if that process happens across all institutes… It becomes like a standard for all… Life is easier for us because we have problems in placement of the students as well because like I said, the parent comes and says, you told me that he will get a job. (Interview 24)

Perhaps the most common criticism of the commercial institutes is that so-called 'Industry Ready' graduates are not ready to work in industry. Newcomers who cannot work independently or integrate into a team remain 'always a trainee' (Ranade, Interview 35, Rao, Interview 39). The solution that the commercial training institutes increasingly offer is incubation programs – real or simulated production experience within the course of animation training, designed to expose students to the pressures of professional work.

Programs like the MAAC Creative Shop, Frameboxx Incubation Centre, Frameflixx, and the specialization program at Graphiti integrate students in the final stages of their training into a professional production pipeline by having them work on commercial projects for outside directors. That director brings with them "all the rules, all the discipline, all the idiosyncrasies of the studio" (Shetty, Interview 33). Waeerkar

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visualization certificate, to the 20 month 'Redboxx 1 Career Super Specialization Diploma' (Frameboxx, 2013). Graphiti's 'G-CAT' courses ranges from 10 months to two years.

[17] How practitioners lobby for these government interventions is a major topic for analysis in Chapter Five.

describes how 300 MAAC students have been brought together to produce a film that has since been broadcast on the *Disney Channel*, adding: "From students' point of view, you get mixed rapport with the technical guy who can later on give him a job in a studio or he gets a great studio, which can get him better jobs" (Interview 30). Turakhia notes how going through the "pressure cooker of real life" has made graduates, "more studio ready" leading to all of the students in the initial class finding employment (Interview 29). This development across the animation training institutes reflects their longstanding orientation towards industry, "mirror[ing] what is happening in the workplace" and easing the transition to professional life (Ball, 2002: 11). However, outside commentators like DreamWorks' Shelley Page are more sceptical:

> [T]hey're projects which have a really tight deadline and they're commercial projects. So the ability to learn and to expand your skills is maybe secondary to what they learn about working to a deadline. (Interview 42)

Page suggests that by placing such long-term emphasis on the 'pressure' of a simulated production environment, commercial institutes may inadvertently de-emphasise the development of artistic skills that thrive in a more open instructional environment.

Regardless of the potential value of the experience to the student, the rising prominence of professional incubation does suggest a growing risk of self-exploitation. It is difficult to conceive of a way that students can perform more than a token amount of commercial labour without also undercutting demand for their own employment upon graduation. Not simply accepting an unpaid internship, in these circumstances students are actually paying to work. As has been commented in legal circles around internship programs in the United States, a common expectation is that educational practice should first and foremost benefit the student (Magaldi and Kolisnyk, 2013, 7). The greater the incentive that the educational provider has to use workplace learning for other means, such as a production revenue stream in its own right, the more potentially problematic the resulting arrangement becomes. However, given the challenging climate for domestic production in India such collaborative solutions appear increasingly favorable, even inevitable:

> The student does the films, and the channel gets it aired. It is a partnership between three of us. That partnership would be wonderful to have. Today, the channels also want to show content, but they are not finding producers who can make so much content for them. So, here, there is a big bunch of people who can do it for you. Why not look into the whole idea? (Interview 30)

While a return to learning situated in a professional setting calls to mind a reimagining of apprenticeship in the tradition of the *Gurukul*. That students are being used commercially as a labour resource suggests that this comparison is not entirely appropriate. This is why

Mohan himself calls for a return to a more traditional model of workplace learning in which students can learn and begin to support their families at the same time.

A summative example of the centrality of access and security to animation training can be seem in Mohan's call for 'Informational Animation,' presented concurrently with my field research at Nanjing University in October 2011. Beyond a simple utopian desire to return to a system of artisanal apprenticeship, he proposes pursuing different ways to integrate entry level practitioners into work, recognizing the ongoing fragmentation of labour, while responding directly to the economic security demanded in the cultural context of the Indian family:

> The incentive for a developing country to invest in training specialists who produce informational animation is evident. Unlike entertainment, which is always a gamble, the industries that could potentially employ informational animation (including construction, engineering design, pharmaceuticals, and education) are taken very seriously in the economies of developing countries. These industries possess the financial muscle to support training of animators, and to provide secure employment for animation professionals. (Mohan, 2011)

Conclusions

This chapter has analysed the case of professional development within the confines of the commercial training institutes. Comparing conceptual categories across accounts, I have argued that the way both leaders and students within the institutes respond to these conflicts further reflects growing variation in the formation of professional identity. While both emphasize a close relationship between training and industry, outside observers counter that commercial training is out of touch with long-term industrial and community needs, some even accusing training of constituting a separate industry imposed upon animation practice. I observe that the relationship between commercial training and industry is complex, and is deeply rooted in a conflict between the demands of the industry, and the career aspirations of students.

In the first section I investigated the origins of commercial animation training within animation studios, in context of an ongoing shift of social and professional development out of the workplace. In the second section I developed a narrative of proximity between the institutes and industry, and traced it across practitioner testimony – from educational administrators, to students, and institutional critics. Ostensibly close working relationships developed between institutes and major domestic employers have responded to changing labour needs that favour specialist and semi-skilled technical vocations. For the institutes, proximity to the industry is fundamental to providing students access to jobs. In turn those students value opportunities for direct engagement with industry professionals to improve their work.

For institutional critics like Singh, it is clear that while the relationship between institutes and industry is not as close as often claimed, they are nonetheless tightly linked by forces of market demand that make innovation difficult to achieve. In the third section, I presented how the institutes have responded to both increased criticism and competition by developing sophisticated student counselling and defining new types of successful employment outcomes. These practices are clearly designed to confer additional choice in the training experience. However, I stop far short of terming this practice student-led learning in the same sense as achieved at the NID or IDC. Finally, I paid particular attention to workplace experience programs that blur the boundary between school and work. Such opportunities may also entail self-exploitation, leading to calls for a return to more traditional forms of workplace learning supported by practice in other industrial contexts.

Design Education/Commercial Training

Given dramatically different approaches to pedagogy, and engagement with industry and wider production communities, how do these radically different discourses on education address each other within wider narratives of industrial change? Practitioners assert that the design institutes and Commercial Training Institutes are distinct cultural entities. These institutions fill dramatically different functions, or "paradigms" (Interview 30): Design Institutes appear to produce industry and community leaders, based on 'aspirational' principles, irrespective of market fluctuations while the commercial institutes respond quickly to market demands. And yet, while the practices, testimonies, and identity formations that emerge are largely defined in opposition to each other, they nonetheless do not, at least not in a simple sense, directly compete with each other. One is designed to educate the designers of an imagined future locally-focused cultural industry, while the other, however imperfectly, prepares creative workers for the industry as it exists as a source of employment today. As Vivi5's Dhankani suggests:

> [Y]ou need an army to win a war. If you don't have an army, if you just go on and say these are my ideas and I want to conquer your country, it is very difficult. You have to have an army. An army needs to practice… We went to Bombay and saw all these agencies… We saw, – 'oh my god they work so hard like day and night – sweatshops we would never want to go there;' because we are not trained to do that. There are people trained to animate in-betweens. We were trained to design. (Interview 6a)

This is a key distinction and is a response to the argument that the design institutes do not support industry. It becomes a question of whether the several different kinds of education can function as a unit within a cohesive culture of production. There is a need

for cooperation between institutes and between institutes and industry to support the career objectives of students, the labour needs of employers, while leaving room for independent entrepreneurism, interdisciplinary outreach and artistic practice. As NID teacher Ajay Tiwari asserts:

> Right now we should break all kinds of boundaries and definitions… we need to mix a lot, and schools, non-art schools, design schools – they need to come out of the definitions. (Field notes 25/10/2011)

There is also the potential for government initiatives that might inculcate and manage interactions between educational institutions and employers in the wider cultural industries, most notably to encourage less-exploitative forms of apprenticeship and aid graduates' transition to adaptable professional identity (Ball, 2002: 15, 21). While regional and national efforts to introduce and enforce educational standards are on the rise, they chiefly address the supply of labour rather than the precarity experienced by students.

One of the central concerns for practitioners across the professional community is the means by which aspiring professionals develop the creative, technical, and social skills to participate in animation production. The different organizational structures and communities of practice within the design and commercial institutes generate opposing practitioner narratives. These demonstrate different ways of conceiving educational practice as both culturally and economically distinct from industrial practice, and yet fundamental to the sustainability of production culture. Ultimately the testimony also shows how these practices and communities are networked and 'constellated' within wider social structures. While many question the proper relationship between education and industry, Matheson (2006) asserts that it is most beneficial to not think of the two as separate processes at all. Educational institutions not only produce the creative labour that industry requires, they can be vital sites for innovative practice and new development. Ideally conceived development of one should strengthen and encourage the development of the other (62). In Indian animation, this task becomes the responsibility of professional organizations. This is particularly evident in the participation of professional craft associations like the Animation Society of India (TASI) and ASIFA-India in the socialization of animation students; emphasizing communal celebrations as points of access for the professional community, and forums for the negotiation of common practice.

Part Three: Social Networking and Collective Action

In Part One of this thesis I introduced two competing discourses of Indian animation practice. I began by investigating the large-scale industrial development of the outsourcing sector, and how this is underpinned by a narrative of global economic engagement. By contrast, in the next chapter I focused on the emergence of a boutique production sector, entwined instead with a narrative of local self-sufficiency and cultural continuity. In Part Two, I detailed cases from government and commercial institutes to demonstrate how these opposing narratives also pervade educational practice. This revealed striking differences between efforts to impart culturally relevant design and employer-valued technical skills. My analysis of participant testimony in each of these comparisons exposed practitioners' very different experiences of creative practice; unlike not only in terms of business strategies, but also in how they conceptualize the social conditions of Indian animation. Nonetheless, the ways that such diverse practitioners make meaning are actually quite similar: highlighting a struggle for creative control and economic power, the balance of individual and group identity, entrepreneurship and social learning, and through these, industrial change.

With the central conflicts and grounds for dialogue well established, I turn now to collective action. Part Three moves from the practices of production and education to the processes and structures through which creative practitioners manage shared knowledge and formalize collective identities. In the remaining chapters I investigate the reflexivity that occurs in the spaces between the traditional sites of animation production and academic textual analysis, revealing how a great deal of industrial theorization takes place as negotiation among individuals and groups: between the studios, schools and other emerging structures considered so far. This in turn gives rise to institutions that foster and regulate this negotiation, and ultimately contribute to increased social coherence. Although there is considerable overlap, I group these processes into two areas, roughly corresponding to professional associations and a trade press. Chapter Five examines the range of craft and trade organizations that serve as centres for formal affiliation and identity alignment. By comparing the reflexive positioning of grassroots and pan-industrial bodies, I reveal the contested role of professional associations in managing knowledge and governing identity. Chapter Six analyses outlets for industrial communication: correspondence, print periodicals and new digital platforms that together comprise a 'trade information network.' In both, I consider how defining the success or failure of knowledge exchange has drastic consequences for the culture of Indian animation and the professional identities of creative practitioners.

Chapter Five: Socializing the Animator – Professional Organizations

"Unless you have a sense of belonging in the community, you will always have these little pockets of people everywhere, but there will never be a sense of collective." Ranjit Singh, (Interview 28)

"Everybody in the community is putting in solid hours of work to achieve something concrete." Archana Krishnamurthy, Karnataka Animation, Video Games, and Comics (KAVGC) Summit 28-29 Aug. 2013

Introduction

Learning how to be a member of an animation production community does not end outside the classroom or studio door. This process of identity management is picked up by professional and trade associations through events and programs that attempt to foster 'belonging' through knowledge sharing, increasing collective action, and negotiation of best practices. In this chapter I investigate the different kinds of organizations that represent Indian animation either as a creative community or industrial sector. These vary from grassroots craft associations to regional and national industrial or even pan-industrial bodies, each of which provide crucial links between the reflexive negotiation of professional identity and the maintenance of concrete social structures. Like studios and schools, such organizations are shaped by aspirational narratives. Drawing on testimony from creative practitioners, alongside participant observation and organizational publications, I argue that the systematized sharing of knowledge between individuals fosters increasing social capital and catalyses ever more 'concrete' or structured forms of interaction. Rather than view organizations as essentially conservative brokers for existing conditions, my analysis emphasizes their active role in validating change, unsurprisingly towards greater social cohesion. Yet with increased control also comes debate over who has the right to speak for whom, to shape what practices will be legitimate, and how the assembled membership should govern itself and engage with others.

Collective action in Indian animation manifests in a variety of different organizational structures. Craft and trade associations have emerged in response to perceived isolation between animation practitioners and studios across India, exemplified by the November 2000 founding of the local chapter of the International Animated Film Association (ASIFA-India) and in August 2001 the Animation Society of India (TASI). Around the same time, reports published by pan-industrial trade associations, The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM), announced the arrival of Indian animation on the world stage, and began to make projections about its future.

Alongside the events described in Chapters One and Four, this large-scale institutional intervention into what had previously been a small and informal space fundamentally altered the narratives of Indian animation. Quantification of revenues and expectations of growth have become permanent fixtures of industrial discourse. However, with the global economic downturn, much of this enthusiasm has given way to uncertainty. While content capabilities have continued to advance, particularly in television and visual effects, corresponding feature releases have largely failed to meet expectations (KPMG, 2013: 150). Many animation practitioners argue these targets are imposed based on faulty assumptions, symptomatic of a lack of common purpose between industrial organizations and the community of animation practitioners they claim to represent (Gitanjali Rao, Interview 3; Akshata Udiaver, Interview 20). Local business associations like the Association of Bangalore Animation Industry (ABAI) have sought to fill this gap, by coordinating strategies between engaged practitioners, industry leaders, government, and international partners.[1] Each in different ways, these organizations have become increasingly integral to an evolving culture of animation production.

Approach

As elsewhere in this research, for my analysis of professional associations I draw as much as possible from what practitioners understand and say about the conditions of their practice, asserting that they are active agents in the negotiation of their own culture of production, not simply constrained by economic structure, but dynamically entwined with it. Similarly, organizational identities are not static and consistent, but active and contested. As Brian Street puts it, culture itself is not a thing but, "an active process of meaning-making and contestation over definition, including its own definition" (1993: 25). Rather than look for signs of a culture of production in consensus, I follow the Geertzian anthropological tradition in seeking evidence of perpetual reworking of culture. Professional associations and gatherings are obvious sites to observe this as it occurs. The core research data for this chapter is coded from a wide range of different sources. The interviews I conducted during field research primarily address the grassroots craft associations, ASIFA-India and TASI, drawing testimony from six organizational leaders, all of whom also appear elsewhere in this thesis in other roles. This is supplemented with testimony from across the range of remaining interviews with more than 40 other

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[1] In May 2014 the Association officially rebranded simply as 'ABAI,' reflecting a transition from regional advocacy towards a wider focus (ABAI Monthly Newsletter Vol. 10, 2014).

professionals, teachers and students, as well as observational data from two community events in November 2011.[2] Additional data, including the majority of material concerning the industrial associations, ABAI, FICCI and NASSCOM is drawn from other testimonial and textual accounts including institutional publications and studies, government policy documents, press releases, and coverage in the trade and popular press (table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Professional and Trade Organizations:	
Craft Associations	**National Industrial Associations**
The International Animated Film Society, (ASIFA- India)	The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)
- Vice President Seshaprasad A.R. (Production Executive, DreamWorks Dedicated Unit)	- Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming & Comics (AVGC) Forum
The Animation Society of India (TASI)	- Media and Entertainment Skills Counsel (MESC)
- President Emeritus Ram Mohan (Graphiti)	The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM)
- Hon. Secretary Akshata Udiaver (*All About Animation*)	- NASSCOM Animation and Gaming Forum (NAGFO)
- Hon. Jt. Secretary Puneet Sharma (Aptech)	**Regional Industrial Associations**
- Committee Members, Ranjit (Tony) Singh and Vaibhav Kumaresh (Vaibhav Studios)	The Association of Bangalore Animation Industry (ABAI)

My concern in this chapter is to investigate the practitioner reflexivity around the formalization of organizational identities. I begin by reassessing terms from established industry, how the practices revealed in my data differ from models based predominately on studies of unionized labour. From this point of departure I re-ground professional organization in participant testimony describing opposing drives that underpin attitudes to collective action: creative autonomy and social engagement. These draw upon lingering structural conditions of isolation in Indian animation, but also appeal to the perceived social value of shared knowledge. Building on this foundation, I present cases of how informal spaces for reflexive exchange have evolved into the more formal structures of professional associations organized to capitalize not only on engagement but also identity alignment between practitioners.

The second section describes the activities of craft associations, organizations that have formalized around promoting social learning. However success in student outreach

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[2] These were the TASI 'Swiss Cheese with Max and Mary!' seminar and screening on 5 Nov. 2011 at Whistling Woods, Mumbai and ASIFA International Animation Day (IAD), 6 Nov, 2011 at the National Centre for the Performing Arts, Nariman Point.

belies concerns about the growing instrumentality of engagement and the ability to retain established professional members. The third section places collective action in context of industrial representation and governance. Local and national trade associations have prioritized higher-level dialogue, providing a venue for the performance of industrial unity, and to negotiate for greater control over occupational identity and the conditions of production. The final section examines corresponding practitioner anxieties over institutional authority and social alienation. I conclude that trade and professional organizations have become not only powerful means to implement reflexive narratives and tangible structures to regulate practice, but also clear measures of the coherence and embeddedness of production culture.

1.   *Reframing Professional Organization*

Professional organizations may take many forms, all of which share at least some common attributes. Professionalization itself suggests an effort to gain control over the conditions of occupational practice for political purpose (Bloor and Dawson, 1994: 291). Robert K. Merton defines a professional association as, "…an organization of practitioners who judge one another as professionally competent and who have banded together to perform social functions which they cannot perform in their capacity as individuals" (1958: 50). This is broadly consistent with how professional associations have historically functioned across cultural industries.[3] Allen J. Scott describes how Hollywood craft associations, "constitute forums in which problems of common interest can be discussed and acted upon, while providing useful information, contacts, mutual support, training programs, and so on (2005: 130-31).

Not only do they help to focus individual identity into tangible structures, professional associations provide a crucial venue for social exchanges between practitioners, and it is in this sense that reflexivity can be understood as central to collective action, "…they are arenas through which organizations interact and collectively represent themselves to themselves" and through which they negotiate with others (Greenwood et al, 2002: 59). Unions, professional societies, and trade associations are important tools available to members of a newly-conceived practitioner community to put their identities to work, and how they talk about them is central to understanding their

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[3] Each of the common terms for professional bodies has a basis in collective interest, most commonly an 'association' devised for a common purpose, a 'federation,' 'guild,' 'league,' or 'union' for mutual protection and assistance (OED, 2014).

reflexive positioning in the organizational field. Once formed, such associations develop different knowledge bases, codes of practice, and institutional structures, and as they may pursue differing objectives, the presence or absence of specific kinds of organizations may have dramatic consequences.

Despite commonalities, analysing animation associations in India is complicated by the potential for misunderstandings based on other industrial contexts, as much existing organizational research is drawn from case studies of US or European organized labour. Recent scholarship has emphasized the impact of runaway production on the power of unions: findings of growing localism in worker advocacy, loss of collective rights, and a corresponding rise in individualization (Christopherson, 2005: 38; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011: 225). Stahl notes that, lacking union representation, many Asian animators "only get the security and benefits for which they are individually powerful enough to bargain" (2009: 63). The collective representation that unions provide is fundamental in addressing professional precarity endemic to media work, and without this, individuals increasingly must rely upon much more ephemeral personal networks. What is missing is to ask what other social arrangements arise in the absence of organized labour. Even in Hollywood the history of collective action has been one of at least three different kinds of organizations: unions, trade associations and professional societies. Occupational unions have emerged over decades of labour conflict, representing both above the line talent as well as below-the-line craftspeople through the affiliated unions of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), including Local 839: The Animation Guild. At their strongest, Hollywood guilds have maintained almost total control over access to local employment. With the rise to dominance of outsourcing, this is no longer so simple.

Once in India the ability of conventional unions to influence the conditions of animation work has been virtually non-existent. Instead, the models for organization in the Indian context are not guilds but rather trade associations and professional societies, and even these operate in a climate long characterized by informal social and economic relations (Ganti, 2012: 224). While the trade associations representing the interests of Hollywood studios and producers in conflict with labour have become very prominent, especially the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), and Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP), in India it has been pan-industrial organizations that have wielded this authority, often at a distance from the practice of animation itself. Instead, bodies like FICCI, NASSCOM, and ABAI provide spaces for the industrial reflexivity of highly-networked individuals.

Similarly, in Hollywood, honorary professional craft societies like ASIFA and the Visual Effects Society (VES) are most often recognized for the ritual performance of industrial consensus among elites, but also function as boundary spaces between students and industry professionals (Caldwell, 2004: 182). In the absence of union activism, both the trade associations and professional societies in India have acted more as advocates for social cohesion, for negotiation rather than labour conflict. Although the jurisdictional responsibilities of different organizations remain ambiguous, the objectives of the two types of professional organization can be categorized in practitioner accounts by the different identities that they support. The craft-based professional associations stress engagement and negotiation in order to generate shared professional identity as a form of social capital. The trade associations stress industrial identity, and 'knowledge capital' achieved through strategic partnership and self-regulation. Both are strongly founded upon a narrative of communality, largely contingent on practitioner reflexivity and based in the experience of social and economic isolation.

Re-grounding Sociality

In previous chapters I have outlined how the desire for both economic engagement and creative autonomy has fundamentally shaped practitioner reflexivity. Stressing competitive advantage and individual creativity, the prominent narratives of entrepreneurship within outsourcing, boutique animation, and educational practice complicate the development of collaborative relationships both between practitioners and firms. This may be understood as a corollary of wider tensions between creativity and commerce (Caves, 2000). Several participants express that autonomy and communality reflect oppositional impulses and therefore necessitate a learned balance, "you have to be really mature to understand how the harmony between community building and competition can actually coexist" (R. K. Chand, Interview 18). This tension manifests on a wide range of scales, from close day-to-day professional collaborations, to periodic social interaction across cultural and national boundaries.

Even with the entry of large firms since the start of the outsourcing boom, animation production in India has remained fragmented. One barrier to monolithic practitioner community is the sheer size of the country and great distance between production clusters. Even in a technological economy it is hard to maintain relationships over distance (table 5.2). As Delhi-based Vivi5 designer Mehul Mahicha explains, "You see the industry in India – there are so many different industries… there are regions like Bombay, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata. They are totally different. They are not connected with each other" (Interview 6b). Geographic isolation is a reality of cultural and economic

Table 5.2 - Animation Production Clusters
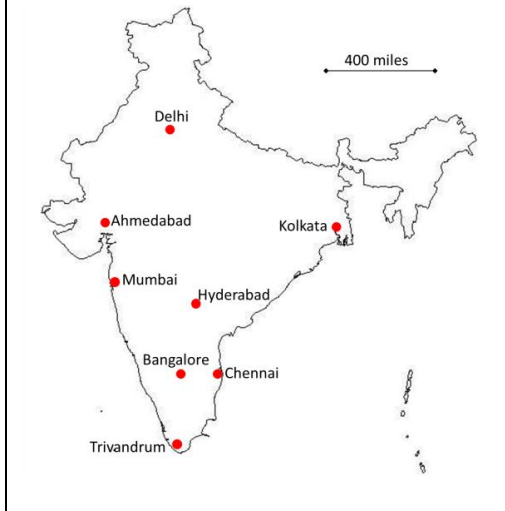
life in India, and the organizational and technological strategies of both outsourced and neo-artisanal production have increasingly adapted to facilitate acting at a distance, beyond the limited social capital of local networks; in the case of Vivi5 to strive to, "communicate beyond any physical or geographical parameters" (Vivi5, "Profile," 2011). It follows that Mahicha's animation industries are multi-centred. Large internationally-engaged studios have formed local agglomerations in major urban centres linked to the industries represented by the major trade associations. These include major firms like Disney India in Mumbai, Technicolor in Bangalore, DQ Entertainment in Hyderabad, and Toonz Animation in Trivandrum.[4] Growing firms like Mumbai's Studio Eeksaurus and Animagic, and Hyderabad's Green Gold have also emerged to pursue advertising, industrial design, and increasing original production as smaller boutique design firms have spread into smaller urban centres.

Despite this proliferation, practitioner testimony still speaks of isolation. Even within the large production cluster in Mumbai, animators describe practice outside of the wider context of a professional network. Independent educator Ajit Rao goes further and asserts established innovators like Chetan Sharma, Gitanjali Rao and Shilpa Ranade, "are still working in islands. They are in isolated surroundings which is fine because this is the first stage" (Interview 38). Rao's account recognizes that isolation can be linked to innovation, but ultimately scattered cultural capital must be leveraged to increase social capital. As I asserted in Chapter Two, the rise of boutique producers reflects an intentional departure from the outsourcing based production sector, and as I return to later in this chapter, a corresponding ambivalence about the imposed corporate sociality of an industry governed by larger firms. Affirmation of self-sufficiency then corresponds to a disavowal of institutional support for independent voices:

> Nobody is telling you how to run this show. You have to figure it out yourself. It's not like a film commission which has certain mandates, certain rules of behaviour which you are following and therefore you are like this. (G. Rao, Interview 3)

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[4] Until 2013, this would also have included Crest in Mumbai, and Rhythm & Hues in Mumbai and Hyderabad.

While Rao's practice is perhaps unique, the social isolation she describes resonates with accounts from animators and producers alike at studios of various sizes (e.g. Arijit Gupta, Interview 16; D. Chaudhury, Interview 22a; Suresh, Interview 23). This testimony describes an environment where there is, or has been until recently, relatively little engagement. To borrow from Lave and Wenger's literature on social learning, there is an absence of sustained interaction in which the negotiation of norms of a community might take place (1991). Individuals are not exposed to the benefits of proximity, opportunities for creative exchange and other learning effects; what Grabher terms the beneficial background 'noise' or 'buzz' of localized creativity (2002a: 209; b: 254). Without these modes of communication social capital cannot grow. As social capital is conceived as the sum of collective resources "linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships" (Bourdieu, 1986: 248), producing it through the formalization of such relations is not necessarily deliberate or strategic, but it certainly can be (de Bruin and Dupuis, 2004: 63). This appears to be the root of more elaborate forms of sociality across Indian animation.

Some form of professional exchange remains a feature of cultural production even in the most isolated surroundings. The nature of this interaction varies greatly, from the brief and transactional to the negotiation of resilient social ties. Many participating animators identify as introverts, and perceive an obligation to network as an unavoidable balance to autonomy (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011: 108). To maintain relative independence it is necessary to remain "in circulation," to periodically make oneself available for collaboration, if only to maintain relationships and secure new work (G. Rao, Interview 3). However, in contrast to this kind of enforced sociality, these same individuals often also seek out more 'authentic' relationships that emphasize creative exchange. This has been a critical factor in the creation of social groups to support local practice where formal structures do not exist, such as Delhi 'Saturday Sketches' described by Vivi5's Rita Dhankani:

> They [designers] used to meet up and say, 'let's just sketch.' When you are sketching some things pop up and you talk. Friends meet up. There is so much to exchange. We especially don't talk about clients or work because again we are sharing the same market, but then there are so many other things to talk about. (Interview 6a)

Unlike networking events designed to circulate information for strategic purposes, such as Wittel (2001) or Grabher (2002a; b) observed among London IT and advertising professionals, this engagement appears more affective, for camaraderie and self-realization. The relationships described are based in personal familiarity rather than professional experience, indicative of lingering communality rather than a more transient

network sociality. Critically, this conception of engagement is also mirrored in the development of larger more structured institutions, where social relations balance shared experience and information exchange.

2.   The Craft Association

In this second section I present analysis of two such professional craft associations, TASI and ASIFA-India; and what practitioner testimony suggests about efforts to use knowledge exchange to impart durable communal identity. President Emeritus Ram Mohan describes the origin of TASI as something like a "professional animators club," an explicitly non-commercial space for creative exchange, "We wanted a place where we could just come together and show our work, put it on display to our colleagues, get feedback from them… and there was going to be no self-promotion" (Interview 31). Another founder, production management educator Ranjit Singh concurs, adding the importance of learning from collective knowledge:

> …the fundamental principle of how TASI was started was that as professionals we just felt the need to sit together and chat… Let's share what we've been doing, what we've been up to, and maybe each one of us can grow as a result of what we have shared with each other. (Interview 28)

In contrast to Saturday Sketches, the arrangement of an animators' club suggests membership. This is intentional, as Singh continues, "The minute you formalize a structure, the minute you give it an entity, there is a sense of belonging. Once you get that sense of belonging, then it's easier to convince people to put in efforts." Many of these efforts have been aimed at further integration, incorporating students into the growing professional community. Achieving this necessitates long-term engagement and identity alignment (Wenger 2000: 228). However, while rooted in a narrative of communality, the craft associations face an increasingly transactional social climate that emphasizes individual experience over group narratives and the ephemeral performance of unity over ongoing collaboration.

'Exposing' Community

Despite operational differences between them, the cultural objectives of TASI and ASIFA-India are very similar, to provide an open forum for exchange. Both associations host talks, workshops, and sketching events around the country, although ASIFA-India is

composed of local chapters and TASI events travel from city to city. [5] They also organize larger annual celebratory festivals: TASI's Anifest India and ASIFA-India's International Animation Day (IAD), including prominent local and international speakers, as well as both student and professional awards (table 5.3).

Table 5.3:   *Craft Associations*

"The Animation Society of India (TASI) has been formed with a view to increase awareness of the medium of animation in India. It aims to educate the emerging generation and the public at large and at the same time provide a platform for exchange of creative and technical information within the existing art and animation fraternity in India." (TASI, "About Us" 2012)

ASIFA-India: "upholding one of its mottos of blending art and technology, making available invaluable knowledge and information… creating a free, open to all platform for interaction and networking which has seen the active participation and support of the industry." ("About ASIFA-India" 2012)
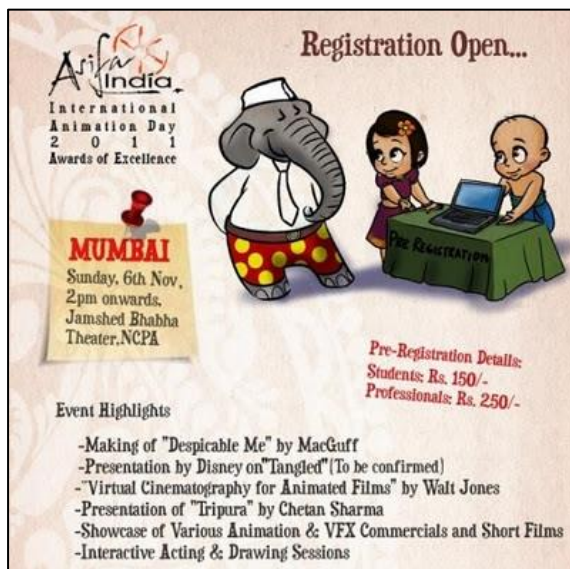
International Animation Day (IAD) and Awards of Excellence, 6 Nov. 2011, NCPA, Mumbai (Courtesy of ASIFA-India)

"Work in Progress" Workshop and Sketching Session, MCCAI Pune, 30 Nov. 2013 (Courtesy of TASI)

I asked research participants about the role served by the craft associations, and there are substantial commonalities between their responses. IDC Associate Professor Shilpa Ranade directly addresses the benefits of community to practitioners separated by geography:

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[5] Other differences are administrative. TASI's bylaws require leadership rotation and limit the number of committee members from any one company. At the time of field research in 2011, the president and vice president of ASIFA-India were both affiliated with Rhythm & Hues.

> I think one of the major things is exposure, because I know that TASI has members from really small, faraway, far-flung places… they're fulfilling the need for an animation community and people exchanging ideas, meeting, coming together, coming from different places. (Shilpa Ranade, Interview 35)

Arnab Chaudhuri similarly praises organizational efforts, "to get out of the metros" and build "exposure" to different kinds of work (Interview 27). The objectives of the craft associations paint a picture of community spreading rhizomatically through engagement. However the emphasis on exposure in these accounts suggests a more pragmatic view of socialization based on the concentration and application of organizational authority (Giddens, 1979). Where participants notably differ is in how community as an abstract social 'need' is converted into tangible structures. Many refer to the craft associations as communities in their own right.[6] Others prefer to speak of them as indicators of more inclusive sociality, such as an emerging professional "fraternity" (R. K. Chand, Interview 18; S. Rao, Interview 39). Leaders within the associations emphasize the latter, stressing commonalities between different organizations, and playing down conflict in favour of niche specialization and collaboration (Abhishek Chandra, Interview 17). TASI committee member Vaibhav Kumaresh reasons that more organizations and events can only mean more engagement is occurring. "The more, the merrier. At least the students have so many options" (Interview 19).

As in a studio or school, the ways that a professional association organizes itself reflects subjective understandings of what the group is for and how its members should behave (Caldwell, 2008: 70). Formally the craft associations exist to create platforms for the unfettered exchange of information for all Indian animators. However the strong emphasis on students suggests the extent to which these organizations are predominately occupied with a more specific mission: reproducing a community by imparting common professional identity to students. Participants define this as a continuous process of socialization. ASIFA-India Vice President Seshaprasad argues that through exchanges, they "target the student at the grass root level outreach to create more exposure, and… better the community that's coming across" (Interview 15a).

Organizational leaders hope to communicate the ways of interacting, stories, common resources and methods that make up the "shared repertoire" of a community of

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[6] MAAC Creative Director Sanjiv Waeerkar asserts that, "knowledge sharing of the industry is very widely and nicely done by all these communities" (Interview 30). This suggests a professional/cultural life separation in keeping with the individual entrepreneurial ethos of the training institutes.

practice (Wenger, 2000: 229). Newcomers are not taught; rather they gain experience through increasing levels of social involvement, termed by Wenger 'legitimate peripheral participation,' but here rooted in the traditional '*Gurukul*' methodology endorsed by Mohan and other veterans of his studio. The conditions of real and perceived creative isolation show the cultural capital possessed by organizational founders like Mohan, Singh and Kumaresh to shape organizational practice (Harvey et al, 2012: 532). Patterns of social behaviour are passed from experienced to new practitioners. As new individuals enter the growing professional community they 'align' with what is already going on, the dominant practices and processes of the growing organizational culture.

As I argued in Chapter Four, one of the reasons that these activities are seen to be needed has been precisely the lack of engagement between novice and experienced animators in the work place. The labour phenomenon of the "missing middle," caused by the widespread rise in short-term work has acutely impacted early career trajectories (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2001: 349). One of the most significant consequences has been a reduction in the stable mixed-expertise work groups where both skills transfer and socialization have traditionally occurred. Given more stable employment in a unionized studio environment, creative skills and professional knowledge might be imparted slowly and systematically through apprenticeship (Caldwell, 2008: 146).[7] Following the well-publicized example of international firms like Rhythm & Hues, larger companies have developed continuous education programs (147). Yet, again, many training programs have been spun off into enterprises in their own right, and the craft associations have supplemented or in some instances wholly relocated these functions into the semi-public community forum. Unfortunately this strategy brings with it a risk of commodifying the very relationships between students and professionals that organizers have worked hard to create.

Commodification of Engagement

Despite the enthusiasm that surrounds TASI and ASIFA-India events, the model of social engagement they have developed faces significant challenges. Observing the experience of video game workers, Mark Deuze et al (2007) found that the inability of craft associations to directly intercede on behalf of their members as would a union tends

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[7] Despite industrial transformation, the majority of skills formation is still expected to occur through work experience. Yet, as I argued in Chapter Four, such '*Gurukul*' apprenticeships are becoming increasingly rare, replaced by paid industry 'incubation' programs.

to consign them to an observational role. As short-term relations between workers become ever more important, the personal jockeying for position required to maintain employment may supplant the incentive to participate in communal "advocacy" (349). This places craft associations in a tenuous position. TASI and ASIFA-India target students in order to socialize them into the values and practices of a professional community. Yet, as I demonstrated in Chapters Three and Four, the tendency in animation training has been to place the onus on the student as an individual. The spaces of community engagement offered by the craft associations become instead a transactional resource. Students I spoke to report determination to seek access to "professional knowledge" though engaging with established animators (Bhavika Bavishi, Interview 25a). Major annual animation festivals like Anifest India and IAD bring together hundreds of students seeking the knowledge that will give them an edge in realizing their creative and professional ambitions; drawn by the reputation of prominent and engaging animators and opportunities to increase their own professional exposure. For the student they are "venue[s] to demonstrate your short films; your creative competence; your creative abilities;" and for employers, "a market where you identify potential talent" (Madhavan, Interview 2).

Defining the success of the craft associations purely in terms of their market value as repositories for community knowledge becomes increasingly problematic as it is linked to a more ephemeral network sociality rather than a sense of persistent membership. The testimony of prominent speakers at such events reveals a very different perspective, as they often conceive this interaction in social rather than economic terms, stressing professional legacy and the personal desire to 'give back' (C. Sharma, Interview 26). They leverage their own symbolic capital for greater social capital.[8] Nonetheless, organizational leaders mount a vigorous argument against instrumental participation:

> You can't say that I grew two inches higher after attending a TASI session. There is nothing tangible, but we are hoping that if they were excited, if they asked questions, if they learnt something from it, each person must have gone back with a different frame of mind... We don't want to say that attend a TASI session and go home 25 percent wiser. Like your chances of getting a paycheck are more. (Kumaresh, Interview 19)

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[8] Prominent individuals possess considerable cultural and symbolic resources. That these might be exchanged for social and economic capital through engagement is a key point I develop further below (Wittel, 2001: 71).

To address this perceived one-way flow of cultural capital TASI has sought to integrate students into the negotiation of community issues relevant to their experience, most notably in hosting debate on animation training.[9] This suggests an opportunity for students to engage actively in community as it begins to regulate itself. However this too presents its own challenges. By taking such an assertive role in the early development of students entering the professional community, the craft societies make it more difficult for themselves to also serve the needs of established practitioners, providing a venue for more fundamental negotiation of professional conditions.

If the craft association events provide students opportunities to develop new skills and build a professional network, for more experienced members they are occasions for quite a different set of interactions: from meeting friends, to voicing concerns or conducting business negotiations (Deuze et al, 2007: 348). In Caldwell's topology of the social spaces of production culture, the social activities that cater to prospective members are on the periphery, set apart from progressively more sequestered spaces of exchange (2004: 186). The more craft associations are perceived to act exclusively as contact zones for the professional community, the more other functions must take place elsewhere. Accordingly, IDC Associate professor Nina Sabnani cautions that a focus on students to the exclusion of other stakeholders limits the scope to address concerns of the wider community:

> TASI is mainly for people who want to learn about animation. Usually they are very young people… who want to learn how to do something… I don't know if people are really getting together at any intellectual plane or discussing animation. I don't see that much happening... There is not that much dialogue or argument about what is animation or where it should be going or what we should be doing. (Interview 37)

While craft associations have been successful targeting a student audience, in order to develop lasting community identity they must maintain a sense of membership into professional life. However, just as there is a missing middle in the animation workplace, there may be a corresponding gap in the craft associations, an absence of active rank and file professionals only exacerbated by the very public association of community resources with students. Those missing are not the prominent practitioners who conduct the workshops, but working animators already putting in long hours on paying projects, with

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[9] Although, they provide "an open forum where students will question the institutes [and] institutes have to defend themselves" (Kumaresh, Interview 19), TASI events are often hosted by institutes and senior training professionals are active in organizational leadership (P. Sharma, Interview 24).

a correspondingly precarious work-life balance, for whom community participation currently represents too great a commitment, for undefined personal benefit.[10]

Finally, in addition to threats concerning the depth of interaction between practitioners, the craft associations also must address the persistence of engagement. Accounts from both associations describe efforts to foster continuing professional development and ongoing knowledge sharing. However the lack of engagement between community events is a major worry for participants, as journalist and entrepreneur Anand Gurnani suggests, "We need to go to collaboration, creation of content [and] deeper discussions through events; otherwise, we will just be having a feel-good thing... and not go beyond" (Interview 10). That Gurnani conceives the social space as potential forum for entrepreneurism represents a further remove from the non-competitive club Mohan first proposed, moving towards the strategic sociality of the trade association. However, that engagement may be intermittent is not in itself an insurmountable challenge to community cohesion. Norcliffe and Rendace (2003) for example, describe the operation of a "periodic social economy," organized around intense creative exchange at annual conventions and smaller scale local events. Rather it is the transience of engagement between practitioners that ultimately limits all kinds of organizational knowledge exchange. That much animation production work is based around ever-shifting creative collaborations means that while a great deal of knowledge may be generated it is also easily forgotten (Grabher, 2005: 1492). Accumulated social capital is at risk of simply being dispersed as soon as participants return to their own studios and projects.

These challenges demonstrate the difficulty of posing a narrative of communal identity alongside the day-to-day transactional network sociality of industrial creative practice, and ultimately an organizational imperative to address the individualistic tendency in cultural labour: the inclination to view participation as an opportunity for self-development, augmenting a network that is fundamentally personal rather than social (Wittel, 2001: 51, 56). Ambivalence to individualization potentially undermines the project of formal professional organization, and the wide perception that the craft associations exist primarily for the purpose of exposing and empowering students is a barrier to their development to serve wider community demands. However in order to

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[10] Even active participants report negative effects on work-life balance, "My family complains of me being out on weekends, nearly every second weekend for an event in some place, and they are like, 'do you guys not want your Saturdays and Sundays?'" (Gurnani, Interview 10).

meet these needs, the organization needs to offer greater more in exchange. As Singh explicitly recognizes:

> We are at best right now an organization which has for its own reasons, its own constraints, limited to events, seminars, workshops, festivals and that kind of stuff. I would love to see this expand into an organization that people can turn to for help in any way, whether it is financial help, whether it is educational help, whether it is legal help. There are various aspects which the artist community requires. They need a voice, and TASI can be that voice, but it's not going to be something that can be imposed. (Interview 28)

The idea that the community has needs that can only be served once it has been assembled into a formal entity is significant here. It addresses the fundamental question of what organizational structures are for, beyond the immediate transactional value of information. What Singh envisions is a more overt collective effort to gain control over the conditions of production by addressing pressing community concerns, in particular the development of minimum standards of professional training, instructor qualifications, and political advocacy to gain regulatory support (Bloor and Dawson, 1994: 281). How such grassroots reform might be achieved absent the collective bargaining authority of an animation union remains to be seen. However, as I reveal in the following section, many of these concerns are shared by both individual and institutional participants in the larger trade associations, who seek to leverage the performance of industrial unity for collective economic advantage, including efforts to regulate professional identity from the top down.

3.   *The Industrial Association*

In comparison to the emphasis that professional societies have placed on grassroots engagement, trade associations representing the animation sector have prioritized higher-level negotiation, providing a venue for industry leaders to network with each other and with policy makers. In this third section of the chapter I reveal how bodies like FICCI, NASSCOM, and ABAI embed sociality not only in economic collaboration but overtly political context. Despite origins and interests outside the animation community, the pan-industrial associations have changed the organizational culture of animation through the ways they quantify and formalize industry narratives. Their reports, working groups and events provide venues to perform industrial unity and to leverage it strategically. They apply this collective capital to represent the interests of Indian animation firms to regulators, albeit with varying degrees of success. Finally, associations have recently begun to use policy outreach as a mechanism for self-regulation; comprising efforts to standardize industrial practices and professional identities.

While professional associations represent individuals, trade associations represent companies (table 5.4). They are established by a number of firms competing in a single market, in order to generate social and economic capital they cannot achieve alone (Boleat, 1996). They work to cultivate "Brand India" (NASSCOM, 2011; KPMG, 2009). Doing so, they face the same ongoing changes that characterize all aspects of Indian animation. It would be a mistake to ignore the performance and theorization of industrial identity as somehow separate from the more "slippery" cultural negotiation at the grassroots (Caldwell, 2008: 235). This is all the more critical as it becomes clear that the boundary between the two is less solid than it appears.

Table 5.4:   *Pan-Industrial Associations*

Founded in 1927, The Federated Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, presents itself as the "largest and oldest apex business organization in India," its history "interwoven with" the creation and economic development of the nation. "FICCI has contributed to this historical process by encouraging debate, articulating the private sector's views and influencing policy" (FICCI, 2012). FICCI claims to represent over 250,000 companies, and a key role in the ongoing transformation of India into a technological economy.

Founded in 1988, The National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) asserts a similar claim in promoting the IT-BPO sector. Including affiliated chambers of commerce. NASSCOM's membership is 1,350, "represent[ing] 95 percent of industry revenues" (NASSCOM, 2012b).

As pan-industrial bodies, FICCI and NASSCOM have many interests beyond the animation sector. FICCI's long track record on behalf of Indian business has its origins in agitation for trade self-sufficiency during the last decades of British rule. In more recent years the federation played a large part in government negotiations resulting in official industry status for Indian cinema (Ganti, 2012: 69). At the same time NASSCOM has come to prominence as an advocate for the IT services sector that catalysed the rapid growth of outsourcing, including the growth of animation production services. While the craft associations are concerned with developing a shared professional repertoire or knowledge base, these organizations are concerned with enhancing "knowledge capital" in the animation sector (NAGFO, 2010). This is reflected in efforts to formalize and unify industrial strategies, and presented most clearly in the form of much-publicized industry reports the associations produce in collaboration with international accounting consultancies.

Performing Industrial Unity

The pan-industrial trade associations are most recognized in Indian animation for the proliferation of strategic industrial narratives. FICCI's KPMG "Entertainment in India

Report" and NASSCOM's "The Animation and Gaming Industry in India" compiled by Ernst & Young Publications are the primary sources of the statistics used to promote the almost ubiquitous narratives of continuous industrial development and ongoing growth of the animation sector.[11] All aspects of animation practice from technologies to traditions are assessed for their potential contribution to projected turnovers, tax earnings, and sectorial growth.[12] These numbers proliferate widely not only in practitioner accounts and the local trade press, but in the national and international press, where they are used to justify large-scale strategic and commercial actions (Frater, 2008). In 2001, NASSCOM projected that India would require 300,000 animation and production services professionals by 2008 (De and Glancy, 2001), and in 2007 that the value of the animation sector would grow from $460 million, to $1163 million in 2012, at a CAGR of 27 percent (*Business Standard*, 2008). As I have argued, these predictions map closely onto the growth of commercial animation training and speculative investment in the feature film bubble.

Although they have reduced projections in response to the global economic downturn, the strategic narratives presented in the industry reports have remained remarkably consistent. In 2009 the NASSCOM report continued to enumerate the perceived advantages of India as a hub for animation production, a skilled workforce, co-production and IP opportunities, a growing domestic market, and of course low cost. In this way the annual reports have helped to bring about a change in the language used to describe animation: from 'value chains' and 'fragmented markets' to corporate 'synergies' (Chand, 2009). This rhetoric closely matches the narrative of outward looking development I presented in Chapter One, emphasizing strategic partnership while turning to Hollywood as a model. The animation and visual effects chapter in FICCI's 2011 KPMG report "Hitting the Highnotes," is even titled: "(Bolt)ing (Up)wards into a new 'Avatar'" (97). By 2013's "The Power of a Billion" the message moved towards consolidation of gains, asserting that, "Animation is no longer a sunrise industry" and therefore future gains will come through increased strategic collaboration (KPMG, 2013: 152).

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[11] This reflects what Ganti aptly calls, "an industry of generating reports about the film industry" (2012: 397).
[12] In the 2009 FICCI KPMG report, the production and increasing popularity of animated mythological content is presented in terms of its potential to "build brand India" at home and abroad (48).

While ostensibly based in independent analysis, the reports increasingly incorporate local voices that blur the line between industrial and individual reflexivity. They do so by offering a venue for prominent individuals to contribute their own spin on organizational narratives. The 2013 FICCI report included guest columns to "enhance the value of the facts and information" (KPMG, 2013: forward). The animation section concludes with what is essentially a keynote, "India Ascends Global Stage with Animation and VFX" by Technicolor India country head and ABAI President Biren Ghose:

> India has been in the animation industry for only 12-14 years as compared to many other countries that developed local and/or international businesses over the last 35 to 50 years. If we go back 5 to 7 years, the industry was a meagre 2 to 3 percent of the total Indian M&E revenues. That share has now increased and will go to almost 10 percent of the total India M&E sector in the next 6 to 7 years. (KPMG, 2013: 156)

Such celebratory 'enhancement' has the effect of personalizing the strategic narratives of the industrial associations, grounding the analysis of remote management consultancies in the experience of prominent and respected members of the community. Yet this is equally a process of individuals aligning with and legitimating dominant organizational narratives, and as I return to in the fourth section, the lingering influence of such numbers means they can be a force for conflict as much as cohesion.

Just as industrial reports validate commercial strategies and unify narratives, events create spaces for this unity to be performed. These include FICCI Frames, a three-day international conference billed as Asia's largest global convention on the business of media and entertainment, NASSCOM's Animation and Gaming India, and more recently ABAI's ABAIfest and KAVGC Summit. Within the wider 'Media and Entertainment' (M&E) industry, Frames caters to animation, gaming and visual effects with meetings, workshops, keynote speakers, a media marketplace and the Best Animated Frames (BAF) Awards ("About Frames" 2011). NASSCOM's 'Animation and Gaming' 2008 conference promotes its "Super Pitch" session both to provide a forum for new talent and to demonstrate the further "maturing of the ecosystem" (NASSCOM, 2008b). This is accompanied by an endorsement from 2007 winner Prosenjit Ganguly:

> The NASSCOM super pitch is probably the only platform of its kind in India, where animation content creators get to present a brand new idea to an audience and get a very spontaneous critique. An acknowledgement here is a definite tip off on the future prospects and product value of the content. (NASSCOM, 2008b)

In this too Indian trade associations closely match a Hollywood model. Caldwell observes very similar pitching 'rituals' in the production culture of US television (2004; 2008). As there, gatherings also function as industrial boundary zones, but in ways that overtly blur

the boundaries of social and economic practice. Such events serve a dual purpose, building personal skills and networks, but also enforcing the associations' industrial narratives and their role as spaces for negotiation.

On a cross-industry scale, the mutually beneficial social gatherings described by Mohan take on a different significance, becoming ceremonial "spaces of industrial cohabitation" (Caldwell, 2006: 107; 2004: 182). These are billed as venues for cooperation not competition, or at least the performance of mutual promotion. Here elite participants representing major firms may enact their alignment with a wider community, and unsurprisingly the narrative that emerges is rooted in shared history. At the 2103 ABAI KAVGC Summit Green Gold's Chilaka relates the camaraderie and the common experiences that bind past and present industry leaders:

> I'm a veteran of the industry now. All of these guys I know from long time. So first thing is déjà vu for us. When we meet these guys we talk about the days when we were struggling, how we used to take the second-class train tickets or the bus tickets to go somewhere…
> I remember my first NASSCOM… it really inspired. Places like this you get to hear priceless wisdom, what people have gone through struggle. A person who is starting new; he may think that he is the only one who is struggling and he may think he is not good enough. The reality is that everyone has gone through struggle. Without struggle, you cannot win. The forums help in that. (ABAI, 2013e)

This is a persistent communality rather than the more precarious sociality of individual projects or firms. Chilaka's remarks come in the wake of his ABAI 2013 Excellence in Leadership Award, recognizing his success in domestic television content so one might be tempted to explain away such rhetoric as purely the individual performance of cultural capital. Indeed, affirmations of personal 'struggle' are a familiar component in myths of 'making it' across cultural industries. However it is important not to discount that the impetus for these gatherings is to achieve shared economic and political objectives, aims that extend well beyond inspiring new practitioners. Industrial reports and events serve to promote negotiation of long-standing challenges. The authority to address these challenges comes from organizational members, and the trade associations represent these interests in efforts to change the conditions of practice, ultimately including the regulation of professional identity.

From Representation to Governance

The representative function is one of the most important roles of the trade association, necessitating an organizational understanding of member needs and the decision-making process of outside stakeholders. NASSCOM and FICCI benefit from substantial economies of scale and experience from other industrial sectors that they bring

to the negotiating table with policy makers. The professional associations are seen to have the closest ties to both international industry and local regulators, and in this sense are perpetually straddling the borders of the professional community (About FICCI, 2012). The reflexive performance of unity by prominent practitioners and firms is also critical to the realisation of industrial strategies. This is leveraged in terms of symbolic knowledge capital, which the trade associations convert into political capital in the form of collective influence. As ASIFA-India Vice-President Seshaprasad (then at Rhythm & Hues) explains, the large industrial associations carry the clout of their business members in seeking solutions to perceived challenges:

> We [R&H] are a part of the NASSCOM Advisory Board. We are also a part of the FICCI board… we would like to be there and support the industry, and if there is something we can contribute by throwing our weight around, we will definitely be involved in those stages, and obviously, their help is needed much more, obviously for creating tax sops or a centre of excellence or recognizing animation as an industry… (Interview 15a)

Crest Animation CEO A. K. Madhavan asserts their most important role is to support member companies, "to help us push, whether it is the banking community, whether it is the network community, to look at content that is locally made for the local markets" (Interview 2). To achieve this, the trade associations have created a series of sector-specific committees: NASSCOM's Animation and Gaming Forum (NAGFO), and later the Animation VFX Gaming Technology Forum (NAVIGATE), intended to, "reach out to various stakeholders as 'One Voice' for the industry" (NASSCOM, 2012a).[13] Similarly FICCI organizes its own Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming & Comics (AVGC) Forum. FICCI senior assistant director Sumeet Gupta explains that such a body "consolidate[s] the various stakeholders in the industry… will discuss the problems related to the industry and help in forming meaningful solution" (qtd. in Demott, 2006).

While the trade associations have claimed significant policy victories in the wider media and entertainment industries, the task of finding meaningful solutions to collective problems has been complicated by the unique regulatory conditions of animation in India. Animation was not granted official status in 2001 alongside the live-action film industry, and the federal government has been notably hesitant to extend protective quotas or capital investment (Frater, 2008). FICCI and NASSCOM have long lobbied for change, and these demands are reflected in their industrial reports, what Graphiti CEO Munjal

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[13] The latter included both FICCI and TASI, and as ASIFA-India is also an institutional member of FICCI, this forum may have represented the largest number of institutional stakeholders in one place.

Schroff terms, "a much needed and long overdue policy intervention" (KPMG, 2013: 151). Consistent with the needs identified by practitioners in Chapters One and Two, the trade associations advocate for production incentives matching other Asian nations, co-production treaties, and reserved allocations for locally produced content, including a public terrestrial children's television channel (152). In 2006 FICCI's Sumeet Gupta proposed a 10 percent domestic programing allocation to be increased to 30 percent over three years, as well as the creation of a National Centre of Excellence for animation, gaming and visual effects (TNN, 2006). This was proposed again in 2008 and 2010 with the promise of ₹520 million funding, and finally appropriated as part of the 2014 Information and Broadcasting Ministry budget (ITT, 2014; Demott, 2010; Venkateswaran, 2008). Part of the problem is that despite the performance of unity and increasing levels of organization, no single body speaks for the animation sector, and for those organizations that do, animation represents a small piece of their interests. As Madhavan describes, "they all have small committees which are in the animation space [but] I don't think the government of India is going to be excited about animation revenues as yet" (Interview 2). Compared to other sectors of cultural industries policy in India, animation still remains a relatively small and unknown quantity.

While advocacy efforts on the national level continue to face regulatory ambivalence, efforts on the local level have been far more positive. Among the most successful organizations at achieving both political aims and corresponding industrial governance has been ABAI (table 5.5).

Table 5.5:	The Association of Bangalore Animation Industry (ABAI) - A Regional Trade Association
	Founded in 2006, the Association of Bangalore Animation Industry is a regional trade association that has gained increasing influence in the organization of animation business across the country, "spread[ing] its wings to become a strong catalyst to promote" not only animation, but "Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics (AVGC)" business activities in India.

The association has sought to develop collaborative relationships with prominent individuals, organizations and events in order to: "create a greater 'deal flow' through co-productions and collaborations and other engagement formats." As such, ABAI presents itself, first and foremost as a: "knowledge sharing industry platform for companies, entrepreneurs and students" (ABAI, ca2014).

In addition to hosting industry summits and grassroots workshops, what has set the Karnataka-based association apart has been its almost unprecedented success in engaging with State government to develop initiatives that not only recognize and incentivize the animation sector, but set out standards of practice for production and training. These were formalized in 2011 as the Karnataka Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics

(KAVGC) Policy, the first of its kind at the State level, which has facilitated further capital investment and subsidies for local infrastructure.

Karnataka and specifically the city of Bangalore have an established track record as a hub for IT, attracting major firms like Adobe, Intel, and Nvidia. Major animation and visual effects firms have also setup in the region, including Tata Elxsi, Technicolor India (and its DreamWorks Dedicated Unit), and Prime Focus. This has created ideal conditions for industrial representation. Far from describing an ambivalent relationship with government, ABAI president Ghose suggests that if the association is "the engine under the hood" of community development, then the government is "the petrol in our tank" (KAVGC Summit 28-29 August, 2013d). Executive committee member Archana Krishnamurthy concurs, "I have never seen a government that is so proactive and is willing to actually join hands and almost sometimes actually are pulling us" (2013b). From the perspective of the regulator, Karnataka minister for the Department of Information Technology, Biotechnology and Science and Technology (DITBTS&T), I. S. N. Prasad describes the relationship as driven by collective knowledge and demands of the industry, spearheaded by ABAI:

> We can do the funding. We can enable things to happen, but end of the day it's the industry which must come up with the design of what they want… I also think it's proper that the government works closely with this industry because we don't have the requisite domain knowledge and we can't understand better than the industry so it's always better to work closely with industry and do what industry wants rather than government doing what it wants." (KAVGC Summit 28-29 August, 2013f)

The KAVGC policy comprises a set of benchmarks to develop Karnataka as a "most favoured destination" for animation and related sectors: providing incentives for outsourcing, venture capital for new local firms, direct funding training facilities, as well as trade association events and student outreach, building a local centre excellence, and to create an expert panel (AVGC-EP) to report on requirements for the "standardization of training, internships and mentoring programs" (KAVGC, 2012). This investment addresses the interests of government partners as well. The policy follows a trend in India for political leaders to seek to leverage cultural industries infrastructure to rework rural and urban spaces. This shows science and technology increasingly supplanted as the most

desirable drivers of regional employment, in favour of media sectors that promise a more 'creative' workforce.[14]

From the perspective of the industry leaders the KAVGC policy offers not only a welcome influx of investment and a respite from longstanding policy indifference, but also an opportunity to engage in industrial governance. At the heart of the policy is a radical effort to reform animation training not only by identifying best practices but standardizing them through industrial self-regulation; a formal 'Train the Trainer' program to impose professional norms on animation instruction. As I asserted in Chapter Four, this is something that many practitioners, even some within the commercial training sector have argued for many years; to define animation training as a distinct occupation in its own right (Interview 28; Interview 29). Recently, a partnership of FICCI and the National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC) has elected to pursue a similar strategy of professional governance nationwide. Their Media and Entertainment Skills Counsel (MESC) has begun to develop National Operating Standards (NOS) for animation jobs.[15] These set "benchmarks of good practice" for individuals in the workplace (MESC, 2014), as Reliance Animation CEO Ashish Kulkani explains:

> We have set up the National Operating Standards for animation, gaming, visual effects, comics and filmmaking. We have so far [done] about 87 job profiles… To follow these at the education level, by the faculty members, by the students, by the educational institutions and also by the production studios for the hiring as well as for making it as a standard for making salaries and compensation to the skills that are being offered by these people is going to be something which will be standard in all of the country. (KAVGC Summit 28-29 August, 2013c)

Kulkani advocates standardization as a means to be able to offer potential animation workers a "results oriented" career path, from school to employment, "making your career and forming your base and doing what you really like and telling stories to the world in different form" (ibid).

Ultimately it is through efforts such as these that the most fundamental impacts of industrial organization may be most keenly felt, reflecting the increasing regularization of creative and economic practice. It is critical to understand that this regulation emerges completely outside the bounds of labour activism, from the negotiation of industrial leadership rather than across the professional community as a whole. Accordingly, any

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[14] The KAVGC policy cites a requirement for up to 70 percent creative employees" that will lift "large strata of economically backward sections of the society" (2012: 3).
[15] At time of writing the council has created standards for four animation occupations: animator, rigger, modeler, and texturing artist (MESC, 2014).

attempt to present this solely as an altruistic top-down effort to address the precarity of animation work would be naïve. This is not however what they set out to do. Although the standardization of educational curricula and labour compensation might address some elements of precarious creative practice, there is no evidence to suggest that they would have any effect on the underlying conditions of isolation and instrumentality that most fundamentally impact quality of life in animation work. Instead, what these measures principally address is the uncertainty of creative labour, and by extension business investment, even going so far as to assert that "unorganized manpower in large numbers" has an undesirable effect on the national GDP (MESC, 2014).

In many ways this is a trend that mirrors the ongoing experience of the larger Bollywood film industry. As filmmakers have been asked to adopt greater transparency in exchange for outside capital investment and industrial recognition, greater organization has become a become a "panacea" for industrial uncertainty; accusations of a lack of discipline, planning and professionalism that lead to increasing calls for 'corporatization' (Ganti, 2012: 246).[16] What these efforts to standardize and otherwise regulate the conditions of professional practice share with other organizational activities such as those of the craft associations is the attempt to exercise authority over the process of professionalization. Although the details are certainly contested, the ambition, emphasized by the testimony of Singh, to provide greater support for professional practice remains. However as addressing concerns about training standards moves beyond identifying best practices into industrial governance, potential trade-offs emerge, returning to what extent sociability and professional identity can really be imposed and enforced on practitioners.

4.   From Local Alienation to Global Camaraderie

Despite the rhetoric of professional community and large-scale performance of industrial unity that characterize the activities of trade and professional organization in Indian animation there is considerable disagreement about the effects of industrial intervention on the culture of production. Many practitioners working in animation production do not take part in formal local networks, some prominent individuals have

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[16] Many of these same narratives proliferate in Indian animation, drawing upon wider cultural anxieties as well. ABAI's Biren Ghose warns, "We see in India very often that we don't spend enough time planning. We don't plan our roads. We don't plan our houses, we don't plan our kids and of course we don't plan our movies" (ABAI 2013d).

reservations about participation, and even among those most active in industrial negotiation some have personal reservations about the restriction of autonomy in the interests of governance. Although a long-time advocate for training standards, Singh argues, "It should not be enforced, but they should adopt. Enforcement does nothing. I am a firm believer in that; you cannot force people to look at your viewpoint" (Interview 28). Many animation practitioners argue the trade associations put burdens on animation to meet industrial objectives, yet are themselves out of touch with practical needs of the community of animation practitioners they claim to represent. As corporate synergies and governance come to the forefront of industrial negotiations, there is a danger that other conversations may be pushed to the wayside. For many practitioners this presents a disconnect from animation practice, inevitable when they are represented by business leaders in industrial bodies largely outside interpersonal communities of animation practitioners:

> Nobody is really talking about animation, and people who are running companies, they are not necessarily animators, you know. They never are… they are all businessmen and they could well be doing something else if this industry doesn't pan out or doesn't have a return on investment. They could just as well be doing something else. (Sabnani, Interview 37)

The individuals and organizations that participate in major industrial events and reports present a narrative of continuous industrial growth. However in my own field research in India, practitioners I spoke to, including in some cases the same people, were not always so positive about the impact of this rhetoric. A common response is to suggest that the claims and projections made by the trade associations are exaggerated, misleading, or simply a "fairy tale" (G. Rao, Interview 3). While NASSCOM reported that the sector would require upwards of 300,000 creative professionals by 2008, the underlying basis of such numbers is subject to question, as Gurnani explains:

> Contrary to all reports that you hear, the current size of, like the number of artists in India is around 30,000, and year on year, recruitment is 4,000 to 5,000 artists. One may feel that, you know, with 450 studios, the recruitment might be higher than this, but the thing is if I'm recruiting 300, there are two studios that are laying off 150 each (Interview 10).

Although intended to proliferate a consistent narrative about the Indian animation sector, the reports themselves are not always consistent with each other. Their key findings are ambitious projections of future growth that have generally not been completely realized.

Nonetheless these circulate with increasing authority across reports and policy initiatives long after they have been published, often after specific target dates have passed.[17]

Concerns about industrial organization are not limited to questions about the veracity of their figures. Many practitioners are alienated by an atmosphere of social and economic engagement imposed from above, outside the trusted social networks that they call upon in their creative and economic practice. As I described in Section One some creative practitioners find the formality and enforced sociality of professional organization and the celebratory yet competitive communal gatherings of the pan-industrial trade associations alienating, disconcerting, and even alarming. In contrast, they advocate for a return to an unenforced and informal sociality:

> I meet informally; like Vaibhav, Chetan, Anand. Since you are like minded, wherever you meet you end up talking a lot to hear what the other person is doing. It's very nice. A bunch of people like us are very good with each other and we have no competitive spirit. But the other bunch which is studios, they don't mingle too much with each other. They are pretty much rivals. (G. Rao, Interview 3)

The corporatization of social relations and occupational roles reflects a trend in the wider Indian cultural industries. Despite the rationalization of the media economy and the regulation of trade associations like FICCI, Informal social relations have remained the norm in Bollywood filmmaking for many decades (Lorenzen and Täube, 2008: 291). It is still the case that much work occurs without written contracts based on relationships of personal trust. Within discussions of individual contributions to Indian industry many of the same names are repeatedly invoked, which gives some indication of the small scale of local personal networks. While overshadowed by more formal industrial groupings, social networks are still a significant structuring force in Indian animation.

There are substantial differences in practice and organizational structure between the large outsourcing firms and smaller boutique firms, producing series and advertising work. Not coincidentally, it is largely the second described by Rao "as islands". As discussed in Chapter Two, the institutional culture within boutique studios like Studio Eeksaurus can be distinctive. Founder E. Suresh is very clear about his own personal ambivalence for social and economic engagement:

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[17] The KAVGC Policy, for example, cites growth projections from the 2008 NASSCOM report. Given the range of available statistics it seems almost inevitable that some degree of picking and choosing may occur (2012: 3).

> I just see a very few companies comparable in thinking with us, and in terms of the quality aspirations that we have… there is no opportunity of collaboration… very few people who our people can learn and imbibe [from]. (Interview 23)

Ways of working and identity go hand in hand. Suresh's insular organizational view is understandable. This does not mean that the formal organizational apparatus of community and industry does not engage with him, as he has been a frequent honouree at the ASIFA International Animation Day Awards of Excellence, TASI Anifest India and FICCI Frames BAF. In participating and benefitting from these shared celebrations, Suresh has aligned his studio to a local professional community, but does not feel personally limited to it.

If some prominent practitioners like Rao and Suresh feel that the local industry has little to offer, this does not mean that they do not seek opportunities for social engagement elsewhere. Rather they see themselves or their organizations as more closely aligned with practitioners in wider international cohort of artisanal animation artists and firms. In a sense this is demonstrates success of a project of professional development, as Indian practitioners begin to interact more freely and equitably with overseas colleagues; fellow nominees and jury members at international festivals. For Rao, this largely derives from participation in film festivals like Cannes and Annecy which provide a sense of communality absent in Indian production, "Suddenly I discovered like a family which I didn't over here" (G. Rao, Interview 3):

> It's funny because we spent four days together at Annecy whereas in Bombay we are not really meeting because his [Chetan Sharma's] studio is in that part of town and I live here. Earlier we used to keep a lot in touch. Now everybody has got under their own thing. We really don't meet as we must. (ibid)

Rao describes how one of the rewarding aspects of participating in the Indian industry delegation to the 2011 Annecy International Animation Festival and International Animation Film Market (MIFA) was not only engaging with colleagues from an international community but also the opportunity to strengthen ties locally, in a way not usually possible at home, even with friends who live and work in the same city.

Conclusions

I conclude this chapter by drawing together the preceding institutional testimony and analysis to consider how organizations become a both a focus for shared creative and professional identities and a powerful means to implement reflexive narratives, resulting in increasingly tangible structures for cultural and economic control. Merton argues that in order to speak for the profession, associations strive for 'completeness' representing as many stakeholders as possible (1958: 54). Discounting all enthusiastic statements to the

contrary, this is something that no single institution in Indian animation can claim to have achieved. Despite the activity of TASI and ASIFA-India at the grassroots or FICCI and NASSCOM on branding and representation, and organizations like ABAI in between, or perhaps rather because of their ongoing actions both independently and in concert with each other, there is no "single agenda" as Arena technical director Puneet Sharma asserts, "Somewhere, we are not getting that right people together" (Interview 24). Nonetheless different organizational structures continue to arise and contribute to the negotiation of community and industrial conditions.

Recent efforts to represent the interests of animation producers to policymakers have been promising and suggest a trend towards collaboration between craft and industry associations, but also the possibility of increasing conflict between creative autonomy and industrial governance. Calls from the craft and trade associations alike to set quotas for domestic content have yet to be realised but efforts to develop self-imposed industrial standards for training and production are beginning to emerge. Nonetheless, it remains to be seen whether this will lead to greater empowerment or increased precarity in employment and professional life, and these issues will continue to be negotiated in the forums of both the trade and professional associations.

Throughout this research I have understood practitioner reflexivity to be intrinsic to the negotiation of production culture through social learning, engagement, and identity alignment. As spaces for cultural and economic action, trade and professional organizations provide a tangible link between this industrial reflexivity and social structure. My purpose in this chapter has been to examine accounts from in and around trade and professional associations, assessing transactional and communal forms of identity, and how organizational affiliation is developed, formalized, and put to work. Beginning by distinguishing the conditions of collective action in Indian animation from Western industrial expectations, I re-grounded analysis of professional organization in testimony of creative isolation and social engagement. I then presented cases of the development of formal social structures and professional associations. ASIFA-India and TASI have formalized around promoting social learning and professionalization, but have faced increasing instrumentality in engagement and challenges maintaining professional dialogue. The contrasting case study of the trade associations suggests a period of transition.

The pan-industrial associations FICCI and NASSCOM have sought to integrate Indian animation into wider industrial context, applying business practices from established organizational fields. Their publications and major industrial gatherings

provide spaces for animation leaders to engage with stakeholders outside the animation community, and give them clout to begin to regulate professional identity, but also put them at risk of alienating animation practitioners. However, corresponding practitioner accounts express tensions over lingering alienation from such centralized institutional authority, and this has allowed other forms of collective activity to persist, including affiliation with international practitioner communities, and a resurgence of camaraderie, that is, more informal, if not explicitly individualized social networking.

It is perhaps this diversity of different forms of identity, from fragmented individualization to highly regulated occupational membership that is most telling about the state of Indian animation culture of production. Trade and professional organizations in Indian animation face great challenges in developing and maintaining cohesive identity, furthering occupational and industrial development, self-regulation and representation. However, the successes that the self-styled 'fraternity' or 'ecosystem' of animation artists, producers, educators, students and commentators have managed to achieve are more significant when seen within their frenzied industrial context.

A traditional view of professional organizations is that they serve as guarantors of established community orthodoxy, reproducing a stable status quo. However, in Indian animation such stability has been very difficult to achieve. Viewing the organization through a lens of social learning and negotiation, it is clear that they can also act to encourage and stimulate change, which may be either towards an engaged community or an increasingly enforced industrial orthodoxy. One of Merton's marks of professional association is a "commit[ment] to dissatisfaction with the state of affairs of the profession as it is" (1958: 52). What the organizations provide instead are forums to debate what that change should look like; to manage, legitimate, and represent evolving industrial identities, while embedding these in community structure (Greenwood et al, 2002: 59). All of this deepens our understanding of the organizational context in which the development of social and professional identity takes place. Continuing along these lines, in the next chapter I turn to an even more direct consideration of knowledge exchange through the operation of a trade information network.

Chapter Six: Inscribing Common Ground – The Animation Press or Trade Information Networks

"We see ourselves as ecosystem catalysts... we are connecting the ecosystem through the strand of information." Anand Gurnani, CEO and managing editor AnimationXpress.com (Interview 10)

"It is like we work as a team, the filmmakers [and] the journalists. It is not very fully functional at the moment, but that is what we are trying to do." Joyce Lemos, Animation Reporter (Interview 8)

Introduction

The preceding analysis of studios, educational institutions, and professional bodies demonstrates how diversely practitioners conceive their activities in and around animation, and how common narratives central to industrial growth, training, and community organization are crucial to the formation of professional identities and a sustained culture of production. Stories animation practitioners tell about their work play a key role in shaping the conditions of practice. As I have argued, such narratives focus on maximizing social capital through efforts to increase social learning, and several are centred on the metaphor of an emergent ecosystem. As a result, fostering interdependence and creating shared repertoires have become common features within organizational culture. Yet, while studios, schools, and professional associations large and small are increasingly active in managing collective knowledge and, in doing so, taking on roles in the regulation of identity, these activities cannot alone account for all of the kinds of exchange that we observe in Indian animation. Nor do they allow us to fully understand how knowledge actually circulates between individuals and community structures.

Within established cultural industries, this necessary circulation of valuable information often falls under the purview of a specialized trade press. In the Hollywood context, production studies scholars describe trade writing as a "messy dance" of secrecy and orchestrated disclosure (Caldwell, 2009: 173); a site where potential collaborators become familiar with each other's strategies (Johnson, 2012: 15). The reciprocal, sometimes even symbiotic, understanding between journalists and studio publicists authorizes what gets reported, and ultimately plays a part in who gets access to what information and when (Ortner, 2009: 177). As a result of this important work, the crucial reflexive role played by Hollywood trade publications in maintaining established

relationships and identities is slowly becoming better understood. However, this raises the question: how does trade communication work in a context where so many relationships and identities remain relatively undefined? Given still fluid creative, cultural and economic conditions, the situation in India may be different.[1] Further, while Indian animation has been under-researched in general, even compared to the attention paid to outsourcing, boutique production, education, or professional gatherings, the emerging communication infrastructure of the community has gone completely unnoticed. This is all the more surprising because it is trade communication that packages these developments into stories, shared knowledge intelligible across the community and beyond. Moreover, like all aspects of animation culture of production, this infrastructure itself has a basis in the day-to-day interpretation of industrial conditions, and may even be the richest textual manifestation of that reflexivity available to outside scrutiny. Accordingly, in this chapter I examine testimony relating to the Indian animation trade press and press-like communication activities, in order to analyse the methods and identities of the creative practitioners who have both shaped and been shaped by this overlooked feature of socio-professional structure.

I argue that, like the professional organizations, the Indian animation trade press, or what might better be termed a diverse 'trade information network,' manages repertoires of shared knowledge while also providing platforms for ongoing negotiation.[2] Journalist and other 'trade practitioner' accounts describe efforts to fill in niche gaps in understanding relevant to community needs, supplementing education and professional awareness of industry events.[3] As conduits for this valuable information, the 'trades' act as they do in other industrial contexts, as a source of cultural coherence and are among the first to explicitly articulate shared identity. However, this superficial unanimity conceals significant underlying tensions. While outlets make knowledge available, the

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[1] As Tejaswini Ganti suggests, "The commercial nature of a media institution does not necessarily render its structure, organization, or working style transparent or universal" (2012: 176). While the core functionality of communication infrastructure might be similar, many creative or technical practices are likely to be locally specific and culturally contingent. Indian creative labour is decentralized, with an emphasis on personal relations and a lingering attachment to informal economy; attributes that likely carry over into the trades.

[2] I further develop this more inclusive concept of trade communication in the first section. However, in short, I use a 'trade information network' to refer to communication activities that may fall outside conventional boundaries of the press.

[3] Likewise, to avoid unintended confusion between different kinds of symbol creators, I also distinguish the 'trade practitioner,' preferring this to the more conventional and specific 'journalist' in cases where this may not be consistent with participant understandings or activities.

veracity and efficacy of that information remain open to critique. This brings the purpose of trade communication into question. As in education practice, responses to these challenges demonstrate the flexibility and even fluidity of the practitioner identities upon which these structures are founded. Here, writing about animation is not only implicated in localized learning, advocacy, and organizational development, but the diversity of animation practice itself. Ultimately, the significance of trade communication in Indian animation may not be in fixing collective identity, but in revealing how such identities cannot be reduced to any pre-defined set of activities. In short, these composite identities and the identity-work that underpins them locate trade practitioners at the very centre of the ongoing negotiation of India's animation production culture.

Approach

As in preceding chapters, I adopt here a combined economic and cultural studies approach, grounding organizational analysis in practitioner testimony and participant observation. However, while the constructivist methodological foundation of 'constant comparison' remains consistent, investigating the reflexivity of the press raises particular challenges. These principally concern access and my own position in the research. It bears special consideration that a trade press defines a boundary area where the community engages with a wider public, and is populated by practitioners who possess substantial personal and professional affinities with this project. Here I return to the concept of 'studying sideways' first raised in the thesis introduction (Ortner, 2009; Mayer, 2008). It is in the study of and engagement with journalists and other trade practitioners that these are most apparent and where they have the most impact on both the conduct of investigation and my findings.

Planning this research, I anticipated that the press might present the most visible interface for the animation community. It was through press interviews that many key figures whose testimony has shaped this work first came to my attention and their critical interest in the evolving social condition of Indian animation became apparent. Opportunities for observation and engagement arose through initial contact with trade practitioners, who in turn provided numerous additional contacts that have shaped the investigation. Accordingly, the "theoretical sample" developed throughout the research has its origins in the press (Glaser, 1978). Further, the sites for participant observation were already inhabited by individuals I initially recognized as journalists. For example, the Chitrakatha International Student Animation Film Festival in October 2011 was as much a setting for participant observation with the animation press as it was with the educators, students and alumni of the NID. Not only was this a public-private venue

where insiders' ways of thinking and representing themselves might be heard and seen, but an opportunity for the community to document itself from the inside as I have done from the outside. It is important to note that none of these are neutral positions, and recognizing this is central to research on the boundaries of community.

Studying sideways calls for attention to be paid to commonalities between investigator and informant. The correspondents I first engaged with at the NID have been my most frequent points of contact; present at each presentation or screening, observing, talking to participants and, like me, taking notes on the proceedings. Although in substantially different cultural contexts our educational and professional backgrounds are broadly similar. We also share a professional interest and approach to writing about animation practice.[4] Further, as I make clear in this chapter, my stated interest in understanding animation as an emergent cultural system corresponds directly to the objectives of animation trade communication. As Ortner describes in the Hollywood context:

> These are all people whose job is to maintain an overview of the larger system, who pride themselves on having the kind of broad knowledge of the scene and its trends that the anthropologist is also seeking. (2009: 184)

This speaks to their prominent position within the culture of production and unsurprisingly also as key participants in this research. However the ability to mediate local knowledge is both an asset and a hindrance for analysis. Investigating the critical industrial practice of the press necessitates scepticism of both initial assumptions and the partiality of data drawn from trade industry analysis or testimony. The challenge is to avoid naively turning to the theories and practices of trade writers as arbiters of authentic meaning. Instead, I recognize that the reflexive positioning of trade texts, as well as trade practitioner self-interest and subjective motivation, are not only closely related, they are both embedded in the same cultural affinities and economic commitments that they inflect and reproduce. In short, the purpose of my comparative approach here is not to filter out the mediating effects of trade communication, partiality or spin, but to engage with them directly.[5]

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[4] Unlike Ortner working in Los Angeles, I stop just short of claiming to occupy the same habitus as my new colleagues in the Indian animation press, but key concerns about understanding, social and power relations remain.

[5] Here I depart from assertions made by Wilkinson and Merle (2013: 416), first to suggest that even "verbatim interviews" are mediated, but also that all trade press reports may nonetheless still be understood as "primary in nature" in terms of their own reflexive content.

Whatever arrangement we might recognize as an Indian animation 'trade press' is made up of a relatively small group of people, working either independently or within one of a handful of organizations. Accordingly, the testimonial data for this chapter is drawn predominately from my interview engagement with five participants who shared their personal stories, understandings, and contacts (table 6.1). However, as part of my purpose here is to problematize some of the conventional boundaries of trade press studies, I also draw upon contributions by other animation practitioners.[6] Finally, significant additional data comprises the textual practice of trade communication itself, referring back to earlier published accounts that have featured prominently throughout this research.

Table 6.1:	*Trade Press and Information Networks:*
AllAboutAnimation.com -	Akshata Udiaver (TASI)
Animation Reporter -	Joyce Lemos (*MiD-Day*)
AnimationXpress.com -	Anand Gurnani (Anand Gurnani Media)
CGTantra.com -	R.K. Chand and Abhishek Chandra (Digitales Studios)

Consistent with my grounded approach, the 'trade press' here is an emergent category. Rather than define it based on outside criteria, to continue this inquiry I need to delimit what is meant by a trade press in the context of Indian animation; how the reflexive practices revealed in my data depart from conventional understandings of journalism. From this I develop a new conceptual frame, the 'trade information network' that accommodates the range of information platforms that I engage with here. I briefly introduce four specific cases, and the reflexive positions of affiliated trade practitioners. Building on this, in the second section I investigate testimony concerning the possible functions of trade communication, from 'catalysing' collaboration to supplementing education, aligning new animators to community expectations and industrial best practices.

That such pedagogical and professional standards remain so contested, as shown throughout this thesis, means that very often much of the information that the trades present is itself subject to argument. This limits the coherence of trade networks as platforms for circulating self-regulatory norms. Accordingly, the third section places testimony from the trades within a context of industrial control, emphasizing the importance of sponsorship and the restrictions this places on constructive debate. Finally,

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[6] These include Akshata Udiaver's reporting in *DNA* (2011b), as well as educational commentary in *Animation Reporter* by Shilpa Ranade (2008) and Ranjit Singh (Lemos, 2012), reports to *Animation Xpress* by Singh (2004) and *CGTantra* posts by Vaibhav Kumaresh (2008-).

by examining these challenges to trade communication, I also reveal the complexity of identity formation among its practitioners. I conclude by returning to social networking structures, drawing together arguments over the formalization of industrial knowledge, with contrasting testimony that presents a vision for a more fluid self-regulating professional community. It is the ongoing negotiation between these practitioner narratives that increasingly defines India's evolving culture of animation production.

1.   *From the Trade Press to a Trade Information Network*

The task of analysing the role played by a trade press in the cultural industries, and in the Indian situation in particular, is complicated by ambiguity of what a trade press actually is. The term has a legacy across a wide range of industrial contexts, but must be focused to describe local conditions. For example, what differentiates the trades from the popular entertainment press? Where does a trade press reside when so much industry communication occurs online, as it does in Indian animation? According to Janet Laib's 1953 account, the trade press comprises specialized publishers devoted to serving industries with publications of particular interest to their working members. These publications, commonly trade journals, are, "magazines edited to serve distinct business or professional fields" (31). Likewise C. Ann Hollifield in her analysis of the communications industry press and public policy defines the trade press as, "print media publications that narrowly focus their editorial content to serve the information needs of readers who have a professional interest in a single industry or industry segment" (1997: 761). Hollywood examples based on these definitions would most often include *Variety* and its competitor *Hollywood Reporter*, but also discipline-specific publications like the American Society of Cinematographers' (ASC) *American Cinematographer*, or in the animation sector, *Animation Magazine*.

This suggests the titular animation trade press must be one that publishes material of interest to those working in the industry or field of animation, many of whom have already been examined in this research. However, it is clear that a great deal of information of interest to these members of the animation community also resides in the popular press. What then would not count as animation trade press? Bollywood film trades, publications like *Screen*; popular entertainment news outlets and websites such as *Bollywood Hungama*; as well as major daily newspapers such as *MiD-Day* or *Daily News*

and Analysis; and business publications like *Financial Express*, each occasionally cover animation stories and the state of the animation industry.[7] However none of these fit the above descriptions of an animation trade press, either because they target a more general readership of media consumers, or that they address a different industry audience altogether.[8]

Further, a traditional definition of the trade press emphasizing the importance of print journals seems unnecessarily restrictive given the amount of material that is written and distributed exclusively online; the rising importance of blogs and web portals that are not strictly news publications, yet perform recognizable journalistic function*s*. For example, Ranjit Singh's article on employee poaching in the outsourcing sector is of no less interest to an animation audience simply because it happened to be published in *Studio Systems*, a post-production industry journal (2004), just as his series on industry-based training is no less relevant for being posted online by *Animation Xpress* (2004-2005). The sensibility of these distinctions very much depends on the purpose of a trade press, that is, the information needs of the animation readership.

Understanding the role of the press presents a particular challenge to production studies, concerned as it has been with insider and outsider knowledge; the boundaries of understanding and identity that define community membership. While the popular press participates in the marketing and branding of industry output, subject to limits on public disclosure, a trade press has a part to play in defining and maintaining the boundaries of the production community itself. In the case of Hollywood, Ortner sets out two ways in which this is enforced:

> One might begin at the level of language and information, and consider the trade magazines. The contents of *Variety*, for example, are highly coded at multiple levels… Then there is the level of content: what precisely gets reported… At both levels the outsider has difficulty reading… The effect is to strongly reinforce the inside/outside divide…while at the same time leaking the valuable information that keeps the industry humming. (2009: 177)

She suggests a scenario in which the trade press provides not only a mouthpiece for insider information but also an enforcer of social hierarchies. Implicitly coded

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[7] For an example from Chapter Two, see Udiaver's commentary on boutique animation studios in *DNA* (2011b).
[8] In the case of business journalism these certainly overlap. Both journalists and their readers belong to multiple identity networks, and it follows that those who make business decisions in animation engage with the wider cultural industries and are served by the business press. However, online platforms like *The Hindustan Times' Live Mint* have allowed these publications to extend their reach into specialized markets including animation, further justifying their inclusion here (Ramnath, 2014).

information is channelled to various levels of elites whose status is conferred by their possession of the additional knowledge necessary to act upon it. By extension, this also implies a deterrent to outside scrutiny, both a means to control discourse and a barrier to the newcomer wishing to study and engage with practitioners, comparable to the high physical walls that surround the famous Hollywood studio lots.

The same might be said of the Bollywood trade press and the gated expanse of Mumbai's Film City, as the industrial conditions are well established. However it appears that in the much smaller and still-developing sector of Indian animation, the accessibility of trade communication is quite different. Information remains just as valuable, but so is promoting access to it for those entering into the community for the first time. Accordingly, a second function of the trades is to channel inside information to members on the boundaries, consistent with the social learning structure of a community of practice (Wenger, 2006). In other words, the information barrier of the press can also be, by design, quite permeable. These opposing tendencies exist on a wider continuum of communication practice.[9] What this reveals is a need to pay as much attention to the information that is publically disclosed as to that which remains privileged, what Caldwell refers to as "fully embedded deep texts" (2008: 347). This corresponds to a useful trend in production studies to move beyond preoccupation with only the inner workings of industry.[10] To apply this thinking to the animation trade press calls for a new way of framing trade communication in relation to production culture.

A Trade Information Network

What seems to be needed is a wider definition of trade communication, accommodating not only traditional trade journals, but trade content in the popular press, e-magazines, industry news feeds including web-based press release aggregators, professional ad-supported blogs, and information portals, all of which include analysis, interviews, products and techniques of interest to animation practitioners. For the purpose of this study, I introduce the concept of a 'trade information network' that comprises all

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[9] Both are evident in accounts of Indian animation. In Section Two, I equate efforts to use valued information to 'catalyse' specific kinds of practice with the former more coded mode, while explicitly educational efforts seem more representative of the later. Both, however, reflect a similar drive to leverage shared knowledge to regulate identity.

[10] While useful to foreground the unique cultural status of creative practitioners, privileging the proprietary and embedded over the disclosed and public comes with a danger of actually overstating inside/outside binaries. As Derek Johnson asserts, this barrier to understanding results from efforts to assess 'production of culture' or 'production as culture' while failing to also account for 'production in culture' (2014).

the factual print and electronic publication aimed, but not necessarily exclusively, at animation practitioners with a particular emphasis on those categories explored throughout this research: artists, studios and their employees, teachers, students, and other kinds of animation professionals, including of course the trade practitioners themselves. This incorporates the perhaps obvious reality that not only do people increasingly get their news in different places; the variety of outlets used to circulate information has also increased. Only by integrating conventional trade journals into larger networks that might include the proprietary messaging of studios, the self-examination of industry publications, and the very public messaging of the industry, may a fuller understanding of trade communication activity be achieved (table 6.2).

Table 6.2:   *A Trade Information Network:*

Communications by studios and industrial organizations: e.g. the FICCI-KPMG Report

Conventional trade publications: magazines and books, e.g. *Animation Reporter*, *The Art of Animation Production Management* (Singh, 2013)

Animation trade content published in related industry trades or the popular press

Web-based trade news and information outlets:
    Industry information portals: e.g. *Animation Xpress*
    Professional blogs: e.g. *All About Animation*
    Online 'communities' or forums: e.g. *CGTantra*

This term is my own invention, created in response to practitioners who seem to rarely speak about a trade 'press,' but often about 'information' exchange. Conceiving trade communication in terms of wider networks allows consideration of activities that may fall outside conventional boundaries of a trade press, not only because of where they occur, but also the identities of the people involved; often creative professionals who may be uncomfortable with journalistic identities or even disavow them altogether. The remainder of this chapter principally addresses four different outlets within this network frame: the print monthly *Animation Reporter*, the online aggregator and newsfeed *Animation Xpress*, the blog and information portal *All About Animation*, and the forum-based portal *CGTantra*. Again, I argue it is the reflexive positioning of these outlets as much as their structural conditions that shapes how information circulates in Indian animation.

      Animation Reporter is, or rather was, the most conventional trade publication in Indian animation. Presented by its publisher Font and Pixel as "India's premiere animation, special effects and gaming magazine", and "addressed to students and professionals" (2009), the magazine corresponded closely to the conception of a niche subscription journal as a resource for industry trends, products, and techniques (Lederer,

2009). The mission to provide readers the, "tools, both how-to and thinking, to improve their craft" (Font and Pixel, 2009) conforms more to Wenger's social learning model of trade practice than the coded communication described by Ortner. Such an educational focus is understandable in light of the magazine's ownership, published under license from one of India's largest franchise training institutes, Aptech's Maya Academy for Advanced Cinematics (MAAC). My principle contact has been editorial reporter Joyce Lemos (table 6.3).

Table 6.3:	*Joyce Lemos – Animation Reporter:*

Joyce Lemos is a Mumbai-based writer and journalist, Editorial Reporter for *Animation Reporter* magazine from 2008 until the end of circulation in July 2013. She currently writes for the afternoon newspaper *MiD-DAY*. Lemos joined the magazine from college. She reports a longstanding interest in animation, only more as, "an observer than a creator" (Interview 8). Having studied English, animation practice appealed as a subject to write about while improving her understanding of animation at the same time, simply, "I was looking for a job and I wanted to write" (ibid).

I met Lemos at the Chitrakatha International Student Animation Festival at the National Institute of Design in October 2011.

In comparison to the decline of print, *AnimationXpress* represents the trend towards the online distribution of industry information, billing itself as "one of the world's leading portals and resources for news, information and community activities for the animation, visual effects and game development industries." (*Animation Xpress*, "About US" 2012) and more recently as "the nucleus of the Indian and Asia Pacific Animation Ecosystem" ("Anand Gurnani" *Linked In*, 2014). Unlike *Animation Reporter*, *Animation Xpress's* positioning as a facilitator for knowledge exchange in Indian animation is presented in far more strategic, transactional, and literally coded terms, "to revolutionize the way B2B [business to business] happens online" (ibid). This network focus is tightly entwined with the public persona of CEO and managing editor Anand Gurnani (table 6.4).

Table 6.4:	*Anand Gurnani – Animation Xpress:*

Anand Gurnani is a Mumbai-based writer, producer, and entrepreneur. He co-founded *Animation Xpress* in 2003 as an offshoot of Anil Wanvari's *IndianTelevision.com*. Initially *Animation Xpress* was simply an aggregator of existing animation news from the business press. However the ongoing transformation of the site can be reflexively oriented to Gurnani's own professional trajectory from school dropout to "serial entrepreneur" (*Linked In*, 2014):

Table 6.4 (cont.)

> I slowly started writing myself as a journalist, as a researcher, and I found that I was enjoying it thoroughly… spending time with people in the animation space, with artists, with the film makers, and what I saw was… I have an inherent flair for documentation or for giving voice to articulating people's thoughts… (Gurnani, Interview 10)

An unabashed promoter, Gurnani's sales pitch emphasizes social capital, the economic value of an interconnected network feeding a growing knowledge repository. Yet his personal narrative here is far more populist, highlighting not only, "filmmakers who are very eloquent and articulate themselves" but the production teams he views as responsible for the increasing quality of Indian production. "When *Animation Xpress* started out" he notes, "India was a production outsourcing based nation. Today, it is different" (ibid). Gurnani does not shy away from taking some credit for this.[11]

I interviewed Gurnani at the NID, October 2011.

While *AnimationXpress* has a number of correspondents in Mumbai, Bangalore, and Delhi, other outlets are much smaller. *All About Animation* is a one person operation, a professional blog, expanded into an information-sharing community 'portal.' The site is a self-funded "comprehensive repository of content and information on all aspects of Indian Animation." ("Long story," 2012) The very individualistic and freelance qualities that make this difficult to quantify in terms of a trade press make much more sense in the more flexible frame of a trade information network, in which practices like blogging can be placed in context of newspaper writing or participation in professional organizations. Accordingly, *All About Animation* is inseparable from Akshata Udiaver (table 6.5).

Table 6.5: **Akshata Udiaver – *All About Animation*:**

As highlighted throughout this research, Akshata Udiaver is a Mumbai-based writer, designer, and community organizer. As a trade practitioner like Lemos, she explains that, "…while everyone else in India was racing to create the Next Big Animated Film, I decided that I preferred being the one to write about it" ("Long Story" 2011). In a later update she adds, "This website was born out of my love for animation and my immense annoyance at the widespread misinformation being propagated by people who either lack knowledge or have vested interests" ("About" ca2014). As forthrightly contrarian as Gurnani is promotional, Udiaver's high-profile reflexive critique is crucial to understanding how structurally embedded power and influence also shape trade communication.

I met Udiaver at the Chitrakatha in October 2011, and subsequently conducted an interview in Mumbai in November. Udiaver continued to participate in ongoing research inquiries through 2014.

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[11] His *Linked In* profile summary describes him as, "the de-facto spokesperson positioning Indian Animation globally and he has also been the glue bringing the Indian ecosystem together" (ca2014).

The final kind of organization I consider is an online community portal, built around the web forum. Notably, *CGTantra.com* is a communication project existing alongside an animation studio. Organized around the motto "Learn, Inspire, Grow," the positioning of this 'online community' is some ways a combination of the other three, a platform tutorial-based learning, for news in the form of press releases and interviews, and a setting for direct engagement between practitioners in a community forum. *CGTantra'*s key deviation from conventional press practice is in embedding trade information in a many-to-many communication format, as members contribute a large percentage of the content. *CGTantra* is likewise directly tied to the experience of its founders, R.K. Chand and Abhishek Chandra (table 6.6):

Table 6.6:   ***R.K. Chand and Abhishek Chandra – CGTantra:***

As introduced in Chapter Two, R.K. Chand and Abhishek Chandra are Mumbai-based animators at Digitales Studios. However they are also the founders of the online community forum *CGTantra*. The two of them approach trade communication from a different direction. Rather than studying journalism or animation, their backgrounds are in information technology. Working at UTV Toons and Maya Entertainment Ltd from 2002 to 2004, they describe a lack of support resources for Indian animators. Despite the fact that international technical resources were available there remained a need for locally relevant information. Chand roots this in the young Indian professional experience:

> Once you're in Mumbai as bachelors; you need to make friends to live together. That's how you can afford a place in Mumbai. So we became roommates and all of us would be primarily on *CGNetworks* at that time, which now is *CGSociety*, and Autodesk help communities, and we realized that we don't have anything like that in India. (Interview 18)

I met and interviewed Chand and Chandra at Digitales Studios in Kandivali West, Mumbai in October 2011.

Chand's notion of addressing a niche information gap is a commonality that emerges across testimony from each of these communication platforms. Udiaver describes approaching an online information marketplace that already included *AnimationXpress* for business trends and *CGTantra's* technical support, yet offered, "no one place that you could go for information on animation like, 'What is animation?' 'What are the different styles and techniques?' 'What is the history?'" (Interview 20). She positions *All About Animation* as providing the necessary background for the newcomer to understand 'insider' language. However, such niche positioning does more than take a stance on 'inside and outside' knowledge. It suggests trade practitioners' savvy avoidance of competitive conflict, at least superficially. In this we see that, consistent with other industrial contexts, trade communication in Indian animation is indeed a kind of promotional 'dance.' Likewise, as I argue below, trade practitioners perform narratives of community and industrial engagement that strengthen engagement and information

exchange. Perhaps the best way to illustrate this is to consider the moment that *CGTantra* became a business in the eyes of its founders:

> I think that was the point when we matured from just starting a community and letting it grow on its own, to actually take the reins and say yes, we now want to drive this community and give it a certain focus, give it a certain direction. (Chand, Interview 18)

These understandings of community process are uniquely aligned not on animation production itself, but on the centrality of their own trade communication practices. 'Taking the reins,' driving the community, and imparting 'focus' introduce a rhetoric of control, using information to shape the cultural and economic environment in which animation practice takes place.

2.   *'Evangelists' and 'Ecosystem Catalysts'*

In the second section of this chapter I interrogate what this practitioner testimony suggests about the operation of trade communication in Indian animation, centred around two key roles, 'catalysing' engagement between practitioners and supplementing education, aligning new animators to professional practices and negotiated social norms. Interview testimony clearly shows that journalists and other trade writers view their support role as crucial for the development of communication and information pathways between creative practitioners. While superficially this appears quite similar to conventional trade press practice, rather than simply supplement existing social structure these efforts are presented as foundational, engendering creative and professional engagement, and by extension social structure, where it otherwise might be quite weak, scattered, or even absent. Trade press studies offer no obvious precedent for this; indeed within a traditional journalistic framework such an activist stance may even be problematic. However, when considered instead in terms of the wider information network of Indian animation, where subjective narrative appeals to community interest are commonplace, this positioning presents much less difficulty. Further, the purpose of this communication is also presented as broadly educational, whether overtly supplementing classroom instruction, in the case of tutorials and articles written for students, providing materials for professional self-guided learning, or implicitly supporting learning of community norms and behaviours.

I asked each of the research participants about their professional activities, the purpose served by journalism and information portals in Indian animation, and there are substantial commonalities between their responses. Principally, each starts from the position that the responsibility of those writing about animation and providing information to practitioners is not only to cover the expanding industry, but also to

support it as a community. Rather than describing a neutral press, this can be interpreted as an activist position. Gurnani is the most overt about this:

> The purpose of *Animation Xpress* is one, to evangelize Indian animation internationally. That is the primary role we play. Second, of course, and parallel, equally important is to ensure that we make the ecosystem more aware about itself. We see ourselves as ecosystem catalysts. (Interview 10)

The effect of the constant stream of information that *AnimationXpress* publishes on a weekly basis is to provide a sense of what different industry participants are doing at any given time. It seems that this is potentially a mutually supportive arrangement. In light of statements by Kumaresh and others, Gurnani's invocation of an ecosystem is not unusual, although he shifts the agency from animators to trade practitioners working in the common interest of the community at large. But what is at stake in describing yourself as an ecosystem 'catalyst?' First and foremost I interpret this as an avoidance of negative associations with journalism. The journalist resides outside the community and may observe and report, but cannot engage. By contrast this 'ecosystem catalyst' is active and integral. What might have been seen as extraneous is now recast as essential. We see this in narratives that rhetorically place trade communication in the centre of a trade information network.

One way that practitioner accounts achieve this is by responding to the spatial constraints on Indian animation, "isolation" resulting in an "unconnected" ecosystem (ibid). The way Gurnani and others do this is very much consistent with Ajit Rao's description of Indian animators as "islands" (Interview 38). One consequence of this understanding appears to be a perception of 'scattered' knowledge both in real and virtual space, which then becomes the social basis for the intervention of trade communication platforms. As Chandra explains:

> Our main motive, at that particular time was only to share with our friends because everybody was scattered. All the artists, all the studios, all this information was scattered all over the net. So we wanted all these people to come together and have one place to chitchat and share their work, share their experience. (Interview 17)

This focus on sharing experience and continuous networking suggests that animation trade communication follows the logic of Wenger's communities of practice. That is, "[in] pursuing their interest in the domain, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other and share information" (2006), and it is specifically the creation of social relationships in this way that enables collective learning. In describing her interview strategy, Lemos repeats this logic almost exactly:

I think people have to come together and share their ideas with each other, and then try to go ahead. Because if you don't share your ideas, you don't discuss with each other, I don't think it is going to be fruitful. (Interview 8)

The rhetoric is about collaboration, posed, as is typical in Indian animation practitioner narratives, in terms of positive change. As a result, the sustainability of the trade press is in creating value from sharing knowledge in this way. In order for all these members share a community of practice they must be engaged with each other. The trade interview is itself an instance of knowledge sharing, both between interviewer and subject, and subject and practitioner audience. Each increase in scale is accompanied by greater need to assert mutual engagement. In a sense the role of those in the animation press is to establish and reinforce those connections, adding tangible value to the imagined community.

Each of those contacted in this study clearly conceives of this as an effort to promote the concept of shared animation community and their own critical role to play in defining it. However, what does community mean in this context? As with other terms that emerge from practitioner testimony, 'industry'; 'network'; 'space'; and 'ecosystem'; for the purpose of this research it is crucial to recognize the commonalities and differences of usage in place. In defining a shared attribute as ambiguous as community this is especially important. I asked each informant what they meant by community.[12] Responding directly to this, Chand explains:

> *CGTantra* is in the middle of connecting technology players, education players, studios, professionals and students… So when we say community, we feel it's all of them. It's not only the students and the professionals who are working there. You cannot alienate the tools and the people who make those tools from the community. You cannot alienate the people who teach education over here as not part of the community. Neither can you alienate the studios […] who actually are the main end of all this. So it's the studio people, it's the working professionals, it's the students, it's the technology players and it's the educational players. All five of these… (Interview 18)

The communication-centred rhetoric here is about bringing together stakeholders with disparate practices "dissolving the borders" not only in support of community cohesion but to assert the existence of such a community to begin with (*CGTantra*, "About Us," 2012). In order to serve a supposed animation community, it seems necessary to define community as inclusive of a wide variety of potential stakeholders. However in terms of

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[12] "TJ: …When you say the animation and VFX community […] what do you mean by that?
RKC: See, we refrain from saying "industry" and prefer saying "community" because we have not really grown into an industry yet…" (Interview 18).

'community of practice' such an increase in scale is accompanied by a need to reassert commitments to shared practices, behaviours and social norms. Moreover, for all these members to share a community of practice they must be continuously engaging with each other. In order to develop the benefits of community cohesion and knowledge sharing that they describe, trade practitioners effectively have to define the characteristics and boundaries of that community, and more importantly promote and propagate that understanding as widely as possible. In this respect, trade practitioners conceive of their practice, not only as central to community cohesion, but inherently educational.

A Continued Emphasis on Education

Education is one of the key ways that trade communication both justifies and sustains itself as a commercial enterprise. But before this is possible, trade practitioners must also educate their audience on how to participate and use shared knowledge resources, effectively the norms of their own community networks. Based on the experience at *CGTantra,* it is clear that practitioners have needed to adapt to sharing in a social setting. Chand and Chandra report that users were initially hesitant to post work for fear of it being stolen or exploited. Accordingly, as *CGTantra* became established they began conducting seminars to teach members how to make the best use of information online, embracing collaboration:

> [W]e thought that people had too much in habit of learning from books and learning from schools. The forum culture was very new to India at that time. So you wanted the people to open their mind that learning is very much possible through sharing online, and you can do a lot if you go online, if you go for the tutorials, if you go for sharing your works. (Chandra, Interview 17)

Given that the function of knowledge sharing in a community of practice is to enable collective learning, and all the participants I have spoken to call for constructive and collaborative change across animation practice, it follows that education is itself central to trade communication; a channel for newcomers to acquire knowledge required to join production communities. Of course, learning is not limited to the implicit knowledge sharing of what different practitioners are doing. As I have argued in Chapters Three and Four, education policy is one of the central debates in Indian animation. As trade practitioners place themselves at the centre, it follows that they are deeply entangled in this. On the one hand, supporting institutional education has been a core priority, especially at MAAC owned *Animation Reporter*. As Lemos notes, "the main reason for coming out with a magazine like that is to improve the quality of animation in India, especially among the students" (Interview 8). However, social learning is not limited to students either. Both knowledge sharing and negotiation are apparent in the way Lemos

describes her interview process with established professionals, "…it is like we work as a team, the filmmakers [and] the journalists. It is not very fully functional at the moment, but that is what we are trying to do" (ibid). Getting this negotiation to occur is a major gap that trade press practitioners, just like the professional associations described in Chapter Five, have struggled to fill, offering a forum for experienced practitioners to debate positions in support of collective goals.

A brief moment of collaborative convergence where this seems to have been achieved is in a series of monthly guest columns contributed to *Animation Reporter* by faculty from the Industrial Design Centre, Shilpa Ranade and Nina Sabnani. From April to September 2008, Ranade wrote pieces on such diverse topics as the Cartoon Film Unit film *The Banyan Deer* (1957), children's animation workshops, and her own experience with indigenous art practice in the Warli tribal community (2008b). She asserts the need to understand that instruction is more than teaching software, and advocates for changes within animation education:

> This is an opportune time for all with a strong commitment to animation education in the context of Indian requirements to respond to the necessity of a holistic approach to animation education in keeping with an endeavour to respond to changing needs, emerging areas and demands of the industry. (2008d)

This message is of course deeply concerned with the student experience rather than established professionals and is consistent with Ranade's later testimony to me as recounted in Chapter Three. However, what is significant is that such a viewpoint is published in a magazine with a dedicated educational readership – and notably one at a large commercial institute – debating positions in support of collective goals. As Udiaver explains this by describing such an opportunity as a rare outlet for artist expression:

> See there is no platform for any of our artists to actually write or speak about their work, so they are more than happy if *AnimationXpress* approaches them and says, 'we would like a guest article' or *Animation Reporter* says, '[…] I want you to write a column.' (Interview 20)

Interviews or guest editorials provide rare opportunities that could be leveraged towards greater social and industrial cohesion. The knowledge conveyed in these articles both supplements and contrasts the often much more procedural and technical information that Indian animation students receive in a classroom setting, and professionals experience in their day-to-day work. This role of supporting continuing education sets the conditions for trade communication to provide a critique of what does and does not work in the animation community. However, as I argue below, this is limited by the institutional orientation and editorial independence of trade practitioners themselves. An ongoing conflict over the administration of professional education and skills training in Indian

animation suggests that the apparent unanimity in trade communication is far from the whole story.

3.   *Contested Knowledge*

The performance of unanimity in the above testimony conceals significant underlying conflict and uncertainty. It is relatively uncontroversial that trade communication drives engagement and supplements social learning within community boundaries that it also serves to define. That trade practitioners generate social capital by greatly increasing the quantity of information available is also not contested. However the quality of that information and its utility as a shared repository for community knowledge is disputed. Major issues of ethics, influence and independence remain unresolved. Moreover, questions of provenance, the authorship of trade information, reflect disagreement concerning who has the right to control community narratives by dictating best practices, and promoting certain participants and activities over others. As long as the reliability and usefulness of trade information remain open to critique, the sustainability of trade outlets is uncertain.

Despite the apparently noble intentions of trade practitioners, it remains unclear how the knowledge generated or reproduced by the trade information networks is being used, by whom, and why.[13] According to a conventional model founded upon the reporting of trade stories in print, this would challenge the very existence of a trade press. However, here it is 'merely' a symptom of wider cultural and technological shifts in how information is packaged and consumed on platforms that may hardly resemble a press at all. Put together, these challenges highlight tests of the credibility, viability, and personal status of trade practitioners – journalists, bloggers, and network operators. Unlike the situation in Hollywood where damaging conflict or uncertainty that may run against promotional narratives is at least partially contained by trade convention, this structural conflict is more or less open to scrutiny. If, as Ortner suggests, so much of Hollywood's messiest trade negotiations are often concealed behind studio walls (2009: 177), the availability of this information through the India's trade information networks exposes the process of community building behind boundaries that are contested, walls that, if built at all, remain paper thin, and easily torn.

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[13] In the conventional press this manifests as a problem of readership. I address this further below.

Sponsorship and the Limitations of Critique

In this context, as in the above discussion of education practice, perhaps the most controversial role claimed by trade practitioners is that of critique. Given an activist stance and varying degrees of independence, trade practitioners claim to draw attention to perceived problems within the production community, and provide a platform to negotiate solutions:

> We try to get [the filmmaker's] thoughts on what he thinks about animation in the country right now, what it is going to be in a few years. And all of them are not very happy with the way things are working out. So […] we try to come together and see what we can do – how we can improve the situation in the country at the moment. (Lemos, Interview 8)

Lemos' approach here is exactly what we have come to expect in an Indian reflexive narrative – optimistic, couched in language of positive change, however its critique is limited. To understand why, it is important to recognize that the trade platforms internal to the community, including all four described here do not exist in an information vacuum. That is, they do not get to set their own narratives with impunity. While industry analysis like the FICCI-KPMG report can be depended on for a rosy outlook, the same does not necessarily hold true for the popular or business press. Most animation practitioners are well versed in press reports of Indian animation on the cusp of success. Yet for all this, the popular press also offers a forum for critique. This is reflected in articles like Nandimi Ramnath's recent *Live Mint* interview with Ram Mohan and Gitanjali Rao (2014), in which she describes Indian animation as a site of incredible untapped creative potential but also perpetual "struggle, disappointment and limited success."[14] So why is it that such critique finds a place in the business press but only rarely in the trades? This is a problem of consistency within the community narrative that trade practitioners have gone to great pains to construct and promote. While I have argued above that it is effectively the job of trade writers to replace industrial incoherence with social engagement, without critique there is little scope for negotiation to occur.

One of the most significant challenges is the legitimacy of a press in effect sponsored by the largest industry players, the major studios and training institutes. This is reflected in news coverage. *Animation Xpress* and *CGTantra* aggregate news from across

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[14] Likewise, *DNA* affords Shilpa Ranade the headline, "Animation Should be beyond cute and clean" in its coverage of the International Children's Film Festival of India (ICFFI) (IANS, 2013). As I have addressed in the previous chapter, this critique extends outside the community, as many of the challenges facing it do as well.

the industry and it is clear that a lot of material is derived directly from press releases. Udiaver sees this as indicative of a lack of editorial content, and ultimately a surrender of critique, "Obviously in a press release the company only speaks good about itself" (Interview 20). While this is a credible point, Indian publications are hardly alone in this. In Hollywood, Caldwell notes that many articles, even perhaps a majority from less prestigious outlets, are likewise "merely hastily re-authored company press releases" (2008: 24). This is a trade-off for volume, but it also shows collaborative engagement between different participants across wider trade information networks. The greater potential cost of this is credibility with other members of the community as a source of valuable information.

Such critique that does feature in the trade press predominately addresses either the endemic lack of government support, or more controversially, education. The dominant critique is against the commercial animation training institutes, which not coincidentally are also the preeminent advertisers. Udiaver on her blog and in her conversation with me is consistent in her attack on uneven and erroneous messages conveyed to industry newcomers, the foreign-produced animation on the television networks, glowing projections from NASSCOM, and marketing from the franchise institutes:

> The exposure has actually been […] the wrong kind. Meaning, they [students] have not really seen the best animation out there. But at the same time they are exposed to the benefits of getting into a career like animation. What's not being spoken about is the hard work required to become a successful animator. All that people talk about is that 'you'll join the course, you'll learn the software, you'll get a job, and start earning a lot of money.' (Interview 20)

Such criticism comes with difficulties and Udiaver is equally frank about the consequences of taking such a stance against exploitative animation training. This is a discourse of credibility against sustainability, and who has the right to set the agenda for debate within the community:

> Why am I not doing *All About Animation* full time? Because I am still not able to earn money off it. The only ones who will advertise are institutes and if I am on one hand criticizing them and saying they are doing a really bad job, I can't take money from them and put their ads because then there is a conflict… I need to find other advertisers or find other ways to sustain myself (ibid).

While as a blogger Udiaver has a measure of flexibility in what she chooses to publish, the consequence of this independence is economic uncertainty, threatening the viability of

the trade communication. As Udiaver points out, the training institutes are effectively the largest industry players.[15] This is itself a conflict between two visions for how shared knowledge may be used to regulate identity in the emerging community: one in which it is predominately an instrument of institutional power, and another in which a range of independent voices and perspectives might act as a self-regulating balance.

This criticism of the commercial communication infrastructure is also one about the quality of information that it delivers. Again, Udiaver blames a lack of options and tight budgets for a poor standard of writing:

> [Y]ou wouldn't believe that these are trained journalists. The writing is poor; the language is poor; the writing style is poor. So it has become a vicious circle. People who might have otherwise been interested probably lose interest because of the quality of writing or the quality of articles, or maybe the subject matter… you don't have good writers or good journalists coming and joining them. (ibid)

Superficially, this may have a lot to do with the relative lack of major economic development in the domestic industry following the feature film bubble. However it also suggests an unresolved problem of professional engagement within trade communication. Despite efforts to recast trade practice as intrinsic and central to community function, the entrepreneurial position enjoyed by Gurnani, Udiaver at TASI, or Chand and Chandra at their own studio is not enjoyed by the anonymous staff writer or trade press aggregator, whose contributions may be evaluated as much by volume as quality, but certainly not for the incisiveness of critique against the principle advertisers. It raises the question, what is the importance of good writing to the trade information network and the wider community? This discourse conflates issues to do with the quality of education with the quality of information for entertainment or economic purposes.

Authorship, Audience, and the Failure of a 'Trade Press'

A lingering question over the legitimacy and sustainability of animation trade information networks is the audience. This raises substantial differences between traditional trade press publications and the more flexible platforms that comprise a trade information network. One legitimate issue is to consider the creative and professional practices of animation, and simply ask: is anybody reading? *Animation Reporter*, with its audience bolstered by MAAC, claimed to be the only publication to release its

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[15]Arguably *Animation Reporter* formed part of a closed circuit loop between MAAC and its students. Other than calls for entries for ASIFA IAD, Chitrakatha and TASI AniFest India, the only direct advertising in the July and October 2011 issues are for MAAC's own new courses. Likewise, *CGTantra* and *Animation Xpress* run numerous ads, primarily for the major franchise training institutes.

circulation, at 11,000 (Font and Pixel, 2009).[16] Gurnani reports that *Animation Xpress* connects over 5000 companies, educational institutions and government agencies. However, one of the fundamental challenges is reliance on written communication in what is seen to be predominantly a visual medium. Udiaver describes that while she has an e-magazine in development at the time of this research, her magazine is not addressed to the Indian education audience:

> [T]here is this tendency among students who are in creative fields, who are artists or are into animation – you'll even see that with some of the senior people – even Vaibhav jokes about this. They don't like reading. (Interview 20)

Students don't read the articles. Drawing on the growing 'instrumentalism' described in Chapter Five, they are interested in the art and documentation of the work process itself, specific skill tutorials they can use to find a job (Nina Sabnani, Interview 37). If the press is failing, it follows that much of the hoped-for interaction, fundamental to the formation and maintenance of community of practice, might be missing. In light of this understanding, the closure of an outlet like *Animation Reporter*, indeed the failure of a conventional trade press altogether, seems unavoidable. However, it is critical to understand that this does not necessarily reflect a lack of engagement with all trade information, but a discrepancy in how this information is presented and how it is accessed.

For many students engaged with over the course of this research, one of the most crucial platforms is the online tutorial video (Interview 25). At *CGTantra* the forum format avoids some of the challenges of maintaining an active readership – as Udiaver puts it, "whether they put up stuff on their site or not you have the community. It is a forum so people are constantly putting up stuff" (Interview 20). Minimal participation of this sort is not really enough to sustain the kinds of community structures envisioned by trade practitioners, so this does not mean that they avoid major challenges maintaining engagement. Participation is key, but only when combined with mutual engagement and identity alignment.

Online portals face their own set of challenges. These include a keeping up with technological and social trends:

> We are in a transition phase in *CGTantra* right now because on a web business point of view, forums are dead… The so-called Twitter community is a portable,

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[16] However, it seems that the majority of these went, not to paying subscribers, but to MAAC students (Udiaver, Interview 20).

impatient for feedback community right now… We don't want to be an awareness program anymore because I think there is lots of awareness and people know. The focus now is slowly, slowly going in *CGTantra* for creating tools and services and platforms that the community can actually use in their day-to-day life, and how it can help them increase their productivity and how it can help them in debate with the industry because it is socially and professionally as well, whether it is for their jobs or whether it is for their education. (Chand, Interview 18)

Given the rapidly changing conditions in the Indian animation domain, the test of online community portals, alongside newsfeeds, blogs, and print magazines, is to provide community members of all sorts with information they actually use to support their practice. The strategy that trade practitioners like Chand describe is to actively support activities that increased interaction, promoting not only awareness but collaboration. In order to survive trade outlets have to be at the centre of multidirectional webs of sharing and collective learning, literally trade information networks, to become routine and essential shared knowledge resources. For Udiaver this is reflected in participation in TASI. For *CGTantra* this has meant a partial transition from online community into the domain of the more formal professional community organization, leveraging its network to host educational and employment events like CGTExpo. Finally for Gurnani, *Animation Xpress* has been a jumping off point for numerous entrepreneurial activities to strengthen and leverage his own personal network. Despite the narrative strategies of animation studios and industry publications to imagine an optimistic vision of a united animation community, underlying tensions remain unresolved. However, while the failure to smooth over conflicts between education and industry, large and small production constituencies might superficially suggest that reflexive narratives likewise fail to form consistent discursive formations, it appears that the opposite is the case.

4. *Complex Identities*

These findings have substantial implications for understanding how trade practitioners identify as members of the animation community, the social infrastructure they both serve and help to create, as insiders rather than simply gatekeepers between inside and outside.[17] Key to press practitioners' insider identity is the fluidity of different activities, evidenced by flexibility in how they conceive and describe their participation in different activities based on perceived gaps and needs. Despite differences between these

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[17] Although this analysis is specific to Indian animation, all of this this challenges conventional understanding of a trade press in any developing industrial context where individuals may identify with a range of social and professional positions.

activities, interviewing practitioners, blogging or writing articles, and moderating community forums all fall on a spectrum of actions and ways of engaging with the animation community. While pursuing this line of inquiry we move further and further from established ideas of a trade press, especially that founded in journalism or journalistic identities. However this happens without diverging from the central processes of trade communication under investigation. While in the established trade press we already see a blurring of reporting and entertainment, between marketing and critique. What we observe here is a further collapse of these boundaries. For participants in the Indian trade networks it is often a case of *not* being a journalist, compartmentalizing commentary or analysis within other activities that then together inform their identity as creative professionals. This itself defines the complex relationship I have repeatedly observed between trade communication and the other centres of animation practice, where there are substantial areas of membership overlap; growing personal, professional and economic ties between outlets, studios, schools and professional organizations.

So far in this chapter I have argued that the testimony of practitioners in the Indian animation press and other outlets reveals a great deal not only about the distribution of news and information within the industry, but through knowledge transfer what that information has been used to achieve. The specific functions that the participants themselves describe for trade communication also reveals much about the construction of their own professional identities and community membership. These are flexible agents filling several different roles, from promotion, to education and professional learning. Within economic and institutional limits they also provide some critical comment. These activities of the press illustrate and affirm the constant negotiation of the characteristic practices and boundaries of an Indian animation community, but moreover they are instrumental in popularizing the appeal to community in the first place.

To take this further, to the level of individual identity and reflexivity, contributors to trade information networks hold multiple roles. Given the diversity of these networks outside of the conventional trade press, professional journalists like Lemos seem to be an exception. Rather for most, communications practice represents only one aspect of identity among many, and several participants in this research play many different parts. Running *CGTantra* alongside a fully-functioning studio, Digitales Studios, Chand and Chandra each have two parallel careers, which allow them to disavow press identities outright, "…we are not journalists. If we lose everything, even then I can sit and do my own animation" (Interview 18). As I have shown elsewhere in this research, this flexibility is not so unusual in Indian animation, and for writers about animation and other

trade practitioners it may be absolutely crucial for how they conceive their roles and develop unique identities and the social and industrial functions they serve.[18]

On the bio page of *All About Animation*, Udiaver depicts 'the short story' of her experience in the form of a Venn diagram (table 6.7) that explicitly visualizes how different overlapping activities contribute to her overall practice as "Writer, Designer, Animation Journalist [and] Founder of *AllAboutAnimation*.com" (2011c). Here in concrete form it is possible to see what is already apparent from practitioner testimony, that member identity in the animation domain is not reducible to any one activity or role.

Table 6.7 **"The Short Story"**

Courtesy of Akshata Udiaver
(*AllAboutAnimation.com*, 2011d)
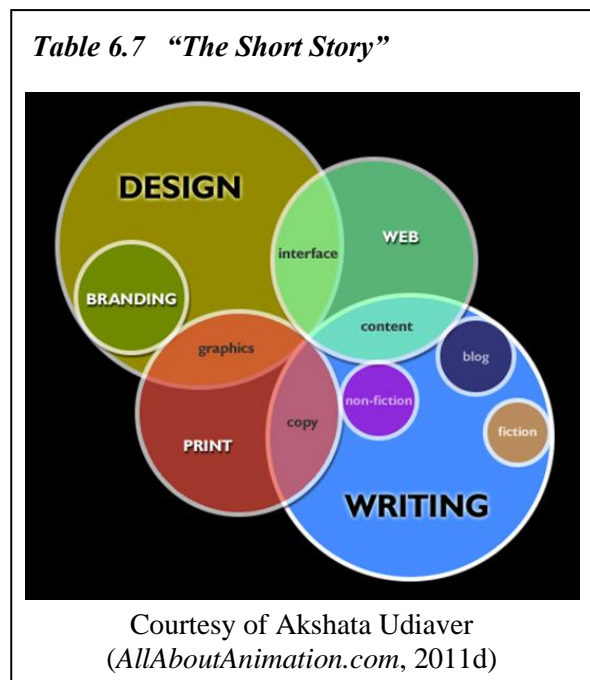
Writing about animation in particular seems to be inseparable from design, but as I have demonstrated above, also education, advocacy and organizational development. This multifaceted identity places trade practitioners in the centre of a crucial networking structure for the animation industry, between studios, training institutes, and professional organizations. As covered in my analysis of professional organizations, it is no coincidence that Udiaver is the Secretary of TASI. She also designed Ranjit Singh's book the *Art of Animation Production Management* (2013). Similarly, Gurnani's practice spans interactions between the press and studios and also industry across national boundaries. He is the Annecy Animation Film Festival and International Animation Film Market (MIFA) Representative, one of three international representatives for the event, alongside delegates from Japan and South Korea. Finally, both Udiaver and Gurnani have penned scripts for animation projects (MIFA 2012; ASIFA IAD Jury, 2011), and increasingly work in the production and distribution of Indian animation, an 'ecosystem catalyst' on a grand scale.

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[18] Whether this may be properly classified as journalism is rather beside the point. Much of the trade communication that occurs in Hollywood, the industry 'whoring' described by Caldwell, would not pass muster as journalism either. Beyond identifying this distinction, the important question remains who this communication addresses, for what purpose, and whether it succeeds in doing so.

It is no coincidence that this superficially tells us far more about individuals than it does about the culture of trade communication itself. To consider this testimony and the recent struggles of trade outlets and interpret that Indian animation may be unable to support a trade communication infrastructure is to ignore the richness of knowledge exchange that is so evidently on display here. However, we should not be surprised that the structures that it produces fail to meet our expectations, especially if those expectations are based on very drastically different social and economic conditions. This reveals a system that places heavy burdens on formal organizational structures, but in contrast allows individuals, willing to take on a lot of personal risk with fewer resources, quite a lot of freedom to experiment. The future implications of these identities for the animation trade press and other outlets for trade information remain unclear. Much depends on how practitioners address the obstacles that they face. In addition to addressing community wide concerns – education, sustainability, building an ecosystem – they must also address challenges with community expectations of the information they consume: quality – both the face value of the information and its utility, as well as it social capital – the extent to which it contributes to shared knowledge and continuing engagement. Finally they must present a narrative of progress and positive evolution. It appears practitioners may try to achieve this through further collaboration and niche specialization:

> We all work together. There's no conflict, nothing like that. We all keep doing, we have our own events; we have our own initiatives. We have our own way of serving the community… We were more active online… We are all friends. We help each other by all means we can. Whatever event comes, we support each other in publicizing their events. (Chandra, Interview 17)

One of the most revealing aspects of this testimony is what it suggests about the regulation of community identity through the formalization of industrial knowledge. While we might expect an established trade press to manage relationships in such a way as to produce clear hierarchies of power and control, the absence of these is not the absence of social structure. The subjective, highly individualistic practice of trade practitioners appears to aspire to a more fluid self-regulating professional community.

A community where no one can agree on who is in charge is nonetheless a community, although critically a lack of consensus on leadership doesn't mean that everyone has the same amount of control. Nonetheless I suggest this testimony speaks less about the superficial disavowal of conflict and more about the regularization of more subtle forms of negotiation, in this instance, socially-motivated moves to avoid competitive overlap and redirect conflict to external actors. Here conflict avoidance appears itself almost as a form of collaboration, or at rather mutual self-interest in support

of overlapping goals. In the face of long-term shared interest in popularizing shared identities within the imagined community they all assert, internal conflicts are both relatively short-term and, even then, routinely restrained.

Conclusions

This chapter opened by outlining the role of trade communication in the cultural industries, drawing from both underlying similarities and differences between the established trade press found in mature industrial contexts like Hollywood and the diverse practices currently emerging in Indian animation. Drawing upon practitioner accounts I developed the new frame of a trade information network, a more inclusive conception of trade communication, comprising not only the traditional confines of a journalistic trade writing, but also more varied practices including studio promotional messaging, business-to-business networking providers, personal or professional blogs, and community forums. Drawing on both trade practitioner testimony and selected textual examples, I revealed how the practices revealed in my data depart from conventional understandings of a trade press, but do so in ways that further reveal the emerging production culture I have explored in this research.

This departure reflects personal and organizational objectives within trade communication, from 'catalysing' engagement to supporting social, educational, and professional norms. I observe that while the testimony of trade practitioners in this area is idealistic, and strongly performative of individual agendas, the community structures described here are not superficial. Trade communication practice serves to both define and popularize community membership, however this means the sustainability of this enterprise is contingent on the impact trade information has on other kinds of animation practice. The degree to which knowledge obtained from community or industrial sources may be seen as unreliable or suspect is a threat to the legitimacy of trade communication platforms as arbiters of professional identity, let alone catalysts of community. That trade practitioners respond to these challenges in the midst of evolving cultural and economic conditions, results in a trade communication infrastructure far less monolithic than a conventional trade press, and considerable diversity both in the practice and identity work of trade practitioners.

To conclude, the testimony of practitioners in the animation trade information network reveals a great deal not only about the distribution of news and information, but what that information has been used to achieve. The way that press contributors understand their place within the wider animation industry also reveals much about the construction of their professional identities and community membership. I suggest that

trade communication is tacitly conceived by creative practitioners as a necessary attribute of animation labour, a set of practices increasingly indistinguishable from professional networking, education and community development. The writers, designers, and entrepreneurs that make up a trade information network do not merely provide commentary on industry from the outside but are located within the very structures they connect. They identify as members of an emergent animation community and are recognized as such, blurring established creative and professional boundaries. These actions refine the boundaries of the animation domain by packaging and conveying the insider information that brings new practitioners into the fold. Also, rather than being only a resource for elite information, the animation press also serves information to the community from the bottom up. Of course, these tendencies can and do conflict. That both these conventions and deviations, fluidity in practitioner identity and accompanying community-structuring processes, can be observed demonstrates differences between the Indian animation press and the Hollywood model. Trade communication activities and the frank testimony of the participants depict a vital piece of the process of community building that would otherwise be beyond academic scrutiny, behind the boundary of the trades.

Conclusion: Reflexive Constructions of Creativity and Commerce

"When will we stand up and be recognized as a personality with intelligence, intellect, character and a serious agenda?" Shilpa Ranade (2008c)

The aim of this dissertation is to contribute to ongoing debates about the construction of meaning in the cultural industries. I have examined the reflexivity of practitioners in Indian animation, a setting that has been almost entirely overlooked by global media scholars and audiences alike, yet which does not lack critical self-analysis. Synthesizing the analysis in the preceding chapters to evaluate the relationships between practitioner accounts and social structure, I return to central question: how do practitioners conceive both their activities and identities in relation to a production culture of their own devising? Although my theoretical intervention in this project is focused on a particular space of creative, social, and economic action, I consider the application of this analysis to other neglected areas of scholarship, as well as the collaborative possibilities of engaging with practitioner theorization to solve wider challenges across animation and media research.

On 30 May 2014, some 19 months after I returned from my field work in India, I received an email news bulletin from *Animation Xpress*, titled: "Will this Arjun hit the Bullseye?" (Iyer, 2014a). While the period of data collection had ended and my initial interpretations, long-subject to comparative analysis, had taken their final form as six chapter drafts, this grabbed my attention. *Arjun: Prince of Bali* was yet another animated children's series based in Indian mythology – but what has changed in three years? In the article, Sidharth Iyer reports this new Arjun as a step forward in creating original animation content, and increased collaboration between studio and distributor – Green Gold and Disney India – in the development of properties. Green Gold founder Chilaka speaks of his company's now "longstanding association" with Disney, while Disney's director of programing Devika Prabhu, reports, "excite[ment] to work with someone who really knows the industry and the Indian animation space" to market "brand Arjun" (ibid). Clearly there is increasing power in localized brands; as Ashish Kulkani asserts in the article, "[Chilaka] has three to four well established brands and is using it well" (ibid). The increasing disclosure of such accounts in the trade press reinforces narratives of global engagement that I revealed in Chapter One.

A few weeks later, I had the privilege of taking part in the Society for Animation Studies annual conference hosted by Sheridan College in Toronto, Canada, also attended by two participants in my research, Debjani Mukherjee (Bandyopadhyay) and Akshata Udiaver. Although I maintained an ongoing dialogue with Indian practitioners throughout

the research process, this was the first opportunity for renewed face-to-face conversation, not only for me to again test my interpretations, but for them to share their own new critical endeavours. These continue to suggest that Green Gold's example is hardly the rule for most Indian practitioners. At the conference, Udiaver spoke about multinational broadcasters' continued emphasis on foreign content, which combined with theatre owners' preference for Bollywood features, leaves very little scope for work by Indian animators (2014). Instead she proposed turning to alternative mobile platforms for distribution, 'curating' content from small studios and independent artists (ibid).[1] This search for innovative solutions evokes the narrative of self-sufficiency that I developed in Chapter Two. Similarly, Mukherjee presented her work as co-founder of 'BOL: the language of children,' which runs educational animation programs for rural children, proposing a methodology based upon a "balance of ancient art forms and modern technology" (2014). This perspective not only reinforces the connection to cultural continuity that I have associated with small-scale production, but places it unequivocally in an educational context.[2]

In addition to confirming my understandings, these recent findings also clearly illustrate one of my central observations: that Indian animation is a field of action in the midst of ongoing social change.[3] As I have shown throughout this research, there have been very few occasions in which stability has been maintained for an extended time. Of course, cultural industries are always subject to evolution (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011: 12). While change is balanced by efforts to establish continuity, the emergence of new modes of production is marked by uncertainty. I have traced how animation in the country has transformed from a cottage industry to a large and varied industrial sector; undergoing both an explosion of outsourcing and rapid technological transition to digital production and distribution. Regulatory regimes, the number of firms, their organizational hierarchies, career trajectories, and markets have all also changed, and a further shift in any one of these might have a destabilizing impact on cultural expression (Peterson and Anand, 2004: 318).

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[1] This included her own forthcoming online magazine and distribution platform *IndiAnimated,* which answers Chaudhuri's call for democratizing technology in Chapter Two.
[2] Mukherjee, whose testimony was integral to my analysis of design education practices in Chapter Three, has since joined the IDC to pursue her own dissertation research.
[3] Embracing such change has been integral to the design of this project, even before two companies at the centre of investigations declared bankruptcy, two years into the course of research.

In my literature review I observed that earlier academic interventions into Indian animation practice placed themselves at key moments of transition; the rise of outsourcing (Lent, 2001a), or the birth of boutique production (Deneroff, 2003). Now I do the same. Each of the subsequent interviews I have conducted, events I have observed, and industrial texts I have read, as well as the extensive comparisons I have posed between these, present a more focused image of Indian animation in the slow, but inexorable process of 'becoming.' This is a compelling narrative, but begs the inevitable question: becoming what? Understanding of how practitioners reflexively address this seemingly simple question is one of the key outcomes of this research. Here I conclude by synthesizing three tensions these answers expose, becoming: 1) globally engaged or locally relevant; 2) a commercial industry, or passionate fraternity; and 3) a self-sustaining community or an ephemeral network.

My approach throughout this dissertation has been to integrate different overlapping registers of analysis – intensive interviews, participant observation, and analysis of industrial texts – each discourse subject to comparison with all the others. Resulting chapters have exposed different settings for the negotiation of production culture. Published interviews and industry reports have been checked against personal interviews, and direct observation at community events. In Chapter One for example, I considered how animation pioneer Ram Mohan interprets the origins of outsourcing practice, while later adherents of coproduction and other forms of globalized practice conceive narrow areas of creative agency and economic control. Elsewhere in this dissertation, scholarly theories have been integrated with industrial analysis. In Chapter Two, I detailed how boutique and independent animators conceive self-sufficiency drawing direct comparisons between practitioner models of animation 'ecosystems' and scholar-defined 'circuits of culture.' Chapters Three and Four provided competing analyses of education, training, and the development of professional identity, at varying distances from industry. In Chapter Five, practitioners conceived the difficulty in maintaining professional associations in an increasingly transactional social environment. Finally, in Chapter Six, trade writers presented their role as "ecosystem catalysts," providing a forum for exchange and further widening conceptions of animation practice.

1. *Global Power/Local Relevance*

The range of possible frameworks for analysing differences between large and small-scale cultural production are virtually limitless. However, my comparative analysis between testimonial and textual accounts focuses upon the grounded categorizations participants themselves contributed to the research. Part One illustrated how different

ways of orienting and talking about animation work can generate opposing reflexive expressions: in this case the conception of the global and the local. This also points to my first conclusion. Here is not a one-sided process where the needs of the global marketplace entirely displaces local agency; instead, Indian animation practitioners are actively involved in the negotiation of meaning across both scales. The size of major outsourcing firms suggests power and influence over cultural production, but this is undermined by the separation of creative and technical labour. This distinction remains in later practitioners' accounts of coproduction and localization as well. Yet this also demonstrates the growing importance of local knowledge for both Indian professionals and brands. In contrast, boutique studios' local emphasis on niche markets and cultural relevance theorizes an alternative discourse of animation practice towards a self-sustaining cycle of production and consumption, rooted in Indian cultural experience. This necessitates striking a balance between commercial and personal motivations. This leads to my second point: that the tension between global and local in Indian animation coincides with that between commerce and creativity.[4]

The polarization of outsourcing and boutique production plays a constructive role in how identities and practices are conceived, represented, and reproduced. Differences between the narratives of global engagement and local self-sufficiency disguise substantial overlaps between the reflexivity of participants in large and small studios. Within the emerging animation culture of production, other member's practices, even conflicting ones, remain negotiable. For example, when Sabnani refers to the so-called 'big giant' of Indian animation, she is quick to point out the lessons to be learned for local work (2005:101). Both strains of animation practice and talk emphasize the benefits of taking risks, whether it is pursuing coproduced features or developing new areas of niche production. These competing community structures share resources, not only the cohabiting the same professional environments, but also a growing body of animators, fostered by an emerging education infrastructure.

Investigating such contrasting narratives as global engagement and self-sufficiency reveals not the fault lines of a closely guarded and established industrial sector, but wide open spaces where questions of cultural and economic significance are being, at least relatively, openly debated (see Caldwell, 2009: 168). Here oppositional

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[4] This is the discourse of creative authenticity I first highlighted in Chapter One.

discourses of creative autonomy, management authority and local relevance are perhaps less subject to censure by entrenched interest within the community. Neither side has a status quo to defend; only competing visions for change. Both narratives of global engagement and self-sufficiency have generated critical practice in which Indian animators explicitly defend and justify their methods in the face of perceived threats and challenges. By revealing links between practitioner experiences, emerging narrative discourses, and community structure, reflexive practice shows an active negotiation between individual practitioners within a culture of production. Beyond the negotiation between the personal and the commercial, these autobiographical and self-theorizing narratives demonstrate creative practitioners' sense of agency to participate in and influence to the practice of animation in India. It is the negotiation of these that produces social structure; discourses that define conceptions of an 'industry' space or professional 'fraternity' rather than the other way around.

2.   *Commercial Industry/Creative Fraternity*

Throughout my analysis I paid close attention to the various terms that participants used to describe what Indian animation is 'becoming.' Here in particular, I highlight the identity work taking place, how participants locate themselves and others within imagined communities and what practices they undertake. These subjective identities are also tangled in ongoing struggles between the commercial imperatives of an emerging industry and the creative and cultural affinities of a fraternity of animation practitioners (Watson, 2008).

That industry should serve as a marker for the site of economic action seems to some degree self-evident, but it is not necessary that this be the case. Drawing on Govil as I did in the introduction, "most studies proceed from the general understanding of what an industry comprises," ignoring the full range of processes that may occur under its banner (2013: 173). As I have shown, various trade bodies constantly produce numbers that purport to give an indication of the scale and growth of animation as an industry – and yet, numerous participants in this research conceive industry as something that has not yet been "achieved" (176). For Madhavan in Chapter One, "industry evolves over a period of time" (Interview 2) and is largely defined by scale of economic endeavour, employing large numbers of people and generating global revenues. Across this research, industry as a concept has been preceded by a community of practitioners. Later in Chapter Six, Chand prefers to say "community because we have not really grown into an industry yet" (Interview 18). This also reflects the implicit question of 'whose industry?'

For many, industry has been a construct not devised by animators, but a "template created" from the outside (Mohan, Interview 31).

As I argued in Part Two, the relationship between practitioners and industry is particularly significant to animation instruction and early identity formation. By placing instruction in context of 'purposeful' and design, the NID and IDC produce graduates who view 'industrial practice' at a distance. Rather than being 'industry ready,' they prefer their own self-defined professional networks (Parikh, Interview 7a). Yet, the NID and IDC are only two design institutions in a much larger and explicitly commercial space of animation training where other institutions and the practitioners within them offer quite different models of professional development. Leaders at the institutes assert their close relationship to industry, and this is mirrored in student demands for industry access to acquire "professional knowledge" (Bavishi, Interview 25a). However, as I have argued, the asserted close relationship between institutes and employers is challenged by the tendency of many practitioners to refer to a distinct training industry (Singh, Interview 28), another outside structure imposed on their community.

In contrast to industry, other cultural constructs like a professional fraternity may seem less imposed, but still no more obvious or easy to achieve. The conception of a fraternity of practitioners reflects the discourse of authentic creative practice against outside commercial interference that has reappeared throughout this research. Thus as Sumant Rao asserts:

> [T]he animators, the student community, the actual directors, and the rest of this, they form the animation fraternity. Okay, the managers, the corporations, the distributors are the film industry, who have connections with animation. They are not the animation industry. It's just one aspect of the film industry or the TV industry. It's an industry that has nothing to do with animation per se (Interview 39).

A fraternity exists alongside and in tension with industry as an alternate focus of identity, that other social, textual, cultural, and political structures and meanings may be assembled beneath (Govil, 2013: 173).

Despite the exclusion of 'industry' participants, many of the practitioners with whom I spoke addressed the issue of what exactly constitutes the animation fraternity with a simultaneous inclusivity that took me by surprise. In another comparison suggested by Sumant Rao, "If you love reading books and learning and sharing good books with people, you are in the literary fraternity, even if you don't write anything" (ibid). This underlines the grounded theory dictum to abandon pre-conceived notions of what to expect in the studied environment, to test assumptions about identity rather than simply reproduce them (Charmaz, 2006: 19). Such preconceptions are only apparent when our

own common-sense positions are challenged (67). For example, my own Southern California industrial experience, leading me to draw professional boundaries between animation and visual effects, had to make way for more fluid movement between roles.

In short, they expressed a way of being 'in the fraternity' not in exclusionary terms, based on any given set of creative or technical practice, but in based in the richer more varied possibilities of cultural identity, or more specifically as I indicated in Chapter Two, of passion rather than profit.

> Now is the time we are looking at a little more maturity when it comes to the fraternity itself. You have got decent animators. You have got animation students who are exposed to decent animation, and they have good teachers or mentors, okay? Now, you are seeing a change. The change is still slow because it's still driven by the industry… and the industry doesn't know head or tail of what's going on. (ibid)

Like local creative autonomy and global economic growth, 'commercial' industry and 'creative' fraternity are another practitioner defined pairing of aesthetic autonomy and professional agency (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011: 81). Like all such theoretical oppositions, industry and fraternity are in tension, but not absolute conflict. They are not unnegotiable. As I have argued, this ability to communicate is crucial to maintaining engagement between various individuals with very different relations to practice.

Numerous parallel efforts from across this research correspond to a general tendency towards a wider sense of professional animation identity. As I asserted in Chapter Four, although commercial institutes are closely concerned with fitting animation students into largely pre-defined ideal professional outcomes, from animation, to lighting, and effects, they also market alternative outcomes as legitimate – not only such non-entertainment fields as architecture and industrial design, but defining the new career of the professional animation trainer to meet their own persistent demand for their own graduates. Similarly, as I revealed in Chapter Six, the multifaceted identity of trade writers and other "ecosystem catalysts" (Gurnani, Interview 10) places them in-between other participants and organizations in the culture of production.

3. *Sustaining Affinity/Ephemeral Networks*

Chand defines a community as "a social organization which nurtures itself" (Interview 18). Accordingly, the process of attending to communal needs defines the experience of collective identity. My third and final conclusion exposes the contradictions inherent in attempting to sustain community membership across such a diverse range of personal and professional identities, and the challenges of doing so across increasingly precarious and transactional social networks. While no one

organization speaks for Indian animation, the different types of organizations correspond to the above practitioner-defined tensions between creativity and commerce. As I have argued, the industrial associations play a key role both in enumerating industry and enforcing orthodoxy, while grassroots associations are founded on the principle that knowledge sharing is the root of sustained community affinity. Both are settings for the performance of identity within the wider culture of production, making Indian animation practitioners visible to themselves and to each other.

Throughout this research I have understood practitioner reflexivity to be intrinsic to the negotiation of production culture through social learning, engagement, and identity alignment (Wenger, 2000). As spaces for cultural and economic action; trade and professional organizations provide a tangible link between this industrial reflexivity and social structure. Part of my purpose in this research has been to assess the balance of sustained and transactional forms of identity, and how organizational affiliation is developed, formalized, and put to use. I return to the trade information network sites referenced above, and analysed at length in Chapter Six, as an example of the sort of contradictions I have in mind between the theory and practice of production culture. *Animation Xpress*, *All About Animation,* and *CGTantra* are key forums where reflexive practice and critical negotiation between practitioners take place. However, that animators "don't like to read" (Interview 20) and by consequence, some trade publications like *Animation Reporter* have not survived, suggests that the health of these critical networks cannot be taken for granted. Without them, this research would have been impossible, as much of the practitioner reflexivity upon which it has been based would be obscured. If, as my analysis has surely suggested, an Indian culture of animation production incorporates understanding of practice becoming both industry and fraternity, professional organizations and trade information networks are absolutely critical spaces to debate what that change should look like; developing norms to manage tensions between creative autonomy and economic power and embedding these in community structure.

4.   Conceiving Community/Constructing Theory

As synthesized above, the focus of this dissertation has been on interrogating the lived experience of animation practitioners in general and the results of reflexive practice in particular, including such varied traces as participation in community events, and articles in the trade or popular press. I began this dissertation with a guiding interest in reflexivity, identity, and learning. These sensitizing concepts shaped the initial research design and the methodology. Soon I began to see that any – necessarily ethnographic – investigation into the reflexivity of creative practitioners would be partial and

constructed. Rather than consider this a fault in the process of research, I was intrigued by the possibilities this offered for greater reflexivity in more inductive research, drawing in a wide variety of voices from within the practitioner community into my emerging research understandings over the course of investigation. As I started to unravel the different discourses of animation practice that I discovered, I categorized different settings for identity development. Doing so I realized that behind the conception of animation practice as production of culture are not only sporadic instances of animators interpreting their surroundings, but the continuous theorization and negotiation of culture. This includes common strategies, shared identities, and orientations of practice relative to structural and normative frames, all of which has gone unnoticed in recent scholarship.

While my work clearly exists in dialogue with previous media industry studies, the methodological model constructed around a process of co-construction and constant comparison between accounts provides rich potential for the study of media practice. Inspired by affinities between the critical traditions of industrial ethnography and constructivist grounded theory, I sought to make this research as open and inductive as possible. Nonetheless, I like any other researcher, brought my own theoretical preconceptions to my work. In the case of the intensive interview, this involves a two-way reflexive process. I asked the participant to reflect on his or her experience, and they sought and expected detail on my own interests and impressions. Kathy Charmaz, through her research and theory on health and self-image, argues that attention must be paid to how both researchers and research participants interpret meanings and actions, for researchers to "take a reflexive stance toward the research process and products and consider how their theories evolve… [and] assume that both data and analyses are social constructions that reflect what their production entailed" (2006: 131).

I have asserted that this emphasis on comparison places this approach neatly alongside the methods of contemporary cultural studies of production culture. Sherry Ortner's work on American independent cinema led her to formulate a method of treating interviews, field notes and extant data all as texts, taken apart in order to get "inside a cultural world" (2013: 27). However she also left practitioner accounts intact, to allow individuals to "tell stories about their own experiences" (26). The integrated analyses inspired my own thinking on how to foster imaginative methods of participatory co-investigation and analysis. As the aim of my work is to reveal the hidden reflexivity of Indian animation practitioners and its impact on community structure, how could I not then, as part of this project, include instances of that reflexivity in the research? I began my analysis by treating the reflexive practice of practitioners not as either a wholly

authentic reflection of reality or performative posturing but rather as instances of situated theory to be compared with other instances from other interviews and textual discourses throughout the process of research.

An example of the usefulness of this participatory method of analysis can be seen in my interactions with creative producer, author, and educator Ranjit Singh. Before I met Singh, I had already spent months researching the organization of educational institutions, reading course descriptions, and analysing reports on how education might be improved, including Singh's own twelve part white paper on 'industry-based training' (2004-2005). My 36 prior interview participants also included four educators and seven current students. Singh spent more than two hours talking with me about his personal experiences in production management, as well as his personal perceptions about the position of students, working professionals, Indian animation schools, and firms within a wider social and economic environment. He reiterated much that I had already observed or been told by others: that much Indian animation practice is driven by service work, that communication and knowledge exchange are key to the exercise of building community, but lack of policy support and quality education are chronic problems. However, during our conversation, he also directly responded to my emerging theoretical interpretations, especially concerning commercial training institutes. Singh was eager to correct what he saw as an error in my understanding, viewing the development of commercial training apart from industry, responding that, "The trainer is not to be blamed because the trainer is providing what you wanted" (Interview 28). By calling attention to the supply and demand between studios and commercial training institutes, Singh prompted me to reconsider my preliminary categories and compare them in different ways.

However this active dialogue with participants and practitioner accounts did not conclude at the end of primary field research. The design of my dissertation followed a production studies approach. Yet time for extended ethnographic analysis was necessarily limited. With this in mind, I turned my attention not toward long-term observation, but extended comparison between different instances of discourse. This was to do more than simply fill the gaps in my understanding, but rather to expand the range of critical voices contributing to the final analysis. This was not without attendant risks. Paraphrasing Mills' assessment of reflexive practice in industry interviewing, there remain clear methodological problems in finding out "what industry members do" while at the same time asking them to "reassess those practices" critically (2008: 149).

Like Mills, I have now learned through experience that the personal obligations that researchers experience to their research participants extend well beyond ethical

standards of institutions (2008: 149).[5] The needs of creative practice are not necessarily conducive to such sustained research input. Accordingly, although prolonged collaboration between researcher and participant was the ideal, the reality proved difficult to maintain. In practice, follow-up with practitioners focused on those participants most-engaged with the research, reinforcing their positions as key participants that I disclosed in the completed analysis. This does not conclude with the completion of the project, but extends into future research.

Final Observations

When I conceived this project six years ago, my goals were quite simple. I wanted to know more about Indian animation. I found a huge amount of content but my usual academic sources of information about Indian cultural industries were silent. Turning to published practitioner accounts, I read Ram Mohan speak of animation 'culture' and wondered what he meant by this seeming theoretical proposition. While I had not fully grasped the notion of practitioner reflexivity and the opportunities it would hold for integrated industrial analysis, I went to India with a mission to keep an open mind. Now, I recognize that methodological strategies do not always reflect the real challenges of conducting an investigation of production culture on the opposite side of the world. It is an inevitable part of field research that the researcher will be presented with local circumstances and events for which any amount of reading or second-hand accounts cannot prepare them. India presents many such extremes: wealth, poverty, geographical scale, cultural diversity, and as many cultural industries as cuisines.

A visitor navigates Mumbai based on a slowly growing lexicon of known relative locations, behind, opposite or simply nearby to somewhere else. Researchers must decide whether the accounts of chaos faced on the ground – cultural misunderstanding, frustration with different understandings of the research situation – should be written in the text. The need for reflexivity in research would suggest so. However it is all the more relevant here in that the subjective mappings and locally conferred understandings that allow the first time visitor to slowly construct order out of apparent chaos – to navigate Mumbai, directly parallel the choice of methods and analysis I used to navigate Indian animation. Accordingly, I believe that the three sensitizing concepts that inspired this

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[5] Students and professionals alike expressed surprise and occasionally bemusement at the formality of ethics procedures required by the university to sanction this research, illustrative samples of which are compiled in Appendix 2.

approach – reflexivity, identity, and learning – could provide the basis for further investigation as well.

Future Work

      The serious lack of research into Indian animation suggests an almost endless amount of work yet to be done, far beyond the theoretical interventions and methods of this project. Certainly there is a need for research into the reception of Indian animation that would complement or challenge my findings here. Much more textual and historical research is also required, and there are promising indications that this is forthcoming.[6] However, my work also suggests specific directions for future analysis within the approach I have established. Gendered work and an emphasis placed upon non-entertainment animation represent the two most significant participant-proposed categories without direct analogues in the organizational structure of the project. That numerous studios are filled with men, yet the most prominent independent artists and a large minority of all students are women, suggests a major institutional gender gap.[7] Likewise accounts of "informational animation" (Interview 31) suggests a third narrative of practice somewhere between outsourcing and boutique production. These could easily have been additional chapters. Yet rather than pay lip-service to what may be additional critical factors in industrial identity, I highlight these for separate substantive investigation in their own right.

      A third opportunity is to apply these methods to other industrial contexts. While this dissertation is about the conception and negotiation of a particular culture of animation production, I hope my research offers a more general impression of both the critical processes of production and a methodological model of inductive industrial or cultural analysis. While Indian animation and the changing experiences of Indian practitioners will always be to some extent unique, they are not alone in responding to these changes through the development of a culture of production that suit local conditions. For example, the failure of Rhythm & Hues during the course of this research highlights the complex relationships between localized practitioner reflexivity and global political economy, and suggests obvious affinities between the conduct of this project in

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[6] There are increasingly self-defined animation scholars within India. See Anitha Balachandran's recent work on national identity at the government Films Division (2014).

[7] Investigation could begin with my existing data: "If you have a deadline you don't go home for four days… If a girl has to do that, the family is not going to be too happy" (Udiaver, Interview 20).

India and a similar project investigating the increasingly vocal reflexivity of visual effects workers in any of a number of shifting globalized clusters: from Mumbai to Los Angeles, or Wellington, New Zealand.

Returning Theory to Industry

My focus in this dissertation has been on the cultural practices of Indian animation practitioners, and how they leverage their identities in shared spaces of social action. If for no other reason, a concern with representation means that analysis of production culture has informed every aspect of my work, in seeming contrast with other approaches that emphasize more structural explanatory frames. Thus, whenever possible I have endeavoured to expose points of correspondence between cultural studies and political economy. Moreover I observe that while such distinctions have long been the subject of debate in academic theory, they are of less concern in the parallel reflexive theorization of media practitioners themselves, focused instead on the balance of creativity and commerce. I observe that opportunities for new and productive research are possible through the co-construction this sort of industrial analysis. Just as production studies has illuminated how creative workers make meaning from making content, I hope that this inductive and comparative analysis builds upon this and offers new insights, not only into the development of Indian animation as another instance of production culture, but also the stakes of asserting local professional identity in a globalizing world, the grave crises facing cultural industries education, and the struggles of collective action and knowledge sharing across increasingly ephemeral social networks. Only through direct reflexive engagement with producers, artists, students, educators, community organizers, and trade writers, can scholars of animation and other cultural industries fully participate in both the negotiation and theorization of these crucial challenges.

Vita:

Timothy Graham Jones graduated from Langley High School in McLean, Virginia in 2000. He earned a BA in Film Studies and Political Science and a BFA in Film Production from the University of Colorado at Boulder where he graduated summa cum laude in 2005. In 2006 he joined the University of Southern California (USC) Institute for Creative Technologies (ICT) where he developed cognitive training simulations applying immersive virtual environments and guided experiential learning (GEL). In 2008 he earned his MA in Critical Studies from the University of Southern California, School of Cinematic Arts. He entered the PhD program in Film, Television and Media Studies (FTM) at the University of East Anglia in 2010. He is a member of the Hollywood Chapter of the International Animated Film Association (ASIFA), the Society for Animation Studies (SAS), and the Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS).

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This dissertation was typed by the author.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Research Interviews and Field Research

The Interviews

Number	Participant	Affiliation/Position	Date
Los Angeles			
1.	Jason Scott	Rhythm and Hues: Lead Lighting Director	30/4/2011
London			
2.	A.K. Madhavan	Crest Animation, CEO	12/7/2011
Mumbai			
3.	Gitanjali Rao	Independent animator	16/10/2011
National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad			
4.	Tara Douglas	Adivasi Arts Trust, Secretary	19/10/2011
5a. 5b.	Pradeep Patil Shraddha Sakhalkar	Roaming Design; NID graduates	19/10/2011
6a. 6b.	Rita Dhankani; Mehul Mahicha	Vivi5: Animation Art Design; NID graduates	21/10/2011
7a. 7b.	Manasi Parikh Krishna Chandran	Bechain Nagri; NID students	21/10/2011
8.	Joyce Lemos	*Animation Reporter*: Editorial Coordinator	22/10/2011
9.	Dhimant Vyas	Zynga: Creative Director	23/10/2011
10.	Anand Gurnani	*AnimationXpress*: Managing Editor; MIFA/Annecy	23/10/2011
11.	Debjani Mukherjee	Bol: The Language of Children: Co-Founder; NID graduate	25/10/2011
12.	Nalini Bhutia	NID student	25/10/2011
13.	Ajay Kumar Tiwari	NID: Animation faculty	25/10/2011
14.	Sekhar Mukherjee	NID: Coordinator, Animation Film Design	25/10/2011
Mumbai			
15a. 15b.	Seshaprasad A. R. Amit Aidasani	Rhythm & Hues: Digital Production Manager ASIFA India: Vice President Rhythm & Hues: Assistant Manager - Education and Tracking	28/10/2011
16.	Arijit Gupta	Infinity Post, Lighting Artist	30/10/2011
17.	Abhishek Chandra	*CGTantra:* Co-founder; Digitales Studios: Director	31/10/2011
18.	R.K. Chand	*CGTantra*: Co-founder; Digitales Studios: Business Director	31/10/2011
19.	Vaibhav Kumaresh	Vaibhav Studios, Founder and Director TASI: Board Member	31/10/2011
20.	Akshata Udiaver	TASI: Secretary; *All About Animation*: Founder and Editor	1/11/2011
21.	Kedar Khot	Crest Animation: Art Director	1/11/2011
22a. 22b. 22c. 22d.	Dibyalochan Chaudhury Dilip Rathod Pramita Mukherjee Sushant Acharekar	Crest Animation: Head of Department, Character Effects Crest Animation: Project Head Crest Animation: Rigging Senior Artist Crest Animation: Lighting Technical Director	1/11/2011
23.	Suresh Eriyat (E. Suresh)	Studio Eeksaurus: Founder and Director	2/11/2011
24.	Puneet Sharma	Aptech/Arena Animation: Technical Advisor	3/11/2011
25a. 25b. 25c.	Bhavika Bavishi, Saurabh S. Mazumdar Shreyans Pithwa	Arena Andheri: Students	3/11/2011
26.	Chetan Sharma	Animagic Studios: Director	3/11/2011
27.	Arnab Chaudhuri	Director: *Arjun: Warrior Prince* (2012)	4/11/2011
28.	Ranjit (Tony) Singh	Creative Producer, Director, and Author	5/11/2011
29.	Rajesh Turakhia	Frameboxx: Founding Director	7/11/2011
30.	Sanjiv Waeerkar	MAAC: Chief Creative Officer	8/11/2011

31.	Ram Mohan	Graphiti Multimedia: Chairman/Dean TASI: President Emeritus	8/11/2011
32.	Jitendra S. Chaudhari	Graphiti Multimedia: Centre Head	8/11/2011
33.	Tilak Shetty	Graphiti Multimedia: Director and CEO	8/11/2011
34.	Nitin J. Patil	Mumbai Educational Trust: Course Coordinator	9/11/2011
Industrial Design Centre (IDC), IIT Powai			
35.	Shilpa Ranade	IDC: Asst. Prof, Animation	9/11/2011
36.	Charu Monga	IDC: Research Assistant	10/11/2011
37.	Nina Sabnani	IDC: Asst. Prof, Animation	10/11/2011
38.	Ajit Rao	Animation Independent educator/Architect	12/11/2011
39.	Sumant Rao	IDC: Asst. Prof, Animation; Animagic: Director	13/11/2011
40.	Piyush Kumar Verma	IDC Student	13/11/2011
41.	Dharma Rao	IDC Student	13/11/2011
London			
42.	Shelley Page	DreamWorks Animation: Head of International Outreach	8/10/2013

Excerpts of the above are included throughout this dissertation. Copies of particular or representative transcripts can be provided upon request.

Timeline of Fieldwork

Location	*Event/Activity*	*Date*
Los Angeles		
	Rhythm & Hues, El Segundo	30/4/2011
Mumbai		
	Travel from London to Mumbai (via Zurich) Arrange local mobile phone number and lodgings in Worli Seaface	12/10/2011
	Local sightseeing and acclimatization	15/10/2011
	Gitanjali Rao, home studio, Goregaon West	16/10/2011
	Overnight train to Ahmedabad	17/10/2011
National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad		
NID	Chitrakatha International Student Animation Festival 19-23 October	19-23/10/2011
Day 1:	Opening Ceremony 'Quiet Ones!' Screening and talk by recent alumni, including *In Divine Interest* (Patil) 'Still Swimmying!' An Exhibition on Leo Leonni	19/10/2011
Day 2:	Presentations on animation in Bangladesh, Amar Chitrakatha, and alternative studios	20/10/2011
Day 3:	Presentations on tribal animation, Ahmedabad, Belgian, Iranian, and Swiss animation	21/10/2011
Day 4:	Participated in Panel: "Beyond Entertainment: A Panel Discussion about Other Kinds of Animation" with Isabel Herguera, Rolf Baechler, Ela Bhatt, and Prakash Moorthy Presentations on NID Oxberry and Cartoon Network	22/10/2011
Day 5	Student pitch presentations Presentations: "Cartoon Network and Pogo: 'It's a fun thing' Communication and Branding for kids Channels across the Asia Pacific Awards and Closing Ceremony	23/10/2011
	Overnight train to Mumbai	25/10/2011
Mumbai		
	Diwali – Many businesses are closed. The five-day Indian festival of lights and quite possibly the loudest thing I have ever experienced. This is also a peak date for major theatrical releases.	26-30/10/2011
	InOrbit Mall, Goregaon West Field notes on major brand animation merchandise, Disney Princesses, *Loony Toons* (Warner Bros.) *Tom & Jerry* (Turner), and *Chhota Bheem* (Green Gold)	28/10/2011
	Rhythm & Hues Mumbai, Goregaon West	28/10/2011
	Sightseeing trip to Elephanta Island Cave Temples	29/10/2011

	3D Screening of *Ra-One* (Sinha, 2011) a major Diwali Bollywood release starring Shahrukh Khan, Arjun Rampal, and Kareena Kapoor, and featuring substantial locally-produced VFX PVR Cinema, High Street Phoenix Mall, Lower Parel	31/10/2011
	Digitales Studios, Kandivali West	31/10/2011
	Vaibhav Studios, Kandivali East	31/10/2011
	Crest Animation India, Ghatkopar West	1/11/2011
	Studio Eeksaurus	2/11/2011
	Aptech Computer Education, Aptech House, Andheri East	3/11/2011
	Arena Animation Andheri , Andheri West	3/11/2011
	The Walt Disney Company, Lower Parel West	4/11/2011
	Cartoon Network India, Andheri West	4/11/2011
	"Swiss Cheese with Mary and Max" TASI Seminar Screenings curated by Rolf Baechler from Trick & Film & Animation, Zürich, followed by a screening of *Mary and Max* (Elliot, 2009) at Whistling Woods International Institute, Film City	5/11/2011
	ASIFA India International Animation Day (IAD) Festival at the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) Nariman Point ASIFA-India dinner at Leopold' Café, Colaba	6/11/2011
	Maya Academy of Advanced Cinematics (MAAC), Andheri East	8/11/2011
	Graphiti Multimedia, Mahim	2/11/2011
	Mumbai Educational Trust, Bandra West	3/11/2011
Industrial Design Centre – Indian Institute of Technology Bombay - Powai		
IDC	Damroo: Creating Content(ment) for Children Seminar	10-12/11/2011
Day 1:	Opening ceremony, presentations on: childhood learning, writing for different languages and cultural contexts, and performance of shadow puppetry and sand animation	10/11/2011
Day 2:	Presentations: "Images and Worldviews" – Shilpa Ranade, including sequences from *Goopi Gawaiya Bagha Bajaiya* (2014), "Imagery in an Era of Cultural Diffusion", and "Recontextualizing Images: Games and Animation." I presented: "Not Global or Local: Hybridity and Transnational Children's Animation" preliminary findings on Indian children's television	11/11/2011
Day 3:	Presentations on children as content creators, vocational education, children's publishing, and closing ceremony	12/11/2011
	Travel from Mumbai to London (via Zurich)	12-14/11/2011
London		
	Double Negative VFX, Fitzrovia	25/1/2012

Account of Field Work

The following comprises an account of how the research approaches selected in this study were enacted before and during field research in India.

Preliminary Study – This research originated in 2008 during earlier postgraduate study at the University of Southern California, responding to a screening of the feature film *Taare Zameen Par* (Khan, 2007) at the Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles (IFFLA), which included animated opening credits and dream sequences.[1] I was interested in investigating the transnational networks of aesthetic exchange this film suggested – particularly in the use of stop-motion animation – while exploring the apparent underrepresentation of animation in the Bollywood entertainment industry. This brought to my attention work by practitioners in Indian animation, beginning with the directors of the film's animated sequences, Dhimant Vyas and Vaibhav Kumaresh, and revealed that both were graduates of the NID. This opened the door to a slew of further resources presenting a wider account of Indian animation: numerous interviews conducted by Anand Gurnani for *Animation Xpress* with Kumaresh (2006a), Vyas (2006b), NID coordinator Sekhar Mukherjee (2006c), IDC professor Shilpa Ranade (2004), independent animator Gitanjali Rao (2005), and Crest Animation CEO A. K. Madhavan (2009), as well as articles by Ranade (2008), Jayanti Sen (1999, 2000) and Nina Sabnani (2005). Many of these individuals would become key participants in the later research. The direction of the investigation was greatly influenced by Kotasthane's (2005) interview with Ram Mohan which led me to begin investigating the phenomenon of 'animation culture.' Locating Indian animators would present few difficulties, but planning field research to gather data, and devising a methodology that would render theoretical interventions would prove more complex.

In 2010, having committed to develop the project further for doctoral study, I needed to gain more localized understanding of animation in India – the organization of production, modes of communication and engagement. I initiated a further pilot study to develop, "theoretical sensitivity" to both the social situation of Indian animation and the possible processes of animation culture (Glaser, 1978). This comprised investigation of publicly available texts as spontaneous discourse. Analysis of texts included not only varying

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[1] Indian Cinema CTCS 510 was convened in spring 2008 by Professor Priya Jaikumar, who provided early guidance on the direction and continuation of this research. This resulted in the conference paper, "Beyond Outsourcing: Indian Stop-Motion Animation and Transnational Aesthetic Exchange" (Jones, 2010).

kinds of animated content but other artefacts of practice as well, especially those that might include fragments of reflexive theory. I started with some of the most available examples – reports from both the trade and popular press – coverage *in Animation World Magazine*, *Animation Reporter*, *DNA* and *The Times of India*, but uncovered a greater concentration of reflexive material produced for community portal sites like *Animation Xpress, All About Animation, CGTantra* and *Design in India*. This included press releases, histories, timelines and particularly interviews pertaining to specific films, education and community events, as well as commentary on business reports such as the FICCI-KPMG Report (2011). To paraphrase Caldwell, it became clear that this was a contested 'community' that "constantly speaks to itself about itself" in and outside the context of production itself, and through a variety of semi-public venues and texts (2008: 35).

In accordance with the methodology, I coded and subjected these accounts to comparative analysis of both the cultural and economic conditions they described. One of the first conceptual possibilities to emerge was to consider the position of speakers in the texts in relation to various organizational structures. Accordingly, this preliminary analysis paid close attention to institutions, including large multinational studios like Crest Animation and Rhythm and Hues; smaller boutique firms like Studio Eeksaurus and Vaibhav Studios; schools and training institutes like the NID, the IDC, MAAC, and Arena Animation; professional associations like ASIFA-India and TASI; and industry groups like FICCI and NASSCOM. By comparing coded accounts according to organizational membership, highly differentiated accounts began to emerge, reflecting diverse approaches to production, education and professional engagement, but also negotiated areas of common ground.

Trade reports contributed tentative but clear categories in the emerging data, suggesting differences in discourse between outsourcing and local production, design education and commercial training. These also highlighted the extent to which journalistic accounts were themselves constructed, necessitating adding the reflexivity of press practitioners to the analysis. However this initial approach was subject to several major limitations, stemming from its reliance on extant texts and interviews. Lacking closer observation of the organizational context, these did not account fully for all of the actors or conversational partners involved. The interviewer's position as an active participant in the discourse remained unclear. This raised key questions that could only be addressed through other registers of my larger research method, through direct interviews and participant observation, and integrated into ongoing analysis as these took place.

Field Research - I was fortunate when planning the primary fieldwork, having already developed a large database of potential contacts for in-depth interviews. Individuals contacted during the pilot study, like Madhavan, Mukherjee, Gurnani, Ranade, and Udiaver became key participants and referees for further contacts across different areas of Indian animation production, education and, and professional networks. These individuals served as initial contacts for snowball sampling. As the initial analysis of trade interviews and industry reports was nearing completion, I conducted two reconnaissance interviews in Los Angeles with Rhythm and Hues Lighting Director Jason Scott and in London with Crest CEO A. K. Madhavan. These activities served to further basic understanding and theoretical sensitivity to production processes and trends and initiate the collaborative practitioner-led approach to data collection. This was significant for defining social and economic structures.

These interviews led directly into the major field research in October and November 2011. Fieldwork included site visits to production spaces at Crest Animation, Rhythm and Hues, as well as Vaibhav Studios, Studio Eeksaurus, and Disney India, and the educational facilities at the NID, IDC, MAAC and Arena Andheri. Early in the process I planned to approach the design institutes as primary contacts to facilitate field research, organizing travel around two key events and locations, the NID's Chitrakatha International Student Animation Festival in Ahmedabad from 19-23 October, and Damroo: Creating Content(ment) for Children Seminar at the IDC from 10-12 November on the campus of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Powai. I was invited by Mukherjee and Ranade to participate and speak at their respective events, occasions that presented several key advantages for field research. They brought together a range of stakeholders from across the country, not only members of the immediate school communities, but alumni and professional contacts from industry. Even though it was the Diwali holiday break, a large number of students were also participating while finishing their projects. The subjects of these events – talks and discussions about animation practice – were ideal for gathering data. At the NID in particular, several presentations covered the conduct of animation education, 'culturally-rooted' design, and the transition from education to professional practice. This information, experience and the social contacts that resulted would prove invaluable for interview scheduling and preparation, and it was during eight days in Ahmedabad that I that I conversed and conducted in-depth interviews with many people I had initially corresponded with via email, as well as many other festival participants.

Returning to Mumbai on 26 October, I conducted the majority of the remaining interviews utilized in this research – interacting with practitioners at a range of large and small studios, institutes, and other organizations – using personal references to follow social and professional links between individuals. Distinctions began to emerge between accounts at small studios, large studios and content distributors – Vaibhav Studios, Studio Eeksaurus, Crest, Rhythm and Hues, Disney and Cartoon Network. Those from larger firms stressed steady development, international collaboration (Madhavan, Interview 2), and brand management (Arnab Chaudhuri, Interview 27). In comparison many smaller and independent producers emphasized 'sustainable' local practice over global growth (Interview 23). These interpretations, stressing the creation and maintenance of local cycles of production, complicated earlier understandings based on development through global collaboration, suggesting instead a tendency to balance global and local engagement. Reframing disparate testimony in this way revealed underlying commonalities: responding to challenges in feature production with growing emphasis on television – quality storytelling and design at low cost and high production volumes, and developing animation literate audiences receptive to local content (Mohan, Interview 31). This analysis developed into Chapters One and Two.

Similar contrasts also appeared in educational accounts. Practitioners from the NID stressed differences between individualistic design instruction at the government institutes and team-based technical training commercial training institutes, so I arranged further interviews in Mumbai to develop these comparisons. Not only was discovering variation in this category useful for theoretical sampling, practitioners asserted it was essential to understand the challenges currently faced in animation education (Interviews 18; 19). It was through these earlier interviews that I gained access to MAAC, Arena and Frameboxx. Here, revealing gaps appeared between student, educator, and industry accounts as student demands for professional engagement (Interview 25a) and parent expectations of high-paying employment (Interview 31) juxtaposed descriptions of common relatively low paid and semi-skilled job placements (Interview 24). However, again comparing oppositions revealed underlying similarities, particularly in promoting a wider definition of graduates' professional identity (Interview 29). Framing analysis of education in terms of the need to develop flexible professional identities integrates a range of earlier categories: not only balancing industry needs, student demands and parent expectations, but prioritizing entrepreneurship, and transferring responsibility for learning to the student. This analysis developed into Chapters Three and Four.

Gathering data on community organization and knowledge sharing was not limited to interviews, and there were many opportunities for participant observation, especially at community events hosted by the professional associations, TASI and ASIFA-India. I attended a TASI seminar and screening at Whistling Woods on 5 November, and the following day accepted ASIFA-India's invitation to attend the International Animation Day celebrations at the National Centre for the Performing Arts at Nariman Point. This not only provided a forum for hundreds of animation students to attend presentations by prominent professional from India and Hollywood, but also an occasion for these professionals to engage socially as organizers and speakers did over dinner at Leopold's Café after the event.

Observing and interviewing practitioners active in these professional organizations, as well as the information portals *CGTantra*, *All About Animation* and *Animation Xpress* reinforced the concept of flexibility in practitioner identities, particularly as many are engaged across several production roles and community responsibilities. These practitioners accounted for their professional activities in various ways, identifying not as journalists but animators (Interview 18), as designers and bloggers (Interview 20), or even, "ecosystem catalysts" (Gurnani, Interview 10). As in other areas of animation practice, while initial comparisons between professional organizations and trade press networks, suggested substantial differences in approach, comparative analysis suggests common emphasis on knowledge management, responding to a lack of available information from shared by forming repertoires of community knowledge (Interviews 8; 18) Observing professional organization and trade information networks revealed emphasis on engagement, social learning and negotiation of common objectives and identities, responding to challenges of 'isolation' (Interviews 3; 38), trust, balancing competition and collaboration (Interview 18) and formalizing professional structures (Interview 28). It is in this last attribute that knowledge sharing brings participants' reflexive practice closest to not only negotiating but enacting social structures that they experience day-to-day. This, perhaps the crux of the grounded analysis, developed into Chapters Five and Six.

Appendix 2: Materials Provided to Participants

Interview Request Letter

Date
[Interviewee Name/Title]
[Affiliation]
[Address]

Dear [Interviewee Name]:

My name is Timothy Jones. I am a doctoral student in the School of Film and Television at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, England. I am writing to invite you to participate in a new animation research project to document recent developments in the Indian animation community, and explore issues of animation culture. I am identifying a list of individuals who have participated in this exciting and ongoing phase of animation history, practitioners of all sorts, from industry veterans to students, all with roles to play in shaping the community. I would be honored if you would consent to participate.

I propose that Interviews be conducted at your convenience online using the Skype video application. Conversations will be recorded and interviewees will be provided with copies of the transcripts for editing and review and also, if desired, with copies of the resulting research. Following best research practices, all interview subjects will have the option to withdraw at any time, or have their responses remain anonymous.

I sincerely hope that you will consider participating in this important effort to record the ongoing achievements of the Indian animation community. I will be pleased to hear from you in the near future to confirm your interest in being interviewed. Please feel free to contact me as specified below with any questions. An information sheet on the project is attached for your reference.

Sincerely,

Timothy Jones
Doctoral Candidate, School of Film and Television
University of East Anglia

Email: timothy.g.jones.uea.ac.uk
Mailing Address: 93 Colman Rd, Norfolk, NR4 7HE, United Kingdom
Telephone: (44) 7583637985

Participant Information Sheet

Indian Animation - Community and Cultural Practice

Timothy Jones
School of Film and Television Studies

Project Summary

The last few years have marked a crucial period in the expansion of animation production in India. Despite the range of work being produced, reflecting the efforts of many different individuals, animation in South Asia and in India in particular, has been largely overlooked in global animation scholarship, especially in Europe and the United States. This is a missed opportunity, not only to understand an important community of practice, its history, challenges and triumphs, but to make the work widely available to be viewed and enjoyed as intended.

This research project is aimed to address some of these gaps in academic discourses around animation, concerning individual and community practice. The investigation itself will comprise an extensive series of in-depth interviews with individuals who have shaped Indian animation, and through their efforts continue to have an impact on the community. Of particular interest will be those involved in design, production, education and professional development. Interviews will be concerned with exploring the activities that have been key in establishing and sustaining the animation community today.

Interviewees will be given latitude to shape the discussion. However, general topics will include: personal background, creative approaches, educational and professional experience, business activities and organizational involvement. Further, discussions might cover how animation practice engages with related fields, information technology (IT), wider media communities, and other forces in global culture industry. One of the significant aims of subsequent analysis will be assessing how this local animation community can be defined and understood, what practitioner methods reveal about its past and its future.

Interviews will be about one hour in length, subject to participant schedules. Signed release forms will be secured from each interviewee. Following transcription of each interview, recordings, transcripts, and all other documents and data generated by the interview process will be provided to each interviewee. One goal of the project will be to produce peer-reviewed publishable materials. Another is to make this knowledge available to the animation community at large, to support innovation and encourage future collaboration.

About the Researcher

I am a PhD candidate in the School of Film and Television at the University of East Anglia (UEA), one of the UK's preeminent centers for media education. My research concentrations include animation training, immersive environments, and abstract animation. I joined UEA from the University of Southern California (USC) Institute for Creative Technologies (ICT) in Los Angeles, where I developed instructional simulations applying immersive graphics. These efforts were twice recognized with the US Department of Defense Modeling & Simulation Award for Training (2006, 2008) and by the Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Triennial (2006).

I received a Masters of Arts in Critical Studies from USC in 2008, studying under the film scholars Priya Jaikumar and David James. Prior to joining ICT I contributed to independent film productions, and studied animation design in the Film Studies program at the University of Colorado at Boulder (CU) under the tutelage of filmmakers Stan Brakhage and Phil Solomon, and the film historian Suranjan Ganguly. I earned degrees in Film Studies and Political Science from CU in 2004.

I am an active member of the Hollywood Chapter of the International Animated Film Association (ASIFA) and the Society for Animation Studies (SAS). I am also a managing editor of the SAS journal *Animation Studies.*

For further information please contact me at:
+44 (0) 7583 637985 or timothy.g.jones@uea.ac.uk

Participant Release Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERVIEW

Study Title (provisional): Animating Community: The Development of Production Culture in Indian Animation

You have been asked to participate in a research study I am undertaking for my Doctoral Thesis at the School of Film and Television Studies at the University of East Anglia (UEA). The purpose of the study is to explore recent developments in the Indian animation industry, with a focus on both individual and community practices. You were selected as a participant in this study because of your involvement with the animation community in India. You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

• This interview is voluntary. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the interview at any time or for any reason. The interview will take about one hour. You will not be compensated for this interview.

• Unless you give me permission to use your name, title, and/or quote you in any publications that may result from this research, the information you provide will be anonymized.

• I would like to record this interview using audio/video capture software so that I can use it for reference while proceeding with this study. I will not record this interview without your permission. If you do grant permission for this conversation to be recorded, you have the right to revoke recording permission and/or end the interview at any time. Following completion of this interview, you will be provided with a transcript for your review and consultation.

• This project will be completed by August 2013. At your request, you will be provided with a copy of the final research.

• I am solely responsible for the design and conduct of this research. If at any time you feel you have been treated unfairly, or you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, queries may be forwarded to the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC).

• If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at timothy.g.jones@uea.ac.uk

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I understand the procedures described above. I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions and these have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

(*Please select all that apply*)

( ) I give consent for this interview to be recorded.

( ) I give consent for the following information to be included in publications resulting from this study:

( ) my name   ( ) my title   ( ) direct quotes from this interview

Name of Subject _____

Signature of Subject _____ Date _____

Signature of Investigator _____Date _____

Appendix 3 – Use of Diagrams

Although not integral to the presentation of this research, one aspect of the research approach that departs from more conventional production studies methods is the extensive use of diagrams. Situational maps have been an intrinsic part of the constant comparative method for this dissertation and may bear special consideration here. In grounded theory, diagrams and maps offer a means to visualize possible connections between categories that have emerged in the data, developing during the simultaneous process of research and analysis. Particularly, Clarke presents situational maps as a means for "opening up" and interrogating data in a grounded and comparative framework (2005: 83).

The way these have been used in this dissertation has been primarily as a means to organize data while integrating different registers of analysis, comparing categories drawn from coding of extant texts, interview transcripts and field notes. Situational maps are a concrete tool for representing and articulating working concepts, observations and assumptions systematically, drawn from Clarke's assertion that, "researchers should use their own experiences of doing the research as data for making these maps" (2005: 85). Here they also provide a means to draw comparisons between participants, their reflexive practice, and other actors and elements in the situation of Indian animation. Subjected to relational analysis they document the constant comparative method used in this research.

Situational maps include all the major observed actors and objects in situation of interest. This comprises research participants and other human agents, but also non-human discursive, symbolic and cultural elements, framed by the question: who and what "make a difference" in this situation (87)? In this research this presented an opportunity to assess relationships between individual animators, studios and organizations, the discourses of identity they invoke, and social structure. The following (table A3.1) reproduces a working situational map of categories that ultimately shaped the analysis in Chapters One and Two. This map emerged from the process of coding as I made the observation that participants often spoke about maintaining practice from one project to the next, invoking different discourses to explain their experiences. Following Clarke's example, questions for this map included: who or what things matter in the particular situation of 'sustaining' animation practice in India? What individuals participated? What organizations or other institutional actors are involved in of shaping understanding of what constitutes sustainable production? What discourses were used to produce and locate these interpretations? Finally, what social, economic or political conditions or processes are involved (100)?

As an exercise, Clarke advocates subjecting working maps to repeated 'relational analyses' to ask questions about the links between different elements, systematically cantering analysis on each element and describing possible relationships between it and the other elements in the situation. As demonstrated in the example below (table A3.2), this emphasizes the complexities of the social situation and the choices of different approaches to the data:

Table A3.2:   ***Sample Relational Analyses***
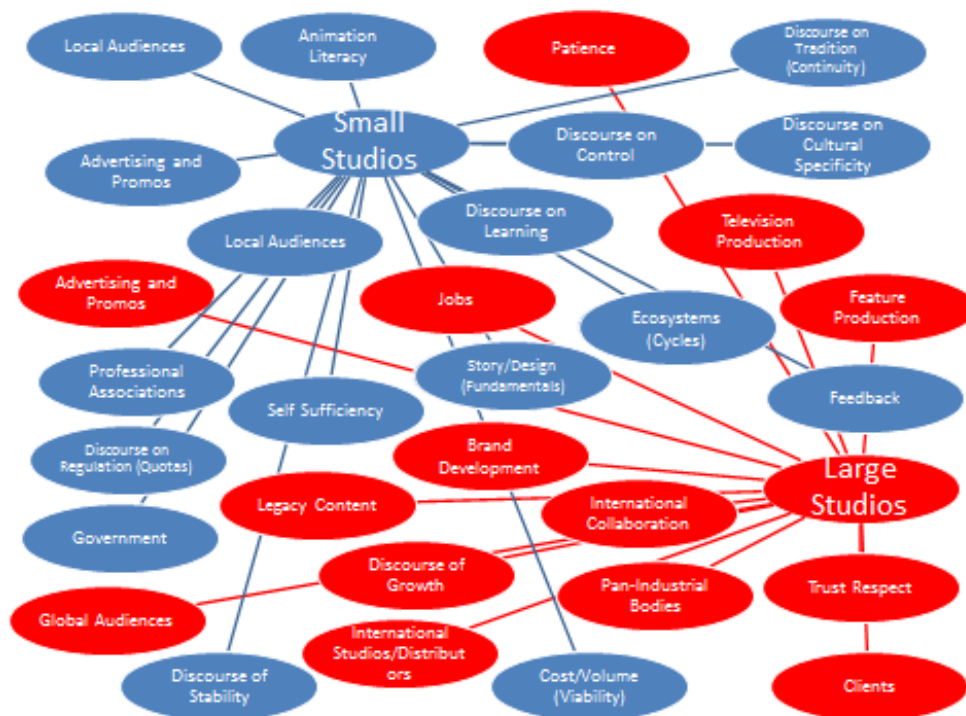
Appendix 4: Industry Data

Economic Scale of the Animation Industry:

Combined Animation, Visual Effects and Post Production – FICCI Annual Estimates and

Projections

2008	2009	2010	CAGR (09-10)	2011P	2012P	2013P	2014P	2015P	CAGR (11-15)
₹17.5 billion	₹20.2 billion	₹23.7 billion	17.5%	₹28 billion	₹33 billion	₹40 billion	₹47 billion	₹55.9 billion	18.5%
$ 388.5 million	$448.5 million	$526 million		$ 621.5 million	$732.5 million	$888 million	$1 billion	$1.25 billion	

My USD conversion at March 2011 rates (KPMG, 2011: *100).* A similar NASSCOM-Ernst and Young study (2010) projected the Indian industry would hit $1 billion by 2012, growing by a higher CAGR of 22 percent each year.

Cost to Produce a Half Hour of Television Animation:

Countries	*Cost in US Dollars*
United States and Canada	$250,000-400,000
Korea and Taiwan	$110,000-$120,000
Philippines	$90,000-100,000
India	$60,000

NASSCOM, 2006

Glossary:

24fps – an annual animation show and competition hosted by MAAC

AAIP – Arena Animation International Program

ABAI – (formerly) the Association of Bangalore Animation Industry; now known by its acronym

ABAIfest – the annual animation festival of ABAI

Adivasi – the tribal and aboriginal population of India

Adivasi Arts Trust – a non-profit that conducts media projects with indigenous communities

AIAFF – Annecy International Animation Film Festival

All About Animation – an Indian animation blog and information portal

Amar Chitrakatha – or 'picture stories;' India's largest-selling comic book series

ACK Media – publisher of *Amar Chitrakatha*

AMPTP – Association of Motion Picture and Television Producers (USA)

Anifest India – the annual animation festival and conference of TASI

Animagic India – an Indian animation studio, producer of *Tripura: The Three Cities of Maya* (2011)

Animation and Gaming India – a trade show organized by NASSCOM

The Animation and Gaming Industry in India – a report compiled for NASSCOM by Ernst & Young

Animation Magazine – an American monthly animation trade publication

Animation Reporter – a monthly print magazine formerly published by Font and Pixel for MAAC

Animation World Magazine – an online magazine of the Animation World Network

Animation World Network – an international online trade publisher

Animation Xpress – an Indian online trade publication

Aptech Computer Education – global retail and technology training company based in Mumbai

Arena Animation – a franchise animation training brand of Aptech

Arjuna – protagonist of the *Mahabharata*; featured in *Arjun* (2012) and *Arjun: Prince of Bali* (2014-)

ASC – American Society of Cinematographers (USA)

ASIFA – *Association Internationale du Film d'Animation* or International Animated Film Society

AVGC – Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, and Comics; an emerging industrial category

BAF – Best Animated Frames Awards; held at FICCI Frames

Bechain Nagri – '*Restless City*;' a student design and merchandising collective at the NID

Bol: the Language of Children – an educational non-profit that runs children's animation workshops

Bollywood – the major live-action Hindi language cinema based in Mumbai

CAGR – Cumulative Annual Growth Rate

Cartoon Network – a multinational animation channel of the Turner Broadcasting System

Cartoon Unit – the animation production unit of Films Division, founded in 1956

CFSI – Children's Film Society of India, associated with Films Division within MIB

CGTExpo – the conference of *CGTantra*

'*Chaitanya*' – (Sanskrit) meaning imbued with '*consciousness*;' although not in wide use, may approximate the English term '*animation*'

Chhota Bheem – children's animated series produced by Green Gold Animation for *POGO TV*

'Circuit of Culture' – a mode of cultural analysis proposed by du Gay at the Open University (1997)

Chitrakatha International Student Animation Festival – A biannual animation festival at the NID

CG/CGI – computer graphics/computer generated imagery

CGTantra – An Indian online community and discussion forum

COABARC – College of Animation, Bioengineering and Research Centre; a '*gurukul*-based' animation academy in Amaravati

Comic-con India – a comics trade show held in multiple Indian cities by Reed Exhibitions

'Community of Practice' – a social learning structure proposed by Wenger (1998)

Coproduction – collaboration between two or more firms, often defined by international agreement

Creative Minds – an inter-centre student competition of Arena Animation

Crest Animation – A former large animation studio headquartered in Mumbai

'Critical Media Industry Studies' – a research framework proposed by Havens, Lotz, and Tinic (2009)

'Critical Industrial Practice' – a kind of industrial reflexivity proposed by Caldwell (2006)

The Damroo Project – a collective to promote content creation for-and-with Indian children

DDU – DreamWorks Dedicated Unit; at Technicolor India in Bangalore

'Deep Text' – a category of textualized reflexive practice proposed by Caldwell (2008)

Digitales – an animation studio in Mumbai

Disney Channel – the flagship multinational television channel of the Walt Disney Company

Disney XD – a multinational television channel of the Walt Disney Company

DITBTS&T – (Karnataka) Department of IT, Biotechnology, and Science and Technology

DNA – Daily News and Analysis; an Indian daily English-language newspaper

Diwali – the Hindu autumn festival of lights

Double Negative – a large visual effects studio based in London

DQ Entertainment – a large animation and services studio based in Hyderabad

DreamWorks Animation – a very large multinational animation studio, based in Glendale, California

DSK Supinfocom International Campus – a private animation, video game, and industrial design institute in Pune; a joint venture between DSK and the French animation school, Supinfocom (*école Supérieure d'Informatique de Communication*)

Entertainment in India Report – a biannual report compile for FICCI by KPMG

Ernst & Young – a multinational professional services firm headquartered in London

Famous's House of Animation – a former animation studio based in Mumbai

FICCI – Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry

FICCI Frames – a trade show and conference organized by the FICCI Entertainment Division

Films Division – the film production house of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting

Frameboxx – a franchise animation training brand

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

Graphiti Multimedia/School of Animation – a Mumbai based studio and private school

Grounded Theory – an inductive approach to research proposed by Strauss and Glaser (1967)

Gurukul – a traditional form of residential apprenticeship learning

Green Gold Animation – an animation studio based in Hyderabad, maker of *Chhota Bheem* (2008-)

Hanuman – a Hindu god and central character in the *Ramayana*; featured in *Hanuman* (2005)

Hungama TV – an Indian children's television channel of the Walt Disney Company India

ICFFI – International Children's Film Festival of India; held by CFSI

IDC – Industrial Design Centre; a government-run design school at IIT Bombay

IAD – International Animation Day; the annual festival of ASIFA, celebrated by chapters worldwide

IATSE – International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees

IFFLA – Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles

IITB – Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay; a government-run engineering school in Mumbai

IMF – International Monetary Fund

In-betweening – animating intermediate images between key frames

IndiAnimated – a forthcoming online magazine and distributor of original Indian animation.

IGNOU – Indira Gandhi National Open University

IP – Intellectual Property

IT – Information Technology

KAVGC Summit – Karnataka Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics Summit; held by ABAI

KPMG – a multinational professional services firm headquartered in the Netherlands

Localization – the adaptation of media text for another audience

MAAC – Maya Academy for Advanced Cinematics; a franchise animation training brand of Aptech

Mahabharata – one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India

Matchmoving – (in visual effects) extracting camera motion information from a motion picture.

MESC – Media and Entertainment Skills Counsel; part of the NSDC

MIB – Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (Government of India)

MIFA – International Animation Film Market; at the Annecy International Animation Festival

MIFF – Mumbai International Film Festival; organized by Films Division

MPAA – Motion Picture Association of America (USA)

MSU – Manonimaniam Sundaranar University

NAGFO – NASSCOM Animation and Gaming Forum

NASSCOM – National Association of Software and Service Companies

NAVIGATE – NASSCOM Animation VFX Gaming Technology Forum

NCPA – National Centre for the Performing Arts, Nariman Point Mumbai

'Network Sociality' – a framework of ad hoc or transactional social relations proposed by Wittel (2001)

Nickelodeon India – the flagship Indian children's television channel of Viacom18

NID – The National Institute of Design; a government-run design in Ahmedabad

NOS – National Operating Standards; professional requirements set by MESC at NCDC

NSDC – National Skills Development Corporation

Outsourcing – contracting activities outside the borders of a firm, often overseas

Pixar – a very large Disney-owned animation studio based in Emeryville, California

Pogo TV – an Indian primarily-animation television channel of the Turner International India

Prana Studios – a large animation and visual effects company, based in Los Angeles

Price Waterhouse Cooper – a multinational professional services firm headquartered in London

'Project Ecology' – a space of collaborative industrial action proposed by Grabher (2002b)

Ramayana – one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India

Ram Mohan Biographics – a former animation studio founded in 1972

RCA – the Royal College of Art in London

Reliance AIMS – Reliance Animation Infotainment and Media School

Rigging – process of adding joints and controls to an animated character or model, done by a TD

Rhythm & Hues – a multinational animation and visual effects company now owned by Prana

RM-USL – an Indian outsourcing studio set up following the acquisition of Ram Mohan Biographics by UTV; Now UTV Toons

Roaming Design – an animation and design partnership based in Pune

Rotoscopy – the process of tracing over live-action footage; widely used in animation, visual effects, and stereo conversion

SAS – Society for Animation Studies

Situational Analysis – a qualitative approach to grounded theory proposed by Clarke (2005)

SMU – Sikkim Manipal University

SPADE – Short Program in Animation, Design & Visual Effects

Stereo conversion – the process of processing a 2D film into 3D; increasingly automated, but a common entry level job in Indian animation and visual effects

Studio Eeksaurus – an animation and design studio based in Mumbai

TASI – The Animation Society of India

TD – Technical Director (see also Rigging)

TIFF – Toronto International Film Festival

Tinkle – an Indian monthly magazine featuring comics; now owned by ACK Media

Toonz Media Group – a large animation and services studio based in Thiruvananthapuram

Transcreation – (marketing) process of adapting content while preserving style, theme, and tone

Turner International India – a subsidiary of the Turner Broadcasting System, based in Mumbai

UNCTAD – United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

UTV – a Disney-owned Indian media and entertainment company based in Mumbai

Vaibhav Studios – a small Indian animation studio based in Mumbai

VES – Visual Effects Society; the international honorary society of visual effects artists

Viacom18 – a joint management venture between Viacom and Network 18, based in Mumbai

Vivi5 – an animation and design partnership based in Delhi

Walt Disney Company India – a subsidiary of the Walt Disney Company, based in Mumbai

WWI - Whistling Woods International Institute for Film, Fashion & Communication; a private film, television and media arts school located in Film City, Mumbai

ZICA – Zee Institute of Creative Art; a franchise animation training brand,

Zynga – A social games studio based in San Francisco

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