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Online Heroines: Exploring the Experiences of  
Aotearoa New Zealand Women Filmmakers

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of  
*Master of Media and Creative Technologies*  
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## Abstract

The experiences of Aotearoa New Zealand women filmmakers have historically included discrimination, erasure, and exclusion; however, online platforms have been suggested as an antidote to this culture. This research explores the experiences of ten filmmakers who had published work online between 2013–2015; why they choose online platforms, what influences them to do so, what they consider successful within their practice, and what limitations and challenges they face now.

Using a feminist framework, and qualitative analysis, this research has two outputs: a written thesis and a creative-led webseries, featuring nine episodes of condensed interviews with the participants available on YouTube.

## Preface

As this thesis draws upon digital sources and references within specific timeframes and context, the Internet Archive: Wayback Machine (<http://archive.org/web>) may be of use for future readers to see some of the content mentioned<sup>1</sup>.

It is recommended that the webseries is watched after reading the Chapter 3: Methodology, but before reading Chapter 4: Analysis and Chapter 5: Conclusions. The webseries allows readers of the thesis to engage with a selected and condensed version of the experiences which are discussed in the analysis. However, as the webseries is the creative practice output of the research, it is better contextualised after reading the methodology and creative practice.

You can view the webseries at <http://onlineheroines.com>, or there is a playlist on the *Online Heroines* YouTube channel<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Assuming the Internet Archive also still exists in the future.

<sup>2</sup> This is linked again at the start of Chapter 4.

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## Glossary

Above-the-line [roles]	Above-the-line roles in a film production are ones which have creative direction in the project.
Below-the-line [roles]	Below-the-line roles are all other crew roles; including (but not limited to) grips and gaffers, costuming, continuity, and camera operators.
Cloud-based [service]	Saving, creating, and hosting files through servers on the Internet, as opposed to only on local drives on your PC or mobile device.
Cis [gender]	People whose gender identity matches what they were assigned at birth, i.e. cis woman.
Feature [film]	A film over 40 minutes in length (Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, 2017).
Film or screen industry/industries	Infrastructure, continuity of employment, and productions for profit surrounding cinema and television production (Dunleavy & Joyce, 2011).
Freeview	Aotearoa New Zealand's free-to-air digital broadcast system.
Gif [file format]	A gif (.gif) is an image file format commonly used on the World Wide Web. While gifs can be a static image, they are more commonly used to

display animations or snippets of video.

LGBTQ [community]	An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer/questioning communities, which also includes asexual, pansexual, genderqueer/nonbinary, and intersex identities. However, rainbow, queer, and in Aotearoa New Zealand, takatāpui, are also commonly used.
Low-budget [film]	A film with a budget of less than \$100 000.
Micro-budget [film]	A film with a budget of less than \$50 000.
No-budget [film]	A film with a budget of less than \$1 000.
Nonbinary/genderqueer [identity]	Gender identities which exist outside of the Western idea of a gender binary.
Pākehā	Aotearoa New Zealand citizen of European descent.
Patriarchal society	A power structure dominated by men throughout organized society and in individual relationships: head of the family unit, leaders of social groups, boss in the workplace, and heads of government (Napikoski, 2017).
Screeener	A copy of more than 50% of a feature film's duration, in a format easily playable by the general public.

Showrunner	The person who has the overall management and creative authority for a television programme; also known as the leading executive producer.
Tangata whenua	The indigenous people; used to refer to Māori as the first people of Aotearoa New Zealand.
Taxpayer funded [film]	A film receiving funding from the New Zealand Film Commission, New Zealand On Air, Creative New Zealand, or other central government or local body film scheme for development, production, or postproduction (Evans, 2007).
Te reo Māori	Māori language.
The Treaty of Waitangi / Te Tiriti o Waitangi	Aotearoa New Zealand's founding document, signed in 1840 by representatives of the British Crown and around 540 Māori rangatira (chiefs).
Tikanga Māori	Māori culture.
Torrent	A file sharing protocol in which each user downloads files and makes those files available for other users to download via the Internet.
Vlog	A 'video blog', normally presented in the style of a video diary or video update, and hosted on YouTube.



# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Section 1.1: Gender equality in the film and television industries

The low numbers of women in key creative roles in the screen industries worldwide implies there is an imbalance in opportunities and limitations on women's access to film industries outside of traditionally-gendered areas of production, such as wardrobe, hair, and makeup. Between 2003–2017 there were only 26 taxpayer-funded Aotearoa New Zealand feature films which were written and directed by women, comprising 20% of all funded, slightly higher than the 15% of privately funded features (Evans, 2017b). The statistics in Hollywood are even worse: Of the 466 feature films released by the six major studios (Warner Bros, Universal, Walt Disney Pictures, Sony Pictures, 20th Century Fox, and Paramount) between 2009–2013, only 22 of them were directed by women — a total of 4.7% (Silverstein, 2014).

The issue of underrepresentation within key creative roles also flows onto industry recognition and acclaim. In the 88 years of the Academy Awards, there has only been one woman to win Best Director — Kathryn Bigelow in 2010 — and only four women ever nominated, while no woman has ever been nominated for best cinematography (McKittrick, 2017; Swann, 2016). The figures are equally poor for the festival circuit, which represents independent films as well as studio films. *The Piano* (1993), by Aotearoa New Zealand filmmaker Jane Campion, is the only woman-directed film to win the Palme d'Or at Cannes Film Festival in its 78 year history (Yuan, 2017). Only five women have won the Golden Bear at Berlinale, the Berlin International Film Festival (Arnett, 2015; Meza, 2017), and only one film of the 21 competing films at the 74th Venice International Film Festival was directed by a woman (Anderson, 2017). The New

Zealand Film Awards returned in 2017 after a two year hiatus, with one of the five films nominated for Best Film directed by a woman — Alison Maclean’s *The Rehearsal* (2016) (“NZ Film Awards return”, 2016). Shelley Cobb (2015) sums up figures like this as “an increasingly urgent issue” (p. 2), proving a lack of status for women in contemporary film industries.

However, not only are women not equally represented in funding decisions, award nominations, or wins, but those who do occupy the decision-making and gatekeeping roles are often white men. A 2013 survey of Academy voters showed they were 76% male, and 93% white (Low, 2015), and a 2015 survey of screen industry executives by the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies revealed that television CEOs were 77% male and 96% white, while senior management was 93% male and 76% white (Hunt & Ramón, 2015) — showing a significant bias to one particular demographic.

The state of affairs revealed by industry related data is consistent across the gender breakdown of directors and writers, studio executives, and showrunners in most “Western” film industries (Follows, Kreager, & Gomes, 2016; Screen Australia, 2015; Nordicom, 2014). Using Social Network Analysis, Deb Verhoeven and Stuart Palmer analysed the Australian film industry between 2006–2015 to observe how creative networks with only men or teams of predominantly men thrive. Their data revealed that more than 75% of male Australian producers worked on films with only one or no women in production roles. Their data also identified which individual producers possessed the most influence in the industry, who are the key offenders at maintaining this imbalanced status quo, and therefore whose absence would have the most impact in terms of fragmenting the network of men-only creative teams (Verhoeven & Palmer, 2015).

The industry’s avoidance of responsibility for the current manifestation of this ingrained bias is summed up by Hunt and Ramón (2005), who share the rationale

given by Hollywood gatekeepers during their analysis of 347 theatrical release films and 1105 broadcast, paid, and digital platform television programmes:

The talent agencies tell us they are in the business of selling to the networks and studios the kinds of packaged projects they demand. Networks and studios — whose executive suites are almost exclusively white and male — ironically suggest that packaged projects could be more inclusive were it not for overly narrow talent rosters. Dominated by white male members, the academies continue to celebrate the work of white males as a matter of course, insisting that they do so in the name of talent and merit ...

Individual stakeholders in the industry (typically white and male) look to surround themselves with other individuals with whom they feel comfortable, with whom they feel have the best prospects for producing a successful project. These latter individuals, of course, tend to think and look like the former, thereby reproducing an industry culture that routinely devalues the talent of minorities and women (2015, pp. 53–54).

If these imbalances are to be addressed, the nature of existing power structures have to be acknowledged and challenged for their bias and potential discrimination. Executive Director of the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film at San Diego State University, Martha Lauzen, challenged film festivals for being defensive that women's representation is not their problem: "Do they favor choices that have been made in the past? If so, it is likely that they may be perpetuating bias" (Anderson, 2017, p. 10). In particular, Venice Film Festival claimed that they were aiding women filmmakers by not including them, as their films were not good enough, stating "[Director of the Venice Film Festival, Alberto] Barbera defends the move, arguing the best place for these films is out of the competition spotlight" (p. 13). Lauzen however, argues that

“making room for gender diversity or diversity of all kinds does not also require the lowering of one’s standards” (p. 16).

As film scholars and industry analysts, Verhoeven and Palmer (2016) are critical of industry commentators who “place the burden for women’s omission from the screen industries on women themselves, rather than seeking to examine the specific dynamics of what must now be plainly called a deeply ingrained pattern of injustice”, after Screen Australia stated they wanted to ‘organically’ get to 50–50 funding when women are able to ‘believe in themselves’ (2016, p. 5).

Quantitative and qualitative research from the past five years illustrates that regardless of their location worldwide, gender inequality within key creative roles is a current issue for most film industries (Evans, 2017b; Follows, Kreager, & Gomes, 2016; Hunt & Ramón, 2015; Low, 2015; Nordicom, 2014; Screen Australia, 2015; Silverstein, 2014; Verhoeven & Palmer, 2015). Gatekeepers and organisations continue to allow creative teams which perpetuate these issues, and many of these organisations go on to blame women as the source of the issue — whether it is not believing in themselves (Verhoeven & Palmer, 2016) or that their work is not good enough (Anderson, 2017). This further ingrains the idea that women cannot or should not work in these industries through new avenues, namely, that it is their fault, further complicating women’s participation within the film industry.

## Section 1.2: Feminist perspective and framework

The issue of bias and inequality within film industries worldwide has been a relatively recent aim of women’s rights, and feminism has shifted its focus as a movement several times over the course of its existence. In her article “Feminism, A Fourth Wave?”, Ealasaid Munro (2013) summarises first wave

feminism (late 19th to early 20th century) as focusing on property ownership and suffrage, but was led by middle class white women, and often excluded women of colour, as well as their rights. This is evidenced by many key first-wave feminists' use of white supremacy to further their case, such as Millicent Fawcett, who was angered that Māori women in Aotearoa New Zealand had more rights than British women in England (Sanghani, 2015), and Carrie Chapman Catt, who stated, "white supremacy will be strengthened, not weakened, by women's suffrage" (Ortberg, 2014). The second wave (1960s–1980s) highlighted the impact of sexism and patriarchy on every aspect of women's private lives, but also showed a tendency to homogenise women into one group. Black women writers and scholars such as Barbara Smith (1978), bell hooks (1981, 1984), Hazel Carby (1982), Audre Lorde (1984), and Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) were vocal in their criticism of second-wave feminism for focusing on white, middle-class, heterosexual women. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) coined the term 'intersectionality' in order to describe the experience of being a Black woman, which cannot be understood independently of either racial or gender identity. Consequently, third wave feminism (1990s–late 2000s) drew from the work of bell hooks (1981, 1984), calling for the need for multiple feminisms which would better represent the intersecting identities of women, and queer theory, which understands gender and sexuality as fluid categories, thus rejecting binaries (Munro, 2013). The focus on individualism within third wave feminism has drawn criticism (Iannello, 1998; Munro, 2013; Snyder, 2008) as it has been influenced by the rise of neoliberalism and puts the onus for change onto the individual, making "wide-reaching change more difficult to effect" (Munro, 2013, p. 23).

In contrast, Munro states that the contemporary feminist movement is now both "more visible and more fragmented" (p. 22), as the World Wide Web has allowed for the continuation of personal narratives through call-out culture — the ability for feminists to identify and challenge 'patriarchy' whether it manifests itself through corporations, brands, or individuals. Despite the development of this

culture, Munro is hesitant to state whether or not a fourth wave truly exists yet, whereas, feminists such as Jennifer Baumgardner, Betty Dodson, and Kira Cochrane remain more positive regarding an emerging fourth wave. Fourth wave feminism focuses on inequality manifesting as “street harassment, workplace discrimination, body shaming, media images, [and] online misogyny”. The movement uses social media as a platform for communication and organisation, while also contextualising that marginalisation through other identities (for example, sexuality, race, or disability). Director of the Centre of Gender Equality at Pacific University Oregon, Martha Rampton (2008), states “[fourth wave] feminism is part of a larger consciousness of oppression along with racism, ageism, classism, ableism, and sexual orientation” (para. 19). This contextualisation draws on Crenshaw’s (1989) theory of intersectionality, while moving away from hooks’ (1981, 1984) notion that there needs to be separate and distinct branches of feminism, drawing those branches of feminism together under an intersectional framework.

I consider myself a fourth wave feminist; fourth wave feminism resonates with me as my experiences with feminism have been almost entirely online based, with communities on Tumblr, Twitter, and Facebook. I use Crenshaw’s (1989) theory of intersectionality as a framework because even within my own experiences, the various identities that people hold make their experiences with discrimination nuanced and distinctive. For example, my experiences as a Pākehā cis woman filmmaker are not necessarily the same as those of Pākehā trans women filmmakers, let alone Māori cis women or Māori trans women. I recognise that I do not just experience discrimination due to my gender, but also disabilities and sexuality, and those forms of discrimination also interact with one another. Applying a framework of intersectionality, I would like to acknowledge that any discussion of Aotearoa New Zealand is done so in a postcolonial context; Māori are the tangata whenua and Te Tiriti o Waitangi is the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand. As this thesis examines gendered experiences in the Aotearoa New Zealand film industry, it is important

to note that much of the existing research on women's participation in the industry worldwide and in Aotearoa New Zealand has been informed by a gender binary, which does not break down the figures for cis and trans women working within the film industry, or include nonbinary or genderqueer filmmakers.

### Section 1.3: How research is informed by my own experiences and influential projects

This thesis is informed by my own experiences, as a young woman whose degree structure meant I never had an opportunity to study under a screen and media lecturer who was a woman, and who was vastly outnumbered by men in both undergraduate and postgraduate study. As a filmmaker I felt uncomfortable and alienated by male directors as one of only three women directors out of sixteen finalists at a film festival. This research is also informed by my experiences as an audience member, a creator of online content, and as a fourth-wave feminist, with an interest in feminist screen culture. Having been present on micro-blogging site Tumblr since 2009, I have experienced how fandom and feminism can intersect: as I started out like most, an audience member before later becoming a filmmaker. Following these communities on Tumblr was influential to my understanding of film production and its ensuing content, both as a filmmaker and as a researcher.

Two communities on Tumblr I particularly followed were film reviewer Marya E. Gates' blogs *Old Films Flicker* (2008) and *Cinema Fanatic* (2011) and the fandom discussion of Steven Moffat's time as showrunner on *Doctor Who* (Newman, Webber, & Wilson, 2005–) and *Sherlock* (Gatiss & Moffat, 2010–). As I was a film consumer before I was a filmmaker, participating in fandoms and their critiques of content was where I first became aware of the imbalance in production roles. Criticisms of *Doctor Who* and *Sherlock* within the Tumblr fandom community

between 2011 and 2014 illustrated the different forms in which sexism, as well as other forms of discrimination can be embedded within highly successful and critically acclaimed content. Online platforms now allow for audiences to vocalise their concerns and have robust discussions about what they want from media, in ways which are more visible and receive the attention of media creators. These criticisms and concerns were centered around showrunner Steven Moffat's treatment of the women characters he wrote.

Many of the concerns discussed if Moffat was writing diverse, 'well written' characters (STFU Moffat, 2012), and held up Moffat's work to pop-culture tests which were developed around the same time as when he was the showrunner for *Doctor Who*. These were spin offs from the Bechdel test (originally used to critique the lesbian representation in film<sup>3</sup>), such as the Sexy Lamp Test — “a female character that cannot be removed from the plot and replaced with a sexy lamp without destroying the story”; the Antifreeze test — “no woman assaulted, injured or killed to further the story of another character”; and the Strength is Relative test — “[a] complex woman defined by solid characterisation rather than a handful of underdeveloped masculine-coded stereotypes” (Hilbert, 2015, para. 1). Of the first four years of Moffat's period as showrunner, 57% the episodes pass the Bechdel Test (Moore, 2014). An important note about fan criticisms was the background of the people expressing them. Many of the people within the *Doctor Who* and *Sherlock* fandoms offering specific criticisms about sexism, racism, homophobia, and ableism openly stated they held identities affected by these representations. In a discussion about stereotypical and racist undertones of the character of Soo Lin, Tumblr user traumachu states, “Let me just say that as a Chinese-American woman ... Soo Lin [a character in *Sherlock*] is a stereotypical ~\*exotic flower\*~ in a flower vase role to further the plot and is then killed off” (traumachu, 2013). In another example, dlgn asked

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<sup>3</sup>The premise is that if there are not two women in the plot, who talk to each other, about something other than a man, how often would a woman be shown who not only spoke about other women, but was in a relationship with one (Sexy Lamp Test, 2017).

stfu-moffat "...I'd guess that Moffat thinks [obsessive compulsive disorder] is synonymous with "quirky", which makes me rather upset because it's a serious problem" (dlgn, 2014). Another user, jodie-whittaker, states on a post asking "raise your hand if you have ever felt personally victimised by Steven Moffat": "He did reduce homosexuality to a joke and give us harmful representation of autistic people, so yeah, let's say that maybe I do feel victimized" (jodie-whittaker, 2014). The original post has more than 1800 shares ('reblogs') and likes and these examples highlight how uninformed writing can impact the audience by perpetuating stereotypes and other forms of bias towards already marginalised groups.

When the demands from fans for better characters were viewed against the diversity in creative production roles, another issue becomes clear. They only had one woman writer, Helen Raynor, who wrote 4 of the 98 episodes of *Doctor Who* between 2005 and 2013 ("List of *Doctor Who* Serials", 2017), and after Raynor's last episode in 2008 there would not be another woman who was a writer for six years (Lutes, 2014). In this same period, there were only four directors who were women, and there were no directors or writers who were not white. The number of people of colour per episode with dialogue dropped from 2.65 during the Russell T Davies era (2005–2010) to 0.79 after Steven Moffat took over as showrunner (doeandthetstag, 2014). The similar criticisms of *Doctor Who*'s creative team were also given to *Sherlock* (2010–), of which the showrunners are Steven Moffat, and fellow *Doctor Who* writer, Mark Gatiss. A trend I noticed during that time was a large number of people simply giving up on both shows, myself included. The Russell T Davies era (2005–2010) of *Doctor Who* also had its own representational issues, and as the figures above highlight, it was still dominated by white men in both directing and writing. However, the particular frustration the fandom had with Steven Moffat was that he clearly read Tumblr, and while he took fandom theories and included them in his work (Gray, 2014; jewishdyke, 2014; Maloney, 2014; Penny, 2014), he never addressed the issues of perpetuating harmful stereotypes and poor

characterisation of women, people of colour, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ folk in his work. Ironically, white, male critics from the mainstream media, who would prefer “that storytelling remained appropriately hierarchical — with writers and showrunners from the right backgrounds at the top, and everybody else watching along quietly and not making a fuss”, criticised *Sherlock* for being “blog aware” (Penny, 2014, p. 3). These discussions were the catalyst for my interest in informed and authentic representation, noting that it more often comes from those with lived experience. With a lack of diversity in creative roles, the potential for deep and insightful media is limited.

The other influential project on this thesis was film reviewer Marya E. Gates’ blog project “A Year With Women” ([ca 2016]). Gates started the project in 2015, where she only watched and reviewed films directed or written (or co-) by women:

In watching so many movies for so long now, I’ve come to really feel the gender imbalance, both in storytelling and in the characters represented on screen ... Only 6% of the top grossing films in 2013 were directed by women ... That, however, doesn’t mean that 94% of movies are being directed by men. Working at Rotten Tomatoes has shown me that almost one film a week that’s opening limited or on [video on demand] is directed by women (a few weeks back there were 7!). What this means for me, living in Los Angeles, is that I have access to a lot more of these films than most people, yet I still find myself not going to them (I only saw 13 new release films in 2014 directed by women!). (Gates, [ca 2016], para. 2).

Her comments are contrary to the previous findings of a lack of women directors working in US cinema — those working do so outside of traditional Hollywood, releasing their films via alternative distribution platforms — made me question the value of the picture painted by industry statistics. In Aotearoa New Zealand

in 2015, only 1 of the 13 total feature films released<sup>4</sup> was directed by a woman (Evans, 2017b). This film was *Watcher* (2015), by Rose Goldthorp — a 45 minute no-budget sci-fi film, and is available on Vimeo (Goldthorp, 2015). This mirrors Gates' summary of women directors in US cinema; their films were not coming through Aotearoa New Zealand cinemas or even the New Zealand International Film Festival (NZIFF), but alternative distribution platforms; in this case, online video streaming service Vimeo. Instead of exploring how women's opportunities are limited in the traditional industry, which researchers such as Verhoeven and Palmer (2016), and Hunt and Ramón (2005), have already explored, identifying where women filmmakers are working instead and specifically, where they are working in Aotearoa New Zealand, became a noticeably uninvestigated area of research as both a filmmaker and a Master's student.

Another comment Gates made on how she came up with *A Year With Women stuck with me*: "I had been watching all these Susan Seidelman films. She directed *Desperately Seeking Susan*, among other films, and I had never heard of her before. It made me think about how many other women directors that I hadn't heard of or that other people hadn't heard of. I thought I should put a spotlight on them because there's all these great films" (Gates, 2015, p. 6). As a filmmaker, I had always been asked if I wanted to be "the next Peter Jackson", a statement which holds up Aotearoa New Zealand's most traditionally successful filmmaker as the benchmark. Gates' statement made me question how those working in the traditional industry can be considered the only industry, and how, by raising the voices of those working outside of cinema and television, it could legitimise those platforms as also being ones where professional and creative filmmaking is released.

My time on Tumblr highlighted to me how the issue of authentic representation on screen might be improved in the form of representation off-screen. It also showed me that only examining industry figures from broadcast television and

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<sup>4</sup> Excluding documentary features.

cinema is a disservice to creators using alternative platforms. Following Gates' "A Year with Women" and the *Doctor Who* and *Sherlock* fandoms was a catalyst for the area of research this thesis would cover, as well as the core questions it would seek to answer.

## Section 1.4: Convergence and 'new' media: What does it mean for women?

The combination of the Internet, a global system of computers, and the World Wide Web (hereafter referred to as the Web), and the information space accessed by Web browsers using the Internet, created a form of media which is unlike any other: "both a public and a global communications medium" (Flew, 2014, p. 9). Tim O'Reilly and John Battelle (2009) have stated the Web is "becoming a robust platform for a culture-changing generation of computer applications and services" (p. 1). O'Reilly and Battelle's comments build on the rhetoric of Web 2.0 fleshed out by O'Reilly and Dale Dougherty from 2004 (O'Reilly, 2014), which referred to websites designed around ease of use, user generated content, and integration with other products and devices. This type of design has since become dominant on the Web, and as O'Reilly and Battelle alluded to, is significantly impacting many industries, including film and television, and how women can participate in them.

As to whether Web 2.0 is made up of 'new' media, Graham Meikle and Sherman Young (2012) summarise: the Web is already 20 years old, and the Internet, which underpins the Web, is more than forty years old. Flew (2014) echoes this by pointing out there is a need to avoid conflating the *new* with the *novel*. Better yet, examining media as *convergent* is more valuable for understanding the changes to media have had, including Web 2.0, on the screen industries, and on

women's participation in them. There are many definitions of convergence theory, such as Lev Manovich's, which views new media as the combination of "all existing media into numerical data accessible through computers" (2002, p. 25) and Henry Jenkins, who understands convergence as "the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries and the migratory behaviour of media audiences" (2006, p. 2). While Manovich's is situated within a computing context, and Jenkins' through an audience and fan-studies framework, Meikle and Young (2012) proposed an interdisciplinary approach to convergence focusing on four key areas, similar to other theorists such as Barr (2000), Flew (2002), and Lievrouw and Livingstone (2005). Meikle and Young examine convergence across technological, social, industrial, and textual dimensions, defining them in relation to content, organisations, broadcasting, technologies, broadcasting, and users. The technological and social dimensions, in particular, have created both significantly positive and negative outcomes for women filmmakers.

#### Section 1.4.1: Technological convergence: Opportunities and obstacles for women

In the more than 120 years since Alice Guy-Blaché directed one of the world's first narrative films (1886), film technologies have continued to evolve — from sound, to colour, to widescreen, 3D, and IMAX. These technologies have continued to become more accessible and affordable over time, as proven by the presence of independent, amateur, 'guerrilla', and other types of low-budget filmmaking alongside the production houses and studios who traditionally make up the screen industries (Buckingham, Pini, & Willett, 2007; Fair, 2006; Street, 2012). Two significant factors in this change are the development of hardware and software, plus technology integration; digital cameras allow filmmakers to record more footage than celluloid film cameras in the same shoot period and

reduce costs across both production and post production (Matthau, 2015). Developments in digital camera hardware has meant that their storage capability, frame rate, and resolution have all increased exponentially and their integration with mobile phones has resulted in a technology convergence. Phones, in as early as 2005, were being sold on their ability to “unleash your movie maker potential” (“Which Digital Camera”, 2005, p. 48, as quoted in Buckingham, et al., 2007). That potential would be realised within the next decade, with the Tropfest NY 2008 winning film, *Mankind is No Island*, as well as 2015 Sundance Film Festival film *Tangerine*, both shot on phones (Baker, Cox, Dean, & Tsou, 2015; Newton, 2015; van Genderen, 2008).

Meikle and Young (2012) also note that “the significant characteristic of contemporary media is not that they are digital, but they are also networked” (p. 3). Smartphones, as well as post production PCs, are perpetually networked to the Web; the latter particularly since Adobe, who create industry standard software, moved to a subscription, cross-device, cloud-based platform (Adobe, 2013). However, it was not just that Adobe’s software could now be bought and delivered via a desktop app that automatically updates using an Internet connection (rather than a software suite you bought on CD-roms or through a one-time download); Behance, “the world’s leading online creative community” (Adobe, 2013, p. 2) was integrated with the software package which allowed for direct publishing from Adobe software, to the online community. Behance then allowed users to automatically share to other platforms, such as social media websites Twitter and Facebook (Friedman, 2014). As the aforementioned outcomes of technological convergence are positive for filmmakers of all genders, they also break down access barriers for women — as time, money, and access to audiences have been identified as issues for women working in the film industries (Anderson, 2015; Anderson, 2017; Kiang, 2015; Mayer, 2016).

## Section 1.4.2: Social convergence: Opportunities and obstacles for women

While technological convergence has made publishing and broadcasting on the Web easier, those publishing and broadcasting platforms are part of Web 2.0 and what Meikle and Young (2012) consider social convergence: platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, which allow anyone over the age of 13 to sign up and publish, comment, 'like', and share content. These platforms, and the participation culture they create, are in contrast to how the screen industry operates, where creator and audience had stricter boundaries; where "some get to speak and some to listen, some to write and some to read, some to film and some to view" (Carey, 1989, p. 87). Almost one third of Web users have a YouTube account, over a billion hours of video are watched on YouTube each day, and are available in more than 76 languages and 88 countries (YouTube, 2017). YouTube is now a major distribution platform for audio-visual content worldwide, and the barriers to participation are as low as an Internet connection, a smartphone, and being over the age of 13.

It is important to note that many of the individual technologies and platforms which are now part of the convergent media landscape were not designed for their current use —they were shaped by convergence and their end users. The ARPANET project (the precursor to the Internet) was funded by the US Department of Defense to meet the needs of military command (Lukasik, 2011). YouTube was created to be an online video database, after co-founder Jawed Karim was frustrated he couldn't find any videos online of Janet Jackson's wardrobe malfunction at the 2004 Super Bowl halftime show (Hopkins, 2006). Therefore, technologies and platforms are not unchangeable, but contestable systems and services (Meikle & Young, 2012). The potential for networks of people to challenge the ideas and values of technology was noted by Manuel Castells (1998). Convergent communication allows networks of people to function at larger scales, as well as be adaptable and flexible in ways that the

bureaucracies and hierarchies of corporations and governments cannot. The movement to a network-based society was driven, in part, by decades of identity-based political and social movements, and made possible through the Internet and the Web (Castells, 1998; 2001).

The combination of these factors makes possible a reconfiguration of social, political, and economic capacity (Meikle & Young, 2012). Social media platforms took the potential of “people formally known as the audience” (Rosen, 2014) and blurred the lines between one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many communication — redistributing the power to speak, to write, to argue, to define, and to find an audience for it (Meikle and Young, 2012). This potential for the Internet and the Web to democratise filmmaking is acknowledged by many theorists (Buckingham, et al., 2007; de Roeper & Luckman, 2009; Fair, 2006; Huffer, 2017). Malte Hagener, Vinzenz Hediger, and Alena Strohmaier (2016) note that informal film production, including all forms of occasional digital filmmaking, has outpaced film production in the “restrictive formal industry” (p. 2) and they question if the hierarchical dichotomies of theatrical/non-theatrical, auteur/non-artistic, and professional/amateur still exist in the current state of “moving image culture” (p. 3).

### Section 1.4.3: Are existing biases and discrimination recreated online?

As stated in section 1.1, there is an imbalance in opportunities and limitations on women’s access to screen industries outside of traditionally-gendered areas; noticeably, a lack of women in writing and directing roles. The Web is becoming an important resource, tool, and platform for the production, broadcast, and discussion of films by women filmmakers (Maule, 2016) because of the convergence of broadcast platforms with low access barriers and digital

filmmaking technologies. However, existing scholarship raises concerns about platforms, like YouTube, perpetuating a similar gender bias that already exists within the screen industries (Szostak, 2013; Tucker-McLaughlin, 2013; Wotanis & McMillan, 2014) — for example, in 2013, only six of the top one hundred most subscribed channels were run by women content creators (VidStatsX, 2013, as cited in Szostak, 2013). Natasha Szostak (2013) also reminds us that both technology and the Internet operate as male-dominated spaces, in addition to being a gendered space (one where women are rewarded for adhering to traditional gender roles), making it unlikely that there is a feminist utopia waiting online.

Literary theorist Michael Warner's (2002) notion of 'counterpublics' provides some opportunity for how sections of the Web may realise the opportunities for women filmmakers. Warner describes a public sphere being people in general, who can be organised into an audience, crowd, or fandom, and a counterpublic as a dominated group which "aspires to re-create itself as a public and, in doing so, finds itself in conflict not only with the dominant social group, but also with the norms that constitute the dominant culture as a public" (p. 80). Women, workers, people of colour, and members of the LGBT communities have "repeatedly found it advantageous" through history to create counterpublics (Fraser, 1992, pp. 122–123, as quoted in Warner, 2002, p. 84) and the Web presents an opportunity for another — only with networks of social organisation which are "sustainable at larger scales and sizes than was previously possible" (Meikle & Young, 2012). Counterpublics are also enabled by Chris Anderson's (2012) concept of "the long tail": audiences are able to find their niches because digital platforms and marketplaces store content as binary code, and therefore do not have the same resource restrictions as physical shops like cinemas or DVD stores. When the long tail is viewed within the context of a feminist counterpublic and the knowledge of how the mainstream screen industries have gatekeepers of a particular demographic (Hunt & Ramón, 2015), and have been known to be biased to content and content creators which represents them over

others (Verhoeven & Palmer, 2016), it becomes an avenue for underrepresented audiences to find the creators and content which does represent them.

Therefore, whether or not women find themselves equally represented in the top one hundred most subscribed channels on YouTube, they may still find large, engaged audiences for their work online.

#### Section 1.4.4: New issues with convergence

However, with no gatekeepers, the Web increasingly becomes an ocean of content, with little guarantee of your content making it to the top. YouTube, in addition to other social media platforms (especially those which don't have a chronological dashboard or newsfeed), is curated by a secretive and an increasingly controversial machine learning algorithm (Lewis & McCormick, 2018). This makes it difficult for even professional filmmakers to gain significant attention online: as YouTube's profitability is based around advertising (and keeping people watching content for as long as possible), its algorithm is known to promote controversial content. Recent examples include conspiracy theories about mass shootings in the US, and a subculture of violent, lewd and disturbing children's videos (Bridle, 2017; Lewis, 2018).

There is also the issue of trolls<sup>5</sup> and harassment from individuals, and more serious violence such as death and rape threats, and doxxing<sup>6</sup> from 'cyber-mobs' which affects women filmmakers online, particularly women who make openly feminist content. In 2014, filmmaker and media critic Anita Sarkeesian, who hosts YouTube channel *Feminist Frequency* (2009–)(and founder of the not-for-profit educational organisation of the same name), released a video series

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<sup>5</sup> Trolling: "to post deliberately inflammatory messages online" (Troll, 2018, "English: Verb 6").

<sup>6</sup> Doxxing: "search for and publish private or identifying information about (a particular individual) on the Internet, typically with malicious intent" ("Dox", 2018, "Verb").

examining sexist tropes in video games which had been funded by a Kickstarter campaign (Webber, 2017). Later that year Sarkeesian cancelled a talk at Utah State University after death threats against her. Her harassers particularly mentioned Sarkeesian's YouTube channel as a reason for their threats, and the harassment was part of a wider hate-movement called #GamerGate: harassing women working in the video game industry under the guise of concern for ethics in game journalism (Dockterman, 2014). Marina Watanabe, who currently has 81,000 YouTube subscribers, stated in a 2015 video, "I've been making videos on the Internet for almost four years, and unfortunately, I've been receiving misogynistic and abusive comments for that entire length of time". Some of the comments she received range from "...makeup tutorials and victim playing seem to be the extent of what women offer [YouTube]", to "I'm into Asian girls, if you promise to shut up I'd fuck you in the ass" and "end your fucking life you useless cunt" (Watanabe, 2015). These comments and behaviours are not unique to YouTube as a platform, but do create additional barriers for women filmmakers, as they do not exist to the same extent outside of the Web.

Another issue surrounding YouTube, but that affects online filmmaking in general, is creating a sustainable business model. In January 2018, YouTube changed their monetisation policies: previously being set at 10,000 lifetime views, YouTube channels now need to have at least 1,000 subscribers with 4,000 hours of view time in the past 12 months in order to be eligible for monetisation (YouTube, 2018). This particularly affected smaller channels, however, amid criticism of its algorithm, YouTube also began to demonetise specific videos, including those from larger creators which did not breach their policies (Plaugic, 2017). Their policy changes make it difficult for creators to earn passive income from their content, depriving some filmmakers of up to 80% of their former monthly income (Shaw, 2017). Funding filmmaking through other platforms is no more guaranteed: 62% of all film and video projects on crowdfunding platform

Kickstarter are unsuccessful, with 15% of that number receiving no support at all<sup>7</sup> (Kickstarter, 2018).

The lack of a sustainable business model is a two-fold problem for women, recreating the issue of accessing funding for filmmaking which exists in the formal screen industries, while compounding financial insecurity for women filmmakers through unexpected, unconsulted changes to the platform's terms and conditions around monetisation. YouTube's changes lock creators into a specific distribution model: prioritising regular content to an engaged, permanent audience over passive income on previously created content to a non-specific audience. For example, my personal Youtube channel has 25,000 lifetime views, which previously made me eligible for monetisation (Say Cheese Louise, 2018). However, I don't meet either of the two new criteria for monetisation; completing a thesis has not given me the time to grow my subscriber base or create regular content which would generate such a following. African-American filmmaker Ava DuVernay has spoken about the fact she started out writing and shooting on weekends, whenever she could, because she wasn't able to be a full time filmmaker (DuVernay, 2017) — which YouTube's current monetisation model doesn't support. A common piece of advice in crowdfunding circles is that it is a full-time job in and of itself (Davis, 2014; Hunter, 2016; McGee, 2013), one where you might not get paid either; "the fact is most people will probably lose money on [their project] even if they're successful" (Devine & Diani, 2013, p. 1). Considering the already significant financial insecurity many women face due to the gender wage gap, that women are often the primary caregivers to the elderly and children in their families, in addition to other unpaid labour (particularly household management) they undertake (Dickinson, 1996; Ministry for Women, 2018), the likelihood that crowdfunding a video project could also lose money, even if it is successful, is a significant risk to women's livelihood and continued participation in filmmaking.

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<sup>7</sup> What Kickstarter calls 0% funded.

Convergent media is shifting the opportunities available to filmmakers, and how women, which gatekeeping and bias keeps from fully participating in many industries worldwide, can create work and find audiences for it. Significant financial barriers still exist — prioritising particular models of filmmaking over others, models which are not chosen for their accessibility. While the US provides many useful examples of both gender inequality in the screen industries and online content creators, Aotearoa New Zealand provides a useful case study for the multitude of other small screen industries who are in similar positions regarding their means of production (local, traditional industries competing with Hollywood), and how women within those industries are navigating the changes and challenges on online filmmaking.

## Section 1.5: Thesis structure

These influential projects and the progression of the technological, social, and political landscape created the foundations for this project. As Gates summed up in her post on January 1st 2016:

I think we've reached an important place in history ... We live in the age of information. We live in a time where practically any film we want is at our fingertips. We live in a time where we can share our love of films with thousands of strangers who might then watch those films and spread that love like a wave that you can never really trace. We live in a time where you can make a film on your phone. You can share your films online. You can fund your films online. You can support filmmakers by renting or buying their films, writing about their films. Helping them fund their films. YOU CAN BE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE. And you should be a part of that change. And then we won't just wait on Hollywood to change

their tune. We'll already be marching to another beat. (Gates, 2016, 'Be The Change You Want To See In The World', original emphasis).

Applying this foundation, this thesis is structured through five chapters: literature review, methodology and creative practice design, analysis, and conclusions. Chapter 2 examines the literature available and provides a brief history on both women in the Aotearoa New Zealand film and television industries and the impact and uptake of technological changes on those industries. Understanding the historical narrative of key players (namely institutions, organisations, governments, and individuals) within the industry contextualises the current position of the industry and the limitations that exist. Chapter 3 explains the design of the research and the creative practice. As this is a creative research thesis, and sits within a Master of Media and Creative Technologies, there must be a creative-practice element — in this case, a webseries. The goal of this chapter is to explain how the feminist framework, literature review, and the convergent, networked media landscape shapes how the research information is collected, analyzed, presented, and disseminated. Chapter 4 uses qualitative analysis to identify key commonalities, differences and relationships between the experiences shared by the participants, and how they fit into the wider understanding of the industry, women, and online platforms. In Chapter 5, conclusions are drawn about how Aotearoa New Zealand women are using convergent technologies to access audiences, their motivations and measures of success, and the changes they are creating within the formal industry.

## Chapter 2: Literature review

The introduction has provided a brief outline of the discrimination and bias which affects women filmmakers, the feminist perspective and framework that will be applied in this thesis, and the potential surrounding convergent, online media. However, a review of the available literature surrounding women filmmakers is needed in order to have a wider understanding of how the discrimination and bias is manifested particularly within the Aotearoa New Zealand screen industries. This is the same for the development and use of convergent, online media, where the particular combination of industry gatekeepers, audience expectations, and new technologies has affected Aotearoa New Zealand women filmmakers in a nuanced way.

The literature reviewed represents an overview of the small amount of research available. Much of the literature has been compiled through general sources on the Aotearoa New Zealand screen industries (such as Dunleavy & Joyce, 2011 and archive website NZ On Screen) and sources which specifically aim to discuss women's involvement (such as Shepard, 2000; 2014 and Marian Evans' research published on her blog). A significant portion of the examination of new technologies used in these industries has been detailed through news and magazine outlets, rather than strictly academic sources, and their work has provided a crucial view into the impact of these changes in technology, particularly Duncan Greive of *The Spinoff*. Leaning heavily on news media to investigate the impact of these new technologies, in part, shows how fast the changes are occurring within the industry. It also shows the influence that online platforms may have, as many of the articles in question were only published online<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Such as, *The Spinoff*.

## Section 2.1: Women and the Aotearoa New Zealand screen industries

To understand the current opportunities available to Aotearoa New Zealand filmmakers, those opportunities need to be contextualised by the individuals, organisations, and governments before them, and this particularly applies to the opportunities available for women filmmakers. The earliest feature film directed by a man was released in 1914 (Tarr, 1914), while it would not be for another seventy years before the first feature directed by a woman would make it to cinemas (Mackay, 1984). Merata Mita was the first Māori woman to direct a narrative feature film (seventy four years after the earliest feature film [directed by a Pākehā man]), and was the only Māori woman to do so until 2017 (Grace-Smith, Kaa, Gardiner, Wolfe, Cohen, Maihi, Jones, Simich-Pene, 2017; Mita, 1988). Only in 2017 did the New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC) set targets for ensuring women are adequately represented in their funding of feature films (NZFC, 2017b). New Zealand On Air (NZOA) currently prioritises “New Zealand social, cultural, political, or historical stories” (NZOA, 2018, “How we invest”) and documents the statistics around the gender and racial identities of filmmakers they fund, but does not have any specific representation targets.

### Section 2.1.1: Filmmaking before there was an industry: 1900–1990

The Aotearoa New Zealand screen industries have been intertwined with the government, available technologies, and its small population since their beginnings in the early and mid 20th century. Summarised from Dunleavy and Joyce’s definitive 2011 book *New Zealand Film and Television: Institution, Industry and Cultural Change*, since its introduction to Aotearoa New Zealand, television was monopolised by public broadcasters until 1988, where it was then

still dictated by government mandates (with not enough money to achieve them). This introduction was fifteen years behind the United Kingdom and the United States, and progress was significantly hindered by the cost of the technology and infrastructure, and whether Aotearoa New Zealand's population size justified said cost. In 1972, when questioned during the Peacock inquiry about why local programming was only 25% of total content, the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation (NZBC) cited production facilities and a shortage of skilled personnel, however, they chose to produce this content in-house, rather than outsourcing from independent contractors, which left independent contractors struggling to make a living. Unlike television, which originated within the publicly-funded NZBC, feature filmmaking in Aotearoa New Zealand started with individuals who could afford the technology and resources needed for filmmaking. For those reasons, as well as the small population, and therefore audience, independent feature filmmaking was a difficult pursuit for anyone till 1978 when the NZFC was formed.

The 'pioneers' of the pre-1970 era of cinema were Pākehā men (Dunleavy & Joyce, 2012) — however Shepard (2000) is critical of their status, noting that their achievements were "inserted into the canon with such regularity that they eventually assume unquestioned status" (p. 12). As filmmaking was not a commercially viable venture in the early 20th century, the dominant narrative views of these men epitomised New Zealand's no. 8 wire culture, being seen as resourceful, and devoted to the greater good of filmmaking. However, this narrative, created by male historians and the filmmakers themselves, didn't credit the labour of the women who worked with and around them. For example, Rudall Hayward's first wife Hilda (1898–1970) was also his casting director, location scout, producer and production manager, stills photographer, makeup artist, and editor as well as in charge of costuming and bookkeeping. His second wife, Ramai (1916–2014), was also the co-director and co-editor of his films. Both of his wives were also responsible for keeping the family home, and Hilda's mother and grandmother were able to take on some of the childcare

responsibilities (Shepard, 2000) — so it was the work of generations of women which allowed Rudall to become one of New Zealand's film 'pioneers'. Unfortunately, Hilda's career was cut short and her contributions erased when Rudall began his affair with Ramai in 1939, and divorced Hilda in 1943 — showing the extent to which a relationship with a man was the key to participation in filmmaking, despite the fact she had significant experience by that stage, having worked on 28 films including five feature films (Pivac & Sweeney, 2015). More recent histories have emphasised the power these men had to both give women opportunities, and take them away; this would be a persistent trend in Aotearoa New Zealand filmmaking throughout the 20th century. Margaret Thomson's (1910–2005) experience at the NFU was also dependent on men; she was the first woman director at the NFU in 1947, with her film experience in England<sup>9</sup> and a reference from John Grierson, a famous documentary filmmaker at the time, securing her the role (Shepard, 2000). Her role was in stark contrast to the assistant and secretarial roles otherwise held by women at the time. As the NFU only created government films and newsreels, local independent features were rare, with only six feature films released between 1939 and 1972 and monopolised by three filmmakers: the previously mentioned Rudall and Ramai Hayward, and John O'Shea (1920–2001) (Dunleavy & Joyce, 2011).

Dunleavy and Joyce (2000) state the desire to establish a national cinema<sup>10</sup> in the 1960s came from those working independently of the NZBC, as opportunities were too few to have a profitable career (2011), however, this disregards the number of documentaries being made every year from the NFU, in addition to

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<sup>9</sup> Thomson was able to establish her career in England with the help of English filmmaker Mary Field, who was already working as a director for Gaumont British Instructional Films when Thomson applied for a job there in 1936, and later also worked at The Realist Film Unit, a socialist film company where all crew members were paid the same (NZ On Screen, n.d. c; Shepard, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> "The concept 'national cinema' is located in the discursive positioning of individual films in such a way that they are connected to a national 'common ground', one which is ritually accessed via engagement with media such as cinema" (Davies, 2011, Abstract).

their newsreel and promotional films. These films were not completely unbiased however, as Margaret Thomson stated at the Parliamentary Film Inquiry in 1948 that objective and controversial films could not be made at the NFU while it was under the direct control of the government (Shepard, 2000). Many filmmakers from the NFU also moved overseas, such as Margaret Thomson, Monica Mead, Barbara Parker, and Margaret MacGregor (Shepard, 2000; Sowery, n.d.) — a trend which would continue into the next century. During this time, the NFU also had a monopoly on technology and processes, with import licences for equipment refused to those working outside the NFU, and the government department also refused to process film from independent filmmakers (Dunleavy & Joyce, 2012). This, in part, shows the importance of Hilda and Ramai Hayward to Rudall, who had been able to process his films in their darkrooms without needing to go through any other organisations or filmmakers (Ramai was the Aotearoa New Zealand's first professional Māori photographer and Hilda had a darkroom installed in their home) (NZ On Screen, n.d. g; Shepard, 2000). John O'Shea was only able to get this monopoly amended by pushing this issue with the relevant government Minister, while Sam Pillsbury stated that at the NFU “you could hide out there do nothing for years. Or you could leap onto the splendid array of the latest film, editing, sound and lab equipment the rotating funding of a government department enabled, and do anything you wanted with it while no one really noticed” (Pillsbury, 2010, para. 2). This illustrates how highly advantaged the men who worked at the NFU were, especially after Geoffrey Scott's policy that women were only to be hired as secretaries, because they “broke up marriages” by being on location, or “left to get married and have children”<sup>11</sup> — a policy that highlights the gender roles of the period. The policy was enforced from the early 1950s until when he retired in 1973 (Shepard, 2000, p. 34). Scott's decision was despite the hiring of Margaret Thomson only in 1947, who neither broke up a marriage, nor had any children. Between 1950 and 1967, Kathleen O'Brien was the only woman director at the NFU (Margaret Thomson

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<sup>11</sup> And if they were working as production assistants, they were not allowed out in the field — see Diane Twiss' rejection letter in *Reframing Women* (Shepard, 2000, p. 39).

left in 1949), moving from sound librarian to directing in 1950 before the policy came into force (Shepard, 2000; NZ On Screen, n.d.). These type of policies set the expectations of those working in the industry, namely that women were actively not to be included in a creative capacity, and set up the industry culture to be dominated by men.

Television was introduced in 1960 (Dunleavy & Joyce, 2012), which reduced cinema attendance, but increased the visual literacy of the Aotearoa New Zealand public and provided a new medium through which films could be seen. There was little to no outsourcing of programming from the NZBC to independent production houses until 1970, when Tahu Shankland<sup>12</sup> and Michael Scott-Smith<sup>13</sup> created a system for outsourcing due to a shortfall in in-house production. However, outsourcing was short lived as the NZBC was disestablished in 1975 after a second television channel was created. These government changes had a significant effect on the independent production houses; Pacific Films reduced its staff from twenty-eight to just six (O'Shea, as quoted in Dunleavy & Joyce, 2011, p. 74).

The choice for women between working with a government agency or attempting to find independent work, was more a choice between being held back by gatekeeping, or financial insecurity. When so few women were able to work in establishments like the NFU, and independent houses such as Pacific Films were reducing their staff by almost 80%, it did not leave many opportunities. However, one notable opportunity was the Auckland Women's Community Video (1975–approximately 1986), formed from a video workshop which was held during the International Women's Film Festival (Evans, 2017c). Video was a new technology, which feminists globally expected would provide new opportunities for disseminating their ideologies. Filmmaker, Kanya (Carole) Stewart's motivations were to work "at [a] grassroots level, teaching and working

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<sup>12</sup> NZBC's controller of programmes.

<sup>13</sup> NZBC's head of documentaries.

with women who wanted an accessible vehicle of expression for their own reality at a time when the media reflected primarily male, heterosexual views and values” (Evans, 2017c, “Motivations”). It provided many an opportunity to directly challenge the patriarchy present in the industry — “many members are feminists and see video as a means of disseminating feminist views” (“Women’s community video”, 1978, p. 13). Mary Debrett, a member until 1980, agreed: “That was the point of it. We wanted to empower women and to promote women’s rights and aimed to do this by producing tapes that could be used to facilitate discussion within other community groups and to produce tapes that would assist with consciousness raising” (Evans, 2017c, “Motivations”). Many women from the group went on to work in the industry, including Mary Debrett, who left to be an editor with TVNZ.

Deborah Shepard states that within the male-dominated historical narrative of Aotearoa New Zealand film, Roger Donaldson’s 1977 film *Sleeping Dogs* is “the film which launched a feature film industry in Aotearoa New Zealand” (2000, p. 14). Dunleavy & Joyce note it instigated a “major turning point in the establishment of a government supported industry” (2011, p. 77). *Sleeping Dogs* was released a year before the inception of the NZFC which marked the beginning of State support for feature film production, and its record breaking audiences showed politicians the potential of filmmaking as an industry. The subsequent films in the Aotearoa New Zealand canon are characterised as being rugged, masculine, cowboy narratives which came to represent the “classic” Aotearoa New Zealand film canon, despite the rise of feminist documentary occurring at the same time, which was fuelled by the second wave feminist movement and the associated feminists texts and films worldwide (Shepard, 2000). Shepard states some feminist filmmakers secured funding during this time, but still had to fight to keep their feminist ideology within the creative process. For example, Deirdre McCartin, who was granted funds from the Department of Education after the success of *Some of My Best Friends Are*

*Women* (McCartin, 1975), shared this experience about working with Television One:

I went to the Department of Education and told them that Television One wanted to make a major series of documentaries on women but of course that was a very expensive operation and it clearly had a high educational component and we wondered whether the Department of Education would care to support it. They were wonderful ... and came up with a figure of \$15 000 to support it.

I hightailed it back to Television One and said "there's a strong pressure growing in both the public and in government departments that we are not serving women's needs in television adequately ... The Department of Education feels so strongly about it that they would like to put \$15 000 into it" which was a very exciting idea for poor old broadcasting controllers worrying about budgets.

... and then I told another lie and I don't mind being quoted because if you live in a Machiavellian society you have to learn a few tricks. I said, "of course, the Department of Education have made it conditional on it being an all-female crew" which was my own notion of course. At first, I was told, "no way babe. There aren't any sound people. There aren't any camera people".

Then I lost my temper, "look, I'm tired of hearing this. I want an all female crew and I'm going to keep fighting until I get one ... and if you are trying to tell me that the women aren't trained well enough, I will take direct responsibility for trying to ensure their training is advanced somewhat ... I'll spend my weekends and all my nights or whatever is required" ... Finally, they agreed. (Shepard, 2000, p. 59).

McCartin and her all-female crew made six films in total with the funding (NZ\$15 000 being equivalent to NZ\$120 000 in 2017<sup>14</sup>), but only two of the women in the crew continued to make films long-term due to the stress of filmmaking (Shepard 2000). Carole Stewart, the editor on the series, noted how hostile the people working at the television studio were working with the feminist crew: “it took us months to work through the antagonism. One department used to write things about lesbians on the walls and [do] drawings of us saying ‘dykes’” (p. 63). Public comment and criticism was also brutal outside of feminist and women-oriented screenings for these films. Women did continue to work behind the scenes in the NFU and mainstream films during this time, but the historical trend of failing to acknowledge their work would continue (Shepard, 2000). Geoff Steven’s documentary *Cowboys of Culture* (Nicholson, 1990) about the renaissance of Aotearoa New Zealand filmmaking between 1975 and 1981 only included one interview with a woman, Sue May, out of the total 19 and it was to discuss Tony Williams’s film *Solo* (Hannay, 1977), not her own work<sup>15</sup>.

Television New Zealand (TVNZ) formed in 1980 unifying the two channels (Television One and Television Two), and also creating a Māori Production Unit. Te Tiriti o Waitangi required Aotearoa New Zealand’s public service objectives to include provisions for the advancement of Māori language and culture, however, before the 1980s te reo Māori was “almost never heard on the airwaves”, and the programming which did screen about Māori people was rarely informed by Māori perspectives (Fox, 2002, p. 261 as quoted in Dunleavy & Joyce, 2012, p. 48). The Māori Production Unit established three flagship programmes — two of which are still running today, *Waka Hūia* (1987–) and *Te Karere* (1983–). They

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<sup>14</sup> Worked out using the inflation calculator from the Reserve Bank of New Zealand: <https://www.rbnz.govt.nz/monetary-policy/inflation-calculator>.

<sup>15</sup> Deborah Shepard’s *Reframing Women*, which has been cited multiple times within this literature review, purposefully seeks to amend this, with the section *Behind the Scenes* (pp. 67–77) highlighting the women who were absent from Steven’s documentary.

were crucial in training the generation of Māori personnel who would go on to work at Māori Television when it was launched in 2002. Although the formation of the NZFC in 1978 was a brief moment of conviviality between the two major political parties in Aotearoa New Zealand, and aimed to provide holistic support for the film industry, it ignored the obligations of the Crown under Te Tiriti, lacking any special provisions for tangata whenua in the 1978 Act and Pākehā men dominated the production roles which received NZFC funding. The importance of the NZFC in order for any cinema to be made over the next twenty years cannot be overstated, with the NZFC releasing 2–3 films per year, in comparison to the three independently funded films which were also released during the same period (Dunleavy & Joyce, 2011).

Shepard (2000) states that the 1980s were a key decade for women's cinema; "women entered almost every area" of filmmaking. Yvonne Mackay's *The Silent One* (1984) became the first Aotearoa New Zealand feature to be directed by a woman, followed by Melanie Rodriga's *Trial Run* (1984)<sup>16</sup> and Gaylene Preston's *Mr Wrong* (1985). The decade also saw the rise of one of the most prolific and outspoken Māori filmmakers, Merata Mita, with *Bastion Point Day 507* (1980) and *Patu!* (1983). Merata was also the first Māori woman to write, direct and produce a feature, with *Mauri* (1988) (NZ On Screen, n.d. e). However, an essay by Jo Seton in *Alternative Cinema* surveyed 21 feature films from the early 1980s and still noted a significant gender divide between creative roles, with "wardrobe, make-up, continuity and production secretary emerging clearly as feminised areas of the industry" (as quoted in Shepard, 2000, p. 100), which continues the segregation of women in production dating back to Hilda Hayward. Pat Robins is yet another filmmaker whose first jobs were in traditionally gendered roles on her husband's films. She was married to Geoff Murphy, who directed *Goodbye Pork Pie* (1981), but slowly moved from wardrobe and production manager, to directing her first short film *Instincts* in 1985 (Shepard,

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<sup>16</sup> The first feature to be directed *and written* by a woman (NZ On Screen, n.d. f).

2000; Hill, n.d.). The rise of women in the film industry in the 1980s was due to a proactive change in the view of media by women, caused by the second wave feminist movement. During this time, Aotearoa New Zealand film academic Roger Horrocks noted that women filmmakers had gone through major changes due to feminism — particularly around the representation of women in film — and “neither the artist nor the critic can now afford to turn [their] back on that complexity” (Shepard, 2000, p. 127). Russell Campbell suggested that gender stereotypes oppressed men as well (Shepard, 2000) — showing how second wave feminism had encouraged women to be more proactive, and in turn, change the industry, and men’s expectations of both men and women, for the better.

The influence of the government over the screen industries, dictated by the political parties who happen to be in power, continued to make it difficult to maintain a career as a filmmaker, regardless of gender. In 1984 and 1985, the NZFC had submitted a record 22 films to the Cannes Film Festival, but by 1986, due to the removal of tax incentives to film productions here, the NZFC reported a rapid decline in the production of feature films and several production houses had closed because of the lack of investment. In 1987 the first privately owned network in Aotearoa New Zealand, TV3, was established and TVNZ became a “commercially-focused entity whose role was to maximise profit and return an annual dividend to the government” (Dunleavy & Joyce, 2011, p. 108). Most public service functions were given to newly formed government agencies, such as the Broadcasting Commission, later renamed to NZOA. The Stevenson report, commissioned by the 1987 neo-liberal Labour government<sup>17</sup>, devised a system to distribute NZOA’s funding: it would be made available to producers through a system of grants, and the content made from the grants could be screened on any network, not just the publicly-owned TVNZ. While independent production houses now had a real opportunity to make locally-produced content for

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<sup>17</sup> The New Zealand Labour Party is one of the two main political parties in Aotearoa New Zealand, whose center-left position draws on neo-liberalism, and social democracy (Aimer, 2012).

television themselves, by 1990 TVNZ had made 800 of their staff redundant, saturating the Aotearoa New Zealand television industry with personnel looking for work. NZOA's initial income was the Public Broadcasting Fund, which was not sufficient to cover all of NZOA's activities, but was also neglected by politicians, leaving it victim to inflation. By 1999, the Public Broadcasting Fund was abolished and replaced with an annual grant from the Treasury. During this time commercial broadcaster TV3 went into receivership in 1990, and was merged in 2004 with RadioWorks to become MediaWorks<sup>18</sup>.

### Section 2.1.2: The rise and fall, and rise again of women filmmakers: 1990–Present

Dunleavy and Joyce disagree with Shepard that *Sleeping Dogs* (Donaldson, 1977) was the film which launched the film industry: “If an industry only becomes defined when there is an infrastructure, continuity of employment, and productions for profit, then the Aotearoa New Zealand film industry had still, even up to the mid–1990s, to be established” (2011, p. 72). In the years after the stock market crash in 1987, the NZFC sought more funding in order to be a “buffer against the potential cultural colonisation of Aotearoa New Zealand filmmaking by foreign-financed productions” (2011, p. 87)<sup>19</sup>. The representation of Aotearoa New Zealand was also a concern of women; actor Dulcie Smart in 1984 at the Guild of Film and Television Conference stated “I find it hard enough to see myself as a New Zealander on screen, let alone to see myself as a New Zealand woman” (Shepard, 2000, p. 99). Not long later the NZFC set guidelines on the representation of women, as well as Māori, however Merata Mita was quoted in 1988 being critical of the inauthentic experiences of Māori on screen: “I find it tragic that Māori aren't left to make their own stories, to address their

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<sup>18</sup> Although TV3 was still the channel's branding.

<sup>19</sup> Which is ironic considering the lack of provisions for Te Tiriti in the NZFC legislation.

problems and their personalities and their ways of looking at life themselves. Somehow Pākehā feel free to take Māori characters, take Māori stories, and actually because they're Pākehā they're taking them out of context and presenting an interpretive or derivative view of Māori people rather than an authentic one" (Shepard, 2000, p. 186). The NZFC's concerns of "cultural colonisation" were due to the change in the Aotearoa New Zealand exchange rate which, like the tax shelter laws in the early 1980s, increased the incentive for foreign investment. The US dollar bought almost two Aotearoa New Zealand dollars for most of the 1990s and with local crew rates also being cheaper, Aotearoa New Zealand became a production base for many US productions, providing regular work which the industry needed. In order to foster Aotearoa New Zealand's own national cinema, the NZFC set objectives which included script development as well as diversifying the formats of the media they produced, with increased television and short films. One such example was half-hour and hour-long dramas, which allowed those working in the screen industries to gain experience, while not requiring the same level of investment as a feature film (Dunleavy & Joyce, 2011). This was also beneficial for women who were drawn to shorter forms because "the scale fitted their financial and domestic constraints" as well as providing an opportunity for experimentation (Shepard, 2000, p. 131). This is one example of the importance of different filmmaking models, as it allowed different women to participate in the industry when their circumstances and other responsibilities would have otherwise hindered them.

Dunleavy and Joyce, published in 2011, state the 1990s as the "most successful period to date" for the Aotearoa New Zealand film industry, with the international success of Jane Campion's *An Angel At My Table* (1990) and *The Piano* (1993); Peter Jackson's *Heavenly Creatures* (1994); and Lee Tamahori's *Once Were Warriors* (1994). In 1995, Russell Campbell heralded the metaphorical end of the "Kiwi bloke movie" which was epitomised by *Sleeping Dogs* (Donaldson, 1977), with the literal dismemberment of Peter Jackson's characters

in *Braindead* (1992), and stated that women and Māori directors should be the ones to lead Aotearoa New Zealand identity on screen (Shepard, 2000, p. 127). While this was Campbell's assertion, feminist filmmakers were not attempting to replace male filmmakers, but instead be allowed equal space in the media landscape alongside them<sup>20</sup>. British and American film critics Annette Kuhn and Linda Williams both used Elaine Showalter's metaphor of "the wild zone"<sup>21</sup>, and applied it to cinema and Deborah Shepard (2000) uses this term to describe Aotearoa New Zealand women's cinema during that period. Shepard states it "challenges the status quo and disrupts conventional modes of representation" and the range of women filmmakers creating during this time also increased, and diversified "in terms of age, ethnic group and sexual orientation" (p. 133). Jane Campion (previously mentioned), as well as Niki Caro, Christine Parker, Annie Goldson, and Alison Maclean all made their feature debuts during this time. Fran Walsh's partnership with Peter Jackson signaled his departure from his splatter-comedies to more diverse cinema such as *Heavenly Creatures* (1994). Filmmakers Gaylene Preston, Melanie Rodriga, Merata Mita and Pat Robins continued making film for both television and cinema, while Lisa Reihana, Whetu Falu, Riwia Brown, and Athina Tsoulis all released shorts. Following in the footsteps of Hilda Hayward, Ramai Hayward, Pat Robins, and the many women from the NFU, Dorthe Scheffmann also made her short film debut in 1995, having worked for twenty five years "behind the scenes, as either production manager or producer on over twenty New Zealand feature films" before finally taking on the director's role (p. 141). While it could take decades to break away from the traditionally gendered roles on set, women were consistently establishing themselves as successful directors<sup>22</sup>, yet this excessively long timeline was not the experience of younger women in the 1990s. Christine Jeffs went from studying at Massey

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<sup>20</sup> Which perhaps is also true of Māori filmmakers.

<sup>21</sup> Referring to women's culture which is unique to women but unknown to men.

<sup>22</sup> Dorthe Scheffmann's film *The Beach* (Scheffmann & Evans, 1996), was invited to compete at Cannes, and also won the Francois Ode Prize at the 1996 Hamburg Short Film Festival (NZ On Screen, n.d. a).

University in 1989 to assistant editor on *Ruby & Rata* (Preston, 1990) and *Crush* (Maclean, 1992) to her Cannes Film Festival directorial debut *Stroke* in 1994 — showing a significant improvement to the process of becoming a director. Although more Pākehā women behind the camera was not without controversy — Deborah Shepard (2000) questioned the Japanese characters speaking English in Japan as a problematic aspect of Niki Caro’s *Memory and Desire* (1998). Jane Campion’s *The Piano* (1993) was openly criticised by both Māori and Pākehā critics for its whitewashing of Māori experiences in colonial Aotearoa New Zealand — “would any Māori actually say any of that crap?” (Cheryl Smith and Leonie Pihama, as quoted in Shepard, 2000, p. 151).

The 1999 Labour government introduced a public service charter for TVNZ through the 2003 Television New Zealand Act, which included obligations for locally produced content such as news, drama and comedy, documentary, history and arts programming, as well as content tailored for certain demographics, specifically Māori and children. However, as TVNZ was still a commercially-reliant public network operating in a deregulated market, the non-commercial activities required of it by the charter were a challenge — only 4% of its total annual operating costs between 2004–2008 were covered by public funding. It also inflated public expectations of the network and created a critical public discourse around the network. By 2005, CEO Ian Fraser admitted that there was a “major commercial problem with TV One” and TVNZ was abandoning charter initiatives (Dunleavy & Joyce, 2011, p. 183). In 2008, TVNZ’s charter funding was moved to NZOA and after the general election, NZOA was instructed to make the NZ\$15 million charter fully contestable and TVNZ’s public service obligations were removed. In addition to TVNZ’s charter, the Labour government also experimented with TVNZ 6 and TVNZ 7 — two new non-commercial public service channels launched in 2008 and 2009 — but once again, the channels were underfunded and relied on being subsidised by TVNZ’s commercial revenues. TVNZ 6 was replaced by TVNZ U in 2011 (“TVNZ 6 discontinued”, 2010), which broadcast from midday to midnight but was closed in 2013 after

running two years at a loss and TVNZ 7 was cancelled in 2012. These changes were only one of many which reflected the neoliberal commitment to deregulation which was happening throughout the public sector, and in turn, undermined any public service agendas.

While much of the existing Māori representation was complicated by the lack of Māori voices telling those stories, the 1999 Labour government also established a Māori television network funded by the Crown under a Te Tiriti provision. Their purpose was to “contribute to the protection and promotion of te reo Māori me ngā tikanga Māori through the provision, in te reo Māori and English, of a high-quality, cost-effective television service” (Māori Television Service Act 2003, 8(1)). Māori Television was launched in 2004, and a second channel, Te Reo, was added in 2008. Māori Television is notable for inventive and strategic approaches to the commissioning and production of its programmes: participating in leading national cultural events, devising original formats as well as adapting popular international formats. Reaching 45% New Zealanders every month (Māori Television, [ca 2017]), with 86% of their programming made up of local-content (NZ On Air, 2016), and routinely outperforming imported shows, Māori Television proved that Aotearoa New Zealand can create successful public broadcasting, but that it requires adequate funding.

Māori Television sits apart from other opportunities available with funding and grants from the government: it was not subject to deregulation as it formed part of the government’s Te Tiriti obligations. As it wasn’t deregulated, the funding it had available encouraged innovation and experimentation. The antithesis of this was NZOA’s former “experienced creative team” criteria — one example of how limited funding created conservative media is *Filthy Rich* (Zanoski, 2016–2017). *Filthy Rich* was written by Rachel Lang and Gavin Strawhan, of *Outrageous Fortune* (Griffin & Lang, 2005–2010) fame, but criticisms of the show included relying on tired stereotypes of women, unrelatable characters and storylines, and what some considered an inappropriate focus on wealth in a time of huge

inequality in Aotearoa New Zealand (Greive, 2016a; "James Griffin slams Filthy Rich", 2017; Wichtel, 2016). The television show received \$8M of NZOA funding for its first season, and an additional \$6M for its second, despite being panned by critics and beaten on ratings by US import, *NCIS* (Bellisario & Drew, 2003–) on Three in the same primetime timeslot (Greive, 2017; NZOA, [ca 2017]). *Filthy Rich* producer Steven Zanoski even stated that they “put it out there and hope” (NZOA, 2017, para. 10) — a sentiment also shared by *Outrageous Fortune* and *The Almighty Johnsons*’ (Griffin & Lang, 2011–2013) writer James Griffin<sup>23</sup>: “as a writer it's very hard to know what's going to work until it's out there” (“James Griffin slams Filthy Rich”, 2017, para. 3). To be relying on ‘experienced creatives’ who openly claim to not know what audiences want, and just ‘hope’ with millions of taxpayer dollars<sup>24</sup> is not only foolish, but discriminating against young creatives who do not yet have the specific experience required by NZOA for funding. Duncan Greive sums up the effect of this on the industry:

We have extraordinary television talents in Jemaine Clement, Bret McKenzie, Taika Waititi and Jane Campion. They barely work here, and the Flight of the Conchords crew had to head overseas to get their show made.

That's not what our system should be doing. Young talent should be getting turns at the wheel, with us all comfortable in the knowledge that some will swerve straight into the ditch. But a few public failures are the price you pay to get to true greatness, the kind of blazing, original television we must have the capacity to create. The current system doesn't allow for that. Instead, a vanishing small group of people get to

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<sup>23</sup> Both *Outrageous Fortune*, *The Almighty Johnsons*, and many of the other shows James Griffin has written for have had NZOA funding (NZ On Screen, n.d. b).

<sup>24</sup> They later created a TradeMe account, selling off props, furniture and clothing from the series which included designer labels Gucci, Dolce & Gabbana, and Chloe (Casey, 2018).

make what feels like variations on the same solid-yet-unspectacular drama, over and over again, apparently for all eternity.

*Filthy Rich*, intended to function on some level as a commentary on excess and inequality, actually embodies the very inequities it intends to critique: the lack of a path to control for young television talent. The show should signify a moment in which we need to thank its creators for their services to our industry, and ask that they politely pass the torch to a new generation. Because we can and should do better than this. (Greive, 2016a, para. 14).

Giving one showrunner (Rachel Lang) or a handful of showrunners (Gavin Strawhan and James Griffin) the bulk of funding and opportunities limits the diversity of authentic experiences told on screen. It also limits the diversity of working filmmakers. NZOA's Diversity Report (2016a) showed only 33% of television directors working on NZOA projects identified as women, and with an additional 2% who identified as gender diverse<sup>25</sup>. NZOA also went on to justify the number of Māori producers, as 13% "sit[s] just under the population percent of 14.9%". However, lawyer Moana Jackson disputes justifications such as this, stating the percentage of Māori in the Aotearoa New Zealand population is not important as Māori should not be "seen as a minority in our own land" (Reid, 2011, p. 52). As NZOA is a Crown entity, it has a mandate to uphold Te Tiriti within its own practices, regardless of how the government is enacting Te Tiriti in other ventures, such as Māori Television, as it provides different opportunities to work within the screen industries. NZOA removed the "experienced creatives" criteria in 2017 in an update to their entire funding strategy (NZOA, 2016c).

Deborah Shepard (2016) states that the participation of Aotearoa New Zealand women and access to film production has declined between 1999 and 2014, due

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<sup>25</sup> "Gender diverse" is NZOA's terminology, used in line with Statistics NZ standards.

to the “backlash against feminism, by recession and fiscal cutbacks caused by the global financial meltdown ... and a change in political parties to a conservative, misogynistic, right wing, capitalist government” (2016, p. 1). Shepard suggests that the NZFC had become less supportive of women-centered projects, and Marian Evans’ research shows that between 2003 and 2017 there were 23 films directed by women<sup>26</sup> which were taxpayer funded, in contrast to the 84 films directed by men<sup>27</sup> during the same period (2017) — a similar percentage to the NZOA funding of women. Shepard also suggests that it is easier for women to make films due to the increase of film schools and training facilities, as well as cheaper and more accessible technologies, however these things also make it easier for men, making funding for filmmaking less accessible as more filmmakers compete for the same pool of funding (2016). While some already established directors such as Gaylene Preston, Athina Tsoulis, and Dorthe Scheffmann continued to make films in Aotearoa New Zealand from 2000 onwards, the departure of filmmakers such as Jane Campion and Niki Caro to the US and UK is notable, and follows a historic trend of filmmakers, especially women, leaving Aotearoa New Zealand for better opportunities overseas.

Countries like Sweden and Canada, and more recently the United Kingdom — although having different production histories to Aotearoa New Zealand — have moved towards a 50–50 gender funding target for their government-based grants (Berger, 2016; Kang, 2016, Roberts; 2017), providing examples of more progressive policies. Sweden in particular, was a trailblazer in this area, and partnered their funding model with mentorship, talent-development programmes, and a website dedicated to highlighting the work on women filmmakers so people no longer ask “where are the women filmmakers?” in Sweden (Kang, 2016). Their CEO, Anna Serner, started the position in 2011, and

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<sup>26</sup> Written and directed by women + co-written by women, directed by women, and including both features and shorts, but excludes feature documentaries.

<sup>27</sup> Co-written by women, directed by men + written and directed by men, and including both features and shorts, but excludes feature documentaries.

by 2014, had achieved their 50–50 target (Kang, 2015). While 50–50 targets have shown to directly increase the number of women working in the screen industries, they can also isolate filmmakers who identify outside of the gender binary — disincentivizing funding for filmmakers which don't fit into their gender model. Filmmaker Fun Kelly, who has worked for US TV channel Comedy Central, has stated on the topic: “it's already very hard in this industry to meet/work with gender nonconforming individuals. The diversity hires I've heard discussed amongst friends never include talk of gender nonconforming folx<sup>28</sup>” (Kelly, 2018). In 2015, the NZFC announced a gender policy which included an award for women in the industry, a target of 50% women in their talent development initiatives, and a commitment to publishing the gender statistics on their funding decisions (NZFC, 2017; NZFC, 2017b). By 2017, they had achieved their existing 50% target for talent development, and added a new 50% target for their Early Development Funding and feature film investment by 2019/2020 (NZFC, 2017). Instead of stating a 50–50 target (quantifying male filmmakers' participation), setting a 50% target for women filmmakers allows for the other 50% to be made of both men and nonbinary or genderqueer filmmakers<sup>29</sup>.

While there is some available history of the Aotearoa New Zealand screen industries, women's stories within those histories are few and far between. Deborah Shepard's *Reframing Women* (2000) is an important piece of research on women's experiences from an industry and production view in Aotearoa New Zealand, as well as her follow-up piece 'Reframing Women: Gender and Film in Aotearoa New Zealand 1999–2014' (2016). Marian Evans' blog 'Wellywood Woman', and Broadsheet have been two other significant sources on women's history. Broadsheet provides insight from the time of publication, and Marian Evans' research shines a light on historical holes in the narrative, and is also a

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<sup>28</sup> “Folx” being a term used to denote a LGBTQ community and/or a politicised identity (trans-folx-against-eds, 2014).

<sup>29</sup> However, quantifying their commitment to nonbinary and genderqueer filmmakers would be better still.

critique of the current state of filmmaking in Aotearoa New Zealand. While the work of these women has been paramount to women's history in Aotearoa New Zealand filmmaking existing at all, it highlights the need for further research into the changes women currently experience as filmmakers. Their work needs to be continued, in order to ensure that no more histories go undocumented, particularly the histories of those who are not always able to work within the established industries.

## Section 2.2: Technological changes for gatekeepers, audiences, and filmmakers

The use of digital technologies has only become more complex within the Aotearoa New Zealand screen industries, as both the media landscape, and audience behaviour have changed. Government involvement continues to impact the opportunities available for filmmakers, including women. However, one noticeable trend in the adoption of digital technologies has been the lack of power many former gatekeepers now hold. As Aotearoa New Zealand transitioned to digital distribution, established broadcast platforms of television and cinema were left to cater to an increasingly older demographic, as younger audiences moved to other providers.

Online piracy, in particular, has placed an emphasis on technologies which echo the Web 2.0 focus on ease of use (O'Reilly, 2014) and which apply Anderson's long tail (2012), as audiences exist in a globalised media environment where accessibility is valued over the legalities of 'exclusive rights'. Nevertheless, free and legal online platforms that distribute content are becoming a more appealing option for filmmakers, especially when the online alternatives are

unquantifiable, like file-sharing sites rife with piracy, or create poor user-experience, like many platforms maintained by local broadcasters.

### Section 2.2.1: The death of television and birth of video-on-demand

Television entered a digital, multi-platform phase in the new millennium; while already established in other countries, the increase in channels and programmes caused by video-on-demand and digital providers significantly altered the industry. In particular, Sky TV's competitive advantage included its monopoly of pay-TV, control of digital transmission technologies<sup>30</sup>, and a far larger number of channels than its free-to-air competitors (110 by the end of 2010). However, it was their importing of programming from the United States, which was much cheaper than creating local content, that created challenges for Aotearoa New Zealand filmmakers. The continuing deregulation of the television sector was caused by the change in government from Labour to National<sup>31</sup> in 2008 who ignored the review of broadcasting legislation initiated by the previous government (Dunleavy & Joyce, 2011), which meant there were fewer incentives to create local programming.

While the death of scheduled broadcast television had been heralded multiple times internationally (Borland Evan Hansen, 2007; Dredge, 2015; Ganos, 2011; Thompson, 2012), Duncan Greive (2016c), quoting NZOA's 2016 'Where are the audiences?' report, stated that Aotearoa New Zealand television audiences have aggressively moved to online platforms. 72% of 15–39 year olds watch online video every day and "all we're waiting on now is when it becomes uneconomic to

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<sup>30</sup> Until the inception of Freeview, the free-to-air digital broadcasting service, in 2007.

<sup>31</sup> The New Zealand National party is the other main political party in Aotearoa New Zealand, whose center-right position is grounded in conservatism, liberalism, populism, and libertarianism (Colin, 2012).

continue broadcasting television” (Grieve, 2016c, para. 5; NZOA, 2016d). With the launch of paid video-on-demand services Quickflix in 2012, Spark’s<sup>32</sup> Lightbox in 2014, SKY’s<sup>33</sup> Neon, and Netflix in 2015, Amazon Prime Video, and Google’s YouTube Red in 2016, online streaming has significantly altered the television and cinema landscape; as have social networks YouTube and Vimeo.

Media data and measurement companies were forced to adapt to the change in audience behaviour; these changes were necessary in order to compete with Google and other Web media companies, who challenged the imprecise traditional television measurements of ratings by providing in-depth data for individual streams and views (Cohen, 2014). This gives advertisers (who, outside of NZOA and the NZFC, are the other funders of mainstream film and television in Aotearoa New Zealand), unprecedented insight into what content is being viewed, by whom, where, and when. Yet, not all content is streamed legally, which complicates the reach of the figures by companies like Nielsen. There are two main forms of online media piracy in Aotearoa New Zealand: accessing geo-locked content via Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) and streaming and downloading individual files from sites, such as The Pirate Bay and BitTorrent. The uptake of piracy was due to current providers not being able to grant access to content quickly enough for audiences; Netflix New Zealand was criticised when it launched for offering only 1/8th of its US service, in part due to the exclusive local rights already held by other providers such as SKY.

Internet service providers (ISPs) Slingshot, Orcon, Bypass Network Services, and others, offered ‘Global Mode’, which let your computer appear to be in another country and access content which would otherwise be blocked, such as Netflix US or geo-blocked YouTube content. Lightbox, MediaWorks, SKY, and TVNZ threatened legal action on the grounds that they were “operating outside the

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<sup>32</sup> Formally Telecom, Spark is one of New Zealand’s biggest telecommunication companies and Internet service providers.

<sup>33</sup> Sky TV rebranded in 2013 to SKY.

law and in breach of copyright” (Green, 2015, para. 1). Hadyn Green, writing for Consumer NZ, compared it to a tax for just living in Aotearoa New Zealand: “these overseas services are subscription-based, consumers are paying for them. No one is getting anything for free, but consumers are always looking for the best deal, and right now, that is not from a New Zealand-based service” (Green, 2015, “The Consumer”). Paul Brislen, chief executive of the Telecommunications Users Association, summed up the particular frustrations of Aotearoa New Zealand audiences:

The market has moved on. The gatekeepers are losing control. I can be watching a programme half an hour after it screens in the US, and I frequently do. I’m ashamed to be doing it, I would like to pay someone for it, but I don’t want to buy a whole lot of channels full of programmes I don’t want – thank you, Sky – or wait 18 months or a year to see the programme – thank you, TVNZ. (Laugesen, 2012, para. 21).

As Paul Brislen shows, consumers are not opposed to paying for a service, but it needs to have the content audiences want and be at a competitive price. Anderson’s theory of the long tail supports this move to a different distribution model:

Many of our assumptions about popular taste are actually artifacts of poor supply-and-demand matching — a market response to inefficient distribution ... People are going deep into the catalogue, down the long, long list of available titles, far past what’s available at Blockbuster Video, Tower Records, and Barnes & Noble. And the more they find, the more they like. As they wander further from the beaten path, they discover their taste is not as mainstream as they thought (or as they had been led to believe by marketing, a lack of alternatives, and a hit-driven culture). (2014, pp. 137–138).

This applies even more so when looking at so-called ‘women’s interest’, and the tastes of other perceived minorities — if technology can allow people to find content which represents them in ways they aren’t able to see in the mainstream media, people will choose the platforms or methods which allow them to do that most easily.

While exact numbers are difficult to quantify, piracy has been decreasing internationally (Bershidsky, 2017; “Kiwis watching more online”, 2015; Titcomb, 2016), although in comparison, Aotearoa New Zealand audiences still use torrent sites more regularly than the United States or Britain (Pullar-Strecker, 2017). The downward trend has been claimed by Netflix, who determine the price of their services based on local piracy rates and have been pursuing global licensing without geographic restrictions (Van der Sar, 2015). Yet the higher rate in Aotearoa New Zealand could be attributed to US and UK audiences having priority release from their own industries. However, the majority of video-on-demand (VOD) services are yet to make any significant profit for their service providers, including Netflix who has 104 million subscribers worldwide and is US\$20 billion in debt (Ng, 2017). ISPs are using VOD as a way to attract or upsell customers to better Web packages, and Amazon is using their service to cross-promote with its other services (Keall, 2016b). Simon Moutter, Spark’s managing director, said in response to a potential merger of SKY with ISP Vodafone NZ (which was later turned down by the Commerce Commission), “we don’t really see ourselves as competing head-to-head with SKY. The real competition in the future of media is with global over-the-top players like Netflix, YouTube and Apple” (Henderson, 2016, para. 8), reinforcing that although SKY’s hold on the market was once significant, the introduction of international players has changed the priorities of those working with Aotearoa New Zealand networks. Quickflix, the first VOD service in Aotearoa New Zealand, was bailed out in 2016 and has been forced to change its strategy from streaming with a monthly fee to transactional video on demand (Keall, 2016a); where users pay a one-off fee to

rent a movie or television show similar to YouTube and Vimeo On Demand (or DVD rental stores of the past).

### Section 2.2.2: Effect on Aotearoa New Zealand content providers

These changes in audience habits, technology, and distribution providers have had a noticeable effect on Aotearoa New Zealand filmmakers, as well as funders. NZFC has strict anti-piracy guidelines which must be followed for all feature films which have their funding, including not linking the editing software to servers overnight or exporting to an external device or service, as well as including digital formats in their screener definition (NZFC, 2017a). The cheaper and lighter digital equipment has been liberating for women filmmakers, especially being able to edit films on computers at home (Shepard, 2016). Abi King-Jones speaks about how digital technologies allow “a one or two person crew to film observationally in a way that is efficient and unobtrusive [to their documentary style]. Being able to edit on a desktop computer means we can shape hundreds of hours of footage into a feature narrative ourselves, in our own spaces” (Shepard, 2016, p. 4). Removing barriers such as expensive editing equipment only housed at institutions and production houses also allows filmmakers who are parents, especially women, to participate more fully in post-production. However, Robyn Paterson laments the role of the Web in filmmakers lives, especially in balancing a family: “I appreciate the new independence but personally find it distracting and exhausting and increasingly difficult to balance family time and work with the need to be constantly “live” online” (p. 4). Roseanne Liang, however, said using webseries as an online format was “pure joy” as it allowed her to be her own boss, but shared the sentiment of the Web being “exhausting”: “there remains the problem of how to rise about the sheer weight of content to be visible [online]” (p. 4). Shirley Horrocks critiqued online mediums as having potential for distribution, but “few opportunities to create revenue” (p. 4).

Roseanne Liang's first webseries was made with \$1 000 and its second season was crowd funded by the fan base the webseries had established, while her second webseries received a \$100 000 grant from NZOA (NZOA, 2015; Shepard, 2016), showing a hesitance from funding bodies to invest in new media, even from established filmmakers like Liang<sup>34</sup>.

Liang had published her webseries on YouTube, but in a 2015 National Business Review (NBR) article, Aotearoa New Zealand producers anonymously voiced their frustrations at FTA networks. The networks were accused of taking digital streaming rights for local programmes without offering an upfront fee or a share of any online advertising revenue the shows might generate. One producer stated "TVNZ and MediaWorks are trying to take extra rights even when they're the smallest funder. They pay a licence fee but their contribution is tiny – and yet they want these rights without paying any additional fee" (Grant, 2015, para. 10) while another accused the networks of bullying: "If you're a reasonable-sized production company you can push back a bit but smaller companies just have to sign on the dotted line because they get into a position where, if they don't sign, they can't trigger a NZ On Air payment so they're strapped for cash and backed into a corner. And the networks count on that"(Grant, 2015, para. 17). NBR directly cited Netflix and Lightbox as the reason behind the digital rights grab as TVNZ and MediaWorks want to ensure that producers are not going to screen the content with other VOD suppliers later, even if neither TVNZ or MediaWorks have any intention of uploading the content to their own platforms.

With the technological limitations of the networks' local platforms and apps, these rights grabs are problematic for audiences as well; *What Next* (Hobson,

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<sup>34</sup> Liang had previously directed the feature films *Banana in a Nutshell* (Liang, 2005) and *My Wedding and Other Secrets* (Davis & Liang, 2011), both of which received NZFC funding, holds a Master of Creative and Performing Arts from the University of Auckland, won the SPADA (Screen Production and Development Association) New Filmmaker of the Year, and the WIFT NZ Woman to Watch award (Evans, 2011).

2017), a week-long current affairs experiment with John Campbell and Nigel Latta, had NZ\$1M of funding from NZOA and took in live feedback during the broadcast (“What next”, 2017), but participation was limited by the requirements of the TVNZ OnDemand website and many viewers tweeted their confusion and frustrations (Grant, 2017; Sokimi, 2017; Wright, 2017). Difficult to use platforms complicates options for filmmakers, as part of NZOA’s strategy overhaul in 2016 added ‘discoverable’ as a criteria — “applications must have a commissioning platform that can provide an audience for funded content that is appropriate for the size of the investment” (NZOA, 2016c, p. 7), even if they are difficult to use, such as TVNZ OnDemand. NZOA’s new strategy simplified their multiple funding options into one, with the same three goals: quality content, diverse content, and discoverable content. This is then split into four streams by media type: scripted, factual, music, and platforms (NZOA, 2016c). James Griffin stated in an interview that he thinks NZOA should be allowed to invest in partnerships with networks like Netflix and HBO “to make drama here” (“James Griffin slams Filthy Rich”, 2017, para. 6) and the new funding strategy certainly encourages co-investment. However, NZOA’s new funding strategy also comes with “provides free access to content” criteria for commissioning platforms, which would make Netflix exempt from their funding (NZOA, 2016c, p. 7).

Nevertheless, the threat of Netflix becoming Aotearoa New Zealand’s preferred audience is one taken seriously by TVNZ, with Andrew Shaw, TVNZ’s director of content, publicly criticising Netflix’s offerings: “There’s great drama and great comedy being produced across the world, 500 titles this year possibly. Maybe 12 of them will be on Netflix. So let's not get seduced by the fact that Netflix is a ubiquitously available service at a reasonable price. You're still paying for it — would you pay \$10 a month or \$12 a month for twelve shows across the year? I'm not sure you would” (McDonald, 2017, para. 15). His statements contradict the NZOA ‘Where are the audiences?’ report (2016d), which shows subscription VOD (Netflix, Lightbox, etc) use is up 23%, while use of free VOD (E.g. TVNZ OnDemand) only increased by 11% between 2014 and 2016. Shaw’s comments

are also particularly hypocritical when considering that the amount of new local content on TV One was only 31% in 2016 and TV2's was even lower, at 6% (NZOA, 2016b).

One of the motivations behind NZOA's strategy update was to adapt to changes in the screen industry more easily, and break down funding and platform silos, and this creates direct recognition for platforms like YouTube and Vimeo, which exist outside of traditional broadcast mediums film and television, and away from the established networks. User created content sites like YouTube now reach more than six in ten New Zealanders each week (NZOA, 2016d), and New Zealand creators are also making use of the platforms. YouTubers Shannon Harris, Sally Hickey, Ollie Langdon, and Jamie Curry have a combined following of more than 18 million (Te Tai, 2015) and there are over 2000 members of the content creators Facebook group YouTube NZ (2017). However, official support from YouTube for Aotearoa New Zealand creators is absent; the nearest YouTube Space, a collaborative space run by Google, which offers workshops, networking and resources, is in Tokyo, Japan (Google, 2017b). YouTube has also been slow to look at fostering creative, original content themselves, with a failed initiative in 2012, and then the launch of YouTube Red in 2015<sup>35</sup> (Gutelle, 2013; Popper, 2015). Most existing monetisation from YouTube has happened through advertisements on user content, which has been problematic (discussed in Section 1.4.4).

The past twenty years has seen a rapid change in the digital technologies and the online distributors available to filmmakers in Aotearoa New Zealand, which is a small industry and has required government support throughout its lifetime. The development and uptake of these technologies facilitated a shift in audience behaviour, and in turn, validated platforms outside of the control of the local industry. This is hopeful, as the neoliberal politics driving government funding

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<sup>35</sup> Which, in addition to offering an ad-free YouTube experience, also has original YouTube-produced content available.

has created conservative funding models — reinforcing existing inequalities, rather than advocating for progressive change, and hesitation over the local use of new technologies and platforms within the industry. However, as discussed in Section 1.4.4, these new technologies and platforms are not a feminist filmmaking utopia; they come with both the opportunity to escape the gender bias of the existing industry, and ways that sexism can be further manifested in society for women filmmakers. The success of these new platforms is still being negotiated; especially how content is discovered, and the amount of labour required to access funding and audiences. These platforms and the processes that women filmmakers use are shifting and evolving, and examining their experiences can provide understanding into how they are being shaped. As Meikle & Young stated, “we can shape technology, but only if we confront those ideas and values with which we do not agree” (2012, p. 27), and asking questions of the people on the forefront of shaping them allows us a snapshot into how they may continue to evolve in the future.

## Section 2.3: Conclusions: Research objectives and questions

Having completed a selected reading of the available literature on the position of women and the use of digital and online technologies within the Aotearoa New Zealand screen industries, two key points arise. The first is a lack of widely documented women’s history in the Aotearoa New Zealand screen industries, especially of those working outside of established, broadcast mediums. It is difficult to address bias and discrimination if it is not discussed, and continuing to record the experiences of women has the additional outcome of giving people the knowledge and understanding to work towards wider gender equality. The second is that as audience behaviour is shifting the dominance of certain platforms and technologies, filmmakers are negotiating those changes and adapting their own processes around them. Noticeably, there is very little

scholarship available on Aotearoa New Zealand filmmakers which examines this type of filmmaking, let alone examining the intersection of women's experiences and why they might choose this career path over more traditional broadcast mediums.

This informs the overall research objective: to explore the experiences of Aotearoa New Zealand women filmmakers who publish and distribute their work through online platforms. This objective seeks to address these key points from the literature review and provide more scholarship in areas with otherwise little research. Following on from the research objective, the central research question is:

Why do women filmmakers in working Aotearoa New Zealand create and publish using online platforms?

## Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter has been structured so that the overarching research methodology is discussed within Sections 3.1, the more theoretical aspects of the creative practice are discussed in Section 3.2, and the full details of the creative practice process which I followed in Section 3.3.

### Section 3.1: Research design

The feminist perspective and framework, as covered in Section 1.2, had a significant influence on the design of my research, from the methodology chosen, to how I selected participants, and in turn influenced the creative practice aspects. Carrie Lamanna's dissertation *Disciplining Identities: Feminism, New Media, and 21st Century Research Practices* (2008) has been valuable to my own understanding of existing feminist and creative-led research methods, as well as how feminist research can contribute to the feminist movement and media studies as a field. As Lamanna summarizes, "feminist research is not tied to a particular method or methods, but to a researcher identified commitment to increasing knowledge of women's lives" (Lamanna, 2008, p. 41). This overarching framework is how feminist perspectives have been applied to this research; not following a single prescribed framework as such, but constant reflection and analysis of how the chosen methodology and wider research decisions will increase the knowledge of women's lives.

While one outcome of the research is increased knowledge on women's lives, the decisions which enable that knowledge to be collected and disseminated need to be balanced with ensuring the safety of the women participating. As shown by the examples of Anita Sarkeesian and Marina Watanabe in Section

1.4.4, violence can occur against women who critique media or offer a feminist narrative, and the potential for that needs to be taken into consideration when making research decisions which could increase the likelihood of this happening. As this research has both written and creative-practice outputs (the design of the creative-practice is discussed in Section 2.2), it also needs to be considered that the participants' experiences could be seen much more widely and publicly than the written component, which will be kept in the University of Waikato's Research Commons.

### Section 3.1.1: Qualitative analysis

As the key research objective is based around examining the individual, and often subjective experiences of women, this suggests qualitative analysis as the most appropriate methodology. Many feminist theorists agree that the use of qualitative analysis in order to interpret people's words and actions is crucial to understanding their experiences and, in a wider context, the human condition (Garner and Scott, 2013). Their critiques, particularly those of Dorothy Smith, center around the indifference many 'masculinist' quantitative researchers show to women and other marginalised groups, as well as the potential for exploitation of such groups which already experience systemic discrimination (Smith 1990; 1992, as cited in Garner & Scott, 2013). Instead, importance is placed on valuing and acknowledging the community which is the source of the knowledge and research, and creating less of a divide between participant and researcher. These ideas are crucial to this research – they relate both to what type of research is most appropriate in terms of methodology, but also reinforce the importance of an expanded and reflective feminist framework.

Social theorist, philosopher, and feminist Simone de Beauvoir (1949) used phenomenology, a qualitative methodology, to explore commonalities in

women's experiences of marginalisation. Phenomenology examines how a chosen phenomenon is expressed within a specific context (Fabello, 2018), and de Beauvoir's use of phenomenology looks at how women's oppression is expressed within the physical body. While the situating of experiences using phenomenology is not relevant methodology for this research, an example can be taken from de Beauvoir's feminist framework which she uses to contextualise the experiences. De Beauvoir does not claim that there is a universal experience of womanhood, but that there can be commonalities (Kruks, 2014). Despite being written during the early 20th century, her theory sits between the ideology of second and third wave feminism; second wave feminism tending to homogenise women into one group (often using biology to do so) and third wave feminism centering on individual oppression (Munro, 2013). Contemporary feminist phenomenologist, Iris Marion Young, uses a similar framework to de Beauvoir, and Sonia Kruks (2014) describes the way Young contextualises her research: "between purely idiosyncratic reportage and claims for the universality of experience there lies a space where [Young] hopes her descriptions may 'resonate' with the experiences of others. But they also may not" (p. 86). Describing her own research aims, Young states, "the only way we can know our similarities and differences is by each of us expressing our particular experience" (Kruks, 2014, p. 86)<sup>36</sup>.

De Beauvoir and Young's middle-ground ties into Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality (1989), namely that the surrounding social conditions and identities also impact the experience of marginalisation due to gender and make the experience nuanced and significant. For example, while many women experience the gender wage gap, there is also a wage gap between women of

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<sup>36</sup> While this aspect of Young's work is pertinent to this research, I would like to acknowledge that some of Young's related theories, as well as other feminist phenomenologists as presented in Kruk's article, especially those about the "female" body and specifically female lived experience, appear as being gender essentialist and trans-exclusionary. This does not sit with the feminist framework I am using, as discussed in Section 1.2.

different ethnicities; in Aotearoa New Zealand, the median annual salary for a full-time Pākehā man is \$56 000, and for a Pākehā woman is \$50 000. Yet for Asian women it is \$45 000, Māori women \$44 000, and Pasifika women \$40 000 (McDowall, 2017). While there may be common threads which some women experience (the median wage for all women is all less than that of Pākehā men), this is not guaranteed that all women will experience it in the same way (Pākehā women's median is more than Asian, Māori, and Pasifika men), nor to the same extent either (Pākehā women's median is also higher than than Asian, Māori, and Pasifika women). This places an imperative on also acknowledging womens' ethnicity, education, sexuality, religion, and any other identities and situations which can affect their experiences of marginalisation.

To apply de Beauvoir and Crenshaw's frameworks, thematic analysis of the experiences would provide more relevant understanding of women's experiences making film media for online platforms than phenomenology. William Gibson and Andrew Brown set three aims for thematic analysis: examining the commonalities, differences, and relationships (Brown, 2009, as cited in Harding, 2013). This allows common experiences to be grouped together, while also examining the particular differences in experience, whether they are caused by intersecting identity, choice of platform to distribute their work, or other factors. Gibson and Brown highlight the potential issue of thematic analysis as creating accounts which can be "quite distant from the experience of any one individual" (Harding, 2013, p. 4). While grouping the experiences by theme does re-present and re-contextualise them, it also allows for interested parties, such as the government, or industry organisations, to see what are the most common experiences, or what is affecting particular groups of women, and then act on this information if they choose to. The interview transcripts can also be viewed independently, prior to having been analysed in this research, as they are located in the appendices, so that the original statements can always be viewed in their initial context, should they need to be.

To collect the experiences for qualitative thematic analysis, I arranged one-on-one interviews with 12 women directors, writers, or producers who work in Aotearoa New Zealand and have created online video content between 2013 and 2015. These interviews took place in October and November 2015. Participating in the research as interview subjects enabled women currently in the screen industries to have a direct influence on the research and give first-hand accounts of their experiences as practitioners. The interview questions centred around three main themes: why they chose to create media in this way, what their current creative processes are, and how they'll choose to make media in the future. For the creative component of this research, video footage from these interviews was distilled to summaries of key aspects of participants' experience and perspectives on the opportunities and constraints of operating within digital production, and published as a webseries in November 2016.

As I conducted the interviews, the importance of the semi-structured nature of the interviews became clear; the interviews where I followed up with my own experiences or asked questions based on my knowledge as a filmmaker allowed me to access much more personal responses from the participants. This also allowed the participants to create their own categories of response — making the responses more particular to the filmmaker, their practice, and their understanding of the topic. It also meant that not every participant answered every question, let alone answered in the same way. I used the three aims for thematic analysis — examining the commonalities, differences, and relationships, cited earlier (Gibson & Brown, 2009, as cited in Harding, 2013). Harding (2013) suggests three quarters of participants sharing a view is a commonality, however my small sample size, the range of different formats the participants are working in, as well as the fact not every participant answered every question makes it difficult to create a hard rule for what a commonality is. Instead I have looked for broad similarities across all participants, and then also examined for similarities grouped by the formats they work in (music videos, webseries, or YouTube channels).

The transcripts created a set of experiences that totalled 75 000 words, answering 42 questions and follow up questions. In order to organise and analyse the information they shared with me, I created a spreadsheet structured by the sample questions I had taken to each interview, with additional questions I had asked listed underneath, down the left hand side of the table. I then gave each participant their own column, and pasted in their answers to each of the questions. Organising their information in this way allowed me to see which questions or topics had the most answers and to begin to look for what similarities and differences existed based on their answers. From there, I created a second spreadsheet which grouped answers based on similar experiences or reasoning (rather than single questions), and summarised their answers into approximately 50–100 words. This meant that instead of trying to analyse 75000 words, I was only looking at around 8000. This is similar to how I edited the video footage using the transcripts — identifying key themes within the experiences and grouping them accordingly. However, instead of doing this on an individual basis, it was across all the participants. I used these summaries to describe the broad areas of commonalities and differences, however, when giving examples, I went back and used their original phrasing or quoted them directly to stay as true to their presentation of their experiences as possible. This was one of the ways the feminist framework informed the analysis directly, and links back to the discussion of how Simone de Beauvoir used her participant's information — directly using the voices of women themselves (Kruks, 2014). This reinforces the participant's self-categorising, as I have sought to limit how much I reframe their own words, and highlight where my perspective is shaping the analysis.

Creating summaries and moving them into their own spreadsheet meant that I could implement a constant comparative method, which qualitative researcher Rosaline Barbour argues is the heart of all qualitative analysis (Barbour, 2008, as cited in Harding, 2013). This highlighted the broad similarities and differences,

and allowed their common factors to be looked at for underlying relationships. I have organised the following conclusions by topics (then similarities, differences, and relationships) which seeks to answer the research objective: why do women filmmakers working in Aotearoa New Zealand create and publish using online platforms?

### Section 3.1.2: Power distribution in interviewing

In *Ethical Dilemmas in Feminist Research: The Politics of Location, Interpretation, and Publication*, Gesa Kirsch gives a set of ethical areas to examine, with the aim of guiding feminist research: the first of which is "the politics of location (how researchers position themselves in relation to participants)" (Kirsch, 1999, p. x, as quoted in Lamanna, 2008, p. 42). Sabine Grenz (2014) also questions the power dynamics inherent in research — that feminist researchers must scrutinize the relationship between themselves and their participants "in order to transform the inherent power relation of expert and lay knowledge that shapes social research projects" through their use of epistemological assumptions and methodological tools (p. 62). Using Kirsch's framework to examine her own dissertation, Lamanna explains that she is "researching up" — namely that her participants hold more power in her field than she does, and puts her in a weakened position as a researcher, and could therefore influence the way that she holds the interviews and interprets the data. In regards to this research, any potential interview subjects either hold equal or similar status as a filmmaker to myself<sup>37</sup>, or hold a higher status still. Many of the women I approached are filmmakers whose work I am personally familiar with and admire, and some are also people I hope I could collaborate with in the future, which also affects my

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<sup>37</sup> I have had films shown, been a finalist, and also won placings at film festivals in New Zealand and overseas, as well as run my own YouTube channel with some videos nearing 20 000 views.

position in regards to the participants. I also used industry contacts to create the list of potential participants — seeking recommendations from people I have worked with in the past — so the outcomes of this project, if it was not a positive experience for the participants, could also more widely affect my personal reputation.

As Lamanna goes on to state, “on the other hand, my participants are not in absolute power positions over me. Simply by agreeing to an interview, they have given me the ability to represent them in ways they may not agree with and that may make them feel vulnerable professionally or personally. The use of video and audio only heightens the sense of exposure for many.” (p. 42). There are similar aspects to this research; I am asking for specific reflections on their processes and experiences, which they may not have shared widely before, and there is the potential for me to either reflect on, or represent their views in ways which they do not agree with. Some of the participants are also primarily used to being behind the camera, rather than in front of it. Lamanna’s views on how her research could affect her participants is shared by other feminist researchers: Ann Oakley suggests that interviewing should not be a one-way process, and Maria Mies recommends a conscious partial identification with the research participants, instead of adopting a ‘value free’ or supposedly neutral position (Grenz, 2014). Both of these seek to lessen the hierarchy between researcher and participant, by showing similarities and entering into a more equal dialogue. Mies goes on to also suggest researcher participation in research “in order to avoid doing research only for others instead of being personally involved as a woman”, which Grenz (2014) says should initiate change as a tool to gain knowledge — “not only a change within academia but also a social change” (p. 62). Kirsch (2005) articulates it as research *for* women, not just *on* women (as quoted in Grenz, 2014, emphasis own).

For Lamanna’s dissertation, she gave each participant a copy of the unedited video for review after the interview, which the participant could then ask that

certain sections of the interview not be used and revise or clarify answers given to questions (2008). Using this as an example, as it features both a feminist framework and a creative practice output, I provided my participants with their interview transcript (sent by email)<sup>38</sup>, in which they could amend or remove statements. I also provided them with a rough cut of the webseries episode<sup>39</sup>, and sought their express written permission before publishing it. This was to acknowledge that I was significantly editing their statements down from the full interview into a condensed webseries episode, and through the editing process, could potentially misconstrue their experiences or statements. The participants were also able to withdraw from the research at any stage. This gave the participants informed consent as to how they were represented throughout the process and also gave the participants the ability to evaluate the potential outcomes of their involvement in a more involved way than the descriptions provided in the initial information sheet.

Many of these decisions stemmed from the choice to not anonymise the interview data. Taylor and Rupp (2005) noticed in their research on drag queens that their community was so small that anonymity could not be preserved, and harm was caused to the participants by publishing certain details of their lives which could be linked back to them (as quoted in Grenz, 2014). The number of women working in Aotearoa New Zealand who had published work between 2011 and 2014 was also small and it would have been easy to identify the participants based on the work they discussed. Rather than giving the participants the false reassurances of anonymity protecting their statements, I instead provided them with a comprehensive understanding of how they were being represented throughout the research process so they could manage their representation themselves. This also meant a potentially wider audience for their

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<sup>38</sup> This was a smaller file to send than their full video.

<sup>39</sup> A 'rough cut' is the core structure of the video (and in this case, the participant's statements) in place, but where I could still tidy up some of the transitions, what video was overlaid where, titles, *et cetera*.

contributions as their own online audiences would have an interest in content featuring them, and they could use their participation in this research as a means of reinforcing their own feminist advocacy and activism, if they chose.

When discussing the inclusion of the participants within the editing and review process with lecturers from the Screen & Media department, concerns were raised that I was allowing my participants “too much” power to shape the research outcomes. Due to the nature of what I was asking the women about, and the history of violence against women who spoke about these topics online, I felt these measures were only adequate. As stated earlier, I also knew that negative experiences for the participants could affect my own standing within the industry, and filmmakers who I could work with in the future. As Grenz (2014) summarised, “a research project is not isolated but instead integrated into more comprehensive power structures, in the surrounding discourse on the topic in question as well as related issues.” (p. 72). Of the twelve interviews conducted, one participant withdrew due to concerns about repercussions in the industry due to speaking out about her experiences, and one withdrew due to me questioning her about the language she used to describe marginalised groups. Outside of these withdrawals, there were no significant amendments to the transcripts or concerns regarding the participants’ representation in the webseries episodes<sup>40</sup>.

### Section 3.1.3: Selection and interview process

In making a list of potential participants, the main criteria was to find women who have made film-based media in Aotearoa New Zealand and released it online between 2011–2014. This decision was to allow a variety of formats —

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<sup>40</sup> Participants made corrections to the spelling of names, and where footage had been perceived as inaudible.

whether it was short films, webseries, YouTube channels, or other forms of video content they were producing — as limiting the scope based on format seemed unnecessary. However, the timescale proved to be too restrictive, and I ended up including a number of women whose work was either still in post-production or was being released in 2015. There was also very little content I found which was being produced for online platforms pre-2013.

As stated in Section 3.1.1, it was important that women whose identities also intersected with different ethnicities, sexualities, backgrounds, and gender identities were sought out. This was in order to both acknowledge the intersection of different forms of discrimination and bias other than gender, as well as seek to understand how those intersections might affect a filmmaking process. What is presented as ‘women’s experience’ has often “de facto stood for the experiences of certain subgroup of privileged (white, middle class, heterosexual) woman” (Kruks, 2014, p. 75), a problematic trend which has persisted to feminism today, commonly referred to as ‘white feminism’ (Frankenberg, 1993; Monahan, 2018). If the creating and publishing of films (and film-based media) online is one which requires a level of privilege within society, that is something to be ascertained through analysing and collating the experiences of a diverse group of women. It cannot be established through a biased sampled set which inaccurately attempts to represent the experiences of all women. If this research seeks to truly represent the experiences of women working in Aotearoa New Zealand, then the research process should look for all demographics of women in Aotearoa New Zealand, not just ones which are more easily accessible through similarities to myself as the researcher, or whom I already know through my own networks.

A list of the initial potential participants can be found in Appendix I, and was created mainly through Google and my own knowledge of what was being published by Aotearoa New Zealand creators at the time. However, I also used Twitter to ask for suggestions (Hutt, 2015), as well as posting on various

Aotearoa New Zealand filmmaking Facebook groups, and publishing a notice on industry news and listings website SCREENZ (Barclay, 2015). I also received a number of recommendations from the women I initially reached out to, as I included a request for suggestions for other women they might know who were working on similar projects in the initial email contact. This allowed me to identify further women working on online platforms who were outside the sphere of media that I engage with or people I knew. This was very valuable, as one woman was unable to be interviewed as she was currently working on a project in Melbourne, Australia, but recommended five other women who might be available for me to interview.

In my search for participants, I also reached out to and spoke with men, which provided a range of responses; some were able to recommend women for the research, and one, whom I had met for only a few minutes at an industry event, wanted to discuss the topic in depth with me and offered to put me in touch with a woman I had been struggling to contact. However, this experience was not typical of all men. Some men I discussed the research with were defensive, some were apathetic, and one asked why I cared about women filmmakers when Aotearoa New Zealand had Peter Jackson<sup>41</sup>.

The interviews were one-on-one, as well as semi-structured — including specific questions as well as follow up questions, but maintained a casual quality. This was important in creating an environment where the interview participants felt comfortable and feel they could speak candidly about their experiences (Burger, 2014). Lamanna (2008) affirms “it is important that feminists critically confront the terms used to define women and explain their experiences” (p. 17). Choosing a semi-structured interview method reinforced that the participants will be able to create their own categories of response (Garner & Scott, 2013) as, for

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<sup>41</sup> Although, this was at a scholarship interview panel, and they were not involved in the screen industries. While I did receive a University of Waikato Master’s Research Scholarship, I did not receive the scholarship involved with this panel.

example, some women believe gender equality is a human right but do not feel that feminist, as a label, fits them. Therefore, allowing for flexibility of categories was important, as it acknowledged the complexities and diversity of ideas and experiences women face.

### Section 3.1.4: Constraints

In undertaking the research for this project, there were technical, logistical, and personal constraints, some of which I was able to plan for and mitigate, and others which were unexpected. Lamanna (2008), discusses the importance of interrogating research practices to allow for the “representation of a multiplicity of voices and identities” and she attempts to “disrupt any assumed sense of objectivity through the telling of my own life stories and fieldwork experiences” (p. 6). This also ties back into the framework used by de Beauvoir (1949), and Miles (1978). In addressing the constraints of the project — whether they be technical, logistical, or personal — I hope to not only illustrate some areas of the research practices that could have been more inclusive, but also wish to be frank about my own objectivity.

My personal constraints on this project include living with anxiety, depression, tinnitus, and mild hearing loss on one side, chronic back, neck, and shoulder pain, joint pain, fatigue, insomnia, difficulties focusing, and disordered eating. I moved house five times in the three years undertaking this research, including two times to escape situations and relationships that were heavily detrimental to my mental and physical well-being. My physical and mental health have seriously deteriorated over the course of this research, including several plans to take my own life. The lack of adequate financial support has certainly contributed to constraints on this research as well as my own health, limiting the resources I could access (whether it was purchasing the adequate filming equipment needed

or hiring a filming assistant), as well as contributing to burnout due to working 25+ hours a week on top of my full-time course load to make ends meet. I acknowledge these factors, not to use them as an excuse, but to provide some insight on how disability, housing insecurity, and living near the poverty line do not create a conducive environment for research to take place.

In regards to technical constraints, the recording equipment available from the University was particularly unreliable — despite using different gear, ensuring that the equipment was set up correctly, batteries were charged, and accounting for all other troubleshooting methods, I was not able to sufficiently record the two test interviews I held on university equipment. Instead I used my personal Canon EOS 7D and kit lens, and purchased a Rode smartLav+ microphone (which allowed me to use my smartphone as an audio recorder) with some of the money from the University of Waikato Masters Research Scholarship I received. The Rode smartLav+ was a lapel microphone<sup>42</sup>, which provided higher quality sound than that recorded by the on-camera microphone, or the attachable directional microphone I have. This allowed me to have consistent quality and some degree of reliability. The university's tripods and lighting kits were also too bulky for me to take as carry-on luggage while flying<sup>43</sup>, so I also elected to use my photography tripod (as it would be unlikely I would be doing any camera movement), which was somewhat broken but adequate for the needs of the project. I also purchased a Rotolight HD Creative Colour Kit, in order to have some additional lighting available which would not incur any additional travel costs and be easier for me to lift and carry, as I would be using public transport in many of the cities I was visiting. However, the lack of a brightness control made it difficult to adjust, and I instead elected to design the interviews around natural

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<sup>42</sup> The kind of microphone you see clipped onto a subject's lapel in a television interview, for example.

<sup>43</sup> Having checked luggage was an additional cost I sought to avoid, however it would have been likely they exceeded the weight limit for checked luggage anyway.

lighting wherever possible, which was complicated — especially when filming in other cities, and unknown locations.

I did not have the resources to pay for a filming assistant, which increased the likelihood of mistakes within the recording process.<sup>44</sup> This meant I was the camera operator, sound recorder, lighting designer, interviewer, producer, and director; it was often overwhelming and difficult to ensure all roles were done properly. I lost Hweiling Ow's video footage which meant I was unable to include her in the webseries, and this was a significant disappointment.<sup>45</sup> I was able to reschedule the interview with her, but my health on the day meant I was not able to follow through with the shoot. My disabilities also impacted on my interactions with the participants, as my fatigue and anxiety levels made it harder to conduct the interviews, and to ask more difficult questions.

I was also limited by when and whom I could interview, as I needed to complete the interviews within a two month period from October to November 2015, and was using the aforementioned scholarship to pay for my travel around the country. I needed to film as many interviews as possible in the same city to make it financially viable, and scheduled the interviews accordingly. There were five filmmakers who were interested in participating but unable to because of scheduling conflicts. While I intended on having all of the interviews as one-on-one, I made some exceptions due to time constraints: Hazel Gibson and Morgan Leigh Stewart worked together as executive producers on *K Rd Stories*, and were interviewed together, as were the four Candle Wasters (Claris Jacobs, Elsie Bollinger, Minnie Grace, and Sally Bollinger), as they work as a core unit together. However, due to only having one lapel microphone, this made recording these interviews more difficult, as well as finding an environment

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<sup>44</sup> I felt asking someone to volunteer for the role would have been unethical, especially as I would have been unable to even pay for their travel costs.

<sup>45</sup> Her footage was recorded with no issues, I just have not been able to find where I put the footage.

which would fit them suitably in the camera frame. The audio of Hazel Gibson and Morgan Leigh Stewart had to be fixed in post-production as the directional microphone picked up a lot of echo and more environmental noise than the lapel microphone would have, and fixing this was time consuming. I was unable to find a suitable private, indoor location for the Candle Wasters' interview, so we filmed at the Wellington Botanical Gardens. This meant that we had to wait for members of the public to walk through the back of the shot, and had the sounds of a water feature in the background. I also did not have time to discuss the filming with the Wellington Botanical Gardens, which made the shoot additionally stressful. Fatigue also made travelling difficult, and limited the amount of time and energy I had to hold the interviews.

Gaining ethics approval was also time consuming, and contributed to the short period I had in order to hold the interviews: it took approximately nine months to gain approval for this research. This was partly due to a change in supervision happening over this time, as well as a lack of precedent for creative-based research projects using interview subjects who were not anonymised, and that there were no representatives from the Screen and Media Department on the ethics board at that time. However, the difficulty I had formulating the necessary proposals in such a way to cover this situation also contributed to this. The ethics board had concerns around whether the rights to the information which the participants were sharing and which would be published in the webseries, were being assigned to me, as the filmmaker, rather than staying with them as the participants. Due to the way copyright is assigned in Aotearoa New Zealand — as an automatic right when work is created (Copyright Council of New Zealand, 2018) — their assumptions were based around whether this copyright also covered the specific information presented in the media. Their concerns that it would be unethical for me to hold the copyright for the participants' personal experiences is correct, that would be unethical, however that is not how

copyright applies<sup>46</sup>. As per the Copyright Act 1994, I would hold the copyright for the footage itself and the edited version of that footage in the form of the webseries, but would not have any adaptation rights (for the underlying concepts, ideas, or experiences presented) as the rights to adaptation only apply to dramatic and literary works. This means that while I would hold the copyright for the footage and how it is constructed into a webseries, I would not hold the copyright for the specific experiences presented within the footage (just this recording of them).

However, in order to satisfy the ethics board and provide no doubt that the participants maintain the copyright to their own experiences, I organised an additional license form for the participants to sign which grants me a non-exclusive, ongoing (unless otherwise requested), worldwide license to the intellectual property expressed in the recordings. Concerns were raised that the participants would not understand the license form, however, the body of the license had been adapted from a free-to-use form from the Advertising and Illustrative Photographers Association of New Zealand. To this end, I amended the ethics application to state, 'these participants are all well aware of professional practice within the film industry, where such license forms are standard'.

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<sup>46</sup> This would be like trying to claim that if a witness were being interviewed for the evening news, and they said "the house burnt down, there were lots of flames", then that television network now owned the witness' construction of the event because they recorded the witness saying it, and can restrict how they talk about it from there on. Aotearoa New Zealand copyright does not work like that.

## Section 3.2: Creative-practice design

Following on from the research design, the webseries uses the interview recordings and condenses them to ten-minute summaries of the key aspects of the participants' experiences. The episodes were then published, free of charge, on YouTube, and were also embedded into a Tumblr-hosted website, which featured supporting information about the series. This output became the creative practice element of the research, with the written research component used to place the participants' experiences within the wider academic discourse, as well as reflect on the webseries as a film-based series published on an online platform. This creative practice output allows me to add my own experiences in publishing film-media online into the qualitative research, adding another layer to the analysis and furthering my commitment to examining and acknowledging the biases that I, as a researcher, bring to the research.

Just as the research design is built around the feminist framework, so were the decisions made in the creative practice process. Much of the process came from my existing practice as a filmmaker, however, this was significantly shaped and changed by the requirements of working within the University, and holding the work up to a much higher, and more rigorous standard<sup>47</sup> than I otherwise would have<sup>48</sup>. This was also the first time I had worked within a documentary-style genre, and so required a higher level of research into what conventions I would make use of, and which I would choose to break away from. Additionally, most of my previous work had been of a much shorter duration — generally, three minutes or less. While some of my previous work (such as Vlogmas<sup>49</sup> and other

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<sup>47</sup> While I hold the entries for film festivals and competitions to a high standard, the content of my personal YouTube channel is subject to much more lenient quality control.

<sup>48</sup> In part due to working with filmmakers who I admired, but also due to the fact it would be more difficult to remove all references to series from the world than any other film I have made.

<sup>49</sup> A YouTube format tradition where you vlog every day of December in the lead up to Christmas.

vlog series) had been up to 24 episodes long, none had been of so many episodes (nine plus three trailers) as well as being so long in duration (approximately ten minutes each).

### Section 3.2.1: Creative-led research

The creative-led elements of this thesis paper, and the Master of Media & Creative Technologies degree itself, were what interested me in pursuing postgraduate education. Smith & Dean (2009) suggest that while “there are many rich and innovative ways that creative practice can constitute, or contribute to, research in the university environment” (p. 1), in turn, research can also positively impact creative practice.

Smith & Dean’s discussion of the implicit understanding that research will be verbal or numerical, and artwork which is sonic or visual can complicate definitions of ‘research’, do not apply here *per se* — I have chosen an oral presentation (through showing the participants sharing their experiences in webseries episodes). However, their points that the nature of knowledge is “unstable, ambiguous, and multidimensional, and can be emotionally or affectively charged” do apply (p. 3). Smith & Brown suggest that a definition of knowledge which accepts these traits, although being true, can be at odds with some definitions of what academic research is. Particularly if research is viewed as generating knowledge which is transferable, “that is, can be understood and used by others in a manner which is essentially congruent with that of the original” (p. 3). By directly presenting the experiences of the participants as told by the participants (although edited for time), the emotions in which they shared the information is retained, allowing for a more authentic sharing of their perspective, and in fact allowing it to be understood more clearly in line with how it was expressed initially.

Presenting their experiences in this way connects with the research framework: feminist writer Andi Zeisler (2017) states, “women are told in a million small ways that anger, along with other strong emotions, is an inappropriate response to things that by their definition should provoke anger: discrimination, disenfranchisement, degradation, abuse” (para. 6). Asking the participants about their experiences includes potentially discussing those topics and how they affect their current working environment — online platforms — and the traditional industry. In applying a feminist framework, instead of enforcing a “neutral detachment” in order to show “‘rational’ and ‘objective’” participants (Zeisler, 2017, para. 6), presenting their accounts with the original emotion in which it was presented allows audiences to see the emotional effect of these experiences on the participants. It also serves to validate those emotions and reinforce that they are natural and reasonable responses to those experiences, for both the participants and the audience. So in using a feminist framework and a qualitative methodology, retaining the original emotion of the experiences creates a more identifiable experience as a piece of filmmaking, and serves to further the research, rather than take away from it.

Presenting the data in this way answers one of Kirsch’s (1999) guiding questions for feminist research: how lived experience is transformed into research data, or the politics of interpretation (as quoted in Lamanna, 2008). While you can see the participants’ experiences through a qualitative analysis lens within the written component, you are also able to see a condensed version as presented by the participants themselves within the webseries, and in full as transcripts within the Appendices. This not only allows for future researchers to see the experiences presented, as Smith & Dean (2009) suggest, more authentically, but also shows how I have shaped the data by viewing both the original presentation of it as well as my interpretation. This, once again, ties into the feminist framework — ensuring that the lens through which I have created and shaped the analysis does not go unnoticed.

Kirsch's (1999) other guiding question also relates to the creative-practice: how research is disseminated to various audiences, or the politics of publication. Kirsch cautions feminist researchers who look to use experimental publication practices, and Lamanna (2008) uses this as a point of reflection in her own creative-practice research. Much of both Kirsch and Lamanna's discussion is centered around the power dynamics in creating multi-vocal texts where "the author, working backstage so to speak, still remains in control. She scripts choreographs, directs, and produces the voices appearing on the page" (Kirsch, 1999, p. 68, as quoted in Lamanna, 2008)<sup>50</sup>. In Lamanna's research, which uses digital ethnography, she created a digital interface similar to that of a desktop computer in which her research is presented as video, audio, text, and still images and organised in folders. She describes this as allowing the viewer to "move through the piece at [their] own pace and in the order of [their] choosing. Because the user juxtaposes the data in multiple ways and is continually reminded of my hand in gathering the data, the constructiveness of the narrative is foregrounded" (p. 11). The presentation of my creative-practice output is similar — with the viewer presented with multiple episodes to choose from via either the Online Heroines website or on the Online Heroines YouTube channel. Like Lamanna's research, this allows them to construct their own narrative from the data, and choose the experiences which interest them the most. It also reinforces that this research has been constructed by someone; while they are able to view the experiences in the manner in which they were originally presented, the nature of watching the videos reinforces that those experiences were chosen and contextualised to fit within a wider purpose.

A different aspect of the politics of publication is who is able to access the research. Research in this field is not only of interest to those in screen and media studies, but also could be useful for policy makers within government,

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<sup>50</sup> I have covered much of their points about power dynamics in feminist research in the paragraphs above, as well as in Section 3.1.

industry organisations, and other filmmakers. While the University of Waikato's Research Commons is open access, it may not be the first place to look for resources as a filmmaker, or even as a person with a general interest in women in film. There is also the potential inaccessibility of academic vernacular, as some people may struggle with the length and level of language required of a thesis. By having a creative-practice output, the potential for reaching a wider audience who may find use for the research is higher, and in a format which may also be more easily understandable.

Brown & Sorensen (2009) cite the individualistic nature of creative practice, versus academic research — which aims to uncover knowledge that was previously unresearched within the field — as a tension in creating practice-led research. In choosing the output of a webseries, which is primarily drawing upon documentary as a genre, there is less ambiguous creative expression involved and more focus on the communication of specific experiences and ideas. While any viewers of film-based media are going to interpret the media based around their own experiences and understandings, having a participant present their experience directly to the viewer is much less enigmatic and debateable than a piece of more abstract art presented to the viewer based on their experiences. While some forms of creative-practice may be based in experimentation, especially in terms of media and form, this creative-practice output is instead rooted in effective visual communication; namely, communicating the experiences presented by the participants.

### Section 3.2.2: Format and genre: Documentary webseries

There is a distinction to be made between the broad notion of non-fiction films, which are any kind of instructional, corporate film, historical, or biographical film or an advertisement, and the specific non-fiction genre of documentary

(Plantinga, 2005). Documentary is seen to have more “aesthetic, social, rhetorical, and/or political ambition” than other non-fiction films (p. 105), and filmmaker and theorist John Grierson characterises documentary as the “creative treatment of actuality” ( Plantinga, 2005, p. 105). However, this ‘actuality’ is still artificially constructed. Film scholar Bill Nichols describes how self-consciousness and the responses to the act of being filmed can change what is being recorded in Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin’s *Chronique d’un été (Chronicle of a Summer)* (Dauman, Rouch & Morin, 1961):

They recruit a group of individuals in Paris in the summer of 1960, follow them, gather them together for discussions, and record how they act. In some cases, the filmmakers instigate what happens. At one point, for example, Rouch asks Landry, a student from the Ivory Coast, if he knows what the tattoo on Marceline Loridan’s forearm represents. No, he says, and Loridan then recounts her experience in a concentration camp during World War II. This exchange would have never happened without the filmmaker’s active intervention, but the role of the social actors and their capacity to be themselves does not change. (2017, p. 32)

Rather than attempting a fly-on-the-wall approach (known as ‘direct cinema’) and trying to record an event which could have occurred regardless of the camera, Rouch and Morin created a set-up in which their subjects would discuss what they wanted. Rouch and Morin called this *cinéma vérité* — or truthful cinema, and is often categorised as a lack of narrator voice-over, but with the filmmaker interacting with the subjects they are filming (Nichols, 2017). Of the six sub-genres of documentary set out by Nichols — expository, observational, poetic, participatory, reflective, and performative — *cinéma vérité* falls under participatory, and seemed the most relevant considering the semi-structured interviews I would be conducting.

Yet, feminist film theorists took issue with the mainstream presentation of documentary, including *cinema vérité* (Harvey, 1986; Johnston, 1999), for appearing more objective than they really were: “they are not neutral, as many ‘revolutionary’ film-makers [*sic*] appear to believe” (Johnston, 1999, p. 36). Their criticisms were centered around the claim of ‘realism’ cinema, rather than dismissing documentary as a whole — as Pam Cook said, “it’s the idea of realism which we’re trying to question” (Kaplan, 1977, as quoted in Warren, 2008, p. 16). *Cinema vérité* was, however, a genre used by many feminist filmmakers, but used in a way which was distinct from mainstream uses. Particularly in the 1970s, feminist documentary films centered around women’s experiences “at home, at work, within the [feminist] movement, in bed, and in the doctor’s offices”, which was seen as “innovative and radicalising” for showing women who were not “femme fatales, smothering mothers or bathing beauties” (Warren, 2008, p. 6). Their use of the format was distinct because of the relationship the filmmakers had with their subjects, their activism, and the effect they sought their films to have. Feminist film theorist Julia Lesage (1986) suggested that *cinema vérité* is the most effective way for feminist filmmakers to share women’s experiences — in order to get women to share their experiences on topics which may otherwise seem taboo, and that those individual experiences are able to be seen within a wider context. This was directly in line with second-wave feminist aims of ‘consciousness-raising’, or making women aware of the collective oppression they experienced. While using a handheld camera, being heard interacting with the subjects off camera, or showing film equipment in shot — characteristics of *cinema vérité* — denounced a transparency and honesty in reminding viewers that the film was constructed, mainstream filmmakers were seen to take for granted or not to examine the inherent bias and worldview which they were also imposing. For theorists like Lesage, feminist documentary films were more ‘truthful’ as they sought to show ‘real’ women — rather than the “fantasies of male filmmakers” (New Day Films, as quoted in Warren, 2008, p. 4) — and therefore seen to be more transparent about the (feminist) ideologies behind their films.

E. Ann Kaplan described *cinema vérité* as both the exemplary aesthetic of realism and one of the 'simplest and cheapest' forms of filmmaking (as quoted in Warren, 2008, p. 11). Shilyh Warren (2008) is critical of Kaplan assuming that feminist filmmakers chose *vérité* because of their financial situations and lack of expertise in making other types of films, and instead suggests the aesthetic and style present their own opportunities. Warren describes the intended effect of feminist documentary *Growing Up Female* (Reichert & Klein, 1971), and how it linked with second-wave feminist action:

Stitching together six portraits of girls and women at different stages of "womanhood," the film argues that American womanhood is a sham. The only solution for "the American woman" is solidarity with other women. Urging women to unite, the film clearly operates in tandem with women's liberation activism and the program of feminist consciousness-raising, both thematically and aesthetically, as it tries to convince women that they need each other and a movement to change the course of their collective future. (p. 8)<sup>51</sup>

As Section 1.1 covered, there has been increasing research in the last 5–10 years around women's access and participation in the screen industries. That research has both informed and been informed by the surrounding action within the screen industries worldwide. Protests have occurred at the Academy Awards, the Cannes Film Festival, the Australian Academy of Cinema and Television awards, the British Academy of Film and Television Arts Awards in the past three years due to the lack of both gender and racial diversity in the screen industries (Carr, 2015; Clarke, 2018; Hunt, 2016; Keegan & Zeitchik, 2016; Mortimer, 2016; Wilkinson, 2018). Just as second-wave feminist filmmakers designed their

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<sup>51</sup> Similar to many criticisms of second-wave feminism in general, many feminist documentary films of the 1970s were seen as only representing 'the American woman' who were also white, middle-class, cisgender, and straight (Warren, 2008).

documentaries to make women aware of the collective issues surrounding their individual experiences, the result of Aotearoa New Zealand women filmmakers speaking out about their experiences could create wider awareness for widespread problems they face as well.

The use of *cinema verité* in this way sits apart from action happening in other, bigger countries like the US and UK, as it does not focus on creating disruption or embarrassment<sup>52</sup> as protests do. Instead, taking a personable approach, it aims to build identification similar to how de Beauvoir and Young (Kruks, 2014) contextualise their experiences in order to resonate their research with specific others. However, some theorists are critical as to whether this method is effective — Claire Johnston said, “I have often been very struck by *cinema verite* [*sic*] movies and am convinced of their importance to the women’s movement. But to people outside, what a lot of *cinema verite* [*sic*] movies do—women talking endlessly about their experiences—often has no effect at all. It doesn’t do any work in terms of presenting ideas or actually engaging the audience at any level. It encourages passivity” (as quoted in Warren, 2008, p. 16). This is an important point, as it could be easy to assume that the experiences presented will speak for themselves. That said, the surrounding presentation of films has changed significantly with online platforms, and does a lot to contextualise and market the film to audiences who will be invested and interested in it in the first place.

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<sup>52</sup> Which can be effective in bringing about change.

### Section 3.3: Creative process

Before any creative process could begin, I needed to make some decisions about the specific format of the creative output. Specifically choosing a webseries has an effect on the reception of the media, as opposed to choosing a short film, a feature length film, or another format entirely. This ties into Marshall McLuhan's idea of 'the medium is the message' (1964) — that the message which any piece of media conveys is influenced by the medium chosen in which to deliver it. Mark Federman describes McLuhan's idea in this way: "the message of a newscast are not the news stories themselves, but a change in the public attitude towards crime, or the creation of a climate of fear" (2004, para. 6). By choosing a webseries as the medium, this influences how a viewer understands the content, but it also may change the attitude of the viewer due to the nature of it being a webseries itself. For example, applying a documentary genre to the content may mean that the content is taken more seriously and at face value, as it is presented in a way which appears more believable and true-to-life than a fictional narrative. The shorter, episodic, and less formal format of a webseries may make the content appear more alternative, as it has not been distributed via a traditional broadcast platform, such as television. By publishing a creative output, which has been a part of academic research, on YouTube, it might contribute to validating the platform as being more intellectual. It could, however, generate the opposite effect of making the research appear simplistic. Practically speaking, a webseries fitted within a platform (online) and format I have experience using, and would create similarities between myself and my participants (asking questions both as a researcher and as a woman filmmaker working in a similar format). From there, I chose to use YouTube as the hosting platform over Vimeo, as YouTube has a much wider user base and I wanted the ability to organically reach as many people as possible through the platforms I chose.

### Section 3.3.1: Title and filming

In past projects it has been easier to come up with a name after filming and editing is complete, however, this time I felt it appropriate to start with a name for the webseries. After much googling of synonyms for ‘women’, ‘online’, and ‘filmmakers’, I settled on ‘Online Heroines’ — suggesting the idea of these women being amongst the first filmmakers to explore online platforms<sup>53</sup>, and who could be seen as courageous for doing so<sup>54</sup>. Many of the filmmakers also centre their content around women, so the name ‘Online Heroines’ could also be seen as referencing the media they make as well. However, even choosing a name was not without its own politics. I was asked (with significant negative connotations) by a man I met at an event why I chose ‘heroine’, not ‘hero’ for the series. While the word ‘hero’ can be used to refer to people of all genders, considering how excluded women have been from the film industry, since its inception, deliberately choosing its feminine form seemed pertinent.

Having added to my initial list of women filmmakers (Appendix I), I now had a much larger list, and began to contact potential participants — trying to have a general balance of the platforms and formats and their roles within production, as well as ethnicity, education, gender identity, sexuality, and disabilities. However, much of the latter was difficult to be sure of if it was not something which they spoke about openly. I reached out to all trans, Māori, Pasifika, and Asian women filmmakers whom I had contact details for<sup>55</sup>, but I was only able to organise an interview with Britney Hazeldine (Pākehā/Māori; Tainui).

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<sup>53</sup> The term ‘pioneer’ has been used in the past to describe filmmakers doing similar things, but has a colonial implication which I did not want to imply.

<sup>54</sup> I felt at the time that ‘heroine’ came across as old-fashioned, but the Lorde album *Pure Heroine* had come out a few years earlier so was not too uncool to use.

<sup>55</sup> Which were Nikola Pilawa (trans), Britney Hazeldine (Pākehā-Māori; Tainui), Emily Muli (Tongan), Rose Matafeo (Pākehā-Samoan), Bronwyn Chin (Chinese), Bonnie Hu (Chinese), Sherry and Sarah of Doubly SS (Korean), and Kerry Warkia (Papua New Guinean).

In terms of what roles constituted being a ‘filmmaker’, I made the decision to seek out all women who had held at least one of the following above-the-line roles: director, writer, producer, and/or executive producers. I deliberately excluded women who had only been actors on online projects, although some might consider their roles as above-the-line. There was less guarantee that they had been a significant part of the creative, technical, and production process, and I felt that the experience of being an actor on set could be considerably different to that of someone also working in a behind-the-scenes role<sup>56</sup>.

By the end of the end of September 2015, I had approached 26 filmmakers (assuming that not all would be available for an interview), with an additional seven who approached me about the project. That included Hweiling Ow (Malaysian) and Tegan Morris (muscular dystrophy, wheelchair user, partially sighted). Of the total 33 filmmakers I approached, or who approached me, I held twelve interviews with sixteen participants. I travelled to Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch in October and November 2015 to hold the interviews, as well as holding one interview in Hamilton, and one online via Skype.

*Table 1.* Breakdown of final<sup>57</sup> participants by format, platform and role.

Name		Format	Platform	Role
Candlelit Pictures	Alix Whittaker	Music videos	Vimeo	Executive producer, producer
	Anna Duckworth			

<sup>56</sup> However, if someone had been an actor *and* director, *et cetera*, that would have been fine.

<sup>57</sup> As two participants later withdrew from the research, I have not included them in this data. Hweiling Ow was not included in the webseries, but has been included in the analysis and this table.

Hazel Gibson		webseries	YouTube		
Morgan Leigh Stewart					
Hweiling Ow					Producer
The Candle Wasters	Sally Bollinger				Director, writer
	Elsie Bollinger				Director, writer
	Minnie Grace				Writer, producer <sup>58</sup>
	Claris Jacobs	Writer <sup>59</sup>			
Bea Jobin		Youtube channel		Director, writer, producer	
Britney Hazeldine					
Charli Prangley					
Tegan Morris					
Kimberley McManus					

Before I held the interviews I had organised, I did two pilot interviews in Hamilton with women I knew who were bloggers, who had been interested in using video as part of their wider web presence. This gave me practice in setting up a frame I liked, testing the equipment I would be using, filming in an uncontrolled setting, asking the sample questions to people outside of academia, and answering questions about the research project itself. This also allowed my practice participants to think about the strategies they were going to be using in

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<sup>58</sup> Minnie is also the “co-everything else which we don’t say as a specific role”.

<sup>59</sup> Claris is also the cinematographer and production designer, however, I wasn’t asking her specifically about those roles.

their own projects, and discuss them with someone who was engaged in a similar practice. Through doing this, I identified some key issues with the University's technology I was borrowing, which allowed me time to find work-arounds before filming the other participants<sup>60</sup>. It also was a chance to refine my call sheets (Appendix II), including adding information which I had missed out but was necessary, as well as additional notes which would support working around my own constraints (such as a checklist of forms which must be signed).

On the day of the interview, I would meet with the participants and before filming took place, provide them with a consent form<sup>61</sup>, license form, and an additional form which took in a selection of personal information: age, ethnicity (including iwi), education, sexuality<sup>62</sup>, religion, gender identity<sup>63</sup>, preferred pronouns, and illnesses and disabilities. This was so I could write about the participants appropriately (e.g. use their correct pronouns), but also see the diversity of the women I was representing in my research. I also included the instruction to leave any fields blank that they did not feel comfortable answering, as well as fields for them to write their own answers, on all questions except for age range. This was important to my framework and methodology, as it allowed the participants to create and define their own labels (Garner & Scott, 2013) in terms of how they identify themselves and therefore presents a more authentic representation of them. I was surprised by the limited age range of the participants — with all participants falling between 15–39 — as many well known women filmmakers from Aotearoa New Zealand are much older, such as Gaylene Preston (b. 1947), Jane Campion (b. 1954) and Niki Caro (b. 1967). Seeing the education level of the participants was also interesting, with the majority being university graduates. I regret not also capturing whether or not they studied

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<sup>60</sup> As discussed in more detail in Section 3.1.4.

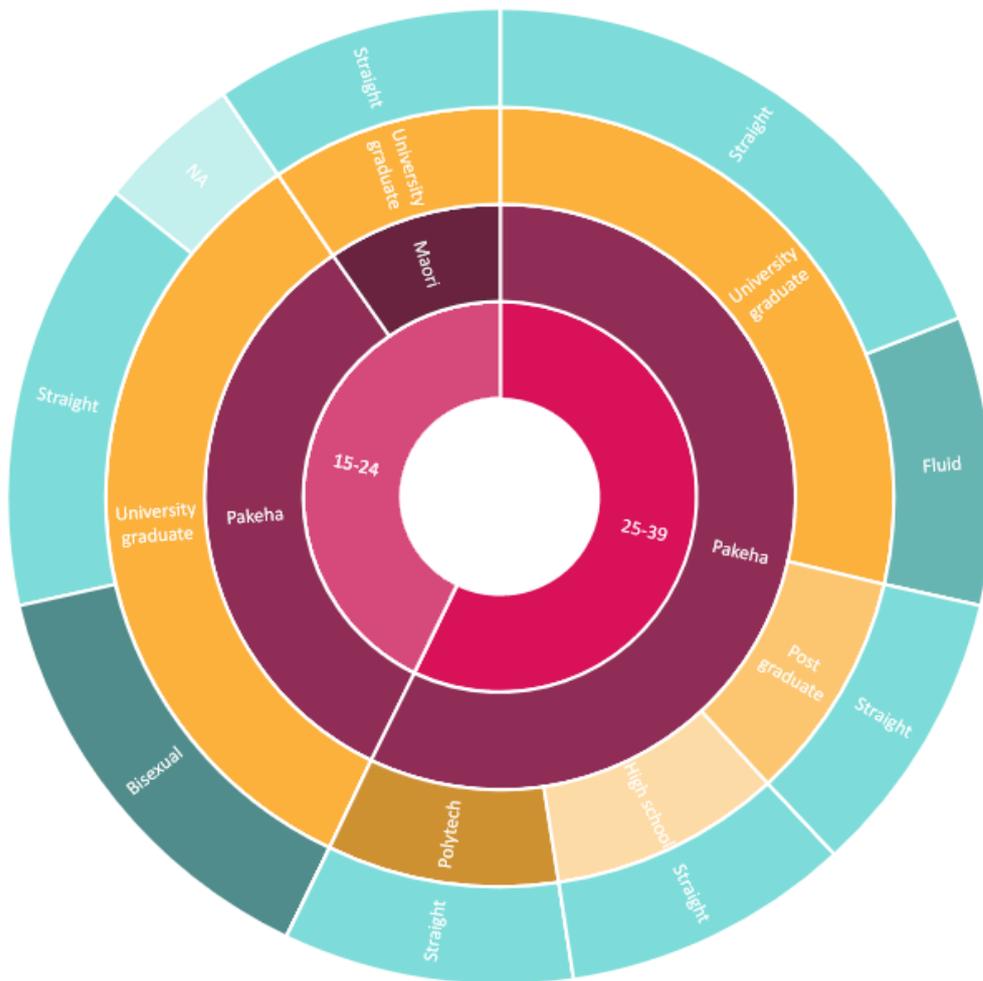
<sup>61</sup> Which being a part of the 60–90 minute interview, the web episode produced from the interview being published online, and their statements being published in the written thesis.

<sup>62</sup> With the option for sexuality to be anonymised.

<sup>63</sup> This included a description of cis, trans, and a space to write in your own gender identifier.

media or film at a tertiary level, as that would have added an interesting depth to that information. Minnie Grace, from the Candle Wasters, asked if they could keep a copy of the form as a basis for their own work, as they seek to create authentic representations of young New Zealanders and appreciated the range of identities covered. One change which I would make to the form in retrospect is to be clearer about the question about disabilities — “are there any illnesses or disabilities which you feel are relevant to your process?” I would be interested to see if there were a change in responses if the question were more explicit about including mental illnesses in that category (as I feel personally that my mental illnesses affect my filmmaking process as much as my physical limitations do). Using the term ‘disabilities’ can also be loaded, and their response to that question might depend on whether they identify as a person with a disability. I also later questioned if this needed to be an open field, or a yes-no question, and whether that would impact how people answered it.

Table 2. Graph showing some of the various intersecting identities of the webseries participants: age, ethnicity, education, and sexuality.



I provided the participants with an information sheet when I first reached out to them via email, and then closer to the date of filming. I also emailed them the sample interview questions, which I had developed with Craig Hight from the Screen and Media department at Waikato while applying for Human Ethics approval. Listed in Table 3, these centred around answering the central research question — why do women filmmakers working in Aotearoa New Zealand create and publish using online platforms? The sample interview questions help to

create a type of interview environment where knowledge and experiences are openly shared, namely on where there was no 'correct' way of answering it, and being able to follow up a statement was encouraged in order to further understand their experience (Burger, 2014; Lamanna, 2008). I had the sample questions printed out and took them with me to each interview; I would sometimes ask all of the questions, would sometimes pick and choose what was appropriate, and sometimes rephrase them to make them easier to understand or relate more specifically to the work they were engaged with<sup>64</sup>.

As a more approachable way to start the interview, I began the interviews by asking the participants what work inspired them to create in the ways they do. By discussing someone else's work first, and generally sharing an enthusiasm for particular media with me, it eased the participants into talking about their own work afterwards. At the end of each interview, I would ask if there was anything they wanted to discuss which I had not already asked about. This was particularly interesting as sometimes they would bring things up which I had not considered being an issue as a filmmaker, and other times I would use this as an opportunity to discuss their feelings about being a woman filmmaker, if they had not brought it up already. Many of the more personal stories came out of me giving examples of times I had seen or experienced sexual harassment on film sets or examples which I perceived to be rooted in sexism or inequality — an act of building trust with the participants and giving a point of 'sameness' to relate with (Grenz, 2014). I first noticed the trend of not talking about these kinds of experiences at a Women in Film and Television event entitled *Where Are The Women Filmmakers* in 2014. When the discussion turned to gatekeeping, it wasn't until I put my hand up and asked about sexual harassment that anyone was willing to discuss its effects on women working in the industry. It required someone going

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<sup>64</sup> This happened often with the filmmakers who were running YouTube channels.

first<sup>65</sup>. I applied the same theory to the interviews: mentioning my experiences first, then seeing what they would share in return — tying in with the feminist framework around creating a safe environment within my own research practices.

During the time I was filming this, I was in the middle of a significant period of anxiety and depression in my life, and this made asking follow up questions more difficult than they would have been otherwise. There were also several interviews where the participant would move within the frame, often moving out of focus and staying there for periods of time, and my anxiety made it more difficult to feel I could stop the interview and reposition the camera. In retrospect, I would be much more confident about ensuring that the aesthetics of the frame were how I envisioned. There was also one participant who used words which can be viewed as slurs by some members of the group they were referring to, however, during filming I didn't feel comfortable asking them about it on camera. This was reinforced when, as one of the interview questions, I asked how they take on board feedback and they said they ignored it. When I did, at a later date, ask the participant about their choice of language, they pulled out of the research. This reduced my numbers from 12 interviews, to 11.

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<sup>65</sup> Which was not an insignificant action considering how much power I had in the room compared to people who were there from the New Zealand Film Commission and South Pacific Pictures.

Table 3. Sample questions provided to participants

Opening question	Follow up question
Can you tell me about some projects where you had a significant production role, which were published through an online platform?	
Were you inspired by other content creators?	
Have you tried traditional means of making and publishing media?	Did you feel it was successful?
What made you choose this particular way of publishing media?	
What created your initial desire to make and publish media online?	
Was it in getting the content to an audience and this was the best medium or was it in creating video-based media itself?	
What is your current process for making and publishing media?	How did it develop?
What platforms do you use to publish your work and why did you choose them?	
Do you feel there is one “best practice” for making online media?	
Do you feel there are commonalities between using, making and publishing media online and traditional methods?	

How do you measure success?	Is that something which is important to you?
Do you feel this is a worthwhile way of making and publishing media?	Will you continue it in the future?
Do you work (for main creative roles such as writing & directing) alone? As a team?	What are the pros and cons of this?
Because you have the opportunity for direct audience feedback, how does that affect your process?	What are the pros and cons of this?
Are there any supporting platforms you use to publicise or engage with your audience?	Do you feel this is important?
What are your personal viewing habits?	Do they align with your process?
What were the most positive experiences to come out of this process of making and publishing media?	And the most negative?
Do you have advice for other women wanting to create media?	What would you do differently if starting again?
Do you feel the online media landscape is becoming overcrowded?	
How do you make sure your work is seen?	Is that a concern to your process?

The particular technique of *cinema vérité* which both mainstream and feminist filmmaking had in common was interviews with their subjects — particularly having their subjects speaking directly to camera (Warren, 2008). By being asked specific and follow up questions by the interviewer, this relates back to the ideas presented by Oakley, Mies, and Kirsch (Grenz, 2014), as well as Lamanna (2008) about entering into a more equal dialogue with interview participants and moving away from a ‘neutral’ position. In doing research for the style of cinematography and editing, I watched a variety of documentaries to look at how they constructed an aesthetic and created an engaging piece of media: *Tabloid* (Morris, 2010), *Catfish* (Joost & Schulman, 2010), *Capturing the Friedmans* (Jarecki, 2003), *Roger & Me* (Moore, 1989). I did not just look at *cinema vérité* films, as I will be using the main convention of *cinema vérité* regardless — interacting and being directed by the filmmaker off camera — but wanted to look at how framing, editing, lighting, and pacing are effectively used more widely in documentary film<sup>66</sup>.

I really appreciated the staging and lighting used in *Tabloid*, as well as the cohesive graphic design used on the titles and surrounding media — with a newspaper background, a bold display typeface, text underlined in red, and a faux-sellotape effect holding the titles ‘down’. In *Catfish*, I felt the handcam footage, and sloppily framed shots certainly cheapened the film — something Kaplan touched on about *cinema vérité* in Section 3.2.2 (as cited in Warren, 2008). While moving camera is definitely something used in vlogs and on YouTube, the general use of whatever lighting is available and lack of framing in *Catfish* isn’t an aesthetic which I feel works when the webseries will be sitting with both a mix of completely amateur work, and very professional work (as happens with online platform). I don’t want it to look amateurish, I want it to look like it should be taken seriously, and is respectful to the participants and the

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<sup>66</sup> I was not able to watch any feminist documentary films, and that was a disappointment, as I would have really loved to also look at the choices they made in more depth. This was mainly due to a lack of access to them.

work they create. Creating a handcam style look also would not work with my own limitations — I did not have time to spend following my participants around in the same style *Catfish* used, but would also not have been able to physically hold the camera for the length of time required to achieve that as a coherent style due to my disabilities.

This informed my filming choices, and I decided to go with a single camera set-up, with a tripod, lapel microphone, and my smartphone acting as the sound recorder. In terms of the mise-en-scène, I wanted to keep the participants sitting on the rule of thirds line, so I would have space to place titles (name, role, etcetera) on the opposite side. Ensuring some white space was important, as I didn't want their 'talking heads' to feel too close, while also still framing the participants in an interesting, aesthetically pleasing way. I wanted to give enough space around the subject that it didn't feel uncomfortable to watch for a long period of time, while also being close enough that the focus was on what they were saying, and that the audience didn't feel too distant from the subject as it was personal experiences and stories which were being told. I ended up going with a mid-shot from the waist up, and include a buffer space around the top. This, however, became complicated when trying to put multiple people in one shot, as well as when I wasn't able to scout a definite location beforehand. I was happy for the background to be somewhat busy, since it was going to be out of focus, as the lighting was the main priority when choosing a location. However, I deliberately set up the shot so the camera was eye level. I didn't want to take a subtle high angle – which some might consider more 'flattering', but makes the participant look down on the audience, nor a low angle which can be unnatural and makes the participant look like they're overpowering the audience. I wanted the audience and the subjects to be equal, so arranged the composition to mirror this idea.

Sound was the single biggest issue whilst filming, as I generally filmed in a public space, and compromising background, lighting, and sound in order to have the

most aesthetically pleasing shot was often difficult. In one interview, we restarted three times in order to find a suitable place, while in others it was bright with little shade, which ended up with the participant sitting in the shade (so that she wasn't squinting and had even lighting) but the background was still brightly lit, which was a distracting contrast. For the interview which I held via Skype (since Charli Prangle lives in London, and myself in Hamilton), I showed her stills from other interviews so she could set up the composition similar to the rest of the interviews. She then recorded the interview herself on her DSLR and with a directional microphone, and later sent the footage to me. It was also difficult to find a suitable time to film this interview as it was winter in London, and the daylight hours were very short, and there was a thirteen hour time difference between us. For the interview with Hazel Gibson and Morgan Stewart, I got them to sit close together, and as I only had one lapel microphone, instead used my directional microphone. This was okay since we were in a very quiet space, but as it was a large room, using lapel microphones would have decreased the echo. I did the same thing with the Candle Wasters, which was four people in one frame, and again, in a quiet space, but having four lapel microphones would have been the preferred option as it would have made catching all their comments easier, since they talked over each other sometimes. As discussed in Section 3.1.4, using the directional microphone was the best I could do — and still better than just using the on-camera sound.

### Section 3.3.2: Design

As mentioned above, at the same time I implemented the standard design process I would ask graphic design clients about the identity they wanted to create for their project. This directed me and my thinking about the specific aims of the project, and how that should inform its wider visual aesthetic.

From there I brainstormed several concepts for the logo and examined how it would look within the multiple contexts (as a moving image, as a static image, on different backgrounds). I chose the heavy, brush font Sunfast for the text 'Online Heroines'<sup>67</sup> and then to contrast for the tagline, the sans-serif Google typeface Lato<sup>68</sup>. This meant that the logo sat well with other logos for similar organisations (like The Establishment and Rookie mentioned earlier) but was not exactly the same, and the use of a sans-serif typeface gave a more modern and well-rounded appearance to the logo.



*Figure 1: An unused concept for the Online Heroines logo, featuring an alternative logo mark. (Source: Hutt, 2015).*

I also wanted some kind of logo image (rather than just a wordmark), so that I could create an opening title, so the logo image needed to be able to work with that too. I experimented with a range of filmmaking, computer, and online iconography, eventually settling on a mouse cursor — this is because the cursor was the most easily identifiable icon, as well as the tool used to create, access, and interact with technology and platforms. I purchased a license for this mouse image from icon website Noun Project via subscription, as I felt it best fit with the thickness and look of the display font Sunfast.

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<sup>67</sup> Which I purchased a license to use from website Creative Market for USD\$14, which covers both personal and commercial use.

<sup>68</sup> The pros to using a Google typeface is that they are free to use.



*Figure 2: The final logo, with Sunfast and Lato, as well as the cursor icon from Noun Project. (Source: Hutt, 2015).*

For the website, I chose the blogging platform Tumblr to embed the videos in and upload supporting content, as it allows the webseries to be seen both on YouTube itself, and shared within Tumblr<sup>69</sup>.

In terms of creating the titles animation, I looked up title tutorials and examples, and especially liked many of the examples in Minimal Titles by Dmitry Kolesnikov on Motion Array. This gave me ideas as to how I could introduce the titles in a simple but effective way; it doesn't need a lot of movement, nor a detailed background, but small and sharp expressions to introduce the titles in an interesting way.

When it came to making this in After Effects, I applied an animation preset to the 'Online Heroines' text and sped it up, but decided to fade in the 'Interviews with...' text afterwards. It also introduced the fade in effect I'd be using for the title cards later and was also more dynamic using two different animation styles. I added a mouse-click sound effect to signal the transition once the mouse image

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<sup>69</sup> It was also cheaper than paying for hosting from a provider. I bought the domain name <http://onlineheroines.com> for US\$10.69 and redirected it to point towards the Tumblr hosting. I looked through a variety of Tumblr themes and eventually went a minimal, responsive theme from Creative Market, which I purchased for US\$9.

had moved into place, as this made the titles more interesting and reiterated that the tools and platforms the audience was using to navigate the webseries was also part of what the webseries was about. I sourced the mouse click sound from website Freesound, and is licensed under a Creative Commons CC0 1.0 License (meaning it is in the public domain).

I added in title cards to the episodes but found the lack of audio was very noticeable, so I found some ambient noise from the audio track and put that in the gap. This also eased the transitions between the different audio cuts. I also integrated the audio so you hear Anna start talking while still watching the title card, and that way it makes the titles more interesting and the transition from title card to footage less abrupt. I made sure however, that when it transitioned from one to the other, it was in between her speaking — not mid-word. I used a fade in animation to bring in the title cards, which linked to the opening titles. I also decided to include end titles — I wanted to acknowledge the additional footage from Candlelit Pictures, but also felt it would make it seem more professional and polished. Youtube videos rarely have credits, but as this is a documentary webseries, not a narrative or personal Youtube channel, it seemed appropriate.

I created custom thumbnails for each of the videos — and this was when executing the wider branding design I had created for the logo became more difficult. On YouTube, interesting and effective thumbnails are an important aspect of the platform (Gielen, 2014; Smith, 2015). In not being more decisive about the background of the frame when filming, I had unknowingly created a problem for myself later on when it came to making effective thumbnails which fitted within the rest of the design theme. I had also not been decisive about a colour palette when filming — as I had little control over the filming locations and was prioritising lighting and sound quality, and did not want to dictate what

the participants wore either<sup>70</sup>. So when viewed as a set of thumbnails, while there was a motif in the type of shot used, there was no colours tying the different episodes together as a unified whole. While I could have colour graded every episode, in an attempt to unify them, it was quicker and easier to simply make all the thumbnails black and white. This was relatively effective, as it reduced the busyness of some of the backgrounds (Hazel and Morgan, and the Candle Wasters) but made the episodes which had the best lighting and contrast between subject and background much more appealing than ones which looked more flat and dark.

I had chosen a light cyan colour to compliment the black and white theme I was otherwise using — initially just to be used within the website theme — however, as black or white text wasn't going to be readable against the black and white thumbnails, I also used it there. I had to adjust the particular shade of this colour in order to be readable against the thumbnail stills and as I was using the 'Online Heroines' font Sunfast for the thumbnail titles, and it became clear that this font worked far more effectively on the plain backgrounds, than it did on the busy ones. I run an online support group on Facebook called the Feminist Freelancer's Club, and I uploaded the thumbnails, and linked to the first draft of the Online Heroines website to get some critiques from fellow designers and creatives who would have some interest in the topic. This was really valuable, as it helped me to brainstorm ways of making the design more effective — they suggested putting a gradient behind the names on the thumbnails, and changing the hyperlinks to have a grey over effect rather than the blue.

I changed the blue accent from #b0ebe9 to #7ddcd9 so that it stood out more (especially on the About and Contact pages headers, and when you hovered over a link), and fixed the code which was making my email hyperlink blue instead of grey. I also changed the thumbnail from having a grey opacity layer over the top,

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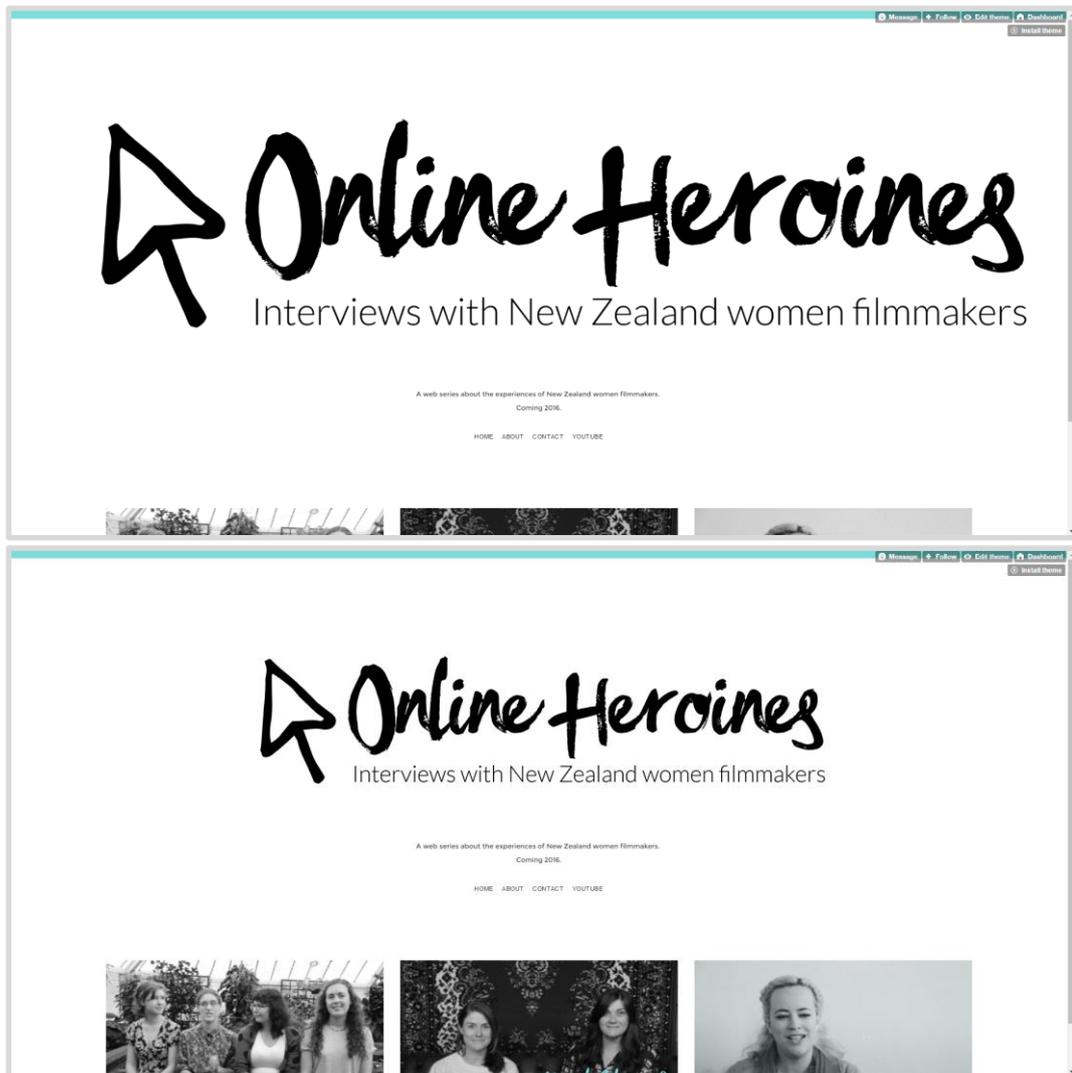
<sup>70</sup> This was so they felt the most comfortable on screen, and they were an authentic representation of themselves too.

to a gradient opacity layer going from white to a darker grey. This has made the image darker where the text was, and kept the participants faces from becoming too dull. I played around with putting a thin, dark grey stroke on the outside of the text, but because it is a brush script, however, it muddied the design and went away from the minimalist theme I was going for.

While I had bought this Tumblr theme because the layout was responsive — a key aspect of website design when many viewers may be accessing the site on their smartphones. However, when I inserted my own logo into the header, it wouldn't resize and instead cut half the logo off when viewed on a mobile device. This required me to do some minor alterations to the code to fix it: from `height:250px !important;` to `max-width:100%;` so that it would scale to the right width depending on the browser's size. However, this made the desktop and laptop versions have a huge logo, as I had uploaded the logo at full resolution, so I simply resized the logo in Photoshop (from 2534x589px<sup>71</sup> to 1034x250 px) so that the biggest version would only be 250px high, which is what the original code specified. While this may seem overly detailed, I have included this to highlight the range of skills needed to be a writer-director-producer using online platforms — which includes basic HTML and front-end Web design.

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<sup>71</sup> I had made the logo such high resolution in case I had wanted to animate it in a way that made it bigger than the video resolution of 1920x1080. However, the file size was still only 238kB which is why I hadn't resized it for web earlier.



*Figure 3.* Screenshots of the Online Heroines website before and after I amended the code to resize the logo properly (Source: Hutt, 2016).

While making the titles and amending the website, I also created the channel artwork for YouTube. YouTube provides templates, so I used that to ensure the logo would fit on all devices they channel might be viewed on (e.g. mobile, laptop, desktop, television). I also implemented the same blue line which is in the Tumblr theme into the channel artwork for YouTube, maintaining consistency within the graphic design for the webseries across multiple platforms. I used the mouse icon as the channel's profile photo, and also enabled this to be overlaid as a watermark in the bottom right hand corner through YouTube's settings. This means that if anyone downloads the video and tried to use it elsewhere, it will

be overlaid in the file, and also creates a more professional look for the episodes on YouTube. Appearing professional was important in order to stand apart from the hundreds and thousands of hours of content available on YouTube, much of which is created by amateurs, and as a value indicator as to the potential quality of the video content itself.



*Figure 4.* A cropped screenshot of the Online Heroines YouTube channel, on the 'About' page (Source: Hutt, 2016)

### Section 3.3.3: Editing and publishing

Once the interviews were complete, I then moved onto transcribing them. When I have filmed and edited interviews for past projects, I have never transcribed the original raw footage — only ever the completed edit for creating closed captions. However, I needed to transcribe the raw footage so that I had the full data from the interview to use in the qualitative analysis. By May 2016, I had only transcribed two of the interviews, as I was finding the long levels of focus required very difficult to maintain, as well as designing and creating the supporting media for the webseries at the same time. Friends of mine, who were interested in the project, offered to help me transcribe the episodes, and I gained ethics approval to do so, as long as the transcribers signed confidentiality

agreements and deleted all video and audio footage they had been sent once the transcribing process was complete, which they did. It was during this time that I found that Hweiling Ow's footage was missing, but that I still had her audio files from the lapel microphone — reducing my interviews from 11 to 10.

Once the transcripts were complete, I sent them off to the participants for review — this was one of several crucial steps in creating a collaborative process and lessening the power structures between myself and the participants. It was also through this process in which one of the participants reflected on her safety and decided that it was better to not be included in the webseries, making my final number of webseries episodes 9, from the original 12 I had filmed. She had been working with a male director for a web-based project and was only allowed to speak about the project with his permission, and as per her agreements with him, had to run all her recorded statements past him. The edits to her transcript were severe, cutting almost all comments which were critical of the project she had worked on. All mentions of other projects she had mentioned in passing or critiqued were also cut. Otherwise, however, none of the remaining participants requested any changes to their transcripts.

Once I had the approved transcripts, I began editing. I edited Anna Duckworth's episode first, and in my first edit simply took out all of the dead air, footage of me asking the questions off camera, and any large pauses or umms. This gave me 46 minute of footage, which I then edited down to 17 minutes. To do this I used the transcript and organised the footage by themes, and then took out any points which were repeats, or weren't explained as clearly as others, and statements which I didn't think were as interesting or on-topic. While taking the footage of myself asking questions out of the episode might seem to be working against the convention of *cinema vérité*, it was to make the footage more streamlined (so there is more of the participant talking and less of them listening to me speaking) and because I was not recording myself with a microphone, so the audio of me speaking was very quiet and distant.

I sent this very rough cut to Anna for her feedback, and asking if she had any footage or stills I could use to intersperse the footage of her talking. Anna gave me links to two behind the scenes videos, as well as some music videos she was involved in, and links to photos on the Candlelit Pictures Facebook page. I then cut it down the episode again, this time to 9 minutes (my goal was under 10), and overlaid relevant footage with points Anna made. I then sent this to Anna, and asked her permission to send it to other people for feedback, which she consented to. I sent it to friends of mine who work in media, Craig Hight from the Screen & Media department at Waikato, friends of mine who are regular Youtube users, and my mum – in order to get a range of feedback on length, engagement, and design. While my target audience is other women filmmakers, I wanted to check with people outside that demographic, including men, to make sure it was something they could still watch, understand and enjoy. After discussions, we agreed about using title cards — as there was only so much additional footage I could include, and this might help to keep the audience engaged the whole way through by showing the thematic links.

Other feedback included positive comments on the content of what she talks about, as well as the balance between being concise and but still enough detail for them to make their points. It was also suggested to add more overlaid footage around the 1–5 minute range, as this was a long period of just watching Anna talk. From there on I tried to make sure there was additional footage every 1–2 minutes so that the participant wasn't talking for too long without a break. Another piece of feedback questioned the tone of the video. I had edited to be very quick and concise, and what she spoke about was engaging, but her delivery was very mellow. I could not afford to license music for the webseries, and was not able to find any creative commons or royalty free music which was suitable, which made it difficult to lessen the contrast between the two tonally different areas. Multiple people commented on the need for more introduction of Anna's roles and although Anna did introduce herself at the start of the video, this rough

cut was completely without any titles. It was at this stage that I made a note to put 'Anna Duckworth – Candlelit Pictures' and potentially include a little bit of information about Candlelit Pictures in the video description and on the website, in order to contextualise the videos further.

Once I had finished Anna's episode, I applied a streamlined version of the same process to the other participant's episodes:

1. Edit 1 - removing all dead air, ums and ahs, my questions
2. Edit 2 - condense by using the transcript, and organise by theme
3. Edit 3 - the ruthless edit (under 10 minutes)<sup>72</sup>
4. Edit 4 - adding titles and additional footage
5. Export as low resolution<sup>73</sup>
6. Send to participant for approval
7. Export as high resolution

All the participants gave me additional footage to use, and I acknowledged the use of this in the credits at the end of the episode. And once I had all the videos edited and approved by the participants, I then followed a second process for uploading them:

1. Upload to Youtube
2. Apply closed captioning
3. Change YouTube thumbnail
4. Write post for website
5. Load video in Tumblr post, with blurb
6. Change YouTube setting from private, to public

It was important to me that all the videos were closed captioned, as it allows a wide range of people to more easily access the content of them — whether that

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<sup>72</sup> Which I like to think of as the kill-your-darlings edit.

<sup>73</sup> This made it easier for the participants to review the video on their end, as I had sent them a link via cloud storage platform Dropbox.

was people who are hard of hearing or deaf, learnt English as a second language, struggle with an Aotearoa New Zealand accent or the pace the participants speak at, or even just simply prefer to watch with subtitles. Using the transcripts as a basis for my editings meant that I had been keeping track of the what I had been keeping in, what I had been removing, and how I had arranged the information, so there was no need to retranscribe the finished videos. While the video was uploading and transcoding, I uploaded the transcript file to Youtube and adjusted the automatic timings they had placed so they were in time with the audio.

### Section 3.3.5: Marketing strategy

For my own marketing strategy, I replicated similar approaches to my participants, using a cross-platform strategy and tailoring content to fit the expectations and affordances of different platforms. I created some written copy for each episode with the help of Chelsea Towers, a blogger and avid YouTube consumer<sup>74</sup>. Namely, one piece of copy for the YouTube description/website caption plus a pull quote which summaries what their discussion is about, a list of tags for YouTube, and a list of links to include in each blurb. On the website, I had designed the homepage so that under the embedded video there would be a pull quote from the participant, and then a ‘keep reading’ link for their full profile information. For example:

““It’s the new form of entertainment really, so many more people are flocking to YouTube rather than watching television.”

[read more break]

Kimberley McManus is a Youtuber, running Our Daily Life, who started out creating makeup videos, but now vlogs about her life as a solo mum

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<sup>74</sup> Who is also a close friend of mine, and thus why they volunteered for this job.

and reviews of children’s products. Kimberley has two kids, Zach and Sadie, and is currently studying to be a midwife. Get to know more about Kimberley, or subscribe to her Youtube channel at Our Daily Life [hyperlink]” (Hutt, 2016).

Using a quote in this way gives a bit more context when choosing what episode to watch when using the website, and, I hope, would encourage more people click on an episode even if it’s a creator they’ve never heard of before. The list of tags for YouTube was important for the video to be categorised correctly and work within YouTube’s algorithm — for it to be suggested to YouTube viewers, it needs to be hitting the right keywords. I came up with a collection of general tags for all the videos:

Women, filmmaking, interview, documentary, women in film, New Zealand, film industry, feminism, gender bias, discrimination, Online Heroines, online filmmaking.

Then a series of individual ones based on what the participant had discussed in the video and the kind of work that they did:

Charli Prangle, Youtube, Youtuber, NZ Youtube, NZ Youtuber, design, designer, vidcon, vlog, side project.

This meant that, hopefully, it would show up in searches for any of these keywords, and it would also be shown as suggested content to viewers of the participant’s content as well (if they also used YouTube).

I was a part of the Cultivate Mentoring Lab, and was being mentored by local marketing professional, Vicki Annison. Vicki and I created a press release and she helped me come up with a list of relevant media to reach out to. This included regional and national news outlets (mainly focusing on online platforms), film

industry guilds, unions, and organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand, advocacy groups for women locally and internationally, and a couple of film bloggers and journalists who I knew through Twitter. In the press release, I both gave some quotable information about the webseries (so they could publish straight from the press release if they wanted to), in addition to stating I was available for interviews. I assumed that most places would want to just re-publish the press release. That said, WIFT New Zealand was the only place which did so (and still wrote some custom copy to go along with it) (WIFT, 2016), although Online Heroines was included in the December video on demand and webseries picks for Women & Hollywood's blog (Montpelier, 2016). I did interviews with Auckland student radio station 95bFM, Aotearoa New Zealand industry website SCREENZ, and alternative media platform VICE (Barclay, 2016; Borissenko, 2016; Robinson, 2016). I did additional interviews with women and gender non-conforming filmmaking website The Light Leaks, as well as YouTube tutorial and educational website Premiere Gal, and Australian and New Zealand European film festival Down Under Berlin (Brannan, 2016; Gorman, 2017; Hoyos, 2017) from simply tweeting about the webseries. Some of these pieces were published a while after the webseries was released (particularly The Light Leaks and Down Under Berlin), but as it was available to watch online, people could still access it and it created an extended period of interest in the webseries outside of when it was first released. I also published an op-ed with Agnès Films, a women in film online community and advocacy website named for filmmaker Agnès Varda (Hutt, 2017). This was actually a condensed, written version of a 3 Minute Thesis presentation I had given earlier that year, and worked in well with Agnès Films asking if I would be keen to write something for them<sup>75</sup>. I had other work syndicated for Aotearoa New Zealand news and entertainment site The Spinoff, who were also keen for me to write something custom about the series for them,

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<sup>75</sup> I used the term 'pioneer' in this piece, despite having discussed my hesitations around using it within the webseries name, as a reference to how Deborah Shepard (2000) describes the way men are portrayed within the industry in contrast to women.

however, I am still yet to find the time to do so<sup>76</sup>. I was also fortunate to have been included in several pieces on Marian Evans blog's about women artists, writers and filmmakers (Evans, 2016; Evans, 2017a).

As part of the press release and promotion of the webseries, I also created three teaser trailers: Tegan, Anna, and Kimberly, which was released October 30<sup>th</sup>; Britney, Hazel and Morgan, and Alix, which was released on November 6<sup>th</sup>; and finally The Candle Wasters, Charli, and Bea, which was released on November 25<sup>th</sup>. The trailers<sup>77</sup> were one minute thirty to two minutes long each — significantly shorter than the episodes themselves, and a much more palatable YouTube length — and I tried to group the participants for the trailers based on a contrast in formats, platforms, and outputs. This was so that viewers would get an understanding of the breadth of the webseries and, hopefully, also interest as many different people as possible in the series.

In addition to the teaser trailers, I began a scheduled promotion of the different episodes before the webseries was live. I worked with social media strategist Rachel Lynch<sup>78</sup> to create additional promotional content from the core content of the series which I could share on various social media platforms. I took particularly thought-provoking and interesting quotes from the episodes, put them into a design template which was based around the existing website and thumbnail design, and created graphics I could upload to promote discussion and watching of the episodes. I paired this with my own statements about the series and tried to include keywords which might get picked up by people who were interested in similar topics (see Figure 5), but wouldn't bring people who might harass or abuse either myself or the participants<sup>79</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> I am hoping to do this once I have graduated.

<sup>77</sup> Available to watch on the Online Heroines YouTube channel.

<sup>78</sup> Who, in full disclosure, is another close friend of mine.

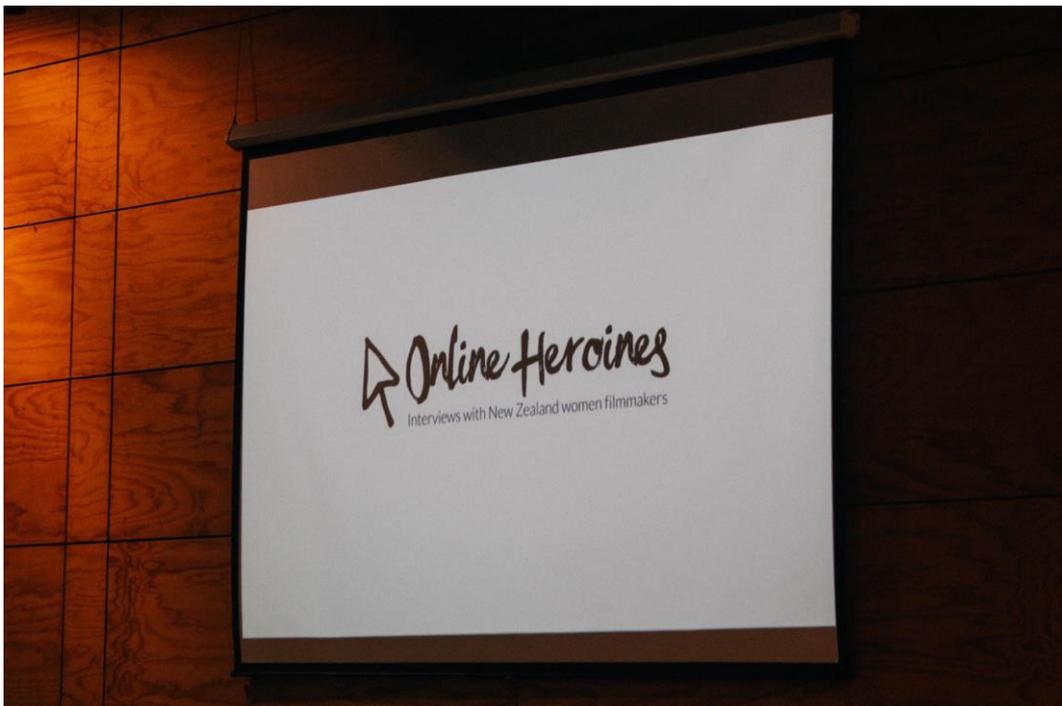
<sup>79</sup> E.g. On Twitter, I would use a hashtag like 'women in film' but not 'feminism' as one is a relatively niche interest, while the other is often trolled for easy targets of harassment.



*Figure 5.* Screenshot of a tweet with a quote graphic I made, tagging the filmmaker and linking back to the episode it comes from (Source: Hutt, 2016).

In addition to being a way to get let people hear about the webseries, it also created another avenue for commenting and engaging in discussion about the series. Replying to a quote from Morgan Leigh Stewart about whether there is financial equality between the types of films women produce, and the types of films men produce, feminist Josie Durney said, “this is one of my favourite quotes from your series – really makes you think about how's it's all about perspective” (2016). Filmmaker Belinder Pflaum responded to a quote about the future of filmmaking being online with “I agree with @AlixWhittaker on this one” (2016).

The episodes themselves were released on November 26th, at a small event I held on campus. I invited the participants, people who had supported me and the webseries, my supervisors and members of the Screen and Media Studies department, and some undergraduate students who I had tutored. I had the webseries, as a YouTube playlist, projected onto a wall, with the sound muted and the closed captioning turned on. This allowed people to watch the webseries, while also being able to network and chat without feeling like they were disturbing people watching the series. The event was both an opportunity to see the webseries as soon as it was available, as well as gather filmmakers, film enthusiasts, and media academics in a room together to discuss and think about the experiences of women creating online video content.



*Figure 6.* Image from the Online Heroines launch, of the title screen projected onto the wall (Source: Hutt, 2016).

As well as the nine episodes, I also created a post on the Online Heroines website which was just a black image in the 16:9 ratio (Hutt, 2016). In the caption, I shared the demographic breakdown of the participants from the information

sheet I had them fill in:

92% Pākehā (NZ European) | 8% Māori

69% Straight | 15.5% Bisexual | 7.75% Fluid

100% Cis gender | 0% Transgender | 0% Genderfluid

8% Had a significant disability or illness | 92% Did not

I did this in order to be clear about who the webseries actually represented from Aotearoa New Zealand, and publish an open invitation for people who identify as women who would like to be a part of the project in the future, particularly those who aren't already represented in some way, to get in touch with me. This was important, keeping in mind the feminist framework, in order to acknowledge that this webseries doesn't speak for all women working in Aotearoa New Zealand, but does seek to be an inclusive, safe, and supportive space for women's experiences to be shared. I hoped that by showing that the other surrounding identities of the participants had been recognised, that it would encourage women outside of those who are already represented that those differences — and how they affect being a woman filmmaker — would be valued, rather than diminished or erased.

## Chapter 4: Analysis

**Note:** *It is recommended that the webseries is watched now — after reading the methodology, but before reading the analysis and conclusions. The webseries allows readers of the thesis to engage with a condensed version of the experiences discussed in the analysis, while the following chapter reflects on the broader process and provides academic insight into the research. You can view the webseries at <http://onlineheroines.com> or there is a playlist on the Online Heroines YouTube channel.*

As summarised in Chapter 2, present trends in Aotearoa New Zealand industry show the marginalisation of women in dominant narratives in both the industry and the film canon itself. Both the television and film industries rely on State funding for local content, which has been dictated by a series of neo-liberal governments, and any opportunities offered by digital technologies within the existing industry were monopolised and dominated by overseas companies — particularly SKY and Netflix. Although online platforms like YouTube offer new opportunities outside the industry, they also come with risks, with some women who use YouTube being subjected to threats of violence and harassment (as discussed in Section 1.4.4).

Although the overarching research objective is to answer “why do women filmmakers working in Aotearoa New Zealand create and publish using online platforms?”, I have broken this question down into three smaller sub-sections:

What influences their choice to publish media online, particularly in contrast to television and cinema?

What do they consider successful within their practice?

What limitations still exist and what challenges do they foresee in the future of online video publishing and production?

This chapter is organised around these three questions and compares the commonalities, differences, and relationships between the participants' experiences with the existing scholarship about the Aotearoa New Zealand industry (as discussed in Chapter 2). While quotes and short passages have been quoted from the participants, the full interviews can be found in Appendixes III–XII. It is also important to contextualise these interviews as taking place in the last months of 2015, and Table 1 has a list of the participants with their full names, any production names they have, format they produced, what platform they used, and what their roles were on page 82. As per the suggestion of the University of Waikato librarians, I have not used in text citations for the participants' quotes or statements, as all the data mentioned comes from the interviews with the exception of one case (which is cited as personal communication).

## Section 4.1: Influences, inspiration, and choices

Asking the participants about their experiences as women filmmakers provided a variety of responses. Yet there was a clear divide between participants who had worked in the industry (Whittaker, Duckworth, Gibson, Leigh Stewart, Ow, and Hazeldine) or used a more traditional crew-based team (Whittaker, Duckworth, Gibson, Leigh Stewart, Joblin, and the Candle Wasters), and those whose whole experiences had been entirely in a solo practice for online platforms (Prangley, McManus, and Morris).

For those who had worked in the industry, or in a traditional team structure, there were feelings of unfair gendered expectations around what they could (or

could not) do. Being able to work outside of those expectations was crucial to their freedom as filmmakers and as women. Anna Duckworth discussed how “women can jump in and do anything and there are no traditional expectations and barriers” when they work online, saying:

The thing with the traditional model is that you can't prove yourself until you're given a chance, whereas if you go out there and make something, and it gets heaps of views and it's really critically acclaimed ... then you have proven yourself. I think there is a history of women in traditional film models having to be a real 'bitch', they have to be really tough to make it through, and almost have to adopt a masculine personality to get through. Whereas I feel the online stuff has a lot more tight knit, small communities banding together ... You can just be doing stuff with your friends and [get] stuff made.

This idea of needing a “masculine personality” was touched on by other participants who had worked in the traditional industry as well, sometimes identifying a lack of confidence and tenacity in themselves — seen as masculine-coded traits — as holding them back from being able to achieve their goals. Bea Joblin's thoughts on this topic tied into other comments she made about being afraid someone would tell her she was doing things wrong: “I think the first step is having the audacity to believe that you have the right to speak. Which sounds ridiculous, but actually very deep in most women still I think — a sense of ‘you don't have the right to be the leader, you don't have the right to be the one doing this’”. Joblin described its effect as subconscious, subversive, and affecting men less, because they see other men being filmmakers more often than women do. These ideas have been reiterated by other women in the industry, such as filmmaker Robyn Paterson, who said in an interview with Deborah Shepard:

I think what largely hampers us is lack of confidence and self-doubt which can stem from popular representations of male brilliance. The film world

idolises genius and hotshot directors, terms more commonly attributed to and represented by men. While women are equally talented their achievements are often perceived and treated differently which decreases the likelihood of them pursuing a long-term career in film. (Shepard, 2016, p. 12)

Gendered expectations weren't the only frustrations participants had; Britney Hazeldine, Hweiling Ow, and Hazel Gibson retold stories about toxic, hostile work environments from their experiences in the industry. Hazeldine was called "sluzza" as a nickname<sup>80</sup>, saying comments like that were normalised: "We've accepted the shit that they do because we have to, and because if we stand up to it, they'll be like, 'oh, she's in a bad mood today, must be her period'. No! Treat me like a human!". This mirrors statements about what the industry was like 30 years ago — with gaffer<sup>81</sup> Bindy Crayford commenting after working on Vincent Ward's *Virgil* (1984), "you almost had to forego being a woman in order to get the job done":

You have to be all blokey and laugh at the jokes. I have on several occasions tried not to be a part of that whole thing but in order to maintain good working relationships there has to be a certain amount of camaraderie on set and because most of the people on set tend to be males [*sic*] you have to join in with the sort of stuff that they do. (Shepard, 2000, p. 104).

Gibson described working with people — especially "old school" people — who had traditional expectations, which Duckworth had touched on earlier: "they just don't have the same level of respect for you and it's really frustrating not being respected by them if you're younger or you're female [*sic*]. Personality-wise we

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<sup>80</sup> A colloquial term for 'slut'.

<sup>81</sup> The gaffer is the head of lighting for a set.

get along, but I know you think that I'm lesser". In regards to this, filmmaker Leanne Pooley, who worked with a male-dominated crew for her film *Beyond the Edge* (Pooley & Metcalfe, 2016) has said, "I think, as a woman you are fighting your own corner by simply standing up. You just have to stay standing." (Shepard, 2016, p.13).

Ow also described a time when, as an actor, she hadn't felt comfortable on set: "The director had made this bottle out of sugar glass or something, and he's assuring me that it's fine but apparently it's been sitting there for a while so it's all moist. So they use it to hit me over the head and it really hurt. I was just like, okay you guys need to give me a moment to get over this because we had to get through the night. It was just so painful". With the #MeToo movement bringing untold stories to light around the world, Uma Thurman's account of a dangerous stunt in which director Quentin Tarantino had assured her she was safe on the set of *Kill Bill: Volume 2* (Bender & Tarantino, 2004), only for her to end up in hospital (Dowd, 2018), seemed to have a similar dynamic — only with more severe outcomes. As Uma Thurman's and Bindy Crayford's examples show, this isn't unheard-of behaviour. This is a continuation of the sexist behaviour which Deborah Shepard noted while writing *Reframing Women*, where Gaylene Preston's male crew for the documentary *Making Utu* (1983) would refuse to help her, and pornography was circulated on the set of a film cinematographer Mairi Gunn was working on, including "a topless poster girl" on the tailgate of her truck (2016, p. 12). Of this experience, Gunn said "If I hadn't been a feminist this would have derailed any attempts to forge a career" (Shepard, 2016, p. 12). The outcome of a history where women are discouraged from careers in filmmaking was felt by Gibson, who voiced frustrations at not being able to see women doing what she wanted to be doing: "If you're in my position, in the beginning of my film career, and I don't see anyone who is like me or has reached that pinnacle of success or recognition by their peers. How are you ever going to think it's possible?"

While the participants who had worked in the traditional industry or in crew-based teams shared negative experiences and frustrations about the industry, the comments from Charli Prangle, Tegan Morris, and Kimberley McManus — who had all only worked online — didn't place such an emphasis on their experiences being affected by being women. Although in 2013 statistics showed only six of the top 100 most subscribed channels were run by women (VidStatsX, 2013, as cited in Szostak, 2013), McManus said the people whose channels she saw growing were balanced: "it's equal, it's either male, female [sic], straight, gay, just anyone. If you're good and people enjoy watching you then why not? I don't think there's any discrimination". Just as Gibson had described how frustrated she was in not seeing women doing the things she wanted to do, Prangle discussed how important it was to her that women were visible on YouTube. Prangle discussed how it's still groundbreaking for women to win awards within the industry worldwide, giving Viola Davis as an example being the first woman of colour to ever win a Best Actress Emmy in 2015 (Rich, 2015) — "I feel like on YouTube it's so common to see females [sic] of all different shapes and sizes and colours filling up your subscription box and that's really cool. No one's gonna be like, 'oh wow, look, it's a woman on YouTube', because there's so many of us there, and you can feel at home and you can feel accepted there". Being able to curate your own subscription feed on platforms like YouTube means you can search out the diversity you want and not be limited by what's in the 7pm time slot — describing a kind of counterpublic (Warner, 2002) as well as the opportunities of the long tail (Anderson 2012).

When asked if they would consider working in the traditional industry over online platforms, many of the participants — whether they'd worked in the industry before or not — cited concerns about control and freedom (Duckworth, Joblin, McManus, Hazeldine, Ow, Jacobs), television being a dying platform (Elsie Bollinger), and whether the industry offered the same opportunities (Whittaker, Duckworth, Sally Bollinger, Jacobs, Prangle, Ow, Morris). Their reasons for choosing online platforms also mirrored many of the perceived frustrations with

television and cinema. Sally Bollinger talked about how the Candle Wasters wouldn't be allowed to "test stuff out" for television in the same way they do with their webseries and Jacobs agreed that being able to experiment is important to them. Joblin talked about the freedom it gave her, while Hazeldine liked the fact she had control, and they both talked about not needing someone else's approval. Their reasons echo Filmmaker Roseanne Liang, one of Aotearoa New Zealand's first webseries creators, who said being their own bosses was gratifying and a huge advantage (Shepard, 2016). Alix Whittaker, Anna Duckworth, Britney Hazeldine, and Sally Bollinger all discussed the ability to improve quickly through the fast turn-around and feedback. Hazeldine called it a "good backbone" to start with after tertiary study, and Duckworth described online platforms as being "hugely freeing for creatives". Ow saw online platforms as a way of telling stories which were important to her and Morris wanted to "create resources and opportunities to present an image that was really positive of what it can be like to be disabled" because she couldn't find those things online to supplement her work as a public speaker. A lack of representation tied back into the concern for control, and feeling filmmakers lost control when working within the existing industry. Describing why being able to do 'blind' casting for her webseries was so important, Ow said "there is a real issue with TV at the moment not representing exactly how NZ is looking right now".

Another aspect of choosing online platforms over television and cinema was their accessibility; Kimberley McManus, Sally Bollinger and Minnie Grace talked about the formats they work in as being achievable for them. McManus said "I don't think it would have been something I would have pursued on my own. I wouldn't have gone after it but the fact that I could do it in my own bedroom made it doable". Sally Bollinger shared almost the same sentiment, saying "it's a single camera setup, we can do this, we can do this in our bedroom ... this is a long form story we can actually pull off". This reinforces points made by Shepard (2016) that cheaper and lighter equipment has been liberating for women — but particularly for mothers, who can now participate more fully in the production

process, being able to film, edit, and upload from your own bedroom, instead of institutions and production houses.

The importance of seeing other women as role models was reiterated by almost every participant citing the work of other women filmmakers as inspiring their work — whether they were writers, directors, or even a manga studio (Whittaker, Duckworth, Gibson, Leigh Stewart, the Candle Wasters, Joblin, Prangley, Hazeldine, and McManus). A similar majority (Whittaker, Duckworth, Gibson, Leigh Stewart, the Candle Wasters, Prangley, McManus, and Morris) were all inspired by online videos. However, only Gibson, and Prangley specifically acknowledged local online creators as influencing them, *Flat3* (Liang, Fong, Xue & Lau, 2013–2014) and *Smay Prangley* (Prangley, 2008–) — perhaps suggesting a lack of local online content being widely available in 2015.

Joblin and the Candle Wasters were the only participants who cited television and cinema as a direct influence on their style and content<sup>82</sup> — other than both being webseries creators, they both have the strongest influences from people within the traditional Aotearoa New Zealand film industry. Joblin’s mother is actor, theatre writer, and director Geraldine Brophy. Sally and Elsie Bollinger’s mother is actor and director Katherine McRae, and their grandmother is actor Elizabeth McRae. Other notable women filmmakers who had parents with established careers in creative industries were Jane Campion — her parents Richard and Edith were well-known Wellington theatre figures — and YouTuber Sally Hickey, whose father is broadcaster Jim Hickey (Sheppard, 2000; Van Beynen, 2018). I found out this information about Joblin, and the Bollingers after I had interviewed them<sup>83</sup>, otherwise I would have very much liked to have asked them about the relationship between their mothers and their work. However, the fact that they didn’t bring it up explicitly perhaps suggests they might not

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<sup>82</sup> Britney Hazeldine mentioned the film *Julie & Julia*, but as what inspired her to start blogging, rather than influencing the aesthetic or narrative of her YouTube channel.

<sup>83</sup> Elsie Bollinger only mentioned her mother was a director in passing during the interview.

have wanted to. Considering their proximity to the traditional industry, it is significant that both Joblin and the Bollingers chose to create for online platforms.

In terms of what they watch more generally, Whittaker, Duckworth, Gibson, Leigh Stewart, the Bollingers, Ow, Hazeldine, Prangle, McManus, and Morris's viewing habits all aligned closely with the type and format of the content they made, particularly online — imitating the results from the NZOA report which stated 72% of 15–39 year olds watch online video every day (NZOA, 2016d)<sup>84</sup>. In terms of the relationship between what they watch and their own content, McManus said "you can tell when I'm watching a lot of YouTube because I'm also creating a lot of YouTube videos, whereas right now that I'm busy and life is studying my YouTube is lacking because I'm not able to have the time to watch other YouTubers — which doesn't inspire me to create content". Claris Jacobs, of the Candle Wasters, said that she found watching other webseries difficult as she compares and judges their choices, which isn't enjoyable. However, Whittaker, Duckworth, and the Bollingers, all deliberately used the media they watch as a way of researching and reflecting on their own choices as filmmakers. Elsie Bollinger said:

This morning, Mum said to me "in the film last night— Oh no I don't have to talk about it", so I said "no, what were you going to say?" She said "there was just this really weird editing decision" and I was like "I love this, this is what I do!" Mum's a director, and that's how I got interested in directing, because Mum would be sitting there, being like "now that's a nice shot" and I'd be like "yes, it is...". I love analysing stuff like that.

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<sup>84</sup> Charli Prangle said she watches a lot of content on her phone because of the unlimited data plans available in the UK, but can't afford to go to the cinema or have a television license (see Appendix VIII).

## Section 4.2: Purpose and success

In the follow up article to *Reframing Women*, Deborah Shepard describes her curiosity “now that feminism no longer legitimately fuels and inspires the projects (because we are *supposed* to be emancipated), where filmmaking derives its energy and radicalism” (Shepard, 2016, p. 8, original emphasis). In terms of the purpose and reasons why the participants became filmmakers in the first place, there were two broad commonalities. The first was a love of filmmaking as a medium itself — Whittaker, Duckworth, Leigh Stewart, Gibson, and Hazeldine all shared this sentiment. Leigh Stewart described her feelings toward film as “I love what they meant to me and how I got something out of them. So I was like ‘that would be cool, I’d like to do that.’ And then from there it’s evolved ... ‘alright, now what do I want to say now?’” The second commonality was a focus on storytelling, particularly stories which weren’t otherwise being told — *Ow*, *Joblin*, and *the Candle Wasters*. *Ow*’s approach was almost the antithesis of Leigh Stewart: “you need to start from a place of ‘I really want to do this, this says something to me’ and then put it out there to the world. Then people can see the heart behind it”. *The Candle Wasters* described their purpose as being centered around exploring vlog-style webseries, but was driven by the question of what they would adapt<sup>85</sup>, and making it relevant to them as young people in Aotearoa New Zealand. *The Candle Wasters* were also explicit in stating they were feminists, but still negotiating how they create feminist media<sup>86</sup>.

McManus started making beauty vlogs, but moved into being a family vlogger for

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<sup>85</sup> As their inspiration, the *Lizzie Bennet Diaries* Powell, (Powell, Green & Su, 2012–2013) was adapted from *Pride and Prejudice*.

<sup>86</sup> When the *Candle Wasters* wrote their first webseries, Elsie Bollinger was still in high school; Elise Bollinger was 17, Claris Jacobs and Minnie Grace were 19, and Sally Bollinger was 20 (M. Grace, personal communication, July 1, 2018).

her kids and to tell their stories: "the videos that I look back on personally were the ones with my kids in it ... and one day my kids are going to be grown ups and they're going to look back on those videos so I was like ... why don't I make this what my channel is about ... and there is less [sic] people from New Zealand doing that so I saw an audience that wasn't being capped so I did it." This ultimately changed her experience of being a mother, and the stigma she experienced along with it:

You can tell when you're walking through the mall and people see you and pass judgement without knowing you... If you're a young mum you'll understand what I'm talking about but on YouTube people are complimenting me on parenting and being like oh I should try this or giving me feedback as well ... That's really cool to have that community there and it is mums and I still feel like I'm being me. I think when you become a mum you get so consumed with being a mum you forget to be yourself a little bit whereas YouTube was that outlet for me to still be me and still do what I love.

While the stories they felt weren't being told didn't have a similar thread, they were each particularly important to the identities of the participants — whether that was being high schoolers for the Candle Wasters, a mother for McManus, or a person with disabilities for Morris. As described earlier, Morris wanted to create resources for other public speakers but it also tied into her own narrative:

I didn't really connect with my identity as a disabled person. Over the years since I've been living independently and I've really grown into myself I've realized it's obviously a really inherent part of who I am and the more I can own that and address that in a positive way, the more it will make it easier for other people, either abled or disabled, to own their identities and be able to be more comfortable in becoming friends with and developing relationships with disabled people.

While they might not have the express purpose of feminist consciousness raising as films that Auckland Women’s Community Video made in the 1970s and 1980s did (Evans, 2017c), the participants showed that much of their purpose and content of their media would certainly still be considered feminist — especially using a framework like intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989).

Purpose and success were not particularly intertwined for the participants; fulfilling their purpose did not necessarily mean they viewed their work as successful, nor did they prescribe to ‘fame and fortune’ as a measure either<sup>87</sup>. Many of the participants noted a place for quantified measures, such as views or followers (Whittaker, Duckworth, Hazeldine, Prangle, the Candle Wasters, Gibson, and Leigh Stewart), or awards (Duckworth, Ow, Gibson, and Leigh Stewart), but overwhelmingly those metrics were considered less important than community and engagement (Whittaker, Duckworth, Gibson, Leigh Stewart, the Candle Wasters, McManus, Hazeldine, and Prangle). This focus on community as success tied into particular aspects important to their filmmaking practice: freedom, inspiration, and connection, as well as feminism.

The YouTubers spoke about creating a community around their videos in a similar way to one another. Prangle explicitly described her connecting to people through YouTube as what matters most to her as a filmmaker; not just having subscribers, but “when that subscriber number turns into someone commenting regularly on my videos and I get to know them through that”. While Hazeldine used to focus on the number of subscribers she had, she said “I’ve changed my perspective and the way I want to view being successful — in terms of the content I create, is if I inspire someone, or if I connect with them on a deep, meaningful level and help them out in their lives”. This was very similar to McManus's attitude: “I think if you are able to connect with just one person,

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<sup>87</sup> Anna Duckworth said, “I think if we wanted to be rich and famous, we wouldn’t be making films [laughs]”.

that's a success. The fact that I've been able to connect with a whole bunch of people, and people that feel like not just a view, they feel like a friend. I feel like when I am talking to my camera, they're the people that I'm talking to, I'm not actually just talking to a device. That's really how I measure it".

Prangley also discussed how the personality-centered nature of YouTube is paramount, even more so as channels grow, and appearing like a one person crew can be engineered:

Some people have help with editing and with production and things but if you are the kind of person making videos like I do where it's just you talking to a camera, generally a lot of the time it is YouTubers doing that themselves, even when they are bigger. A lot of them do have help when they get really big and you know, they've got a lot of other things going on outside of YouTube, but the funny thing is that their videos often still look like it's just them doing it, which is interesting. I think YouTube is a really personal thing and you want to think that everyone is making the videos themselves because that's sort of how it started and how it came about.

The importance of appearing genuine, connecting with their audience, and seeing them as friends is described by media theorists Misha Kavka as 'the *feeling of proximity*' (Kavka, 2008, p. 2, original emphasis, as quoted in Berryman & Kavka, 2016, p. 309), which can create a type of intimacy which is often used in the construction of celebrity. However, as stated previously, none of the participants were interested in fame as an outcome — instead focusing on the meaning that engagement gives them. Charli Prangley in particular, has deliberately steered away from the commodification of her online presence by not being with a network, and limiting other 'influencer' practices, as she sees quitting her job to YouTube full-time as delegitimizing the content of her videos. "Because I'm a designer and I work doing design and then talk about design in

my videos, I feel like if I stopped being a designer, then there wouldn't be as much meaning behind what I'm talking about in my videos because I wouldn't be doing design as a job. So I enjoy having YouTube part time as a hobby. It's a hobby that I take very seriously"<sup>88</sup>.

Anna Duckworth placed heavy focus on engagement too — "a lot of our creatives are really interested in a smaller, more engaged audience than just a large anonymous audience. So people writing blogs about our stuff ... people commenting, people sharing a video — shares are often more important than likes because that's saying someone really likes something enough to share it with their friends." On the other hand, Alix Whittaker, who also works for Candlelit Pictures, admitted that initially she viewed online platforms as not important — the "bum option". She was of the view "if everything else fails, you can put it on the Internet" but now views it as the best place to "start finding your crowd, start finding an audience, and interacting with people". She tied this engagement to holding power and giving them more freedom and opportunities in the future. She used the Candle Wasters as an example of this:

It's becoming increasingly difficult to find good content and a lot of people are looking to makers that they trust and checking back with them to see if there's anything new ... that they haven't seen yet. So it's really important for us to be ... making sure that the people who are interested in their work know where they can find it ... If you can come to making a feature film, or a television show with 3 million people who are immediately going to watch your content, that gives you a lot of power. I think that's another thing that Candle Wasters are nailing — they have created an audience for their content and they are delivering content that that audience loves, and that audience keeps on growing. There's no stopping them after that, they could do anything they want now ... That's success.

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<sup>88</sup> For more discussion of this, see Prangley's interview in Appendix VIII.

For the Candle Wasters — who were the most qualitatively successful participants at the time — they did not base their success so much in the number of their subscribers but how that number had turned into a fandom. While Claris Jacobs said that getting to 1 000 subscribers on Youtube, then 10 000 subscribers, was a “massive deal”, Minnie Grace said they were really excited the first time a gif was made<sup>89</sup> and they were “astounded” by fan art. Elsie Bollinger said it was “really satisfying” when videos were positively received on Tumblr and YouTube through the comments, as well as seeing their work having their desired effect on their audience — although Sally qualified that by saying “we don’t want to come across as evil geniuses, but it’s fun”.

Gibson and Leigh Stewart found their work got more prestige, opportunities, and feedback from online platforms. They viewed a Vimeo Staff Pick as being more prestigious than laurels from a film festival, with Gibson saying “there are so many festivals these days, obviously there are some that are really prestigious and it’s always great to get [films] in those festivals, but if you just wanted those laurels on the start of your trailer it’s not hard to get those I don’t think”. They did have specific, qualitative goals for their project *K Road Stories* (Gibson & Leigh Stewart, 2015) — which they were required to report on because of funding they’d received — but their own goals were people turning up to the event they planned on Karangahape (‘K’) Road, and the community’s reception of the films. They also felt successful in the diversity of the filmmakers they were working with: “We were privileged to be able to make 10 films and get a really wide selection of people. We’ve got half women, gay writers, Polynesian, Māori, and Chinese — a whole mixed bag of people, because of that we get a wide range of stories out of it”. However, they did acknowledged the responsibility of the filmmakers they work with (implying the directors) for creating and maintaining their own online communities — Leigh Stewart said “for us it

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<sup>89</sup> See Crosby, 2018, as cited by Popova, 2018; Newman, 2016; Gürsimsek, 2016; for discussion of the use of gifs within online fandoms.

depends on the filmmakers' own networks", with Gibson elaborating, "and how engaged they are with wanting to push their film, which we are happy with encouraging, but you can't force someone's hand".

While this research has taken notes from Lamanna (2008) in several ways, the participants' focus on creating dialogues within their work also ties into Lamanna's theories of feminist creative practice. Lamanna argues feminist new media projects should "encourage dialogue between researchers, participants, and audiences" (Lamann, 2008, p. 104), and by publishing excerpts of these interviews online it allows both the participants as well as a wider audience to comment on them. However, hearing the participants' views on feedback, engagement, and creating a dialogue with their audience, many of them would also be fulfilling Lamanna's objectives for feminist new media projects. So while feminism itself may not be the sole focus of the participants' media, as Shepard (2016) suggests, they are still making feminist media work which applies feminism in new ways.

A somewhat unique aspect of online filmmaking (in contrast with traditional broadcast) is the ability to leave feedback which is directly attached to the work itself. The barriers to leaving a comment are similar to those for uploading content, signing up for an account and a connection to the World Wide Web. I specifically asked the participants if they used the ability to get feedback in this manner in their filmmaking process — if they had tied success to community and engagement, then this aspect of the platform became significant.

The Candle Wasters, who found satisfaction in seeing the reactions of their fandom, said they were emotionally affected by feedback, with Claris Jacobs saying "I could go on the Internet at any given time and see someone like telling me that I'm like a god, like literally people have written like you're a god, or being like you're a racist biphobic asshole, like any time I can just go look at that, so it's like a weird sort of space to live in". Elsie Bollinger explained when they

were writing *Nothing Much to Do* (2014), they didn't think about an audience because they didn't have one: "then writing *Lovely Little Losers* (2015), I was quite determined not to think of the audience ... I feel like [other webseries] are kind of trying to listen to Tumblr and be like this is what Tumblr wants, have it Tumblr and it's a bit like- [Sally: "Tumblr doesn't really want that"]". Jacobs summarised their approach to audience feedback, saying "you can't give people what they want, give them what they need, or what they want in a way that they don't expect it".

Hweiling Ow also talked about fandom and fan reactions in regards to *AFK: The Webseries* (2015–2017), saying "fantasy fans are very passionate ... We kind of have to honour the fact that they're so passionate about it ... If they're gonna be horrible online then I would ignore it. A lot of people have a lot of angst to get out. So we just let them angst it out". To contrast this with the existing industry, writer James Griffin said "as a writer it's very hard to know what's going to work" and producer Steven Zanoski said they just "put [their work] out there and hope" ("James Griffin slams Filthy Rich", 2017, para. 2; NZOA, 2017, para. 10). While the *Candle Wasters* have said that don't necessarily give their audience what they want, they were still aware of what their audience wants, and are much more deliberate and thoughtful in their choices than just "hoping".

There were participants who didn't measure success with engagement: when asked whether she measured success, Hweiling Ow said "not really". She talked about how traditionally in her family, success is measured "with career, cars, having a house, stability. That's all gone out the window". However, she went on to say "I am pretty happy with what I'm doing. I've been given like the 48 Hours Auckland best actor-actress award, but there's so many great actresses out there, you know? It's tough because everyone's got a different taste in things and opinions and I guess if you want to go by the status quo success is what the popular choice is. Am I a popular choice? Don't know". This rejection of the traditional measures of success because it relies on being popular relates to

Anderson's idea of the long tail (2012) — where niche content can find their audience because online platforms allow them the time and space to do so.

Both Joblin and Morris don't see success in being a filmmaker, *per se*. Joblin doesn't see it as part of her identity, and as a part of that, tries to view success in filmmaking in a much wider sense: "are you respecting yourself and other people and doing something that you enjoy in the moment? Are you communicating something from a place of love that you think could contribute?" Instead of being a filmmaker herself, Morris sees herself as participating in filmmaking and her measure of success is tied to that:

At the moment it's if I can put out a video on a weekly basis, that I'm really happy with the standard of the video — if I can get 20–30 views of a video in their first week maybe. I have fairly low standards at the moment. Still doing it more because I enjoy it ... It would be nice in some ways if there were more people who aren't directly connected with me who find my videos and see some relevance or entertainment factor in my videos.

["This is something you've said you'll do for like a year?"]

That was initially the timeframe I set for myself – but I think I'm pretty much determined to stick with it indefinitely unless something unforeseen comes up because I've really gotten to enjoy the process and the challenge of it. As long as I've got something to say, and the ability to say it and I have at least one or two people who show interest then I'll keep doing it.

### Section 4.3: Limitations and challenges for the future

In terms of what limitations and challenges exist, the participants' responses collated into several broad categories: the gendering of production roles (in both industry contexts and within the YouTube format), having other women as mentors and role models, and creating safe working environments.

Grenz (2014), in her discussion of power within feminist research practices described how “it is not just the inclusion of narratives, but silences which also provide valuable insights” (Grenz, 2014, p. 65). Many of my participants talked openly about their experiences with me, so while there were not silences *per se*, there was a woman who withdrew from the research out of safety concerns, and also things said off camera<sup>90</sup> or explicitly off the record, which created their own silences. Something which was said off camera, which I then asked other participants about on camera, was the perception of whether film production roles are gendered, particularly those of the director and producer. This was something Deborah Shepard had noted in her recap of the Aotearoa New Zealand industries in 2016, but also by Margaret Thomson, the first woman director at the National Film Unit, in 1947: “it has been hardest in those professions where a woman practitioner would challenge the stereotype of women as exclusively gentle, maternal creatures” (Shepard, 2000, p. 27). When I said to Gibson and Leigh Stewart that another participant, who was a producer as well, had said “I feel like a mum on set”, Leigh Stewart replied “it’s like adult kindergarten, often. I just said that today”. Gibson described how underappreciated producing can be: “Your skill set needs to be so broad. You need to be good at finances and scheduling, but what’s not really understood is that you need to be so good at interpersonal skills. You’re basically the go-

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<sup>90</sup> Many of the things said off camera were not necessarily off-limits to talk about on camera, but were just discussed in a more relaxed manner, or were things which the participants didn't think was important, but that I wish I had recorded.

between everybody and making sure everybody's happy and not clashing and kind of smoothing things over ... If you do your job well no one knows you've done it."

When asked what advice she would have for other women wanting to be filmmakers, Ow said "we need more women making stuff, we need to have a bigger and better presence. We need to not make excuses not to allow ourselves to do it cause it's easy for guys to just take over". She also questioned if she lacked tenacity, in regards to becoming a director, but when I asked if that related to viewing producing as overlapping with things we allow women to do, and directing as overlapping with things we allow men to do, Ow said "I would agree with that". Many of the producers I had talked to had spoken about wanting to get into directing, but in an environment where there are not the same gatekeepers as the traditional industry, the internalisation of gender roles appeared to be a key factor in holding women back.

In a US study of women in leadership, women who showed confident leadership were described as bossy and viewed as less effective leaders, than when men showed the same traits (Kramer, 2016). Joblin brought up an experience which mirrored this research:

I have had a couple of incidences of a male crew member saying like 'oh you're a dictator, oh you're controlling' and stuff like that... Actually once, one single instance of that, and me thinking 'oh I wonder how I gave that impression' because that's the very opposite of what I want to create. Then I suppose the question comes into your mind of 'is that because I'm a woman and I'm in the executive role and that's what's gone on here?' And who knows...

Gibson also recognised confidence was a trait she had been conditioned not to show, saying "I find myself writing emails to someone and saying 'oh I'm sorry I

was wondering if maybe you might maybe want to help me out on this thing?', instead of saying 'hey, I'm doing this thing, it's going to be awesome, you should be involved, I reckon you'd be great and this project's going to be great'". She was also critical of the idea that women filmmakers don't exist: "It's not there aren't women out there who don't want to or can't do this stuff, it's just about getting it from that nascent stage to a stage where they have confidence in themselves" to write, produce, and direct.

Whittaker was specific in saying their community and process at Candlelit Pictures needed more women directors — "we're sort of drowning in male filmmakers and it's not that we don't love all of them, cause we do, but we're both really interested in telling stories from a female perspective and so that's one of the things we're primarily for". From there, they went to 48 Hour Film Festival heats and watched the work of new filmmakers online, "if we see something we like, then we'll go after that person, have a cup of coffee with them, and say 'would you like to start receiving music video pitches through us?'"

The gendering of online spaces has been touched on by Natasha Szostak (2013) and the assumption that women on YouTube would be beauty vloggers was similar to the gendering of production roles within traditional teams, and was touched on by McManus, Prangle, and Hazeldine. McManus suggested that if she had continued to do beauty videos, rather than family vlogs, she might have a larger audience now: "I definitely grew faster when I was making those videos than making the real life stuff but the real life stuff was me so that's what I wanted to do". Prangle recounted an experience at a YouTube space in London: "Sometimes they'll look at me and I'll have makeup on and they'll be like, 'oh, what do you make videos about? Do you do beauty and fashion?' and I'll be like, 'no, why would you assume that? Thank you I guess, that you think my makeup looks nice, but nope'". Hazeldine also talked about the pressure to do content around traditionally feminine skills:

“As a female [*sic*] you go on to YouTube and you’re like, beauty guru or, like, fashion guru, and I like fashion so I’ll talk about that, but beauty is not my thing. I just slap on whatever I’ve got lying around, put it on my face, done. At first I found that really weird, like I tried to fit into the beauty guru style, making Halloween costume tutorials and that involved makeup and stuff like that. It just really wasn’t me, that’s really awkward to watch, you can tell that I was trying to fit in the stereotype of what a woman should be on YouTube”.

Hazeldine openly said she doesn’t believe in herself enough, but also tied that into something Gibson had said earlier — not seeing other women doing the things she wanted to do: “A lot of the female roles are all paperwork type stuff, and I don’t wanna do that, I wanna be in the creation of film ... At work all of the directors bar one, are male, so there’s only one female and there’s a group of 13, 14 directors”. When I asked Duckworth if she had worked with women directors, she took a while to answer — she had, but was also focused supporting more women to be directors within Candlelit Pictures. Gibson and Leigh Stewart were very proud of having half of their K Road Stories films directed by women, citing it as their most positive outcome for the project. However, Leigh Stewart was critical of people within the industry who were congratulatory about the statistics for women’s representation for producing: “52% of feature film producers are female<sup>91</sup>. So they’re like, well done, move on and I’m like no, tell me where the money split is cause I want to know that. There’s a missing statistic here. [Gibson: “...\$200,000 films all produced by women-”] -[and] the multi-million dollar films produced by males [*sic*]? So like 80% of funding goes to the 48% of men or what? I want to know that.”

Gibson also tied her perspective back to the culture of film schools. Having been

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<sup>91</sup> Gibson cited these statistics as being released by the New Zealand Film Commission in 2014.

to the University of Auckland, she said “when I did Film 101 there was probably 500 people in the class, it was probably pretty evenly split. Then by the time I got to third year and I was in classes with 16 other people, it had definitely dropped off, the female ratio was definitely way down. And it’s like, do people just get discouraged?” This was another point which I had touched on with the participants — having not been taught by a woman lecturer in screen and media in my seven years of study, and been outnumbered by men in many of the classes, as both a student and tutor. While this does not guarantee a bad experience, it speaks to the points Gibson brought up earlier around seeing other women doing what you want to do, especially if not having women as teachers was coupled with not seeing any work by women filmmakers either. Hazeldine said that while she had women tutors at AUT, she said she didn’t study anything by women throughout the whole course, and when I asked about what Māori content they did, she said “Zero. None. Nothing ... We didn’t study any of that”<sup>92</sup>.

On the other hand, Claris Jacobs and Elsie Bollinger, who both went to Victoria University, said they had very positive university experiences. “I did a whole course on New Zealand films, so that was one thing” said Bollinger. “Definitely less, but I’ve had female lecturers and tutors. I did a whole course on popular music and film, that was taught by a woman and I think if I had to choose my favourite lecturer would be her”. Jacobs did say she did a French film paper, but that a large component of it was feminist films: “my last essay ever for uni was like three films by french female directors in the last 20 years about female coming of age, so I ... definitely felt like I had that opportunity”. Bollinger noted a particular diversity in the films she watched at university but also including Aotearoa New Zealand content: “They’d definitely keep bringing it back to New Zealand, it was an important thing ... We’d look at like histories, eras of different types of film. Then at the end of the year we had to do a research essay, so I could choose to write on New Zealand film. But you kind of had to choose to

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<sup>92</sup>Britney also immediately qualified that she did communications at AUT because “people from South Seas always slam AUT as not a real [film] school”.

write about that". Both Bollinger and Jacobs did however, agree that making films was a boys club — "it makes me so angry" said Jacobs.

Deborah Shepard (2016) noted the success of Aotearoa New Zealand filmmakers Zia Mandviwalla, Roseanne Liang, Michelle Savill, and Abi King-Jones because of the mentoring they had during and after film school: "following film school, women filmmakers continue to need support". However, Hazeldine noted there was "no support offered" to her after graduating from AUT:

"You just graduated, and then they're like go out into the world and do your thing, and everyone from my major are working in various places, we're not all in film ... It's going to take a while for people to get there, because we weren't given any connections or any opportunities to work in those areas ... A lot of people have just gone to the admin side of TV, so that's like scheduling, stuff like that, it's not in the studio, or not creative, or not out on set, it's admin, which is stupid, but it's also where a lot of females end up which is really sad".

That said, filmmaker Michelle Savill, who was mentored by Gaylene Preston has said, "I don't think anyone finds it easy after film school" (as quoted in Shepard, 2016, p. 11).

When I asked Gibson and Leigh Stewart about what advice they would give other women, Leigh Stewart described advice that her mentor gave her when she first started in the industry: "her advice to me was 'don't'<sup>93</sup>. But if you do, marry a lawyer. And I was like 'this is terrible advice'". Gibson agreed that it was terrible advice, but did encourage women to find mentors: "older women in the film industry who had it even harder than we have it, they are so generous with their advice because they want you to succeed". She recounted how a woman she

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<sup>93</sup> Ironically, the most common piece of advice given from the participants answer to this question was some version of "just do it".

met from the industry while she was still studying said “here’s my email address, here’s my phone number, let me know what you’re working on, send me your scripts, keep in touch” and how important that was — “she was just giving away her personal email address because she wants girls to succeed in these things”.

Gibson was cognisant that while she felt she was still at the beginning of her career, she could still do these things for other women: “I’m in a position to hire people as a producer, I’m especially conscious of looking out for girls in technical roles. Girls who want to be cinematographers, and gaffers, or editors. I’m always keen to hire them or find them, always keen to talk to people like you [Louise]”. Duckworth also said that when people email her, asking to meet with her for advice she always says yes — “I’m like ‘yes! Absolutely! I want to help you so much’, and I want to give people notes and give people help, and put people in touch with the right people ... Starting out, the film industry was so like, all in your face, everyone is out for themselves, but the more I ask for help, the more I realise that people really want to offer it. Especially when it’s just their advice, they’ve got nothing to lose”. I made a particular choice to include Duckworth’s comments in her webseries episode, as I felt it was important for women like Hazeldine and Ow who said they felt they lacked confidence or determination, to see that there were other women out there who actively wanted to support them<sup>94</sup>.

Bea Joblin had talked about her responsibility for creating safe environments during production as part of her purpose — saying her process is “definitely always evolving” because of the ways the industry can be toxic. “Traditional ways of making film and even theatre have been based around bad treatment of people — a lot of disrespectful, unsafe stuff, a lot of pushing people too hard, a lot of dictatorship rather than collaboration ... I always come from a perspective

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<sup>94</sup> Hazel’s comments got cut only because of the time constraint of their episode — trying to fit everything interesting one person said within ten minutes was hard enough, let alone with there were multiple people speaking in the recording.

of ‘how can I make this as empowering and enjoyable for the people in it as possible’”. This included changing her stance on not reading the comments online “ever on anything”, as she had viewed online spaces as a place of “uncensored negativity”. She wanted to bring audience feedback into her work in the future: “[Someone] came up to me at a party and they were like ‘I’ve wanted to talk to you about this for years, I think [a segment of her show] was really offensive, I think you handled that situation really badly’, which was really good ... You can’t let [feedback] censor you but you can figure out the wisest, least harmful way to put stuff out there, and then you can also just say sorry”. She viewed much of her previous views on feedback and choosing to ignore them were “an immaturity professionally” which was rooted in her desire to experiment and do things differently without suffering any potential negativity for doing so.

Creating safe work environments was a critical issue for more than just Joblin, particularly for those working in more traditional crew-style teams. Anna Duckworth and the Candle Wasters also discussed their responsibility to their cast and crew members — while the Candle Wasters had only worked with people they trusted, Elsie Bollinger explained “we always hope that people will talk to us about things that they have issues with, because we’re totally there to be able to act. The tricky thing is communicating that we’re all so critically busy that you have to come to us, we’re not going to be able to come to you and be like ‘we’ve noticed this’ it’s important for us that people know they can come to us”. Minnie Grace went on to say they were addressing this for Bright Summer Night — having someone between themselves as the rest of the cast and crew, “the main thing that has come up with people not telling us, is that they’d tell us other people’s things and not their own”. But they also talked about how having a “female-heavy” crew was important, with Grace summing up their position as “making sure everyone behind the scenes is just as representative as people on screen”. For Duckworth, she saw herself as often being the person who noticed problems, as part of being a producer, saying she thinks it’s important to raise

any issues before they're even on set. "I think the most important thing is having an open dialogue, and if something is worrying any member of the team, for anyone to be able to talk about it. Even the intern can be like 'hey, isn't that really racist?' and you can be like 'oh yeah let's change that'. At any point, anyone should jump in."

# Chapter 5: Conclusion

## Section 5.1: Research conclusions

Historically, there have been barriers to women's participation in the screen industries in Aotearoa New Zealand — centered around gender roles, bias and discrimination. While there has been a movement globally to raise awareness for these issues and force industry gatekeepers into action, there is little available research into what other filmmaking avenues offer women as an alternative, particularly in Aotearoa New Zealand.

So why do women filmmakers working in Aotearoa New Zealand create and publish using online platforms? From the 10 interviews, it can be established that significant barriers still exist within the traditional industry: gendered expectations of what roles will be held by women, normalisation of harassment, lack of respect and concern for wellbeing of the women in cast and crew, and a perceived lack of control around whose stories get to be told. These reiterate stories told by other women filmmakers as far back as 1949 (Shepard, 2000) — showing there are still significant areas for improvement in terms of the working conditions for women in the screen industries.

Online platforms, in contrast, are seen to have significant opportunities — allowing filmmakers to experiment, test out concepts and get feedback quickly to improve their practice. For those who worked within formats specifically designed for online platforms, they felt being a woman affected their experiences less negatively. Most of the participants' viewing habits aligned closely with the media they created, particularly for online platforms — and most of the women cited other women filmmakers as their inspiration to get into filmmaking, highlighting the importance of seeing other women in their field,

which they also saw more of in online platforms than they did in television or cinema.

Many participants had a focus on storytelling — particularly stories which were important to their identities such as being a mother or having disabilities. Television and cinema were seen to not represent “how NZ is looking right now”<sup>95</sup> and online platforms were seen as a way of filling those gaps. Most viewers viewed connection and engagement with their audience as success, with some rejecting notions of commodification and celebrity online, and instead focusing on meaningful, authentic connection with their audience. However, others rejected the notion of success and of filmmaking being a part of their identity.

In terms of limitations and challenges for women to navigate now and in the future, for one participant, success was as simple as whether she could make one video a week<sup>96</sup>. This highlights that for women with disabilities, filmmaking is not fully accessible yet, even though a previously marginalised group, mothers, now have better access<sup>97</sup>. The roles of director and producer, when working in a traditional crew-style team, were seen as gendered, and to address this, more women in male-coded roles need to be publicised and celebrated. There were also gendered expectations of women on YouTube — namely that they would make fashion and beauty content, but the participants felt they could easily find their own niches based around their true interests.

While the visibility of women on YouTube was seen to be positive, there was a lack of equality seen within film schools and the industry at entry-level: they are seen as boys’ clubs, and concerns were raised regarding lack of mentoring and role models, creating issues for women in the very early stages of their careers.

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<sup>95</sup> Hweiling Ow, see Appendix X.

<sup>96</sup> Tegan Morris, see Appendix XII.

<sup>97</sup> Kimberley McManus, see Appendix XI.

Some participants noted a lack of women directors within their own circles, and were actively working to support any women who were interested in directing. In regards to producing, there were also concerns that deeper inequality was being glossed over because industry organisations wanted to be seen as progressive<sup>98</sup>. There was also an emphasis on actively creating safe working environments, including taking on critical feedback and creating roles so that everyone within a crew can feel they will be heard and safe.

As the research set out, these conclusions provide some guidance to industry organisations, education institutions, and filmmakers — should they wish to take it — on areas which could reduce barriers to filmmaking for women. Although the research was undertaken in 2015, it is likely that the general experiences and practices of the participants are still relevant. Even if (when) changes to technology and societal attitudes make this research out of date, this research can hopefully serve as an addition to the Aotearoa New Zealand historical narrative surrounding women and their experiences in the industry. My hope is that this research builds on the research which came before it, becoming part of the foundation of understanding of the experiences of women filmmakers in Aotearoa New Zealand., which future research in turn can build further.

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<sup>98</sup> Morgan Leigh Stewart, see Appendix IX.

## Section 5.2: Evaluation and reflection on research and creative-practice

While the summary in the previous section does answer the research objective, those conclusions should be seen as only the start of a wider and constantly widening discussion around the opportunities and wellbeing of women within the screen industries — by no means the only answers to those questions. They represent a small sample of women, and their views are intertwined with their identities, environments, and own priorities — which is not to invalidate the narratives they've shared, but to contextualise them.

While many of the participants held significantly different identities to each other — whether that was motherhood, location, or disabilities — they were a majoritively straight, Pākehā, cis group. I am disappointed I was not able to represent tangata whenua more robustly, nor any trans, genderfluid, lesbian, or asexual filmmakers either. Hazel Gibson said finding a female boom operator<sup>99</sup> for their all-woman 48 Hours team was near impossible because they were all in high demand<sup>100</sup> — and certainly some of the women I approached, whom I would have liked to include but couldn't, lead important, busy lives. However, I also believe that further reflection of what I can do to create a welcoming, inclusive practice is important in acknowledging how skewed the participant demographics were.

There were comments around funding and creating a living out of filmmaking which I would have liked to include within the analysis, especially as the Aotearoa New Zealand screen industries rely on State funding, but due to the significant changes which have happened in the past four years, I felt their

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<sup>99</sup> The person who holds the microphone pole.

<sup>100</sup> For further discussion, see Appendix IX.

comments may be no longer current on the topic<sup>101</sup>. However, the participants' views on livelihoods and funding are able to be found within the appendices, should any researchers in the future find a need for them.

The feminist framework is the outcome of my feminist understanding at this point in time, as well as of feminist research methods and further contextualised by politics of location and economics, among other factors. I feel that the feminist framework I have applied has been beneficial in many ways: enabling me to work *with* the participants, rather than reinforcing traditional research power structures; having an understanding of how this research may negatively affect them; and ensuring this research has positive societal outcomes that extend beyond my personal academic accomplishments. However, it would be naive to assume that there have not been areas and issues which this framework has overlooked: for example, I am certain that my qualitative analysis methods could be improved, especially in terms of working effectively with such large amounts of textual data. I acknowledge that my own constraints have not enabled me to have read as widely as I would have liked, especially concerning new research on online platforms and creative-led research practices. The use of transcripts within the editing process was not something I had done previously, but which had enabled a much more thorough narrative to be established within the episode and hugely reduced time needed to create closed captions. While I hope automation may become an effective tool for creating transcripts in the future (as they were labour-intensive to create), this is certainly an aspect of the creative practice which will influence my process going forward.

While at the time of designing the research (2015), there was little similar research available in Aotearoa New Zealand, I do not know if that claim would still stand now in 2018. This is in no way a negative outcome — I feel that similar research (such as Shepard, 2016) has only strengthened this analysis by giving

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<sup>101</sup> The length of time between holding the interviews and submitting the research was not insignificant, and I feel the quality of the research would have been improved by reducing that time. However, many of the constraints listed in Section 3.1.4 contributed to this time frame.

me more to compare and contrast with from in and around the industry. So while being a unique piece of research may have seemed attractive at the start of this research journey, I am grateful that it is no longer so.

In terms of the quality of the interviews, I feel they would have been significantly improved by not being undertaken during a time of significant mental illness. However, the support of a filming assistant would have been substantial in improving the aesthetic of the webseries, my ability to follow up questions, and keeping track of the digital files. I feel I could have culled some questions which either did not give me significantly new information or which I ended up skipping over anyway. Having a pre-interview meeting with each participant may have allowed me to be more prepared, scout locations more thoroughly, and have more concise interviews. It also would have been helpful in building trust with the participants.

While the webseries currently has 1 600 views, I do wish it would have been more widely seen. I feel that is as much a reflection of my marketing and publicising as it was the webseries itself — partnering with secondary or tertiary media studies teachers, having a showing with WIFT NZ, or other avenues which bring together interested parties may have allowed it to be seen by more people. While I submitted it to a few feminist film festivals, none so far have picked it up. I have been also wondering if the length is off-putting, at ten minutes each — Hazel Gibson said of their films which were seven minutes long, “even that can be a struggle to get people to watch online”. It also is a case to examine whether the editing decisions were effective to make an engaging piece at ten minutes long.

That said, 1600 is probably a much higher number than who will read the written thesis, and a small amount of engagement is still engagement. At the opening night, I invited some first and second year students — one of whom, a young man, who had watched every video the whole way through, came to talk to me

afterwards. “Thank you for inviting me,” he said. “I learnt so much tonight — I’ve got so many thoughts about online filmmaking.” This was really significant for me, because it wasn’t just that he was seeing women, or hearing about their experiences, he was acknowledging them as being good at their craft and informing his craft. This reinforced the decision to split the content of the episodes so that they spoke about their process and practice as well as their experiences as women, and that it could have a wider audience base than I initially imagined.

The webseries also serves as a foundation for a project which may well continue into the future — as I have more women who were interested but unable to be interviewed at the time. It would also allow me the opportunity to address the limited demographics represented. Having the webseries as the foundation may also establish the project so that previously hesitant filmmakers would be more interested in participating now. I have also wondered if the use of different *cinema verité* techniques may have meshed better with expectations of online audiences — perhaps moving camera in a vlog style format, more of myself on camera presenting it, positioning more as a behind-the-scenes look into filmmakers lives, or just shorter episodes — I’m not sure.

In regards to the participant which pulled out due to safety concerns, as well as potential topics which were implicit, unsaid or left out, I feel that if I were to redo these interviews now, many of the filmmakers would only be more outspoken as the movement of #MeToo as well as the surrounding discourse about inequality in the industry is growing. I also hope that with new projects to discuss, the participant who pulled out due to safety concerns might consider being re-interviewed. There is also the question of what silences have been left within my own work, and when might I feel comfortable discussing them outloud. While I have endeavoured to be open about my own constraints — there are still things which I have not felt comfortable including here. Enabling others to feel safe in speaking their truth is only so much in my control —

perhaps we are at a point now where anonymising the data could be achievable, or where participants would feel more comfortable being heard. However, enabling myself to speak fully to my experiences is another question again. Perhaps the only way to answer these questions is to continue the discussion.

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# Appendices

## Appendix I: Initial list of women identified as potential participants

This list was compiled in August and September 2015 through Google and my own knowledge, and was submitted as part of my ethics application.

Abbreviations:

D/W/P - Director, writer, producer

EP - Executive producer

webseries				
Name	Productions	Role	Notes	Location
Kerry Warkia	Auckland Daze (2012) Flat3 (2013 - 2014) A Long Way From Broadway (2015)	Producer EP EP	Went from online back to traditional & been involved in many webseries  Working on Find Me A Māori Bride for Maori Television	Auckland
Roseanne Liang	Flat3 (2013 - 2014)	D/P/W	Centred on Chinese-NZ women  Co-produced by Kerry Warkia	Auckland
The Candle Wasters	Nothing Much to Do (2014)	D/P/W	Crowd funded webseries with no prior experience  Adapted from Shakespeare, references other webseries + fandoms	Auckland and Wellington
Amy Bowie	A Long Way From	Co-creator	NZ specific content	Christchurch

	Broadway (2015)	Co-writer	Kerry Warkia executive-produced  Doesn't have own channel, only pilot is released	
Bea Joblin	Hutt Valley Dream Project (2014) CNT Live (2014)	D/P/W  D/P/W	Deliberately chooses online publishing to avoid traditional media  Very loudly feminist  Daughter of Geraldine Brophy	Wellington
Patricia Phelan	Game Over (2015)	Director	Women centred content + production  Has Kickstarter, but only pilot is released	Auckland
Anna Duckworth	\$1 Reserve (2015)	Producer	NZ specific content  Was financed by TradeMe, The Actors' Program & Wallace Arts Trust	Auckland
Sophie Henderson		Writer	NZ specific content  Wrote Fantail – a feature length film Initially an actress	Auckland
Youtube				
Name	Youtube channel	Role	Notes	Location
Britney Hazeldine	Scout & Company	D/P/W	Magazine style content (although less structured than most)  Māori. Studied media at university	Auckland
Nicki	Nicki Pilawa	D/P/W	Youtube channel	Auckland

Pilawa			documents her transition in Aotearoa NZ	
Emily Muli	Emily Muli	D/P/W	Musician Tongan. 40 Hour Famine ambassador	Auckland
Charli Prangley	Charli MarieTV	D/P/W	Magazine style content Design, DIY, fashion. Moved to the UK, which has better YT opportunities	London
Jahleshia Deflavelle	Makeup with Jah	D/P/W	Beauty Plus size, self-taught	Auckland
Bonnie Hu	Bonnie Beauty xo	D/P/W	Beauty Chinese-New Zealander, self-taught	Dunedin
	Puffique	D/P/W	Craft DIY Is not personality driven, but content	Unknown
Jamie Curry	Jamie's World	D/P/W	Comedy skits / memes One of the most popular NZ Youtubers	Auckland
Shannon Harris	Shaaanxo	D/P/W	Beauty One of the most popular NZ Youtubers	Auckland
Tara & Ellen Mackenzie	Shop Style Conquer	D/P/W	Magazine style content Beauty & fashion	Auckland
	It's Black Friday	D/P/W	Magazine style content Goth	Wellington
Casey Rose	Fashionaddict	D/P/W	Magazine style content	Unknown

	KC		Had negative experience with NZYT community	
Short Films				
Name	Productions	Role	Notes	Location
Aidee Walker	Friday Tigers (2013) Cat Killers (2014)	Director Director	Worked in both traditional + online media.  Loading Docs film Cat Killers got pulled for controversy  Shown work in online short film competitions and uses online platforms for self funding	Auckland
Nathalie Bolt	Vajazzle (2015) Dropped Pie (2015)	D/P/W D/P/W	Turned to online media because of wider audience  Used crowdfunding + sponsorship to make film  Women-led production company	Auckland
Echo Janman	Public Films	Producer	Cultural art film projects based in the Pacific  Used a range of media to create work – from VHS to Vimeo	Auckland
Nikki Castle	Madness Made Me (2015)	Director	Worked in both traditional and online media  Involved in Loading Docs and developing a webseries	Melbourne
Amber Easby	Baba (2014) Kusuda (2015)	Producer Director	Done both traditional and online distribution of short films.	Auckland

			Involved in Loading Docs	
Margarita Olkhovsky	M Olkhovsky	Director Producer	Publishes short films to Vimeo  Has been working on crowdfunded film for local fashion designer (but not published online)	Christchurch
Other				
Name	Productions	Role	Relevant because	Location
Anna Jackson and Julia Parnell	Loading Docs (2014–present)	EP	Professional development initiative based around using online platforms  Highly successful, NZ specific content.	Auckland
Nia Phillips and Jean Kim		Producer	Supported by NZ On Air + NZFC	

## Appendix II: Interview call sheet for Alix Whittaker and Anna Duckworth

Interview date: 14 October 2015

Interview participants: Alix Whittaker  
Anna Duckworth

Phone number: Alix: [REDACTED]  
Anna: [REDACTED]

Main contact through: Email

Notes: Producers, run Candlelit Pictures, also do television, commercials and features in addition to online content

Meeting place: Candlelit Pictures, 24 Pah Road  
Epsom, Auckland

Weather forecast: Rain, easing to showers in morning. High of 18°  
Checked 11 October

Information sheet sent: 15 September

Interview questions sent: 11 October

Kit needed: Canon 7D + 18-135mm lens  
Tripod  
Lapel microphone + phone + headphones  
Rotolight + batteries  
Laptop + charger + USB 2.0 cord for Canon  
Shotgun microphone (spare)  
Canon batteries (spare)

Canon battery charger

Itinerary:

1. Find place suitable to film
2. Do you have any questions?
3. Sign consent + release forms + demographic
4. Set up camera, etc
5. Are there any questions you don't want to answer?
6. Test camera + mics
7. Are you comfortable?
8. Begin questions

Paperwork checklist:

Consent form signed  
Release form signed

## Appendix III: Interview with Alix Whittaker

*Louise: Can you introduce yourself?*

Alix: Hi, my name is Alix. I'm one of the co-founders and directors of Candlelit Pictures. I make a lot of music videos, webseries, and short films through Candlelit Pictures, some of which I'll be talking to you about today.

*Louise: Were you inspired by other content creators?*

Alix: Probably the only online content creators, the guys who make, guys and gals who make High Maintenance. I think they really nailed the online medium in a large way. I think probably the best thing you can do online, is something you're not allowed to do in TV. Obviously a show about a drug dealer is going to make it on TV, so they really nailed that. They also nailed the short attention span problem – keeping them nice and short means that people can go, have a little break from what they're doing, watch a sweet little episode and then get back into their work without having to take an entire half hour break from their day.

*Louise: Have you tried traditional media like television or film?*

Alix: No, we haven't dabbled in traditional distribution pathways yet. Mostly because we don't work with any filmmakers who are ready for that. Candlelit pictures are really interested in helping emerging filmmakers learn how to make stuff, and the internet is really great for that, because we can make something, put it straight online, and immediately we're getting feedback from the audience in comments, and also, you know, everyone we see who's watched it is saying, "oh I saw your thing and I didn't understand this" or "what did you mean by that" or whatever. So that's immediate feedback for the filmmakers. It's a great way for them to learn and if we were going through television or cinema for

them at this point, they wouldn't be getting that immediate feedback, it'd take a much longer time for their project to be seen by an audience and for them to get that feedback. I think we're really struggling to make any money out of the online distribution platform and I'm sure a lot of people are, cause it's so new and nobody really knows how it works yet. So I imagine that we'll be moving into traditional distribution platforms later on, once the filmmakers that we're working with are established and know what they're doing, and are ready to spend a much longer time making something before they can show it to an audience.

*Louise: What influenced your decision to distribute stuff online?*

Alix: It's for the quick turnaround of feedback for sure. That was the main thing. Definitely the only way you're going to go from being a mediocre filmmaker, which everybody is at the beginning, apart from, you know, the few oddballs who manage to not be. The only way you can get from being a mediocre filmmaker to being a really great filmmaker is through practicing, through trying it out- [interruption]

The only way to get good is to practice so as a company we were looking for ways to let the filmmakers practice and in New Zealand about 16 short film grants available every year, 200 music video grants available every year, and a handful of webseries grants available every year. So in terms of the path of least resistance, music videos is by far, in a way, that. You can be pitching for 12 music videos every month and statistically speaking you're likely to win a few of them. That's the thing we really like about music videos, they're instant gratification, you can make them, they're relatively easy to score the pitch for, you can make them, put them up online and get immediately feedback from people and really through making music videos we realised that we wanted to take a different direction with our short films as well. Since we started making and releasing music videos online, we haven't made and released a short film to film festivals

without it being online already and one of the first film festivals we went to, we were in competition for the best short film award, our short film wasn't online and the short film that won the award for best short film, the festival had found online so I think unless you think your short film has a really good shot at getting into a major festival like Canne, who still won't let you play if you are online, the best way to have your work seen and to get into festivals is to put it online and pour all your money and time into your online strategy, not your festival strategy.

So through making music videos we've learnt a lot about how we want to distribute our short films too.

*Louise: You personally, what made you want to make stuff, and particularly want to make stuff online?*

Alix: Personally, I got into producing because as a teenager I had a lot of friends who were artists, like musicians, painters, poets, actors, you know who wanted to make plays and whatnot, and I never wanted to be them, I always wanted to be the person that made it possible for them to do the thing that they were doing. I felt like none of them understood, you know all of my friends who were making art never managed to be able to call a gallery and sort out an exhibition, and I was just like, "that's so easy, I can do that!". So I naturally gravitated towards being a facilitator of the arts and supporting artists and my favourite art form is film. Films have played a huge role in my life in terms of helping me figure things out that I didn't understand and showing me things that I wouldn't have even been looking for anyway. When it came to making a decision about what I wanted to do with my life, that was a relatively easy decision to make in terms of a pathway.

I started out going down quite a traditional route. I went to university and halfway through my first semester I was offered a job working for a producer for

a few months and so I left uni thinking I'd go back and went and worked for her. Her and I had a series of conversations about the way that the industry works here and the fact the producer's job is really more about practical experience than it is about book learning for the most part. I decided not to go back to uni and at that point, I needed something to keep myself busy and so I started to look for emerging filmmakers to be making stuff with at that lower, grassroots level because I knew I could make things and I knew there were people around who had great ideas and no idea of how to execute them. So those were the people who I started helping. To be honest, in the beginning, we didn't really think online was that important, in fact it seemed like a really, kinda like, bum option. It was like, "oh well if everything else fails, you can always put it on the internet". In the last five years, having worked putting our work online, we've done a complete 360 on that. We think online is the best place to start finding your crowd, start finding an audience, and interacting with people. I think that there will be, and there already is, a massive opportunity for filmmakers to test new work and see how people respond to it before spending millions of dollars making a bigger piece, and I love that. I think that's super cool.

*Louise: What's your current process for finding people to work with and finding ideas you want to see made into films?*

Alix: We're, Annie [Duckworth] and I, are always looking for new people to work with. We're primarily interested in finding women because we're sort of drowning in male filmmakers and it's not that we don't love all of them, cause we do, but we're both really interested in telling stories from a female perspective and so that's that's one of the things we're primarily for. But we go to all of the 48 Hours Film Festival heats that we can, and we watch all of the upcoming music videos from fledgeling filmmakers and student films and stuff. If we see something we like, then we'll go after that person, have a cup of coffee with them, and say "would you like to start receiving music video pitches through us?" The way that normally works is we contact the bands and the record labels

and whatnot, and they'll send us songs, and then we send them out to all the directors on our list, and they'll send us a pitch, we'll send us feedback, they'll send us the revised pitch, and then if we think we would make it, you know, then we'll send it to the band. If it's something we probably wouldn't make, then we won't send it, you know, because obviously what's the point.

*Louise: What's your next process in terms of Vimeo or YouTube?*

Alix: Well the bands always want to put it on their YouTube channel, YouTube is massive for the bands. Vimeo is a filmmakers community, so we really encourage our directors to upload the video on their director profile on Vimeo. We push to have a premiere online; sometimes that's a difficult conversation because a lot of New Zealand bands want a premiere with New Zealand media outlets where they have friends at or whatever, and the truth is that a lot of the New Zealand music blogs just don't have the audience that international music blogs have. We like to push hard to send it out to the international music blogs first, and give them the first option. We have good relationships with music blogs overseas now as well who can single-handedly drive tens of thousands of watches to our video, you know, in a day.

Also the really great thing about international premieres is often the international publications will take the time to write a review of your video that they'll post with the premiere. Whereas in New Zealand, they never do that. So we definitely focus internationally for the premiere and I think premieres are a really important part of it. Then, following the premiere, it's really great to continue releasing content in and around the music video, so we like to do behind the scenes photos, sometimes we might have made a little behind the scenes documentary or you know, we start with the premiere, and then once it's been released, we'll release other content in and around, after that. Behind the scenes photos or footage, or little comedic sketches from the set, or drawings, or anything like that which can push people towards the video.

In the beginning, we really felt like online was an afterthought, and not part of the full plan. Whereas now it'd be the first thought, and it's where all of our planning goes into, everything else is an afterthought.

*Louise: Do you feel there's one "best practice" for making stuff online?*

Alix: I think the cool thing about online is that there's so much freedom. Everywhere else that you work, there's a whole bunch of people who are putting limitations on you and I think the best practice for working online is to not put any limitations on yourself. Do whatever you want, you have complete creative freedom, just go hard, make something, try something difficult, and if it doesn't work, who cares. Move on. Make something else.

I think that's the cool thing about online, there's not a lot of pressure on you to definitely nail it, you know. You can fail, over and over again, and learn about your failure in a really helpful way because even the awful feedback, even the people who are like "this is a piece of shit! Who have you any money to make this!", that's still helpful to hear. There's always something you can take away from all of that.

*Louise: Do you feel that there's similarities between more traditional ways, and making a webseries? Do you think that there's similarities in the process and where do you think they start to differ?*

Alix: If you're making a webseries without NZ On Air funding in New Zealand, it's completely different from making a television show, because you have that complete freedom. You can do it anyway you like. You can shoot parts, and edit them, and then keep shooting and keep editing and keep shooting and keep editing, and I think that's the cool thing that the guys from High Maintenance did. When they started out, they just made as many episodes as they could

afford to make, and then as more money came in, they'd make more episodes. In that way, if you're working outside of a traditional funding structure, you have complete freedom and it's nothing like working with a studio. Whereas, the funding with NZ On Air, I think they've been doing it for about three years now, and in the beginning, it was the wild West. They didn't know what they were looking for, so the application criteria was very open, you could present whatever you want. As it's gone on, it's become a lot more defined, exactly what they want from you, and it's becoming a lot more like television, in terms of what they expect in a pitch document, and the kind of, proof of concept that they'd like you to have before you even begin.

If webseries really takes off in New Zealand, it'll be in the underground, it'll be the Candle Wasters; those guys really nailed it and they have shown everybody else that it's possible to make something, for no money, because you're so passionate about it that you just want to get together and make it. I think that is the really cool thing about online, is that it gives people permission to make something and release it. There's no studio body, or New Zealand On Air body saying "oh your thing isn't really good enough yet, you just keep working on it, and not make it yet" – you can just make it and see what happens. Those guys [Candle Wasters] are a real inspiration for that and I certainly hope they are inspiring kids all over New Zealand to pick up a camera, even if it's just their mum's phone, and make something because they can.

*Louise: How do you measure success in what you do?*

Alix: Because I'm all about the people who are making the things, I measure success based on how much they learnt through making it – that's just me personally. I think as a company, we measure success based on support we've rallied around that filmmaker through the project. Especially moving forward online, it's becoming increasingly difficult to find good content and a lot of people are looking to makers that they trust and checking back with them to see

if there's anything new from that maker that they haven't seen yet. So it's really important for us to be building up the Vimeo communities of our filmmakers and making sure that the people who are interested in their work know where they can find it and are coming back to watch it time and time again. It's slowly through making content for online that they can build an audience around themselves, and if filmmakers around the world really manage to nail that, a lot more power will come back to them in terms of distribution. If you can come to making a feature film, or a television show with three million people who are immediately going to watch your content, that gives you a lot of power. I think that's another thing that Candle Wasters are nailing – they have created an audience for their content and they are delivering content that that audience loves, and that audience keeps on growing. There's no stopping them after that, they could do anything they want now. They've got a huge audience behind them, who are loyal and love their work. It's great. That's success.

*Louise: Do you feel this is a worthwhile way of making and publishing media, and will you keep doing it in the future?*

Alix: Definitely both of those things. Like I said before, and I'll say it again, I think the only way to get good it to practice a lot and to get feedback, so I think the online medium is really great for that, for practicing and getting immediate feedback, but it's also really great for building your audience and finding the people who are interested in consuming your art. That makes it more valuable than any other distribution platform that exists, really. It's interesting because I wonder what's going to happen with online distribution, in a way; traditionally cinemas take such a huge chunk of your profits, the filmmakers don't often see a lot, and that's something that audiences deep down, have always felt a little bit bad about. They're coming in and consuming this person's work, and the person who made the work is not benefiting from that in a lot of instances. I think your Netflix, etcetera, online are trying to be the cinema of the online world and that's great in terms of there's one place you sign up to, it's secure, you know

that your credit card details are going to be safe, so you trust it, and there's a bunch of different movies there available for your consumption, but I mean just as a consumer myself, I would prefer to be able to Google Steven Spielberg, go to his website, have his entire collection of movies there, and to be able to rent them off him directly and have all the money go to him. I don't know how that will work in terms of people being able to trust that their bank information is secure, but if somebody creates an app that can do that, that all filmmakers can put on their website that is secure, the app is secure, and maybe the app takes a smaller percentage than the distributors online (because apps often do, cause they get it), that could be a really great way to move forward with distribution. One of the cool things about online is that if you leave a comment on someone's video, on a filmmaker's Vimeo channel, you know that they're going to read it. You can have a dialogue with them, and I think it would be great to have the same was true with your money; when you spend it, you know it's going to the filmmaker, and I'm sure that's going to happen in the future, I just don't know how it will. I have no doubt that online is going to completely take over as the dominant distribution platform for everything. It's just a matter of time and I don't think that cinemas are going to die, I think there will always be a place for cinemas, people will always want to be able to go and have a communal experience, and see it up on a huge screen with really big noise, but I think the cinemas are going to have to up their game in a way and possibly curate. You have a cinema that also has a bunch of gaming stations, and that's the cinema that plays all the films that gamers are into. You have a cinema that has a nice, quiet, French lounge with wine and stuff, where people chill, and that's the cinema that plays a lot of art house films and stuff like that – so that people have their local community space that curates things that they might not find online.

*Louise: How do you feel about advertising as an income? Ads before Youtube videos, or product placement as alternatives to payment; so it's free content but?*

Alix: I guess I'm fine with it, in a way. I don't like having to wait to watch something for an ad, personally, and I don't like the idea. It's off putting, for me, the idea that the audience who are watching the work that the filmmakers that I'm supporting have made, start the whole experience going "oh fuck, I have to wait, one two three, uhhhh" you know? That's not a nice way to start your experience watching this thing, but I don't think it's going to go away, so it's not a fight I'm interested in particularly rallying against beyond saying that it does irk me a little.

*Louise: ...so, making the stuff, like you don't have to pay them a percentage of your profits?*

Alix: Yeah yeah totally, I love crowdfunding I think it's so so great. It's a really wonderful way to help to find your audience and your fanbase. And it's also a great way to help people feel involved. I've been to a lot of crowdfunding meetups, and I talk to people who are like, "you know I work on an office, or I work doing whatever, and you know I've always got \$20 or \$30 a week extra that I could do something with and it makes me feel really good to be able to support artists with that money. So, I go on pledgeme every week and I find an artist I want to support and give them \$20." You know, there are a lot of people who really want to be a part of something who I think, you know they have a similar motivation to me – you know they don't want to be the artist. They also don't want to be me – they also don't want to be a person interfacing with the artist making it happen. But they do want to give \$20 every week to help them. And crowdfunding creates a way for those people to do it. I think it's perfect. I love it.

*Louise: So, do you, work in a team? Do you want to talk about what kind of team structures you've been in and what the gender makeup of those teams are?*

Alix: Well Candlelit Pictures started out, I mean, pretty much my entire experience in the industry has been Candlelit Pictures, because when I first

started out the Producer who gave me the job that I mentioned earlier, she was very encouraging for me to just do it. Don't wait for anyone to give me permission. Which is the thing that I think the internet does that I love. The girls that make Candlewasters, they didn't need anyone's permission – they just did it. So that's what Candlelit Pictures has been from the very beginning. It started with – there were three of us, two boys and me. The two boys were writer/directors and I was the producer. And within a few years Annie Duckworth came on board as another producer and from there, since Annie came on board and her and I have been able to do a lot more work and work with a lot more creatives, the company has grown and grown and grown and now we have 9 producers all of whom are female, and 25 writer/directors that we work with – one of whom is female. And we've spent years looking for women to work with and still there's only one in that group. And that's really disheartening for us and we talk about it all the time, the fact that we really wish it wasn't so out of balance. And we continue to look for people, and it's really hard, they just don't seem to exist – ladies who want to direct. It's very difficult to find them.

*Louise: I was definitely the only girl in my classes who was like "I'm going to direct." And everyone was like, "oh, you don't want to just organise?" No.*

Alix: We have a lot of conversations in house especially between the female producers – and the amount of times when we've all been like "We don't want to write and direct, but maybe we should all just change careers and be writer/directors just so that we can inspire other people to do it and show them that it's possible." But it's not what we're passionate about. We all want to produce, that's what we're into. Which is why we haven't yet made that transition, but I mean if it keeps on being this dire for much longer we might.

*Louise: It's kind of funny, because I always thought that "yeah, I can organise stuff – that's not that difficult" but then making this, I'm like, oh I'm really not*

*good at emailing people ... I need a producer, I really suck at this. So I'm sure [female directors are] out there, wishing they had producers!*

*Are there any supporting platforms that you use to publicise or engage with your audience. So like, you use youtube and vimeo to publicise stuff, but do you use twitter to get feedback; do you use instagram to get feedback; or do you make use of the comment sections on those platforms?*

Alix: For feedback from the audience for the actual work we try to make use of the comments part of Youtube and Vimeo primarily, and Facebook – we have quite a strong community on Facebook who always give us feedback in the comments section there. On Twitter .... Truthfully we're so busy making stuff that we don't spend a lot of time soliciting feedback on social medias beyond Facebook. All of our attention and energy goes into Facebook, Vimeo and Youtube. Beyond that, we have a Twitter and we have an Instagram, and we do use them occasionally. But we're not actively looking for feedback in those places.

*Louise: What are your personal viewing habits. So, do you watch tonnes of Youtube? Do you watch lots of music videos? Like, do they align or are they different?*

Alix: Interesting question. I am part of a Facebook group called the Music Video Society of Centrifugal Oddballs and they post great music videos all the time, so I check that regularly. Every morning I'll go and watch one, maybe two music videos while I'm having a cup of coffee. And I also use Vimeo to find work – I don't use Youtube, at all.

*Louise: That's ok! It's not about judging you! Part of [asking the question] was just me wanting to know what other people watch!*

Alix: Vimeo's really great at curating content. They're great at it. They keep me satisfied... they don't leave me wanting. I also really love shortoftheweek.com – it's a great place to go and find nice stuff to watch.

*Louise: I even found this, documentarystorm.com — they just embed videos from YouTube. But they send out a newsletter every week, like here's a new free documentary!*

Alix: There's a new site called Mubi – they have 30 feature films on their site that you can watch all the time. And every day one expires and a new one comes in, and I think that's amazing. Totally into that.

*Louise: So what's the most positive experience to come from the way that you make things? And like, this can be feedback or "oh I felt really cool working with these people" or I just did a project that I was really passionate about, or it can be anything...*

Alix: Well, the thing that comes straight to my mind, is through all of the music videos that we've been making, there are people all over the world who saw the first few music videos that Candlelit Pictures released and must have thought wow those were pretty cool, you know New Zealand company doing something cool, and over time have been slowly... [audio missing]

*Louise: Do you have advice for other women wanting to create media?*

Alix: Definitely I think the biggest piece of advice I could give you is just do it. Use Candle Wasters as inspiration, and don't let anything else hold you back because there's no need to. The internet gives you permission to make whatever you like and release it and see what people think. And if they love it – they love it. And they might! But there's only one way to find out!

*Louise: What would you do differently if you were starting again?*

Alix: I think, I would... I mean the only thing that I really regret is that we don't work with more women. So I guess, maybe one thing I would do if we were starting again would be to make our position really clear from the outset – try to attract any females who want to make stuff and say to them “we're here, we like producing things, we want to work with women, so if you want to make stuff please email us and get in touch because we're keen.” And we're working on how to do that right now – how we can reach out a little bit more clearly because on the odd occasion that we do meet people, or rather females, who are making stuff they're often be like “oh I had no idea that you guys would be interested in working with me if I got in touch with you” or something like that. So I think you know, it would be cool to go back in time and do that from an earlier stage because then we'd already be working with a lot more women.

*Louise: Do you feel that online media is becoming overcrowded, and if so how do you make sure your stuff is seen?*

Alix: I think the world is becoming overcrowded, media wise..or in every way. It's not just online, it's like, you know, there is too much to consume everywhere. And, I don't really see it as a problem. I actually think it's a really cool thing because I think all of the content is people who are learning. And the cream rises to the top, you know – the good stuff is found more online than it is through any of the other traditional networks and even if it takes a few years...you know sometimes when you release something it doesn't catch on straight away, it takes a little while for someone to find it and tell everyone about it. But, it's still there waiting to be discovered. And if it's good enough it will be. And I think it's fine for all of that other stuff to be there in the interim. I don't see that as a problem.

*Louise: Is there anything else that you'd like to say, or anything that you'd like me to ask you about?*

Alix: I guess, the thing that I think is really cool about what you are doing is you're asking lots of different people for their opinions and then you're going to publish them publicly for anyone who's interested to be able to see. And so, I hope that you get a diverse range of opinions from people, but my opinion is the cool thing about the internet is that you don't need anyone's permission to create something for it. And, you don't even have to limit yourself in what you can create. You know, on the internet you can have full frontal nudity, and unlike in traditional distribution it can be full frontal male nudity, you know as well as female nudity. That's great. You know, there's no restrictions, you can do anything you like and I think that's not something people should be abusing. I wouldn't encourage you to go and make something crazy provocative with lots of naked people and drugs just because you can. I think you still need to be looking to the history of the artform and really trying to make sure that you are prioritising your story and that you're prioritising your voice as a filmmaker and telling the things that are important to you. But, I think it is empowering that we have this distribution format that has been created that is so accessible to so many people around the world and allows you the freedom to create whatever you want. I think that's super cool, and I love that in New Zealand it's the females who are paving the way in that format, it's Roseanne Liang and the Candle Wasters and [muffled]...that these are the ladies who are making it happen and I think they are a massive inspiration and I hope that there are people and filmmakers around New Zealand that are thinking "yeah, I can do this" because they can. And if they think they can't, I hope that this series that you are making helps to show them that they can too. Because they can, and that's the cool thing about the internet, and that's it in a nutshell!

*Louise: Anything else that ...?*

Alix: Annie [Duckworth] is amazing. If you ever need a female producer, she is top notch!

*Louise: Did I ask you about any negative experiences that you have come across?*

Alix: You know, I think that even the negative experiences that we've had with the internet really are positive ones. The people who have reacted really badly to some of the stuff that we have released, it's ended up being alright in the end actually. I think a really great example of that is our [Dopra?] music video – when that came out, there was a lot of controversy around what we were actually trying to say with that music video, and it sparked a conversation that we are beyond stoked to have sparked or to have been getting people to think about. And I think that's the important thing about getting negative comments online, is don't take them personally because there's no need to really, you know everyone's allowed to have their own opinion. Why do we have to take that personally? We don't. But what it does do is start conversations, and I think if the conversations you're starting are conversations worth having then great. And if they start from a negative standpoint, fine – there'll be positive voices in the mix, you know. If there aren't, then you can bring yours. You made the thing – you're the authority, at the end of the day.

## Appendix IV: Interview with Anna Duckworth

*Louise: Can you start off by introducing yourself, and then saying what kinda stuff you've done?*

Anna: My name is Anna Duckworth, I am a producer, and last year I produced 27 music videos, New Zealand On Air (NZOA) funded, and self funded. Some of my favourites were for LarzRanda and SheepDogWolf, and last year I made my first webseries, called \$1 Reserve.

*Louise: Can you tell me how you got started making stuff?*

Anna: When I was in high school, I always wanted to be creative, and I thought I wanted to be a novelist, or something like that. When I left high school, I started making YouTube videos, just like video blogs or silly skit videos, and found that there was quite a vibrant but small New Zealand Youtube community, and that kind of spurred me on. I decided to go study film at university. I studied at AUT, and made a few short films throughout that time, did 48 Hours while I was at university, and got really into filmmaking. When I left university, I travelled to New York on a one year work visa, worked as a PA on feature films over there, ended up production co-ordinating on commercials and music videos over there, but my work visa ran out. So I came back to New Zealand and started working with Candlelit Pictures, where they asked me to produce music videos and short films, which seemed really scary at the time, jumping from PA to producer, but they were really encouraging and I found that I could totally do it, and it was a really supportive environment. I just kept making stuff basically, probably sucked at the beginning, and got better and better as I went along. I'm sure I'll probably look back at myself now and be like, man I really sucked then, but it's just a process of doing more and practicing and getting it out there and getting feedback.

*Louise: Were you inspired by other content creators? Like other people on YouTube or people who make films?*

Anna: I've always been a heavy user of the internet, so I feel like I have seen a lot of other content creators and been really inspired by what they're doing, especially the YouTube community, doing lots of stuff, it's changed so much over that time, also other platforms like Vimeo, and stuff like that, just making really great quality content, like the webseries High Maintenance, I look at and I'm just like, oh my gosh, it's just so good. Some of the production values of really simple setups, that people can do really great stuff, really simply, and fast. I think it's been hugely inspiring to see what can be done, and that you don't need a huge team, you can just do something yourself. Also, that the story or the concept is the most important thing. Someone can be making something really simply, but if it's someone just telling a story, and it's a really good story, it's good. You don't need all the bells and whistles. I feel like I've seen a lot of really great content and thought, I could do that.

*Louise: Have you tried to work for TVNZ, Weta Studio, etc?*

Anna: When I left university, I was really determined not to get a nine to five job. I had seen a lot of people who had graduated before me, that were in seemingly boring jobs, not really doing anything, and they were a tiny cog in a giant machine and I really wasn't that patient. I really wanted to get out there and do it, so I pretty much just wanted to start doing whatever I wanted, straight away. Having said that, I also value what you can learn from working under really experienced people. For me, my chosen way is to work with established crews on project-based work, like feature films 'cause it can just be like two months or three months, and you get to learn a lot from another producer or production team. But it's not like signing your soul away to a contract or working nine to five every week.

*Louise: What made you choose to take on projects that are primarily online-based?*

Anna: I think the ability to distribute stuff online has been hugely freeing for creatives, like the instant gratification and feedback is what emerging filmmakers need to get better. Every project you do, you are making leaps forward, and if it was a traditional short film, that is going to be a three year process from funding and development, and shooting it and post production, and then you have to put it through the festival circuit, and then you can finally release it and get that huge audience feedback. Whereas, online you just put it straight out there and you can gauge what people are thinking and how successful it is. I think that's what was so addictive about music videos. Because there are so many music video grants in New Zealand, you can think of an idea, action that idea, put it out there and get a lot of feedback about what people think of it. It's just the best way to develop your skills, music videos are a perfect playground for filmmakers to just try out new ideas and get really creative. As a producer, seeing that process go from start to finish 20 times in a year, rather than one time in three years, it's really beneficial.

*Louise: What's your current process for taking on projects? Does someone pitch to you? Do you pitch to someone else?*

Anna: There's as many different ways of going about a project, as there are projects. Everyone has come to us in a different way. For music videos, the way that it usually goes it that there is an announcement of who has been given a grant, and then we email them all the songs we like and then say "can we pitch to you?" and they say "yes", then we send it to all our directors, they make a treatment, we give our directors a couple of sessions of feedback to help them get better at making their treatments, then we send it to the band and they either do want to do it or they don't. Other times, we've just heard a song that we really liked and we were like "can we please make a music video for you?"

With the webseries that I did last year, it's a project that the actor's programme has been doing for four years. They're a one-year actor's training institute and they do an on-location shoot. In the original years, they had been doing scenes from movies for actors to put on their showreel. So we pitched them the idea of "hey, you could be doing original content, you've got these great actors, you've got this crew, you've got a budget, why don't we put that to good use and make something original" and they were really behind it so they bought on Curtis Vowell and Sophie Henderson to write and direct, and then came to us and said "can you make this happen?" so we did. Candlelit Pictures has quite a large community of emerging filmmakers and we all get together and watch films and discuss our ideas and develop each other's scripts; so usually we know what each other wants to do, so if someone is writing a script, they're talking to us about it, and usually one of the producers will jump in and be like "I love this script, if you want me to produce it, that's cool". Also, I feel like I'm always looking for good scripts and good ideas, so any time I'm talking to any writer or director, I'm just like "I can make things if you want! Anytime! Just send it to me!" which can be dangerous sometimes can you end up over committing but yeah. I am always over on the lookout for people to come to and talk to me, or for me to talk to other people, about making stuff.

*Louise: What platforms do you use to publish your work, and why?*

Anna: We have a lot of discussion and conflict about which online platforms to use. The two main ones for us at the moment are YouTube and Vimeo and there are pros and cons for each. Facebook has also come into the mix recently, they're really pushing their video side. Vimeo, for us, has always been for us, quality over quantity, it's really simple, it's not full of spammy junk, it's really high quality, and the community there is much more careful, and critical. Youtube is just for the masses, and the gutter of the internet but has a lot of foot traffic, you're a lot more discoverable on Youtube. Often our directors will push

to have stuff just on Vimeo because they like that critical eye that's thoughtful and understanding of their work, rather than just like, the masses. For me, as a producer, I push for Youtube, or both, because that's the way you're going to get eyeballs and I really want as many people to see our work as possible. Quite often we release it on both because there are pros and cons for both of them.

*Louise: Do you feel there are similarities between making stuff for online, and making stuff for TV and cinema? And where in the process does it start to differ?*

Anna: I think the difference between traditional and online media, the gap is getting smaller and smaller. There is a lot of crossover. You could have a short film in a festival which was shot on an iPhone or you could have a video on Youtube that was shot on the best digital camera.

I feel like there's a lot of crossover happening as time goes on. I think there are a lot of traditional mindsets about the way things are made, and more and more, I see there are two schools of thought about filmmaking and making moving images. One is the get your hands dirty, get it done, anyone can pick up a camera and make something, if you've got a story to tell, tell it. The other is the very tried and true, you can't do this until you've done this position, and you can't do this position until you've done this position, and very traditional and structured, with a lot of hierarchy.

I see a lot of benefit to both styles of filmmaking. You need the dedication and precision of the traditional model to not make mistakes and not accidentally delete your footage. All those systems are there for a reason, but I think more and more people are embracing DP's who didn't come up the traditional way, and have new ideas, and can just pick up a camera and shoot. I think you can totally shoot a DIY film and have it play in cinemas, and you can totally shoot a traditional film and have it on VOD which people can just buy online. I feel like

the intersection of the two is really merging and the difference for me is more an attitude or way of going about it.

*Louise: Do you think that especially relates to women, who can struggle to get into the lower tier roles or progress further?*

Anna: I think the newer, online model really suits women because anyone can jump in and do anything and there are no traditional expectations and barriers. Even now, on a traditional film set, you very rarely see a woman grip, or a male hair and makeup artist – it happens but it's not that common. There are just expectations of the way things are, whereas when you're doing it yourself, you can jump in at any position, and do whatever you want, and you can prove yourself. The thing with the traditional model is that you can't prove yourself until you're given a chance. Whereas if you go out there and make something, and it gets heaps of views, and it's really critically acclaimed, and does really well, then you have proven yourself. I think there is a history of women in traditional film models having to be a real "bitch", they have to be really tough to make it through, and almost have to adopt a masculine personality to get through. Whereas I feel the online stuff can a lot more tight knit, small communities banding together, you don't need a huge personality to break through. You can just be doing stuff with your friends and getting stuff made.

*Louise: How do you measure success?*

Anna: At Candlelit Pictures we have a few different metrics for success of our online content and any of our content. Views are obviously a huge one that you can report back to people and use for future funding. If you're trying to get someone to give you money for a project, you can say, this video had this many eyeballs on it, and we think this is going to have something else. But views are very quantitative, rather than qualitative and so a lot of our creatives are really interested in a smaller, more engaged audience than just a large anonymous

audience. So people writing blogs about our stuff and talking about what they like and don't like about our videos, people commenting people, people sharing a video – shares are often more important than likes because that's saying someone really likes something enough to share it with their friends. Then also online there are certain accolades that are really important to us – like if we get selected for Vimeo Staff Picks, that's really great, or if a really huge Youtuber does a shout-out to your thing and you get heaps of views – that's really great. Being nominated for different awards is always nice, there's [Vodafone New Zealand Music Awards] Best Music Video and other webseries awards and stuff like that. Engagement is the main thing that signifies success for me; the way people are talking with us about our content.

*Louise: Is success important to you?*

Anna: I think success is really important to us because it's important to know you're having an impact on your audience. I think it's really tough to make something that is designed to be watched, and have it not be watched. So you want to get it out there to as many people as you can, and usually you're trying to say something, and it's something that's important to you, that you think needs to be said. So the more people who get it, and the more people who discuss it, the better. We kinda love it when people hate it too, that's engagement. When people don't get it, or read it in different ways, that's really interesting to us as well.

Obviously we'd all love to be rich and famous as well [laughs], but that's not really a huge part of what success means to us. I think if we wanted to be rich and famous, we wouldn't be making films [laughs].

*Louise: Do you feel like doing stuff online is a worthwhile way of making media?*

Anna: Distributing content online is a double edged sword I think, because on the one hand you have access to so many people, it's instant gratification, you're getting feedback, you're putting yourself out there. But on the other hand, it's a little bit like shouting into an empty room. You never know if something that you made, that's incredible, is not going to be seen by anyone. It's really hard to cut through the masses, and more and more there's just a sea of content online. It's really hard to be noticed, and I think that's where online marketing comes into it, you have to be really clever about that stuff.

But there have been instances where we've made something and released it online, which I think is really incredible and it doesn't get the attention I think it deserves. There is just so much, so much stuff out there. Even I find myself online, watching beauty tutorials or something, just crappy stuff, just because it's like junk food – so it is hard to cut through with something that you think is powerful and important, to get people to watch it.

*Louise: Do you want to talk about the difference between [working with a male-heavy team versus one with women]..?*

Anna: I'm trying to think if I've ever worked with a female director.

Oh yeah, I have! At Candlelit Pictures we have quite a community with lots of different combinations of roles. We have producers, directors, art directors, first ADs [assistant directors], all kind of in the mix around each other all the time. When we're trying to build a team for a particular project, everyone just pairs off in different combinations and you just ask whoever's around if they're keen to be involved.

A lot of the music videos that I've done have been with one of directing duos; thunderlips, which is Jordan and Shawn. They are quite loud, boys-boys, and

usually the production team is women. The directors are men and the production teams are women; it just seems to happen that way.

Then we have our emerging directors programme, where anyone can apply and they can submit treatments for music videos. We will develop their ideas and help them make a music video. The vast majority of emerging directors are men. Any time a woman is vaguely interested I'm like "Yes! You can do it! I believe in you!".

The webseries that I did, \$1 Reserve, we had Sophie Henderson who was the writer and her husband Curtis Vowell was the director, it was quite a nice dynamic working with the two of them. Also, our executive producer, Michelle Hine from the actors programme, brought a really great contribution as well.

Recently I've done a bit of work with Aidee Walker, who's a director. I love working with her. I feel like what I love about a female producer-director team, is that you really encourage a lot of women in other roles. It's like we all band together, which is great.

Recently I did another short film with Cathy McCray, and almost our HODs [heads of department] were women, and I think it's really important if you're trying to make a film with a female voice, that's it's not just the director. You have to bring that female voice through in lots of areas.

*Louise: Have there been any really negative stuff?*

Anna: We've had a lot of positive and negative experiences with feedback from online distribution. It's really hard as a creative, for someone to say mean stuff about what you're doing. But that's what critical feedback is. I directed a music video, which will remain nameless, and it was my first time directing, and it went on YouTube and it just got slammed. So many people were like "this is shit, this is

terrible, it's so boring" and at first, I was kinda like, sad. Then I realised that I had done exactly what the musician and their label had wanted. They wanted a really simple performance music video of that person singing, and that's what it was. It was that artist singing. I realised that anyone watching who didn't like it, didn't like watching that artist sing. What kind of fan are you if you don't like this?

So I feel like a lot of times when people give negative feedback, it's not actually about you as a filmmaker but about something else. Having said that, there have been times when people have given us really good critical feedback, that you can look at and say, oh I never thought about it that way. We had a bit of controversy over one of our music videos once, which was kinda like, parody isn't the right word, it was based on J-Pop and we were kinda making a point about cultural appropriation and the characters in the thing being controlled, and there were all these ideas of creepy, underworld stuff happening and trying to appropriate. J-Pop is kinda Japanese culture trying to appropriate Western culture, so we were like, Western culture, trying to appropriate Japanese culture, trying to appropriate Western culture. So we were trying to start a conversation about that. Then a lot of people only saw the surface level, and were like "omg cultural appropriation, so inappropriate, you can't do this!" but that was great. That's what we wanted people to talk about. We wanted there to be a discussion about that. Now people study our music video as an example of critical comment on cultures and that sort of thing. That's ideal.

*Louise: Do you use any online platforms, not just for distribution, but also for production?*

Anna: I think other people talk about Facebook as if it's distracting them from their work, but I'm like, this is a necessary tool in my arsenal. I could not produce without Facebook. I use it all the time to enlist help, get suggestions for crew, ask for random props. I am a huge proponent of getting your community involved in what you're doing. People love to be involved, I am sure there are certain people

on my feed, who are like “ahhh Annie stop talking about these things that you need” but I know that out of my 500 friends or whatever, that someone has an e-cigarette that I can use for a weekend, or that someone has a car I can borrow, or a van, and it’s always such random things that you need. “I need an ugly dog!” or whatever. If you couldn’t ask your community for that stuff, I don’t know how you would find it. I feel like your options were so limited if you didn’t have access to people in the way you do now. Producing would be a completely different thing. But also – just discovering your peers? It’s really hard to stay connected to other people who are doing the same thing as you, so the fact that you’re seeing what other people are making, and you can see who you know, who knows them, and you can be like I really love their work! “We should go get a coffee and talk about it”. So I think the interconnectedness of the online filmmaking community is hugely beneficial for everyone involved.

*Louise: Are there any other supporting platforms you use?*

Anna: We’re kinda learning how to use other online platforms to market and support what we’re doing. Recently, we’ve been trying to do little teaser videos on Facebook and Instagram, just trying to provide additional content that’s around the project. It’s not just snippets of the project, but other cool things that relate to it in a similar way. We also want to get as much hype and discussion about a project that we’ve done. So the more we can be talking about in as many different ways, the better.

*Louise: Do you watch the same content that you also put out?*

Anna: I feel like I watch a lot of trash on the internet. I spend a lot of time getting lost down youtube holes, just watching the weirdest stuff, like dog training videos. I just spend a lot of time consuming content online. Sometimes I feel like I want to watch something that’s going to be good for my filmmaking education, I should use this time to watch a short film, or I should watch a webseries. A lot

of the times I start watching things, and then I stop, because, I don't know. I'm like, it's not good, or it's not entertaining, or it's too cerebral and serious. If I want to watch something serious, I'd be watching it on a bigger screen. Whereas when I'm watching something on my computer, I want it to be under five minutes long. I want it to be entertaining, or light, or silly. I like watching other people's music videos, and I like watching webseries that are really good, but my standards are quite high and there's a lot of not-good stuff.

I spend a lot of time watching crappy stuff, but I also spend a lot of time watching video-blogs and I wouldn't make video-blogs now. Watching those video blogs does kinda inspire me to see what people like, and you also see what communities are active online. For example, Vlogbrothers, who have this huge this Nerdfighter community; even though I don't want to make the videos they make, I know that there's a community that's large, that's into the values that they represent, so it does give you an insight into audiences and what's going on with different communities.

*Louise: With the positive and negative experiences, it doesn't have to be with feedback, but also with teams?*

Anna: I think one thing that has been really positive for me about distribution stuff online, has been the inspiration that you get from completion satisfaction, you actually get something done and made and it's out the door. Things that really drag on are really demoralising, and it can be really stink when you release something three years later and it doesn't represent your skills as a filmmaker anymore. I always want to get stuff out as quickly as possible so I can be improving and onto the next thing.

I think it's really good to work in different teams because you get to try out who you work well with, and who you don't work well with. So working with fast turnover online content, you get to try out lots of different combinations and

build collaborations which will last hopefully your entire career. You get to work with lots of people of lots of small project and build partnerships or groups that you can be working with over and over again, and strengthening that collaboration.

*Louise: Has there ever been a time where you felt like something wasn't going right and had to really confront the problem?*

Anna: I feel like my role, a lot, is the kinda realist, or the troubleshooter, so I do often notice problems which are coming up and have to raise them with other members of the team. It can be really awkward and on set is the hardest time to raise an issue, so I feel like I try my best to raise any issue before we're on set, or sometimes after. Recently we were shooting a scene, and the vibe of the scene was so not what I had expected, and was bad, and I was like "this is not cute, this is rapey, we need to stop, this is really wrong". Afterwards, I talked to the director, who was a woman, and I was like I don't think that scene was coming across the way we intended, and she was like "I know". It wasn't working and we talked about it, and we were like, we need to reshoot that scene tomorrow. So we reshot it, and shot it in a different way so that it did work, and I think that was an example of raising issues and them being addressed, and it working out really well.

A lot of the time I raise issues and we talk about it, and then I realised that I'm wrong. That happens. I think the most important thing is having an open dialogue, and if something is worrying any member of the team, for anyone to be able to talk about it. Even the intern, can be like "hey, isn't that really racist?" and you can be like "oh yeah let's change that". At any point, anyone should jump in.

*Louise: Do you have any advice for women wanting to start?*

Anna: I think there are so many inspiring examples for women filmmakers at the moment, and there are becoming more and more, and I think the main thing is to just go and do it. Make it happen. There are so many people who want to help you, that's one thing that I've noticed myself is that anytime anyone emails me or calls me and says "can I take you out for a coffee?", I'm like yes! Absolutely! I want to help you so much, and I want to give people notes and give people help, and put people in touch with the right people. I think that's one thing that, for me, starting out, the film industry was so like, all in your face, everyone is out for themselves, but the more I ask for help, the more I realise that people really want to offer it. Especially when it's just their advice, they've got nothing to lose. People like helping other people and I think that's one good thing about New Zealand, is that people do have the time and inclination to help each other. Their not like so busy that they can't spend an hour talking to someone.

*Louise: What would you do differently if starting again?*

Anna: Hopefully I wouldn't make as much embarrassing stuff on YouTube [laughs]. I guess I wish I had started earlier. I didn't know what I wanted to do for a long time and muddled around, and then kinda found what I wanted to do. I think I didn't know what the options were, I didn't know what a producer was, I didn't know what that role did. All I knew was, what a director did, and even then I didn't really understand what it was. I think I would have educated myself about how the film industry works earlier and just tried to get on as many sets as I could to see different ways that things work.

*Louise: Do you feel that the online media landscape is being overcrowded?*

Anna: I feel like now you can't just create a YouTube account and put a video on it, and expect people to see it. You have to be building communities and having constant content, and having distribution pathways that you're constantly putting content on. For us [Candlelit Pictures], our primary one is our Facebook

page. We post videos there and we know that people will see them, at least our fans will see them there. There is just so much content and it's hard to cut through. I think marketing something that is hugely underrated, especially in kinda young, diy communities. It's something from the traditional model, the marketing stuff, but I think it's really important and I think young people have great, innovative solutions for that kinda of things. You know, having a Tumblr and having a Twitter in character, and having an instagram, and having all these different things which is creating a brand for their content, and just being really clever, and doing great stuff.

But yeah, I think young people are being really innovative in the way they are getting their content in front of people, and thinking of new ways to market it.

*Louise: Are there any further comments you'd like to make?*

Anna: The main thing for me that's great about online is that it gives you the opportunity to practice as a filmmaker, and no one starts off being a great filmmaker. You have to be good before you're great, and you have to be kind of okay before you're good, and you have to be a little bit shitty before you're okay. It's okay to suck, and it's okay to just make stuff and put it out there and keep trying, and you'll get better. I think a lot of people starting out, and I see it over and over again, get really demoralised by the fact that their tastes are up here and their skills are down here and they think they're just not good. No one starts good. You have to just start and try, and do it over and over again until you get good.

## Appendix V: Interview with Bea Jobin

*Louise: So would you like to introduce yourself and talk about what projects you've put online and what roles you had in them?*

Bea: Kia Ora, my names Bea Joblin. I have put two webseries online so far in my career that I wrote, directed, and produced. I suppose because it was back in the day when you did everything yourself and probably production designed and all that jazz and everything.

I also have a feature film in post production which I'm hoping to release online. That's my plan. I want to do something clever and fun like call it Koha release or something like that. So get an audience involved in a particular way where they can interact with it financially. They can make a donation here and there to us or to something else but it's still available for free if people need it. So it's the idea that you're valuing the product, you're not saying 'oh, it's only going online', you're making the online release a bit of an event in itself, I guess.

*Louise: Were you inspired by other content creators?*

Bea: Yeah. Not so much online. I suppose the reason that I got into film, because I was previously in theatre, was because of Ruth Jones who makes Gavin and Stacey. I was like, that's awesome, really loved her writing style in that. I think because I'm not a particularly visual filmmaker, I'm a character based filmmaker, and a narrative based filmmaker and I enjoy slice of life and the way film lends itself to that, so her style of comedy kind of appealed to me in that way.

*Louise: Have you tried traditional means of making and publishing media?*

Bea: No I haven't, I've always been really not interested in getting funding from mainstream bodies ; not interested in trying to get anybody to pick anything up.

I've always been like, we're doing it ourselves, we're doing what we want, especially because my first show was called 'CNT Live' and it was a feminist breakfast show and it was incredibly, what you would call, 'offensive' in a mainstream context, so I knew that no one would take it anyway so I was enjoying the freedom that the internet gave me in that respect.

*Louise: What made you choose this particular way of publishing media?*

Bea: So firstly that there's a freedom in terms of your content, and in terms of if you have politically alternative ideas, or socially alternative ideas, or you try to be radical in some way or challenge things, it's a lot easier to just do it online because you don't need anybody's approval and permission. But also, in terms of the kinds of content that's being valued, just female stories or queer stories which I'm really interested in – anything that isn't a straight white cis male experience. I think you could wait around for a long time to have a funder or a broadcaster decide that that was worth talking about. Whereas if you just do it yourself, then it's done.

*Louise: What got you interested in filmmaking itself, was it to tell stories through the medium, or was it the medium itself that interested you?*

Bea: Definitely to tell stories through the medium. It's taken me a long time to develop a love for the medium itself, and be like oh that's a nice camera, or that's a nice angle, or that's a nice frame, and really learn to appreciate that stuff. At first it was like, let's just get our opinions out there, mainly my comedy out there as a vehicle for political views, that's how it all started – and let's grab a camera and film what we can kind of thing, and actually appreciating the artistry of film has taken me a little while longer to develop. Probably still developing it.

*Louise: I did theatre all through high school and got really into that, and then this was my way of combining – because I was also really into photography – so this was my way of combining it.*

Bea: I say that I was raised in the theatre, because my Mum and Dad worked in it, and so I've always sort of understood life through art, you know making art has just always been a thing that I was going to do. But the decision to move out of theatre and into film was very much about wanting to reach a wider audience. Even though I haven't necessarily done that, but there was something really appealing about 1. it's longevity, you make it and then it sits there forever, and 2. it could potentially reach huge amounts of people.

*Louise: I tutor the second years [at university], and we're doing television production... they work in a studio with live editing and they've been using the lights and it's so interesting how many of them have been using them in a theatrical way. And seeing that on camera I'm like 'oh I miss theatre so much!' – it looks so good!*

Bea: Now I've gone back to theatre, I love them both for different reasons.

*Louise: What's your current process for making a thing?*

Bea: It changes all the time. Currently, I'm not sure. I suppose the standard way of doing it that I've always subscribed to is like I'll [inaudible] of the rest of my life; I'll make a thing it'll be something I'm really really into, I'll just smash it out, won't really edit it that much or show it to that many people before I decide to do it then just Facebook people and be like 'yo, come and do this.' Do it for no money, just smash it out then try to get it edited and put it online. That was how it was done before. After I shot my feature I was toying with the idea of trying to be a bit more professional with the way I went through a post production

process. Haven't really done that. And now figuring out how I'm going to finish that.

But I'm about to make another webseries potentially with my friend, which is just more about actually community building and practice and play and fun basically and we're not even sure what we're going to do with it – which is working on an improv based process. So the same kind of casual get people you know to come and turn up, but this time instead of writing something you get them to develop a character and then just come and let the character have an experience basically. So very like 'Mike Lee' except less hardcore and more casual.

Yeah! Changes all the time!

*Louise: What platforms do you use to publish your work and why do you choose them?*

Bea: I've just used Youtube, mainly because I feel like Vimeo is not as widely known and used. Like, because I'm actually a little bit of a film philistine, I wasn't really very familiar with Vimeo – like, I'm not familiar with Vimeo outside of my film career. So I feel like there's something depressing about only film people will see stuff on Vimeo, whereas I want to be working for a wider audience. So that's why I like Youtube. Everybody knows it, everybody can use it.

*Louise: Do you want to talk about marketing?*

Bea: I feel like so far in my career I haven't actually committed to marketing and committed to, that phrase, 'curating' a fandom or curating an audience, which I think is really necessary. I think because I'm very early in my career it's also about finding the right product that you're so proud of that you really really want to push it and put the work into that. I think it's about finding a team around you

so that you all have the time and energy alongside your other lives, to be doing Tumblr, doing Twitter, doing Instagram, doing Facebook, and really being an interactive presence for the audience who are consuming your product, I suppose. I also really like the idea of interacting with them in an ongoing way so it's like – because I really like episodic content – how they interact with this story or the production, whether it's episode by episode or series by series, or something like that. So I think if you've got a really strong fandom, that would be a really cool process to engage in.

*Louise: Because you have the opportunity for direct audience feedback on your work through online platforms, does that affect your process?*

Bea: No, not really, because I have previously just been really hard headed, even in the way I write and then in the way I shoot, really like 'this isn't the way anyone else does it and everyone would tell me that it's probably the wrong way, but I just want to explore it!' you know. And so I'm never thinking about who is going to watch this and are they going to like it – I'm always just thinking about 'let's just experiment with something!' Which is again an immaturity professionally – that's not bad, that's part of figuring out who you are and finding your own style. So I think in the future it would affect my work, in terms of again once I'd developed that audience, once I knew who was interested in the work I'd done before. It wouldn't affect me in a way that it would censor me, but I would be interested to meet their needs, I guess.

*Louise: Do you have a system for telling the difference between general bullshit comments – like 'oh it sucked', which have no real value, and stuff that's like 'hey, maybe you did this thing that you didn't entirely think through and to certain people it could be quite hurtful.'*

Bea: I've never looked at the comments on any of my stuff because I don't look at comments online ever on anything, even if I was looking up a recipe or a

knitting pattern I would never look at the comments because I just think that the internet is a space of uncensored negativity in that way. But in person, I've had experiences with one segment of the show – my first show someone was like – and they came up to me at a party and they were like 'I've wanted to talk to you about this for years, I think that was really offensive, I think you handled that situation really badly, blah blah blah', which was really good because, I think with art you're being brave and you're taking a risk when you're talking about something and it's always going to be wrong for someone, and it's always going to be right for someone. So you can't let that censor you but you can figure out the wisest, least harmful way to put stuff out there, and then you can also just say sorry. For you to say sorry and acknowledge the hurt that your work caused someone doesn't mean that your work was wrong or your process was wrong, it just means that it hurt someone, you know. And I think you can learn about...even if you wouldn't do it, like if you would naturally do it differently because you're a different person, you know. But I still think, almost what you're learning about is – that's what art does. It creates comment, you know. And you almost learn that that process is okay, that process of putting it out there, getting a bad response, trying to fix that, is just a natural part of it that's always going to exist.

*Louise: Sorry if I don't interject or be like "Yes!" because I don't want to edit it out later... Do you feel like there's one best practice or like your process is always evolving?*

Bea: Definitely always evolving. A big big thing for me is always people, because I believe traditional ways of making film and even theatre have been based around bad treatment of people – a lot of disrespectful, unsafe stuff, a lot of pushing people too hard, a lot of dictatorship rather than collaboration. So I always come from a process before product place, and I always come from a perspective of 'how can I make this as empowering and enjoyable for the people in it as possible'. I think clear communication, checking in with people all the

time, especially because actors are putting themselves in a very vulnerable space, and people don't actually realise you're so energetically vulnerable when you're in that space, stuff that wouldn't normally affect you does – so best practice is always very loving surrounding them, very respectful of the crew, trying to create a whanau collaborative environment, trying to create a sense of whanau between cast and crew so there's no divide. Trying to bring in other people's ideas; not be tied to a creative vision in the sense that you're going to create a socially or emotionally negative situation because you're going after that one thing. If this doesn't feel like the right thing for the room then it's obviously not the right thing for the story, and I can actually go with what these people need and want rather than what's in my head, because what's in my head is not always the wisest thing. So those are things I've always worked into my practice and hope to continue to work into my practice. But what that looks like and how you implement it is always changing as you get wiser as a person, you know like I would definitely have been over molly-coddling and mumsy to my actors probably to begin with, when I first started out, but now I'm aware of the way you can hold space for people, keep them safe, make them feel appreciated, without being really really intensely – almost annoyingly – there for them. So yeah that stuff changes, but definitely 'people first' would be my best practice motto.

*Louise: Do you feel like there are commonalities between making stuff for traditional platforms and making stuff for online platforms? Do you think they differ?*

Bea: I think they're way more similar than people see – my first thing is always like, oh this character has popped into my head and it's saying something, I'll make a thing about them. And then the actual medium that I would use to express that is always a later consideration because at the end of the day a story is a story and a character is a character, and the medium is only the vehicle. So I think in terms of say a TV series and a webseries, there's very little difference.

Yes when you bring people into say a shorter episodic experience, you're creating a whole different rhythm, but that's still less different than people might expect. I know someone said to me about my first webseries, and it really rang true, that the couch is your friend and the computer is not. Like when someone's watching TV it's because they're bored and tired generally, and they'll watch – even if something is shit they'll watch it just to have it there, you know. Whereas when you're using a computer and you're using the internet, if you're not engaged like that you're going to click away, because you can click on anything else. So I think that that's a challenge of webseries that we would have to acknowledge. But then I think that the way people consume TV these days is also online – like everything's a webseries these days if you're under 25, essentially, no one's watching TV, you know.

*Louise: I've had so many people be like "I don't own a television... but I own a screen that I will plug into my computer" and I don't know ...no, I couldn't name a single one of my friends who owns a television that's connected to the network...so I totally get that.*

*How do you measure success?*

Bea: I measure success in life in one way. I don't measure career success and then film success or anything like that – even with film, I try not to be attached to it with my identity. It's like yes I have made some films and I might make some films in the future, but I'm not even sure – and I think that's a really healthy way to be attached to it. And in that case, success is like 'are you respecting yourself and other people and doing something that you enjoy in the moment? Are you communicating something from a place of love that you think could contribute?' That's success. So that is the case for film and the case for everything else, and I think you get to point where you don't want to just be making stuff that never gets seen, because then you're not – for the amount of time you're putting in, the amount of your life you're dedicating – you're not contributing to society in

the sense that you're not really affecting people or really empowering people or enlightening people or just bringing them joy. So probably in the next few years success in film would more start to look like big numbers of people seeing the stuff that I make – if the stuff that I make is something worthy to be seen. But figuring out whether it's worthy to be seen is done by making it, and the process of making it is a success if people had a good time and learned something and you learned something, and everyone felt good at the end.

*Louise: Will you continue to make stuff in the future?*

Bea: I'm at this point of my life where I'm unsure where I'm going next but I sort of have this belief that if a film needs to be made or a webseries needs to be made through me, it will. I'll get that little 'we need to do this now' and I'll do it. But I won't not do it because of the reasons that hold women out of this industry, you know what I mean. If I'm the woman that's meant to be making 'The Film', I will and it doesn't matter if no one wants to fund it and it doesn't matter if no one wants to broadcast it or whatever, because it will find its audience, and it will find its manifestation, because we do have to really believe as female filmmakers that if we want to make it and it feels right that it's going to be made and it's going to be successful. Because there's a lot of programming that's telling us the opposite.

*Louise: You kind of talked about it a little bit at the start, but can you talk about what roles you inhabit? And then kind of who else you work with or choose to work with and how you developed that team?*

Bea: So the first things I did, or I suppose all of the things I've done, I was writer/director/producer. Not producer out of a desire, which I think is a very common situation, but producer because someone's got to put in the back-breaking work for your work, and it's most likely going to be you when you're starting out. And I'm always on the look-out for people who want to collaborate

and people who want to make a community around it and stick with that community. So I've been very lucky to work with a lot of amazing people in a lot of different capacities across my short career so far, and keep connected with a few of them which is really cool. I am really interested in having women in the executive roles and the HOD roles and have achieved that a lot of the time. But I'm also interested in working with men and inducting them into my different quite feminist-ly influenced way of making film, and always found that to be a really wonderful process that they're really receptive to. And I think that the team that builds around something, even if you're in a writer/director/producer role – it's still not your work. It's still the work of the team, you know, and the community owns the baby – the community made the baby. And if you can develop a community that really feels that – that you all own it – then I think that's the kind of team that I want to make. And I think I probably achieved that the most recent time I made something I think.

*Louise: What are your personal viewing habits?*

Bea: Well that's what's so funny. I have become a hippy and also my laptop was stolen, so I literally don't watch TV and film anymore. Which is really funny, it's like you're a filmmaker who doesn't consume media essentially, which is odd. My viewing habits used to be always online, quite heavily comedy, and female stories I guess. And now I'm just obsessed with meditation. But I feel like that's OK, as long as you stay connected to other people's viewing habits and what they want because making the product as opposed to viewing the product is very different. So it's almost like you don't have to have experienced the viewing of the product, you just need to be connected to the people who are so you can be like, I guess we said before, meeting their needs and giving them what they want.

*Louise: Could you tell me about the most positive experience you've had making stuff?*

Bea: Like most positive project? Or most positive day? It's hard to say the most positive, because every time it's gotten easier at a personal level, you know there's less limiting self belief blocking you and you're more relaxed and you're more able to enjoy it and stuff like that. I mean I have a tendency to overcomplicate, I always have a massive cast and a massive crew which is, like I was saying before – I'm very into looking after them, so it's a lot of energy to hold that space. So maybe my most positive is the smallest thing I ever did, which was my second webseries which had a cast of like four but it was mainly just two, and like no crew, and it was very relaxed and very summery and very low stakes, you know, so that was really cool. I mean I'm really interested in making film in a way that's not stressful, that's relaxing and playful and doesn't take itself too seriously. I think you can work hard and respect something without taking it too seriously. So for that reason it was probably the most positive.

*Louise: Do you have a negative experience?*

Bea: It is always all bound up in itself. Each one is a very positive experience and a very, not negative, but challenging experience. I've always found a sense of 'oh that half killed me' which I don't want to carry on. I don't think that's sustainable or useful or good, and I feel like I'm getting closer to figuring out how not to do that, which I think is just experience and maturity and all that stuff. Because I've acted since I was like 11, probably my experiences as an actor on other people's sets would have been my most negative film experiences because of all the reasons I talk about of the way people, but especially young women, are treated in those environments.

*Louise: Do you want to talk about being a woman making stuff?*

Bea: I think the first step is having the audacity to believe that you have the right to speak. Which sounds ridiculous, but actually very deep in most women still I think is a sense of 'you don't have the right to be the leader, you don't have the right to be the one doing this, you're not...' The whole imposter syndrome thing. Which I just think affects men so much less in film, and I think it's subconscious and it's subversive, it's just the fact that you see a man doing it and you identify that that's something I can do. Versus, you never see a woman doing it so you never identify that that's something I could do. So I think the first step is to say 'oh actually I can do this'. And then every step you take towards achieving that there's a voice in your head going 'no you can't, no you can't, no you can't...' so you have to get through that. Also, once you get through that you realise what that was and you can tell other women 'hey you do have permission, I give you permission, you give yourself permission. Do it'. So that's a really big thing.

Also, when you're the director and you're the producer, you're creating the culture around a work, so you're not experienced misogynistic or sexist culture. It's almost like it doesn't come into you, people don't interact with you in that way even though they would interact with you on someone else's set in that way because you very clearly set the tone. So I haven't struggled with that as a female filmmaker necessarily. I have had a couple of incidences of a male crew member getting ...saying like 'oh you're a dictator, and oh you're controlling' and stuff like that...actually once, one single instance of that and me thinking 'oh I wonder how I gave that impression' because that's the very opposite of what I want to create. And then I suppose the question comes into your mind of 'is that because I'm a woman and I'm in the executive role and that's what's gone on here?' And who knows?

I think the best thing I got out of my [inaudible] has been the ability to say to other women 'well I did this and I think I was held back in some ways by the belief that I can't because I'm a woman, I think that's what's going on for you, all you actually have to do is just do it and believe in yourself. And I believe in you.'

And almost because you've done it you have the authority in a way to say 'oh I believe in you' and people go 'oh, OK.' So it's so satisfying to see women start to take their first steps into directorial roles because of the way you've been able to support each other as artists in a community. And if you weren't a female filmmaker I wonder if it would be as easy to do that, like if you were a male filmmaker trying to support women would it be as easy? I don't know.

I think for me I'm here to tell women's stories, because men are there to tell men's stories all the time, and the people who are speaking are men so they're going to tell those stories. So I'm very committed as a female filmmaker to making sure I tell female stories because I think again we're trained to think in male ways according to male agendas. Every time you start to write something, I found this when I first started writing, a male character would come in – it would be a man's story and you'd have to work so hard to stop and think 'why is that a male?' Why is this protagonist not a female? And then you realise there's no reason so you write a female. And at first I really had to work to make sure I was writing female characters and female stories, because we've been trained even as woman to not be as drawn to them. Whereas now I'm just naturally drawn to them which is really cool. But I would always check myself back against that; who is the protagonist here? Is it a woman? Why is it not a woman?

*Louise: I did that in undergrad. I'd just be like oh I need to write a script... Okay it's going to be about this magician... And it's going to be a dude. Ah, why? No. It's this social conditioning of who you see on screen... men. So that's who you put in your thing.*

*Would you have advice for men who want to support women filmmakers?*

Bea: Totally, yeah. Listen. And engage with that. And female directors who say 'hey I'm a director' or 'I want to be a director' are very rare. So it's about finding a female DP or a female production manager or a female production designer or

an actress or a writer and saying 'have you ever considered directing?' 'Oh no I couldn't...no, no, no.' 'Why?' 'Oh these, these, these reasons....' Well, is that really an issue...? And actually just have conversations with people where you open up their minds to the possibility. I think that that could be really useful. Saying, as a director myself, I when I started didn't know that...the director is always the least experienced person on set... And just keep your eyes out or your ears out for women who you think might be considering it but have never been supported into it and try and engage with them in conversation.

*Louise: Do you feel that online is becoming overcrowded with content?*

Bea: Yeah I used to feel like that, like oh the world has got so much content. Like we can't all keep writing songs and writing plays and making films, we can't all keep painting pictures... I used to worry that there was too much art and not enough time to be able to consume it all for the population. But then you have little moments where you see a blank wall and you think oh that actually needs a painting, or it's silent and you think someone needs to be singing right now and what you realise is that there's always more room for more stories and more art and more beautiful, lovely things. And you can't reinvent the wheel. A lot of the time we are telling the same stories again and again from different ways, or we are singing the same song or painting the same picture, but it's still of course infinitely different and varied and more likely to be original and novel and something new if it's coming from a woman in film because often films are made by men. So no I don't think that these platforms are overcrowded. I think that people will always need art, and art will always run out, expire. Most art expires. Shakespeare has not, yay. But we don't necessarily want to all be watching films from the 70s. We need new art all the time. And art only exists to reflect to us our own growth as a species really, so we always need new art being made to reflect ourselves at each step. So yeah, heaps of room.

*Louise: Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?*

Bea: I try not to talk too much about an 'us and them' sense, or like this is the way we are oppressed within the film industry, or this is the way we are kept out or whatever. Because yes that is happening – it's tacit and it's unconscious most of the time. The male powers that be in the film industry don't know necessarily what they're doing, they're just not taking enough time to reflect on what they're doing, so I try not to spend a huge amount of time saying 'it's so hard for women; we're not mentored, we're not funded, we're not supported and because of that we're not seen.' I just sort of have this sense that the more of us who keep saying we can do it, it is easy, we get together we support each other, we stay really positive about it, and we find that our products are actually more sought after.

The female market in terms of women telling women's stories (which is what women want) is wide open, so being opportunistic about it, I suppose, rather than spending too much time being like 'bloody bastards'. And working with men and enculturating them into a female way of making film which is often very different, and upskilling them in that way and making them part of the community. But still saying 'I'm the director yo.' I'm not going to be your production manager forever, I'm not going to be the 2nd AD. I'm directing, this time you can come and support me and make the tea, you know.

*Louise: Today I was at the library and I saw this book on Antarctica, and I was like oh cool — because I like Antarctica — but I flipped it open and there were three female characters and I was like what? And then I flipped it over again and I was like ...is this a woman writer? Then I read all the reviews and they were using female pronouns and I was like oh my gosh I have to write this down because I need to find this book because it's about women and it's written by a woman, like oh my gosh!*

Bea: I will watch something if it's directed by a woman, just because it's directed by a woman. And we need to start as women filmmakers using that, and saying yeah that is how it is, that is what's happening, there are women just waiting to support me, you know.

*Louise: Yeah there's been some interesting articles, I haven't read them yet, but I saw the headline, and it was like 'Are these outspoken female actresses actually working with female directors?' And I was kind of like, yeah...that's a good point! Can we make them friends or something?*

Bea: Yeah totally, like if there's some group or network where famous female actresses can hook into it and then there's all these young female directors just waiting there. That would be awesome. Someone does a protest, like Jennifer Lawrence protests and says I'm not making another film with a man. Because she can greenlight a film, you know. It's just that female directed scripts will not be getting as far as the actor's agent and then therefore the actor, but yeah if we could circumnavigate that that would be great!

*Louise: I almost feel like there needs to be another — like rather than going through agents or going through the film commission or whatever — just being like 'hey so this friend of mine who's really awesome has a script and you're really awesome at directing, can I put you in a room and just see what happens?'*

Bea: Well that's why something like Film Fatales is really awesome — because women are networking for each other and also just community building. I never want to take a script that I have and try and get a fancy actor, because I'm very connected to a whole lot of actors which are really awesome. They're part of my community, we're always working together. So it's also, is it the way we re-prioritise things, and also getting those online audiences; we'll make this many things just in our community, building up our audience or whatever, and so by the time we go to someone with money we don't even need actors, I've made

these actors famous with my online audience, by just doing it myself, you know. Total reclamation of power, which is what the internet as a platform is about isn't it?

*Louise: Do you use any online platforms like Facebook groups for actors, or do you make your own Facebook group of your community?*

Bea: No I haven't actually, just because I've always known actors, I've always been mostly friends with actors. So it's always been easy for me. But stuff like Wellington Actors Group, a lot of people use which is really cool. And also Wellington is so community minded with film and theatre, that once you know a couple of people, you've got absolute access to anyone. Which is really awesome.

*Louise: Do you have any thoughts on the limitations of such a small industry?*

Bea: Like in Wellington?

*Louise: Or even New Zealand?*

Bea: Again people always talk about the limitations of New Zealand for all creatives, and that's why creatives all want to go overseas. But for me, I only see it as opportunities, so in Wellington people work for free because there's not that much work and that's just the culture. And yes that's not good on one hand: it's not good that we're not funded enough to support ourselves and we're all having to support ourselves with other jobs. But it also creates a love based, community based way of making things which is so fruitful in itself. And the relationships have to be so strong because it's all about relationships, there's no money drawing anyone in. So you have these great working environments and when those working environments do get funded, they retain that kaupapa which is really awesome. So I see that as a massive plus for Wellington. Again,

how easy it is to know people, how open people are to meeting new people because it's so small, also how non judgemental it is because it's low stakes, so everyone's just like 'I just made this thing, I'm just exploring, whatever'; it's like this beautiful nursery. Auckland is less like that I feel; a little bit more exclusive; people are less likely to work for free; they're a little bit less open maybe; there's a little bit more judgement on your work potentially. But there's still the similar aspects of that which are part of the fact that we're such a small country. So I feel like you have the freedom to make a beautiful film nation into which you can kind of pour money at the right moment and you've got something so much more efficient and beautiful and healthy than something you might have in London or New York or LA or whatever which is based on the wrong things, you know. So yeah, I don't see limitations.

*Louise: What do you think of the fact that even if you get \$100,000 to make a webseries, that's not going to be enough to pay everybody a living wage? I know you don't go for funding, but...?*

Bea: I definitely feel like I don't like asking people to work for free, and I sort of said to myself the last time I did that it would be the last time that I did it.

*Louise: Was it the last time?*

Bea: Well it was the last time I did it for such a large amount of days. Because it's that whole argument of yes we have to make things and we can't just wait around to be funded to make things. But on the other hand we have to identify; self-identify as professional, self-identify as people whose craft is worth something. So there's those two arguments going on all the time. And yes, there's not a lot of money going in this country that you can use to make this work financially sustainable for people. But that's a reality of arts in every country unless you're in the highest level. And once you get to the highest level, because there's so much money involved you are therefore operating according

to a corporate agenda. You're there to help people make money, you're not there to make art. So that's a reality of art in the world as it is now. We don't necessarily value art for artsake, as much as we need to sustain an entire industry, so yeah that's a limitation. It's a reality but it's a reality everywhere and I still feel that the best way to, or the way that I would choose to tackle it, is to change the very nature of the industry, and you do that by continuing to practice, continuing to build work, continuing to build community, continuing to build your audience, and trusting that as we evolve as humans we're going to start valuing people more and therefore art more than say profit. We live right now in a very capitalist culture and going to LA is not going to change that. It's more about start here and... [exploding hand gesture].

## Appendix VI: Interview with Britney Hazeldine

*Louise: To start off, do you want to introduce yourself and say a little about your Youtube channel and what your background is?*

Britney: Hey! I'm Britney, I'm a blogger and a YouTuber, I run a YouTube channel called Scout and Company, and I've been running it for about five years. While I was doing that I also studied at AUT and did a degree in film, sort of, it was communication, kinda like cheating, but yeah. That's me!

*Louise: Were you inspired by other youtubers to create a youtube channel?*

Britney: I was a blogger first and I was inspired by another blogger, and the movie Julie and Julia, to start blogging, and then I decided to get into YouTube because I wanted to show my audience more of me and have more of a connection with them, even though there was probably like, ten people, so that was why I first started and I thought I was like the only New Zealand YouTuber at the time, which is so stupid. Then I found the community through a video by Finn and Kieran about what Wellingtonians say, and that's how I found all the New Zealand crew and I was like, oh, I'm not the only one!

*Louise: Have you tried doing stuff for TV or cinema? Could you talk about that?*

Britney: I've always wanted to work in the film industry, as a career choice, so I work in TV now as a media operator behind the scenes, but I'd want to get more in front of camera and do acting and presenting eventually I guess, so that's where I want to head, I just don't know how to get there. So I'd love to work in cinema and things like that. And I'd love to make my own... I always have idea for short films and things that I want to make, so I kinda wanna do that but I always find it kinda difficult to find another creative who is interested in that. I know

with the internet a lot of people are out there and they are willing to help but I never reach out and ask for help.

*Louise: You went through university, what do you feel is the limitation in working in TV... Cause you said you don't really know how to quite get there, do you know what the limitation is? You just don't know the right people or don't know if there is opportunities or...?*

Britney: I think I don't know the right people and I also don't believe enough in myself. I think that's a lot of it, like I'm like oh I can't do that or I wanted to be a camera operator or something and then I go on set and everyone is male, I can't do that, and then I have to try find another one and a lot of the female roles are all paperwork type stuff, and I don't wanna do that, I wanna be in the creation of film or something like that.

*Louise: That was a really good answer – someone finally said it.*

Britney: But it is true! Everyone on set is a guy and I'm always like oh, and then you feel like you have to become more manly to fit a role.

*Louise: Yeah, you have to be one of the dudes. I've interviewed mostly producers, and producing is mostly organizing stuff. They're kinda like the mum on set.*

Britney: Yeah!

*Louise: And I can't find any directors. It's [seen as] quite a masculine role.*

Britney: Yeah, you don't see it often. At work all of the directors bare one, are male, so there's only one female and there's a group of 13, 14 directors. I'm like, we need some more girls. We need girl power!

*Louise: I get really frustrated because all I want to do is direct, I don't wanna produce! Have you seen how good I am at emailing people? I don't wanna produce but people kinda think you must be weird.*

Britney: I totally think that, I totally agree with you. It's frustrating.

*Louise: Do you want to tell me about your thought process of why you then chose Youtube?*

Britney: Youtube was sort of like filmmaking on a smaller scale, and you have more control over it, so I thought it was a good thing for me to start, because I started it when I was at uni and I thought it was a good backbone so that I could start creating and tar bettering my craft in a way that I have total control over. I don't have to go through someone to get approval or funding or something like that. But that also has its limitations because you're like a one man crew. One lady crew!

*Louise: Right back at the start, did you want to get into filmmaking because you liked the medium itself and what it represents, or because you felt like you had something to say, and that was the best way to say it?*

Britney: I think I liked the craft, the art of it. I wanted to be in the film industry since I was a kid. I remember the first time holding like a camcorder thing, it was like at the ice sculptures, you know how they used to make mazes out of ice and stuff, and I had a camcorder and I sat all my family down to watch the movie I made at the end of the day. That's my first memory of wanting to create stuff with film and I just thought it was a good way to express myself I guess, and I wanted to capture things.

*Louise: Could you talk me through your current process for making youtube videos? How do you come up with the idea, how do you decide on how to film it and fit it around the schedule, and then deciding ... Youtube as a platform?*

Britney: I took two months off of blogging, but still made videos, but they were mainly vlogs, so vlogs are easier to make because you just film them on your camera, like weekly vlogs, and then you edit them all together into a big thing. For my weekly vlogs I like to leave the ambient noise in so that it's more immersive, rather than chucking a layer of music over it to cover it up I guess. So that's my thing with my weekly vlogs, and then I also do a video series called Asking For A Friend, which is a monthly series where I bring on someone from my life to answer questions from the internet, and they're usually anonymous, which is why it's called Asking For A Friend. With that, I don't really prepare, I just get the questions from the internet and then we sit down and have a lengthy discussion about things. Then my other videos, I do like three topics, so there's like, advice, DIY or style, and those are usually well thought out, scripted, and quite planned so I know what shots I want to get, rather than just setting up the camera and being like, I need to say something, 'cause I won't say it or create it in a way that I'm happy with, so it takes a lot of thought process I think. And then I film it, film cutaways and then edit it together and upload it, trying to stick to a schedule.

*Louise: Do you think that blogging helped you be more decisive in what kind of videos you make?*

Britney: Yeah. My blog is like a lifestyle blog, which is kinda broad, but it is a topic, and that's the topic that I took to youtube as well, rather than just talking about random things that don't fit within a bracket. With my youtube videos I want to help people, or inspire people, and that's what I take into account when i'm deciding what video to make.

*Louise: Can you talk about why you chose YouTube, as a platform, over something like Vimeo, or even Facebook?*

Britney: I chose YouTube as a platform rather than Facebook and Vimeo because to me it seemed like more of a community and I watched a lot of YouTube beforehand and I saw a lot of creators uploading to there, so I thought I would go on there too, which, it just seems more collaborative, and you can connect with other people and I'm huge on connection, whereas Vimeo I think is more, I don't really know Vimeo so I shouldn't really judge it, but I think it's more of an art platform where you put like, if I made a short film I'd probably put it on Vimeo and not YouTube because I think they're two different platforms for two different things, and then Facebook is just, I would never upload a video to Facebook, it's just not a video platform, it's just like a social network and I think it's a clunky social network too. It gets me really riled now, I just think it's ugly. They changed the algorithms so they could get more video content to go through so they could top YouTube in the amount of videos played, but they just auto roll so no one's not really watching them, which I find annoying.

*Louise: I always turn autoplay off anyway, because I don't want it using my data.*

Britney: Exactly!

*Louise: Do you feel like there's one best way of making YouTube videos, and that's your way of doing things, or would you like to do things differently?*

Britney: I like the way I make videos now, but I think I'd like to do more collaborative things with more creative filmmakers, I just need to reach out to them I guess, find them. I'm happy having creative say over it, but sometimes it's hard to film stuff when you've just got a tripod and you want like, cool, arty shots of your outfit or something, and you're like, 'oh wait, I can't do that with myself',

so I think it'd be fun to find a group of creatives that like filming together. It's always weird going, asking them first, you know? So we'll see.

*Louise: Do you feel like there's similarities between the stuff you do at work, like the process of making stuff for tv, and the process of making stuff for youtube?*

Britney: I think there is a similarity because I still apply the same thought and structuring to how I make videos and I still like to apply a high standard quality, something that could be broadcast, type ethos. I think I edit better than the stuff they play at work because sometimes they're just really bad and like, who's your editors? I'll go edit it for you and make it better! I dunno, I sounded really big headed but I just think there's a lot of room for improvement. But I think you can still apply the same ethos to your own work on your own platform to what you would do for someone else's job, if you're working on a short film or something. I think it's better that way too because if someone who you want to work with, or who is a filmmaker, sees your work and you put up something that is below what you are capable of putting out, then they'll think that that's your highest quality, and you're like no! I can do better! But you didn't show them, so just always do your best work.

*Louise: Do you feel like making YouTube videos regularly means that your personal skill level increases at a much higher rate than if you were just trying to make [short] films?*

Britney: Yeah, I think if you make regular content you are more likely to grow your craft and find your own style and personal voice, because you don't know it until you start making stuff, and until you start experimenting with different ways. When I first started making youtube videos my videos were completely different to what they are now, like I did halloween costume tutorials and it was like, those are private-d now because they're really embarrassing! But I did stuff

like that which is completely different to the way I approach my youtube video making now.

I can't remember what it's called but there's this infographic kinetic text thing, that's like, you'll be creating stuff for a long time and there will be a gap between what you want to create and what you are creating, and the only way to bridge that gap is by creating more, and I think that's really relevant, and it's a really cool video. I think you just have to keep constantly creating in order to better yourself and grow your craft, and just keep your creative juices flowing. If you stop, you're gonna not feel creative anymore, and you're gonna fall into a pit of un-inspiration. I dont think thats the word...

*Louise: How do you measure success, or do you measure success?*

Britney: I used to be a big number counter, and I would check my Instagram followers and subscribers quite a lot, and that was how I would measure if I was successful or not. More recently I decided to stop counting the numbers because it's just a number and it's a horrible pressure to put on yourself, and it's not success. I think now I've changed my perspective and the way I want to view being successful in terms of the content I create is if I inspire someone, or if I connect with them on a deep, meaningful level and help them out in their lives.

*Louise: Do you think that Youtube is valued enough by 'real' filmmakers?*

Britney: I don't think so, I don't think they fully understand YouTube, or they just think it's some teenager with a video camera, like a camcorder type thing, not proper equipment who just sits in their room and makes, like a random video. They don't see it as, in my personal opinion, as something that's proper, but maybe that will change in the future when more creative types are going online and creating these types of things, and putting a lot of effort into what they make and it deserves to be seen.

*Louise: I've been disappointed when people I've been interviewing, they're been like yeah, stupid YouTube videos and makeup tutorials and I'm like, hey! I would never know how to do winged eyeliner...*

Britney: If it wasn't for YouTube I wouldn't know how to makeup!

*Louise: Don't hate on it! Not cool!*

Britney: I think the first person I subscribed to was a beauty guru. I can't remember what she was called, and then I found Bethany Mota, she's like a big beauty guru, and then I found the other creative, indie side of YouTube, I guess.

*Louise: I think the first one I ever watched was Natalie Chan...*

Britney: Oh my god I love her! Her clones are just the best, so inspiring. I love her clones.

*Louise: Do you work as a team? Do you work by yourself?*

Britney: I work by myself for my youtube and my blog, which can get a little bit lonely sometimes I guess, but I have friends who do both blogging and YouTube and i'm feeling creatively stuck I'll go to them and rant or complain about something and then we'll spark a conversation and get me out of the mess. Sometimes it can be difficult when you don't have someone else to rely on who can, when you're busy with work or with something else, they can edit a video, so it's just you plodding along. I do have someone, my friend Dylan usually takes my outfit photos, or I shove the camera at my mum, and then they're kinda like, my photographers I guess. If I want to make an arty video I'll try and reach out to someone who can make a video like that and then collaborate with them.

*Louise: Do you feel like there are pros to working alone?*

Britney: I think yeah, there are pros to working alone because you have full control over what you're doing and you don't have to like, bicker about it with someone, you can just decide yourself, and I come to, sometimes, sometimes I don't, but sometimes I can come to decisions quite easy. There are pros like you have creative control and it's your thing and you can do whatever you like to it, which I like. It's more me, I guess. And being reliant on myself, I have to stick to a schedule and enhance my skills or whatever. Sometimes on a Friday night I'll just spend hours watching After Effects tutorials, I know it sounds lame but oh my god they're so fun. Bettering my skills is something that you have to do when you're working by yourself, I guess you have to do that with a team but there's no one else that you can learn off of or rely on so it's solely you doing the whole creative thing.

*Louise: I have a little bookmarked folder of YouTube videos for motion tracking, because I always forget how to do it! So I can just go back and watch the videos. I never remember!*

Britney: My favourite people who make After Effects tutorials, I just devour a whole 15–20 minute video about how to make a graphic and I'm like where did my time go? Oh that's right...

*Louise: I was also thinking the other day that all of the reviews of tech products and the tutorials I watch, they're all done by dudes.*

Britney: Yeah! I've never noticed that until now. They are.

*Louise: Most of them are nice and aren't douchebags, but it's like hmm.*

Britney: You know what, at work yesterday I noticed, because they do trackside 1 & 2 are one of our main clients, and I was working on some race over there, but it was so sexist, it was like ladies day, and they just had all of these girls parading around, and the guys, the presenters on camera being like blah blah blah females, and I'm like this is so sexist! And even our male presenters were like, this is really bad, what do you do Australia? Its weird that that's socially acceptable.

*Louise: I find that weird in a professional environment. I've been on film sets where there's been blatant sexual harassment and I'm like... [really?]*

Britney: How is that okay?

*Louise: [It's like] do you guys all see this? I see this.*

Britney: Then as females, sometimes you just laugh it off because it's the easiest way to deal with something. Anyway, getting back.

*Louise: Do you find that being able to choose your own team for your youtube videos, you're guaranteed a safe environment?*

Britney: Yeah! You are because you're picking who you want to work creatively with and usually you know them already and usually they're someone who you trust and that you know will collaborate with you and create good content together. So you know it will be safe and fun. Also fun is a big thing, you want it to be fun.

*Louise: Cause youtube has a comments section, does that, do you think about that when you're making a video? Does that kinda come into the way you make stuff, that like, oh yeah, people are gonna be able to comment on this?*

Britney: Sometimes I forget that people watch my videos which is stupid cause I'm like oh, I want to connect with people! A lot of the time if its an advice-y video I like to get people to ask questions so that I can respond to it and I want more of a discussion rather than, oh I like the way you edited it, like I want more in depth stuff rather than shallow compliments, even though they're not shallow, they are just being nice. But yeah, I want a discussion.

*Louise: Do you have a way of telling apart the general trolling for reactions and constructive criticism which you may not react well to initially?*

Britney: No, I don't! Sometimes I just, if I find a constructive bad comment, I don't react, I don't reply to it immediately because otherwise I might just be like rrrr and start a fight and that's not what I wanna do, I want to understand this person, they're probably going through something, I don't know. I just don't reply until I think about it for a while and let it simmer in my mind and then I can understand what they're trying to say, and then I just try and respond back with positivity because I don't want to, I think if someone's looking to pick a fight and I'm not gonna give it to them they'll just go somewhere else to get it anyway so there's no point in me adding to the fire, I guess.

*Louise: That's a good point. Some of the people I've asked are just like oh I hate them!*

Britney: Sometimes there is truth in what they say, sometimes what they say is helpful and you can boil it down to a good, like a positive and I think that's what the thinking process time is, trying to find what they're actually trying to say. There might be some constructive thing that you can learn from.

*Louise: Could you talk about what supporting platforms you use to publicise your videos?*

Britney: So I have my blog which I embed all of my videos into as well as uploading to youtube, and then I try and direct people to the blog from YouTube too so it goes both ways, and then I also have an Instagram and a Twitter. I don't have a Facebook page any more for my blog because I deleted it, because I don't like Facebook. But it's a good platform to have I guess. But I use Instagram mainly, Instagram is my favourite social media platform and I think it's because I like pretty pictures, and it's another visual creation, it's another way I can visually express myself, and like, put some filters on it. That's how I like to share and I'll just write a comment and say, got a new video up, or I tweet it, and I have a Tumblr as well but I hardly put my videos up on that, I just reblog stuff.

*Louise: Do you feel like there's a link between filmmaking as something visual and insta as something visual and there being cross-respect?*

Britney: I think so, I think that's why insta's my favourite thing because it's a visual platform as well and I'm a very visual platform because I like film, so it's just another aspect of it. I have a certain way I edit my Instagram photos which is the same way that I like to edit my videos, so they both fit into my style.

*Louise: Like, same aesthetic?*

Britney: Yeah!

*Louise: So can you tell me about your personal viewing habits? Do you watch YouTube? Do you watch TV? Do you never go to the cinema? Do you always go to the cinema?*

Britney: I love the cinema. I think it's something that people don't go to much anymore because you can just stream online, but it's completely different if you watch something on your own tv, or if you watch it in a room full of people who are experiencing the same film that you are. I like the whole, I don't know what

the word is, ceremony of going to the cinema, the whole act of doing it, I think it's really fun and I try to go often depending on my work schedule. And then YouTube, I watch a moderate amount of I guess. I don't watch a lot of the bigger [more popular] YouTube people anymore because I don't find their content stimulating or interesting, I think their target demographic is the younger people and that's not me, so I try to find the more independent YouTubers, and filmmakers and things like that and people who make stuff that are both creatively inspiring and just I guess inspiring for life, and helpful. And I also watch vlogs too, which can be 20 minutes long. It's really kinda creepy when you think about it because you're watching someone's life but it's also so fascinating, I'm so nosy! And then TV-wise I only watch, I have certain shows I like to watch so I'll watch those and it just depends I guess on if that shows playing on TV then I'll sit down and watch it but if it's not I probably won't watch it at all, just go on the internet.

*Louise: Could you tell me about the most positive experience you've had making YouTube videos?*

Britney: The most positive experience would be getting to connect with people and meet other creatives, and just creating myself in general. Also I ran into someone at the gas station the other day. It was a positive experience but also really weird having someone notice you when you're filling up your car. They're like do you YouTube? And I'm like yeah, like what? You watch my videos? And I think that's really cool that people are out there and they like what you make and what you create, and you can impact on their life in a positive manner. I hope we didn't get awkward audio.

*Louise: That happened to me though, like I made one YouTube video, and I went out to grab some takeaways, and the girl serving me was like you make YouTube videos?*

Britney: It's so weird! You watch it? Your real? It's cool when you meet someone who watches your stuff, cuz then you're like ah you guys are real, you're not a number!

*Louise: I think you can definitely seem like that, like yeah my mum just watched it a bunch of times.*

Britney: I think I'm pretty sure my mum did that when I first started. I think she just watched my videos quite a lot, just to bump my numbers up. Or like view my blog all the time, so when I logged in to check my stats, because I was right into stats at the beginning, it would say like 50 views, and I'd be like 50 views. Secretly it was my mother just refreshing the page.

*Louise: Is there a negative experience you would be ok talking about?*

Britney: From YouTube?

*Louise: Or even just like filmmaking in general?*

I put up a video where I cried once and then that was a bad idea. Like I got a lot of support from it but it was just me ranting about some guy not liking me, and then I cried in the video, and about 2 weeks later I was like what have I done? Let me take this down! And I think that's something that you shouldn't put up online, like there is a boundary for what you should say and what you shouldn't, and I think at that time I was in the phase of making random videos, rather than content, considering purposely creating content. What is that word, lost the word, but putting thought into what you're making, rather than just blurting something out and turning the camera on. Negatively? I don't know, I can't really think of anything. I guess just, deleting my video was a really bad experience. It was a well edited video about smoothie bowls, I was so proud of it. And then I exported the video, and then didn't check it, and I was like sweet, I'll delete

those video files, cause I was making a thumbnail, photoshop said you've got no space. So I deleted the video file. Turns out the video I exported was corrupt, and then the video was deleted and then I had a tantrum. An internal tantrum about YouTube and why I do it. I think that's the biggest thing is the, why do I do this? Probably that everyone is going to go through, I just don't understand what the point of doing it is, because sometimes you don't see, you don't see these people, who are watching your stuff, so you don't think you're actually making an impact on their life, but then you've got to think there for every one person who comments, there's probably 10 or 20 or 30 or 100 who don't comment. And then those are a lot of people that you're impacting on and trying to make a positive difference, I guess.

*Louise: I used to have a rule to never comment on YouTube videos.*

Britney: It's weird eh, I did too, like I never did.

*Louise: Now I'm more inclined to comment but I know if I have something I really want to say.*

Britney: Rather than just saying, 'oh beautiful'.

*Louise: 'This is a really good video, check out mine'.*

Britney: Yeah, I don't approve any of those, they go to my spam folder. Which I guess is kinda mean, cuz I guess they're trying to grow their audience, but I think there's some more genuine way to go about that.

*Louise: The stuff that you watch, do you think you make stuff that is similar, that you would be interested in?*

Britney: Yeah, there's this one girl Lucy Moon, she says she was inspired by my vlogs to make her vlogs, and I was inspired by her vlogs to make my vlogs, so it's really weird that we do the similar type of way of editing our videos with the vlogs, and I think that's really cool, because, I don't know, creatively inspired by her. I've already forgotten the question! I'm terrible!

*Louise: Do you make content that you would also want to watch?*

Britney: I think so. I think I shouldn't make something that I wouldn't want to watch because then I'm not passionate about it and I'm just doing it for like, the views, or the clicks. If I did that I wouldn't feel authentic, and I think that comes across on camera if you're just making something fake to get view counts, or to get a hurt and the search subscription, it comes across. So I like to make stuff that I'm passionate about and stuff that hopefully my audience is passionate about too.

*Louise: Do you have advice for other women who would want to start-*

Britney: For YouTube? In the film industry?

*Louise: Or just making stuff for videos in general.*

Britney: I think if you do want to work in the film industry, YouTube is a really good place to start, just creatively. It gives you the opportunity to hone your craft, and in a semi-safe environment. There's always going to be someone who doesn't like your work. At the same time their criticism can always be a good thing because you can learn from that. So I think that if you did want to get into film, you don't necessarily have to go to film school, although it's a good place to start because it gives you all the skills do you need, and a good place to learn, but you should at the same time be creatively making stuff, and the only way to do that, the only way to better your skill is to make something en masse and keep

creating, so I think YouTube is the perfect place for someone to better their craft and to explore their own voice and opinions, and just learn about themselves.

*Louise: Do you feel like, would you be ok to talk about film school? I've found it really frustrating and there aren't very many women in the classes. And I've also never been taught by a female lecturer.*

Britney: So I did communication, I initially went for a degree in journalism. I always wanted to work in film, but then ended up taking TV as my major in my third year. So I like to say I went to film school, but basically it's not. People who went to, like, South Seas, I don't know why, but people who go to South Seas always slam AUT as not a real school but you still learn. I guess the majority of my tutors were male. There were quite a lot of female tutors as well but in my final year my lecturer and producer was a male tutor. I got on with him really well, but no, he wasn't female. I think it might be changing, when I did it, I did a video major and there was video and studio production, and now they've merged them together so I don't know what it's like now.

*Louise: Do you think you ever studied woman made stuff?*

Britney: No. We didn't study stuff made by females at all, not throughout the entire course. And I did like radio, and other media platforms, and we never studied anything specific to females or things that were created by females. In first or second year we studied film but we studied, like, aliens. I don't even know who that's made by, but we studied like, mainstream films, not New Zealand content, we didn't do New Zealand content, we didn't do female stuff. It was kinda just, yeah. Weird, I hadn't thought about it, but we didn't learn it.

*Louise: How much Maori content?*

Britney: Zero. Zero. None. Nothing. It's just interesting to think about. I've never thought about it before. No New Zealand stuff either. That's fascinating.

*Louise: I've been doing so much research on the history of the New Zealand industry and Maori Television is my favourite thing to talk to anyone about because it's just so cool.*

Britney: We didn't study any of that.

*Louise: Yeah well I didn't realise until I did my own research for my masters, let alone like, maori women doing stuff. My film school experience has been good, but it could have been a hell of a lot better.*

Britney: I feel like we didn't do anything, a lot of our stuff was theory based for the first two years and then in the final year we had to make our own projects, but even then, we got a client for our first project and then our second one we did a short film, and then worked with our classmates to crew it. We didn't really learn about the New Zealand industry. We didn't learn proper film calls or anything like that. South Seas are right, it isn't legit, but it was a good place to learn, I guess.

*Louise: Do you feel that there was enough help for you getting a job when you graduated?*

Britney: No, there was no support offered, there was nothing, a lot of the other Majors, they had internships offered to them, we didn't have internships for our major, the staff members didn't really offer a connection, unless you were close friends with them, and a few of the tutors I was good friends with them I guess, they would send me through potential job. That was only because I had a connection with, not because they send it out to everyone in the class. I think you just graduated, and then they're like go out into the world and do your thing,

and everyone from my major are working in various places, we're not all in film, and even then the jobs that we do have aren't exactly what we wanted to do, they're not like, right in the film industry, and I think it's going to take us a while for us, if we do want to get working on like, proper film things, it's going to take a while for people to get there, because we weren't given any connections or any opportunities to work in those areas and film creating, you know? A lot of people have just gone to the admin side of TV, so that's like scheduling, stuff like that, it's not in the studio, or not creative, or not out on set, it's admin, which is stupid, but it's also where a lot of females end up which is really sad.

*Louise: All the women I know from my degree went on to become teachers in media studies.*

Britney: It's crazy eh?

*Louise: Even in my masters class, I'm the only woman who isn't an international student. I realise that I'm quite 'masculine', I just don't put up with people talking shit.*

Britney: I think that's a good thing!

*Louise: Well yeah. I can't believe these are masculine traits, I realise that if I didn't have these traits I wouldn't feel comfortable being in these classes because there is so much bullshit to put up with. It would be so exhausting.*

Britney: Especially if you're quite feminine. There needs to be a better word than feminine, but you know what I mean. If you were just too emotional, I guess. Uuuhhhhhh.

*Louise: They still did and said really shitty things that I was still upset about, but I just kinda had to suck it up.*

Britney: Yeah, you have to masculine-ate yourself, you become more of a man to put up with everyone's bullshit, to feel confident and safer, I guess, you lessen your female side and become more masculine. At work I work in a studio. 80% of the staff members are male, so you basically become part of the male group, like you're one of the boys, which I kind of like, but do I like that because I like that, or do I like that because I have de-feminised myself, in a way? I don't know. It's when I start thinking really intense about stuff, I'm like, do I really like this because I like it, or do I like it because the media has brainwashed me into liking it? What's going on there?

*Louise: I definitely find it hard being feminist on film sets, I'm watching stuff and being like, that's not ok. And I want to yell at people but you can't, that's not professional.*

Britney: I'm a media operator, all the other media apps are guys, so I'm one of the boys. One of them showed me this article about feminism, and I really don't know why he showed it to me, because it was just slamming feminism in a bad way, and I was like, that's not what feminism is about, that's not what it is. Saying I don't want to be feminist because I like to shave my arms. That's not it. These are the people that are giving feminism a bad name, not the feminists, you know. There are a lot of people out there that are saying feminism is bad, because they're crazy psychotic feminists who believes in workplace equality and stuff like that. Even the guy who I work with was like, has basically been achieved. And I'm like, dude, you earn more than me for doing the same job, I know that, it's not achieved. We've still got a way to go.

*Louise: When guys say that, it's like, 'how would you know?'*

Britney: Exactly! 'You're not a girl!'

*Louise: 'Tell me about the discrimination faced as a woman, please!'*

Britney: And just how things are normalised, like I've been called 'sluzza' as a nickname, and that's just like, 'okay' because it's a 'joke'. That's normalised and that's okay rather than it actually being offensive, I guess. It's weird how we've basically as females accepted the shit that they do, because we have to, and because if we stand up to it, they'll be like, 'oh, she's in a bad mood today, must be her period'. No! Treat me like a human.

*Louise: That is honestly so much what it comes down to, 'you don't make me feel like you think I'm a person'. I find it hard when people say, 'just don't take it so seriously-'*

Britney: It's a serious matter!

*Louise: It's like, 'you don't have to deal with this every day'.*

Britney: 'You don't understand, cause you're a guy'.

*Louise: What would you do differently if you were starting again?*

Britney: I don't know. The first video I made, I was sitting in a tree. Maybe I wouldn't sit in a tree [laughs]. I don't know, I think everything I've done so far I have learnt from, so I guess that's a good thing. I probably wouldn't put videos app where I cry about someone not liking me, or stuff like that. I don't know what I would do differently. I think nowadays I see my content as having a purpose, whereas before I just uploaded because it was a Wednesday, and I upload on Wednesdays, and if I didn't have a topic I'd just make something up, and that wasn't valuable to anyone, so maybe I would do that differently. But at that time, that suited me, so I don't know.

*Louise: How do you combat feeling like it's really overcrowded on YouTube? How do you combat feeling like you need to stand out or you need to be different to have your stuff stand out?*

Britney: I think it is really saturated. Online is incredibly saturated nowadays, and it because a lot of younger kids are like, this can be my career. I'm going to get a camera, I'm going to make stuff. These kids are 10, by the time they actually go into the workforce 10 years later, they're going to be amazing at what they do because they started so young, I wish I'd started doing things that young because then I would have, I'd be really skilled. I think in order to stand out, you just need to know your voice, and you need to know who you are and be sure of who you are, and also be sure of the content you create, rather than just making stuff because it's what everyone does. I don't do tag videos because I don't find any interest in watching those, and I don't want to make them, so I don't make them, even though they would probably get me your numbers, things like that. I think the only way to stand out is to be true to yourself and be authentic and be real.

*Louise: I often get mad about people who started really young and have so much more experience. What do you do to not get mad?*

Britney: I get mad! Because these kids are really good, they've got so much experience already. I guess you just have to remember that you're on the same journey, they're just younger than you and have already done it. There's this, I think he's 18 now, from Australia, and I used to watch his videos a couple of years ago and admire them, and now we're friends online, and an online sense, so I think that's really cool that you can connect with these people, but it also, his stuff is just so great because he started so young, and he found his voice early on. I think that used to upset me a lot when someone would make a beautiful video, and my work would be nowhere near it, then you've just got to take that as inspiration and keep working towards your own personal goals, and trying to

make stuff that you are happy with, I guess. And you can do it, you just have to believe.

*Louise: That's it, unless there's anything else you'd like to talk about? You're welcome to rant about something.*

Britney: Like what?

*Louise: I did an interview in the South Island and they wanted to talk about how no one gives the South Island any funding and stuff.*

Britney: Really? I didn't know that!

*So if you have a thing...?*

Britney: I don't think so. That's fascinating though, but no one gets funding in the South Island.

*Louise: Do you think you would ever go for something like New Zealand on air funding for your channel?*

Britney: Maybe? I don't know, is that a thing, do they do that now?

*Louise: They do webseries.*

Britney: Yeah, they do do webseries. I don't know, like, I think you have to really believe in yourself to ask for funding for your own channel, because I don't think they fully understand it yet. It's basically like a many TV show because you're creating and curating content, so I think if they changed their opinions and views on the way they look at you tube, maybe I would. Like I don't know, i've never thought about that. Maybe, if I believe in myself more.

*Louise: Do you have any more thoughts about being a woman online? Or being anything else online?*

Britney: I think it can be tough, because you are opening yourself up for criticism, especially if you're not, usually as a female you go on to YouTube and you're like, beauty guru or, like, fashion guru, and I like fashion so I'll talk about that, but beauty is not my thing. I just slap on whatever I've got lying around, put it on my face, done. So I'd never make a video about that. At first I found that really weird, like I tried to fit into the beauty guru style, making Halloween costume tutorials & that involved makeup and stuff like that. It just really wasn't me, that's really awkward to watch, you can tell that I was trying to fit in the stereotype of what a woman should be on YouTube. I think you just have to be you and have the guts to be you online, and that's more vulnerable than being someone you're not, to get views. Being fake is easy to do online, I guess, and it's safer, but if you want to connect with people, if you want to be fulfilled, thank being you is the only way forward. Rant over!

## Appendix VII: Interview with the Candle Wasters (Sally Bollinger, Elsie Bollinger, Minnie Grace, Claris Jacobs)

*Louise: Just need you to do it once more*

Sally: Sure, we are the Candle Wasters, we create a Shakespeare-inspired vlog series for youtube, we've done one called Nothing Much To Do, and a sequel called Lovely Little Losers, and currently we're working on Bright Summer Night, which is a Midsummer Night's Dream adaptation.

*Louise: Cool, do you maybe wanna say what each of your roles are within the production*

Elsie: I direct...[interruption]

*Louise: No it's fine*

Minnie: Do you want us to say our names as well

*Louise: If you want, you can be anonymous*

Elsie: We're the Candle Wasters, but who are we? ...I do a mix of things but mostly I'm co-directing with Sally ...I'll introduce my name, and then I'll say that

*Louise: Thanks, I'm just gonna cut around it it's fine*

Elsie: I'm Elsie, and I mostly co-direct

Sally: And I'm Sally Bollinger and I also direct...we're all writers on it, that's the other thing, we all write it together and then we sort of split off into our different roles and do different things...we're sisters also, that's the other fun fact about us [gesturing at herself and Elsie]

Minnie: I'm Minnie Grace, and I produce the series for the most part and also co-create, co-write, co-edit, co- everything else that we don't say as a specific role

Claris: I'm Claris, I do production design, so that's like set design and costume design and I also do cinematography sometimes

Sally: Claris was our cinematographer for the first two series but we're getting a bit more specific on our next series, so that's what you mean there

Claris: Yeah, I'm defining my role more for the next thing

Minnie: Which is exciting for all of us

*Louise: So...I'm debating if I want you to talk specifically about [inaudible] but they're all great so like, were you inspired by other content creators?*

Claris: Ah yeah so the four of us watched the Lizzie Bennet Diaries and that was really inspiring to us, we all used to like talk about it and get excited about the new episodes and stuff, when we were hanging out and we were like what if we just made a thing, what if we just did a vlog series thing, that would be, casual, it's not been casual at all, but the idea was casual, and we were like, you know, if someone was to make a vlog series, what source material would they adapt, and we were talking, and we all like Shakespeare, and then like what plays would be good, obviously a comedy because a tragedy would be a bit hard, and I'd recently seen Much Ado About Nothing, a London production of it with David Tennant and Catherine Tate, so I was like yes, and you were all familiar with it, the Bollingers had made a comic...

Elsie + Sally: We'd started.

Claris: Yeah you'd started making it.

Sally: We'd started drawing a comic of Much Ado, me and Elsie did, in which I think Pedro and Beatrice were like smoking buddies...

Claris: We took that out guys...

Elsie: And the style was very much like Bryan Lee O'Malley Scott Pilgrim and so significantly for Nothing Much To Do we were inspired by the Lizzie Bennet

Diaries and like the format, yeah but then in our lives we were like inspired by comics, such as Scott Pilgrim and you're really into...

Minnie: Clamp

Elsie: Clamp, so like manga, and then we've also got directors like Edgar Wright that we really admire and, what else what else, what other content...

Shakespeare's a big...

Claris: Well like actual vloggers as well like I watched a lot of Zoella around the time that I was making it so someone like Hero's character, felt very inspired by a real person, kind of a weird mix of...

Sally: World of the Orange I think was very benefit for u ...

Claris: Was it called..Woto I think, Woto...they've died now right, I mean not the people but the show has died, obviously

Sally: Liam/Leo left to get an outside job... Nobody died

*Louise: Yeah you scared me for a minute I was like what?!*

Sally: Yeah but I suppose the big push for it was like the fact that it's a single camera setup, we can do this, we can do this in our bedroom, like this is a long format story we can actually pull off.

Minnie: And then we were like what things do we wanna see that didn't happen in the Lizzie Bennet Diaries, such as like leaving the one spaces...which she did go to different spaces but she was always in one room so we wanted to see outside and like with...cause we came with, what, in the end three different vlogging setups or channels, and then it's like what their different rooms look like as well and how that influences the way they vlog as well...

Claris: I remember specifically like always the Lizzie Bennet Diaries she'd be like and then I went to this party and all this stuff happened at this party, and then this party, and I was like well we could just do a party like that it would be so much fun, like I remember just being like let's just do it, so that was really exciting for us, actually pushing the format a bit more, for ourselves, like

obviously we're not the only people who have pushed the format, we're not like ground-breaking or anything.

Elsie: But it's fun.

Minnie: I guess in regards to the comic, we do have some pictures if you wanted to see them.

*Louise: I'd be so keen, yeah, cause like when I was watching it, like I'm 22 now, nearly 23, I was just like that is like my high school cause you like hang out on the field and you go to parties and we had parties like every weekend and I was the one always taking photos so having the party shot like yeah that's what we did on weekends like this is exactly like my experience and it's so good, I think that, I dunno, it felt very New-Zealand-y, rather than like American parties, which are so staged all the time*

Claris: We definitely did like try and represent our experience, we weren't trying to be like let's carbon copy an American teen movie and try and do that, we were like let's just show our lives.

Sally: We do have an American audience.

Claris: That's always surprising, like 52% of our audience is American.

Minnie: But yeah the one thing that we did want to take from those staged American parties was the red cups? Unfortunately we couldn't find any red cups...

Claris: Just aesthetically, it's an aesthetic thing, I dunno...

Minnie: Cup aesthetic...

*Louise: Yeah, I definitely noticed as well there was lots of like Tumblr influences, like in the characters, and like Tumblr was my life in Year 13, so I was like that was me ...little bit embarrassing now but like that was me*

Sally: I think Beatrice, totally.

Claris: It's interesting that we didn't decide to have Tumblr as transmedia.

Sally: No we did remember we did try to do that.

Claris: But we never like tried to...

Minnie: Never were like as committed to it...

Claris: Lack of time.

*Louise: Yeah it's a lot of work*

Elsie: Anyone that we were particularly inspired by? ...Miyazaki, yes, because he's got really really great themes and like very human stories, so we'll definitely be, I dunno, I'm trying to think of, kind of, story ideas and stuff I often go to Miyazaki even for just like the aesthetic as well and then what I make will not be like that at all but like if it has some kind of like that heart it

Claris: It's always like a bouncing board as well, if you take something that you like and you're like, might take that along, some of it.

Elsie: Hopefully Bright Summer Night has kind of those like magical aspects but also there's very kind of human flawed characters and stuff.

Minnie: Richard Ayoade's work, Edgar Wright, just like the style and...

Sally: Also just like the fact that...

Elsie: Love Ayoade like Submarine is a fantastic film.

Sally: But like 10 Thing I Hate About You, like all of those Shakespeare high school adaptations where you're like oh yeah people adapt Shakespeare into high school all the time, like She's the Man as well, just the fact that those things exist.

Elsie: But there are beautiful parts like 10 Things I Hate About You when he's like singing to her on the stairs like that kind of absurdity in real life is really fun to play with, like singing Beatrice's song.

Sally: Flight of the Conchords

Claris: Oh yes there we go

*Louise: Cause I watched all of Lizzie Bennett, and then it was really interesting seeing a lot of like the kinda critiques of it saying like oh there's so much slut-*

*shaming or like it's not really as feminist as it could be, like was that a thing you guys wanted to address, like making a feminist webseries*

Sally: I didn't really, I didn't tap into that until after we'd made our one, like I didn't realise there was that whole drama.

Elsie: Unfortunately I think we could have done better.

Claris: I think we definitely could have done better... We did go into it, being like we're gonna do something that we're like proud of or happy with or whatever.

Elsie: We're all feminists so we just hope that what we make is feminist but then you actually need to... And also the same with like representing different ethnicities and stuff, you can't just be like we're chill, you actually have to like make an effort, which we're just learning about.

Claris: I think what happened with the first series definitely is we were like let's just make this thing and because we're feminists some of those elements came into it, but we didn't sit down and be like how to make this feminist.

Sally: Like make a plan...

Elsie: Which like I wish we had...

Claris: Well I think we should in the future, and I think we will, we're much more sort of like aware of it...

Elsie: Like pack it full with female characters...

Sally: Well there's like two ways to do it, could've gone in with an agenda being like we're gonna tackle slut-shaming and that's the whole thing is gonna be around Hero's party but instead we kinda were like we want like male-female friendships so Pedro and Beatrice will have their little spotlight, and we also want this so we'll do that, and we kinda want Claudio and Hero to resolve like this sort of but hey...

Minnie: I think it's like, because with Nothing Much To Do we were like coming into it with the idea of having fun and I think representing something we want ourselves on screen which is still something that's lacking, despite it being like I suppose the most prevalent of the minorities being represented, so I think that that is something that we have done, and that we did ok with, and yeah like we

made choices I think as we've come through but it wasn't like set up to be a feminist work in and of itself, to be like this is feminism now... No...

*Louise: Yep, cause like I was reading something about Mad Max, in our feminist club we had like a huge discussion about it in that it's not...*

Elsie: I wish I was part of your feminist club.

Claris: Yeah can we like join the club...

*Louise: You guys can join... We got into talking about whether something could be feminist or whether we're just viewing it through a feminist lens, it's not like upsetting, cause I definitely found that when watching it, I was like oh this is like, I'm not just like oh yeah they're saying that I'm not a person, like do you know what I mean? So even though it wasn't intentionally feminist, like it was still good to watch from that point of view*

Claris: You weren't sitting there just being like I'm dying I'm dying I'm dying which so many films like, have you seen the new James Bond, from what I've heard I'm like I don't wanna see that 'cause I'll be like agh...

Elsie: Jurassic World...

Claris: Oh god...

*Louise: Hey... She did so well in those high heels...*

Claris: See but is that feminist, like I'm so confused as a feminist I'm like what's going on here, is it, like...

Elsie: Take the heels off?

Claris: Yeah but is it feminist that she ran in them, that she managed, I'm kinda like take the fucking heels off but I dunno I don't wanna like...

Minnie: I read something that was like if [inaudible]'s character had been a lady!

Claris: Chris Pratt's character?

Minnie: Had been a lady as well, then you could have had two different sorts of females

Claris: That would have been good, also, we're running out of track now, but also the young boy who had a girlfriend at home and was eyeing up all those girls at the park, I was like why, what are you saying with this film, what is the like moral here?

Sally: But I suppose what you're saying is that something like Mad Max, it's kind of neutral and therefore it's viewed as feminist?

*Louise: Yeah like it's not atrocious and therefore it's like so feminist*

Elsie: So true

Claris: That's the level that we're at, if something's not atrocious, we're pleased

Elsie: How sad is that

*Louise: I definitely have like a little file of like films that I don't get angry while watching, put them on when I'm upset like phew*

Elsie: Life's not too bad

Minnie: Do you have further questions about representation in the, or should we like..I was gonna say something else

*Louise: You can just keep going*

Minnie: Yeah like in addition to, with Nothing Much To Do I guess being more aligned with white feminism just because we are white we also don't like feel qualified to tell stories about, or tell the stories of people who are a different race to us or are different gender or sexuality to us, we wouldn't feel comfortable telling that story, we can have them in our stories just as people but we wouldn't wanna try and be like this is what it's like to be,

Claris: Yeah or like this is the main massive story arc to be blah blah blah, if we don't understand

*Louise: I guess like my understanding of like white feminism is like feminism that only promotes white women... so like is that, have you made any attempts to be like inclusive or promote intersectionality or is that something that you're aware of but don't know how to tackle or like want to tackle or like...*

Claris: We're definitely trying, even from the very beginning we had those discussions when we were casting *Nothing Much To Do*, we were like we can't have everyone white, I mean most people were white so we obviously didn't do that well but we were always aware of it

Sally: I suppose we wrote characters that were mostly like the translation of the characters from the play and then we were like they can be played by anyone, we weren't trying to cast specific...

Claris: Definitely open casting it.

Sally: Even like a character like Balthazar was like, we were just kind of open to casting whoever.

Claris: They could've been girls.

Sally: Whoever fit that role, so it wasn't like ...I know there's like a billion different ways you could go about it but I'd say we were just kind of simple about the way we went about it like we will cast a good person in these roles, these people have to be related, these people don't, this person's musical, please audition for us

*Louise: Have you tried traditional ways of making media? So have you pitched for television, have you written a film script and submitted it to the film commission...*

Sally: We've done the 48hr film challenge, that's I think about it

Claris: I've been doing that every year since I was 11, so that's like a big part of my life now I guess, god that's like half my life...we've done stuff like within

university, making short films and all that kinda stuff, but yeah our first like pitch was for Bright Summer Night, which we got, so

Elsie: So that's pretty good

Sally: Our expectations are like

Elsie: If we had like time we would love to be making pictures for television and things

Claris: We've always talked about making short films as well and we really wanna do that

Elsie: In the far future making a film would be radical but we haven't, just the webseries

Sally: And initially our Midsummer Night's Dream idea was a film

*Louise: What would you consider the main barriers to those avenues, 'cause you've obviously done webseries and they've been successful, so what made you choose that over a film?*

Claris: I don't know, 'cause I'm worried someone will be like but so it shouldn't be a webseries, but it's like we've changed the idea obviously.

Sally: Yeah it's different, it was very.

Claris: Well it was very unformed when we were like let's make a film, in ten years.

Elsie: It'll be really pretty.

Sally: And then we were like we need an idea...

Minnie: This one's our most solid.

Sally: This is our idea... So yeah we've thought about it but we haven't really done it, and we, I mean, I did a visual arts degree in photography and moving image so that's not traditional media but it is other media.

Minnie: Because it was something we could do in our bedrooms.

Claris: I think money as well.

Minnie: Watching the Lizzie Bennet Diaries and being like we can do that, we have a camera because we all like filming stuff, we have a tripod and a sound person magically appeared

Elsie: Through a friend of a friend of a friend...there's this funny thing as well where a lot of people whenever we kind of discuss TV, people are saying at the moment like TV is dying and so it's almost like, I think we've had a lot of people be like stay on the internet, you've got an audience, that's where it's gonna go, I dunno how I feel about that yet, 'cause we watch TV series and we love them and it's very different, the way you watch a TV series to the way you watch a webseries.

Claris: It just happens that we're watching the TV series on the internet 'cause it's still a TV series format.

*Louise: Yeah 'cause that's what I was gonna say like how much TV do you watch on a television at 8 o'clock at night and you go oh Shortland Street's on, like turn in on...*

Claris: I mean I don't have a TV in my flat, so there's literally not even an option, people are like oh that ad haha and I'm like don't know what ad you're talking about

*Louise: Do you still have a screen though?*

Claris: A computer screen

Minnie: But it's not like a big, it's literally a little laptop

*Louise: 'Cause I was listening to a podcast on a flight with Grace Halberg, it was the Girl Boss Radio, she was talking about how like E! Television like slagged her off*

Claris: Really?

*Louise: Yeah and it was really awkward*

Clariss: Like after her show?

*Louise: Yeah cause they gave her a TV show, 'cause they'd written this horrible thing about like MTV movie awards and then were like oh it's just all youtubers, young people, idiots, and then someone was like uh didn't you like give one a show, and they were like hmph, and she was kinda talking about how it was a really big learning curve 'cause it didn't work, her having a show on there because you can't get millennials to turn on TV's...*

Elsie: Yeah that's totally like, I started, I watched like a couple of episodes of Funny Girls and I wanna watch more of that but yeah it's, I mean I don't really watch anything, watch other stuff, but it'd be great if it was just online, I mean I think it is...

Sally: But yeah we started watching it on demand.

Clariss: But I have to remind myself, that's it on, I'm not like oh Friday night 8pm or whatever, like you can watch it anytime just remember.

Sally: But then, webseries are still there, even it's from like that weekly time slot that kind of expectation.

Minnie: I guess even YouTube does, because if you're subscribed then you get an alert, whereas if something's on TV but you're not watching it on TV you're watching in on demand you have to remind yourself, because you're not going to get an alert.

Clariss: Like coming up on Tuesday, that show that you want to watch, the TV reminds you...

Elsie: Also TV works as a family thing.

Sally: I like shows that... Like with a webseries you get to, we were able to make something immediately, like we were able to test stuff out, whereas you wouldn't let someone do that on TV in that same way, and like again with Lovely

Little Losers, I'd say there's some things that we were like figuring things out for ourselves as well, and it's like again.

Elsie: I think also we wouldn't have put all this time, sorry this off track but we wouldn't have put all this time into making a movie if that was the first thing that we'd made like that would've just felt odd, like releasing webseries is kinda like those little bits, try out some things.

Claris: I think a lot of experimentation.

Elsie: whereas if we made a movie it would be kind of like we put all this effort into this one thing that people may or may not watch, bits of it would be good bits of it wouldn't, it's quite different.

Claris: I do like we get immediate feedback.

Elsie: Yeah that's fun.

*Louise: Yeah it's exactly like Candlelit said exactly the same thing like they were like yeah you can make like one short film over three years or you can make 12 music videos in the space of one year and which one do you think you're gonna learn more from, it's like, you guys are giving me the good old, 'cause it's so like, a bazillion times more true, that's another question though that I was gonna ask like do you have a process for, or does the ability for direct feedback affect your process?*

Claris: I think it does.

Elsie: Serious topic.

Claris: I think just like us as creators are emotionally affected by that, I dunno that you can like see that in the work, but as a person I could go on the internet at any given time and see someone like telling me that I'm like a god, like literally people have written like you're a God, or being like you're a racist biphobic asshole, like any time I can just go look at that, so it's like a weird sort of space to live in.

Elsie: I think when writing NMTD we weren't thinking about the audience 'cause we didn't have one.

Sally: There was things in it like there were lines in that series that were like how many people watch this?

Claris: When we were writing it we were like heh heh heh...

Minnie: Like friends and family?

Sally: 10 people?

Minnie: Lily, just Lily.

Elsie: But yeah and then writing Lovely Little Losers, I was quite determined not to think of the audience, which I don't think other people do, like watching webseries since Nothing Much to Do, I think, like I think Lizzie was one of the first.

Claris: We were in that first wave guys!

Elsie: With Lizzie Bennet Diaries but I think you can see that since, a lot of them, I mean we might be wrong, but I feel like they are kind of trying to listen to Tumblr and be like this is what Tumblr wants, have it Tumblr and it's a bit like...

Sally: Tumblr doesn't really want that...

Claris: You can't give people what they want, give them what they need, or what they want in a way that they don't expect it.

Sally: But I think too that that feeling of going, with Lovely Little Losers we're going to ignore, not ignore but like we're not going to be influenced by the fandom, is still a choice.

Claris: We're just gonna make what we wanna make and it's a thing and they might not like it but we'll just do it.

Elsie: But also the audience, I think it's kinda like we could've been more receptive to-

Sally: It was a mix of, I felt like some things were we're doing this because that worked well before and because we know they like it and that's kind of our style now and then some of the things we put in there were like no this is totally just us doing the thing...

Minnie: But like because of the, essentially a lot of our values do sort of coincide with a lot of the values of the audience anyway, putting aside like we knew the things we wanted to improve on anyway with Lovely Little Losers which some

people think we've succeeded with and some people don't and that's just life and so putting the audience to the side I still think that a lot of the main things were still sort of there.

Elsie: I agree I think that we are kind of part of our audience, well we are a community so we end up making something for the people that are watching it.

Minnie: So with the direct feedback there's not much we can do to change it because we wrote this and we filmed this months ago and now we're just releasing it...

Claris: I always find it funny.

Minnie: I mean we can still take out in editing or put in in editing but it's not gonna be the same as if we'd written a different story...

Claris: I think sometimes the feedback that I see online is very, I'm very like well we literally can't change it now like it's too late, like I dunno with winter king, but the thing is with winter king, do you know about winter king? You won't know but it's basically like this really crap ship it's like a ship that the fans ship, isn't canon, it's never gonna happen, it's just not what we wrote...

Elsie: It's just like a lesbian relationship, neither of the characters are gay, people are sad.

Minnie: They're sad.

Claris: But I think even if we were doing it at the same time, like making it and releasing it at the same time week by week filming another video, I think we potentially wouldn't have even done it because it doesn't fit with our characterisation-

Minnie: Of those characters.

Claris: But like so many of our fans ship it.

*Louise: Doesn't mean I agree...*

Minnie: They'd look good.

Sally: They would!

Minnie: But they'd have one great night and then they would hate each other forever.

Claris: I don't know. I mean, even though a part of me just wants to give them what they want, it just doesn't work, I'm sorry, it just doesn't fit with how we wrote the characters.

Sally: Meg feels so straight, but also that Freddie, that's the ginger character, one of our reasons for having her there is because we had the Pedro/Beatrice storyline and it was kind of like we want to see that male/female friendship that just is a friendship and isn't — and we obviously went in and ruined that a bit for ourselves — but that was in [inaudible]. But with Lovely Little Losers we wanted to see that again in an unspoiled kind of way which is why Freddie as to be straight but living with all these guys and isn't attracted to them because they're her mates not because...

Minnie: And vice-versa, she's gay...[interruption] Also because it's that they have those flat situations in a lot of sitcoms and there's eventually the one female character that will end up with one or all three of the dudes in some romantic sense, and we didn't want that to happen at all but for it still to be platonic and that to still function. So it's like we were doing something that we wanted to see but isn't necessarily something that the fans expected to see...

Claris: But also they want to see more than what we gave them, they just want everyone to be not straight and 90% of characters to be female and like I respect that but it's just like that's not what our show is.

Sally: Yeah, well I don't know...

*Louise: Yeah, well I flatted with a guy in first year and everyone was like 'oh so you're like a couple?' and I'm like 'No... he's just the least annoying of my friends.' So like, totally appreciate that. Do you have a process for telling the difference between someone being like 'you guys are shit and stuff...' and being like 'hey maybe this thing is something that you didn't think of that might be slightly offensive, just letting you know maybe...' Like constructive vs trolling ?*

Elsie: Yeah well I don't think we've had any people just trolling, I can't think of any examples of people being just like 'go home!'

Minnie: Yeah well there's not been like wild hate, but there has been I guess-

Elsie: Passionate.

Minnie: Yeah passionate would be the word ...Passionate discussion that some of we are like, that makes sense and we can take that on board and we can be like well we can actually accommodate that within what we've got now, or we can take it board and be like we can accommodate that in our future work if we've got anything in the future. But then there's other stuff which is like we're just going to go well that's fair for your opinion and for your life experience but it's not something that actually relates to this character's storyline and their relationships with the other people in the story.

Elsie: Yeah, it doesn't matter how angry the people are, we always try and listen to them and understand and interpret why they might be saying that and more often than not we act in being like how can we be more respectful immediately...

Clariss: We've done some trigger warnings.

Sally: Yeah that was the big thing this time around.

Elsie: And it is hard to get feedback which is like, you guys did something wrong, it's like no! But we're human and we're learning and we're young, so it's good, and we try and thank people as well. We often post being like, thank you for telling us that we're wrong.

Clariss: I think it's reasonably obvious to us when we see a post on the internet or if someone's directly messaged us, more often than not if they're directly messaging us it's about something important. If they're just writing a random post on the internet being like 'they suck' that's not something that we should take on board. Especially if it's literally just like 'they suck'. What else are we going to do?

Elsie: We're don't go to them and say 'hey actually, we're really cool'.

Clariss: 'You're really mean!'

Sally: We've got some friends who are on Tumblr, like I'm not on Tumblr super-much, but like they are a bit more kind of...

Minnie: Aware?

Sally: Like remember one of Hannah's [inaudible] ...they sometimes kind of clue us into things. I think the big thing this time around was the whisper challenge which we didn't think about but was like...

Elsie: Do you know what the whisper challenge is?

Claris: It's colloquially called as a kid 'Chinese Whispers'. That's... It's racist and we're aware of that, but it's that game but like as a Youtuber meme thing...

Minnie: So everyone who is playing has headphones on with loud music playing and then they've got a sentence that they're saying to someone like [to Sally] 'your glasses look nice' and they have to lipread, and then she'd tell Elsie and then...

Elsie: By the end of it's hilarious, like 'waterfalls are beautiful', but like yeah so we got two responses from that one was like quite assertive [inaudible]

Claris: Did we get more than that? Oh, this was just people who sent us things, because there were other people who made posts...

Minnie: These were the people who sent us things, because there were other people who made valid like ...and other people didn't even pick up on it as well... like I think it's just a thing that other people do...

Claris: I mean we didn't pick up on it, obviously because we wouldn't have made it if we did ...

Sally: You haven't explained it yet. Basically people were offended because it's like a thing... for people who are deaf it's a problem they face all the time, and-

Claris: Yeah an everyday problem and we were making a joke out of it, basically.

Minnie: Interestingly, or like I found it quite interesting just because I'm not in a position where I experience it and I don't often interact with deaf people or hard of hearing people, was that there was a couple of YouTube comments which was like 'my grandma' or whoever that person interacts with and sits down and watches our webseries with their grandma, which sounds really cute...

Claris: Oh I didn't see that one, that's really cute.

Minnie: They were like, my grandma's deaf and she actually really enjoyed the episode because she was like that's like almost positively helping out...

Elsie: So I think it's like, we almost...

Sally: We've found that we can't please everyone.

Elsie: I often feel that when we have something like this, the difference is often that we're kiwis and that our audience is mostly American, because there are lots of things, and little ...

Claris: ...Interactions...

Elsie: The word 'bro'. But also like just in our webseries we have a character who's gay, in our minds we're like obviously the friend group is very much like in our real lives and no one is bothered. But in the webseries the character gets beaten up frequently just because he's gay. So things like that, and things like naturally we take attitude of being 'oh no it's just something that people can enjoy' but we respect that some people are offended and that's terrible. We don't take that personal view. I think it has something to do with us being kiwi.

Minnie: I also think it's a cultural difference and a reaction to a vocal part of fandom that is in part because a lot of the vocal part of fandom is American or somewhere else from the English speaking Western world. But on that same topic-ish when we had our most recent meetup with fans, there weren't actually any photos posted then some of the local fans were like "Why are there no photos or videos of this meetup? Was it secret?" If they'd wanted to it would be fine.

Sally: It's utopian I think, in our storytelling.

Claris: I like being utopian in our storytelling, I don't want to tell the story of someone being beaten up for being gay. I wanna tell the story of like all their friends being like "Cool, you're gay, let's just get on with life."

*Louise: Do you think it helps that there's four of you, so that when you get feedback, someone could be offended but then there's three of you so someone can be like "Okay let's take a breather"?*

Claris: I think we talk to our friends about it as well, I'm always like let's sound this out — not just irrationally put trigger warnings on every single video.

Sally: We have a couple of people specifically that we go to for advice this year particularly we realised that because there's four of us we don't have a tie-breaker – so if we get stuck on videos we will send them videos and ask for feedback. Who in our friends do we all know trust and love. Same with things like trigger warnings, we have a couple of people we run that by.

Minnie: Sometimes we'll get people that won't because a trigger warning doesn't happen soon enough, but it's like because we think it's really important we actually want to be able to sit down and talk it through, most of the time we'll end up putting a trigger warning on the video somewhere, but because it's so important that we actually discuss it and work out what wording works best for the trigger. It can sometimes take a while for the warning to be there.

Elsie: That ties into your question, because it is great that there's four of us because we can balance the load of stuff and we can have discussions and come to really solid conclusions. But it does also mean if one of the team is busy it makes it hard. Because there are four schedules.

*Louise: I would love it if there were four of me. Could you talk me through your process of how you come up with an idea, how you script it, do you pitch it, do you get funding, do you make it over summer, every weekend etc.?*

Sally: It's evolving

Elsie: For Nothing Much to Do we came up with the idea in the start of the summer of 2013, the whole of 2013 we were writing scripts.

Minnie: We spent about two days trying to figure out how would this work?

What would happen?

Sally: Trying to get like an overview-

Claris: Of the acts.

Sally: We went major plot points, what would this be modern, we did that with the party which is masquerade.

Elsie: For the rest of that year we had me and Sal were in Auckland and many of us were in Wellington so we just wrote things in Google Docs. We needed to get

the scripts done, getting to the end of the time that we had to get the scripts done we were like, these are the ones that aren't done.

Claris: We kind of worked in teams.

Elsie: Edit each other's scripts.

Claris: For both webseries it's been really higgledy piggledy. Someone starts writing a script. Someone comes back and changes things. Four people will be involved.

Elsie: Which has its benefits, and not.

Claris: It's quite an interesting process. I like, don't know who wrote particular 'famous lines', it could have been any of us.

Elsie: And I tend to write in scenes so it's quite nice to see my scene, just in another episode that's been bookended by someone else's. So *Lovely Little Losers* was quite similar, except we wrote it less time. It was under 6 months — second half of 2013.

Minnie: We didn't really have as much time to have a meeting about just what those points were.

Claris: Well anything can happen here, and let's add another character, and another scene, and now it's really long.

Sally: That was interesting because I knew the play the best, I would say, so I'd come into it and be like "are we going to have this plot point?" and people would be like "oh that's a thing" not in a bad way, it means we ended up with a mix of things. I think whenever we do something we end up with a mix of all our different sensibilities. So I'd be like "let's have this Shakespeare plot point" and someone else would be like "let's have these awesome lesbians" and then someone else would come in and be like "how about this weird little funny scene."

Elsie: So what we've learned from that is that it's great to be in the same city, so we can have discussions where like you're all in the same room and can be on the same page. So that's what we're going to do for *Bright Summer Night* this weekend actually. We're going to go away and spend three solid days and by the end of that we will have the ten episodes down.

Clariss: And we're all gonna write episodes ourselves.

Elsie: There's five of us, because we're bringing Robbie Nichol onto the team. Do you know White Man Behind a Desk? That guy. So then each of us will have two episodes. But this is slightly different way of writing it, where I'll write it and be like "here is the first draft of this episode" and people will then read it and edit it but I'll have the final say on that episode.

Clariss: The process will change.

Elsie: So we wrote it and we were like right we're going to have to contact people about auditions so we put the word out on facebook and things-

Sally: And we know a lot of people from drama classes things like that we've done quite a bit of Shakespeare stuff over the years Shakespeare Globe Centre New Zealand Festival, so we knew a bunch of people and we auditioned and had the auditions at our house over a couple of days. We got them to send in tapes as well, they could put up videos online. Which is how we cast our [inaudible]...

Elsie: So that was quite a small network of people.

Minnie: But we had 60 people audition.

Clariss: Did we? I'd forgotten that

Elsie: But still, that's pretty small. It's a lot for people who are just starting out.

Clariss: For Bright Summer Night I think a little more than that would be good.

Elsie: Yeah and then so once we'd cast we spent a couple of, three weeks filming, that was the entirety of anything.

Sally: We did a callbacks, which sort of served as like a workshop day, which was really great because we had a few people for Beatrice in mind and that was going to change the way we cast the rest of it. Everyone got into character quite a bit there, and met each other and was like "Oh wow, this is actually a real thing!"

Especially for us, because I was in denial even when we were writing scripts I was like "this isn't actually going to happen though because that's not, we can't actually, only magical people do stuff like this." And then we turned into one of those magical people who do that, which is still unbelievable for me. So then we cast it, the callback was great, we filmed it, then the rest of that year we split the episodes between the group.

Claris: We split it between the two of us (Minnie & Claris) edited stuff together, and the two of you edited stuff together, again mainly because of the cities. So each of the four of us have two episodes that we've edited, and then the rest give notes, if you're the editor you're like the final decision maker which you didn't have for [inaudible] and that was hard sometimes.

Elsie: for Bright Summer Night we do the pitch for that, we somehow manage to find time to come together and put forward a pitch, we had a brainstorm session about what would we wanna make, talked to a couple of people about producing our series and then we got Bevin Linkhorn involved.

Minnie: I think we are really thankful for him actually getting us to make the time to make the proposal.

Claris: Bevin really pushed us when we were like "we're too busy", now we're even more too busy.

Elsie: He could be like "so we need to know this, this, and this for this pitch and I can sort the budget and stuff" so we came along and gave him that stuff would hand that in and that was really stressful and then we got it. I don't know if there's anything else about the pitch

Louise: No that was good.

*Louise: What would be your ultimate process though, if you all lived in the same city and you had so much time?*

Claris: We do now.

Sally: Elsie moved down this year for university, and I moved down for this. I like Wellington, but it was also like it would be ridiculous if we're trying to edit and do everything at meetings and I'm on skype the whole time. Recently I went up to Auckland for a month, it was bad.

Claris: It's really hard to communicate through Skype on a deep emotional level.

Minnie: Our conversations when we're having meetings will flow from us being excited and friends or about something else that's going on in our lives, or a show we're into and then we need to do this thing and this thing etc. so what

we've found really valuable when we have meetings is we have check-ins, where we all sort of like "I had a shit day the other day and that might affect how I am in the meeting today, so if I start being distant that's why, I'm here for this etc."

Sally: I think our ultimate process would be having like a year to think about the idea and write stuff, and then months of pre-productions. And an office.

Elsie: Especially adapting a Shakespeare play, it would be awesome to read all the different scholars opinions etc. it's so exciting, there's so much about Shakespeare that is like "maybe Shakespeare meant that, maybe he meant this." it's cool to find your own opinions, but you have to be able to do this that others interpretations.

*Louise: I went to a feminist media studies conference in London and there was a guy that was doing Shakespeare adaptations online that's what he was studying, and I was like "hey have you heard of these guys, they're from New Zealand!" ...also, I have an office, it's great. I definitely recommend getting an office.*

Claris: Yeah it would be great. Working out of our homes, I've found that really hard. In my room at my desk, hanging out in my room, doing work. I want to come home and be done.

Minnie: I think it being a choice to keep thinking about it, rather than having to.

Sally: Also like, we filmed the first series in our home, the second series in their flat. There were people staying there while we were filming.

Minnie: We've learned from that.

Sally: We filmed over 3 weeks and we did 48 Hours.

*Louise: I've never done 48 Hours because it sounds like the worst weekend of my life, and it costs \$200 [interruption]*

Sally: Good way to test your team.

Claris: It's been a lot of hard work, we've really learned from all the stuff that we've done.

Elsie: Much prefer to be making stuff that at times is average, but learning a whole heap, than just sitting there being like “Well if we did try it would be great.”

Claris: “Maybe we will just sit here thinking about it for years”.

Elsie: Our biggest thing to our friends if we’re ever like to our friends, I’m thinking of making this thing, they’re always like “do it, we’ll help you.”

*Louise: Would that be your advice? To other women wanting to start making media, just do it?*

Claris: We’ve built this big community around us about what we’ve done. People are excited about it.

Elsie: The more I’m making content and the more I look at content, I’m just sick of the lack of female representation. I just want more female characters out there, I don’t care about the range, I just want people to be aware that there are women out there expressing themselves in many different ways.

Sally: We’ve been talking a lot lately about how you don’t have to limit the type of female characters that you create, that kind of you can write anyone and they will exist in the world. Everyone’s there.

Elsie: On the bus I saw this woman, skateboarding with this massive afro, the clothes she was wearing... I was like, if I come up with her as a cartoon character, I would have been like... Maybe I dunno, but of course she’s around in Newtown, skateboarding around. I just think it’s fantastic.

Sally: Limitations: give yourself deadlines, get help from people, but also like, the vlog series automatically gives you some really nice limitations on how you can tell the story.

Minnie: You have to think about why people are filming or telling the internet or the world this information, and feel that at least you feel solid about those justifications.

Sally: It forces you to be a bit clever.

*Louise: Something I got really excited about watching Nothing Much to Do, was the fact that you used YouTube conventions, especially like Dogberry, their channel was like shitty and like 4:3 and I was like, ohhhh my second year students would do that. Yesss. That's a really good separation of stuff using filming conventions that I get because I'm a wanky media student.*

Sally: But we were Dogberry's once

Claris: It was a really nice thing to do, to throw it back, we got someone's old home movie camera, we borrowed our friend's.

Minnie: It was a very deliberate choice to have such a different quality in the cameras

Sally: Even Ben's camera is a different camera, but I'm not sure if anyone notices that.

Claris: I don't know if anyone notices that.

Minnie: They're like why is Ben so obsessed with Freddy's camera, doesn't he have his own?

*Louise: But the cinematography is so different, it's a deliberate choice, it's so clever. I appreciated it. Do you wanna talk about the commonalities between web-series and TV shows? And where you think they differ?*

Elsie: The main thing for the webseries is the length. webseries are often shorter. Some aren't so successful because they're a webseries but they're like 20 minutes long. I don't know what that's about.

Claris: You mean each episode, vs the whole thing cos our whole thing is about 4 hours long

Elsie: Different groups of people, people watching certain web-series will be a certain niche, but TV series are certain niches.

Claris: The audiences are fragmented now. Audience fragmentation has meant that there's different really specific groups of people watching different things. So all the people that watch our show, like they're very clear about what they

want. But there are still old people who are turning on the TV and are like “anything that’s on we’ll watch it” I think the youth of today are very clear about what they want and they go searching for it.

*Louise: Do you have any thoughts on, this was a thing at Webfest, where they talked about being genuine about your audiences, writing stuff because you’re a part of that audience, like you’re young women writing about young women. Do you think that gives you an advantage that you’re not writing bullshit that young women are like ‘ugh’ about?*

Claris: I think there’s a lot of studio executives being like “we’re gonna make this show for teenagers, I know what they want, they want heterosexuals.”

*Louise: [Laughs] that is so definitely going in*

Claris: I think we’re not that.

Elsie: We definitely benefit from writing what we know. And even the male characters that we write, are the guys that we know.

Minnie: With NMPD especially, our characters, people found it ridiculous at one point there’s a video where three of the main boys sing one direction, and that was shocking to a large portion of our vocal audience as something that just wouldn’t happen, like, dudes don’t know one direction, they don’t know those songs.

Elsie: We didn’t ask them to do One Direction, we were like we have some Beatles lyrics you can read.

Minnie: But it’s like those are our mates, and they know One Direction.

Claris: It’s an accurate representation.

*Louise: I think even still though, it’s interesting to see women’s representation of men, because that never happens, it’s always the other way around.*

Elsie: We're not just representing women, I wish we'd had more female characters in *Lovely Little Losers*. But at least we're representing, like it's four women representing men.

Sally: I'm still not entirely sure with *Lovely Little Losers*, which ways it works and which ways it doesn't work. I haven't had that distance to step back and see it in action. But I think we try and write the guys that we know. I think we probably let our male characters get a bit more emotional. I think all of our arcs tend to be more emotional arcs, rather than action based arcs.

Minnie: It just comes to be what we think is interesting and what works for a particular story that we're telling.

*Louise: I think also that it's really nice that your female characters are not obsessed with being popular, or having sex, because all American movies written about young women are like 'I want to be popular but I'm not' but instead it's like 'this is my cousin and we're just hanging out doing some baking'.*

Claris: I think a lot of the stuff we did, especially with NMTC we weren't even aware that we were portraying something different. Looking back on it and getting feedback is cool.

*Louise: Do you measure success, and if so, how?*

Claris: I seem to remember that when we got 1,000 subscribers massive deal, 10,000 massive deal.

Minnie: the first time a gif was made, that was really exciting.

Claris: Yeah, we freaked out.

Elsie: We were kind of... When we were writing the script, like do you think someone might gif this?

Sally: When we were filming it was very much just a joke that we'd have fans at all.

Minnie: Fan art we are always astounded by.

Claris: People doing amazing art that they've spent hours painting.

Minnie: Really cool that it exists, I personally don't read it because I find it so bizarre, I really appreciate other people playing with the characters but I can't look at it.

Elsie: Do you mean like measure success in terms of other webseries?

*Louise: what is your metric for being like, yeah we did a good job!*

Elsie: It's really nice when we get lots of views on a video, but I would say that's not how I measure it as a whole. I'm hypercritical of our show.

Claris: Yeah. I'd almost say like, it's only our own opinions. We're like "are we happy with this" when we are trying to figure out whether we're happy with the series as a whole or just one episode, we're like what did we do wrong, what didn't we do wrong with this little piece of content.

Sally: It's kind of like, I'm always going to be happy that we did it, and people's feedback kind of is part of that.

Minnie: What do I see in what we've made that I want to change, and is it possible for me to change that in the future, obviously I can't in this particular instance, but yeah, knowing what you like and what you didn't like about your own stuff is good.

Sally: Do you guys measure it with like, if you watch it?

Claris: It's got to a point now where I have no idea if this was someone else's show that I would watch, I just can't separate that.

Minnie: I don't know that I'll know about either of them without. I think after that we will be able to reflect on the series as a whole.

Claris: Especially with Lovely Little Losers it was so limiting because we couldn't just cut to a close up keep remembering that it's in world.

Sally: It was quite fun filming that there was a party scene in Lovely Little Losers, classic party scene the character filming is drunk so that was fun, a lot of out of focus.

Claris: There's been good stuff, but towards the end of that it was frustrating. Moving into Bright Summer Night it's exciting to be free of that limitation. But there's a fear of shooting stuff properly.

Elsie: Also to do with success, it's really satisfying seeing people, when we've made a video that we're really proud of, to see that they're received positively on Tumblr and through the comments on YouTube *et cetera*.

Elsie: There are some moments when we go, we've written this so people will feel this the start... and we see that played on Tumblr that's a good success for us. Expected moments, where there's a happy song, and everyone's like this is a good song.

Sally: There's also the weird thing in [inaudible] which is an Australian web show.

Elsie: They stole Taming the Shrew.

Sally: They contacted us quite recently and were like, 'hey you inspired us to do this...' Kind of... What did they say exactly? We thought you were great and we made our own one do you want to check it out?

Claris: They did say they were inspired by us going out and making something.

[Off the record content]

Sally: Mark of it travelling, not sure if it's a mark of success.

Claris: People have messaged us and said I have depression and this has helped me through, and that is a mark of success. I often have this thing where I'm like just faffing around making art, maybe I should work in a hospital or something... but if someone is telling me that I'm helping them through with a thing that I've made maybe I should keep doing this.

Elsie: People saying I've got exams and I'm having a hard time, this is my release.

Claris: Because that's how I use TV shows, totally, it's my time to relax. Get out of the world for a bit.

*Louise: Is it satisfying as directors, not like manipulating your audience, but when you get the desired response?*

Sally: We don't want to come across as evil geniuses, but it's fun.

Claris: Often when we're coming up with ideas we're like OMG imagine if we did this

Minnie: Before we emotionally impact anyone else, we've gone, we would feel awful watching this, do we really want to put these people through it? But then we're like but they'll come out stronger.

Elsie: I was watching a clip for a video coming up and I was like arrrrrrgh, and I wrote those lines!

Minnie: I was watching some takes for another video that's coming out, and I'd forgotten that the very first thing we'd filmed was this big moment. So I was like "la, la la" I know that at the end of this episode some big things happened. But the first thing we'd filmed was that big moment!

Elsie: It's successful when the creators react.

*Louise: We've actually done a few of the questions further down! Do you kind of want to talk about Tumblr and Twitter and supporting platforms you use, especially like, in character?*

Minnie & Claris: Mmm... Transmedia!

Sally: We could always use transmedia more.

Claris: It's lack of time really, the most important thing is videos always.

Transmedia has always been a little fun extra thing.

Minnie: Which when we're all really busy doing university and jobs that we can actually get paid for, and like relationships with other people that we have, and like balancing all of that, and finding the time to do this, it's like the time do this will be to make the videos, rather than to do the extra stuff and we definitely took on more with LLL than we were expecting I think, so our transmedia for this series has sort of not been as good as we'd hoped it could be.

Claris: Have we done any?

Elsie: Yeah we have.

Minnie: We've done a couple of Beatrice things, a couple of comments.

Elsie: It's really important to us that, especially NMTD that we were like we can create this world through Beatrice had a Twitter, Ursula had a Tumblr but she didn't really use it but she put up photographs. I'm glad we did that. Um [inaudible] really briefly had a tumblr as well. We had Pedro was running for student leader so we had a Tumblr. We were trying to get people to like.

Minnie: That meme happened before we had an audience.

Elsie: I should reblog that, and be like "bring back the Pedro" because we just have a picture of our friend and photoshopped his face.

Minnie: We have done that in the past, we can bring it back again.

Elsie: But yeah that was really important to use in Nothing Much to Do.

Minnie: [Gasp] We've got an Instagram!

Elsie: Recently we've got an Instagram, but we, us. Which is fun. Like I'm really determined for Bright Summer Night to like keep involving, we have built up this community through tumblr and things, and trying to involve people as much into our creative process, not have radio silence while we're making it.

Claris: Not be like mysterious myths sitting there writing on their thrones, it's like no, we're just in our flats.

Elsie: We never release the videos like "here's a video, here's a video" we always wanna have like little promo, trying to be like "Hey guys check it out!" but we can't just say check it out every time cos that gets boring.

Minnie: We actually spent so long doing these promos that no one is going to see after this first time. People do watch them, because people make comments like "Balthazar didn't invent oat milk".

*Louise: I think I saw that come up on my subscription feed and I was like oatmilk has been a thing for ages!*

Claris: See that's why we made the video, so you'd get angry and watch the video.

Sally: Our biggest bit of transmedia though is probably the description boxes, not all vlog series do that.

Claris: That's become really big for us. It started off really casually, and now it's like every video it's so important to the story.

Sally: In fact there was a whole series of videos we put out recently on LLL where it's like, they're happy videos, everything is wonderful, but you read the description box and it's like, this is a distress call essentially.

Elsie: I'm not sure how many people actually read the description boxes, but this was one of the times where like you're like 'you watched the video you're like, this so happy, did you read the description box it breaks your heart'.

Claris: People posted screenshots of the description box on Tumblr.

Elsie: So that's a lot of fun and also when we describe the level of detail, cos we just think ah that's cas of course you have a description box of the characters they've watched the video, we described this to adults and they're like, really they're that intense?

Claris: I think it's confusing for people. Just even explaining to people that for like Nothing Much to Do there were multiple channels, they're like I don't understand.

Elsie: It does make sense if you, like we were determined to be as clear as possible and in Nothing Much to Do they were like go check us out on this channel, so it's not like... if you watch you can find it yourself.

Minnie: I think if we were writing for an audience, who, I think myself as a viewer if I'm told about this other thing I will go and watch it because it's exciting. We were writing for people who would also do that.

Claris: Not like a lazy audience.

*Louise: Do you feel like you expect a level of YouTube literacy in your audience? So like, they will get that there's three channels because they're three different groups of characters?*

Claris: I think that's just part of the realness too, like it just doesn't work for it to be all on one channel and made by one person.

Minnie: The realism was a really important aspect in the justification for everything being in-

Sally: But we did make a playlist.

Claris: Whenever I'm showing a person that isn't YouTube literate, I'm just like "here's the playlist, all you need is a playlist"

*Louise: Even when I was like — tell me if I make you uncomfortable at any point, but — I was like "yeah I'm interviewing the Candle Wasters they're so cool" and one of my friends was like "what?" So I was like "how do you not know?" so I linked them to the playlist and told them to click here and auto-play. It makes sense to be different channels in the world, but then to be able to be like "this is the order to watch them"*

Claris: We've even changed the order of a few videos after we've posted them. What is it, the vox box, which is like our character list, was the first video to come out, but because of realism we just put it secretly on the internet.

Minnie: We didn't send the cast and crew the link, they were like looking for it, because we didn't have an audience.

Claris: Also we were like, we don't want you to share it, and then it goes viral, but we didn't have an audience.

*Louise: The thing about the gifs, I was talking to someone, it's destroying me that I can't remember who it was, I'm sure that it was after Webfest as well, and they were saying like "oh yeah gifs are a sign of like, I've succeeded".*

Claris: It's totally a mark of success. Like someone takes the time to make a gif.

Minnie: It's the same as any of the creative content, coming back to the fan art, fan fiction, the fact that it exists at all because they enjoy the show so much and they like the characters so much that they made this.

Claris: We wrote a fanfiction of Shakespeare's work. It's a high school AU.

Minnie: It's an alternate universe university AU

Sally: Gender swapped characters

Claris: that's how fanfictions work right, you just play with it.

Sally: That's the fun thing about fan fiction, and shakespeare adaptations is you've got all the structure and you get to like play with it, I interpret this character this way etc.

*Louise: Do you feel like there's a divide between people who would be like "fanfiction" and people who would be like "oh webseries, adaptation"?*

Sally: I think for adults totally.

Claris: People are real mean about fanfiction.

Minnie: I can't read our stuff but other fanfiction is fine so there's no reason to be.

Claris: It's such a trope that like, there are those people that love One Direction out there writing fanfiction about how they get with Harry Styles or whatever, it gets really like grotty teenagers hating on people.

*Louise: But like grotty teenage girls?*

Claris: It's so sexist. The whole thing about music fans being 13 year old girls. The pure hatred that comes out of these middle aged men reviewers at those teenage girls is insane.

Elsie: With fan fiction, the fact that there's fan fiction about our show I just think is absolutely awesome, because it's creativity coming from something that we've created. I don't see it any different from someone painting a picture or making candles. Which has happened.

Minnie: With our faces and the characters on them. Someone made socks.

Balthazar has a jumper, and someone made a knitting pattern of the jumper and made them into socks.

*Louise: You guys have Love God t shirts, did you guys do that or did a fan?*

Sally: Fan made the design, and we asked if we could print it and they said yes. We said we could reimburse you, they were just really nice about it. Go ahead, print it, be happy.

Elsie: But also if you did fan art, for someone you really admired, and they asked if it could be a t shirt...

*Louise: There's fandom for your show, but do you feel like you're creating fandom for yourselves too?*

Claris: I feel like we need to put forward a better front than we have been. It's all that mystery.

Minnie: Which we weren't even aware that was happening.

Claris: We were trying to be professional.

Minnie: We were trying to be professional, but like we need to balance that more with we are still stupid kids on the internet. We're not too professional. Were we too professional?

Claris: People put us on this pedestal, expect us to be some sort of perfect in the realm of blog series which we just aren't.

Elsie: Also it's this funny thing, that if they know that we're the same age, it's probably good to also know that we're dorks.

Sally: I think sometimes we don't even see the fans, it's difficult to connect it in my mind as being like a hierarchy, cos I'm like they make stuff, we make stuff.

Claris: But then sometimes I do feel like there's a weird hierarchy when I go onto the comments.

Minnie: I find a disconnect between writing it, making the videos, then people receiving the videos. The difficult levels of what those three things are and I think that I sort of to some extent stop myself from becoming fully aware of the audience receiving the videos, because to truly connect with the fact that there

are 10,000 subscribers to the NMTD channel that's 10,000 people who liked it enough to subscribe and re-watch the videos, like it's too much for me to comprehend.

Claris: It gets really scary whenever we broach the subject. We're like no don't talk about it.

*Louise: Is it kind of like stage fright in a way?*

Sally: I realised that subconsciously that we had that a bit for the first series.

Elsie: I think even when we were talking about it just before, the fact that we were like we didn't listen to the audience, but we did kind of... that's such a clear example of us not really knowing how to cope with the fact that we have an audience. We're totally not aware. But we totally are aware. It's something that we have to accept that we're going to create a lot of stuff that we want to see, that's simultaneously the stuff that a lot of other people want to see because we're young women wanting to see certain content, which isn't in the world.

Claris: There's a gap in the market that we're trying to fill, I guess.

Elsie: It's just important to actually keep it that simple. But then we can't keep it that simple as well though, because representation needs to be done. So that's where it gets really tricky.

*Louise: I definitely appreciated though, that there was like one all four of you talking about Nothing Much to Do.*

Claris: We tried to make more of those, but we didn't have the time

*Louise: I found it and I was like, oh my gosh, they must be my age! I emailed so many webseries being like 'do you have a crew list' and they'd have no list anywhere. I'd finally get a PDF and there'd be no women, and I got onto your page and I was like FOUR WOMEN! This is the greatest thing I could ever find on the Internet! Then that you had a video where you were talking about stuff. There*

*was totally, I found I had way more respect when you guys were like yeah we just... being dorks.*

Claris: We're really trying to put more of that out there.

Minnie: That first video that exists, hopefully we will have more of those soon.

*Louise: The reason I wanted to do this project was cos I graduated undergrad and I knew no one who was making films, let alone any women. All of my friends went on to teaching, or went on to waitressing and didn't make stuff. It makes me so angry. I want to make stuff, where do I start. So finding you guys and being like, they're my age, they're doing stuff was great. It was great to send it to friends and say they did it over summer, we can do it over summer.*

Elsie: We've got a little cousin who was like, I'm thinking of filming a thing with my friends, so I was like, okay well I'm going to be asking you for a script in December! Teams are a big big thing, it's really important because then you've also got that like "oh I've dropped the ball" because there's other people who are getting affected by it.

Minnie: I find it very hard to imagine working on something solely by yourself, now that we've worked so collaboratively to create the two webseries that we have.

*Louise: Do you watch a lot of webseries yourselves?*

Claris: As a whole not really, yeah the amount of webseries that I watch is very minimal, but yeah viewing habits, I watch a lot of films and a lot of TV series but interestingly I feel like the stuff we've made is reasonably comedy ish but I mean a little bit drama as well in there, more in Lovely Little Losers, but the stuff I watch is like reasonably intense drama, like Hannibal and Orphan Black, and How to Get Away with Murder, but for me I like that I'm watching something that's different to my show. I did try for a while to watch more webseries, but this thing

would happen where I'd be like "yes I see here that they've made a decision which is different to my decision" and I feel like I'm working. It's such a different vibe.

Minnie: Not have to think about this, or be able to go "I really appreciated that shot" without going, but this is how it would work in the webseries that we're doing... in relation to this webseries that we're watching.

Elsie: Our viewing habits are quite different to that I feel. This morning Mum said to me, in the film last night, oh no I don't have to talk about it, so I said no what were you going to say? She said "there was just this really weird editing decision" and I was like "I love this, this is what I do!" and it was great. Mum's a Director, and that's how I got interested in Directing, because Mum would be sitting there, being like "now that's a nice shot" and I'd be like "yes, it is..." I love analysing stuff like that.

Sally: We watch stuff together often, and we would critique.

Elsie: We really enjoy doing, picking apart why-

Sally: What we liked and didn't like-

Elsie: Why they chose to do that, if there's a TV series that we really love and respect, and there's a really disappointing episode we kind of end up rewriting it... and then we're learning from it.

Sally: And then you learn interesting things, there were two episodes of Torchwood that feel like they don't fit, they don't feel like they're about space, but about fairies, and we figured out that they are written by the same person and that's the only two episodes that they wrote. Sounds kind of vicious when I say it out loud.

*Louise: No, like I totally do the same thing. So like, when I can watch something and just enjoy it, I'm like, this is a miracle.*

Minnie: I find even when you enjoy it you will still be like, this is what I liked about it

Claris: It's a switch I can turn on and off in my brain, my Year 10 media studies teacher was like 'a lot of people don't like media studies because it makes you turn on this switch which can be hard to turn off again'

Elsie: We watched Trainwrecked the other day and I just like sat back and enjoyed that

Claris: Is that the one with Amy Schumer?

Elsie: Then afterwards I was like aaaaargh plotheoles, but I had it switched off for as long as possible until late that night

*Louise: You guys all mostly did media or arts degrees at uni?*

Elsie: No, I didn't do media at all during high school, and I've just done one year of uni which I did do film, I did a film paper. I really enjoyed. That was the first thing I'd ever done anything actually studying film. Then I did english, a theatre paper and a little bit of psychology.

*Louise: I always reckon that like english and theatre count because they're still storytelling.*

Sally: I did a lot of art subjects at school, drama, didn't do media, maybe did media once in like year 9, and then I did a Bachelor of Visual Arts and Photography, and there's a lot of standing around and critiquing, particularly with photography.

Elsie: It's really interesting to have that perspective come in with the mix, it is a really important mix and having someone who has a different perspective on it.

Sally: Photography needs to validate itself as well, because it's like as a medium it's struggling to be taken seriously.

Minnie: I did a lot of the same classes as Sally at high school but I also did promedia, drama buddies.

Claris: We all did drama at high school, it's good.

Sally: Shout out to Rita Stone

Minnie: At uni I did a double major in criminology and english lit.

*Louise: Was that at Auckland University?*

Minnie: No, Vic.

Claris: I did media studies at high school, and I did a film degree with media studies and english and theatre papers, and also it was like a study of film making and practical filmmaking skills.

Elsie: Which is really important.

*Louise: Do you mind if I just ask a couple of questions about academia? One of the things I found, I had never had a female lecturer in media, never had a female tutor, never studied any women's films. One of the YouTubers I talked to was the same, and she was like... we never even studied anything specifically from New Zealand.*

Claris: I have a different perspective on that, but that's good. I have a good one. I did a whole course on New Zealand films, so that was one thing. Definitely less, but I've had female lecturers and tutors. I did a whole course on popular music and film, that was taught by a woman and I think if I had to choose my favourite lecturer would be her. I think I did reasonably alright writing my essays etc. but I enjoyed her lectures the most, they were so enjoyable. I was always like, yes, let's go to this lecture.

Elsie: I only did two film papers, they were both male lecturers. Female tutor, but in my first trimester my lecturer was definitely trying to choose films with a range, the one that springs to mind is We are the Best. That was awesome, because that has a male director but it's based on the graphic novel by his wife. That was awesome. Very weird to watch though. Everyone is forced to watch these films, because in the next lecture you're going to be studying it and I could just sense that there were a bunch of guys that would never ever have watched this film if they hadn't been forced to watch it. I was like, go our lecturer for

forcing a bunch of dudes to sit through that. After the lecture I was walking back to the bus, saying like it was really weird, really awkward et cetera [inaudible] I think even though there are mixed responses it's important that it's out there and people are watching it.

Minnie: [inaudible]

Elsie: Yeah I had to watch 300, that was weird.

Claris: A few of my courses that were overviews, there would be a week on the feminist perspective of the thing.

Elsie: They'd definitely keep bringing it back to New Zealand, it was an important thing. Definitely in the second course. We'd look at like histories, eras of different types of film. Then at the end of the year we had to do a research essay, so I could choose to write on New Zealand film. But you kind of had to choose to write about that.

Claris: I was going to say I did a french film course, and a big component of it was feminist french films. My last essay ever for uni was like three films by french female directors in the last 20 years about female coming of age, so I was like, you know definitely felt like I had that opportunity.

Elsie: Do you feel like other people appreciated that?

Claris: Yeah, the lecturer said the topics of the final essay one of them was feminism.

Sally: I had a really small group, and just about every time we had a critique we'd end up on some tangent about feminism, and we went into the other classes and they were like our classes aren't like that... to the point where one of our tutors was like "you're not girls, you're women".

Elsie: It's like a boys club, films. Making films.

Claris: It makes me so angry that it's a boys club as well.

*Louise: Something that I asked a lot of the producers that made short films, was, I've worked on films, I've been a runner and stuff, and there's been times when there's been blatant sexual harassment and no one has said anything, but there's been times when I've been like really uncomfortable but I'm the bottom of the*

*tier. So that's something I asked the other participants, 'hey how do you make sure it's a safe work space for the women at the bottom of the tier'. If you had a crew, is that something you would address?*

Elsie: Our crew is just made up of our dearest friends.

Claris: We only get people on board who we trust.

Elsie: We could probably make this clearer, but we always hope that people will talk to us about things that they have issues with, because we're totally there to be able to act. The tricky thing is communicating that we're all so critically busy that you have to come to us, we're not going to be able to come to you and be like 'we've noticed this' it's important for us that people know they can come to us.

Claris: It's important for us to have a good work environment.

Minnie: Something we're looking at with Bright Summer Night is to have someone between us and the cast, as the main thing that has come up with people not telling us, is that they'd tell us other people's things and not their own, so having someone they could talk to.

Claris: They could tell we were incredibly busy so they wouldn't want to tell us but if there's someone in between us and them they can tell without feeling like they are bothering us

Elsie: Then they can tell us and be like, you should be aware of this.

Sally: So far we've managed to steer clear of all the gross stuff by working with people that we know. Hopefully we can just keep doing that.

Minnie: It's important to us to have female crew also, making sure that everyone behind the scenes is just as representative as people on screen.

Claris: Obviously it's not like, we can only have women, but it's like female-heavy is a nice thing to aim for.

Elsie: We've got a kick-ass female sound recorder, and Jenny is amazing, she is a friend of Claris's and she does everything.

*Louise: What's the most positive experience to come out of this?*

Minnie: Working with these guys.

Claris: Our friendship is like a whole new level now.

Sally: Also like, there are some people, like the lovely Jake who we cast as Benedict who we wouldn't know as well if we hadn't cast him, he's gonna move in with these guys next year, that wouldn't have happened.

Minnie: He is also like, if I hadn't been cast my life would be totally different as well.

Claris: So we've like changed other people's lives, so that's kind of a weird little tingly thing.

Elsie: I don't look too far ahead in the future, but right now we seem to be able to make stuff with the funding from NZ On Air which is absolutely incredible, wow okay so we might actually be able to do what we love to do for a job and that's all very positive, I'm aware that it might not last.

*Louise: Is there a negative experience?*

Claris: I sometimes feel a little bit like, hounded by the internet. I just want to crawl into my cave and make some art.

Minnie: The disconnect, forgetting that people watch it, then being reminded people are watching.

Claris: And if that moment when you're reminded is someone being mean to you, you just have to put on your armour.

Sally: [spoiler alert] there's a sneaky side channel, which will be out today, where I was writing scripts for it secretly, and we put it out on the site, then the moment the fandom found it... I was like "Oh, there's pressure now, I didn't realise there was a pressure, I didn't realise that I was enjoying not having that pressure. That's weird because I always knew that people would end up watching it."

Claris: It's that disconnect thing, where part of your brain knows.

Elsie: It was always going to be there to be found, but the fact that people could find it. We were like someone might find it, but it won't matter because of the exciting.

Minnie: One thing with the sneaky side channel was that we wanted to be really amusing and chill.

Claris: There was a kind of weird thing that happened with the fandom, because they felt like superior because they found something we didn't want them to find... we wouldn't have put it there if we didn't want it to be found.

*Louise: Is that a thing you think about though? Like putting little Easter Eggs?*

Claris: Little shakespeare references...

Minnie: This is not an easter egg at all, this is a video that we pretend doesn't exist, in Nothing Much to Do but there's a video that's not in any of the playlists which has had about 2,000 views vs. 20,000 on the other videos.

Elsie: The only other negative thing would be time.

Sally: there's a point where it's getting late in the evening, and you're like, I could go to sleep, or I could finish the video, and you're like finish the video! And it's 2am.

Claris: It feels like it's taking over our lives, I wouldn't have let it take over my life so much if I didn't love it. It's like a creative child. But also there's just those times where you feel like you want to just-

Minnie: Gave some structure-

Claris: Get drunk and go out or whatever, but you can't because the videos due tomorrow.

*Louise: This was a thing I noticed at Webfest too, everyone is like "yeah we can get funding but it's not enough to live off" or "yeah we can pay for a location etc. but we can't pay the people we need to hire to work" what do you feel about not really being able to do it full-time, because of limitations, because of like, the government?*

Claris: Well we've got our Kickstarter, so that's us being like 'more opportunity for money to live'

Minnie: Because for the last two, we worked with people because they wanted to be there, with Lovely Little Losers we were able to give them food because of the Kickstarter that we did for that, but with Bright Summer Night we've got a budget that we should be able to pay some people, we've got scholarship money which is \$100,000.

Claris: It seems like a lot, but then you think about how much each of us would get, and how much rent we each have to pay etc.

Minnie: This budget for Bright Summer Night should accommodate for paying for everyone as well, but it's not enough for anyone to live on.

Claris: It's a really scary thing, because you're like I really want to be grateful but I also want to spend all of my time doing this. I don't want to spend any other time doing anything else, but you can't because you need to pay your rent.

Sally: I think our hope is that we're slowly, our hope is that it continues this way and it will build to a point where we can pay everyone properly, that might have to end up with us juggling more than one project, and possibly still having other jobs ourselves, but hopefully.

Elsie: I think we're incredibly lucky that we're all young, and when we were writing I could still live at home and I don't have to pay for rent, and a lot of this is only achieved because our parents are so supportive. We're incredibly aware of that. So for Bright Summer Night the priority is paying the people that actually need it, and we can still get away with not getting paid that much because it's our hobby ish thing that we're really passionate about.

*Louise: Do you find that Kickstarter makes it more viable though?*

Claris: It's certainly helping, we're nearly at \$12,000 currently.

Minnie: \$100,000 on it's own seems like lots.

Claris: I mean the \$22k that we got last time went so fast.

Elsie: I think the government could be more supportive.

Sally: They used to have an arts benefit.

Clariss: So frustrated.

*Louise: I think this is the last question, do you feel the online media landscape is becoming overcrowded? Do you feel like you guys were the first cool webseries from New Zealand but now there's other ones?*

Sally: We're the first blog series from New Zealand that I'm aware of.

Minnie: I'd like to think that the world is wide enough for everyone to say their piece, ideally be respectful and supportive of anything that someone's creatively putting out into the world whatever that is.

Clariss: I think if something is good enough it's gonna bubble to the surface.

Elsie: The same thing you were saying before about like, I should be a doctor what am I doing with my life? There is a gap, clearly, for women creators, and for stories about women

Clariss: and I don't want to be a doctor, I want to do this!

Elsie: We write about things where there is a gap, and I feel like there should be more, I feel differently I guess, to a man.

Sally: The internet totally functions in a different way from television, and that's what it's building towards, people are becoming more aware of that, the fact that not everyone's going to sit down and watch the same thing, but you're always going to be able to find something because your mate would have seen a thing that was cool.

Clariss: I think it must be kind of terrifying for the older generation, because TV was simple.

Elsie: That was even more simple, but even having five channels there's only a certain amount of things you can be watching at 7pm at night on TV, now with Netflix and everything. We've had people coming up to us being like 'how do you have the amount of views that you have?' because we've got a niche.

Clariss: The niche audience of shakespeare fans.

*Louise: It's a thing though, because when I was at high school, I was a drama nerd who was really good at english who wanted to do filmmaking, who spent all my time on Tumblr, like I was probably Beatrice, I went to a tiny small-town school where I was the only person like that, how many other small towns had the same 'me' in them. All over New Zealand and America, et cetera, and you think you're the only person but you're not.*

Sally: And we've seen people jump from watching one show, to watching another show, to watching our show, which is I think how we built off the fan base.

Elsie: And also people just going, you post all this stuff about Lovely Little Losers, what is this?

Sally: Someone posted a gif from Lovely Little Losers on their site.

Elsie: One of those moments where we filmed it and went 'that's gonna be a gif'.

Sally: And these two characters were leaning in to kiss each other and one of them pulls out and you're not really sure why, and that was in the gif, and this person who was anonymous was like so I saw this gif and "I don't know who they are or what the context is but like why didn't they kiss??" and somehow that whole bit of story was encapsulated in this little bit of thing, and recently this person was like "I was that anon that got really angsty that one time, I've caught up".

Minnie: That's just people talking about something.

*Louise: That's definitely like a Tumblr thing though*

Minnie: The creators of it's Always Sunny in Philadelphia, awful show, I really like them as creators as well, because they just took a handycam and were like "let's film our silly idea for a show".

Claris: The fun outweighs the stress. If there's fun in it that you love, the bits of stress.

Minnie: Also we try and work out what causes, if there's angst we try to find the time to sit down and work it out so everyone is okay again as soon as possible.

Sally: I think that's a byproduct of us all being friends.

Claris: I think if we weren't friends and we'd just randomly tried to make it we'd probably have thrown the towel in a bit earlier.

Claris: I think we want a secret agenda, it's to make stuff that we're happy with, stuff that's feminist, give other people jobs as well imagine that, hiring people!

Elsie: those are all things in our lives, Bright Summer Night we're all really keen to make a change to. There are things that I want the world to speed up on. We're going to be talking about like consent and sexuality. It's all stuff that's really important to us. Knowing the New Zealand culture being much more chill, and us creating a utopia, that is something that we can keep doing and be like this how nice this is. Then when something's bad, being like, okay that's bad but then being intelligent and having conversations with people and having good philosophies.

## Appendix VIII: Interview with Charli Prangley

Charli: My name is Charli, I'm a designer and I also run a YouTube channel where I post videos talking about design; also videos about fashion and DIY projects; and I also make vlogs showing my life, so I basically film my weeks and walk around with a camera and put it on the internet.

*Louise: Sorry if I don't – cause I can't interrupt you, cause I'll just have to edit it out like this, so there'll just be head nodding and thumbs up like this. Do you maybe want to talk about, you're a director, a producer, a camera team...*

Charli: When I make my videos I do it all myself, so I come up with all the ideas, I write the scripts, I film it all myself and then I edit it all myself and post it online. Sometimes I will work with other people and we'll collaborate and help each other out because there's a great YouTube community, and you know, we can work on videos together, but most of the time it's just me in my bedroom, working on videos by myself.

*Louise: When you started your YouTube channel, were you inspired by other people? Do you want to kind of talk about that?*

Charli: When I started my YouTube channel I was mainly inspired by my sister who had also started a YouTube channel and I saw the videos she was making and putting online, and that she was becoming a part of this really cool online community that I decided I wanted to be a part of as well, and that was one of my main reasons for starting. I was inspired by people like Karen Kavett, she's another design YouTuber, she makes videos talking about graphic design and, you know, she goes into the details with it and it's not just about the basics and she's not just doing, like, Illustrator tutorials and Photoshop tutorials. So I really liked that she was talking about design as well as like, showing projects as well

and that's the sort of thing that I wanted to do so I definitely would say that I was inspired by her as well.

*Louise: Have you done, like, traditional filmmaking and have you thought about working for film or television? Have you made short films or is this – like, YouTube – your main foray into filmmaking?*

Charli: So I've never made short films or done any sort of film making training or anything like that. I did study motion graphics at university and animation and from there I guess is where I sort of started to learn about storytelling through video, and that was another reason why I wanted to start my channel was to pick back up doing that sort of thing because I didn't end up doing that for my career but I really liked it, so that's where it comes in I suppose. Does that answer it?

*Louise: Would you ever want to do something like television or make feature films or anything like that? Or do you purely enjoy YouTube as a medium?*

Charli: I don't know if I would ever want to get into doing, like, feature films and television things. I don't know if that's my medium, if that makes sense. For me, I make videos online and on YouTube. Part of it is because of the community, not just for the videos itself, and I don't feel like there is that community around TV and film. There's quite a divide between the people who make TV shows and make films, and the people who watch them, whereas I feel like with YouTube, there's much less of a divide. Like, comments on videos are like, one of the main ways that you can interact with your audience, and then your audience can, like, follow you as a person on other social media and things as well, and I think that's a really cool part of being on YouTube, so. I don't know if what I do would ever translate well to film or television, but I don't know. I never say never, but that's definitely not something that I'm actively working towards, if that makes sense.

*Louise: Could you take me through the current process to make a video? So like, how do you come up with the idea, the schedule, when do you go and film, when do you edit, etc?*

Charli: So all of my videos start off as a little idea that I write down, probably in a note on my phone. Like, I like to capture ideas as I have them, so make sure that they don't get away. Some of the ideas, that's as far as they go, but most of the time, the idea will then be put into a spreadsheet that I have – that's my YouTube schedule. So that has all the dates of when I'm posting videos, cause I post two a week, one on Saturday and one on Tuesdays. And I'll sort of have a look at what videos I've got planned and where this new idea could fit in. I try to have like a range of content. So I try not to have weeks where there's two fashion videos in a row, or two design videos in a row, so that I can mix it up and keep things interesting. So once I've got the video scheduled, I will then plan what I have to do to film it. If it's a video that's gonna require me talking then I have to write a script for it. When I say script then I don't mean that I'll write out word for word exactly what I have to say. It's mostly just writing down talking points so that when I go to sit down and make the video I can have it already planned what I want to say and not have to sit there and ramble too much, like I'm probably doing now! Because otherwise I find that my videos end up far too long and I like them to be as short as possible to keep people's attention span. So yeah, that planning comes in handy. Then when I sit down and film the video I generally will film in my bedroom in a space pretty much exactly like this and then move on to editing it. The filming generally happens on the weekends because I live in England and it is very dark in the evenings now so I need some natural daylight to film in the weekends. And then editing I will generally do in the mornings before work, because I work full time so I've got to fit in YouTube around my day job. So mornings is when I can have a few hours of just, like, time by myself with no one else up and awake in the house yet, and I can just edit without, you know, any distractions.

*Louise: How has that process changed over time? Like, when you started, was that process the same? Or have you worked it into something that suits you better?*

Charli: When I started making videos I think it took me a lot longer than it does now, is probably the main difference between two years ago and now. I also had a camera back then that could only film for five minutes at a time and it didn't have a flip out screen or auto focus, so I had to, like, come up with some contraption to, like, sit on my chair that would be about my head height to try and focus it and like, get the framing right, so the whole thing took a lot longer than it does now. So investing in better equipment has sped up my process which is great, because it means I can get everything done, and I don't know if I could still keep up my output if I was trying to work with that old camera. I don't know if much else has changed with my process – I think I've definitely gotten more organised, I guess, as I've gone along and just realised how much work YouTube actually is. Like, you look at a three-minute video and it doesn't, I don't know. I don't know if the hard work that goes into it comes across some of the time. Especially when it just looks like, oh, this person just turned on their camera and is just sitting down and talking to it. But there's all the planning that goes in behind it, and having a structured process like I just talked about with the writing down the idea and then the script and so on, makes it easier to follow and easier to get the videos done on a weekly basis.

*Louise: Well, that's so funny because my camera doesn't have a flip screen, but it does have auto-focus, so yeah, focusing stuff is so hard. Especially when I do outfit photos, and I have to kind of like, pick a thing that's roughly where I'm gonna be standing so the depth of field is right. I totally get that.*

Charli: Yeah. I used to do it with my yoga mat.

Louise: Oh that would work really well, yeah! Yeah, you need, like, a sort of tubular person-shaped sort of thing. Could you talk about what platforms you've published on, and why you chose them. So obviously YouTube but why did you choose YouTube?

Charli: I chose to put my videos on YouTube specifically because of the community that surrounds YouTube and how it works. Like, people go on YouTube and subscribe to channels and then will watch their subscription box and watch all the videos in it. So, getting your videos on YouTube and getting someone to subscribe to you is a good way to get them watching you regularly rather than just a one-off stumbling across your video, if that makes sense. I have in the past put videos on Vimeo when I've made, like, little motion graphics pieces, but that was mostly just, to like, post them, to have them somewhere that I could link to. Whereas now, my YouTube channel is my main focus and my videos are a part of that channel, so I just couldn't imagine putting them anywhere else. There's been a lot of talk recently about Facebook favoring native videos that you upload to Facebook, and I'm just not interested in doing that, because I'm not interested in building my Facebook audience. I feel like there's not much benefit in that for me, and I want people to come on over and subscribe to my YouTube channel. And if I put my video uploaded to Facebook, then what benefit will people have coming over to my channel, so that's why I've stuck with YouTube. The community that surrounds it is awesome... being a YouTuber is not just about putting videos online, it's also about being surrounded by other people who do that as well, and people who know what it's like to make videos, and they know the hard work that goes into it and can help you out. And YouTubers are generally a pretty friendly bunch, I've found, and it's fun to be one of them.

*Louise: Did you feel that, like, there's one kind of best process to making video? Do you feel there's a lot of YouTubers who all do it the same way? Kind of, like,*

*they do everything and they upload twice a week... Do you think that's a really common way and do you think it's the best way?*

Charli: Do you mean just like the process of coming into an idea and editing, or, you mean like, the practice of publishing videos on a schedule?

*Louise: I guess maybe if you want, you could talk about, like, some people have management and networks and stuff like that.*

Charli: Yeah, good point, I didn't think about that.

I think there definitely is a formula with YouTube. Most YouTubers that are successful have a schedule that they stick to. That means that their audience knows when to come to their channel to get their videos. And it's, I don't know, now that I think about it, it's kind of like, you know like, scheduling, like, a television show is only playing at a certain time, but a video you can watch at any time but people like to be the first one to it, so they'll often check YouTubers' channels, like at the specific time they know that the video's gonna be uploaded. I always see tweets from people who follow the big famous YouTubers, you know, like 'I've been refreshing the channel'. And you know, they just sit and wait on it until the video's put up.

The other thing that's quite common amongst all YouTubers is I think, some people have help with editing and with production and things but if you are the kind of person making videos like I do where it's just you talking to a camera, generally a lot of the time it is YouTubers doing that themselves, even when they are bigger. A lot of them do have help when they get really big and you know, they've got a lot of other things going on outside of YouTube, but the funny thing is that their videos often still look like it's just them doing it, which is interesting. I think YouTube is a really personal thing and you want to think that everyone is

making the videos themselves because that's sort of how it started and how it came about.

*Louise: Do you want to talk about, like, you're not with a network are you?*

Charli: No, I'm not with a YouTube network but a lot of other people are, and some people have management teams as well, that will source brands to sponsor videos for them, and help them out with videographers potentially, that sort of thing. I guess the main reason people sign up to a YouTube network to me seems to be they promise like, an increase in ad money and things... I just never really saw the benefit in it so I've decided to stay independent for now, yeah. I don't know what else to say.

*Louise: You don't do it as a full time job, do you kind of want to talk about, like-*

Charli: The difference in that?

*Louise: Yeah, like, because you have ten thousand subscribers, or even more than that, not that I checked [laughs], but like, that's like a lot of subscribers, but you don't do it full time. Like, that must be hard! Do you want to talk about that?*

Charli: Yeah...

*Louise: Especially because a lot of people would, with increasing the amount of subscribers they get.*

Charli: Yeah, that's true. Something you often see with YouTubers as they grow is they'll reach a certain level where they'll quit their job and do it full time, which is interesting. I am still working full time and I will be for the foreseeable future. I've got thirteen thousand subscribers right now, which is really exciting, but the only way I could make it a full time job is if I really wanted to work with brands

more and have all my videos sponsored, which is not something I'm particularly interested in right now. Like I'll pick up sponsored projects whenever one comes up from a company that I'm interested in, that I really like and respect, then I might look at it, but I'm not focused on going out there and getting sponsors so that's why I'm still working for now, and I also really like working full time. Like, I like my job. And because I'm a designer and I work doing design and then talk about design in my videos, I feel like if I stopped being a designer, then I wouldn't have as much, like, I don't know what the word is, then there wouldn't be as much meaning behind what I'm talking about in my videos because I wouldn't be doing design as a job. So I enjoy having YouTube part time as a hobby. It's a hobby that I take very seriously, so I guess I would call it more of a side project than a hobby, but it is still part time for me for now.

*Louise: Do you feel there are similarities between YouTube and television shows? You kind of touched on it a little bit before, but do you wanna kind of maybe talk about the pros and cons of that? New media versus old media?*

Charli: It's interesting, there are a few YouTube channels that I subscribe to and I know there's many more out there, that are putting out content that is, like, more like a show, like a TV show. Like, there's one that I watch called Twin Joke that's like a variety show and it's absolutely hilarious. It's these two twins, the Fratocrats and they have like a guest on every week, and they've got like segments that they'll do each week, which is, yeah. It's just always hilarious and you always know it's going to go out weekly. The videos that I make are more, like, talking about things and you never quite know what you're going to get next week, so that's just, I don't know. I think that's just a thing on YouTube, but... there's more and more channels that are popping up I think that are doing regularly scheduled types of content just as well as the timing that you're putting that up. So that's interesting. And also production values on YouTube are going up and up. I think that, back in the day on YouTube you could put up a video from your webcam and that would be accepted but now there's just no way

anyone would watch it. People expect high production values and good quality video, good quality lighting, and they want your videos to look really professional. So more and more, production values are going up. I think that's where the similarities between television and YouTube end for me, because I think like I said before, TV seems really far away and, like, the people who appear in TV shows are, like, untouchables. Even when it's like a reality TV show, you never quite believe it's real. Whereas on YouTube, you do believe it's real, and yeah, I'd like to think it is. I've seen, you know, a few people saying, like, 'I met this YouTuber and they weren't how they come across in videos', and that's always really disappointing, because you want to believe that the person that you're sitting, like, talking in their bedroom, you want to believe that how they come across in real life. And I've found that to be mostly the case through all of the YouTubers that I've met so far. It's really cool that when you get to meet them you feel like you know them already even though you just met, because you've seen them talking in videos. And for that reason I think that new media with YouTube is just much more relatable than with TV shows.

*Louise: Do you think, cause, I went to this webseries conference a few weeks ago, and one of the biggest things I noticed in that was that the people who make stuff especially if they're like, young people, they are young themselves, so they're making content for their audience and they're a part of it, so it's way more, like, genuine.*

Charli: Mmm. Yeah I think that, genuinity... what is the adjective for that? Genuineness? What is it? Whatever it is, I think it's really important these days.

*Louise: How do you measure success?*

Charli: Ooo. Success is a tough one. It's hard to... measuring success on YouTube is different for different people I think. Like, the easiest thing to think would be number of subscribers, but at the end of the day, that's just like, a number,

right? Like, what matters most to me is connecting with people, is when that subscriber number turns into someone commenting regularly on my videos and I get to know them through that and I get to know what they like about my videos and maybe what they don't like if they, you know, see something that they want to give some feedback on. That's the most meaningful thing to me is getting comments on my videos and hearing from the people who subscribe to me and hearing that a video was useful or maybe after watching it they'll have lots of questions and that can spark a conversation. And that's just really exciting to me. Just like, yeah. I like hearing feedback and hearing that I've helped someone. Recently in the past few months I've been getting more and more emails from people which is really cool, because they've taken the time to seek out my email address to send me a message and tell me that a video has helped them and share a bit of their story and maybe ask some more questions and I'll go back to them and we can have a little back and forth. But that part means a lot. Yeah.

*Louise: So, do you have a process for determining with feedback the difference between just kind of like, trolling, or just people talking shit, and actual, like, constructive feedback which may, at first you might be like [gasp] 'what? How could you say that?' but actually like, oh, they're telling me this because it's helpful, even if it hurts my feelings a bit.*

Charli: Yeah, I've been very lucky to not get too much like "hate" so far, though, touch wood because I'm sure, you know, everyone gets it at some stage and I'm sure it'll come. Every now and then there's a few like, random comments, you know, that I just delete straight away because that's obviously just someone who's just been trolling around, but that's seriously like, maybe like once every three months I'll get that, so I'm very lucky in that way. Sometimes it'll get more like what I'd think of as constructive criticism though. Often I get that I talk too fast in my videos, and that's definitely a problem and I'm probably doing it right now. I think as kiwis we have that issue that we talk really fast so sometimes people find it hard to understand me and they might be like 'what? What did she

say at this time?’ and put like a timestamp, ‘I can’t understand you, you talk too fast’ and I’m like, yes, ok, mental note, I need to slow down in my videos, so that sort of thing is useful because that means that they genuinely wanted to understand what I’ve said but I was talking too fast so they couldn’t. But yeah, I’m lucky that I don’t get many trolls or anything, so yeah. Not much more to say I suppose.

*Louise: There’s been some people who are like, oh, no, all comments are just good or I delete them.*

Charli: Oh, interesting.

*Louise: Do you kind of want to talk a little bit about the difference between the YouTube community in New Zealand and the YouTube community in London?*

Charli: Yeah, that’d be interesting. I moved to London in January from Wellington in New Zealand, and when I started YouTube, like I said, my sister had started a channel and showed me the New Zealand YouTube community and it just seemed so much fun so I’d become a big part of it and knew a lot of people in the New Zealand YouTube community and we’d always meet up and it was just really fun and felt really supportive and connected. Then I moved to London and didn’t really know many people. There is a YouTube space here, so there is YouTube offices and they hold happy hours where you can go along and meet other YouTubers which is really cool. But I found that, I guess there’s so many YouTubers in London that the YouTube community is so big and there’s also so many famous YouTubers that are a part of it that it just seems really hard to, like, break in, in a way, like you have to find your own little group. So the New Zealand YouTube community is like, one big group, whereas here in London there is more like, lots of little groups, and everyone knows the bigger ones, but not many people are actually friends with them, if that makes sense. So it’s less connected.

*Louise: Do you think though that, like, you improved as a YouTuber from having, like, actual YouTube there, their office there, you could go talk to them, they could help you out, versus like, there is nothing in New Zealand!*

Charli: Yeah. What's been really useful is I've gotten to go along to a few workshops at the YouTube space about production. There was one called, I think it was 'production on a shoestring'. Basically was talking about how to shoot videos as a solo person, making videos, and how to really improve the quality, like, in little ways, without investing in, you know, the fancy filmmaker equipment. So that was really useful. There's also YouTuber events like Summer in the City over here, which has lots of panels from YouTubers, talking about YouTube issues and you know, things like that. And there's also some that are sponsored by Google and they come in and talk to us about nerdy things like YouTube analytics and how to understand them, and I find that stuff really fun. So there's definitely been a lot more learning opportunities being over here than being in New Zealand where it's sort of just... I guess since moving over here I've become more and more serious about YouTube because there are those resources available for me to improve. Whereas in New Zealand it was just sort of like, you know, struggling along on your own and just, you know, trying things out and doing whatever felt right but then you come to these workshops and you get more information which is really useful and you sort of start to learn the ins and outs of the YouTube algorithm and how to like, what sort of content it likes best and what thumbnails work best and how to tag your videos and all those little details that you were just like, learning from trial and error before, but now you've got someone from YouTube actually telling you how to do it, which is really useful.

*Louise: So, do you have thoughts... oh, I forgot to ask Britney this<sup>102</sup>, crap. That's ok. The NZ YouTube community's Facebook group. Do you have any opinions on that?*

Charli: So I don't use Facebook, so I'm not part of the YouTube community Facebook group... What I do know of it, from other people – are you meaning the New Zealand one? So I don't use Facebook but I've seen a lot going on, like I've heard, through my friends who do use Facebook, with things in the New Zealand YouTube community facebook page, lots of drama happening that is just... I don't use Facebook because I feel like it just... I don't, yeah, I think Facebook just like, attracts that type of drama so I'd just rather not be a part of it. I can get all the benefits of the community through Twitter and through YouTube itself and just through talking to people from iMessage and things like that so I'd rather stay away from Facebook.

*Louise: Do you kind of find that like, one on one relationships are kind of better... in the community do you feel that like, talking to people one on one, do you get a lot more from it than say like, posting in a group and hoping one replies?*

Charli: Yeah, the interesting thing about like, Facebook groups for YouTube is it can often just be people just putting their videos out there and promoting themselves and not, you know, they'll make that post but they won't go and leave feedback on other people's. You know, that's always a risk with any sort of community type of thing. Communities are good for discussion, I think, and it's good to hear a range of opinions. Like, I'm, while I'm not part of the New Zealand YouTube Facebook group, I am part of an online design community that's like a private membership thing, site that you pay to be a part of, and there's this online chat, and sometimes people will put a question and it'll be like crickets and no one will respond. But other times someone will ask something that everyone will have opinions on and we might have different opinions and I think

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<sup>102</sup> Charli and Britney know each other, which is why I referred to Britney by name.

it's really useful to talk about, like in an open space, and realise that not everyone thinks the same way as you, and I think it's good to like, have your thoughts and opinions challenged like that, in a professional way, if that makes sense.

*Louise: Do you want to talk about what supporting platforms you use, so you don't use Facebook?*

Charli: I have a Facebook page for my YouTube channel but I'm not very good at posting on it, because... I'm really good at posting on Twitter because I feel like I live on Twitter 24/7, so it's easy for me to think oh, maybe I should tweet a link to my video now. Whereas Facebook I have to actively think, right, I need to put something on my Facebook page, you know, like I'm not just like on it, and think to put something on there. Same with Instagram, I spend, you know, a lot of time scrolling through Instagram looking at pictures, so that reminds me to put pictures up that mention my videos and try and encourage people to go over and look at my YouTube channel. Those are the main ways that I think I would say I get people to my videos. I also have a blog that I tend to write a post about my videos, not necessarily just about the video but about something that relates to the video, so people are getting extra content from reading the blog and I'm not just repeating the same thing.

*Louise: Do you feel that like supporting platforms are important to publishing videos as well? Because you obviously have comment sections and stuff on YouTube, but do you feel like those other platforms to engage with people are also important?*

Charli: I feel like it is really important to have other platforms like Twitter and probably Facebook as well, like, I should be doing a lot better there than I actually am. I should be trying a bit harder with it. Because that way you're getting involved in someone else's day more so than when they're just looking

through their YouTube subscription feed. Like if they're just scrolling on Twitter and they see a tweet from you, maybe if it's even not about the video that you've just posted it might remind them that you exist, I suppose, and go and look at your channel, because with posting videos online, I feel like you're constantly vying for people's attention and vying to get them to click on your video rather than the millions of others in their subscription feed. So anything you can do to try and make them keep you in their thoughts, it helps.

*Louise: Do you want to kind of talk about like the pros and cons of working by yourself? Like especially because you don't have a network, like, you have so much creative control... do you want to touch on that?*

Charli: Making videos for myself, I enjoy it like I said before, I'm not part of a YouTube network because I just don't want to... my channel is my baby and I don't want to let anyone else be too close to it. But it comes with its challenges mostly because of time and the effort that it takes to make videos. Like if I could employ someone to create the surrounding content around it, to post to my Facebook page and that sort of stuff, that would be amazing because I feel like I could get a lot more views per video, you know, getting it out there and spreading the word. I think I do alright on my videos themselves on my own because I'm so used to it and I've been doing it for so long, but in saying that, recently I worked on a video with a friend who's a videographer and he shot it for me and that was awesome because I just couldn't have got the quality and the shots that we got on my own, so that was really nice, to work with someone else, and I would like to do that more. Videos by myself just talking in my bedroom I'm fine to you know, set up the camera on my own, but I would like to do more videos that require skills that I don't have and equipment that I don't have, so that's when I'll be wanting to ask for help more. And luckily with the community that YouTube brings with it, it's really easy to do that, like I don't feel like that's a huge hurdle I have to get across because I know the people are there

who are willing to help and you know, like exchange services or collaborate in some way.

*Louise: Because there's obviously some really big YouTubers who do have other people like, posting for them on social media, do you think you have to be extra careful then to come across as too managed in that you're still very genuine and still you?*

Charli: Yeah, I think that's definitely a fear. Recently I had a friend who was interviewing for a job with a big YouTuber and the job was gonna be that she was gonna be posting on this YouTuber's Twitter and Instagram accounts. And I follow this YouTuber and I was like, wow, I can't imagine that the tweets and the Instagrams I'm seeing from her aren't coming from her. I like to think that the people that are tweeting and posting the photos are actually tweeting and posting the photos. So it kind of opened my eyes and made me think, I wonder how many of the other ones out there aren't really themselves. Which is, you know, it's disappointing to think about. I want to always be me, if that makes sense. I think that that's really important and it's an important part of being a YouTuber, is being genuine. Because you're basically like, inviting someone into your room and into your thoughts, so I think it's important to stay you as much as possible. I can see where the big YouTubers, where that challenge arises, you know when they're really busy and they don't have the time and they're having all these opportunities just like, thrown at them to earn more money by doing a video with this brand and stuff, and that kind of scares me a little bit to be honest. I'm obviously not at that stage yet so I don't have to worry about it, but who knows. If deals like that started getting thrown at me I would hope that I would still, you know, have the courage to stick to what I'm doing, and remember that I'm doing this just because I like making stuff and not because I want it to be my job.

*Louise: Do you think that this is a worthwhile way of making [inaudible]?*

Charli: What I'm trying to do is, I'm not sure exactly how yet but I want to build my audience to then do something else. Like, I have a t-shirt line, a t-shirt company. I'd really like to build that up more and build up my product line and be selling that and maybe like, teaching people is an interesting thing. I'd like to try and make money doing those things rather than working with brands which seems to be like the formula for YouTube at the moment. That's the main way you earn money is through brand sponsorship deals. And I'm just interested to see what else I can do other than that, I suppose. I think there must be other ways, it's just, we've got to find them.

*Louise: What are your personal viewing habits?*

Charli: I used to watch a lot more YouTube than I do now and that makes me really sad because I used to basically watch my entire subscription feed and add all videos that I wanted to watch to my Watch Later list. And then I would go through and watch them. But now, I just don't have the time to do that, and that's really sad. What I tend to do rather than scrolling through my subscription feed is I will just go directly to the channels of people whose videos I know I want to watch, like my friends' channels, and I really like Casey Neistat, I will always watch his vlogs. And I just sort of watch videos when I can, which is why I like shorter ones, because I can just kind of like watch a video while I eat breakfast, watch a video while I brush my teeth. Sometimes I will even watch a video while I am walking to the tube station because we have unlimited data on mobile plans here in England so I can do that without worrying about going over the limit. So I basically just try and fit in YouTube videos wherever I can but I definitely watch less than I used to.

*Louise: Do you watch TV on a TV? Do you go to the cinema?*

Charli: There's a few TV shows that I try and keep up with, but not many to be honest and I'm not very good at keeping up with them. We don't have a TV licence, which is a thing you need in England to watch television on your TV. But I will stream shows online usually, sometimes we'll put that on the television but mostly just on the laptop. Same with movies most of the time, because going to the cinema is really expensive here. It's like, the equivalent of about thirty New Zealand dollars to go to a movie these days, so, yeah. That's insane. No one can afford that. So I tend to stream movies as well. So expensive, seriously.

*Louise: Thirty dollars, that's ridiculous. At least here it's like sixteen to twenty. Tell me about the most positive experience you've had from YouTube.*

Charli: The most positive experience I've had has probably been the emails or comments from people who've said that I've helped them with design or got them interested in design, even. And the questions that they ask are like, really insightful and that just makes me happy that I'm building this audience of, you know. These intelligent people that want to learn and want to learn from me for some reason which is really cool. Another exciting thing that just happened recently is I've been invited to speak at a conference in Austin, Texas, and I'm going to be speaking there about making content on YouTube consistently and doing that alongside a full time job.

*Louise: Do you have a negative experience you're comfortable talking about?*

I'm trying to think and I don't know if I've not had one or if I have and I've just blocked it from my mind, you know. Oh! I've got one. So just like the New Zealand Facebook community for YouTube is full of drama, over here there's a site that's quite popular called Guru Gossip – that's possibly its name. And basically it is a site where people go on – it's like a forum thing – where people go on, and, I don't know if I'm allowed to swear – you can bleep this out if I'm not – they like, bitch about YouTubers, pretty much. There is a few, like, there's

meant to be like, a forum for making positive comments and a forum for making negative comments but obviously the negative comment one is much more popular. And I hadn't really heard of it but someone tweeted about it one day and saying, like, 'ugh, people who post on this thing are so annoying'. And I was like 'oh what's this'. And then I did the thing that, I don't know – maybe this is embarrassing – that people do when they hear about that, and I decided to Google my name on it, and see if anyone had mentioned me. And there was one comment there from someone, and the fact that I can still remember what it said, you know. And someone had posted a screenshot of a big YouTuber's video and my comment was underneath. And they replied and said, 'unrelated but that Charli Marie is so annoying. She like, promotes herself to the stars all the time and thinks that she's so awesome'. And I was like, woah, what? That wasn't my intention at all in commenting on this person's video. I just wanted to leave them a comment because you feel like you know them and I'd liked their video so I just wanted to say so. And the fact that someone had seen that and thought that I was doing that for other reasons was, I don't know. And there's nothing you can do about that. Like I wasn't going to jump on the forum and be like, 'actually no, I wasn't', because, you know. That's just not how you should respond to trolls. But yeah. That's the only one negative thing I've seen about me on there, and then I decided that I would not look at it again. So who knows, there could be lots more now. But I think it's safer to just not check and just put it out of your mind.

*Louise: What would you do differently if you were starting again?*

Charli: I think it's hard to think about starting again because I feel like I'm so much more comfortable in front of the camera now. And I look back at my old videos and I can just see how nervous I was, and that I could only say one sentence at a time and I'd have to, like, make a cut because I'd mess up the next sentence. But that's not something I'd really change because that's just something I had to get more comfortable with over time. Perhaps one thing I would change is I would be ok with making the type of content that I wanted to

make and not feel pressured to make the type of content that I saw other people making. When I first started YouTube I did a lot more videos about beauty than I do now, because that's what everyone else was doing, and everyone was doing, like, monthly favourite videos where they talked about their favourite products. So I thought that that was a thing that I was supposed to do if I wanted to be, like, a lifestyle channel. So I did that too. And then, I was like, found myself, not really enjoying those videos, like I didn't even enjoy editing them. So I was like, why is someone else gonna enjoy watching this. So I just decided to stop making them and to make more design videos even though when I first started making more videos about design I was seeing people unsubscribing with every single one I made, which was kind of disheartening to start with, you know, because those were the type of videos that I really wanted to make, that I really wanted people to be interested in. And for those to be the ones that would make people unsubscribe, you know. I was like, 'aww man'. You know, maybe I should just talk about makeup then if that's what these people want to see. Then I realised that it was ok that they were unsubscribing because it was just me finding the right audience, and that now when I post a design video I get more subscribers than with other ones. So it's cool that over time that's happened, but it was just hard to realise that at the time.

*Louise: Do you feel that YouTube is becoming overcrowded and how do you deal with that?*

Charli: I think there's more channels on YouTube than I can even fathom. But I don't know if I'd say it's overcrowded. There's a lot of channels on YouTube now, and every day I'm discovering new ones that have like a million subscribers that I'd never heard of before, and I'm like, what, how'd that happen? But I don't know if I'd say it's overcrowded. I think that you know, quality will always rise to the top, and if there's more and more quality, then I can't see that as anything but a good thing really. So I'm ok with that sort of crowding. I don't really know what else to say about that.

*Louise: Do you do anything to make sure that your work is seen? Or is it just kind of like a – you try to make your videos as best or as good as possible?*

Charli: It's hard to... like, the thumbnail on YouTube is really important. What the thumbnail looks like is going to be the thing that people click on out of all the other videos in their subscription box to watch. But YouTube has problems with their subscription box and sometimes videos don't even go into it, so you can't always rely on that being the way to get people to your videos which is why I will always try and tweet about them, make posts on Instagram about them, try and remember to put it on my Facebook page as well. I think the more avenues you try and get people to your videos, the better.

'Cause, people don't know if your video is good until they click on it. So I think it's about making every video as good as it can, so if they happen to watch one, then they have in their mind that this is the type of quality I'm going to expect from this person, so they'll know next time when they just see a thumbnail that this person's video is going to be good because they watched that other one and that was good. So trying to keep quality consistent I think is key.

*Louise: Do you have any, like, thoughts you want to share about women on the Internet? Or being like a female YouTuber?*

Charli: I've been at a Summer in the City and VidCon – two YouTube conventions I've been to recently. They've both had women on YouTube panels, which have been my favourite panels at the conferences, which is awesome. They're always super packed as well. At the VidCon one in particular, they'd put it in a really small room, and the room got completely filled up, and there was even people waiting outside wanting to get in. So I think hopefully they'll learn for next time that there are a lot of women on YouTube who want to talk about being women on YouTube and put it in a bigger room.

For the most part my experience with being a woman on YouTube has been positive. I think just because of the types of videos I make, I don't attract the, you know, like the negative comments as much as perhaps some others do. It's been great for me to see more and more women doing something for themselves, and that's where I really respect that although being a full time YouTuber isn't my goal, I think it's really cool that there's so many women who've been able to make their own little empire in a way, and do things for themselves, and carve out their little piece and give themselves a platform to talk about things. I think that's really great. Anyone can make a YouTube channel, which is cool. And anyone who has something to say can make something and put it out there and I think that is awesome.

*Louise: Do you feel like that's lacking in television and cinema?*

Charli: I feel like what's interesting is when there's, like, a lead female character in a TV show, it's like a big deal. And it shouldn't have to be, but it is because so often TV shows do have male leads, you know. Like, I think recently, I can't remember what award it was, but the lead actress in *How to Get Away With Murder* won an award and that was like, a big deal, because she was a black lady, her first time to win an award, you know. Whereas I feel like on YouTube it's so common to see females of all different shapes and sizes and colours filling up your subscription box and that's really cool. No one's gonna be like, 'oh wow, look, it's a woman on YouTube', because there's so many of us there, and you can feel at home and you can feel accepted there. Did that come across ok?

*Louise: It was really interesting that you said that you felt expected to do beauty videos because Britney said the same thing. And yeah, I always feel like such a shit woman for being, like, oh I just slap some stuff on and I don't know what I'm doing... beauty is not my thing at all, so like, do you maybe want to talk about, if you have thoughts about, the expectations of what women do on YouTube?*

Charli: So one thing I've really enjoyed from going to these conferences and these women on YouTube panels is seeing all the different types of content the women are making on YouTube. Because honestly when I started, most of the videos from women that I was seeing were beauty gurus, talking about makeup and that's why I sort of felt like I should be doing that as well. But then as I delved more and more into YouTube land, I saw people who were comedians. There's one girl, Hannah Whitten, who talks about sex education, and people making songs, like musicians, and just talking about their lives and not necessarily doing makeup. It's interesting that when you meet someone at the YouTube happy hours that I often go to at the YouTube space. Sometimes they'll look at me and I'll have makeup on and they'll be like, 'oh, what do you make videos about? Do you do beauty and fashion?' and I'll be like, 'no, why would you assume that? Thank you I guess, that you think my makeup looks nice, but nope'. I don't know what to say, but yeah.

*Louise: Do you find from a design point of view that there are lots of other female designers talking about stuff? Like, would you feel like you're one of the few?*

Charli: Well there's not many designers on YouTube in general, so, I think it's pretty even.

*Louise: Yeah, well, like, one thing, I watch lots of like, filmmaking reviews of products, and they're never women. They're always men. So, I don't know if that's the same in design?*

Charli: I haven't found it to be. In the design industry itself, that's a different story, but on YouTube, not so much, that I've noticed. I could probably only name like, five design YouTubers off the top of my head actually. There's not many of us.

*Louise: That's alright. Clearly it's a niche that needs filling. Do you have advice for other women that want to start making YouTube channels?*

Charli: So – I keep starting my sentences with 'so'.

*Louise: It's ok, I can trim it.*

Charli: Good – that's what I have to do for myself as well!

*Louise: Do you have to edit out yourself saying 'does that make sense'?*

Charli: Yeah. All of the time! My advice to women wanting to make videos on YouTube would be, first of all to just start and get your content out there, and you know, make the type of stuff that you want to make. And I would also really advise you to as much as possible try and get involved with the community and connect with other YouTubers. You never know what's gonna come across your comment box. I know that my sister's had a couple of comments on a video we did together that, you know, someone thought we were twins and were making some lewd comments and that's never a nice time, but you know, we talked about it together and were able to laugh about it. But you know, if you're going through that by yourself it will probably make you feel, you know, a bit yucky. So, connecting with other people and joining together, meeting other women on YouTube is a great thing. There's lots of, you know there's online communities, reaching out on Twitter, going along to happy hours if you're in a space where you can, and try and connect with other people as much as possible. Because then you can sort of meet people who are going through the same thing you are and feel like you're in this together, and get their help when you need it.

*Louise: I think I'm out of questions.*

Charli: Any particular topics you want comments on?

*Louise: Not particularly. I mean, do you have any thoughts on VidCon? Because I have another YouTuber who went, so it would be quite interesting if you had any particular thoughts on it.*

Charli: Yeah. An interesting thing when I went to VidCon that I didn't really expect, because like I said, becoming a full-time YouTuber isn't my main goal, but when I was there, and I saw the parties and the cool events that the famous YouTubers you know invited guests were invited to, I didn't expect to feel as jealous as I did, and I don't know if jealous is like, an ugly word or whatever, I wasn't you know, wishing bad on them for going but, I was very envious and wished that I could be there too. And that's not because I think that I should be famous or anything like that, I think it's just that with YouTube feeling like such an open platform and you sort of feel like everyone's relatable and everyone's right there and invited into your lives, it's easy to not really notice that divide between the big YouTubers and the smaller ones because they're making the same types of videos, they've just got slightly less people watching them. But when you're at this event and you've got this very clear divide – these people are across the red rope and you're on the other side – I found that really hard to deal with for some strange reason. And now that I'm back in my normal life, I think it's really weird that I felt that way, but that's just what happened at the time. The rest of VidCon was great though, being surrounded by meeting new people who were like-minded and all wanting to make things, it was really fun. I just wished, found myself wishing that there was more for smaller creators, more for, you know, people who are early on and are perfectly ok with that. You know, not aiming to be the next million-subscriber thing. I feel like it would be nice if that was celebrated a bit more.

What did your other person say about VidCon?

*Louise: She said it was really interesting, and kind of like the fandom of the celebrities was really interesting to watch.*

Charli: I found that more at Summer in the City because I went with a friend who has a lot of subscribers. And there was people lining up to meet him, and I was like, this is my friend! You know? Yeah.

## Appendix IX: Interview with Hazel Gibson and Morgan Leigh Stewart

*Louise: Do you guys just want to like introduce yourselves, and then explain a bit about the project you've been working on?*

Hazel: My name is Hazel Gibson.

Morgan: I'm Morgan Leigh Stewart.

Hazel: And we've been working on a project which is destined for online release, called K Road Stories and it's a series of ten short films set on Karangahape Road.

*Louise: Were you inspired by other content creators?*

Morgan: Yes.

*Louise: Who?*

Morgan: Particularly for the online project that we're doing, it came about from a few different things. There's a few local creators, but I was particularly into this web channel called 'Wigs'. The idea is that it's online content for women by women. That was quite big a few years ago, and I was like 'there should be more things like that'. It wasn't perfect, by any stretch of the imagination, but, it was sort of a step in that direction.

Hazel: For me, I was influenced by a lot of online content because I don't have a TV, and I haven't had a TV for seven or eight years. So, everything I watch is online, whether it's TV or movies or web-series or games or anything like that it's all sort of influenced by my online viewing habits and that kind of thing. And so I've really enjoyed webseries like *High Maintenance*, I've really enjoyed the way that they've created that and how all of the stories were linked by this one character. I really enjoyed local series *Flat3*, I thought it was very good. And just really had these sorts of series in the peripheries and then we sort of got

together and came up with this idea to create this series. We thought, well, why don't we apply to the NZ On Air Digital Media Fund for the money, because it would be the perfect medium to try and show our short films. Because that's the nature of short films, that a lot of the time nobody sees them – there's nowhere for them to go. So by putting them online you're instantly expanding your audience. I guess as a filmmaker that's all you really want at the end of the day is for people to see your stuff and see the things that you make. And online just seems like the natural progression of that.

*Louise: Have you tried making stuff for television and film?*

Morgan: Yeah. I've done a lot of music videos, short films, and I've just produced a feature film in the more traditional sphere. Though, in saying that, it actually won't get a theatrical release in New Zealand. It's got to go online. So, actually creating long form online content without intending to.

Hazel: We've both done pretty extensive work in traditional film mediums. But we just find that increasingly the content that we create is ending up online or exclusively online. I've made commercials which are purely for online, they're not for television release. And music videos, they don't – they have a bigger life online than they do on TV. I don't even know any TV channels that still play music videos.

*Louise: Would you consider what you've done more traditionally to have been successful?*

Hazel: Yes.

Morgan: Yeah. Some of it.

Hazel: I guess on a project by project basis. Some things, like a music video, you could make a really great music video, but if no one likes the song it's not going to be a success as such.

Morgan: I've made a short film that's been to a few festivals, but it turns out it had a bigger life online. NZ Herald did a premiere of it online and then it's just been sold to Lightbox so it's living more out there than it is on a big screen.

*Louise: Do you feel, then, that with what you do it's more worthwhile to put it online anyway? Regardless of whether you're intending to put it online?*

Hazel: Eventually.

Morgan: I think there's some projects where the goal is eyeballs and some projects where the goal is money. So it's like, some projects you're never going to get money out of so what your goal is then is to get as many people to see it, so you get it online. Through the easiest way possible.

Hazel: Especially with short films. Short films, or anything in that kind of short format, music videos, you're never going to make money from them, but they might afford you opportunities down the track, because somebody might see your short film and think 'wow this person's really great at what they do, I want to see more from them'. It might open up other job opportunities that might give you money. But, other than that it's more about getting other people to see it and sharing your work, and getting a reaction or even engaging with people.

Morgan: With things now with short films, where people used to make short films for film festivals, nowadays the biggest thing you can get is like a Vimeo staff pick. That is like gold. That would be the goal, you know?

Hazel: Or end up on [shortoftheweek.com](http://shortoftheweek.com)

Morgan: Screw all those festivals where –

Hazel: Or have someone famous tweet about it.

Morgan: That's better for your career than laurels at a festival  
(undistinguishable)

Hazel: And because there are so many festivals these days that, obviously there are some that are really prestigious and it's always great to get them in those festivals, but if you just wanted those laurels on the start of your trailer it's not hard to get those I don't think.

*Louise: What created your initial desire to create media? Did you feel you had a story or were you interested in filmmaking as a medium itself?*

Morgan: I just love films. I love what they meant to me and how I got something out of them. So I was like 'that would be cool, I'd like to do that.' And then from there it's evolved, like getting there and making stuff, then going 'alright, now what do I want to say now?' So it wasn't like I went in with a purpose, apart from just that's what I want to do. But now I'm like 'Okay I'm in this position, I've done a lot of stuff and now I've done stuff that I'm not that into so now I want to just focus on stories that I want to tell. One day I'll get to the point where I can actually do that freely.

Hazel: I'm the same. I think that it just came out of the love of films just in general and loving going to the cinema and seeing films and different stories and genres and all that kind of stuff, and wanting to be involved in that, and then going to uni and then really enjoying the theoretical side of film studies. Like the close reading of things and eking out the idea behind the stories and the symbolism and the context of where that film might have come out of. I really enjoyed that, and then fell into the production side of it. Tried a lot of things and was like 'ohh I don't know if I like doing that or working with that person – I thought it was a great opportunity at the time but their ideas don't align with that I want to make. And then sort of narrow it down and then end up getting people around you – 'Spiritual Warriors!'

Morgan: There's a filmmaker Alejandro Jodorowsky, and he talks about making films surrounded by your "spiritual warriors". So people who are all on the same page and the same wavelengths trying to tell the same idea. That really stuck.

Hazel: There's a documentary made recently called Jodorowsky's DUNE. He was making a film based on the sci-fi 'Dune' and it never came to fruition, and so the documentary kind of explores why that never happened. And he talks about having people around him who weren't spiritual warriors and they didn't fit in.

So we've kind of taken that on board and we try and only have good people around us who have the same goals. We're not in it to make money –

Morgan: Specifically this project. Others are to make money.

Hazel: To be able to survive would be nice. But we're definitely not in it to be rich and famous.

*Louise: Could you talk me through your current process of how you come up with an idea? What format you choose to make it in? How you get your crew together? How you assign roles? Like filmmaking 101.*

Hazel: We have very similar working circles. Generally in the Auckland film industry, I imagine it's the same for the rest of New Zealand, as a producer people will call you. I don't think I've ever had to submit my CV for anything. People will just call you and say 'hey I have this job, I know so and so who knows you, we've got this opportunity available are you available?' And that's just sort of how producing jobs come around for us. Otherwise for something like K Road Stories, which was more we created that, that just came about from conversations with others, friends of ours who are also filmmakers.

Hazel: So the K Road project was born out of conversations that we had with other filmmakers. There was a lot of talk around it. Being producers we're quite organised and so it was a lot of people going 'that's a great idea, that'll be awesome', but it was us who went 'ok let's apply for funding, who we can talk to? Let's get this going, who should we have involved?'

Morgan: And we structured it–

Hazel: Where should it go? Those kind of things. I think that maybe the real beginning point was when we all got together at a bar, about 15 of us filmmakers–

Morgan: Sharing stories. So James Solomon, who's one of our partners in this project, we got filmmakers together and started telling stories about K Road just to get things going.

Hazel: And we realised everybody has one. That was kind of the idea behind it, that everybody has a story from K Road. It might be touching, or sweet, or funny, or outrageous. And it's kind of something that happened to them or someone they met. We just sat around for three or four hours and just drank beers and talked about these stories. And they were just so funny. We thought, why don't we utilise this? We don't need to make documentaries or such, just this rich kind of base of incidents and events that happened — if we can get people to develop them into scripts then maybe something could come out of it.

Morgan: So, crew and stuff. It's knowing the people who understand the project and understand what they're going to get out of it and what they can contribute, particularly when there's so little money involved that it's not a simple transaction. It's often the HOD's or the Director has their own supporters so that they know that they will always help them out.

Hazel: It is a delicate balancing act a lot of the time, especially where there isn't money involved. If you're offering someone... obviously you always feed them, but you might not always be paying them. So it's either like a token thing like a petrol voucher, or it'll be the promise of owing them a favour. Favours are like a really big thing in the film industry, especially if you're a producer and you straddle that thing of working on short films and low budget stuff and music videos and things, then if you also do commercials and higher paid work, then there's the promise of 'I got you this job on this commercial, can you help me with this short film?' – Or the other way around. Usually you try and be as efficient as possible so you're not taking up too much of people's time. We've kept all our shoots for this to one to two days. I think for this project specifically we put some very basic rules in place to do with the film. The film had to be around seven minutes long, you get a \$2000 budget to shoot and edit, so you can spend that how you want. We'd rather you spent that on props and gear rather than paying everyone. Trying to overlap as much in terms of crew and things as possible. And people who know about the project and getting everyone on the same page.

*Louise: Has that always been the way you've done stuff?*

Hazel: Yeah, out of necessity.

Morgan: You've got to really think about where your budget's going. But, we do get to give back on occasion.

Hazel: When we produce things we understand that we're asking a lot from people, especially on low budget things. Therefore, we make sure that we're not asking people to shoot really long days. We feed them well, we make sure there's enough food, and good food, and we make sure that they feel like they have ownership over the project. We keep them involved as much as possible at each step of the project. So even if they might have only been a lighting assistant we still want them to come to the premiere and be involved with that, and to invite all their friends to be part of it. Not just 'oh thanks for your time, see you later'. Make sure that we run safe, happy, film sets. If you're not getting paid, at least you're able to have fun.

*Louise: What platforms do you use, and why do you use them?*

Hazel: It's changing very rapidly. A big interest of both of ours is the social media side of things. The marketing, and how you get things out there. It's quite interesting because two years ago I would have said yup vimeo has the best video quality, it has the best interface – but it's not the biggest in terms of audience. If people know about your particular film or whatever you product onto Vimeo they can find it. Or you can have the link and you can share it and people can find it. But you don't really stumble across things on Vimeo like you do on YouTube. YouTube is definitely the frontrunner now because their quality is up to the same quality as Vimeo. You can have up to 2K now on YouTube if your screen can handle it. You're going to get a lot more people who just stumble across things there. Like recommended videos, all the algorithms seem to be more effective. And their integration with Facebook is better. Recently there was the Big Screen Symposium, and Anna Dean did a talk. She does a lot of

social media marketing. She did the social media for What We Do in the Shadows, which was like a really incredible campaign. She had a talk which was really interesting, to see how rapidly all that sort of stuff has changed, and it's really applicable to us for trying to get things out there. She was talking about how there's so much content and people are being asked as viewers to engage with so much stuff that's it's really hard to fight through all that. To get people to pay attention to your things. The things that she did a year and half ago for What We Do in the Shadows she said she couldn't do now because it changes so rapidly. For us, we just have to keep really on top of what is the most effective way to get stuff out there, and what platforms to use and where to spend your money in marketing. You can spend money on Facebook ads but is it more effective to put it in print? It's so rapidly changing that you just have to try and keep up and give things a go, because you can't rely on what you've done before because it might just not work again.

*Louise: Do you feel there's one best way of doing things?*

Hazel: No. Definitely project by project.

Morgan: Things have to suit the idea, suit your audience, that's always key.

Hazel: Do you want to talk about Deathgasm? Because that was a very specific audience.

Morgan: I produced a feature film called Deathgasm and it's a heavy metal horror comedy. So your audience is quite defined. It's the kind of thing that you know who to aim it at, so you pick the things that they use the most.

Hazel: You can imagine that most of the people that would be into that are going to be under the age of 35. SO having it on VOD makes total sense.

Morgan: Online accessible, huge marketing online, a lot of content on Facebook. It serves that audience well. Whereas if it was a Helen Mirren film maybe the best thing for you to do is put it in print advertising and trailering at cinemas that have that audience there. Whereas that wouldn't work for us.

*Louise: Are there similarities between doing stuff online and doing stuff for TV and film, and where do they split off?*

Hazel: The production side of it is pretty similar–

Morgan: Just scaled down. I think that's largely in part because the budgets for online content are so small at the moment. I think this will change, because the content that is going online is just getting better and better. And your audience is almost limitless. So the quality level should match the potential.

Hazel: I think it is definitely hard. It's changing, but slowly, from the people that had the money are unwilling to put the same budgets into online content as they are for traditional mediums. So the budgets for TV stuff is still a lot bigger than online. For a 30 second TV ad they might give you \$300,000 or half a million dollars, but for the same thing online they would only be willing to give you five, or ten, or 40 thousand dollars for essentially the same thing.

Morgan: Well, becoming the same thing. All you need is this to create this, so the expectation levels are going up, so the budget levels should reflect that in order to get the right thing.

Hazel: Yeah it's quite hard if you're a younger person working in the film industry. Sometimes I think I live in a bubble because I don't have a TV, I just watch everything online – everybody does that, surely? So why don't people put more money into online? Then apparently the majority of New Zealanders do still watch TV and it's still a big part of their lives.

Morgan: It's funny because there's things that happen online that are so across the board and end up on the news.

Hazel: Well a lot of news sites just get their content from online places now.

Morgan: Think about viral videos and how they can reach such a huge audience.

Hazel: If you think about YouTube stars, people are earning \$5000 a month on YouTube to make their makeup vlogging videos.

Morgan: Jamie Curry (Jamie's World) is a good example of that. She's transcended that into a fantastic burgeoning career.

*Louise: How do you guys measure success? Do you guys measure success?*

Morgan: For this project we have specific and structured measures of success to hit that's particularly for reporting for funding. But goals for us I think are just views and participation at our events.

Hazel: So the films are going to be premiering on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December along K Road. There'll be ten different locations along the street and each film will have its own special location. So we're going to be encouraging people to follow the map, and they can go to them in whatever order they want. Hopefully we can kind of get a measure of success from the amount of people that show up to that and feedback that we get on a personal level. An overall of if people are enjoying it or getting something of value out of it. Which will just be anecdotal, what we get back from people on the street. And the filmmakers, who will be on the street with their films. And then after that they'll be going online, so I guess it will just be whether we can get people to see them. They're only seven minutes long, but even that can be a struggle to get people to watch online. If people are into it they take off. I'd be quite interested to see if there's one or two of them take off. Occasionally every couple of months there'll be a short film that really makes the rounds and people will be like 'oh my god have you seen this film?' It'll be interesting to see if that happens with any of our films. I can imagine they'll have quite different view counts.

Morgan: Also for us it depends on the filmmakers' own networks

Hazel: And how engaged they are with wanting to push their film. Which we are happy with encouraging, but you can't force someone's hand.

*Louise: Does direct audience feedback come into your process?*

Hazel: I think yes and no. I think with in terms of authenticity yes, especially with K Road that was a big concern of ours because the people who are gonna see it will be on K Road and they'll be people who are familiar with the area and might have quite an attachment to it. They might live or work or hangout there and

might have like certain nostalgia or memories around it. And so by telling them stories, showing them films they don't recognise their K Road in I don't think we'd get a good response from that. And we took that into account when choosing the scripts. We put a call out to all the filmmakers that we knew had a relationship with K Road of a level that would be good to make short films. And we got incredible treatments and ideas, but some of them belayed a tourist-y, seedy place, with prostitutes and strip clubs. You could tell they weren't very familiar with it. That isn't going to be very authentic. People aren't going to react to that in a good way. And also with choosing our writers and directors we were privileged to be able to make 10 films and get a really wide selection of people. We've got half women, gay writers, Polynesian, Māori, and Chinese – a whole mixed bag of people. Because of that we get a wide range of stories out of it.

Morgan: I think with what we've chosen, it really comes down to good stories. Beyond the K Road setting which is quite finite, so it was making sure those stories work above and beyond just the location.

Hazel: So they do have universal themes or ideas. And they do have characters that people can relate to, but they are authentic to K Road.

Morgan: It's just looking at those two levels of we think about K Road when we do it, but were also thinking about the story and how that will go wider.

Hazel: And in terms of people commenting and things like that there is, like in terms of Deathgasm, the majority have been really positive, but you get the occasional person that is like that sucked it was really crap. And you kind of get like we worked really hard on that. As long as people aren't directing a lot of hatred at a particular person it's fine. You just let it happen. Not everyone's going to like what you make.

Morgan: I would like them to inspire discussion. Like people go 'oh yeah it reminds me of that time that whatever'.

Hazel: If people commented that would be awesome. Just hopefully most will be positive.

*Louise: Do you feel confident in telling apart the clear hatred and the constructive criticism?*

Hazel: Being a younger person who has grown up with the internet, you do kind of separate people who are being trolls and are just sad and lonely being mean – they want a reaction. Obviously YouTube comments are the worst in the world, or if you’ve seen the comments on stuff.co.nz you just have to understand that those people don’t reflect who you deal with in everyday life. Genuine criticism about the actual content or structure of the film, that’s totally fair enough and I would encourage people to feedback in that way. It’s not too hard to separate those two things. I can imagine if it was directed personally at you it would be hurtful. But you just have to step back. I’ve got a rule that I don’t engage in internet fights. Because I’ve done it a couple of times on Facebook, but you just get so furious but you don’t get any satisfaction out of it. You’re not going to change their mind and they’re not going to change your mind.

*Louise: What platforms do you use to engage with your audience?*

Morgan: Facebook is our main one for this project. It’s the easiest and the broadest platform for New Zealand.

Hazel: I’ve heard that Facebook is now more of a video platform than a social media platform. You’ve got videos that autoplay and that’s the most shareable content. Twitter’s not that big in New Zealand among anyone other than journalists. It’s not a good way to promote your film.

Morgan: We sort of cover it because there’s a small audience there, but it’s not the focus.

Hazel: I think if you’re doing transmedia projects where you’re telling stories across different platforms, I think you can do interesting things with Twitter. You could have twitter accounts as the characters. But generally, it’s a real struggle. You have to do a lot of work on Twitter to actually get any kind of impact. Facebook, Instagram’s alright if your content is visually interesting enough. Like

with Deathgasm, there was a lot of content that was visually interesting like fake blood and body parts. Whereas if it was just portraits of people's faces you wouldn't get the same level of people being interested. Radio Stations can work really well if you pair with the right stations. They have a massive reach and they're open to non-commercial projects and left of field kind of things.

Morgan: And that's what suits them. They're physically in the kind of space where we are doing our event.

Hazel: An audience's desire to look at something online is so immediate it's kind of like I have 18 tabs open on my computer and I haven't opened 16 of them in 2 weeks. It's kind of like if there's a video available to me to watch I'll watch it right then. But if I heard about a video that was online on the radio I wouldn't remember to go back and look at it later. But if it came up on my Facebook feed or if someone sent me a link to it I would watch it straight away. We really need to be thinking about the immediacy of things. Things like print media and radio can work for advertising an event or premiere, or like with Deathgasm there was a lot of New Zealand Heavy metal bands. If you had like peripheral type things.

Morgan: We did a big online metal magazine and did the premiere that way. Which worked because the metal community is a whole bunch of smaller communities that make up a larger community. The best way to get to them is online.

Hazel: Especially niche audiences, online is the only way to reach them. And trying to reach people in an immediate way. And binge watching is a really big part of the way people view things these days. So if you want people to watch your stuff you want it to be available to them. When we did this project we talked about different ways we could release them. We could release one a week like a TV show, but that just doesn't work online. Because people will just tune into a TV show because it'll be part of their IRL routine. You're not going to get people go 'it's 6pm on a Friday, that new webisode will be out now'

Morgan: It's kind of a personal thing, like online content is one person watching on one screen.

Hazel: It's not a community thing. But people will talk about it online so people will watch in an individual way but they'll talk about it and there'll be memes and they'll tweet about it and there'll be forums. So there's a big online community around a thing, but everybody watches it themselves. So tailoring it to that binge watching culture is quite important. Actually we are in the golden age of TV. Not in the classical family sitting down and watching it sense, but in terms of writing. If you go back to TV series from the 90's they're so badly written in terms of the story arc, they don't have stories that go over the whole season. Sometimes actors will change and they'll be playing the same character. Now, in things like Breaking Bad and Game of Thrones, or Arrested Development jokes that were set up in the first season that didn't pay off until the third season. Or like in Community they say Beetlejuice three times over four season. Then the third time that's been said, Beetlejuice appears. That culture of Binge watching affects how people write things and create things.

Morgan: For us with K Road stories we're kind of doing that. The episodes, even though they're stories and by different directors, they do have recurring characters. So if you do watch it all in one go—

Hazel: There's an overlap. You see the same locations and the same characters, there's an extra who's in one who's a main character in another and playing the same kind of person. You could put it together as a feature length film, you could see it as all happening within a 24 hour period.

*Louise: I feel like writers reward audiences for binge watching. Like 'yeah we put in this strip because we know you'll see it, this is just for you'.*

Hazel: And also because they know people will talk about it and pick stuff apart online —

Morgan: Easter eggs! And now it's in the content.

Hazel: Recently I was watching the latest season of Rick and Morty and afterwards I googled it and it bought up a subreddit for Rick and Morty. They have a thread that they create every time an episode airs so people can chat

about an episode as it's airing. So they can talk about it even if they're sitting by themselves in their bedroom. Within minutes people are creating gifs of funny bits, linking back to previous episodes, they're getting screen grabs like 'do you see this machine on the shelf? That was from episode one series two'. It's crazy, people are like obsessive. And I think people are rewarded because of that by the writers. Definitely something to keep in mind, I think. If anything gifs are really interesting, and the Tumblr cultures really interesting because people actually create instances, when they're filming stuff, hey know that will make a good gif. Like a 2 or 3 second thing which would resonate with people. Sometimes you see it if you're watching a live interview and someone does something funny you're like 'that's going to be on the internet in 10 minutes as a gif'. Being a person who's in the internet generation you start to see those things in traditional media.

*Louise: Do you want to talk about your personal viewing habits? Do they align with what you'd make?*

Morgan: I think so. When I first came across *Flat3* it was a little after the time that it got released and I had it all at once so I just sat down and watched it all.

Morgan: So I think for sure if something like our project came up I'd sit down and watch the whole thing. Like there's a webseries that got released today and I'm planning on just sitting down and watching it all day.

Hazel: I tend to find I have a terrible attention span. When I get home from work at night I'll want to watch something to relax, but I can't commit to a two hour movie. I will happily sit through 3 or 4 episodes of a 20 min show but I don't want to watch a two hour movie. Depending on your mood, sometimes I feel quite guilty because I'll be watching something and still be on my phone. And I feel bad because as a filmmaker I feel like I should be giving the filmmakers my full attention.

Morgan: But it's also written that way. A lot of television is created to cater to people doing other shit in the background. So you can hear it but you're not watching it. Whereas a film there's a lot more in it.

Hazel: You do have to remember a lot more from earlier on.

Morgan: Yeah I watch everything online now, still go to the movies though,

Hazel: And also if something is readily available and is reasonably cheap we're more than happy to pay for it. Occasionally I will pirate or stream stuff but that's only if I can't access it any other way. But if it's not immediately available I'll just stream it.

*Louise: Could you each tell me about a really positive experience you've had in filmmaking?*

Morgan: With K Road Stories, one of the positive experiences I've had is sitting back and looking at the 10 filmmakers we have and going 'that's an incredible bunch we have of incredibly talented people'. There is a bonus to that: 50% of them female. That is awesome. That's a huge jump in the general statistic for New Zealand, which is like 11%.

Hazel: Between 4 and 11%. Might be 11% writers, 4% directors are female – for produced feature films. Those are the statistics that the NZFC released last year. So being able to really look back and we want this to be our experience as filmmakers going forward, when someone else is funding us, as opposed to us being the people choosing the filmmakers. When someone is choosing us as filmmakers we want to be right up there with the same opportunities as men. And feel like you have an opportunity to tell your stories and work on projects that you believe in, and for it not to be the biggest struggle to have people pay attention to that.

*Louise: So, half women directors?*

Morgan: We've got ten films, five of them are directed by women.

*Louise: That's very impressive.*

Morgan: It was actually very cool.

Hazel: The thing is it's not so much about finding them, it's about creating them. This is what the film commission said when they released their statistics and they said they're going to be trying a lot harder to get women writers and directors involved, women who are underrepresented.

Morgan: 52% of feature film producers are female. So they're like, well done, move on. And I'm like no, tell me where the money split is. Cuz I want to know that. There's a missing statistic here.

Hazel: \$200,000 films all produced by women—

Morgan: The multi-million dollar films produced by males? So like 80% of funding goes to the 48% of men or what? I want to know that.

Hazel: So the thing with the 4% or 11% of women directors. It's not that they aren't funding women, it's that women aren't applying. So they kind of are like why are we not getting women to the point where they are applying? So their goal is like to go out and basically do talent development. So women who are coming out of film school, making their first short films or music videos, being like 'keep at it, how can we encourage you?' Something that I've noticed in myself and something that is really hard to go against your nature to do or what you're conditioned to do, is apologising for what you do. I find myself writing emails to someone and saying 'oh I'm sorry I was wondering if maybe you might maybe want to help me out on this thing?', instead of saying 'hey, I'm doing this thing, it's going to be awesome, you should be involved, I reckon you'd be great and this project's going to be great'. And to actually go back through and take out all your sorrys and have a bit of faith in yourself is probably what's lacking. It's not there aren't women out there who don't want to or can't do this stuff, it's just about getting it from that nascent stage to a stage where they have confidence in themselves to write a feature and produce it and direct it.

Hazel: I've definitely as a producer on set, you're the boss. And so to have like cinematographers defer to the director when you're just like, you actually need to be listening to me when I tell you this thing. It can be really frustrating. Especially if they're older as well.

*Louise: Producing in a lot of ways is like organising, and I had someone else I interviewed said "I feel like a mum on set"*

Morgan: Yeah, it's like adult kindergarten, often. I just said that today.

Hazel: I feel like producing can almost be one of the most undervalued roles because your skill set needs to be so broad. You need to be good at finances and scheduling, but what's not really understood is that you need to be so good at interpersonal skills. You're basically the go-between between everybody and making sure everybody's happy and not clashing and kind of smoothing things over. Half your day is smoothing things over, and if you do your job well no one knows you've done it.

*Louise: I totally understand that. Like I direct this and produce it and direct it and film it, and I'm so sick of producing. I'm so bad at replying to emails. And am like 'this is why you like directing'.*

Hazel: Producing is so stressful.

*Louise: It's so much harder than people think it is.*

Hazel: It can be really enjoyable. The point at which a shoot all clicks and it's all going well it's like 'good job' and it's awesome. But up until that point, it's just like so anxiety-inducing. It's not pleasant.

*Louise: The fact that the two roles are gendered, and people are like 'where are the women filmmakers?' and it's like, yeah but you don't make it ok in society for it to be okay for women to take on those traits.*

Hazel: Four or five years ago Zinefest was on in Auckland, and they had a workshop where you could come along and use all their stuff and make a zine. And I was going through and I had this list of famous recognisable directors and there were like two women. And that was it. And it was really frustrating. If you're in my position, in the beginning of my film career, and I don't see anyone who is like me or has reached that pinnacle of success or recognition by their peers. How are you ever going to think it's possible? It was a really frustrating moment. If it's not possible that really sucks. It's definitely younger women aren't encouraged.

Morgan: Somebody just released the hundred women directors that aren't being hired in Hollywood list. And it was great, and the internet reacted and was like 'and this person and this person' and the list is like growing and growing and growing. I'm like 'oh that's so encouraging'.

Hazel: It's nice when things like that come out. But I feel like I've only seen those articles in the last couple of years. Before then it really just wasn't on people's minds.

Morgan: And it was just put aside.

Hazel: I'm just like 'in twenty years things will be better'. I like to take a positive outlook. Things are getting slightly better. It might be slower than I would hope.

Morgan: I think there's an academic problem, but there's also just a –

Hazel: – because when I started, when I did Film 101 there was probably 500 people in the class, it was probably pretty evenly split. Then by the time I got to third year and I was in classes with 16 other people, it had definitely dropped off, the female ratio was definitely way down. And it's like, do people just get discouraged? There aren't people going into schools and like – you know with STEM degrees and stuff there's been like a big push to get women involved, especially at the high school level, and up through.

*Louise: I'm one of the people who runs the feminist club on campus and we were talking about STEM subjects and I was like 'try being a film major where you're in technology but you're also in art, so people are like 'you suck because you're art and all women anyway. But we're a technology field, so there's no women.' You have no concept of what that's like...*

Hazel: I feel like it's not as obvious as being the STEM side of things, like there's no women in IT and science and engineering, by the general public it's not as obvious.

*Louise: Can you tell me about a negative experience that you've had in filmmaking?*

Morgan: One of the most negative things I've had to deal with is having the opposite of a spiritual warrior. And having to live with that and deal with that on a day to day basis for a very long time. Because some of these projects take a very long time. And you're unable to get out of it at that stage. I think that's the most negative thing. But learning that and not repeating it is also one of the most positive things.

Hazel: And you always make mistakes and luckily you meet people who you think 'yes you're awesome, you're going to be in everything I do going forward'. You find yourself in situations where you deal with a lot of old school people who are set in their ways and aren't open to new ideas. And they just don't have the same level of respect for you and it's really frustrating not being respected by them if you're younger or you're female. Personality-wise we get along, but I know you think that I'm lesser. That can be really frustrating. I guess the other negative thing is more of an ongoing trying to survive off what you want to do. If you want to make awesome stuff and you want to have a reasonable level of control over what you do, it is often low budget or no budget. You hope that someday something will come out of it, an opportunity will, you might get a pay

check off the back of it. We all have to do stuff we don't want to do just to pay the bills, work part time jobs or work on TV commercials which nobody wants to sell, like make a commercial for insurance. But you've got to do it because that money will then tide you over for the next two months while you make your awesome no-money things and work with the people that you want to work with.

Morgan: I think the negatives is probably like the freelance up and down –

Hazel: -which I think applies to everyone that's freelancing, doesn't necessarily –

Morgan: -it's hard not being able to plan long term.

Hazel: And it does affect your life in ways that you become really scared to spend money. Even if you do have money you're like I don't want to buy this expensive thing because I don't know when my next paycheck will come along.

Morgan: Yeah I'll just fix my really shitty car that's thirty years old instead of buy a new one.

Hazel: I think the lifestyle can be really stressful. In general. I don't think we'd be doing it if we weren't getting something out of it.

*Louise: Do you have advice for other women who would be wanting to make media?*

Morgan: I was just hearing my mentor when I first started working in the industry, her advice to me was 'don't'. But if you do, marry a lawyer. And I was like 'this is terrible advice'.

Hazel: Maybe in the same vein, don't date directors. Or date them but don't work with them. Keep your professional and –

Morgan: - oh! Have a life. I think that's the key thing for me is to maintain a life outside of it. Just because there is life outside of it. It can also inform your interesting stories. So don't be consumed by the whole of it.

Hazel: My advice would be don't give up. It can really sometimes make you question why you're doing it. And have a mentor. Have someone who you find inspiring and trustworthy who you can call up and ask for advice, or you can send

them documents to look after, or you can ask about certain people in the industry – that kind of thing. That’s really helpful to have. One or two of them.

Morgan: As a woman I think that’s easier to find, a confidant like that.

Hazel: And I think older women in the film industry who had it even harder than we have it, they are so generous with their advice because they want you to succeed. Even when I was at university and I came across this costume designer, she’d been in the industry and she was like ‘hey, here’s my email address, here’s my phone number, let me know what you’re working on, send me your scripts, keep in touch’. And that was really amazing to hear as someone who was 19 and had no experience. And she was just giving away her personal email address because she wants girls to succeed in these things. If you can find these women, if you can hunt them out, they’re very generous with their time and their advice. Even as someone at the beginning of my career, at 27 or whatever, I’m especially conscious that I’m in a position to hire people as a producer, I’m especially conscious of looking out for girls in technical roles. Girls who want to be cinematographers, and gaffers, or editors. I’m always keen to hire them or find them, always keen to talk to people like you. We did an all-girl 48 hours team and we were the first team to ever do that. And that was actually really awesome, but like finding a female Boom Op was the hardest thing, because the three that were in Auckland were all on jobs, they were all booked all the time, because they’re really good at what they do. So finding someone who could operate a boom and do sound recording was really tough. But we were determined to make it happen.

## Appendix X: Interview with Hweiling Ow

*Louise: Would you like to just introduce yourself and say what kind of project you've been a part of?*

Hweiling: My name is Hweiling Ow, I have been involved in a lot of projects. My current one is called AFK which is 'Away From Keyboard', it launches on YouTube tomorrow. It's been on The Zone, so if you have it, it's on before Ash vs. Evil Dead on Wednesdays & Sundays. I've been involved in like maybe 13 years of 48 hours, and out of those 13 years half the time we were in the Auckland finals and twice we were in the national finals as a Peter Jackson wild card. I have been involved in various capacities in other shows as well, like Rising Dust which is a friend of mine's one, and we were based in the middle of nowhere. I don't remember everything I did.

*Louise: Do you want to say what kind of roles you've had?*

Hweiling: I have worked professionally in the industry as well, my first professional role was a PA to an American Director, which was awesome. I have done location PA, PA PA, I've produced, I've AD'd, I have done a lot of driving, I've done driving. I really don't remember. You end up doing everything. Defining a role is important, but at the same time it's just getting things done. Most of the groups I've been involved in are small and everybody just pitches in and does everything. More of a community feel as opposed to a cog in a big system, which works in the bigger productions but I like the smaller ones because of that.

*Louise: Were you inspired by other content creators who had done similar webseries, or did you come up with it to fill a niche, or was it just a story you wanted to be told?*

Hweiling: One of the directors I work with quite frequently, it's his baby basically. I love it because it's fantasy. I love the story. There's a lot of gender swapping and stuff, for example if you were a guy which chose a female character then you're stuck in the female characters body, so it's the first time you've got breasts and vagina and vice versa, and same thing for a girl in a guy's body, you've got a penis and what do you do with it? And being all male all that kind of thing. So what drew me to that particular project was that, and also I'm really pro kind of blind casting, and trying to include many different types of people in New Zealand who are amazing actors as well, because there is a real issue with the TV at the moment not representing exactly how NZ is looking right now.

*Louise: Have you tried producing stuff for television or cinema with those same elements/issues in mind?*

Hweiling: It's very hard producing for film & TV there's a lot more hoops you have to jump through, whereas if you do stuff and put it straight to YouTube there's a lot less red tape in getting it out there. I have tried those avenues, I am working with another director who is interested in migrant stories and I guess third world perils, because it's quite close to home for me. My parents they were both from really poor backgrounds and they both worked really hard and got scholarships to New Zealand. My Dad used to be in a bedroom with like 6 siblings all together in one bedroom. Occasionally they didn't have enough food for the day as well, from that to being knighted by the King, kind of thing. So it's not that far from me, like how much work that's gone into it. Currently the house-helpers or the maids in Malaysia, and the difference mistreatment, but also vice versa maids who take things for granted because there are stories of maids who after working a year with this particular family, the family would come back and everything has been stolen. There's also stories were the maids have to work like 24/7 and things like that. Like the Dickens days. So that's an interest of mine that I'm pursuing with another director. Then I've got a poetic side which I'm also pursuing with another director, where it's been more organic where I've written

this poem and visually he sees some things and I'm controverting in different ways as well. So in some ways I'm actually at the beginning of finding my voice in film and adding to the creativity of a project.

*Louise: What made you get into making stuff? Was it purely making video stuff, or you had a story or something to say?*

Hweiling: When I came to New Zealand that was the first time I started to explore who I am and what I want to do, because the way life was in Malaysia didn't enable me to do any of that. So I felt quite young coming to this country even though I was older, I was like a 15 year old trapped in a 20 year old body. It started with acting, and acting to me is like my religion because acting, you need to know who you are really well and that was very attractive to me. Knowing how to respond in different situations so it started with that and then collaborating with different people doing work and understanding how film works. I'm not formally trained anywhere. I just picked it up as I go, and I think that's the way it works for me. Being thrown in the deep end and doing what you need to do. I have had ideas of the stories I want to tell. I haven't done it yet. Part of what encourages me to tell stories are competition with money prizes, because it justifies why I could enter it. I have that conservative upbringing in that sense where you need to make money to live, kind of thing. So for me that makes the justification easier, like, okay I'm going to put in this much and I could potentially win that much. One of the first ones were 48 hours, ABC's of Death ran a competition and basically people die from an alphabet, a is for asphyxiation so they opened to everybody internationally as in like we have these 25 directors you could be the number 26. So I came up with a concept called 'T is for talk' if you look it up online, it's gruesome, everybody dies. But it's from my brain. I don't know where it comes from because I'm not particularly, I don't watch horror but I have a tendency of being dark and a bit morbid for the horror stuff which I want to do some more of. There's another competition which is the Make My Horror Movie one and I pitched with one of the directors I work with a

lot, a story idea which I really want to make which is called 'Blanket Fort' where people are trapped in this blanket fort finding their son where shit happens. So that's the dark side of me. I definitely want to do more stories of people's hardships and perils and having to deal with so many massive changes in their lives. Especially like, the asylum seekers in australia right now.

*Louise: Do you feel like they're not being currently told on mainstream media?*

Hweiling: It becomes a popular subject, and then it disappears you know. It's a real hard thing because I don't think people want to see that kind of thing every day because it's hard to live through the guilt of having a fine life and somebody else is suffering but it's important for their education and awareness. It is a timely thing and is it represented enough at the moment? Things aren't represented as much, if it's cool or topical then it's in the news if it's not cool or topical then it's not in the news. So I don't know the answer to that.

*Louise: Can you talk me through your process on how you come up with an idea, how do you get a crew, how do you film it, whether you apply for funding, that process?*

Hweiling: All my processes are different. Sometimes I get asked onto a project. At the moment I read the scripts and see whether I'm in tune with it, because for me to commit to a project you've gotta see it and believe it. I basically have an idea and then I look at maybe a competition, like TropFest, hey there's \$10,000 there let's see how much we could spend and who wants to be on board and if we win we will split the winnings, basically. I'm a really fair person in that sense. I go this is how it's going to be and spell it out. I look at who wants to be on board and who is good to work with. The industry is known for being cliquey, but I understand it because you're in a real kind of intense situation where you have to get on and sometimes you have to just get straight to the point and not worry about how people feel. So I understand when people are specific about who they

want to work with and given options I'd be specific about who I want to work with as well. Predominantly to be a crew on film & TV you have to be very good with problem solving and have really good common sense, if you don't have those two then you're out just like that. One of the other ways of getting funding was through Kickstarter and that was successful to cover costs, and at the Armageddon last year for AFK The Zone actually approached us because we were doing a fantasy series in NZ and they were looking to put something that was made in NZ on The Zone. So they offered us a little bit of money for that.

*Louise: Would you say that Kickstarter is more effective than NZ on Air or other more traditional funding places?*

Hweiling: It's actually more work, because you have to maintain that relationship with the Kickstart backers which is fine it's just important to think about how you make promises – like we promised to send posters, which turned out to be an expensive thing because of postage. It's not as easy convincing people to invest in your project it's just not easy all round to convince anyone to invest in your project.

*Louise: Do you find that it depends on who is a part of your project and who their friends are who may invest?*

Hweiling: I think it's a community thing, yep. You would get the odd person from around the world going "Hey I really like the sound of that and I'll put some money into it" but predominantly our backers are from NZ and they know of our work and they know that we've done lots of really amazing work beforehand and that we will honour it.

*Louise: What made you choose Kickstarter over other platforms? Like, PledgeMe?*

Hweiling: Kickstarter is more international. We started AFK with everybody doing an American accent. That was to target the overseas audience. Even though it's completely made in NZ we are New Zealanders, that's why we did it with Kickstarter. Looking back, would we do it differently, I don't know. I think it's good that we have that international focus and reach. Because with Facebook as well, with the marketing we are trying to encourage more American people to come and see it and that was always the plan to go really big. What is the NZ market for fantasy, it should be big but I think there seems to be an assumption that New Zealanders aren't into fantasy, but ask who watches Game of Thrones or LOTR. I feel like people are ashamed to say that they like fantasy or sci-fi, which is too bad.

NZ On Air funding; my friend has been successful but she ticks the boxes and she's diligent but I've never been successful with NZ funding. Is it the stories? Who knows. I don't know whether my proposal is not that great. Or the stories I'm interested in is not what NZ funders are into. I just assumed that I'm different and it's easier to accept it that way, I guess. Because I've lived my life feeling different anyway.

*Louise: Do you think there's similarities between making stuff for an online platform and making stuff for TV or cinema? Do you think the process is the same, or are there differences?*

Hweiling: Process is the same. It's interesting you say that because there's some successful movies that are done on budgets and it still works, it's the execution. You could have everything and the film could still suck. There's a lot of examples of American movies that suck even though they had everything, the best actors. If the execution of the story is not good then it makes no difference, it's still a bomb. I think to go online is easier. There's just less people to go through. If you want to make something, you just put it on. It's reaching out to the audience, the marketing online which can be done, and it's not what a lot of people think

about it, is necessary to be heard. Making the thing is one thing, telling the world is another. Everybody forgets about that.

*Louise: How do you measure success? Do you measure success*

Hweiling: Not really. Traditionally, where I come from, my family success is measured with career, cars, having a house, stability. That's all gone out the window for me in the last 10–15 years. I don't measure success that much. Maybe I should. I am pretty happy with what I'm doing. I've been given like the 48 hours Auckland actors Best Actor/Actress award, but there's so many great actresses out there, you know? It's tough because everyone's got a different taste in things and opinions and I guess if you want to go by the status quo success is what the popular choice is. Am I a popular choice? Don't know. Generally not. Because I'm a bit weird.

*Louise: With publishing stuff online, because you have the opportunity for direct audience feedback, is that something you address in your process? Do you allow for feedback to shape the process as you go along, or is it something that only influences your next project? Do you ignore comments altogether?*

Hweiling: Generally we acknowledge it. The science fiction fantasy fans are very passionate, they would know everything about what you do. We have this amazing girl who works on our show, she knows every fact and detail that happened on the show. I was like, that is amazing. Like who was on what day, and what person was playing the behemoth (we had five different behemoths) and that's amazing. We kind of have to honour the fact that they're so passionate about it. We do acknowledge when they kind of compare our show to another show that's been happening recently. We go 'yeah it sounds like it is, we've never seen that particular show — it's great that it is, but hopefully our view is slightly different.' and haters gonna hate. If they're gonna be horrible

online then I would ignore it. A lot of people have a lot of angst to get out. So we just let them angst it out.

*Louise: How do you tell the difference between people who are just being horrible and constructive feedback that might seem shitty at first but could be really valuable?*

Hweiling: It's easy for me to have a separation for AFK because it's not completely my baby, whereas with the director it's slightly easier to feel hurt by it. But I can relate it to some of the other things that I've done, like a theatre show [inaudible title] I tend to not reviews until the show is over. You've just gotta take what's good and trust the people that you value their opinions. Then put away the rest and be stronger than it. It is a real hard industry and it is really brutally honest and I feel like I've got a thick enough skin to deal with that.

*Louise: Are there any supporting platforms you use to engage with your audience other than YouTube comments, like Twitter, Tumblr or Facebook?*

Hweiling: We use Facebook quite a lot, it's the biggest one that we're using currently. I don't quite get Tumblr. Instagram and Twitter I am getting my head around it, which is to just tag everybody you know kind of thing and it will turn up in everybody else's feed. It's a lot of noise out there, but that's kind of what you need to do. It's like banging pans together like "Here I am!" In saying that we haven't had to do too much of that. We've been approached by a couple of distributors from Europe which is really surprising. I think if you search 'fantasy webseries' there's not many that turn up. So that's been good. In some ways AFK is quite unique. We're on Google+ but it's another platform and it's pretty dead... there's one follower. YouTube with the subscribers hopefully there will be an increase, but I think what we're going for we won't have massive subscribers on YouTube because what we've got will be sold to different places as opposed to having lots of subscribers on YouTube. Maybe further down the line because

what we're planning to do is releasing more videos when it's quiet in between seasons to keep it alive.

*Louise: What's your personal viewing habits? Do you watch tonnes of YouTube?*

Hweiling: I watch a lot of things online. It's easier. TV has got to make it easier, they have, they've integrated the internet on TV which is amazing. Searchability needs to be improved. But how I feel the way it's going is that you just need to have your content, and put it out in as many places as you possibly can so that people can access it easily. It's like making a bag of chips, you have to put it in as many shops as possible so people can access it.

*Louise: What's the most positive experience to come out of making stuff so far?*

Hweiling: Life fulfilment. Making friends. People who are like-minded, sounds cliched. I guess I'm really proud of AFK cos it was really ambitious. It was very hard. Everything was outdoors, it's 6 core cast over 4 months leading into winter and one of our cast had to wear a chainmail bikini and I was going "OMG I need to make sure that she's kept warm" it was one of the hardest shoots I've ever done. I'm pretty proud of it I guess.

*Louise: Do you have a really negative experience you'd be okay talk*

Hweiling: This is when I was an actor, I was shooting in a house that was on a piece of farmland in Hamilton and there was sheep poop everywhere and we had to shoot at night, even though we'd blanked out all the houses and I knew how it worked, but the DOP was particular about it and said it looked different. There was this tent that they used, but they had to move it and I don't know why but they dragged it across so the tent had sheep poop all over it. The director had made this bottle out of sugar glass or something, and he's assuring me that it's fine but apparently it's been sitting there for a while so it's all moist. So they

use it to hit me over the head and it really hurt. I was just like, okay you guys need to give me a moment to get over this because we had to get through the night. It was just so painful. That was probably the worst experience to date, for me that I can remember.

*Louise: Do you have any thoughts you'd like to share about being a woman on set?*

Hweiling: Yeah, they say it's a male-dominated world. I wouldn't call it male. I'd just say it's hard. You've got to be hard. Straight to the point. Take no crap kind of thing. But be nice as well. You have to stand your ground. There's a lot of sarcasm that goes on which can cross a line a little bit. So just standing ground as to where you feel is okay and what's not okay. Bottom line is that we're getting this project done, let's get it done. It does feel a bit militant. But we're moving forward and we need to move forward otherwise we just keep going around in circles. That's why we're known to do really good work because we move it forward. I'm always concerned about people's happiness on set, which is good and it's bad. I just worry about people. Food is really important on my shoots. People are donating their time so it's really important. It will be interesting when I'm on a set where people are getting paid. I don't think I'll change that much. Selecting the right crew is really important.

*Louise: Would you have advice for other women wanting to start?*

Hweiling: Just do it. Again going back to acting, my religion, is that one of the things is find reasons to do something, not reasons NOT to do something. We need more women making stuff. We need to have a bigger and better presence, we need to not make excuses not to allow ourselves to do it cause it's easy for guys to just take over and lean on them in the chivalry kind of way, but I think it's important for us to just do it ourselves. Hey I want to do this so let's go for it. There are actually a lot of women out there doing stuff. It's more the paid

positions on a higher level. There's a lot of amazing producers out there. We need more directors.

*Louise: Most of the producers that I've interviewed, have said there's no female directors, but none of the producers want to produce, they want to direct.*

Hweiling: In the journey of finding my voice, I like poetic videos that don't mean anything but internally mean something to someone. I'm pursuing that with another director but I'm writing that. I have made like a short clip and it has that feeling to it. Maybe I lack tenacity.

*Louise: I always wondered if it was gender roles, because producing is kind of like being really organised and kind of being the mother figure, knowing the budget saying "no we can't afford to do that" etc. – whereas directing is more like "I'm in charge, I have all these ideas I'm a genius blah blah".*

Hweiling: I would agree with that.

*Louise: In the most extreme forms, I should say.*

Hweiling: For me personally I've got a monkey on my back that I'm trying to get rid of. I need to allow myself to do what I want to do. I've been discouraged to do that because of my upbringing because being part of a community it's we need to do this for each other. But you're totally right, maybe we need more people to be more selfish. Selfish is not the word.

*Louise: For women to be a producer it's easy because that's an accepted role*

Hweiling: I think women are just naturally good at organising stuff. It's amazing when guys can do it. I have huge respect for guys who are incredibly organised. I think generally women are better organisers.

*Louise: Do you feel like that's an inherent thing, or like a socially conditioned thing?*

Hweiling: I do think it's partly inherent. I was very messy as a child. I would just shove things in big piles of chaos. But through my life in the last 10 years I've noticed that I'm actually very... maybe it's through being more efficient in my life, I've got to make it more efficient so I have more time. I think it's inherent AND socially conditioned. It's both. New Zealand is quite good. I'm originally from Malaysia, so this would not have even been on my list as a thing to do. New Zealand is enabling people. So I don't think it's that much of an issue here. I just think women should just go out and do it if they really want to do it. I've been meeting more female DOPs and one of the directors I'm working with is female, she's from Myanmar originally.

*Louise: Do you find there's a difference between working with female directors and male directors?*

Hweiling: Yeah, different way of approaching stuff. More conversation with the female director less conversation with male director. But guys and girls are born different in terms of predominantly the way they think. I wondered about that. It's like doing the same thing with different approaches that make sense. Even the way people learn stuff is different. People with dyslexia and learning disabilities. Everybody has different ways of coming to it. There is a popular way and there is everybody else's. For me the university system never really worked for me. I'm more hands on. Everybody's different.

*Louise: You kind of talked about how AFK fits a niche, so my question is, there's so much content and so much out there, how do you make sure that your work gets seen or that it fills a niche? How do you address that in what you do?*

Hweiling: We didn't set out to fill a niche. We set out to do a story that we thought would be amazing, that happens to fill a niche. I think you need to start from a place of "I really want to do this, this says something to me" and then put it out there to the world. Then people can see the heart behind it. If you go out going "Oh the demographic is looking at this, and we're gonna do this, to fill that demographic" it's not going to work. It's got to come from the heart. To get the word out there, we use a lot of LARPer in AFK. A lot of Cosplayers, and Cosplayers are on the rise. I've been so amazed at Armageddon with the people that make their own costumes the quality has just gone up and up. It sounds geeky but actually they're just makers. We've been reaching out to the different platforms as well, like the Xbox. Gamers are slightly different as well there's really aggressive gamers and the others. Armageddon was definitely our event of the year to launch it and tell the world about it. That's for New Zealand. Internationally what I did was search 'webseries distribution/marketing' 'sci fi channel' searched names that might be relevant then I would come across things and investigate it a bit more then write to them, and write to them. Due diligence of writing to people. Whether it gets accepted or not at least you've put the word out there you just hope you don't end up in the spam box.

## Appendix XI: Interview with Kimberley McManus

*Louise: Do you want to start off by introducing yourself and saying what your YouTube channel is about?*

Kimberley: Hi, I'm Kim and I have a channel on YouTube. I pretty much just show my daily life every so often, not every single day. I like to just have my kids involved and document memories and share my journey with people and connect that way.

*Louise: Were you inspired by other people who made stuff?*

Kimberley: I was inspired by beauty gurus [on Youtube] mainly, which is where my channel started, but then eventually I moved on to do what I enjoy and what I'm more passionate about and what I felt like I could have more of an effect on other people's lives doing. I was inspired by beauty gurus I'm not going to lie though.

*Louise: Would you ever consider pitching your channel to a television network or making a film about it?*

Kimberley: Probably not. I like having the control. Being able to upload when I want, how I want, have what I want in it. It's me and it's organic and it's exactly how I want things to be whereas I think television can put their own spin on things and take it away from what you actually want things to be about.

*Louise: What made you choose YouTube as a place to put it on?*

Kimberley: I didn't know that there was anywhere else to be honest. YouTube I discovered when I was bored one day and I realised that people actually did that

and made videos and put them on to YouTube. So from then it sparked a bit of a passion and it's something that I've always wanted to do I think. From being young I've always wanted to be seen, or perform, or entertain, and it was a way that I could do that without any pressure from anything else. I don't think it would have been something I would have pursued on my own. I wouldn't have gone after it but the fact that I could do it in my own bedroom made it doable.

*Louise: How do you currently make a video? Can you talk me through whether you plan it out whether you script it or do you just run around with your camera?*

Kimberley: Yeah, I just run around with my camera mainly. I use my phone most of the time as well and I'm just "right, I'm going to make a video today" and I'll just document what I'm doing and talk to the camera like it's my friends because the people on the other side of that camera watching what I make are my friends. Then I just pop it into my computer upload it to iMovie and cut it all together. That's how it goes.

*Louise: Do you think you'll always do it like that or would you even consider getting a vlogging camera or...?*

Kimberley: Yeah totally! I'd love to get a vlogging camera eventually and do way more professional vlogs because the standard that YouTube is at now it's only... technology keeps on making it harder and harder to stay up with what the big YouTubers are doing so I think if I had the means to do that I would do it but at this stage in my life it's just what I can afford and going with that and making that work for me and it does work. I can connect with people and that's, at the end of the day, what I want to do. But I'd love to be able to give the best production value possible.

*Louise: What platforms do you use to publish your work? So you use YouTube, but do you have a Facebook page or a Twitter account? Can you just talk about what you use and why?*

Kimberley: Obviously social media is so important if your wanting to be on it and you have to cover every platform possible. I don't do that successfully but I do have a Facebook page, I have a Twitter, I have an Instagram, I have a Snapchat and I keep it relevant to what's going on on my channel just to connect in that sense as well. It's also giving your audience another platform to connect on. I think it's just important to have all those things to link it all together.

*Louise: You said you'd like to be more present or you think that's really important so what would you consider the best practice or the best way of being online and being seen? Whether or not you do it, or whether you'd like to do it? How do you feel is the best way to get your content out there? Do you think you're doing it best or do you think there are ways you could... ?*

Kimberley: I think the very very best way to do it is by word of mouth. Where I'm at with my channel it spreads fast by word of mouth, so one friend will love a video and get their friend onto it and get another friend onto it and so on. I think if you're a bigger YouTuber it is about production value and having the right thumbnails and the right camera and that's really what matters to bigger channels but I think for someone at my level it is more... I do have to keep myself in check with thumbnails and make sure that my videos look likeable but it definitely spreads better through just making people like me I guess, and being relatable and giving them something to suggest to friends 'cause if you like something you go and tell people about it I think.

*Louise: Do you watch other young mums doing stuff on YouTube?*

Kimberley: Yeah. I love watching family vlogs and I think... it was important for me to do something like this where I am being a mum because I guess my situation's a little bit different, like you see all these really happy families together and there was no New Zealand family really doing it and because I'm a solo mum so I was like "that's different" and we can have all these amazing memories. It's a cool way to show that it's all fun and heaps of people can relate to you.

*Louise: I think that's really cool because my Mum was a solo mum and if she could have watched someone else being like "yeah it's totally OK to be a solo mum" that would have been huge for her.*

Kimberley: That's it, showing that it's... it is "normal" nowadays anyway.

*Louise: Would you ever consider going into something like television or making cinema?*

Kimberley: I think I'm more in YouTube for the fun of it. If I were to go and study I don't think it would be anything to do with cinema or production value but in saying that going on TV if the right opportunity came up I'd consider it, I'm not going to lie I definitely think about it.

*Louise: Do you think that there would be similar ways of doing things between doing stuff on YouTube and doing stuff for more commercial productions?*

Kimberley: Yeah I think YouTube is going very commercial anyway. YouTube is a commercial platform on most levels. I think where I'm at is less of that. I don't know how to answer this... Can you say the question again?

*Louise: Do you think there's similarities between making stuff for TV and making stuff for YouTube and especially the commercial elements of it?*

Kimberley: Yeah I definitely think YouTube is just like television in that sense. Bigger companies chuck their money into television as much as they chuck their money into YouTube, probably heading up even more so into YouTube because it is so widely viewed. I think companies are connecting with that and then... it's the same thing really. People make money off it and that's what they do on television.

*Louise: Do you think you have more freedom? Could you imagine there being...?*

Kimberley: Oh, yeah totally. Way more freedom. You can choose, you can say "no" to something or you can say "yes" and I think, for me, any opportunity that I've had I've always had to like something first, or I've had to at least have tried it out. I can say that I don't like something if I want to.

*Louise: How do you measure success?*

Kimberley: I think if you are able to connect with just one person, that's a success. The fact that I've been able to connect with a whole bunch of people, and people that feel like not just a view they feel like a friend. I feel like when I am talking to my camera, they're the people that I'm talking to, I'm not actually just talking to a device. That's really how I measure it. I suppose being successful could mean making money and making it your career, or it could be measured a different way and I suppose... I never even knew that you could make money off YouTube so I didn't do it for those purposes and I did it more for the connection and for something to do, something that I could be passionate about. I measure it by connections.

*Louise: Do you feel like this is a worthwhile way of connecting to people?*

Kimberley: Definitely. I talk to people that I would never have talked to before. If that's your only reason for doing it then you're doing it for the right reason, 'cause that's what you get at the end of the day; you get those connections and friendships and friendships with other YouTubers. It's a real cool community because people support each other and you don't know who you're going to meet but you meet so many cool people and just by supporting each other you form these bonds.

Kimberley: It's really cool 'cause you meet so many different people and you form these relationships where you just support each other. I think that's a bit of what the world needs is just being able to support people more often. Everyone benefits from it and then you have your viewers as well, they support you and they're so kind and they leave you these awesome messages and stuff and so it is definitely worthwhile to do YouTube.

*Louise: Do you work- when you make a video you make it by yourself? Do you want to talk about the pros and cons of that?*

Kimberley: A project that I worked on for my channel was a lookbook video and working on that by myself meant that I had to go out and find locations to film, and then I had to bring my camera and my tripod, and set it up and constantly try to get different angles and if I had somebody there to film it for me it would have made it so much easier but it's still do-able. I guess one of the pro's is you don't have that differences in opinion, you only have to keep yourself happy but then you have to put all the work in and all the time into it.

*Louise: Because there's obviously an audience comments section on YouTube do you pay attention to that? Do you take it on board? How do you deal with that?*

Kimberley: With comments, I encourage my viewers to comment and leave comments and often they do and they leave really lovely comments. You

occasionally get the mean ones and they are the ones that stick and you do focus on them more than you should but in the broad scheme of things when I weigh up my bad compared to my good comments I get a heap more good comments, and those are the really nice ones that brighten up your day and make you glad that you actually made the video. I think it is good to have the comments section though because sometimes it might just be constructive feedback. It gives that connection, again. It makes the person watching it a real person rather than just a view.

*Louise: How do you deal with feedback that's negative? How do you tell the difference between a "good" negative comment or a "nasty" negative comment?*

Kimberley: I think you can just tell just by the way it's written. A mean comment would just be mean, nothing would be nice about it, whereas a constructive comment might be about something that you did or something that you could do better. You take it to heart 'cause this is your work and it's what you've put your time and effort into but they have the right to tell you that maybe you could have done this or you could have done that. But then the mean comments they're just nasty and they shouldn't be there.

*Louise: What are your personal viewing habits like? Do you watch loads of TV? Do you watch lots of YouTube?*

Kimberley: I'm a Netflix watcher, so I just get stuck into a series and then that's what I'll watch. You can tell when I'm watching a lot of YouTube because I'm also creating a lot of YouTube videos whereas right now that I'm busy and life is studying my YouTube is lacking because I'm not able to have the time to watch other YouTubers which doesn't inspire me to create content. That's how it is for me.

*Louise: Could you tell me about the most positive experience you've had through your channel?*

Kimberley: A while ago, like a good couple of years ago, I decided that it would be a good idea to open up about something that I know a lot of teenage girls go through. Probably teenage boys too, but being a teenage girl at one point in time myself I could relate it to other teenage girls. I just sat in front of a camera and talked about it because I'd come across old journals from that time in my life and I wanted to be a support, almost like a big sister, to girls that might be going through it. It got a whole lot of views quite quickly and a lot of people came to me with their stories, similar to what mine were and it made me realise what I had gone through was OK, but also made me realise that I was supporting other people by being open about it. It was quite overwhelming because it wasn't the reaction that I was expecting. I just thought it would be another video but the fact that these girls could open up and connect with me and share these private moments... These are things that I wasn't able to share with anyone as a teenage girl. These girls were sharing it with me, made me feel so privileged and it was a really cool experience because it gave me a lot of fulfilment, I think, through doing that.

*Louise: Has there been a particularly negative experience?*

Kimberley: Not really, I've been pretty lucky. I honestly haven't had anything I can think of that bad happen to me. I was doing daily vlogs and my Nana got really sick and then she passed away and that was hard to film through that, but it was just a stage in my life and they were there to support me. They wanted those videos and so I kept on making them. But that was the hardest thing that I went through.

*Louise: What would you do differently if you were starting again?*

Kimberley: I think from the get go I would create what I was passionate about because I did make up because I thought that... all the girls that I'd seen on YouTube, that's what they made. Their videos were great and they did get me into this, but I did what they did whereas I wish I had just done what I wanted to do from the very start. That's what I'd do differently. And make it about my life.

*Louise: Do you have advice for other women wanting to get into YouTube?*

Kimberley: Do it. You won't regret it. I think you get so scared when you even think about posting a video, I've been there I was so nervous. To be honest, my first video, it was uploading and I took it down halfway through the upload and it was never seen by anyone because I was so scared, I just freaked out but it's not that scary. You get it out there and you might get a couple of views, you might have a really awesome video with an awesome title that gets lots of views, that's just really lucky, but generally it takes a while for your audience to build. It starts off really small and that's nice because it means that you can make those foundations with those people and then grow from there. It's not as scary as you think it is.

*Louise: How do you feel about YouTube becoming overcrowded?*

Kimberley: I think it's awesome for the people that are really benefiting from it. It does take away from what it used to be, it used to be a smaller community but it's cool that more people are getting involved. More and more people are realising that it's something they can do and if they're really passionate about it it's something that they can pursue, it's a platform they can use. I definitely think YouTube has changed so much though with what it was to what it is now but change isn't necessarily bad. It's harder to get recognised when you first start out as a smaller YouTuber but the community's there and the people are there and that's really what makes YouTube what it is, I think.

*Louise: Do you want to talk about the differences in YouTube; it used to be just places to upload whatever whereas now it's becoming really commercial, and your thoughts on that?*

Kimberley: I came into it [Youtube] right around where it was transitioning, so it was going from people were just doing it as a hobby to when people were doing it as a job. Not a whole bunch of people were doing it as a full time job at the time when I started and I think more and more people are getting recognised and it's becoming like television. YouTubers now get stopped in the street and get swarmed and they get Teen Choice awards and there's a category for YouTube now, it's just becoming this massive thing. It's the new form of entertainment really, so many more people are flocking to YouTube rather than watching television. It's changing a lot. I think it's cool, I really think it is cool 'cause at the end of the day a lot of people, say if you wanted to be an actress or an actor or just an entertainer in general, that's why you do YouTube because that's what you want to do, that's what you're passionate about and that's what so many people do. For example Grace Helbig, she wanted to be a comedian and now she's doing it through YouTube. People are living their dreams through YouTube. I think it's cool.

*Louise: Do you think that it gives more opportunities to women, in particular?*

Kimberley: No I think it'd be about balanced. My personal opinion is I think the people that I see growing it's equal, it's either male, female, straight, gay, just anyone. If you're good and people enjoy watching you then why not? I don't think there's any discrimination.

*Louise: But do you think YouTube as a platform has more opportunities than, say, getting a... Would Ellen have become way more famous way more quickly on YouTube than...?*

Kimberley: I think it's hard to judge that without being able to compare it to something.

*Louise: Do you see more content that's particular to your lifestyle on television or YouTube?*

Kimberley: YouTube. Definitely. 'Cause YouTube is real people. Television, most of the time, is made up and if it's not made up it's reality television which isn't necessarily reality. Whereas YouTube is reality, YouTube is people.

*Louise: Do you see more stuff that interests you on YouTube?*

I think just because it is just real life stuff it's more relatable.

Kimberley: I think that was the opposite for me, what happened. I think if I had continued with make-up and beauty and fashion I would have grown faster. I definitely grew faster when I was making those videos than making the real life stuff but the real life stuff was me so that's what I wanted to do. And it wasn't ever about being seen more. YouTube has always been a hobby for me and if it became more than that then I would be very lucky and I would be happy but I've got goals outside of YouTube to make it in other ways and other professions so it was never really about getting lots and lots of views, that would be the dream result but really it was just about having fun and being creative.

*Louise: So it's got a dual purpose? It's for you, for your family, personally as well as...?*

Kimberley: Yeah. The reason I made the decision to stop the beauty and move on to the family stuff was because the videos that I look back on personally were the ones with my kids in it. I did vlogmas, which is you vlog the 25 days up until Christmas, and one day my kids are going to be grown ups and they're going

to look back on those videos and think it's so cool that their Mum did that so I was like well why don't I do this more, why don't I make this what my channel is about because it's what I like to look back on, and I love editing them it's so much easier as well and there is less people from New Zealand doing that so I saw an audience that wasn't being capped so I did it.

*Louise: Like, you found a niche to fill?*

Kimberley: Yeah I found a niche to fill that... So, there wasn't anybody in New Zealand really doing that so there was a niche to be filled and that's why I did it, sort of transition into something a bit different.

*Louise: Do you have any thoughts on being a female YouTuber?*

Kimberley: In New Zealand or just in general, in the world?

*Louise: Or being a Mum-YouTuber?*

Kimberley: I love being a Mum-YouTuber because I think a lot of people think that YouTube is... YouTube is for like cool, hip sort of people most of the time and I feel like... Actually my first video was talking about I am this age and I'm into this stuff, yeah I'm a mum but that's not going to stop me from still being creative and still getting into what I like to get into. But women on YouTube? I don't know I don't really know how to answer that.

*Louise: Do you think that you get to show a different side of being a young Mum?*

Kimberley: Yeah I think young mum's have a bit of stigma behind it, and I'm not actually that young. I am quite a bit older but I guess I look younger. You can tell when you're walking through the mall and people see you and pass judgement without knowing you... If you're a young mum you'll understand what I'm talking

about. But on YouTube people are complimenting me on parenting and being like oh I should try this or giving me feedback as well. If, for example, when I was toilet training my son and they were like oh you should try this and you should try that and that's really cool to have that community there and it is mum's and I still feel like I'm being me. I think when you become a mum you get so consumed with being a mum you forget to be yourself a little bit whereas YouTube was that outlet for me to still be me and still do what I love.

*Louise: Do you have anything else you want to say?*

Kimberley: My closing statement would be that one about just doing it. If you're interested in doing it just do it because you won't regret it and you'll probably be quite happy that you did.

## Appendix XII: Interview with Tegan Morris

*Louise: Could you start by just introducing yourself, then talking a bit about your YouTube channel?*

Tegan: My name is Tegan; I have a YouTube channel called "Tegan Meets World". I started it in February this year, officially, but I have uploaded videos to it previous to that, starting in early 2014. But I've only started regularly on a weekly basis uploading since February this year.

*Louise: Could you maybe tell me like, what exactly your role is? Like, you're in front of the camera?*

Tegan: My channel is kind of focused around me as a host, a host in my own life doing day to day things like travelling, random scenarios that pop up in life, or it's relating around things in my experience. Because I have a disability I try and occasionally do things that are a little more serious or eye opening for people around disability. I host interviews with people with other disabilities, or talk to people who work in disability field that kind of thing. Because with disability being so relevant to me, and also in my experiences I've realized that there are a lot of people who don't understand much about disabilities so I feel like it benefits me and it also benefits others to kind of address things to do with both disability and awareness of us as humans, not just people with disabilities.

*Louise: Were you inspired by other content creators to make a YouTube channel?*

Tegan: Yeah to a certain extent I was, I've been a YouTube viewer for years and years before I started making videos. I probably started watching YouTube videos back in 2009, or a bit later than that. I was kind of late to discovering YouTube. Over the last few years I've definitely got a lot more involved in following certain people and I really admire particular creators who are doing their own lives but

also as an extension of that are helping to support and extend a cause of other communities that they're part of. So whether it's people in the LGBT community, or cultural communities or disabled community or whatever it is. I follow a lot of vloggers as well as people who just create videos. I feel like by just doing what they do, they're not always explicitly grandstanding or advocating on a topic, but are doing a good thing for that topic just by representing themselves well. So that's kind of what got me into YouTube I guess.

*Louise: This is kind of a tricky question to ask the YouTubers of us, but would you consider making a feature film, or being on television?*

Tegan: Yeah, I guess I'd say yes. As far as being a filmmaker or anything like that I know that's not really my strong suit so it's not a grand ambition to be a filmmaker, but as far as participating in those types of projects I would definitely be into that. I guess it comes from my background as a public speaker I've also moved into YouTube. I really enjoy being in front of the audience and sharing with them, being able to feed off their reaction to what you're presenting to them. But it's kind of different to when you're creating content and you're just talking to a camera, or figuring things out with a group of support people around and filming a project then trying to translate it into this open space between you and the camera. Films and public speaking are a lot more dynamic and you've got more structure that would help with that. I'd definitely be open to those sorts of things.

*Louise: Do you think there's better access to YouTube though to be a part of it?*

Tegan: I think in a lot of places that's probably true. I think NZ is at an advantage but also a disadvantage in terms of our size. There's all these TV shows like Shortland Street and all these other little kind of homegrown little shows, whether they're part of mainstream TV or the movie industry or online, that is giving people opportunities to have their 5 second cameo on TV if they want.

There's jokes about how everyone in NZ has been on Shortland Street. I think in terms of our size it makes it easier to find someone who knows someone who knows someone who can maybe find you a part as an extra on a TV show or something, but also our industry isn't so big that there aren't quite as many opportunities but you know if you've got those connections or have good timing or whatever you can sometimes find those opportunities or they come to you. Especially if you get a good name for yourself or get known by the right people.

*Louise: Did you start a YouTube channel because you wanted to just talk to people and that was the best way? Or did you just have an interest in video filmmaking itself?*

Tegan: It was kind of a strange process I guess, in terms of when I first really made a decision that I wanted to do this and I just kind of decided I needed to make a shift in what I was doing. As I said I've had this real interest in public speaking for a long time, and the advocacy and everything that goes along with that. I thought how can I add to this, how can I find or create the resources that I can use in my presentations. Then I realized that a lot of the stuff I was needing I couldn't really find online. It was kind of a matter of me deciding I'm not looking in the right place or they're not there. So maybe I should have a job making these things myself. It's strange for a long time I didn't really connect with my identity as a disabled person. Over the years since I've been living independently and I've really grown into myself I've realized it's obviously a really inherent part of who I am and the more I can own that and address that in a positive way, the more it will make it easier for other people to own their identities, either abled or disabled, and be able to be more comfortable in becoming friends with and developing relationships with disabled people.

So when I started my channel it was a) wanting to create these resources and opportunities to present an image that was really positive of what it can be like to be disabled or live with a disability, but it was also a challenge I set for myself

as a learning project. I said to myself I have these goals of needing to create these resources but I also need a challenge for this year around something I need to do on a regular basis something to work towards.

So I'm going to give myself a year when I need to work toward creating a video each week. I knew I'd need to work towards editing skills and story planning and filming set up and all that type of stuff which is something I'd never done before and never thought about, so I had to really learn from the basics. It was only part way into this year that I decided to commit to this, that I got someone to work beside me in this and help with filming and editing because it started getting beyond what I could do with my really simplistic software and basic knowledge so I got a filming assistant. The more I keep going with this and I started hearing about VidCon and I fell in love with LA a couple of years ago, and I kind of have a burning ambition to actually get to VidCon. Fortunately, I was able to do that this year, and it coincided with my still relatively new interest in YouTube and everything else. And being there has really cemented my determination to keep going with YouTube and confirming why I'm doing it and what viewers can get out of it as much as creators can get out of it. It really sent me home with this kind of inspiration.

*Louise: How much do you edit yourself when you're on camera, do you try to show the best version of you or are you open about shitty things?*

Tegan: I think all the time I'm pretty unfiltered. I try and think like the camera is somebody I'm really close to and I can be really open about things with. I have made videos on days when I just have no energy. And it's like uh okay, I have to make a video today and I only have capacity of just being here in bed, feeling like crap so I'm just gonna put the camera like arms length away from me and put on the video and be like "Hi guys, its one of those days. I'm in bed, I feel like crap but here's us having this conversation and talk about whatever subject – sometimes if I'm having a bad day, I'll pick a video topic that justifies why I'm

sprawled out on the sofa under a rug or curled up in bed with the TV on, or something like that. But other times I'll just be really blunt and say 'this has gone wrong' or 'not feeling good today' 'this is where I'm at' it's good to be really blunt and open.

But other times I do really try to put on more energy and enthusiasm and put myself in the more dynamic headspace, because it's more the focus of the video. I want the content to resound with the way I'm speaking or vice versa. Some people you watch videos and they always have that same sort of tone, and you always feel really good after watching them. Because there's just something about their presence on camera that is like 'wow that was a really simple video' but their energy or their enthusiasm really translates through their video. Because I don't really have much capacity to be really physically expressive, even I have limited facial expressions, I really try to be eloquent and expressive with the words I use and the way I say things and the kind of mood I set with where I set my videos. It kind of helps to reinforce the things I'm saying with the ways I can say it.

*Louise: How do you feel about the whole inspiration-porn kind of thing? Around disability. Are you concerned that your videos could be taken that way?*

Tegan: I have a very strange relationship to the whole concept. I understand where the people who don't appreciate how people find it inspirational from some people who are disabled and think it's just going about what they deem as their normal life; I have a sense of open mindedness or I just don't really care... I have no real problem with people seeing what I say and what I do as encouraging or positive or inspiring or whatever. I feel like there are so many difficulties and negativities in life, and we all have these differences and everyone is always pointing each other's differences out. I feel like if any of us can provide something that regardless of our differences that I can identify with in a positive way, I feel like that should be okay.

If I do public speaking and somebody is really touched by what I say, or if I make a video and somebody is really intrigued or impressed or whatever by something I've said or something I've done, I'm all good with that. But I guess for me because I put so much emphasis on me as a person first and my disability second, and all the people around me are that way as well, I kind of hope that is the main message that translates to people. That's the main message of my videos, to show me doing me as a person, not me doing my disability as a person. And I think that's kind of where most disabled people have a problem, is when most people only see their disability first.

*Louise: That was a really interesting answer.*

Tegan: I mean any of these things I answer, it's obviously only my perspective. Within any community there's always going to be a whole spectrum of opinions about it, some are really aggressively in one way and the other way – then there will be people who are sitting on the fence or don't really know or care. I'm neutral – just let each other live and as long as nobody is being hurt by taking something as empowering or positive, then why shouldn't they be able to do that.

*Louise: I guess it probably also depends on your intent of making stuff, like if you intend to be empowering.*

Tegan: I mean I guess that's because in my public speaking versus my videos, when I do my public speaking it is almost always explicitly focused around something disability related like I might be speaking to a class of nursing students who are there to learn about how to best provide support and treatment to disabled patients. Another group might be parents with kids who have disabilities who are wanting encouragement around thinking about the children's futures in terms of school and after school. Versus my videos it's kind

of like the other side of me, it's still on some level obviously disability related because that is an inherent part of who I am in my day to day life, but at the same time that's me doing stupid things or funny things or having adventures or doing normal day to day stuff both good and bad days. I'm trying to step in between those two spaces so people can see that yes I'm a person with disabilities but it's not the thing first and foremost about who I am.

*Louise: You're a person first.*

Tegan: Yeah so that's why when I do my interviews especially and I introduce people I always ask at least 5 questions about them as a person first before I even bring up the topic of their disability or their health condition. For me it's always more interesting to ask about the person's back story, who they are what their interests are what their favourite music is and all that type of stuff, rather than so what's your job, what's your disability? It doesn't really have that much relevance and people who don't have a disability seem to think it has the utmost relevance. It's kind of the same with people's obsession around gender and sexuality, it's like people will tell you if it's relevant to you. Unless you are relating to them about the subject it doesn't have any relevance for you to know right now so it's unnecessary to bring up.

*Louise: I think that's the best way I've heard that phrased. So you've kind of talked about it a little bit, but could you talk me through your process of making a video – how you go about it, how do you come up with the idea, how do you film it, how do you edit it et cetera?*

Tegan: That varies a heck of a lot. Some weeks it's a last minute scramble of like 'oh my gosh what am I going to film this week' but other times I'll know a week or so in advance, I'm going to a concert or something like that so I'm like "people who are with me, you're gonna be my camera crew and be on the ball and like capture footage, and like talk to me about things, be prepared to maybe be on

camera a little bit". So like let's create something out of this. It really depends on that way in terms of filming, and it also depends on what I'm doing like if I have an idea that takes some planning then obviously there will be more preparation and setup and that kind of thing but most things are reasonably low key sort of last-minute.

In some ways I'm not really a very good planner, I don't storyboard things out or script things or anything like that. It was kind of the same when I first started out with public speaking, I used to script things and try to organize everything and have cue cards and that and I got to a point where I was like 'stuff it' I'm over it, this is way more work than it's worth. It takes all the joy out of it and spontaneity, and if you lose your place in what you're saying I felt panic 'oh my goodness, what am I saying, where am I at' whereas when I present I have slides which give me a cue for what I'm saying and I go off on my patterns I usually talk about for that particular subject and can change the anecdotes that I use and feed off people around me people I'm speaking to. When I'm doing videos because I don't have that audience to give feedback, I have to think okay this is going to be a four-five minute video so I'm probably going to speak for six-eight minutes then edit it down. I usually try to do it in one take, because I hate repeating myself – I feel like it loses any spontaneity in my voice, I try to get the lighting and sound as good as I can in that first take.

I give the footage to my filming assistant who edits it for me, ideally we'd be able to work together at home on it – but at the moment I don't have a software and computer system that's adequate so she's using what she's got access to through her studies. I kind of have to do this backwards and forwards dialogue with her using Dropbox & email, I can give her feedback on whether or not I think things need to be changed – whether it's volume, or lighting, or cuts or anything like that. The more I do it, the more we work together, the more synchronised we get around her understanding of what my vision is and me getting clearer about what I want out of something. Initially I was like, until I see the footage I'm not

going to know what I want – because now I’m not even seeing the footage, and from the scenes I know we’ve shot and piece together the overall movie in my head. We’re getting better and better at understanding each other's intentions and hopefully sometime soon I can get a computer system at home so we can kind of work side by side on that. I can kind of learn some more. A lot of the stuff I was doing before I started working with my filming assistant was very simplistic but I think I’d like to work on that and develop it further.

*Louise: Cool. So could you talk about why you chose to publish on YouTube rather than like, Facebook or Vimeo?*

Tegan: I think because I was already really involved as a viewer on YouTube. I really enjoyed a lot of the people who were present there. I didn’t really even learn very much about Vimeo until very recently. I think just in terms of the platform and what it offers it made more sense. Because for me, Facebook and things has been very much a social media space that I’ve contacted friends & family and things like that and I kind of wanted it to be a separate entity and I could make it quite professional. It just seemed more sensible in terms of the kind of processes that are laid out in the site. How I can go about uploading things and everything. The more I’ve gotten into it the more I’ve realized there are added benefits that the YouTube support videos and tutorials and help desk, there’s a whole community it seems. People are happy to work together and reach out to each other and encourage each other, even if it’s kind of in the self interested way to kind of keep pushing and keep developing. I really like that being part of YouTube as another platform.

*Louise: How do you feel about the comments section of YouTube, is it something that you think about when you’re making videos? If someone leaves you a comment would you address in your next video?*

Tegan: Because of the scale of my channel so far, that’s not really been an issue

for better or worse yet. I feel like I have enough of a sense of reality that if there were trolls or somebody that's not agreeing with what I've said or whatever, I could be like 'that's your opinion, or you're just being a troll' or whatever. In terms of being able to see positive feedback it's really nice. It's what I was doing on other channels. The community it helps to provide around those creators. I think it's really awesome. I'm kind of hoping that with time that will happen in mine. Because I have seen how awesome it can be in the community around other creators in terms of the connections people form and the information that they share, the dialogue that can go on between the creators and the community. One of the most major factors for me continuing trying to push and expand and improve.

*Louise: If you get a really good comment does that give you more drive to make more videos? Or knowing that you've affected somebody positively?*

Tegan: comments are not really something that happens very often. Even though I've been going since February I've only had a handful of comments which have been positive. It's usually like 'hi, I've found you from this place' kind of thing. At this point it's nice, but it's not something enough to motivate me. For me it's more about creating things for the future that I hope it will become. Creating things because I enjoy doing it. Because I hope even if it's not useful necessarily or not reaching all the people directly now, that maybe I can use it in the future for some other project either as a reference point to a presentation or who knows what in the future but kind of creative posterity.

*Louise: How do you define success for your YouTube channel?*

Tegan: I have fairly ambiguous standards. At the moment it's if I can put out a video on a weekly basis, that I'm really happy with the standard of the video – if I can get 20–30 views of a video in their first week maybe. I have fairly low standards at the moment. Still doing it more because I enjoy it. I get the

occasional positive feedback from people who know me, and who watch my videos because they know me, rather than I have a big community of people who have no idea who I am other than through my videos. It would be nice in some ways if there were more people who aren't directly connected with me who find my videos and see some relevance or entertainment factor in my videos.

*Louise: There's no wrong answer to that question.*

Tegan: It's most encouraging I think, when you see your subscriber number grow. That's probably the most motivating factor for me. On a day to day or weekly basis it's something I don't think about too much and focus on the process.

*Louise: Is this something, you've said you'll do it for like a year?*

Tegan: That was initially the timeframe I set for myself – but after coming back from VidCon, I think I'm pretty much determined to stick with it indefinitely unless something unforeseen comes up. Because I've really gotten to enjoy the process and the challenge of it. As long as I've got something to say, and the ability to say it and I have at least one or two people who show interest then I'll keep doing it. I feel like everybody wants to be able to leave some sort of mark, either creatively or family or their job or whatever so this is my little thing I want to leave. Because you know, once anything is on the internet they say it's there forever.

*Louise: Do you have any other supporting platforms, like a Facebook page or a Twitter account that you use specifically to publicise?*

Tegan: I kind of have two Facebook pages, I just realized actually it's really strange. Last year I started a campaign to try and get the attention of Ellen DeGeneres before I went travelling. Because I was really interested to meet her, I thought this could be amazing if I could meet her, or have that opportunity to be

an audience member or be a guest on her show – and had all these amazing fantasies. So I created this Facebook page that I had built a lot of support on to try to get her attention.

When I started my YouTube videos this year, I decided to post on that page, and just kept it going as ‘help Tegan meet Ellen’ which is what I started out the page as because I felt like it was still relevant in the sense that Ellen’s work is helping give a voice to people who maybe don’t get noticed and promoting positivity and all that. I thought I could relate the two things together and hopefully people won’t have too much of an issue with this. I kind of publicly said when I decided to give up on the campaign, I asked if they had a problem with me using the page to share my videos and then just tell me or unlike the page. Then this year I created this page that’s specifically related to my channel ‘Tegan meets world’, I haven’t been able to get anyone to shift over from the campaign so I publish the links on both pages. It really depends though on how many people connect with what I’m posting. If I’m posting other videos or memes or whatever that increases the engagement and views to the page and that kind of stuff. But like I said for me it’s more about the process of doing it than saying I’m not going to be happy with this unless I get 500 likes by the end of the month or something.

*Louise: Could you maybe just talk about the most positive experience you’ve had? Vidcon?*

Tegan: Vidcon is the highlight of my experience because before that I had mostly been a viewer of YouTube. I’ve got quite a big list of people that I subscribe to but there’s only a few that I’m really loyally a viewer of. Those people have a format and subject matter and personality that I really connect with, and I really relate to the community that they have around them. For some reason I really identify with a lot of people who identify as being part of the LGBT community, so I tend to watch a lot of video creators who are either vloggers or just themselves doing different things or making certain types of videos that involve

elements of their sexuality. They tend to always have really good communities around them, it's been really nice seeing the power of those communities and how they support each other. To be able to go to VidCon and see that in a real life personal in your face type of way. There was also the crazy side of it where you see hoards of screaming teenagers chasing a YouTuber at the end of an arcade or something. You think oh my god this is like being at a One Direction concert or something. To move up to the big kid's club, where you can get away and get beyond that kind of frantic energy of the fans, and just sit in these discussion groups and listen to these people on panels who are talking about thing about the industry and their focus on whatever subject area they focus on in their videos. Different things that are the professional side of what they do or whatever it is, also having opportunities to meet some of these people.

It was really interesting to see some of the realities for people who are really big names like Tyler Oakley, or Kingsley, or Hannah Hart, or any of those people who are really up there – celebrity status basically – they actually have to be treated like celebrities by the event organisers because if they were to go into a public space where they aren't chaperoned, they can literally get mobbed. It's kind of sad, from what I've heard where VidCon and these other kind of YouTube events started in the early days, there was no barrier or sense of separation between viewers and creators because it wasn't so massive and these people weren't so massive so if somebody knows that such and such person is going to be going to point A to Point B in the next 5 minutes it's going to go through the grapevine, next thing you know there's going to be 300 teenagers swarming there or something. We're really lucky with some of the people we met who were at that middle status – or in our eyes being really successful, but not being so successful that they can get by without being incognito without being swarmed.

There's this guy I follow, his username is Swoozie, he's a really sweet guy that me and some friends have followed for ages and we actually got to meet him at VidCon. We made a really quick video with him, because we had all these New

Zealand chocolates and stuff and we were going around and talking to as many Americans' and other international creators and stuff, and asking them to like "would you mind telling us what you think of this one?" and then we would make a video when we got home. He was really sweet and nice, and he and a few other YouTubers who are like on his level I guess stood around and gave people time, talked to people gave out hugs and handshakes and autographs and that stuff to fans and it was really cool because that's what I think it used to be like.

But when you get really famous it tends to get too out of control, because people forget that people have only got so much time and energy and they are actually like us, they aren't a superhero who is like changing the world. Some of these people are actually making a difference. They are not superheroes they're not different to us. I guess when you're an excited fan, and you're like 'oh my gosh I love this person' and you're with enthusiastic friends it's easy to get caught up in that hype. That was the weirdest part of it, but at the same time also the most awesome part of it. Seeing this massive crowd of people who are in the same space as you where you're like all fangirling about all these people and you're so into the environment of what online video making is all about. I came home with a sense of how much power and influence it has on people in a really positive way in terms of creating friendships and sharing information and giving support, just all this really positive stuff as well as obviously like the dangers of trolls and bullies and all that kind of stuff. But overall I came back with a resoundingly positive feel about the experience.

*Louise: I was wondering if you had could give a few sentences of advice that you would want to have been told?*

Tegan: I feel like this is the sort of advice I'd give to anybody about anything, and it's; if you're passionate about something or you just want to give something a go then just do it. I guess it's something that a lot of the bigger YouTubers get asked

as well, I feel like none of us are experts when we start out. I'm still certainly not an expert. I think everyone is always learning as they go along, even if they've been doing it for 5 years. You'll probably still be learning things, so I'd say just start. Have an idea, and some enthusiasm and start. Don't do it because you want to be famous. Do it because you are enthusiastic about it.

*Louise: Did you have any comments about being a woman on the internet?*

Tegan: Personally, it's not been a factor so far. Maybe one day it will be. I know from other people I watch that yeah there are still a lot of issues around objectification and generalisation and sexism and stuff like that, but I think that it's not exclusive to women. I think there's more of a trend nowadays for that to happen to guys. It's probably more of a problem for woman because they're kind of an easier target I guess.