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**Vocational Survival:
Expanding the Film Value Chain
for the Independent Filmmaker**

A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy in Arts and Social Sciences
at
The University of Waikato
by
Fiona Jackson



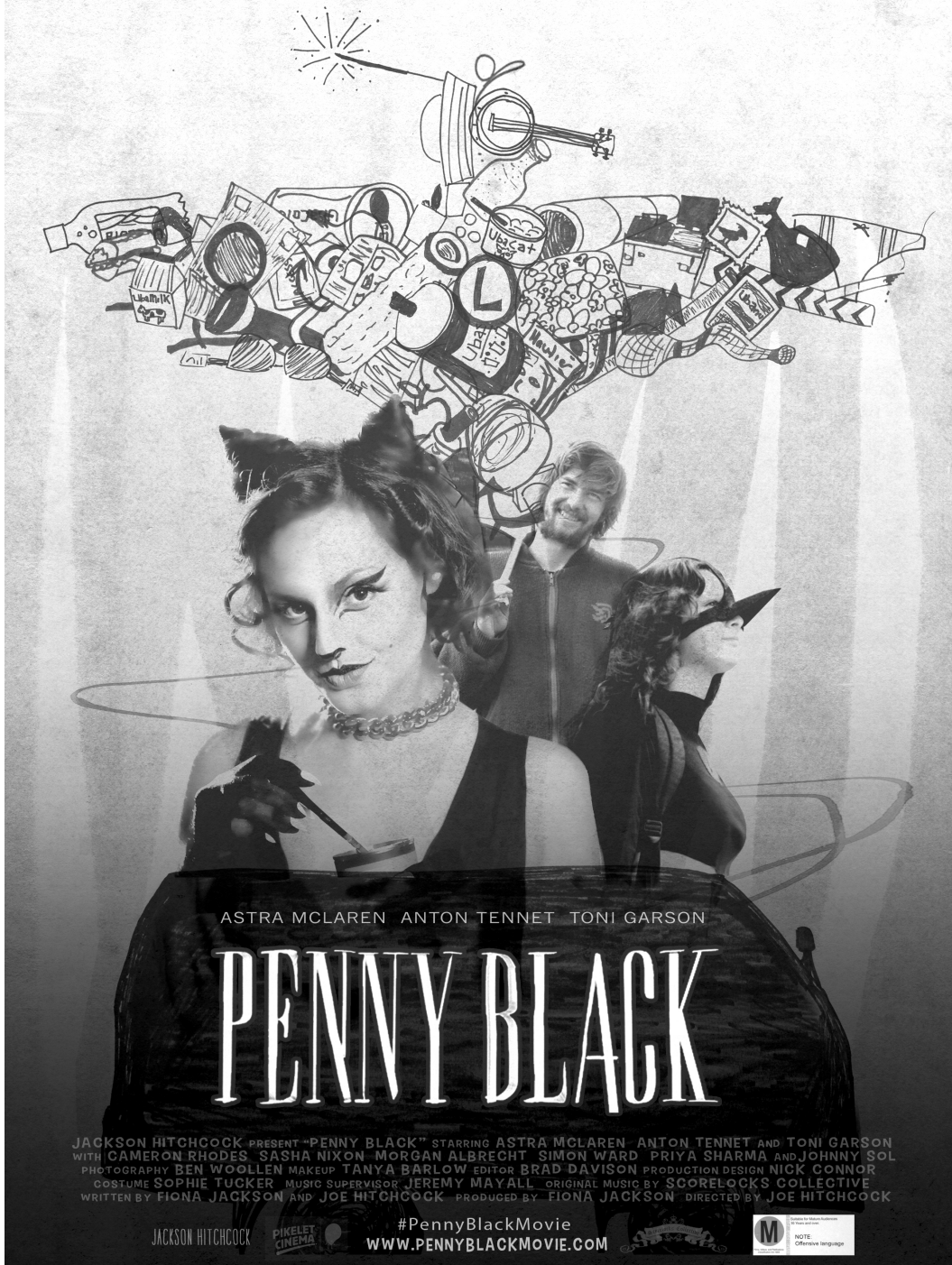
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2018

ABSTRACT

As a case-study in the occupational sociology of the creative industries, this thesis develops an argument for expanding the traditional Film Value Chain model in order to address what it means to be an independent filmmaker. The research focuses specifically on the filmmaker's journey or course of action, rather than on film aesthetics or artistry, and ultimately presents this as a structured series of stages. To reach an understanding of this structure, the research combines (auto)ethnography with Grounded Theory in order to develop a thick description that moves between practical experience and emergent concepts. The exposed structure of an independent's filmmaking career progresses through four frameworks: exploration, focus, independence, and establishment. The *exploration* stage is dominated by a high level of simple autonomy-orientation. The *focus* stage is dominated by growing realisation that the simple autonomy-orientation is too simple and a different orientation is needed. The *independence* and *establishment* levels encompass a complex autonomy orientation. The presentation of the research draws heavily on both identity theory and the emerging research paradigm of performative ethnography, and one chapter takes the form of a screenplay which interacts creatively with the other chapters, the synthesis of which has produced a model of independent practices. By extending John Caldwell's analysis of industrial "promotional surrounds" (IPS), which identifies the dominant corporate and labour practices and "logics" in relation to which independents necessarily define themselves, this thesis articulates the nature of an "independent promotional surround" with its distinctive actors and logics. Finally, it proposes that this IPS expresses a discourse of independence and that an expansion of the traditional Film Value Chain model will recognise the tensions around which this discourse organises itself.

IN CINEMAS FEB 2016



ASTRA MCLAREN ANTON TENNET TONI GARSON

PENNY BLACK

JACKSON HITCHCOCK PRESENT "PENNY BLACK" STARRING ASTRA MCLAREN ANTON TENNET AND TONI GARSON
WITH CAMERON RHODES SASHA NIXON MORGAN ALBRECHT SIMON WARD PRIYA SHARMA AND JOHNNY SOL
PHOTOGRAPHY BEN WOOLLEN MAKEUP TANYA BARLOW EDITOR BRAD DAVIDSON PRODUCTION DESIGN NICK CONNOR
COSTUME SOPHIE TUCKER MUSIC SUPERVISOR JEREMY MAYALL ORIGINAL MUSIC BY SCORELOCKS COLLECTIVE
WRITTEN BY FIONA JACKSON AND JOE HITCHCOCK PRODUCED BY FIONA JACKSON DIRECTED BY JOE HITCHCOCK

JACKSON HITCHCOCK

PIKELET CINEMA

#PennyBlackMovie
WWW.PENNYBLACKMOVIE.COM



Director Joe Hitchcock, script Fiona Jackson and Joe Hitchcock,
producer Fiona Jackson, DoP Ben Woollen,
makeup Tanya Barlow, editor Brad Davidson,
music supervisor Jeremy Mayall, original music Scorelocks Collective
Cast: Astra McLaren, Anton Tennet, Toni Garson, Cameron Rhodes, Sasha Nixon.

In cinemas February/March 2016 in: Auckland, Wellington, Hamilton, Stewart
Island, Thames, Picton, Paekakariki, Christchurch, Cambridge, Alexandra,
Hokitika, Rotorua, Oamaru, Westport, Motueka, Russell, Waiheke Island, Napier

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Gabrielle Jackson (age 6)
Motivational poster
2012

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INTRODUCTION

Perspectives on independence

This is a thesis about the independent filmmaker, based on research for which I took on the role of independent filmmaker (having had earlier film industry employment in other roles). The methodological and presentational consequences of this particular positioning will become clear. So too will the question of geographical positioning – my previous employment having been in California while this research, and the filmmaking role that paralleled it, have taken place in the small nation of New Zealand. But the preliminary positioning required here is more conventional: to situate this thesis in relation to independent filmmaking as an established object of academic study.

There are five perspectives in the academic literature about independent filmmaking, outside those two central, interlinked, dominant perspectives with which this research will be almost entirely unconcerned. The two dominant perspectives can be termed “textualist” and “auteurist” (or together as “artistic”). A great deal of academic attention to independent filmmaking has been focused on films as aesthetic creations and on their creators, or at least on those aspects of their creators that help our appreciation of the aesthetic creations. The present research is not uninterested in those two dominant perspectives but is largely unconcerned with them, for the simple reason that a great deal of work of that kind has already been done by others.

So, the five other perspectives are of more interest here. They are:

- Labour relations
- The cinema of small nations
- Guerrilla tactics
- Shadow film economies
- The Film Value Chain

In various ways, research around these five perspectives has counterbalanced, though not greatly so, academic Film Studies’ massive dominating interest in film texts and auteurs. (It could also be argued that there is a sixth perspective – the

political – but political interests (e.g. policy) are integral to the labour relations, small nations, and shadow economies perspectives). Where mainstream Film Studies has evolved (e.g. around supplemental interests in the cognitive processes involved in “reading” films or around audience research), these expansions of interest still leave the five listed perspectives looking less than central to the field’s institutionalised sense of itself. But it is towards these more marginal perspectives that the current research has been drawn, in order to find its own point of focus and approach. They shall be introduced in turn here, before the place of this particular project is identified, explained and justified.

The labour relations perspective

The labour relations approach provides our starting point: “While a voluminous bibliography could be constructed of books, articles, and popular press devoted to the artistic side of this industry, almost no attention has been paid to the people who work in it” (Gray & Seeber, 1996, p. 1); by which is meant “people who work” understood as more than just their roles as artistic creators. These labour relations researchers focus especially on the ways in which “craft organizations negotiate agreements with multiemployer associations” (Gray & Seeber, p. 1), in other words the organised labour and corporate employer relationships in the film industry that regulate the regular patterns of employment for a trained workforce, where this exists. So, the labour relations perspective has its own margin, as it were: the dispersed *casualised* workforce of independents, many of whom may work outside the craft organisations and outside the corporate sphere in a space where the very concept of an “industry” looks questionable. One of these labour relations researchers has been particularly concerned with this margin: Susan Christopherson, an American academic researcher in the field of Social Geography, not Film Studies.

Christopherson (1996) has charted the “vertical disintegration” of the big film industries since the 1970s, followed by their subsequent “virtual integration”: that is, the corporations retaining control over financing and distribution (but divesting of facilities) while production initially “disintegrated” into a proliferation of independent companies of vastly varying size, and then a gradual shift towards

larger production companies, typically on an international scale, “tightening their control of production in multiple markets” (Gray & Seeber, 1996, p. 11) via “studio” scale production, but without owning studio lots, and getting into long-term relationships with the corporate financiers and distributors: “Rather than owning the facilities and hiring the personnel, the major companies are currently integrated through contract and investment” (p. 11). This re-corporatisation of the industry without the old vertical integration of the big studios has had a profound impact on organised labour and corporate employer relationships in the film industry, the old-fashioned unions having “stagnated” (p. 11), replaced now by various talent guilds with weakened bargaining powers, since “virtual” integration in effect leaves much of the workforce without the stable employment frameworks that existed in the era of vertical integration.

Christopherson (1996), points to a consequent “lack of cohesion among segments of the labour force” and a lack of “cross-occupational solidarity” (p. 86), in fact to the increasingly meaningless nature of the term “labour force” in relation to film production. The irony is that the size of the labour pool increased massively as this happened. According to her research, in the US, for example, film output declined by 1982 to 63.9% of what it had been in 1958 when studio-based vertical integration was still in full swing, but the workforce was 237.5% of what it had been, and this trend continued, creating a vast pool of casualised labour competing for work opportunities. The stable employment frameworks provided by vertical integration were no longer in place to provide the checks and balances, so the labour pool of actual and aspiring filmmakers just kept growing, fuelled more recently by an influx of independent filmmakers as a result of the lowering costs of technology. Where they still existed, craft unions responded by tightening their protection of their own workers’ “patches”, especially their training through apprenticeship-type arrangements. Academic film schools suddenly proliferated to “train” the expanding pool of aspiring entrants to the field, even though they may have been badly mismatched from the outset to actual employment opportunities.

So the labour relations perspective offers us a first snapshot of the lot of the independent: to find a way of surviving in this field of casualised labour, characterised by weak occupational solidarity, over-supply and corporate “virtual” integration that is undoubtedly even less invested in its labour’s interests than the

old studio system was (an exception perhaps being corporate interest in acquiring independently completed films at a fraction of their cost). For this research, I have positioned myself as one such independent.

The cinema of small nations perspective

Dawson (2012) discusses the flexible specialisation (FS) that emerged as a key component of the virtual integration charted by Susan Christopherson: the clustering of specialised production companies around the virtually integrated corporate structures (and relates FS to global post-Fordist trends away from mass production). Citing Christopherson, Dawson characterises the current era of FS as “deal-making entrepreneurs networking with other business owners” (p. 23) and notes that “deroutinization” results for film workers, as they become a resource pool to be utilised by these entrepreneurial networks, largely unprotected by any stable routines of employment.

Dawson and Holmes (2012) also point out that there has been a major consequence of FS for the cinemas of small nations, that the “complexes” which form around the corporate cores can now be dispersed globally, at least in theory. Companies tied together by FS do not have to be physically located together, in part thanks to the enabling technologies of virtual working. In practice, however, the authors point out that *ideal spaces* are being looked for in order for dispersed FS to work effectively (Dawson & Holmes, 2012, p. 9) and they cite Richard Florida’s popularisation of the idea of creative classes, cities and communities as one manifestation of this interest in finding (or developing) such ideal spaces.

As an example, Dawson and Holmes refer to Ystad in Sweden, where government policy, investment of public money, regional planning, incentive schemes, hub (or incubator) construction, etc. have combined to make one of these spaces for FS. There has been a proliferation of these spaces in small nations, eager to offer their creative labour pools some of the opportunities that FS seems to provide (2012, p. 9), while also tapping into the perceived economic opportunities for a city or region. However, unlike the many optimists who write about such initiatives, Dawson and Holmes not only point out that filmmakers “are often reluctant to

relocate” (p. 9) to these ideal spaces but they argue that “networks of patronage and clientelism” (p. 10) may be far more important as ideal spaces for FS than geographical spaces. Physical spaces can be developed in small nations eager to tap into the opportunities of FS – and the affordances they provide local filmmakers can often look impressive – but there is no way to shift a network of patronage and clientelism into such a space. Dawson and Holmes suggest that such physical spaces are not sufficiently “manoeuvrable” (p. 11) – that they cannot go where the networks of patronage and clientelism actually are. So, they can become echo chambers, spaces devoid of the necessary networks.

Petrie (2007) provides one of the most often cited accounts of New Zealand film as a cinema of a small nation, making informative comparisons with Ireland in particular. Though showing the more traditional concern for films as aesthetic creations and selected directors as auteurs, Petrie does address other factors, notably the role of the New Zealand Film Commission, founded by government in 1978 to foster a national film culture by supporting production of 4-6 feature films a year that exhibited a “national identity”, very much a nation-building project rather than an industry-developing project in its early years. The nation-building agenda was later reflected in the documentary film about New Zealand cinema, *Cinema of Unease* (1995), which sought to define the “national cinematic imaginary” (Petrie, 2007, p. 171) and Petrie points out the problem: “the desire on the part of some to grow the local production sector is potentially at odds with the maintenance of an engaged and engaging national cinema” because the latter too readily becomes “reductive images of brand New Zealand” (p. 173). Other descriptions of cinemas of small nations in the volume where Petrie’s essay appears, reinforce this argument that fixation on a “national cinematic imaginary”, a screen manifestation of a national identity, turns into another kind of ideal space.

So, the cinema of small nations perspective offers us a second frame of reference for understanding the challenge faced by the independent: in these small nations, the temptations of FS and the concept of a national cinema conspire to construct two different kinds of intersecting ideal space, one physical, the other imaginary, neither of which may be of much help to the independent in search of those networks of patronage and clientelism that produce opportunities to develop a career within the virtually integrated business structures of film in the real world.

(Such networks are based on what, later in the thesis, we shall refer to as tie relations).

The guerrilla tactics perspective

The general notion of guerrilla tactics – the devising of low-tech and low-budget solutions for achieving high-potential results – is derived from filmmaker Spike Lee’s coinage of the term “guerrilla cinema”, although the latter was more than a matter of production tactics. Grainge et al. (2007) situate the moment of Spike Lee’s coinage in a short but informative history of independent filmmaking in the USA, starting with how the Sundance Film Festival in Utah became, since 1990, a key venue for American independent film:

Increasingly attractive to Hollywood agents and distributors seeking “breakout” hits – such as Steven Soderbergh’s *Sex, lies, and videotape* (1989) that took the top prize at Sundance and went on to gross \$100 million worldwide – Sundance played a part in bringing independent film into the mainstream. Robert Redford [festival founder] explained this function in positive terms, suggesting that the festival seeks to “eliminate the tension that can exist between the independents and the studios”, enabling independent filmmakers to make contacts and strike deals (Grainge et al., 2007, p. 505).

In other words, Sundance has been an exemplary space for the patronage and clientelism described in the previous section, with Redford as arch patron. As such, it is a clear example of the deal-making entrepreneurs networking with filmmakers but also of how “independent” can now be defined only in terms of a “relational dynamic” with the corporate world, not in purist terms as some kind of “free-standing” phenomenon (Grainge et al., 2007, p. 507). Leading independents, such as Spike Lee, can then be seen as “mapping this relational dynamic onto sensitive and overlooked social themes” (p. 507). In fact, this kind of mapping is precisely what Lee intended by the term “guerrilla cinema”, taking advantage of the corporate industry’s appropriation of independence as a marketing asset in order to infiltrate overlooked cinematic ideas into the mainstream. This was a matter of content, aesthetics and politics (in Lee’s case specifically around “socio-political

concerns about race” (p. 507)), but also of production tactics and working practices and it is these that are of particular interest here.

Lee’s early 1990s promotion of a guerrilla cinema appealed to independents with less interest in the socio-political dimension and more in the mode of production: “Guerrilla techniques were also adopted by young directors whose lack of budget became a selling point in movies that relied on a low-tech and purposely amateurish look” (Grainge et al., 2007, p. 509), among them Robert Rodriguez and Jim Jarmusch, although the amateurish look rapidly gave way to higher production values and a stylishness achieved with limited resources. Grainge et al. catalogue the boom of such filmmaking in the 1990s, their account peppered with the now familiar adjectives like “quirky” and “idiosyncratic” that the entrepreneurs favoured in marketing independent products.

The key point to be made, however, about the self-conscious adoption of guerrilla tactics in filmmaking is how it became currency in the relational dynamic that situated independence within the mainstream and in relation to an entrepreneurial appropriation of the different. So, the independent can self-identify as an adopter of guerrilla tactics in filmmaking in order to position themselves within this relational dynamic, not as an outsider in any real sense. In other words, the adoption of guerrilla filmmaking tactics becomes a matter of filmmaker identity, an often marketable identity at that.

The shadow film economies perspective

Ramon Lobato’s (2012) influential discussion of the shadow economies of cinema, even though Lobato’s own research focus was almost entirely on distribution, opened up a set of ideas from which a fourth non-textualist perspective on independent practices has developed. Lobato anticipates our discussion of the Film Value Chain when he points out that distribution can drive production cultures (his term), a kind of reverse flow along the value chain. So, when new forms of independent distribution develop in the shadow economies of the film industry, as they have done, then independent production culture can and does shift to reflect this.

Lobato's is an important reminder of how linear thinking that starts with pre-production and ends with distribution can fail to capture the complex two-way flows that actually occur in practice. When he describes "the many distribution networks that operate in loose articulation with or entirely outside" the mainstream industry systems (Lobato, 2012, p. 3), he sets up the question, not only of what production networks operate in loose articulation with or entirely outside the mainstream, but of what social and entrepreneurial networks operate there too, and what the nature of their economies is. Behind every genuine "guerrilla" practitioner encouraged by a new way of reaching an audience, there is an economic arrangement (or an attempted arrangement) facilitating an appropriate kind of production.

Lobato analyses how every new distribution model "in turn has given rise to whole new production infrastructures, aesthetic forms, genres, and consumption practices" (Lobato, 2012, p. 36). Just as pay-on-demand and subscription TV have given rise to new long-form drama aesthetics and production infrastructures (e.g. showrunners and writers rooms answering to a completely different production rhythm and power structure from scheduled advertising-driven episodic TV drama) so too the proliferation of small film festivals, online distribution, social-media-driven audience relationships and mobile platforms has given rise to new independent production imperatives: no longer to meet big-screen cinema requirements and distribution needs, necessarily, but to produce work in ways that reflect a broadening of opportunities, expectations and interests.

Lobato's particular contribution, however, has been to help us see that both ends of the value chain disappear into the shadows and that what is going on there has been massively expanding. His research looks into the distribution shadows around the world, from videotapes sold in grocery stores to DVDs at roadside stalls, from local markets to informal video clubs, from disc copying to internet file sharing. But it becomes equally possible, and of just as much interest, to look into the production "shadows", where aspiring independents are managing to self-finance or crowdfund a huge variety of production.

To put this another way, the present research begins in the shadows, with the researcher as independent filmmaker figuring out how to make a feature film and how, eventually, to get it to an audience. Starting here is not an autobiographical fixation, but rather an acknowledgment of Lobato's point, that beginning and ending these days in the shadows of the value chain, where the informal negotiates with the formal, where the individual finds opportunities to negotiate with "the system", is a necessary way of proceeding in order, eventually, to find the "new coordinates for cultural theory" that are needed (Lobato, 2012, p. 117). Looking at independent filmmaking without looking into these shadowy, informal, personal places is to risk seeing only the forms of independence that the industry already celebrates, but for its own reasons.

The Film Value Chain perspective

Franklin (2012) offers a succinct summary of the FVC perspective:

The Film Value Chain (FVC) – where the life of a film is analysed through progressive stages, such as development, financing, production, sales, distribution and exhibition – is the traditional structural-organisational model used to study the independent industry (pp. 102-103).

Bloore (2009) attempted to provide a diagram to define the independent Film Value Chain by adapting existing diagrams created to explain the FVC of a studio film, but stated that "any value chain model as applied to the film industry possesses several limitations. These include being unable to represent the importance of reputation and personal relationships [and] timescale" (p. 14). I will address both reputation and relationships, along with an explanation of how they develop over time, and demonstrate their place in a redefined FVC.

Franklin's particular contribution to our understanding of the independent FVC has been to highlight the ways that one phenomenon is being managed, deliberately or implicitly, at each phase-transition of the chain: that phenomenon being *uncertainty*.

Each transition, from idea to development, from development to pre-production, from pre-production to filming, from filming to post-production, from post to marketing, distribution, exhibition (and the chain can be segmented even more granularly) is characterised by tactics for (hopefully) minimising the “nobody knows” risk. Nobody knows whether a concept is good enough. Nobody knows whether marketing will translate into sufficient audiences, etc. So, for example, re-funding on the first day of principal photography (a common contractual practice) is a tactic to minimise the fact that nobody knows whether a project in development funding will actually reach that point. The mainstream industry apparatus, everything from script consultants to sales agents, is built around these key points of uncertainty.

Of course, the more independent the independent is, the less access she or he will have to this established apparatus of uncertainty management. But even independent companies that are well networked into Susan Christopherson’s structures of virtual integration are finding that the FVC is failing them. Franklin reports the 2006-08 survey of such companies by the UK Film Council, equivalent to New Zealand’s Film Commission: even the independent companies behind the 200 most successful UK films of this period were found to have, for the most part, “insolvent balance sheets” (Franklin, 2012, p. 104). According to Franklin, the UK’s representative body for producers, PACT (Producers’ Alliance for Cinema and TV) has recognised the failure of the traditional FVC model but has not found an alternative model through which to think about the film production process.

So, Franklin proposes a bare outline of one, drawing on the work of several researchers in a relatively new field called the economic sociology of conventions. In this case, conventions are the uncertainty-managing tactics enshrined at each transition-point in the FVC. The problem revealed by the relevant research in other economic fields is that conventions harden into place and persist way beyond the point where they may have begun to fail, as they may be doing for most independents even though they remain useful in corporate-scale production.

The FVC perspective, therefore, reveals a further challenge for the independent: how to survive within a largely broken FVC-based development process that

remains mostly effective only within corporate-scale production where risk-management failures can be absorbed.

Franklin cites the work of Nicole Biggart and Thomas Beamish in order to sketch out a possible FVC reformulation for thinking about independent production, and it may be useful to refer in more detail to the original work (e.g. Biggart & Beamish, 2003) for a fuller picture:

Conventions – and related concepts such as habits, customs, routines, and standard practices – are understandings, often tacit but also conscious, that organise and coordinate action in predictable ways. Conventions are agreed-upon, if flexible, guides for economic interpretation and interaction. Although used by individuals ... conventions do not reside in, and are not reducible to, individuals. Theorists of conventions explain economic order as the product of socially knowledgeable actors working within collective understandings of what is possible, probable, and likely to result in ... gain and loss.

Conventions are shared templates for interpreting situations and planning courses of action in mutually comprehensible ways that involve social accountability, that is, they provide a basis for judging the appropriateness of acts by self and others. ... The economic sociology of convention is a promising approach to a sociological understanding of both economic organization and dynamics (Biggart & Beamish, 2003, p. 444).

Biggart and Beamish's approach is basically an extension of social network theory that helps us to see past conventions per se to the socially knowledgeable actors working within collective understandings of what is possible, probable, and likely to result in positive (or negative) outputs. When we see working conventions (such as those that reside in key stages of the FVC) as "shared templates for interpreting situations and planning courses of action in mutually comprehensible ways", it becomes possible to place a greater emphasis on the *socially knowledgeable actors working within collective understandings*. Biggart and Beamish point out that "at the level of industries and economies, 'institutionalized' understandings and arrangements facilitate economic action by providing agreed-upon, often tacit, ways of conducting business" (p. 448). Franklin's point, however, is that the FVC might usefully be reformulated in order to replace fixed conventions with an

improved understanding of how networks of socially knowledgeable actors function at key points in the chain. This last point is absolutely fundamental to the project of this thesis.

An improved understanding of this kind, within a reformulation of the Film Value Chain, has not as yet been fully achieved, especially for independents, their career journeys, and their unruly workworlds of constant uncertainty. It is, therefore, a principal aim for the present research.

Summary

The independent today is typically a component in a casualised labour pool, characterised by weak occupational solidarity, over-supply and corporate “virtual” integration which confronts her with an unpredictable world of deal-making practices and players. Outside the Hollywood sphere, especially in the smaller nations, she may find that being independent means being offered various opportunities or incentives for entry into two kinds of ideal space – a geographical space of local, regional or national creative industries infrastructural initiatives and an imaginary space of national cinema, the two often overlapping in a state of uneasy tension (this might be a better way of understanding the “unease” in New Zealand cinema, rather than its supposed thematic and aesthetic manifestation). It might feel worth the effort because she has some version in her mind of the guerrilla tactics ethos: the idea that it’s cool to be taking on “the system” as an independent rebel; availing of new technological affordances to do things her own way; part of a band of guerrilla practitioners who play the system without losing their authenticity. This, of course, is an illusion, even if the emergence of innovative production techniques is an on-going reality. The guerrilla/rebel/authentic/cool nexus is a marketing one within the new system constructed out of post-studio flexible specialisation, virtual integration and technical innovation. Filmmaker self-delusion and deliberate marketing can blur together here, resulting in a caricature of what it means to be independent. There is no outside to the system, except the place where nothing is feasible and aspiring independents fail (or remain amateur hobbyists, which is a perfectly respectable thing to be).

There are, however, shadow economies in the margins: places where independents starting out with very little can self-fund or crowdfund in order to get themselves to a place at the bigger deal-making tables, and shadow economies of distribution where films make their ways to audiences by diverse routes. These shadow economies bend the traditional Film Value Chain into new configurations at its outer edges but the conventions that hold the chain in place remain strong, despite being in many ways dysfunctional for independents (as we shall see). New work on reformulating the FVC is beginning to suggest that a fundamental shift of perspective is needed.

This research project was conceived in order to explore what such a shift of perspective might entail, the researcher's lived experience as an aspiring independent adding a certain urgency to the question, as well as presenting some methodological challenges. One vital clue as to a way forward was provided by this statement from John Caldwell (2009):

Much more attention needs to be focused on the long and complicated journeys that story ideas take through the socio-professional networks that manage, develop, and cultivate them over time. These journeys inevitably involve and require negotiation through a series of rule-governed, conventionalized socio-professional rituals... (p. 205).

The theory of conventions cited by Franklin (2012) helps us to see how the rituals evoked by Caldwell continue to determine the operation of a Film Value Chain developed for studio production and not sufficiently re-thought for today's independent production. But Caldwell's real insight here may well be in seeing the journey that story ideas take, not as a film's journey per se, but as the filmmaker's journey through socio-professional networks. The traditional FVC is a framework for a film's journey. Perhaps what is missing from it, as conventionally conceived, is precisely the filmmaker's journey in this specific sense? An actor network perspective?

The present research begins, then, with this specific question: instead of being driven by the conventions of the traditional Film Value Chain, could there be _____ for independent filmmakers?

The blank space here, based on the foregoing argument, may be a matter of socio-professional actor networks (that is the best hypothesis at this point) but how to fill in the blank in a meaningful way, backed up by evidence, and what kinds of evidence will be of help here, are the next questions that this research will have to address. Methodology will also have to be addressed, of course, but there is some sense of direction in terms of method already built into the idea of focusing on a filmmaker's journey.

What Caldwell is describing when he summarises what such journeys involve is in effect their courses of action. In Chapter 1, the notion of courses of action will be placed in a more specific framework of ideas, relating in particular to what we shall come to think of as mobilised attachments.

Preliminary note on Method

A persistent challenge during the mid-phase of this research was that my supervisors were often left feeling as though they were stuck in fog. This was in large part a consequence of the attempted “thick” description in much of what follows, and of my effort to remain true to a Grounded Theory method that I became progressively more committed to. The “fog” existed and, true to that method, has not been written out of this account. So I apologise in advance to the reader that they are about to share this experience. Methodological discussion is interspersed through the thesis, to help with the experience. I would venture to suggest that clarity does eventually emerge.

In conclusion, we finally come to appreciate that this thesis proceeds through an autoethnographic reflection on the production of the film *Penny Black*. It then moves through a process of analysing interviews with a cluster of independent filmmakers: after reflection on this data it engages with an interview with an experienced producer who was able to talk about career progression, and completes its journey with a screenplay that draws the emerging insights into a

creative text (see condensed dialogue excerpt from Chapter 4 below). 'Kim' below is a time traveler from the end phase of the making of both *Penny Black* and this thesis, her monologue derived from the final pages of the screenplay. She has a slightly different voice and tone here and what she says has a different function, which is briefly to synthesise the two voices that elsewhere are parallel presences in the work.

INT. KIM'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Kim sits staring at the patchwork of ideas covering her wall. She taps her iPhone to record.

KIM

Why is the protagonist's journey the most accepted way of telling stories? And why do we do PhD's the way we do? Because it's the right way? Or just because it's how they've been done for years?

What if my mess of ideas, and mixed up way of exploring and presenting my work is like a patchwork of ideas that link to the side, the top, to other ideas, and stretch through several other ideas, connecting, weaving, intersecting. Like a quilt, with the potential for beauty, and for telling history, and projecting into the future. Still with a framework, but with infinite possibilities.

I've always been told, or it's been inferred, that science, even social science, is looking for truth, and I want to reply, 'whose truth?' All these grand theories claim to be the right way to think, then a new bunch of thinkers come along and then we have the post-whatever grand theory and it all changes.

(MORE)

KIM (CONT'D)

Ellingson points out that even people on the science-slash-realist end of the continuum sew things together, tuck under edges that don't work for their argument, and highlight the points that match their ideas, designing their output to present their work in the best light, and make themselves look good. It seems sometimes they find this grain of an idea, a little scrap of useful new information, and then they attach every piece of fabric in their fabric box to it and make this enormous 600-page quilt, and somehow that's acceptable. Whatever gets them the points they need for their University's research output requirements, right?

(synthesized excerpt from Chapter 4 script)

'Kim' is a person like me. Her voice here is meant to prepare the reader for the disruptions to conventional thesis reading that they will encounter, not because Kim's voice occurs again before Chapter 4 but because her refusal to see traditional form as natural is definitely mine.

CHAPTER 1

Independence and the discourse of passion

It's a whole range of elements coming together and making something that didn't exist before.

– David Lynch, filmmaker
(2007, p. 17).

Courses of action

<p>It was in San Francisco in 1995 that my interest in filmmaking was rekindled. My first attempt to make a short film age 9 failed, when we were unable to borrow a camera, so filmmaking felt like an impossible dream to me, not a “real” job, and certainly not a career. Seven years later and dreading another year of uninteresting classes surrounded by people who ignored me, I dropped out of high school and trained as a nanny. Armed with my nanny certificate I could travel far from New Zealand and all the limitations that reminded me I didn't have the money, the skills, the connections, the possibility to ever be who I felt I should become. But in San Francisco the idea of filmmaking resurfaced. This city felt magical, with its jangling cable cars, foghorns wailing mournfully through the rolling fog, streets begging to be photographed, and</p>	<p>In 1995, John B. Thompson's <i>The Media and Modernity</i> (1995), a world away from my circumstances, experience and concerns (and not a book I would have been interested in reading at the time) articulated some of the foundational concepts of media studies. A Cambridge don, Thompson found himself compelled by his object of study to address questions about “self and experience in a mediated world”, but one feels that his own experience made the “ivory tower” donnishness of his book's final pages largely inevitable. In those pages he called for a disengaged stance of moral reflection in relation to the mediated world. Before withdrawing to that elevated position, however, Thompson did recognise the importance of lived experience:</p> <p><i>...I want to focus on the nature of the</i></p>
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film productions seemingly around every photogenic corner. I began in front of the camera as an extra or stand-in, until a friend suggested that with my adventurous kiwi background I should be working in stunts. A few years of precision driving, riding motorbikes, and being thrown around, I decided to move to Los Angeles. But the stunt groups were cliquey, and I wasn't anyone's daughter or girlfriend, and no one owed me any favours, so work was hard to come by. I trained with Richie Gaona on the flying trapeze and became a director's assistant for one of the other flyers, Tom Moore. I witnessed every step of the Hollywood filmmaking process, from the excitement when Tom first read the script for the Disney movie *Geppetto* (Moore, 2000) until its premiere screening on Hollywood Boulevard. I observed all aspects of production, props, set design, how producers operate, casting, working with actors, editing... The pressure was great, as was the budget. At that time no one in my circle in Hollywood talked much about low-budget independent feature films; most created (the appearance of) successful lives within the revamped corporate *studio* system, where unions ensure no one works for less than the going rate (the section on Mike Figgis below will discuss this corporate

self, experience and everyday life in a mediated world. My starting point is the view that, with the development of modern societies, the process of self-formation becomes more reflexive and open-ended, in the sense that individuals fall back increasingly on their own resources to construct a coherent identity for themselves. At the same time, the process of self-formation is increasingly nourished by mediated symbolic materials, greatly expanding the range of options available to individuals and loosening – without destroying – the connection between self-formation and shared locale. (p. 207).

What seems to have been largely invisible from the perspective of a don's study in Jesus College, Cambridge in 1995, are the non-symbolic materials that might constitute the matrix of lived experience: the relationships rather than texts, the non-symbolic resources (material realities rather than meanings), the ways shared locale might become the inescapable material ground for processes of self-formation even if motivated by the symbolic, which is why San Francisco seemed magical, with its promise of movie making. At the same time, it afforded the concrete relationships and resources necessary to

<p>production environment less anecdotally).</p> <p>While completing my BA and MA back in New Zealand, my learned Hollywood attitude towards filmmaking (high budgets, high wages, fast turnaround, etc.) felt diametrically and unsurprisingly opposed to the experience of making films with an ultra-low-budget. As a student I felt surrounded by a dearth of knowledge, difficulty accessing equipment, and limited encouragement to create work. I eventually found local filmmakers passionate about their work, willing to do whatever it took to make films, and with the “can do” attitude that often typifies successful New Zealanders. But it was clear that a sustainable career making films outside of the Hollywood and European systems was an extremely elusive goal. I would have to find a balance between my two lived worlds in order to achieve this goal.</p> <p>I decided the best way to investigate independent filmmaking for my PhD was from the inside and, as no feature films were scheduled to be made in the region where I live, I began producing my own. Local filmmaker Joe Hitchcock had the desire, time, finances, and ability to direct the film, and was</p>	<p>do something about that perceived promise.</p> <p>New Zealand, and specifically the Waikato as a “shared locale”, afforded different opportunities. If “individuals fall back increasingly on their own resources to construct a coherent identity for themselves” (p. 206), then we may need to understand that those resources are both symbolic and non-symbolic, both relatively freely circulating meanings (such as the idea of movie making) and the thoroughly grounded realities of trying to realise those meanings in particular places at particular times, in circumstances that may be largely given. And to understand also that moral reflection is a very specific intellectual position – one that affords an academic “lived world” of detachment, defined largely by its refusal of <i>entanglement</i> with those circumstances, locales and people.</p> <p>Thompson’s reflection is “moral” in the sense that he wanted to bring, from the outside as it were, some “reasoned guidance” into practical human affairs (p. 265). If, instead, a much more entangled position is allowed, then we have to ask what this will bring to human affairs, at which point Thompson’s sociology may have to be</p>
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motivated to see a project through to completion. He also had enough contacts to build a small capable film crew, so we started working together to create a script he would be interested in directing. The film was called *Penny Black*.

As we worked on the film I also began researching other recently completed and “in production” features that raised many questions about independent film, paralleling my own experience. These included: Does attempting to identify a film’s potential audience at conception, and planning how to reach that target market, take away an element of independence? How valuable is crowdfunding? Do we really need distributors? How do I feel about the director being so often viewed as sole auteur? What do I really contribute to a film as writer/producer, and how might the film be different if I were directing?

In the process of making *Penny Black* I discovered that trying too hard to write and make a predictably “marketable” film often felt formulaic and threatened our passion for the project.

Crowdfunding helped expand awareness of the film project within its immediate audience, the core comprised of family and friends, but expanding that reach

superseded by something like Bruno Latour’s.

Latour’s *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: an Anthropology of the Moderns* (2013) coincided with my linked doctoral research and filmmaking projects getting underway. Of his ideal inquirer, Latour says:

...she knows that only a prolonged, in-depth analysis of COURSES OF ACTION can allow her to discover the real value system of the informants among whom she lives, who have agreed to welcome her (p. 28).

This focus on “courses of action” is very different from anything Thompson advocated, as is the proposed reliance on informants. But what especially stands out here is the object of inquiry: the “real value system”.

Before clarifying what is meant by “real value system”, Latour offers some cautionary observations. Principally that the ideal inquirer should not pay too much attention when told to limit herself to one “domain” (“*with these stories about domains she is being taken for a ride*” (p. 29)): instead, if the inquirer asks the full range of questions, she will find that the fixed vantage point of one

further was difficult, with success depending on variables like the wealth and generosity of the people in our circle. However, these may not all be universal experiences. Published interviews with other filmmakers mirrored some of my experiences, and not others.

Filmmakers are storytellers, and not just on the screen: they do not necessarily stick to fact if fiction is more interesting and will better sell their projects or themselves. The internet is filled with conflicting stories surrounding these questions and I started wondering what is really true, and what are the self-generated myths surrounding filmmaking.

There are few academics who are also practitioners in the feature film arena, and books published by practitioners date quickly due to rapid technological changes in the industry affecting both filmmaking practice and audience reception, so “knowledge” seemed often fleeting in many respects. I found my experiences with independent filmmaking were often at odds with how I saw things work in California in the “studio” style. I wondered if the performance of a large well-paid crew could be exceeded by that of a small

domain (e.g. “media studies” and its subdomain “film studies” in this instance) may leave too much looking still unanswerable.

Whereas the notion of domain obliged her to stay in one place while watching everything else move around incomprehensibly, the notion of network gives her the same freedom of movement as those whose actions she wants to follow (p. 31).

By “network”, Latour means a network of locales, perspectives and actors within which the object of inquiry – here “independent filmmaking” – preserves its multifaceted reality. That reality, moreover, is as a course of action, not just a body of films or the things that filmmakers say about their films (two of the ways that the subdomain of film studies typically identifies its object).

So under the word “network” we must be careful not to confuse what circulates once everything is in place with the setups involving the heterogeneous set of elements that allow circulation to occur (p. 33).

The course of action moves (if fully realised) from “setups” to having “everything in place” and to what then

crew working for their love of the project and the work: if the relationships between key crew members are different on independent films. What is the effect of the tidal wave of indie projects on the industry, on distribution, on the audience? Do audiences really want to be engaged in any way during the production process? Are transmedia packages and experiences the way of the future? I spoke to other filmmakers but, like me, they had no definitive answers, just a sense that the ground was shifting under their feet, as all these matters conspired to breed uncertainty and unpredictability.

These conversations with filmmakers only generated more questions. Who gets to make films, and tell their stories, and who does not? Who (or what) makes these decisions, and why? Are there forms of capital one must accrue to enable the making of films, or even for filmmaking to be considered an option, e.g. competence, finance, contacts, etc.? Is story the key to funding opportunities being realised or do other factors contribute, like age, gender, and marketability of the key creatives? Why do filmmakers on the margins continue to make films when they so often feel misunderstood and unappreciated, and is it connected to an “internal journey” that

circulates through the network of locales, participants, resources etc., the “what” in this case being independent filmmaking in action; which is not to say that blockages in circulation will not occur. So the range of questions that need to be asked about this kind of network is inevitably going to be much greater than the questions that film studies asks about films as texts or about filmmakers as authors of texts. This means that the inquirer/researcher may be engaged in “listing the truly stupefying diversity of the entities that they [independent filmmakers in this case] have to mobilize to do their work” (p. 35). Latour summarises the overall procedure:

Even if the task looks immense to her, our ethnographer can be rather proud of herself. She has defined her object of study; she has fleshed out her ordinary method with two additional elements specific to the modern fields: network analysis on the one hand, the detection of values on the other. Finally, she knows that she is going to have to take into account, for each subject, a fluctuating relation between the values that she will have identified and the institutions charged with harbouring them (p. 46).

can be more fully explored independently than through the corporate system (the section on Preston, below, returns to this particular question)?

Amidst this plethora of questions the overriding ones became two “whats”, and a “who”:

What is the nature of independent filmmaking?

What is the organisational structure of independent production (including questions relating to labour division, networking, collective needs, personal proclivities, deliberate querying of the “Hollywood” organisational forms)?

Who makes independent films (including questions relating to location, motivation, values, wealth, etc.)?

In order to answer these three clusters of questions fully, I will argue that we need a particular understanding of independence; its nature, the effects independence has on intentions and output, its value, and what it means for different sectors of the film industry and those on the outer margins of any industry. When we understand what independent filmmakers do (differently)

How will following courses of action via network analysis have the potential to reveal a “real value system” and what is one discovering as a result? What, in this particular research, is the importance of the institutions “charged with harbouring” the relevant values – production companies, distributors, national agencies, professional guilds, exhibitors?

Latour’s focus is ultimately ontological. He and his ideal inquirer are interested in the kinds of “being” that we are today. More specifically, they are interested in the possibility of recognising a category of relatively new “beings”:

If we remain faithful to the principles of our method, we can recognize particular beings here, even if they seem very difficult to institute for themselves: beings of passionate interest, or interested passions... We find ourselves squarely in front of a new mode of existence that, since we cannot count on a recognized term, we shall call mobilization, or better yet, ATTACHMENT [ATT] (p. 425).

To start with the proposition that independent filmmaking is a passionate interest and is pursued by beings who

<p>in their practice and the circumstances and situations in which they do these things, then we may find that the <i>feelings they have about their work</i> become an indispensable component to understanding the nature of independence.</p> <p>Finally, is independent an ontological descriptor, in addition to labelling forms of practical, financial and affective autonomy? In other words, what kind of being does the term independent describe in a creative field such as filmmaking?</p> <p>Part One of my thesis uses autoethnography and Grounded Theory in order to furnish evidence for answering this ontological question, as part of understanding independence more generally. Having distilled the initial proliferation of questions into three or four clusters, it becomes clear that the term independent in this context may not have a singular, stable meaning.</p>	<p>are mobilised to courses of action by that passionate interest, is in one sense to state the obvious. (Latour's point is that beings mobilised by passionate interest are popping up all over the modern world). But it is a proposition that allows us to borrow from Latour one overriding insight: that there will be for such a being a "brutal alternation before the enthusiasm of being carried away by energising forces and the depression of being subjected to forces that exceed us in all directions" (p. 425).</p> <p>ATT as a mode of existence (Latour's schema uses a set of these abbreviations), reveals a recognisably modern dilemma: how to reconcile the enthusiasms that carry us away with the often crippling forces that block or contain those enthusiasms, not least via institutionalised structures? Latour identifies a fluctuation between these two – a "brutal alternation" between feeling energised and feeling depressed – that surely captures something recognisable to independent filmmakers as our specific example of the passionately interested mode of being.</p>
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It may be helpful at this point to explain the parallel presentational format, as it will be used again below. It is intended to evoke the differences between what I came to consider "bottom-up" and "top-down" thinking. This is *not* a distinction between subjective and objective, as both occur on each side of the format. Rather, it becomes a question of whether one thinks from the ground up (the left column

here) or from the bookshelf down as it were (the right). Although the two-column format is not maintained beyond this chapter, it is meant to install in the thesis as a whole the sense that the two columns are always potentially there. I spent two largely fruitless years at the outset of this research trying to do only “right column” work, until developing a sense of this parallelism in my mind freed up the work, and became the basis of my own understanding of practice-led research.

Throughout this thesis I have used the term research-led to mean research that generates what Graeme Harper, a pioneer in this field, calls "knowledge of creative actions and their results" (Harper, 2011, p. 11). Although other terminology for this kind of research is also identified by researchers such as Candy (2006, p. 3) who more distinctly separate research that leads primarily to new understandings about practice (practice-led) from research which has a creative artifact as the thing that produces the contribution to knowledge (practice-based), differentiating the terms too stringently can also cause confusion, especially where Grounded Theory may want to shift the role of practice to and fro between these options as the research proceeds. So, I have chosen to use practice-led as more of an umbrella term for what I have done as a whole, even where practice-based elements may have occurred at points within the research. In some ways, methodological distinctions within these umbrella terms are more important, such as Till et al's distinction between "analytical" and "generative" research relating to practice (Till, Mottram, & Rust, 2005, p. 104), where this project goes through phases of both, practice being at times "central to the investigation" and a "site for reflection" (analytical, *ibid.*) while at times "supporting the investigation" and in an "iterative" relationship to it (generative, *ibid.*).

The independent experience

The term *independent film* originated in the 1920s to mean a film that was not produced by or affiliated to a major Hollywood studio (Oxford Dictionary, 2015). Lipsky gives another more contemporary definition of independence from a financial perspective as “...when, regardless of budget, cast or the source of financing there is absolutely no expectation of a return OF investment much less a return ON investment”(Lipsky, 2012). There may be such returns of course, but the expectation of them does not drive the work. Between these two versions so many

exceptions to the rule are found that independent film quickly seems to be a floating signifier with meanings that change depending on time, context, and point of view, and which cannot be agreed upon.

Discussions of this range of meanings often roam widely across anecdotal accounts and evocations of a filmmaking philosophy. Ted Hope (*Film Courage*, 2014) is typical in this regard, mixing biographical illustrations with more abstract pronouncements about how things should be done. Other discussions, such as Geuens (2000), take a more organised approach and offer a more conceptually grounded argument for thinking of filmmaking in particular ways. The following overview of the kinds of meanings that independent has draws on these accounts and also on my own experience.

Independence can describe the practice of producing feature films without controlling funders imposing their formulae upon a project with a view to maximising their return on investment, but can also embody much more. It can represent the emotion and passion of filmmakers for specific projects and for filmmaking in general, which is not always necessarily present (or sustained) in larger projects or by commercial filmmakers. It can symbolise the ethos of pushing the boundaries of creativity, expressing freedom in content, storytelling and visual style, and can symbolise a commitment to the practice of the craft. It can remind us that the challenge of overcoming constraints inherent in independent productions (financial, time, etc.) can help push the limits of inventiveness and ingenuity and drive the desire to create better work. Of course, corporate Hollywood-style filmmakers can also be given freedom over their own productions, feel passion for their work, push boundaries, and overcome constraints in a way that produces better end product.

On a studio shoot with a large experienced crew everything a filmmaker may need is standing by available if required, which sometimes results in what Geuens (2000) characterises as “a cinema of routine where professionals perform without passion or imagination. A cinema where nothing is real anymore” (p. 114). Big-budget corporate movies are often shot on location but they do not have to be. Lack of resources on ultra-low-budget films often necessitates shooting on location, sometimes without permits or permission. Geuens says, “A location invades the substratum of the film by providing a living, concrete environment that cannot be

ignored” (p. 114). An actor’s emotions and sensations are more real, her discomfort and shivering on location on a winter’s day is captured by the camera and felt by an audience. Having to shoot on location can require frequent improvisation from the cast and crew as they use or develop techniques to adapt to changing conditions, such as unexpected obstacles, traffic, technical problems, or weather. So experientially, something different may be going on, and Geuens’ substratum may reflect this.

No- or low-pay on ultra-low-budget productions means cast and crew often commit to working on a project that appeals to them based on their interest in the story or script, and their desire to work with the group producing the film. They are motivated to gain experience and knowledge, make contacts, improve their résumé, and accrue favours (or fulfil past obligations to repay favours). In contrast to the delineated departments on union productions, independent filmmakers have the opportunity to widen their skill set into many areas of production. So the experiential difference may involve, crucially, a different relationship to skills and specialisation. Cooperative boundary-blurring skill sets versus highly specialised and territorialised occupational roles may be a significant feature of what independent means to some filmmakers.

When a film’s budget is minimal, unconventional funding options become necessary, such as grants, scholarships, and community funding for the arts. Crowdfunding sites facilitate funding assistance from friends, family, and potentially a wider audience in exchange for rewards such as signed DVDs and exclusive behind-the-scenes footage. Freedom from (outside) controlling financial interests can result in filmmakers addressing subject matter that corporate Hollywood-style production would avoid. Stories can avoid the classic three-act Hollywood formats altogether and explore new or alternative artistic territory, both in storytelling and in presentation. New low cost-high quality filmmaking technology means many more filmmakers are able to produce work, allowing the potential for more stories to be told. Low-budget films can be created for smaller niche audiences that can become advocates for a project.

However, independent films have no *obligation* to push the boundaries of content, style, or performance. They may have large budgets. They may make a profit. They may have the best cameras, professional actors, and highly skilled and experienced

crew members. So independent *may* mean different, experientially, financially, practically, conceptually, but it *does not have to*. Taking three snapshots of actual independents might provide some further insights into this conundrum and, at the same time, will remind us of what contemporary independent voices sound like. In particular, the following snapshots will help cut through the noise of diverse things people say about independence in order to suggest three particular points of focus, the first of which is *voice*.

USA – Rodriguez – refusing the *money hose* and finding a voice

If you get a job doing your passion, you will never work a day in your life. People think I am so busy all the time, but I never work. I'm always playing (Robert Rodriguez, as quoted in Torres, 2013 para. 9).

When he was 23-years-old Robert Rodriguez raised \$7000, largely by offering his body to medical testing, so the story goes, and used the money to make his first feature film, *El Mariachi* (Rodriguez, 1992) with his friend Carlos Gallardo. His plan was to learn as much as he could about the filmmaking process, sell the film to the Spanish video market for twice the amount he spent on it, and use that money to make a sequel. While he was waiting for the contract to sell *El Mariachi* to Mex-American Video he began shopping it around Hollywood, eventually selling the American distribution rights to Columbia Pictures. Though Columbia subsequently spent \$200,000 on post-production and transferring Rodriguez's video to film, and millions on prints and advertising (Shone, 2009), Rodriguez's story of low-budget filmmaking success against the odds, detailed in his book *Rebel without a crew: Or how a 23-year-old filmmaker with \$7000 became a Hollywood player* (Rodriguez, 1995b), launched him into the role of poster boy for independent filmmaking.

Using his talents as director, screenwriter, producer, cinematographer, editor and musician, Rodriguez discovered innovative techniques to disguise his low budget, many of which would not have been possible if he was filming within the context of a studio-type system. He explains in his *Ten Minute Film School* (Rodriguez, 1992: extras) that he employed the actors as film crew because, "They're just standing around anyway". His actors performed their own stunts, in part because

they were the fittest most able people he could find. The production (pick-up) truck (owned by the lead actor) carried all Rodriguez's camera equipment and doubled as the bad guys' vehicle. As Rodriguez planned to edit *El Mariachi* himself he was able to make editing decisions as he was filming. This enabled him to reduce the takes for each scene, capturing only the shots he was planning to use, and resulted in his using only 25 rolls of film for the entire movie.

If you want to make a movie with a really low budget you can't spend on anything. You have to refuse to spend on anything ... you start that money hose going and you just can't stop it. Think of a creative way to get around your problem and keep your money in your pocket (Rodriguez, 1992: extras).

After the success of *El Mariachi* Rodriguez moved on to writing and directing big-budget Hollywood movies, but retained the filmmaking mantra he used for *El Mariachi*, "Fast, cheap, and in control" (Rodriguez, 1998), to the implementation of which he attributes his success.

You get freedom when you can consistently deliver movies that are profitable, that don't cost, and your chances for being profitable are greater obviously if you don't spend the farm on things you could have done inexpensively by just thinking about it for a few minutes and by versing yourself in technology and effects (Rodriguez, 1992: extras).

This is a belief Rodriguez has reiterated throughout his interviews, emphasizing the role of the relationally-defined community in the Film Value Chain: "Most people are either creative or technical. Technicians always need creative people. Creative people always need technicians. But if you're creative and you apply yourself and learn to be technical you'll be unstoppable" (La Coacha, 2012). This embedding of creativity in the relational aspects of the FVC will be central to this thesis. As technology advanced, so did Rodriguez's knowledge and ability. Shots he imagined when writing *El Mariachi* became possible for *Desperado* (Rodriguez, 1995a). Enabled by technical and software advances and their new accessibility, wires could support actors during stunt scenes and be easily and cheaply removed during post-production, and when real guns did not arrive in time he utilised rubber guns and digitally added gun shots and bullet damage on the walls of the historic church (Rodriguez, 2004).

Each subsequent project inspired Rodriguez to push the limits of what could be achieved with an increasing budget, and he continued to develop techniques to cut cost and hasten production. Rather than spend time and money on traditional storyboarding, Rodriguez began creating video storyboards, filming the rehearsal of scenes in the actual locations with actors or crew, discovering what would work before the full crew arrived on set, therefore saving time and money while filming (Rodriguez, 1998). When Rodriguez needed a blue-screen larger than the production company could provide, he improvised by shooting against the early morning sky (Rodriguez, 2007).

Mindful of how team spirit affects a film crew, and how passion can be increased among cast and crew, Rodriguez continues to cast his crew in performing roles as “they get a big kick out of it [and it is] good for the morale of the crew” (Rodriguez, 2007). He incorporates his actors’ personalities and off-camera conversations into the films’ dialogue, often casting actors before the script is complete so he can “write the rest of the script with them in mind so I can play to their strengths and their personalities” (Rodriguez, 2007).

Rodriguez has continued to educate aspiring filmmakers in how to follow his course of action with his Ten Minute Film School videos and presentations:

If you make a big budget movie, don’t be fooled, money doesn’t get you anything. Suddenly you’re working for somebody. Suddenly they start telling you what actors to put in your movie because they’re spending so much money they have to make a lot of money back. If you keep your budget low you don’t have to make back that kind of money. It helps to have money. But it’s not everything. What it is is power though, the more money you make in that town the more people respect you the more freedom you get. That’s really what you want. The money is a means to an end (Day, 1993).

Almost 20 years after *El Mariachi* propelled him into the limelight, FactoryMade Ventures recruited Rodriguez to figurehead a US network channel, El Rey Network. The network, which launched in the USA in December 2013 (James, 2013) targeted Latino audiences by featuring Hispanic filmmakers. Rodriguez has five children of his own who are bilingual but speak primarily English and part of his passion for this project is that he felt they needed socially relevant content that “represented

who they are in this country” (Gratereaux, 2012, para. 3). Rodriguez’s goal is “to fill the screen with Latin faces, talent and ideas and stories but in a way that still appealed to the mass audience, the mass market” (Gratereaux, 2012 para. 8). “We will be able to create our own stars, tell our own stories and allow other Latin film makers to come and cultivate that voice” (Torres, 2013 para. 7).

What this first snapshot of independence offers is a vision of filmmaking with a financial formula and an ethic. The formula is low-budget + high potential returns. The ethic is about voice. There may be no *expectation* of high returns but the potential remains part of the formula. The voice is something to which we will come back.

UK - Figgis - joining the club?

English director, writer, and composer Mike Figgis became an ambassador for low-budget and innovative filmmaking when he vented his frustration with the Hollywood film industry in his film *Leaving Las Vegas* (1995), and later published his book *Digital Filmmaking* (2007).

Figgis (2007) reminds us that, when filmmakers accept corporate funding, financiers gain control over a project:

You’ve crossed into a territory where you are inviting them to comment on the script, because it’s their money. Therefore they feel they have a right to control elements of the film and that their taste should influence the story. Which is a disaster, because it’s never been proved that the fact that you have money means that you have taste, or any concept of the way film works (p. 47).

He believes the British movie industry has had a “defeatist attitude and outdated structure” (Figgis, 2013) and suggests their film financing models under-support creativity, initiative and risk taking. Figgis suggests Hollywood is, on balance, in artistic decline because up-and-coming filmmakers there have their eye on financial success and rehashing generically American ideas rather than on developing their own creative voices (Trilling, 2009). He feels Hollywood producers curtail creativity in their efforts to control the process and manage film production like a

dictatorship (Figgis, 2007), and he champions the idea of the independent filmmaker as a singular voice.

Figgis (2007) suggests that owning the newest hot piece of technology makes filmmakers feel like they are “part of a really exclusive club, with our own badge” (p. 36). He encourages independent filmmakers to purchase their own equipment and seek to understand its functionality fully, modify it to suit their needs and to make themselves more technologically capable. For example, Figgis found the design of the (then newly released) Handicam lacking, so designed a mount to allow for smoother shots and to act as a frame to mount all the accessories (Manfrotto, 2013), allowing the operator to move more freely around actors. This design, which Figgis named the Fig-rig, was later commercialised by Manfrotto.

Figgis argues that hands-on technical inventiveness changes the dynamics of filmmaking, personalising the mode of production, not just the content (Gray, 2013a). Smaller cameras require smaller crews making redundant the highly paid teams of technicians who were once required to operate technology (Gray, 2013b). Smaller crews mean filmmakers can infiltrate a greater variety of situations (Figgis, 2007). Figgis believes the current distribution circuit reliant on high budgets for marketable film productions is almost useless for independent films (Auster, 2007), and he is hopeful that the internet will become an effective alternate way for independent filmmakers to have control of their own distribution. He even suggests they source projectors and screens and create their own “theatres” for viewing “in any space where chairs can be placed all facing in the same direction; where a white wall or a screen exists; and where a medium priced digital projector is connected to ... a couple of speakers. *That is a cinema*” (Figgis, 2007, p. 150). He believes filmmakers should join in solidarity against the corporate structures by forming their own *clubs* and developing a means of distribution much the same way that the music industry formed their own web-based record labels.

Figgis recognises that the draw of the “myth” of the Hollywood lifestyle and its financial and social gains can be an irresistible aspiration for many filmmakers. Though Figgis sees the appeal, he describes participation in the exclusive Hollywood club as “a bit like a pact with the devil”. His own agent accuses him of not understanding the LA social contract, which Figgis (2007) describes as:

I will buy a house in L.A. I will abide by the rules of the LA community. I will not argue with the studios. I will embrace the good life here above all else. I will not mention Godard or other such directors as a reference to anything in Hollywood... (p. 152).

Alternative clubs comprised of independent filmmakers would help to pool resources, share information, support projects, innovate aesthetically, and potentially give some collective strength to filmmakers working outside the corporately controlled networks.

This second snapshot reveals a curious combination of technophilia and opting out from a supposed mainstream social contract. The independent as outsider, empowered by technical savvy, takes on virtually utopian colouration when imagined in emergent forms of grassroots solidarity with like-minded others.

New Zealand – Preston – following the passion with idealism

One of New Zealand's pre-eminent filmmakers, Gaylene Preston's work slides between the genres of documentary and drama, and is often based on true stories that document life in New Zealand (Simmons, 1996). She believes film can give power to people who usually have none, giving them a public voice to tell their own stories about their experiences. Preston is known as a mentor for up-and-coming filmmakers, presenting seminars, workshops, and working with creative teams to develop their projects (Script to Screen, 2011b). Preston refers to the "It" as a way to describe "that big mysterious exciting unfathomable unifying thing deep in the heart of the film", the "original glorious idea" that inspires filmmakers to make a particular film, an It that Preston feels is often watered down as it is subjected to the pragmatic constraints of the business side of filmmaking. She believes the key is to find, articulate, protect and promote the original vision of a project, and retain one's creative intuition during the necessary process of collaboration that pushes a film through the development and production stages (Script to Screen, 2011a).

Preston describes filmmakers as storytellers and persuaders (Shepard, 2009), a notion that carries over to the ever-present challenge of securing funding. Though

she has a proven track record regarding completion of projects, Preston still thinks every film may be the last she is able to secure funding to make.

It's a business first and an art form second ... and so every film has to be a success. If you're a painter you might have the odd painting that you struggle with and put aside. It's accepted as part of an internal journey, but it's very hard to do that with film. Every film has to be a success (as quoted in Shepard, 2009, p. 229).

Preston is mindful of the camaraderie that must be maintained in such a collaborative yet competitive industry. "The person you're competing with today for the money might be someone you're working alongside tomorrow with the money" (as quoted in Shepard, 2009, p. 232). Preston's experiences with the New Zealand Film Commission highlight a situation where filmmakers are either struggling to prove themselves as dependable and reliable to funders in an effort to secure a share of the limited funds available, or they are viewed as being successful enough that they should be able to raise money without public sector support. "It's still a small pool you're drawing on, and funding bodies sometimes feel the bigger fish should swim in larger waters" (as quoted in *The Wellingtonian*, 2009). At a time when the New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC) was headed by a chairman who was only interested in supporting films that were "internationally bankable", and not at all interested in reconsidering projects they had previously turned down, Preston and her producer Robin Laing decided to confront the Commission with a project they had turned down twice. "Seven old ladies talking about the war" may not have international appeal or a large national release, but it was an idea Preston felt passionate about. During her pitch meeting with the NZFC, she acknowledged that *War Stories* (1995) was not a commercial proposition, but stressed her belief that telling local stories is necessary for a national cinema. Other members of the board agreed with her, opposing the chairman, and the funding was granted (Shepard, 2009).

Preston compares the relationship between director and producer to a love affair, an act of faith, and like a marriage in which the pair must learn to solve conflict, to put aside selfish motivations and work together for their common goal, and to keep the *passion* they feel for the project alive in themselves and each other. Preston observes that finding a partner that one is compatible with is not easy, and the

relationships most often do not work well enough for a duo to commit to working together twice. However, she noticed that when she began working with producer Robin Laing on *Mr. Wrong* (1984) things changed for her. The working relationships she developed with Laing made her feel supported in her work. Preston gained a person whom she trusted and who trusted her, and as each developed faith in the other's abilities a method of working together evolved, giving Preston the support and freedom to follow her preferred method of filmmaking.

Preston has always worked by trusting her intuition: "I work instinctively. I say, 'feels right', 'feels wrong', 'feels good', 'feels bad'. All the rest, the script and the storyboards, is homework and intellectual preparation, but on the shoot all you've got is your gut" (as quoted in Shepard, 2009, p. 237). Surrounding herself with a crew that understands and supports her method of filmmaking is important to the success of a project. "You don't make a film out of your head, you make a film out of your heart and out of your gut" (as quoted in Shepard, 2009, p. 236).

This third snapshot of independence prioritises the crucial if problematic term "passion". Preston locates the passion both between core collaborators and in their relation to the project. The special camaraderie that is implied here is a theme that will reappear in subsequent discussion of communities of practice.

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What we begin to sense from the sample of voices assembled above is the tension identified by the French sociologist Bruno Latour (2013): between energising enthusiasms and restraining (as well as enabling) socio-economic forces. Latour sees the emergence of energising enthusiasms as a very modern phenomenon, when these constitute, not secondary and peripheral experiences (e.g. hobbies), but central organising factors in what we can think of as people's reflexive self-formation (Thompson, 1995, p. 207). Filmmakers who struggle independently against funding and institutional barriers because they are passionately attached to what they are doing, offer us a fascinating example of this modern tension in action.

Latour (2013) provides a helpful vignette in order to elucidate this mode of existence (which his schema labels as ATT or *attachment*). He describes a hypothetical "Peter and Paul" who arrange in their busy schedules to meet at a

railway station bar to discuss the software development project they're enthusiastically planning together:

“...as she extends her inquiry, the analyst ... notices, in fact, that if they have been impelled to organize this meeting, it is because they are “attached” by a common “desire,” the desire to create a software program that, according to them, is already “attracting” the “attention” of many persons “lured” by the potential “earnings” and by the “beauty” of this innovation, whereas the program “worries” certain other persons who have been “alarmed” by the “risks” and the “consequences” of the invention. This is what interests our protagonists. It is thus toward this focal point of their attention that the investigator must direct her gaze, since it is what got them moving. With respect to this focal point, the organization of the meeting counts in the end only as an accessory temporarily in the service of something else” (p. 422).

So mobilised attachments that are shot through with these complex intersections of the positive and the negative, enthusiasms and resistances, organised in all sorts of urgently and calculatedly practical ways, start to look like a distinctively modern phenomenon and something that helps us at the outset to get our bearings on what is going on with a manifestation such as independent filmmaking. Latour goes on:

“Yes, of course, they have drawn up a “business plan”: they have it in their briefcases, and they may discuss it, if they have time, at the *Train bleu* bar at the station, going over the “bullet points” of the PowerPoint presentation... Still, these calculations do not support any particular course of action ... they are ultimately incapable of untangling the passions needed.... What we are trying to grasp is what has set them into motion, what moves – in both senses – Peter and Paul... When calculations appear, they are there to reinforce, emphasize, amplify, simplify, authorize, format, and perform the distribution of agencies, not at all to *substitute* for the experience of being set in motion, moved, attached, excited by things...” (p. 427).

Latour defines passion as “the degree of *intensity* of the attachment” (p. 433). What Rodriguez, Figgis and Preston help us to see is how these intensities may be focused through different emphases (voice, technophilia, the alternate social contract, community, etc.).

Historical determinants

With three initial themes exposed – refusing the money hose in order to find a voice, deciding whether to join the club, and passion – a broader historical context may be needed if these themes are to be interrogated for their validity as possible definers of the *independent mode of being* in film. The undercurrent of technophilia (though not especially apparent in Preston) may have its own historical determinants as well.

The rise in independent film echoes the beginning years of filmmaking around the turn of the 20th century, when like-minded filmmakers in developed-world locations in Europe and the USA (and a little later in post-revolution Russia) explored the array of storytelling possibilities the developing film technology presented without a particular focus on profit, but with the pioneer's passion for both storytelling and filmmaking. The rapid commercialisation and industrialisation of the entertainment industry (especially by the Hollywood studios) instituted a dominant model of film production with the goal of maximising the probability of return on investment, and with this change, freedom of expression and creativity may have taken a step back on occasion. As a result of new technology for both filmmaking and distribution, independent filmmaking holds the promise of regaining some of that creative freedom and rekindling the passion felt by early filmmakers – or at least, this may be a crucial part of its myth. Though ideas about freedom may be widely held but questionable beliefs, behind the myth are actual working practices, actual mobilised intensities, and actual intensities.

Though controlled by unions formed to protect workers, the informalisation of creative labour practices in post-Fordist Hollywood has left creative workers in an unstable situation that services the financial interests of the production corporations. De Peuter (2011) argues that there is a trio of precarious labour personas many film workers have adopted. The *cybertariat* works through the Internet, often on short-term projects that have been outsourced by a company, e.g. art design, sound or music scoring. The *autonomous worker* gambles on the potential of self-employment, seeking a better way of work (and life) than waged labour. As with the *cybertariat*, the autonomous worker has flexible hours, but they have no job security and individual workers bear the market risk. The *precog* (precarious cognitive worker) may have a sometimes prestigious-sounding

occupation (e.g. film producer) but labours under almost constantly precarious conditions.

The precarious cognitive workworld

<p>I am a precog. The precog must negotiate the “pleasure-pain axis” (McRobbie, 2004), a shaping characteristic of this type of cultural work. The <i>pain</i> of precarity includes low pay, no pay (e.g. internships needed for entry into paid employment), fluctuating income, the continual job search to maintain a steady flow of income, continuously needing to seek networking opportunities in social situations, being responsible for perpetual and personally financed upskilling, and the responsibility for success or failure of both individual projects and one’s career. But the pleasure of fulfilling work, the sense of “pre-empting conscription into the dullness of 9-5 and evading the constraints of institutional processes” (McRobbie, 2002, p. 521) provide compelling justification for tolerating the pain of uncertainty and self-exploitation (McRobbie, 1998). Filmmakers who always work independently of corporate control exchange potential financial gains and job security for the flexibility to</p>	<p>As independent filmmakers attempt to unshackle themselves from the stricter controls that Fordist practices placed on film creation, so Hollywood tries to incorporate the independent <i>spirit</i> into many of its movies. Dissatisfied or disillusioned by their career trajectories, members of the Hollywood clubs are increasingly crossing into independent filmmaking and flirting by choice or necessity with autonomous worker status; cinematographers, actors, and directors producing and directing their own independent projects, sometimes even taking the gamble to self-finance their work. They, too, learn additional aspects of filmmaking to enable them to work fast and not be dependent on a large crew with territorialised skill sets and exorbitant post-production costs. They fall in love with the process of developing work from the original glorious “It” of an idea, and they fall in love with the people who work alongside them. They build new clubs with cast and crew they meet on big productions and find up-and-coming filmmakers to work in exchange for the</p>
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(re)discover a passion for the medium and the process, thereby reengaging the myths of freedom and passion.

While autonomous workers in Hollywood-style crafts may find themselves moving to and fro on the spectrum from independent to studio as employment opportunities come and go, as the phone rings one month and not the next, the precog's is paradoxically a more stable situation: she is constantly in precarity.

And a film such as *Penny Black* not only gets made out of those circumstances; its mode of production typically reflects them in almost every detail.

Independent films often shoot on locations with no control of the environment. *Extras* are passers-by obscured by a shallow depth of field; stores may be unaware that a micro-crew is filming a movie on their sidewalk with a DSLR camera. There is no reserve of resources in large production vehicles lining the streets. Props found at a location are often used in a scene. If the weather turns cold a crew member may offer their jacket to an actor, which may be written into the storyline enabling her to wear it during filming. If the script calls for the actor to toss a wad of money to a prison

experience. Or they split their time between Hollywood and independence, still dependent on Hollywood to support their lifestyles, and making enough money on big projects to enable them to work on the low-budget films. The result is a spectrum of filmmaking from ultra-low-budget to Hollywood studio style, with no clear delineation between independent and studio, and with projects on the spectrum appropriating ideas, knowledge, and practices from the other.

The development of an efficient, simplified, and standardised Fordist-style process of production with a massive unionised workforce and a convenient assemblage of producers, suppliers, and facilities helped LA studios repeatedly produce products that appealed to a large audience internationally (Caldwell, 2008; Geuens, 2000). In the 1910s, Hollywood's version of Thomas Ford, Thomas Harper Ince, codified and standardised the practice of filmmaking. It would operate under the control of a central producer, with both production and crew becoming compartmentalised. Specialised technicians would do one job only, and were not involved in the creative decisions relating to the film. Scripts followed an industry standard format

guard, the director may borrow the cash from the actors (Rodriguez, 1992).

When independent filmmakers use real houses as locations they look lived in – little items of living scattered around.

When a studio production creates the interior of a house in a sound stage they are often impeccably tidy or stagily untidy (and larger than life to accommodate crew, lights and camera), and even an effort to create an unkempt room can still have an artificial feel to it. Geuens (2000) suggests that Hollywood does not just use a location, it invades it, covering up elements that give it its distinctiveness, “prettifying it, bringing it up to ‘its’ own standard” (p. 115).

Independent films of course may have large budgets, use the three-act structure, and construct a soundproof climate controlled set. They may have the best cameras, professional actors, and highly skilled veteran crew members. They may make a profit. But a crucial factor is that the filmmakers have the choice not to “cover up” the spaces that they occupy, not to invade but to incorporate, to be contaminated by the real.

Penny Black embodies many of the elements of independent filmmaking. We used our savings to fund most of the

leaving little scope for interpretation on set, eliminating structural problems and allowing the precise needs of a project to be identified and prepared for in advance. A script that does not fit the prescribed format, no matter how much producers like the story, will struggle to be made within the studio-style system. A Hollywood script is written with the goal of appealing to studio readers, who recommend projects to producers for option. It must *pitch* well to appeal to producers, and subsequently to directors and actors who will be *attached* to the project to make it more saleable (Geuens, 2000). Though this streamlining may remove many of the uncertainties of filmmaking and increase return on investment, Geuens (2000) argues it makes the entire process “a mechanical operation that suppresses the feeling of brotherhood normally present in a communal creative environment” (p. 75). Of course, Hollywood also exploits new forms of post-Fordism: diversity of tastes, niche productions, welcoming foreign ideas, styles, and personalities (Geuens, 2000), giving film its “historic persistence and cultural resilience” (Caldwell, 2008, p. 34).

From conception independent film has the *option* of unconventionality. The script can be more flexible in form, like

production (total budget approximately NZ\$70,000), with additional amounts raised through crowdfunding and grants, and sponsorship for meals, accommodation, and van rental. Our cast and crew worked for free or for their expenses. Most of our locations were free of charge, and wardrobe was borrowed or sourced from second-hand stores. *We* made all the financial decisions. We scrimped on props, splurged on meals, found sponsorship for our vans, and made changes to the script to reduce costs, but they were all our own decisions. We had no funders telling us what our audience wanted, how to reach our audience, or that the project was not marketable enough. We chose not to attempt to develop the film with the NZFC because of the length of time it would take. Even if they did like our script it might have been several years before it was finally “in production”. Making it ourselves we could leave room for improvisation, leave gaps in the characters’ background stories, have an ambiguous ending, and straddle the space between comedy and drama rather than subscribing to marketably defined genre.

The improvisatory style of shooting on real locations chosen for *Penny Black* added unexpected everyday details and

Rodriguez’s script for *El Mariachi* (Rodriguez, 1992), which consisted of 30 pages with additional ideas stored in Rodriguez’s head. Dialogue in an independent script may be rough with plans for the actors to improvise during shooting or altered after casting, or, as in the case of *What we do in the shadows* (Clement & Waititi, 2014), a 150 page script can be written in three days but never shown to the actors (Waititi & Clement, 2014). Independent filmmakers that are not relying on corporate-controlled style financing can write the story they want to tell without it being driven by the commercial viability of the completed film. They can target a niche market with a particular interest, or tackle a story that may have local interest but which may not have considerable international appeal.

Less structure in film crew hierarchy results in filmmakers having the ability to collaborate differently in the process of creating films, often with the writer and director working together from conception of a project, compared with studio productions where it is not uncommon for a writer to leave a project even before a director comes on board. Director Godard and writer Jean-Claude Carrière would begin a project by looking at images to see if they

a certain grittiness to the production that affected both the cast and the crew. It was the director's job to recognise the potential of these details and incorporate them into the narrative, making them work for, rather than against the film, transferring these factors into the look, the feel, and the believability of the story. During an unexpected rainfall an actor improvised by holding a discarded box over her head. She genuinely shivered from cold, adding to the authenticity of her performance and the stress her character was feeling. The sensations she felt were as real as the biting southwest wind whipping through her flimsy nylon wardrobe. The environment provides small gestures of everyday life that are often welcomed into the narratives of independent films: an actor pulling a hair from her mouth, tucking her cold hands under her arms, or raising her face to the warmth of the sun that has been hidden all day; these moments add to the verisimilitude of the film. When filming on location awkward gestures that people do all the time are witnessed in abundance, as they are natural reactions to existing stimuli rather than calculated actions the actor has utilised to enhance their performance. This is captured by the camera and felt by an audience. Geuens

sparked an idea for a scene, and viewed their collaboration as "...the coming together of two people with complementary skills, two individuals who love cinema, two talents whose aspiration is that maybe a good film will come out of their joining forces" (Geuens, 2000, p.89).

When shooting a studio film the script is *locked* (scene numbers fixed) before distribution to department heads and talent, enabling them to prepare for production. At this point department heads start to *break down* the script, identifying the elements they will be responsible for. For example, the costumier must identify how many wardrobe changes will be required, and then consult with the director regarding her/his ideas for style, fabrics and colour palette. Each department head must ensure that no element is overlooked; that everything that may be needed for shooting is on hand during production. Departments have large trailers where they are able to store any supplies and equipment they may need to make adjustments, additions, or repairs, and to where they retreat when they are not needed on set. This repository of supplies can be moved between shooting locations, creating a system where "everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately on hand"

<p>believes that rather than avoiding contamination by the real world, this kind of production embraces it (Geuens, 2000).</p> <p>We opted to film with a RED camera, which is relatively small and portable, does not require a large crew to operate, and gave the director more freedom, flexibility, and control, especially as it was his own camera and he was proficient in its use. It brought intangible value to the production due to the then current buzz in the industry over the RED (Gardner, 2012). The opportunity to use seldom accessible technology such as the RED camera and the huge lens we hired to replicate 1970s superhero-genre style crash zooms, increased motivation and commitment in the director of photography and camera operator. We released stills of this technology in action as part of our behind the scenes material to communicate the production values of the project.</p> <p>Factors such as technophilia may inform the commitment to projects, and may be especially prevalent for independents without access to a standing reserve of resources. But commitment may also be to the expectation of “impulses, desire, madness, passion” (Steigerwald, as</p>	<p>(Geuens, 2000, p. 114). This <i>bestand</i> may contain many items that are seldom, if ever, used, but which are purchased “just in case”. Several identical wardrobes are made in case one is damaged or requires laundering. Additional props are purchased if they are likely to be damaged or lost. The ready availability of production money (Rodriguez’s money hose) may encourage department heads to choose safe practices they have utilised successfully in the past, avoiding surprises that may prove risky or label them as unprepared, and jeopardise their chances for future employment should they hold up production or fail to perform their duties adequately. Each department (over) prepares for their role in the creation of the film, and then filming commences, often in climate-controlled sound stages. Every element is planned and controlled as far as it is possible to limit unwanted surprises during production. Location shooting, in effect, strives to replicate this studio style by descending on locations with an army of personnel and all the attendant paraphernalia. The studio system dictates that every element in a film must be there for a logistical reason, every story thread tied up by the closing credits, and characters must be types. Steigerwald says this denies the</p>
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<p>quoted in Geuens, 2000, p. 115) becoming expressible through the very conditions of production; the expectation that such things will colour the very experience of making films independently. This may be almost a matter of faith...</p>	<p>artist access to “impulses, desire, madness, passion” (as quoted in Geuens, 2000, p. 115). Contractually attached, locked, broken-down into controllable components: this is the <i>bestand</i> of non-independence.</p>
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Geuens’ use of the German term “bestand” is especially helpful here, taking the top-down angle from the library shelf, so to speak. The standing reserve of stock, holdings, assets, etc., which is what the word means, is a view of the world as a stockpile of assets. Beyond the particular investments of energy by particular filmmakers is the question of whether they are given a world as a stockpile of assets or find their work contaminated, for better or for worse, by a world that has not been so rendered.

The two textual juxtapositions offered by this chapter have contextualised the “I” from which the research originates by, in a sense, presenting alternative texts at key points in the chapter. The juxtaposition will become more pronounced in the relationship between Chapter 2 and its invisible Appendix, the raw autoethnographic material. The methodological strategy in these devices is simple: not to oscillate between objective and subjective voices but to undermine that distinction from the outset in the interests of constructing a naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). As a methodological aside at this point, however, it should be noted that this research is not intended as simply another instance of naturalistic inquiry (NI) per se, but aims also to produce conceptual generalisations of a sort that NI often struggles to generate (Glaser, 2004).

The preceding sections have identified some of the key factors that define independence in contemporary filmmaking discourse in the English-speaking world, including factors that relate to conditions of production, stories and content, the informalisation of creative labour practices, and the kinds of passion that these filmmakers say they bring to the work. Situating these discursive constructions of independence in a long view of media developments may help us to understand how themes such as refusing the money hose, finding a voice, not joining the club,

and passion, represent specific discursive content for a claim that there is something radical about being independent.

Winston's model and the question of *radical potential*

Winston's model (1998) suggests that historical patterns of development in media are predictable. He depicts a field (social sphere) in which science and technology intersect, where knowledge is developed in the scientific field and subsequently moved to the level of technological performance by *ideation*. Ideation is the process by which a technologist envisages a device that could transform a competence. Prototypes are then built to demonstrate this technological *performance* of the competence.

Winston calls the concentration of social forces which impact on technological performance supervening social necessities (SSNs). He refers to the *brake and accelerator* aspects of technological progress, whereby SSNs frame the accelerating factors but there are always brakes as well. Winston tested his general model on every major communication medium, from telegraph to internet, and found that a combination of braking factors always kicks in when the disruption caused by a new technology goes beyond transforming a channel of communication into radically disrupting the vested interests of the most powerfully established networks of "patronage and clientelism", as Dawson and Holmes (2012) call the establishment in this instance, and disrupting the kinds of social contract referred to by Mike Figgis. In other words, SSNs may unleash disruptive technologies, practices, and passions, but not into a power vacuum. There are always powerful interests at work to constrain the disruption, and Winston refers to this as the law of suppression of radical potential. I have populated his abstract model by brainstorming the various zones in relation to the film industry (Fig. 1), not as a comprehensive description but in order to capture the sorts of thing that were going on when I did so.

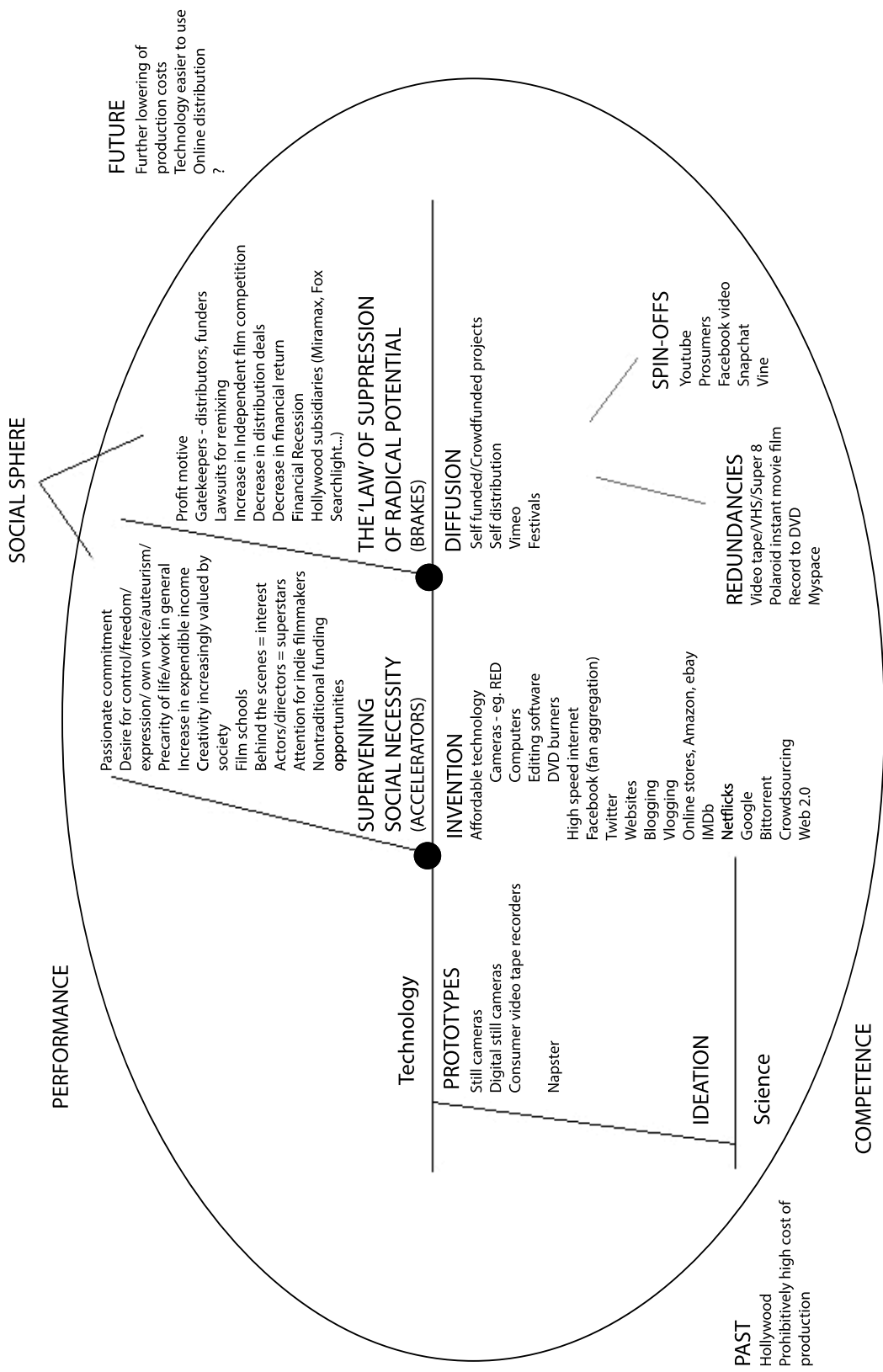


Fig. 1. Passion and profit: Winston's model, adapted for independent filmmaking.

The populated model suggests how independent filmmaking may be framed in Winston's terms. Technology developed from prototypes into devices that enabled inexpensive capturing and communication of images. Concurrently, other necessary technology developed and reduced in cost such as powerful computers, affordable editing software, DVD burners, and high-speed internet, coupled with the ability to share files and video online. This assembly of technical actants has produced a sense of radical potential for filmmakers wanting to work outside of the corporate-controlled style of filmmaking.

Changes in society have provided the SSNs to accelerate the adoption of developing technology, which in turn supports independent filmmaking, such as affordable technology, social media, and file sharing. At the same time that many filmmakers sought more freedom from controlling corporate interests, the technology to enable this became available and more affordable, and this, coupled with an increase in expendable income, meant potential filmmakers were more easily able to purchase the necessary technology. The increasing precarity of economic life primed filmmakers for a lowering of expectations of income, work hours, and security, and perhaps made the idea of self-precarisation in order to take control of their film projects a more familiar, and therefore acceptable, option (see the discussion of precarity later in this chapter). A proliferation of film schools helped filmmaking seem a more viable career option, behind-the-scenes "extras" gave people the chance to appreciate some of the infrequently seen creative processes of filmmaking, and creativity became increasingly valued by society, as Richard Florida tells us (though this was not always necessarily converted into financial reward). In response to the audience's increasing interest in filmmaking (not just films) and a willingness to support or participate in production, and filmmakers' need for funding outside of controlling corporate interests, non-traditional funding opportunities such as crowdfunding were developed.

The gatekeepers of mainstream film production and distribution, distributors, funders, and corporate entities, continue to suppress the radical potential even if they initially flirted with it. They have initiated lawsuits for consumers attempting to "remix" copyrighted material, decreased the amount they are willing to pay to acquire independent film for distribution, and closed many of their own "boutique" subsidiaries that produced Hollywood-owned independent style films.

However, independent filmmaking continues to proliferate. More independent film festivals open each year, and more films are submitted to each festival. Ironically though, this proliferation of festivals worldwide may actually contribute to the suppression of the radical potential of independent filmmaking as filmmakers pursue selection in festivals but fail to profit from screenings. This makes their practice financially unsustainable, while the institutions and cities that host the festivals profit from them as cultural events. However, filmmakers are finding new ways to self-distribute: self-publishing their DVDs, selling from their own websites, and screening their films at their own theatrical premieres, suggesting that this is not a static situation, but rather an evolving tension between radical potential and its suppression.

The long view that reveals this tension brings us to an important realisation. The themes of independence we have identified, framed by Winston's discovery of a systemic tension in media development generally, will probably play out on the ground as it were, in the courses of action taken by filmmakers. And it may be there that the tension is actually lived by practitioners.

Is this then a specific instance, explained in considerable measure by media historical forces, of Latour's brutal tension between energising experiences of potential and depressing experiences of precarity-based disappointment? If so, it would seem that we have identified the framework within which our particular beings of passionate interest (or interested passions) – independent filmmakers – pursue their courses of action and live out their values.

To formulate an initial hypothesis, therefore, what we call an *independent* pursues courses of action (work) based on a specific commitment (or even faith), within an often temporary community of practice (or network) in which values such as idealism are as important as profit. Their labour may, therefore, be fundamentally *affective*, caught endlessly and cyclically as it is between potential and disappointment. Winston's model lacks recognition of this and, therefore, of the affective as a terrain on which radical potential gets contested. At best the moments of realised potential will be precisely that – moments – and so we will need a theory of such moments. And finally we will need to come back to the concept of precarity

in order to understand better the pleasure-pain axis that operates within conditions of precarity for our peculiar independent beings and their distinctive forms of commitment.

The second half of this chapter offers a more detailed discussion of the various constituents of the hypothesis just presented.

. . .

Work/commitment/independent faith

To explain how commitment at work develops, Meyer and Allen describe a Three-Component Model of Commitment, which includes affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Strong *affective commitment* results in a worker's desire to stay with an organisation, and refers to emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in an organisation, large or small. The antecedents of affective commitment are the personal characteristics and work experiences of the employee. *Continuance commitment* describes an employee's need to remain with an organisation due to the costs associated with leaving, and also whether they have viable alternatives for work or investments that would be lost by leaving. *Normative commitment* reflects employees' feelings of obligation or moral responsibility to stay with an organisation, which is based on their personal characteristics, their socialisation experiences, and their organisational investments. An employee may experience varying degrees of all three of these components, and all three correlate to an employee's job satisfaction, job involvement, and occupational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky, 2002). Considering the film crew as an organisation, attachment to other crew members and the project results in strong *affective* commitment, the desire for experience which will potentially lead to success in their future work provides *continuance* commitment, and *normative* commitment is generated by obligation to repay (or generate) favours and keep or build reputation within their community of filmmakers.

Often in the case of an ultra-low-budget film project the motivation of financial reward is largely eliminated, potentially affecting the antecedents of commitment,

but the psychological bonds that tie filmmakers to specific projects must also be considered. O'Reilly and Chatman argue that there are three distinct forms of psychological bond which (referring to Kelman's work on the processes of attitude change (Kelman, 1958)) they label compliance, identification, and internalisation. Compliance is a consequence of workers adopting attitudes and behaviours to gain specific rewards, regardless of whether their public or private attitudes are similar. Identification occurs when an individual respects the values and accomplishments of a group they are part of without adopting them as his or her own. Internalisation results when the values of the individual and the group are the same (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). The rewards of independent filmmaking vary between individuals and crew positions (and may also be experienced in larger budget filmmaking). A director may enjoy the autonomy experienced when having control of every element of a project and seeing the reactions of an audience during the first screenings. A writer may find pleasure in watching actors bring the characters and the script to life. A producer may enjoy the challenge of finding all the pieces and problem solving. Heads of department may enjoy the creativity and working with a team. Interns and assistants may be seeking knowledge and experience from their time on set. And often workers get the opportunity to work in a higher position than they would in paid employment, e.g. an experienced focus puller may get the opportunity to work as camera operator, improving their knowledge and their résumé.

Hackman (1998) suggests that, "teams usually do less well – not better – than the sum of their members' individual contributions" (p. 25) and says, "...problems with coordination and motivation typically chip away at the benefits of collaboration". However, he follows on to say, "I have no question that when you have a team, the possibility exists that it will generate magic, producing something extraordinary, a collective creation of previously unimagined quality or beauty" (as quoted in Coutu, 2009, p. 100), even though more often than not this is not the case.

A possible hypothesis, therefore, is that faith in the *potential magic* of small-team independent working may be one powerful motivation for a commitment to this kind of production. Whether such magic consistently happens may be less significant than a faith that it might. This faith may be grounded in some of the specific characteristics of small-team filmmaking.

Hackman (with Oldham) proposed a *job characteristics theory* based on the idea that employee motivation is relative to the conditions of the work. They identified five core job characteristics (utilising an appropriate variety of skills and talents, being able to identify the whole task and viewing that as significant, autonomy, and feedback including an awareness of how effective performance is). These characteristics impact on three psychological states (meaningfulness of the work, responsibility for and knowledge of the outcome of the finished product), which in turn influence further work outcomes. Their research around work teams suggests that factors in successful team composition are:

- The task the members are required to complete must sustain member motivation.
- The group must be as small as possible, and consist of a good mix of members, people who are neither too similar nor too different – with adequate interpersonal skills to allow them to work together.
- The group must have a clear understanding of acceptable team behaviour without having to continuously discuss conduct (Hackman, 1998, p.28).

Thus a film production of whatever size inherently has in place many of the conditions necessary to foster both worker motivation and team effectiveness. Due to its size, duration, and diversity of skills required to complete a project, filmmaking is functionally suited to teamwork. Crew are hand picked, often with significant consideration regarding the composition of the team, their personalities, their strengths and weaknesses. Experienced filmmakers “become the ‘storage units’ for the industry-wide norms, culture and rules,” (Daskalaki & Blair, 2003, p. 181) allowing new filmmakers to quickly learn about hierarchy and the norms of behaviour on set, which helps to promote competent teamwork. In addition, training opportunities are available through internships, mentoring, and through observation of experienced crew members and a team in operation (Hackman, 1998).

Hackman describes conditions that can make the difference between success and failure for a team. He asserts that it is a fallacy that bigger teams are better as they have more resources to draw upon, as in fact the larger the team the greater number of links that need to be managed between members. Another misconception he

describes is that if team members become too familiar, they begin to accept each others' weaknesses and as a result performance drops, even though teams need the chance to know each other well in order to perform at their best. One exception to this rule is the team member he dubs the "deviant" who questions why things are being done the way they are, who opens up more ideas and is a potential source of innovation and originality (Coutu, 2009). This anticipates both Krackhardt's (1992) notion of the strength of strong ties, and Granovetter's (1973) notion of bridging, both explored further in the next section.

Humphrey, Nahrgang, and Morgeson (2007) begin to extend Hackman's theory by integrating motivational, social, and work context characteristics. They claim that important aspects of social environment and work context have been neglected by job characteristics theory, and that the characteristics of interdependence, feedback from others, social support, interaction outside the organisation and the work context characteristics (e.g. work conditions) should be considered. Oldman and Hackman (2013) revisited their theory noting that the nature of jobs has changed and continues to change, in fact even the concept of "job" is changing. Situations that were not common when Hackman wrote the original paper (e.g. telecommuting, temporary teams, and independent contractors) are now commonplace. They recognise that social aspects of work are becoming increasingly important in organisations and that factors that have a significant social component should be considered. A key factor of this kind may be of particular significance for independent filmmakers.

Much of the enabling network structure for a successful group, as described above, can be found in small independent film crews. Due to budget restraints the crew is small, and often includes friends or previous collaborators who know each other well and who work fast and effectively. The team leaders, generally the writer, director and/or producer(s), bring their strengths to the project, recruiting help in areas of weakness, and sometimes instinctively (or accidentally) including a deviant member with the courage to ask the difficult questions that steer the project away from mediocrity (Coutu, 2009). The leaders understand the need for social support and create situations where cast and crew can relax and enjoy each other's company, perhaps after wrapping for the day. Work context determines the solidarity available to participants as creative or artistic labour and generates

feelings of shared purpose, as with other forms of labour. Critically though, Bain (2005) argues that the identities filmmakers adopt due to their role as artistic labourers are in fact “drawing on a repertoire of shared myths and stereotypes to help create an artistic identity and project it to others” (p. 25), not just through forms of social solidarity but also individualistically.

So, acceptable team behaviour (Hackman, 1998, p. 28) in this instance may often include the shared evocation of this repertoire of myths and stereotypes in order to construct and communicate the identity of the independent. The reciprocal relation of motivation and identity-construction in this way, with its own feedback loops and altruistic encouragement of likeminded identity-construction in others, may be banked in the storage units (Daskalaki & Blair, 2003, p. 181) of the more experienced crew members and, so to speak, released into the small communities that assemble around them.

Communities of practice, camaraderie and networked individualism

Low-budget independent filmmaking often relies heavily on the assistance and goodwill of other people. The internet has turned communities surrounding a film project into an expanded culture, including filmmakers, people in potentially supportive industries (artists, chefs, musicians, etc.) and community members interested in supporting or following a group without physically participating in the work necessary to bring a project to fruition.

Chua, Madej, and Wellman (2011) describe two ways of looking at communities: the traditional *spatially bounded* collectivity; a group of people who converge around an interest (e.g. students, Girl Guiding, filmmaking); and the *relationally defined* (personal) community. The *relationally defined* community has a personal set of *ties* to individuals at its centre. Friends, family, neighbours, acquaintances, co-workers, members of the same organisations, are all personal community members of one individual, and are often connected to each other. Social affordances that link individuals directly and instantly such as mobile phones, email and social media (as opposed to visiting, landlines which linked households to households, and pen and paper letters) have given rise to a form of community

Chua, et. al. call “networked individualism” (p. 102). Social media sites such as Facebook have facilitated the organisation of the social worlds of individuals and made these personal communities more visible, both to the individual and also to the friends, family, and acquaintances in each community. Contemporary independent filmmaking may involve a distinctive form of networked individualism.

Networked individualism may involve both strong and weak ties, though there is considerable ambiguity as to what constitutes strong and weak ties. Granovetter (1973) quantifies the strength of a tie between two individuals by considering the amount and frequency of time spent together, the emotional intensity, intimacy, and reciprocal exchanges. Cialdini (1993) emphasises the rule of reciprocation which says that we will try to repay that which someone has given us; favours, gifts, invitations, etc., even if we do not like the person, and often with things of higher value than the original (Weinschenk, 2009), to avoid any lingering feeling of indebtedness. This socially constructed template for interaction developed a widely shared and strongly held feeling that future obligation meant that one person could give something to another with confidence that it was not essentially a loss (Cialdini, 1993; Levine, 2003). Filmmakers often work on each other’s projects, support crowdfunding projects, and loan equipment with the expectation that favours will be repaid. These kinds of reciprocal relationships tend to build strong ties over time. However, Granovetter (1973) argues that weak ties act as a *bridge* between otherwise unconnected networks, making such ties valuable by providing novel input. Daskalaki (2010) applies this concept to creative industries stating, “...creative compatibility decisions may be based on diverse yet complementary qualities that would enhance the creative potential of the network” (p. 1653). Granovetter (1973) says strong ties do not provide such a bridge as it is likely that if two members of social groups are connected then the other members will likewise be connected and thus share the same information. However, this may have altered somewhat due to changes brought about by the use of the internet as a cheap, quick and efficient means of communication and networking, where ties are more diverse (Chua et al., 2011). Granovetter underestimates the benefits and strength of strong ties. Putnam (2000, as cited in Antcliff, Saundry, & Stuart, 2007) describes “bonding capital” as homogenous populations providing support and encouragement, but the factors that develop this capital (e.g. trust and solidarity)

may restrict the activities of individuals, who must then open their network to accumulate “bridging capital” (Leonard, 2004).

In this context, Krackhardt (1992) argues for the importance of what he calls *philos* (similar to but not reducible to friendship). He defines a *philos* relationship as one that includes three ingredients of trust: interaction that creates the opportunity for the exchange of information; affection which creates the motivation to treat the other positively; and time which creates the experience necessary for each person to predict how the other will react to and use any shared information. He claims that change is not simply dependent on new information, but that major change requires trust, and is the product of “strong, affective, and time-honoured relationships” (p.238). The benefit of strong ties and of *philos* as bonding agents is illustrated in the concept of *communities of practice*, which is where the relevance to filmmaking becomes clear.

Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) describe communities of practice as “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (para. 2). Members of the community value their collective competence and learn about their shared domain of interest from each other. While pursuing their interest, group members “engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information” (para. 2) accelerating the acquisition of knowledge among members (Shirky, 2010). Members are practitioners who develop a shared repertoire of resources including their experiences, information, tools needed for their practice, and methods of problem solving. Communities of practice may be digitally connected around their shared domain of interest, and may include professionals and non-experts. Members of the group may not come together specifically with the goal of learning, but through their interactions this may be an incidental outcome of their practice. Social motivations for participation in creative communities of this kind are the desire for membership while the personal motivations individuals may seek are autonomy and competence (Shirky, 2010). Cultural industries are often geographically clustered to facilitate sharing of technical expertise, knowledge and equipment, and to undertake group projects, and are “predominantly comprised of dense networks of formal and informal economic and social relationships” (Lee, 2011, p. 551). This is often the case for filmmakers, with Auckland and Wellington

being obvious examples of this clustering in New Zealand, perhaps in part due to a tendency for people with “similar cultural backgrounds, financial means, lifestyles, social values and expectations” to gravitate towards the same places (Bain, 2005, p. 36). Filmmakers in smaller centres often struggle to find resources, collaborators, and funding, and may feel they are not taken seriously by other industry personnel, resulting in filmmakers abandoning smaller centres and relocating to cities with larger filmmaking clusters and more work opportunities. Törnqvist (1983) argues, “Creativity flourishes when different specialties and competences are squeezed together on a small surface. What is needed is a meeting-place for more or less random contacts and new combinations of pieces of information and fragments of ideas” (p. 103), and that it would be incorrect to assume that physical proximity alone fosters creative exchange, with creatives often seeking solitude in order to focus on their projects.

Tangentially to this, however, just as *crowdsourcing* has become a way to pool resources, *crowdfunding* has become an increasingly popular way for filmmakers to fund, or partially fund, their projects. Filmmakers find that when people pledge money to support a project they often continue to support (or follow) the project to its completion. They are likely to follow the process through social media, some may help with additional funding if needed, and many will see the film when released and share news of it through their networks. Cialdini explains that when an individual makes a commitment voluntarily it can effectively tie them to the principle of consistency (Cialdini & Martin, 2006). The principle of consistency identifies the desire to be (and to appear) consistent with our past actions and commitments. Being consistently supportive helps bind people into these loose networks (Cialdini, 1993). Another motivation that helps to explain behaviour of pledgers on crowdfunding projects is the principle of social proof, which says that people have a tendency to see an action as being the “right thing to do” when others are doing it. This illustrates the importance of promoting a crowdfunding project before it goes live, making certain there are people ready to pledge the first day. People are hesitant to be the first to pledge on a project if it appears no one else is supporting it. In addition, according to the association principle, if we are connected to success, even in a superficial way, our public prestige will rise (Cialdini, 1993), helping to explain why more people pledge on projects as they near their goal, and even after the goal has been reached and the project is

successful. Crowdfunding projects often offer time-limited rewards, as opportunities seem more valuable when their availability is limited (Cialdini, 1993; Levine, 2003).

Participatory culture is closely aligned to the concept of communities of practice when people are no longer acting solely as consumers. Henry Jenkins defines a participatory culture as one with: with relatively low barriers to artistic expression; strong support for creating and sharing one's creations with others; some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices, and where; members believe that their contributions matter; and where members feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least they care what other people think about what they have created) (Jenkins, Puroshotma, Clinton, Weigel, & Robison, 2006). Now that individuals have the ability to share their work many more are choosing to create work than when it was harder to share, and their potential audience was smaller (Shirky, 2010).

What emerges from these perspectives, when we allow them to converge on the teams at the heart of independent filmmaking, is the importance of the community of practice with its network of strong and weak ties, its passionate attachments (to both the work and other filmmakers), its bridging via weak ties, and its repertoire of resources (including knowledge), and discursively shared myths of self identity as creative labour. Technologically enabled *expanded communities* now gather, relocate, re-form, disperse and shift around these core networks via participatory engagements of various kinds.

What is being suggested here is that the apparent social turn in theories of workworld relations offers a useful conceptual vocabulary with which to extend our considerations of the independent. These considerations around a core commitment to the work, of whatever kind, include important questions about ties of various strengths and duration, philos relationships, and communities of practice with permeable virtual boundaries. The independent's networked individualism is afforded additional opportunities for the creation and projection of an identity. Saying that the self-evident individualism of Rodriguez, Figgis or Preston is today a networked individualism, is to say that the "impulses, desire, madness, passion" of these beings of passionate interest (Steigerwald filtered through Latour) can only be

fully understood through a relational perspective on their mobilised intensities and consequent courses of action. Furthermore, the intensities that are being mobilised may be themselves in part relational intensities, which is to say, relations invested with their own emotional energies.

The flourishing of the independent

Hollywood producer, Lindsay Doran, discovered Martin Seligman's book, *Flourish* (Seligman, 2011) and was intrigued by the five essential elements of well-being (Rickey, 2012) in relation to story. Though it is well known that the protagonist's accomplishment is one of the most important elements of movies that are well received by an audience, Doran realised it is not accomplishment on its own that is most effective. When the achiever shares their victory with someone they love (Rickey, 2012) the act of sharing an accomplishment then encompasses all five of Seligman's essential elements: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (which he collectively refers to as PERMA). The article of Doran's in the New York Times in 2012 intrigued Hollywood, attracting attention from radio talk shows, magazines, and also Seligman himself, who invited Doran to give a presentation on *Hollywood and Happiness* at a Positive Psychology conference (Van Nuys, 2011).

Doran, an accomplished Hollywood executive, was being heralded (perhaps somewhat dubiously) as having discovered the key to what makes watching movies satisfying. But interestingly, despite having spent many years working and living in Hollywood, she did not use PERMA to explore the *practice* of filmmaking, specifically the intense relationships that are often formed between key creative people (recalling what Gaylene Preston told us). Doran did not explore whether the sharing of accomplishment helps to explain why many independent filmmakers continue to toil over their work in spite of low pay, long hours, and seemingly little in return, and helps to contribute to filmmakers often flourishing as a result of, not despite, the challenging demands of filmmaking.

Seligman's model is a construct composed of five measurable elements, each contributing to well being. Each element must have the three following properties:

it contributes to well-being; many people pursue it for its own sake, not merely to get any of the other elements; it is defined and measured independently of the other elements (Seligman, 2011). Filmmaking self-evidently triggers positive emotion in many forms for many practitioners: gratitude for all those who help in the process; interest in the subject matter and in the process of creating the work; hope that all the elements will come together to form a finished project; pride in the work, especially if it receives critical acclaim; inspiration as other indie filmmakers create and achieve, etc. And sometimes it gives rewards in the form of festival awards, public attention, and financial returns. The second element is engagement, which can only be assessed subjectively, and often after the fact. It uses the notion of the flow state, which is achieved when “your highest strengths are deployed to meet the highest challenges that come your way” (Seligman, 2011, p. 24). Each project presents new challenges, pushing talents and abilities to their limit. For a big budget film skilled workers are contracted to do separate tasks, but independent filmmakers often have to learn to do every activity. Though such work is challenging and exhausting, the nature of the work is rarely monotonous (Coles, 2010) and filmmakers often experience a high degree of autonomy in how they perform their work, increasing their level of engagement.

Positive relationships (or their absence) have a profound influence on well-being. When asked to explain what *positive psychology* is about, one of its proponents, Christopher Peterson, replied, “other people” (as quoted in Seligman, 2011, p. 20). The experience of filmmaking is very much about other people. A crew often begins to feel like a family or a tribe. They develop rituals and retell stories of on-set antics that help to solidify the bonds and develop a collective identity. Belonging to and working to complete a project that began as an original idea (see Preston’s “It”), something one believes is bigger than oneself, also has a personally subjective component. What holds meaning for one may not for someone else. For filmmakers their project, a compilation of effort from many people, can feel bigger than the sum of its parts, and bigger than themselves. Belonging to a network of filmmakers holds meaning for some people, especially independent filmmakers who often have a feeling of taking on the industry, or achieving their goal in spite of lack of support from film funding bodies or naysayers.

Describing the positive and negative influences on creative workers in creative

work an independent report commissioned by the BBC states:

The following key influences are commonly identified in the literature as drivers of creativity: freedom, autonomy, good role models, resources (including time), encouragement, freedom from criticism, and norms in which innovation is prized and failure is not regarded as fatal. By contrast, lack of respect, red tape, constraint, inappropriate norms, unrealistic expectations, negative feedback processes, time pressure, lack of autonomy, and overly prescriptive project management, all potentially inhibit creativity (Runco, 2004, as cited in Hutton, O’Keeffe, & Turner, 2005)

Huppert and So (2013) define flourishing in a slightly different way, but in keeping with the spirit of well-being theory, that an individual must have the core features of positive emotions, engagement, meaning, and three of the six additional features of self-esteem, optimism, resilience, vitality, self-determination, and positive relationships. All twelve of Huppert and So’s elements are terms one would find used to describe the necessary personal requirements for successful independent filmmakers, which, along with Seligman’s theory, helps to explain why independent filmmakers continue to pursue their work when the usual motivations of money and prestige are often so glaringly absent.

When we move on here to gather ethnographic and related data about actual practices of independent working, we can use many of these concepts to distinguish flourishing in the work from other factors. It may also be possible to relate this back to ideas about the community of practice (the sharing of accomplishment, including via expanded communities) and about passionate attachments. Such attachments may help creative people flourish, irrespective of the particular products of their labour.

Affective labour

If you’re not paying people very much money then the people that you’re gonna get, they’re there cause their heart says they have to be there. Rene Naufahu (TVNZ, 2014)

Immaterial labour is labour that produces an immaterial product, such as a service, ideas, images, a cultural product, knowledge, forms of communication, affects, or social relationships (Hardt, 2005; Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 290; 2004), or in other words, labour which “produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity” (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 133). Products made by the creative industries are the result of immaterial labour. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have developed Lazzarato’s concept into the idea of the “immaterial paradigm” of labour (Hardt & Negri, 2004), distinguishing three types of immaterial labour that drive the service sector at the top of the informational economy. The first is *informationisation* of production, which is industrial production that has incorporated communication technologies, thereby transforming the production process. The second type includes *symbolic-analytical services*, which encompass “creative and intelligent manipulation” and “routine symbolic tasks” such as managerial and problem solving practices. The third type of immaterial labour involves the “*production and manipulation of affect*” (italics added), performed through human contact or interaction (virtual or actual), which produces “intangible feelings of ease, excitement, or passion” (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 293). Though the process of filmmaking involves all three types of immaterial labour, the affective is of particular interest here, in light of the foregoing discussion.

Affective labour is labour that produces affects for the person performing the labour. Hardt and Negri (2004) note that affective labour is being prioritised when industries look for workers with “education, attitude, character, and ‘prosocial’ behaviour” (p. 108). In an industry where work is secured through personal contacts and recommendations such as the film industry, resumes are rarely used by film producers when assembling crew as personnel are hired not only based on ability and experience, but also whether a person is considered easy to work with (H. Blair, 2001). Film workers are selected to join crews based on “reputation and familiarity, conveyed in a mix of personal acquaintance, kinship, past working connections, and past achievements” (Ursell, 2000, p. 811).

Work within the creative industries is often described as “profoundly satisfying and intensely pleasurable,” (Gill & Pratt, 2008). Rowland and Handy (2012), however, suggest that freelance film production workers develop an addictive relationship

with the film industry, resulting in the diminishment of both quality and quantity of relationships outside the industry, and increasing dependence on relationships within the industry, causing distress when access to the work environment is curtailed.

Workers entering creative industries are sometimes forced to provide their services free of charge, e.g. as unpaid interns, or at low cost. In exchange for their labour they receive the promise of an experience that will help them break in to the industry, and positive affect can be considered part of the remuneration for their work. However, workers also dislike the financial insecurity, competitiveness and the general unpredictability of project-based work and experience stress that results from this (Dex, Willis, Paterson, & Sheppard, 2000). Additional affective features of the creative industries also include fatigue, exhaustion, frustration, anxiety, and insecurity, and for good or bad, a worker's whole life and sense of self may be inextricably linked with their work. Workers need to maintain good working relationships during the course of short term projects, so socialisation becomes an added pressure; no longer merely a pleasant activity, it is an essential part of the job in order to secure future work (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2008). With no formal hiring strategies for workers, networking is a crucial mode of interaction (Coles, 2010). It functions as a means of building and maintaining relationships within flexible working environments and gaining a competitive advantage over less connected workers, or workers who are reluctant to network (Grabher, 2004; Lee, 2011). Even on set the social talk often functions as business or task-oriented talk, and vice versa, constructing and developing social identities, social categories, and group boundaries, including inter-group identity and professional identity (Holmes, 2005, p. 672).

Wissinger (2007) describes how fashion models are working all the time, whether in front of the camera, looking for work, working out, dieting, or socialising. Filmmaking is similar. Lassarato (1996) observes that self-employed workers often find it "increasingly difficult to distinguish leisure time from work time," as their life becomes inseparable from their work (p. 138). Social media blur this boundary further. With little or no job security, filmmakers feel responsible for their career success or failure. If they do not work as much as time allows they may fear that they will miss an opportunity that could result in their collaboration on someone

else's project, or finding more secure paid employment in the business.

Public understanding of creative work is enmeshed with public perceptions of what constitutes *real work*. In the minds of most people not connected with creative work, real work occurs outside the home, involves wages and fees, and conforms to regular, defined, and finite working hours. Bain (2005) explains that much misunderstanding comes about because the work of creative people suggests "freedom, choice and creativity, attributes that others generally associate with their leisure activities" (p.38). This may help to explain why Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2010) research lead them to conclude that creative industries policies have paid insufficient attention to the work experience of workers in creative industries. They suggest that pleasure and obligation become blurred for many creative workers.

The key point then about affective labour, from the perspective of this introductory chapter, is that it requires us to anchor or ground notions such as passion and flourishing and concepts such as ties (whether strong or weak) in the actual circumstances where labour takes place and in the work itself. Before beginning to do so, however, it may be helpful to move beyond common sense notions of the team, as deployed above, and to look for more structured and more theorised explanations of team formation and evolution.

The group-in-fusion (Or, a theory of energising moments)

Sartre (1976) defines *being* as "praxis". Defining one's self by one's work(s) (or being defined as such) is what Sartre calls one's *praxis-project*. As you work, your situation, your subjectivity, is inscribed on your objective world. Matter becomes worked-matter, storing your human labour, and your material works become a field of preserved inert human striving. Sartre called this the practico-inert. The material context of praxis includes the sedimented effects of previous praxes, marks on the material world that can potentially be read.

As humans are social beings Sartre shifts his theory from individual praxis to group praxis, defining four different groups. The first is the "series" whereby individuals are part of a collective (Sartre uses the term *collective* to refer to a passive social

structure, and the term *group* to the active aspect (Catalano, 1986)), but seek shared individual goals rather than working together towards achieving a common goal. The example Sartre uses to explain the series is a grouping of people waiting for a morning bus. Though they wait in the same space, they are separate individuals with a common interest (catching the bus). The bus is a practico-inert object that exists to help them achieve their goal (of getting to work), uniting the individuals from the outside, and each individual is interchangeable with any other (Sartre, 1976).

The second group is the “group-in-fusion” which is formed when previously unassociated individuals realise they have common goals and actively form a group. Cooperation now seems advantageous, and individuals recognise a potentiality in the group with which they freely choose to associate, remaining individuals with their “personal difference intact and enhanced...[but] functionally: they think, intend, and struggle as one” (Burkle, 1971, p. 323). Each member has the freedom to leave the group, and as soon as the group need dissipates, the group, too, may fragment or dissolve (Murphy, 1999). Sartre regards the group-in-fusion approvingly: “it provides a more creative outlet for human energies, permits individual choice to have greater impact on the course of public affairs, and is more hospitable to individual diversity” (Burkle, 1971, p. 317).

The “group-under-oath” succeeds the group-in-fusion as organisation, order, and routine replace the passion and adventurousness of the group-in-fusion. Rather than individual projects, the group becomes the goal of the individuals’ praxis, the objective being to preserve its permanence, and binding the individual to the group above all else (Burkle, 1971, p. 324).

Sartre’s final group is the “institution”, an organisation which has “legitimized and institutionalized self-perpetuation as the overriding concern” (Burkle, 1971, p. 325), established and allocated tasks to its members to ensure permanent coordination. The diversity, spontaneity, and individual freedom found in the group-in-fusion have been traded for social stability.

Sartre’s groups suggest a method for analysing the different stages of group formation in the film industry, and potentially to explore the relationships with any

extended community surrounding the groups. Filmmakers pursuing their careers as individuals in the same geographical area may be considered part of a potential group. They have shared individual interests, work on many of the same projects, but exist in a series and are not actively and persistently working towards a common goal. Individuals have relationally defined communities interested in their work and career (as suggested in the earlier section on expanded communities).

When a group of individuals forms around a film project they share both the common goal of actively pushing a project through to completion, and struggle against the scarcity of opportunities for filmmakers. As a group-in-fusion they remain (networked) individuals, but they recognise and acknowledge their unified relationship. The products of their labour benefit the entire group, providing opportunities for professional development and positive experiences, and are (potentially) financially profitable. An expanded community may form around the project, watching and supporting the filmmakers. As the project nears completion, or is completed, the group members recognise they are no longer indispensable and may begin to disperse in order to pursue their needs elsewhere. Though the group-in-fusion may become serialised after their leaving, the group has “expressed creative subjectivity. So even if it becomes serialised again, it is not a defeat, merely a hiatus” (Gerassi, 2009, p. 257). “People come together in temporary work teams and networks which dissolve when a problem is solved or redefined. Members may then reassemble in different groups involving different people, often in different loci, around different problems” (Gibbons et al., 1994, p. 6). A film team may achieve a degree of success that creates in some of its members both the desire and the ability to form a group-under-oath with the hope of preserving its permanence. As the group works to continue its existence, seeking projects they believe will result in financial security and continued employment in their areas of expertise, communities that form around a group-under-oath may maintain their support through multiple projects, whether their interest was initiated through connection with an individual or a previous project.

Crew working on Hollywood-style projects may be considered part of a series – individuals sharing the same space, working with other individuals on projects that help them achieve their career and/or financial goals. They are also over time part of the institution, their roles are “corporately” established and allocated, they serve

the continued self-perpetuation of the industry, and they help to produce the product that allows the industry to prosper and continue. If they fail to adequately serve the group they may find their contract terminated or that they can no longer find work, thus protecting other members from their perceived “deviant” behaviour.

Communities surrounding institutions may track some or all of the institution’s projects, but Lee (2011) claims that a network culture actually produces a lack of loyalty to an institution that increasingly provides fewer long term promises of employment, which in turn fosters an insecure environment that forces employees to first and foremost think of their own careers, rather than acting in the interests of a corporate good.

A working hypothesis, therefore, is that the group-in-fusion may be more characteristic of independent filmmaking than of corporate production, where serial/institutional bonds predominate. The group-in-fusion may be where the crucial affective factors converge and qualitatively different ties are formed (between people and with projects). But the group-in-fusion also feels like a precarious phenomenon, especially given changes in the nature of work more generally.

Precarity

Precarity in work is not a new phenomenon. It has existed in industrial capitalism since paid employment became a primary source of sustenance (Kalleberg, 2009). Women experience unpaid work in the home, or low-paid “women’s jobs”. Living and working situations have long been precarious for migrants, immigrants, and seasonal workers (Lorey et al., 2012). However, the “new economy” that resulted when economies transitioned from being manufacturing-based to service-based, along with the effects of new technology, has changed the nature of much work. Having several jobs, or even careers, is now the norm for considerable numbers of people (H. Blair, 2003; Surowiecki, 2002). Recent awareness of precarious work (perhaps as a result of the white, middle-class worker beginning to feel the negative effects of the new, post-industrial, flexible job market) has drawn considerable media and scholarly attention to the issues surrounding a precarious existence, and is a concern for labour markets, unions, governments and workers alike (Fantone,

2007; Lorey et al., 2012).

A precarious existence is a life without predictability and financial security. It may include part time and flexible labour agreements, temporary or intermittent employment, low job security, limited social security rights, and low- or no-paid employment positions (Gironés, 2009; Kalleberg, 2009). Increasingly employers demand that workers be flexible with payment arrangements, to work “off hours”, and to be geographically mobile to follow job markets. Though flexible employment terms are often encouraged on a national level, many workers find the experience of precarity challenging, particularly “weak” social subjects such as mothers, students, retired elderly and immigrants. Social policy and public services have, by and large, not altered to support the changes in the work market (Fantone, 2007; Keune, 2013). This “weak” positioning clearly characterises the lives of many independents, especially at the low-budget end of the spectrum.

Jordan (2013) suggests that precarity is not necessarily directly linked to employment status, but rather is “an insecurity whereby one is at the mercy of others, always having to beg, network, and compete in order to be able to pursue one’s labour and life” (p. 42). If sufficiently rewarded, part-time or intermittent employment could be considered a “utopian endeavour”, however, part-time or limited contracts are often used as a form of exploitation, saving companies money and denying certain rights and conditions established for full-time employees (Jordan, 2013). These conditions are a major part of the pain in the filmmaker’s pleasure-pain axis. The problem with precarity is not so much about workers’ daily conditions per se, but rather their diminished long term ability to accumulate any of the various forms of capital (e.g. Bourdieu’s (1986) economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital). This will be a major focus throughout the remainder of this thesis.

Though cultural workers often experience the conditions of precarity as imposed from outside, this way of living and working is also often necessary to allow autonomy in their work. This “self-precarisation” is becoming the normal way of life for ever increasing sectors of the creative work force, with the spread of short-term and low-wage jobs, or projects making precarisation the norm (Lorey et al., 2012). Therefore, it becomes crucial that workers establish different strategies for

accumulating the various forms of capital required to survive and thrive.

Filmmakers in all areas of production experience this precarity but are often viewed by policy makers as “model entrepreneurs” who personally bear the risks and responsibilities of an insecure and discontinuous employment market (Gill & Pratt, 2008). Most filmmakers find it necessary to support themselves in other ways. Actors may work as extras or waiters, writers may also teach, filmmakers who desire to direct may work below-the-line to make money and connections, and many filmmakers rely on family members, partners or the government for assistance when work is scarce (although in New Zealand, where precarity in the film industry is common, the current system of government support does not sufficiently cater for the precarious worker). Precarity experienced in the film industry can manifest itself in a feeling of constant insecurity whereby filmmakers are always required to network, be seen, and compete with other filmmakers to secure work (Jordan, 2013). Many independent filmmakers spend considerable time struggling to accumulate social capital by working on projects for free. This helps them improve their resumés, gain experience, make contacts, and secure the ability to call in favours when they are making their own projects (these specific notions of capital will be fully developed in due course). These features of precarity, in addition to the adage that someone is only as good as their last job, can evoke profound feelings of insecurity and anxiety for filmmakers (Gill & Pratt, 2008).

Some independent filmmakers view the disappearance of work/leisure distinction as experienced by themselves, a positive characteristic of their work. Since most filmmakers experience the filmmaking process as “profoundly satisfying and intensely pleasurable (at least some of the time)”, the extension of “production hours” may also be an extension of the self-actualisation experienced through work (Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 21). This may contribute to what Bourdieu calls “embodied cultural capital”, whereby filmmakers accumulate cultural capital through a process of spending time performing work, learning and self-educating, which results in the filmmaker forming ideas, attitudes, and habits conducive to future success in their area of work (Bourdieu, 1986). While some productions have an office base, this extension of production hours is intensified by the practice of low budget independent filmmakers often completing pre- and post-production from their homes. Although in some situations this may be viewed as an intrusion, it affords

filmmakers the ability not only to reduce production costs but can help them juggle family life with filmmaking.

Time is another asset that is lacking for the creative precariat. Working to support themselves (and their dependents) can mean having another paid job. Often, when paid work ends, creative work time begins. If time is left for socialising it is often also seen as a way to increase creative opportunities or employment. This is often achieved by aligning themselves with a network of relationships that are mutually beneficial, enabling their combined social capital to benefit all network members (Bourdieu, 1986).

When work is more than wages (Jordan, 2013), all of the factors discussed in this chapter will come potentially into play. These factors may not in themselves constitute independence, much less define it; rather they are determining factors in how the independent pursues a course of action. The filmmaking course of action that I pursued, in parallel with researching this thesis, and in articulation with this research, was the low-budget independent feature film *Penny Black* (2016).

Talking reflexively about *Penny Black*

Before production the *Penny Black* crew were members of a series, working in the same geographical areas, having studied at the same universities. They had all worked together in the past on different projects, working to complete feature film projects with the goal of furthering their careers in a creative field that lacks the financial support and infrastructure required to achieve continued and reliable success. Rowlands (2012) states that a group-in-fusion may likely be comprised of people who have worked together previously, and may actively seek to re-create their project team (or a partial team) whenever possible, though the dynamics and processes which mobilise the network may be different each time that a group-in-fusion is reassembled (Daskalaki, 2010). The cast also aimed to support themselves financially, and working on *Penny Black* would help expand their résumés, potentially helping them to secure more lucrative employment in the industry and more prestigious roles.

Each member recognised that if they worked together the project had the potential to help them achieve their goals. They were passionate about the practices of filmmaking they were involved in (the challenges, rituals, habits, etc.) and helped to attract and interact with the expanded filmmaking community during (and after) the filmmaking process (friends, respected co-creators, and more recently with an expanding audience online), which further generated attachment to the project. During a production road trip the group began to recognise they were part of a functioning and potentially successful group, and that their individual contribution was both valued and necessary for the completion of the project. As the crew was so small each member was important and needed, their participation was essential and without them the project would not be possible, even to the point of requiring cast to perform crew duties such as slating a scene or recording sound. This gave the work variety, helped them learn new skills, and gave them challenges that they could readily achieve in a supportive environment. The group developed rituals and ways of working and interacting that both strengthened its bonds, and resisted inclusion of potential members who did not share the group's ethos. The focus was on creating a high quality product while also enjoying the process. Most evenings Joe Hitchcock (the director) reviewed the best takes with the cast and crew, allowing them to laugh together, to share the victories of that day and recognise (and own) their part in the success of the project.

When filming was complete and the individual talents were no longer essential to the project's completion, the group began to dissipate. Their focus moved to other work that provided greater opportunities and financial reward. Though members of the crew had skills that would have been highly valued during post-production they were not in areas that the individuals wished to devote their time to (website creation, computer generated effects, etc.). Even though they had invested in the project and hoped it would come to fruition, their motivation was not high enough for them to value further participation over working on their own projects or earning money elsewhere. Lack of people to share each accomplishment with at this stage may have contributed to the slowness of post-production, removing an energising feedback loop from the process.

Making *Penny Black* was challenging but also enjoyable. Crew members were all at a similar stage in their careers, competent but currently unable to fully support themselves through feature film production. They identified with the needs of the core duo (Joe and me) to produce a meaningful product, which increased their commitment to the project. Their personalities, talents and skills complemented each other, and by the middle of the road trip we had a group with the interpersonal skills that worked together well. Both before and after this point we had members who were difficult, distracting or did not understand acceptable on-set behaviour, and it was necessary to remove them for the benefit of the remaining cast, crew, and thus for the project. It should be noted that though conflict can operate both as an agent for, and inhibitor of, the productive dynamics of relationality within independent filmmaking, on the *Penny Black* project we viewed it as an unwelcome drain on resources. Rather than conflict that challenged our ideas or methods (see the Ties section below for a discussion on bonding and bridging), the conflict we experienced generally came in the form of a team member underperforming in their role or becoming a distraction, inhibiting the flow of the team (see section below on flow). This resulted in additional time needed for preparation or filming, which often caused a knock-on effect on finances and additional time away from paid work for our cast and crew. To be clear about this, bonding ties will be identified as deeply characteristic of early phases of independence, during which bridging ties are often suspected of being too risky because bridging to potentially conflicting perspectives is seen as a potential distraction. But a more mature phase of independence will often depend, in fact, on productive bridging to different perspectives, not least those of institutional actors with differing values and interests.

I would certainly consider making another project with the crew that had formed by the end of filming, thus reforming the group-in-fusion. (see the section above, on the group-in-fusion, for these Sartrean terms). If this cycle was repeated several times resulting in successful projects we may consider proto-institutionalising the group as a company, thus forming a group-under-oath, and attempting to create projects that would reduce scarcity of opportunity

for group members, as several similar groups in Auckland had done around the same time. This seems ideal if members remain committed as in the case of Borderline Films, (Josh Mond, Antonio Campos and Sean Durkin) who each write and direct their own films and take turns producing each other's films, thus working in a supportive environment and keeping creative control (van Hove, 2015). Joe found that when he asked people he had worked with (for free) in the past if the favour could now be reciprocated, often the other party had moved on, had a full time job, had left the country, etc., so in practice he found exchanging favours informally to be unreliable.

Daskalaki (2010) says that "...within creative collaborative communities, the processes of tie evolution (activation, re-activation and dissolution) that contribute to the "logic for collaborative behaviour" cannot be studied by focusing on a single project; rather, motivation for collaboration is affected by previous experiences and also shaped by anticipations of probable future re-enactments" (p.1650). Dyer and Wilkins (1991) point out that a single case may not provide sufficient useful data for theory building. They suggest that the careful study of a single case *can* lead researchers to uncover new theoretical relationships and question old ones, the exception sometimes disproving the rule. Many micro-budget feature films have a very small crew, often with a duo at the heart of the project who are present as the driving force from script to screening. However, experiences during the creation of *Penny Black* may not be typical, so there is also value in the exploration of experiences of other filmmakers.

The hurdle for New Zealand filmmakers to move from group-in-fusion to group-under-oath may be largely financial. The precarious nature of the film industry means groups constantly form, dissipate, and reform around projects that have secured sufficient funding. Opportunities for funding are afforded by the New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC), who have their own agenda for allocating funding to groups based on previous success, genre, experience and perceived ability of the crew, commercial viability, perceived market appeal, perceived international sales prospects, credible domestic distribution plan, and other criteria that are frequently under review (New Zealand Film Commission,

2013). Though films are also funded in other ways, such as with private money, other local grants, company sponsorship, and crowdfunding, in general these are isolated funding opportunities that must be secured with each new project. The *Penny Black* crowdfunding project was successful in that we raised over our set goal of NZ\$2,000, but this was a small amount of the (NZ\$70,000) budget, and we were unable to raise awareness of the project beyond our initial audience at this stage, which meant our success was partly dependent on the financial generosity of our friends and family. We followed all the “rules”, made a fun video, thought of rewards that would appeal to the people we hoped would pledge, made sure we had 10 people who would pledge on the first day, but crowdfunding was no longer new enough to be considered newsworthy by the media. Neither Joe nor I have bodies of work that would be known by many people other than in our circles, so it proved impossible to generate the amounts received by other projects. In contrast, Taika Waititi and Jemaine Clement’s *What We Do In The Shadows* (2014) raised \$446,666 to help fund their international release (Clement, 2015). Both have a strong fan base, have successful projects under their belt (*Flight of the Concorde* (Bobin et al., 2007) and *Boy* (Waititi, 2010)), and they picked the popular genre of vampire films mixed with their unique and popular brand of comedy.

Penny Black, with its small but successful crowdfunding and a quickly dissipated group-in-fusion around the core partnership of two, becomes then a case study of a very particular kind. It will be used here to test theoretical relationships before expanding the study. In particular it exposes the love affair (in Gaylene Preston’s sense) at the centre of this kind of independent filmmaking and, around that, it allows us to pose questions about passionate attachments, precarity, flourishing, strong and weak ties, and the repertoire of myths about self-identity on which the “lovers” draw. The noise of success around a duo such as Waititi and Clement may tend to swamp such fundamental questions.

As a single mother, the above section on precarity feels particularly descriptive of my own situation. Financial insecurity and lack of time definitely reduced my ability to pursue a filmmaking career. Though my girls were in day-care and at

school I was still unable to work evenings, nights, or weekends, often the times independent filmmakers schedule filming. This curtailed my ability to help other filmmakers with their projects, meaning less networking and no increase in skills from peer learning. Without funds or connections to make my own work, I applied for a job with an established production company. However, during the interview I realised this was no nine-to-five job, requiring nights and many evenings, often without notice, and employment for only 40 weeks of each year. The position was unworkable for someone in my position, and many jobs in the industry have similar conditions.

I decided it was a good time to study filmmaking, which allowed me to research, write, and produce a film on my own time, working around my girls' schedules. Though the workload was immense, this was a good decision time-wise. However, I was still financially insecure, constantly worried about every expense, especially for the girls whom I didn't want to deprive of opportunities I felt would enrich their lives. Clothes, school fees, uniforms, camps, birthday gifts, after school activities, stationery, Doctors visits, car repairs; affording anything that wasn't rent or food became a challenge. Though I was offered part-time tutoring, co-teaching, and marking in the department where I was studying, earning money played havoc with the government benefit I received (especially as it was part-time, short term, and the hours changed week by week), and coupled with the higher rate of tax for "secondary" income I was never able to get ahead of expenses, or even catch up. It also increased my workload, which reduced the time I had for study, for housework, and for the girls.

Professionally, and socially, my life felt on hold. I had neither time nor money to socialise or enjoy leisure activities. And I became acutely aware of gender inequality in our society, and of the precarity of so many people with low incomes and an inability to change their situations.

Independence as discursive emphases

Forming grassroots solidarity with like-minded others may result in an independent community of practice centred around participatory engagements. This

phenomenon may be substantially explained by the notion of the group-in-fusion where affective factors can converge and qualitatively different ties form. The development of independence in filmmaking as framed by Winston's model of systemic tension in media development helps us understand how financial, relational and affective themes represent specific discursive content for the claim that there is something radical about being independent.

The expectation of passion being experienced by filmmakers through their attachments to other filmmakers, to the actual work, and to their project, may be expressible through the conditions of independent film production. It may be a matter of faith that passion surrounding the project will colour the outcome of the project, and therefore it may be possible that faith is grounded in some of the specific characteristics of small team filmmaking and thus a powerful motivation for commitment to individual projects. Flourishing as an independent may relate back to characteristics of the community of practice (the sharing of accomplishment, including via expanded communities) and passionate attachments. Such attachments may make people happy in and of themselves, irrespective of the resulting products of their labour. The idea of affective labour requires us to ground notions such as passion and happiness and concepts such as ties (whether strong or weak) in the actual circumstances where labour takes place and in the work itself, especially where this is characterised by precarity.

This chapter has identified at least seven emphases promoted by filmmakers in considering the meaning of independent:

- Individualism/own voice(s)
- Smarter use of technology
- Special camaraderie
- Particular ways of negotiating the pleasure-pain axis
- Felt bonds/ties with and within a project
- Relationally defined work community
- Shared accomplishment

All of these are pointing us towards a revised view of the FVC that puts more emphasis on the relationally defined community, the ties between creative and technical, and the affective “glue” that binds it all together.

A further hypothesis for the present study is that material generated by filmmakers that expresses these emphases may constitute a “discourse”. The case study production *Penny Black* will be used to test theoretical relationships at the centre of this kind of independent filmmaking and allow us to pose questions about passionate attachments, precarity, flourishing, strong and weak ties, and the repertoire of myths about self-identity. But before turning to that material, it remains for this chapter to consider an inescapable cluster of ideas about being independent: ideas about “selling out” versus a critical, alternative cultural practice. Finally the chapter will formulate its perspective on Caldwell’s approaches: that the seven emphases identified here are discursively constructed through practitioner-generated texts and rituals (including rituals of self description and presentation) and that these texts and rituals constitute the “promotional surround” of independent filmmaking (see also Fig. 13).

Positioning the independent

As we have seen, filmmakers and academics hold strong beliefs about what independent should mean, what independent film should be, and what it is not. Though Figgis believes independent filmmakers should use the conventional narrative structure (as found in Hollywood style films) merely as a device to give them the kind of freedom a painter has to “articulate lots of other ideas about light, or politics, or the painter’s own philosophy” (as quoted in Trilling, 2009, para. 4), he also suggests that, by and large, contemporary independent filmmakers are using their work to gain access to Hollywood money. He states, “Young independent film-makers who win the audience award at Sundance have already got their eye on the big bucks” (as quoted in Trilling, 2009, para. 5). Observing the commercialisation of independent film, Ortner notes that from the mid-1980s to the mid 2000s independent companies became commonplace, independent festivals spread across the USA, independent films screened in mainstream theatres and won Academy Awards. She states that, though pronouncements were made that independent film had collectively sold out to Hollywood, in fact what she sees as a movement, retained “a good deal of artistic and political independence and force” (Ortner, 2012). Ortner (like many filmmakers and academics from the USA) seems

to view independence only from an American point of view, considering independent American filmmakers contrasted with Hollywood studio productions to the exclusion of international filmmakers. Figgis, however, does consider international independent filmmaking when he questions the need to continue exploring American stories, which we have been overexposed to. He speaks enthusiastically about third world filmmakers who are utilising new technology to tell stories specific to their situations and distributing their work through alternative networks (as cited in Trilling, 2009).

Ortner considers post-1980s independent film as representing a “critical cultural movement” that attempts to critique the dominant forms and culture displayed by Hollywood movies. For Ortner, independent is the antithesis of Hollywood: low-budget, challenging viewers with difficult subject matter, being political and critical. Though she recognises there is a spectrum with a Hollywood-y end and an avant-garde and experimental end, she admits to writing as if there were a clear binary contrast between independent and Hollywood (Ortner, 2012). This may be sufficient for the purpose of her book *Not Hollywood: Independent film at the twilight of the American dream* (2013) but gives an incomplete picture of independent filmmaking elsewhere. In her discussion of a “discourse of independence” Ortner notes that not everyone who talks about independence has the same intention or relationship to the discourse. She recognises that some people may feel a genuine personal animosity towards Hollywood and its products, where others may express the same animosity as a kind of *posturing*, declaring their status as an *auteur*, or expressing animosity only until they are able to secure a studio contract. However, with this in mind, rather than contesting the meaning (or honesty) behind statements, Ortner chooses to take what people say at face value, as an “instance of discourse” (2013).

Independent filmmaking is commonly described using terms such as “risk-taking”, “personal vision”, “non-Hollywood financing”, “art over money”, as it is defined by the founding board members of Independent Features Project/West (Ortner, 2012, p. 6). At award ceremonies and other public events the independent film community frequently expresses the virtues they feel independent film should embody, and the value they perceive it offers over Hollywood productions. Ortner (2012) shares her field notes from the 2007 Independent Spirit awards where

speakers make statements to the effect that independence is “following your vision without interference”, or that “the best way to have independence is to lower your budget”, and “people are not in this for the money” (p. 7), which are becoming catchphrases (or routine sentiments) of the American independent filmmaking scene. Evoking a “discourse of passion” Ortner claims that passion is another catchword in the independent film world, generally taken to be the opposite of “commercial sensibility”. Independent films are “passion projects”, money is invested knowing the risk of getting no return is high, and she quotes filmmaker Richard Linklater who states “we are now determined more than ever to avoid these industry types who have no passion for cinema” (as quoted in Ortner, 2013, p. 36). These opinions about passion have become the accepted narratives for independent filmmakers. Passion is the new cultural capital.

Certainly some independent filmmakers wish to position themselves and their work against Hollywood-style practices and storytelling, (and this may be especially true around Hollywood where, perhaps more than anywhere, cultural identities are constructed as self-promotional tools). For some, the structure of the Hollywood style film feels too formulaic, the process of green-lighting a film through a studio too daunting, producers too controlling or constricting. The equivalent of this in New Zealand is creating a project without seeking the support of the NZFC, and even successful filmmakers such as Taika Waititi and Jermaine Clement would rather bypass the NZFC to avoid years of rigmarole trying to get project funding (Waititi & Clement, 2014). Passion can certainly be a driving force behind independent film. But so can the desire for fame, or achieving a goal, or proving ability. For some people it may not be that they choose to avoid controlling corporate financing, but that they do not have the necessary character traits to work well under those conditions. Some filmmakers may have the ability to work with these types of corporate or studio development teams but not have the patience to wait years to begin production. Some filmmakers may feel it necessary to have producers actively helping to shape their project and welcome what others might consider an intrusion. Some filmmakers have a vision for a project that no funder is interested in backing, perhaps because the subject matter may have a limited audience or the style of filmmaking is too avant-garde. When talking about not wanting to partner with controlling companies in the future, filmmaker Thomas Burstyn stated, “...we don’t play well with others” (S. Burstyn, personal

communication, 13 August 2014), a sentiment shared by many filmmakers frustrated with corporate funders.

Independent texts and rituals

Focusing on the discursive construction of independent filmmaking requires examining discursive forms and evidence. Caldwell (2008) categorises artefacts and rituals of Hollywood film practitioners into three registers in order to describe “the contexts in which embedded industrial sense making and trade theorizing occurs”; in material confined to the profession, professional material that is also accessible to a public, and material designed for public consumption (p. 346). The following is an equivalent list for independents. These texts and rituals have been generated within the overall environment captured by my adaptation of Winston’s model. In a subsequent stage of the thesis it will be possible to explore more fully how the modelled environment shapes the texts and rituals. (Caldwell identifies as “deep” anything that contributes to general “sense making” as well as routine practice).

FULLY EMBEDDED DEEP TEXTS AND RITUALS

(Intra-group Relations: bounded professional exchanges)

- Personal emails, instant messages, texts, etc.
- Private online videos (screeners)
- Funding applications

SEMIEMBEDDED DEEP TEXTS AND RITUALS

(Inter-group Relations: professional exchanges with ancillary public viewing)

- Electronic press kits (EPKs)
- Festival appearances
- Panels on how to make it in the industry
- Film competitions (e.g. 48 Hours)
- Aggregate film advice websites (e.g. No Film School)
- Filmmaking blogs (e.g. offering behind the scenes information, or advice)
- Filmmaking or technology forums

PUBLICLY DISCLOSED DEEP TEXTS AND RITUALS

(Extra-group Relations: professional exchanges for explicit public consumption)

- Making-of documentaries
- DVD director's tracks, and extras
- Websites (e.g. production, company, individuals)
- Screening Q&As
- Online videos (e.g. trailers, teasers)
- Online interviews (video, transcribed, self composed)
- Podcasts
- Social media pages (e.g. Facebook)
- Crowdfunding projects
- Magazines

The main point of including such lists here is to suggest where the discourse of independence gets most frequently expressed. Caldwell's notion of deep texts and rituals is very useful in this regard, even though he deploys it more in connection with corporate-dominated filmmaking and from the vantage point of Los Angeles. It seems evident, though, that independence has its own deep texts and rituals, many of which will be cited in the following chapters. The point to be made here is that a notion of independence as mobilised attachments, with which the Introduction set up what was to come, starts to make more sense when we consider how such attachments (Latour's ATT) are actually expressed.

A discursive construction

In summary, this chapter began with a plethora of questions that arise when we attempt to define the independence in independent filmmaking, but concludes with the hypothesis that independent is a discursive construction, the word itself a floating signifier within the texts and rituals of self-identification which together constitute a promotional surround around the actual practices of filmmaking. This concept of a surround is also derived from the work of Caldwell, where he clusters specific configurations of texts and rituals into distinct *corporate* and *worker* surrounds (Caldwell, 2008). The proposition here, therefore, is that an equally distinct *independent* promotional surround has developed and continues to develop.

So instead of seeking a reductive definitional precision, the present chapter has suggested a set of interconnected emphases that are both present in actual practices and likely to characterise this surround, and which will need to be explored if the discursive construction of the surround is to be more fully exposed. The result of this construction may be a discourse of passion on which the promoted emphases converge and from which they derive on-going sustenance. Methodologically, passion may not lend itself to being easily captured. Passion in one's own voice, passion for smart technology, passion of co-workers, passion as a fragile phenomenon within a pleasure-pain axis, passion embodied in actual ties, passion as a relational definer of a community of practice, and passion made manifest in shared accomplishment. These emphases in an overall discourse of passion in and for independent filmmaking are what we now need to locate in actual practices.

The Introduction proposed a blank to be filled in to replace the traditional Film Value Chain (FVC) if we are to represent better what is distinctive about independence and its development, especially by focusing more on what the Introduction termed socially knowledgeable actors working within collective understandings. The latter were proposed as an alternative to the much more fixed conventions of the traditional FVC. We can now suggest that those actors and understandings are, in perhaps large measure, bound to a discursive construction of independence that gives expressive form to their lived attachments.

I want to set up two kinds of signpost for what is to come here. The first is a methodological warning. The next two chapters are dense and the matters they raise take a long time to come into focus in the thesis as a whole. This reflects the Grounded Theory method, which I was exploring while assembling the material. If the reader wants to jump ahead to Fig. 10 at the start of the Conclusions section of the thesis, they will see there a representation of how this density consists of layers of "slices" and "categories". The repeated passes through these layers build up the density, which may feel at times as impenetrable to a reader as it did to the researcher. But in the second half of the thesis, the achievement of what is termed theoretical saturation, the consequent "densifying" of theoretical concepts, and the building of substantive theory, should offer a fairly rapidly achieved clarity. No other method requires this degree of patience, I suspect, having had to exercise it myself.

The other signpost at this point is to the emergent cluster of ideas. This concerns the ways in which the traditional Film Value Chain is in fact infiltrated by different energies, different intensities of involvement, mobilised by affective forces, derived from relationally defined communities of creative people who emerge from and slip back into the shadow economies of film, only to emerge again in new relations. The radical potential of independence may be largely affective in this sense. Chapter 4 intends to capture this, filtered through the mesh of data assembled for Chapter 3. The following chapter explains how and why that data was assembled.

CHAPTER 2

Research questions, methods and vantage points on independence

These communities and aesthetic traditions provide a kind of cultural jig, within which our energies get ordered (Crawford, 2015, p. 129).

Where Chapter 1 ended by identifying passion as a dominant discursive construction around independent modes of being and promotion, this chapter focuses on the ordering of energies derived from, but not reducible to, that discursive construction, and on methods for researching this ordering. Thus, the chapter begins by asking, who can structure their lives in such a way as to enable them to make feature films independently; also, how do they do so in general terms? The answers will depend on the people involved, the networks formed, the elements that connect to form industry and business structures, habits and practices of practitioners, what they say and do, how they view their work, how and where others view their work, their experience and knowledge, their values, and on their beliefs; in short their “courses of action” in Latour’s sense. The more specific research questions for the study as a whole will be derived from attending to all of these factors. How best to attend to them, methodologically, will also be explicitly considered here.

Crawford’s *jig* is not some kind of dance (although as a different metaphor that meaning may also work). Rather it consists of the cultural *devices* that hold a piece of work and guide the tools operating on it; in this case the tools being not merely physical (e.g. technologies) but also conceptual (e.g. the beliefs that people have about what they are doing). If there are two interlocking parts to such a jig – the communities and the aesthetic traditions – the focus of the present chapter will be primarily on the former, leaving the aesthetics of independence for later (for the final part of the thesis, and specifically the aesthetics of Jim Jarmusch as an iconic independent). In short, the focus here is initially sociological.

Jarvie (1970, as cited in Allen & Gomery, 1985, p. 155) suggested that there are four questions to be considered by a sociology of film:

- Who makes movies and why?
- Who sees films; how and why?
- What is seen; how and why?
- How do films get evaluated; by whom and why?

The first question is being modified here, as in the preceding chapter, to make it more precise. It may be necessary to do the same in due course with the other three questions as the thesis proceeds, but they are less central to the project. Allen and Gomery (1985) refine this list to include “the organisational structure of the studios... the recruitment of personnel... the star system...” (p. 155). A list for independent filmmaking, informed by Chapter 1’s discussion of the topic, might usefully be:

- The organisational structure of independent film productions
- The values of creative personnel involved in a project
- The division of labour among project members and the roles played by members
- Networking of independent filmmakers
- The discursive surround of independent filmmaking (an expanded view of Caldwell’s notion of the promotional).

Merchant-Ivory independence

Before addressing these topics in more detail, a vignette may help set the scene. One long-term producer-director pairing towered over the landscape of English-language independent filmmaking in the second half of the 20th century – that of producer Ismail Merchant (who died in 2005) and director James Ivory – a pairing that Merchant himself described as a “strange marriage” (2005). The term “Merchant-Ivory film” signalled an aesthetic, but it also still marks an *ideal* of collaborative energies being productively and consistently ordered towards successful outcomes, with “Merchant-Ivory” virtually paradigmatic of authentic working lives.

Some time after Ismail Merchant's death, James Ivory, in a filmed interview (Ivory, 1992) reflected on their partnership. Ivory says three especially interesting things about the strange marriage. He speaks about "an energy" that Merchant cultivated in their collaboration, and about the "web" of "associations" that a producer constructs around such a partnership in order to realize its potential. Ivory talks about other people getting drawn into "our web", in other words not just about filmmaking per se but about the enabling community that allows it to happen. And finally he makes a crucial observation for our purpose here: that being independent is a dialectical condition, of being in a state of tension with the studios. Without the studios, the term independent loses its meaning. Ivory does not use exactly this vocabulary; instead he observes that "our connection to Hollywood is a little closer than people think" and goes on to describe a to and fro between independence and dependence (with anecdotes about getting a distribution deal from Columbia here or financing from 20th Century Fox there). While Merchant-Ivory is virtually iconic of independence, its definition as such relied, by Ivory's account, on a constant tension with various manifestations of dependence.

The film business

In addressing such matters, social anthropology may provide some helpful perspectives. Powdermaker (1950) and Rosten (1941) both approached the sociology of filmmaking by investigating the moviemaking community, its organisational structures, goals, and problems (Allen & Gomery, 1985). Powdermaker's book is considered to be the only serious anthropological study of Hollywood, and only a few social science researchers have subsequently examined the Hollywood film industry as a "dynamic organism that is influenced by both human beings and the mechanics of filmmaking" (Cherneff, 1991a, p. 430). The phrase "dynamic organism" is perhaps too vague for our purposes here but it does capture the sense that enabling forms hold both "human beings and the mechanics" together.

Filmmakers in Hollywood often refer to their workworld as "the industry". However, Veblen (as cited in Monaco, 1979) makes an important distinction between *industry* as primarily concerned with making a product, and *business*

which is more interested in profit. The entertainment “business” (referring to corporate-led production in any country) makes products in order to make profits, with its methods for achieving this evolving over time. Studio projects are typically considered *properties* (short for intellectual property), which may begin as an outline or concept, a screenplay, a novel, etc. Once acquired, property is developed into a marketable *package* in order to make the project attractive to financiers. If a property has already demonstrated audience appeal in another form it is considered to have a track record, which helps presell the film to the same audience. This includes sequels, remakes, etc. To be a successful package the project must appeal to the widest possible target audience, ruling out films produced for niche and minority markets (Monaco, 1979). To complete the package, producers then attach a director and writer with track records, and actors who are currently bankable. From start to finish the focus is on profit.

The Paramount antitrust decision of 1948, which forced the studios to divest themselves of their exhibition divisions, came around the same time as television arrived. Employees were laid off, studio backlots were sold for real-estate development, and rather than merely adapt to production for television, many of the studios became divisions of diversified conglomerates involved in a range of industries, including insurance, oil, resort hotels, sugar cane, perfume, manufacturing, and Coca-Cola bottling (Monaco, 1979). Diversification within the conglomerates permitted studios greater access to capital, allowing them to finance increasingly expensive projects, and if there was a bad year at the box office another industry might have been booming and would cover the loss. However, inclusion in the corporate conglomerate world also brought more scrutiny to the process of manufacturing and marketing films, as studios began employing CEOs and CFOs, striving to increase profit by exploring every business avenue available to increase film revenue, expand their markets, and compete with other corporations for audiences/consumers (Geuens, 2000).

In the mid-1980s the Reagan administration once again deregulated the film business in the USA. Major media companies integrated horizontally by owning other national and international media companies, or vertically by owning different stages of media production and distribution; e.g., owning the publishing house which prints the book of the film, and the music company which publishes the

soundtrack CD that is played on their own radio stations (Croteau & Hoynes, 2001). These were the beginnings of the contemporary corporate cores around which flexible specialisation and virtual integration developed over subsequent decades. In addition, the majors' volume of output meant the economies of scale reduced the cost for them to produce a film print or, in due course, to manufacture consumer video formats (e.g. individual DVDs), and made it cheaper to produce a range of similar products to be marketed through the same channels. The concentration of studios made it possible (and profitable) for the Los Angeles area to continue maintaining an accessible pool of resources and businesses to provide structural support for studio-style filmmaking, even when the old studios as physical locations had closed or been converted to tourist attractions. Stars with worldwide audience appeal, directors who have risen through the ranks, producers, financiers, lawyers, caterers, sound stages, enormous warehouses filled with costumes or props are all available via a phone call. However, it must also be noted that nowhere else are the costs to make a film so high. The elaborate structure of fees, restrictions, and labour regulations that govern the film process in Hollywood impacts independent filmmakers in California who must also abide by union rules, obtain permits, and pay to rent the same equipment and resources larger productions use.

Taking a cue from James Ivory's observation, that independence is dialectically defined in relation to the world just described, we need to look for alternative vocabularies, but perhaps ones being articulated in much the same places.

An authentic working life

In contrast to the business of producing and selling products described above, Svejenova (2005) describes a form of filmmaking based more on authenticity; driven by vision, values, talents and potentialities. She too relates this dialectically to industry structure and to a variant set of "defining characteristics", valuing authenticity as an essential element for the careers of genuinely creative individuals. She identifies four stages through which authenticity plays a role in career creation: *exploration* of "aspects of multifaceted identity and image", *focus* on "identity expression and image manufacturing", gaining *independence* by

“enhancing one’s control over the creative and business aspects of the artwork”, and a “quest for *professionalism*”. Svejenova (2005) argues that these stages are “embedded in a structural context that enables and constrains authenticity work” (p. 947). To develop this argument we can substitute the idea of “structural context” with the notion of *cultural jiggling* (physical and conceptual restructurings of the working environment (Kirsh, 1995)) which will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter. By recognising, accessing, and/or constructing cultural jigs each individual attempts to access, utilise and/or create enabling structures, resolve constraints, and push their career forward on an authentic trajectory (Svejenova, 2005, p. 947). As Crawford would put it, their “energies get ordered” in this way.

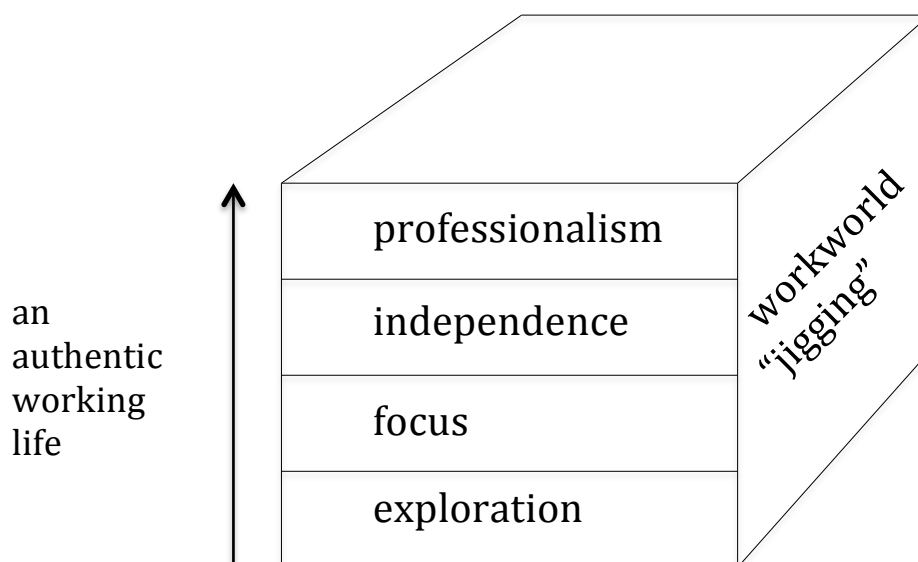


Fig. 2. An authentic working life, based on Svejenova (2005) and Crawford (2015).

Svejenova (2005) uses the example of Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar, whose career falls into the four stages she identifies. The first stage (exploration) describes his years creating versatile amateur work. The second stage (focus) he concentrated on making feature films produced by several existing companies. The third stage (independence) he established his own production company to exercise more control over his work, and the fourth stage (professionalism) “encompassed years of renewal and professional maturity” (p. 955). Interestingly, and perhaps significantly, the Spanish film industry is very similar in structure to the New

Zealand industry, as seen in the table below comparing the Spanish and Hollywood film industries. The differences between the Spanish and New Zealand industries in these terms are that New Zealand has a low number of small producers and, though there is a government regulatory framework that provides subsidies, films can be produced without accessing this. The same is true in Spain but not clearly shown on the table.

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Defining characteristics</i>	
	<i>Hollywood</i>	<i>Spain</i>
Industry structure	Consolidated (small number of large studios; independent producers)	Fragmented (large number of small producers)
Regulation	No	Yes (subsidies)
Film budgets	Large (especially for studio films)	Small (much smaller than budgets of low-cost Hollywood independent films)
Talent pool	Big	Small
Intermediaries (agents, deal makers, etc.)	Well-developed	Under-developed
Power in film projects	Studios Unions Stars	Film directors (who usually are also scriptwriters and/or producers)
A dominant metaphor of filmmaking	'Mass production'	'Craft'

Table 1. A comparison of the Spanish and Hollywood film industries (Svejenova, 2005, p. 955), *used with permission*.

Cultural jigs

We can begin to fill in the details of the enabling cultural jigs, and at the same time push forward with addressing Jarvie's four questions, as listed at the start of this chapter, particularly the modified version of his first question. In a consolidated, business-focused industry, studio producers select projects from hundreds of submitted scripts and treatments. Studios have ready access to finances, resources, projects, and a large talent pool of workers and performers (and in some contexts to government or state incentives). The trade unions that protect workers, ensuring stability, safe conditions and guaranteed pay rates, also limit the number of workers who are available to perform union work through entry requirements and high

initiation fees (the current AFTRA-SAG national initiation fee rate is US\$3000 (SAG-AFTRA, 2017)). Integrated structures distribute projects internationally, and economies of scale increase the likelihood of studios' financial return on their mass-produced products, with studios' blockbuster titles able to counterbalance the cost of low-performing films.

In contrast, the fragmented structure of the independent film industry gives some power back to directors, or indeed to writers as the initial authors of the work (Kipen, 2006). Projects can be written or chosen by the people responsible for, and passionate about making them, potentially resulting in a wider variety of films with more diverse subject matter and audiences. There may be more opportunities for entry into the independent industry as producers are more accessible, opportunities to join a crew are more readily available, and smaller budgets mean filmmakers are increasingly able to procure sufficient funding outside corporate channels.

However, as budgets are often low, so are wages, potentially discouraging workers who are motivated by money, or for whom a precarious work life is not feasible (e.g. single parents and others with inflexible working constraints). This reduces the capacity of those without existing financial capital to participate, and increases reliance on grant-awarding bodies with specific funding agendas.

So, although studio and independent production involve differing sets of cultural jigs for filmmaking, we can begin to suggest an answer to the question posed at the start of this chapter. Those who have access to adequate cultural jigs (including financial support, training, access to equipment, a pool of contacts from which a group-in-fusion might be created, etc.) can structure authentic working lives for themselves and progress up the stages.

Actor Networks

We should be able to see these cultural jigs in operation if we look closely enough at the practices of production workers. Caldwell (2008) offers examples of how this may be done. While acknowledging economic processes and corporate influence, Caldwell examines the functions of social communities by looking at the cultures of production created not only by those in above-the-line positions (directors, producers, writers), but also by below-the-line labourers. He examines data

obtained by interviewing film/television workers, analysing the textual artefacts created by practitioners, and observing professional gatherings and production spaces. As he seeks to identify a kind of self-theorising within the discourse of “everyday workers”, Caldwell recognises that personal disclosures in the media industry are always constructed, and are more suspect and spin-driven the higher a worker is found on the “food chain” (p. 3).

Caldwell (2008) argues that in the face of outsourcing and de-unionisation, film workers are increasingly responding to *unruly* conditions created by technological and economic changes in the business, and are using industrial self-referencing in the form of trade texts and discursive rituals in order to negotiate and resuscitate technical and craft identities and ensure vocational survival. As the film workers’ world becomes unruly, their ephemeral texts can highlight the ways in which they attempt to re-jig their working world to ensure it continues to operate to their advantage. For example, as technological advances have allowed *unruly audiences* (users and fans) to share the production and aesthetic competencies of professional TV and film workers, workers have responded in the time-honoured Hollywood fashion of dismissing such independence as the domain of amateurs and naïve outsiders in an attempt to protect their professional self-image and their jobs.

To varying degrees, independent filmmakers are undoubtedly also spin-doctors of their own stories, which are distributed and shared through social media, networking events, interviews, etc. Within these stories of production hardship, fighting against all odds, and surviving “development hell” lie independent filmmaker beliefs that may illustrate when and how they form strong supportive groups, share knowledge and resources, and toil against the odds to make films that often have no guarantee of distribution, let alone showing returns on invested time and money. Caldwell (2008) defines these accounts themselves as “critical industrial practices” (p. 5), not merely descriptions of real practices but discursive constructions of a particular reality. Recognising that filmmakers are inherently storytellers, and that their accounts may be generated to further their own objectives, Caldwell suggests that for the researcher these accounts should be “grounded within the contexts of the material, symbolic, and representational practices of production workers” (p. 26-27). He achieved this by “looking over the shoulder of crew members – by analysing the deep texts, demos, machines, and

artefacts that they circulate among themselves” (p. 27). Similarly, I immersed myself in an independent filmmaking production culture during the making of *Penny Black* in order to observe how a group of filmmakers (including myself) constructed a working environment (jigged our world), in ways conducive both to supporting the completion of a feature film and to engaging an audience for it over time. Accounts of the experience of the cast and crew circulated as texts produced and shared among the team, and anecdotes and illustrative images were publicly shared through social media and, eventually, through the more traditional media channels that picked them up. Together, these filmmaker accounts, and the locations, objects, and technology they addressed, represented various actants in a web of independent film production of the kind that Latour terms an “actor-network” (Caldwell, 2008, p. 7). Moreover, the accounts themselves may have functioned as actants in the same network, as narrations of the network dependencies operative within courses of action.

Actor-Network Theory

Actor-Network Theory (ANT) treats non-human objects as parts of social networks, capable of contributing to or participating in the systems of association and relational interdependence. Rather than confining the definition of social to the human, the term *actant* is used to refer to both human and non-human entities. Latour avoids the term actor (except in the acronym itself) as it brings to mind only human entities, preferring the term actant, as it can also refer to non-humans. ANT is a mechanism for describing and does not itself try to explain why or how a network takes the particular form it does.

ANT was developed as a way to connect modalities that are usually handled separately by theorists, but which may benefit from a multi-perspectival approach (Valck, 2007). Latour asks, “Is it our fault that the networks are simultaneously real, like nature, narrated, like discourse, and collective, like society?” (Latour, 1993, p. 3).

Latour (2004) defines an actant as anything that modifies other actants through a series of actions, by contributing something new to the assemblage that cannot be

reduced to the other entities. This does not suggest that inanimate objects have goals and aims, just that they modify the action of other entities (Bryant, 2011).

Each actant may be considered a sum of other smaller actants. For example, a car may be considered an actant, but may also be broken down into parts, wheels, brakes, oil, etc. The car, as a whole, can be considered to be a black box, a device, system, or object that is experienced without consideration of its internal workings. A film production is an example of both an actant and a network, which may be broken down into smaller actants: cast, crew, cameras, computers, etc. Each individual component is part of the network, integral to the completion of the finished product, and may also be a member of multiple overlapping networks (Daskalaki, 2010). The end product has the same black box quality as a car. It is experienced as a mysteriously integrated whole. But it is also an actant in larger networks, in more extensive “traffic”.

Thus, Valck (2007) suggests that film festivals, for instance, are complex phenomena that may benefit from application of Latour’s idea of the network as it assumes *relational* interdependence, including both humans and non-humans in the larger traffic. The congregations, performances, and products of the filmmakers, sales representatives, critics, and other audiences, are understood as “necessary links that make up the event” (p. 34).

So we can suggest that the cultural jigs which enable working lives may only be fully understood if we see them as involving networks, in Latour’s sense; and that these are in fact what constitute Chernoff’s dynamic organism, as we referred to it in the third page of the present chapter – an organism of co-dependent human and non-human parts.

Promotional surrounds

It is this expanded view of film that allows us to see as important what Caldwell terms the promotional surrounds, which are a specific manifestation of Latour’s narrated networks. Powdermaker laid the original foundation for this approach. In 1946, Hortense Powdermaker went to Hollywood with the goal of better

understanding the nature of movies (Powdermaker, 1950). An ex-Hollywood film director had told Powdermaker she “could not possibly understand movies as part of our culture unless [she] knew the social-psychological milieu in which they were made” (Powdermaker, 1966, p. 210). So she spent a year in Hollywood interviewing producers, writers, actors, and directors about their motivations, opinions, lifestyles, power, etc., in an attempt to ascertain whether the social structure of Hollywood was an important determinant in the content and form of feature films (Powdermaker, 1966). As a result, Powdermaker published the first anthropological study of the film industry, *Hollywood: The Dream Factory* (1950). Her book received a mixed reception, drawing criticism from anthropologists for her nascent research methods (Cherneff, 1991a), and from industry professionals for daring to be critical of their industry (e.g., Bierstedt, 1951), provoking a passionately worded rebuttal from Powdermaker (1951). Caldwell (2008) believes this kind of reaction is partly a result of the industry’s anxiety about who knows what in Hollywood, and fear of the mystique (the “black box”) being diminished if what really happens in Hollywood is uncovered. Caldwell notes that after Powdermaker’s book, scholarship on Hollywood took a turn towards nonindustrial conceptions of cinema, creating a 30 year chasm in production studies scholarship until the early 1980s when some film scholars began to research “lived cultures” once again (p. 12).

If we want to understand the “dimension” column in Svejenova’s table (Table 1, above), Caldwell provides a promising approach. *Production Culture* (Caldwell, 2008) builds on Powdermaker’s method, resisting the “nonindustrial inclination in film studies” (p. 12) and scholars’ preoccupation with analysing onscreen content in terms of “texts, aesthetics, ideology, and identity” (p. 282). Acknowledging the impossibility of finding an “authentic reality” behind-the-scenes, he studies the “self-representation, self-critique, and self-reflection” found within workers’ accounts of their industrial practices (p. 5). If this is the case, there can be no stable or singular “authentic reality” of independent filmmaking either, as we have already noted.

Caldwell (2008) identifies the promotional surrounds based on the idea that people engaged in film production increasingly engage also in self-representation, or reflexivity. By analysing ephemeral texts (“trade and worker artefacts, interviews

with film/television workers, ethnographic field observation of production spaces and professional gatherings” (p. 4)) he developed a model of “Two Warring Flipsides In the Industrial Promotional Surround” illustrating the “collision of reflexive corporate strategies and reflexive worker counter-measures” (p. 325), whereby the top-down corporate control is counterbalanced by ground-up worker agency. He divides this into three zones: *unruly workworlds*, *unruly technologies*, and *unruly audiences*. And once again we can see dialectical thinking at work here: corporate and worker strategies and measures defined in relation to each other.

Caldwell (2008) states that reflexive talk can be viewed as “rich, coded, cultural self-portraits” (p. 14), and considers these deep texts able to provide more insights than trade talk on its own can. He claims trade texts (such as behind-the-scenes footage) that promise to provide the viewer with a special glimpse of movie magic are in fact “reductive and proprietary”, publicly circulating only sanctioned insider knowledge to viewers (Caldwell, 2006). Moreover, they often reduce complex actor networks to the “playful ‘magic’ of artists and medieval alchemists” (Caldwell, 2008, p. 14).

Caldwell (2008) contends that the growth of industrial self-referencing, self-disclosure, and organisational transparency is a result of four factors: the dissolution of barriers between media professionals and audiences; digital technologies that have blurred the borders between lay and professional media worlds; the increase in multimedia markets which require self-referencing meta-texts for effective viewer navigation; and increased competition triggering pressure to symbolically value innovation in public ways. This increasing propensity for self-representation creates a problem when researching film practitioners, since self-promotion and deliberate personal branding influence the way they represent themselves and their behaviour. The stories practitioners tell about their working practices help create self-affirmation and value in a working environment that is increasingly tenuous and competitive.

Caldwell (2008) makes the distinction between corporate reflexivity and worker reflexivity as follows: “Corporate reflexivity involves top-down self-referencing, organizational relations, and is closely related to marketing”; and worker reflexivity involves “more local forms of individual self-disclosure, socio-professional

interactions, and craft meritocracies” (p. 324). Caldwell views the industrial world of filmmaking as having two warring sides, but they are still sides of the same phenomenon, albeit *experienced* in different ways. However, his Los Angeles based analysis perhaps necessarily neglects to address whether there may also be an *independent reflexivity* and what its promotional surround may reveal about its defining characteristics.

The top-down Corporate Promotional Surround (CPS) includes, as we have seen, texts such as branding, marketing, making-ofs, spin-off product franchises, DVD extras, and electronic press kits. Corporate logic involves industrial levelling strategies aimed at lowering costs, eliminating union entitlements, minimising inter-craft solidarity, and keeping the balance of power tipped towards the studios. It attempts to maintain direct-to-consumer marketing pressure by levelling hierarchies and removing middlemen in its consolidated market/distribution chain. It uses the tactics of creating publicity and buzz about blockbuster properties on multi-platforms to cross-promote conglomerate properties, advertising its often unexceptional mass produced content alongside more reliably successful projects (e.g. trailers before blockbuster films). The goals of the CPS are to externalise risk through co-productions, pre-sales, outsourcing, and merchandising, and to cultivate flexibility through outsourcing, contract labour, and project-based incorporation (Caldwell, 2008, p. 370).

The ground-up Worker Promotional Surround (WPS) includes mentoring, how-to panels, trade stories, technical workshops, comp reels, craft meritocracy, etc. The labour logic involves the craft strategies of protecting and increasing their power through their unions and guilds, making them self-perpetuating through a system of protracted mentoring, and maximising and codifying the degree to which production is distributed across departments and crews. Cultural tactics of the WPS are: to cultivate the idea of a unified industry with income-protecting organisations that are an integral part of a consolidated industry structure; to convert work into cultural capital via socio-professional rituals, ancestry, and meritocracy; and to buffer underemployment by leveraging cultural capital via credits and awards. General goals of the WPS are to network to survive the system of short-term production, and to maintain high-costs of entry and exclusivity, preaching collectivity, yet barring many new aspirants from entry to protect positions within

the already large talent pool (Caldwell, 2008, p. 372).

By contrast, the corporate messages (policy statements, predictions, etc.) circulating in the corporate unruly workworld encourage over-supply of content and workers. They fuel economic uncertainty, resulting in excessive *spec* project creation as markets become more uncertain. The ephemeral texts surrounding the workers' unruly workworld attempt to discursively armour members against the potential precarity resulting from the cheapening of their labour. Unruly technologies are typically an on-going consequence of the changes digital technology has effected. The corporate world employs new technology within the framework of traditional aesthetic standards and conventional practices, but often fails to incorporate existing labour protections, (e.g., when studios claimed digital screening of primetime programmes was a "marketing" opportunity, thus failed to compensate workers through residuals as would be required for repeat screenings on free-to-air networks and cable channels (Leopold, 2007)). Worker reflexivity is often deployed territorially, to legitimise one technical craft group over another, establishing competence and exclusivity as the pace of technical obsolescence accelerates. *Unruly audiences* refers to the impact of users, fans, and digital uploaders increasingly competing with film and television workers as they develop the same production and aesthetic competencies. Though many professional workers continue to dismiss amateurs, ultra-low-budget independents, and other outsiders, there is also an increasing pressure for workers to explore the low-budget worlds of independent filmmaking and internet distribution. In contrast, the corporate promotional surround attempts to create a psychological relationship with unruly audiences as consumers through corporate disclosure and organisational transparency via viral marketing and ancillary content (Caldwell, 2008) in order to keep them in relationships with the content they are given.

Expanding the promotional surround

Although Caldwell does not use the term, these are all examples of how corporate and worker cultures constantly jig their workworlds and relationships with technology and audiences in order to maintain their own interests. Caldwell's research, however, was limited to the Los Angeles area between 1995 and 2005. He

dealt with mainly below-the-line workers rather than management, and focused on traditional forms of film and video production. This was before solid-state cameras, before Facebook was publicly available, YouTube had just begun early 2005, the Canon 5D was launched in 2005, and the iPhone was not announced until 2007. Caldwell did not consider in detail the thousands of filmmakers in the USA who produce film outside of the direct sphere of influence of Hollywood's unions and guilds, and money. And Svejenova's (2005) comparison of the Spanish and Hollywood industries, above, reminds us of the need to consider the specifics of other national cinemas. One would expect that factors such as a fragmented industry structure, government regulation and subsidies, small budgets and a smaller talent pool, underdeveloped intermediaries, and more power residing in the hands of directors (rather than with studios, unions, or stars) (Svejenova, 2005) would shape the independent filmmaker's world differently, and not just in Spain. Caldwell did not address the different strategies, tactics and goals used by independent filmmakers elsewhere to jig *their* cultural practices and worlds in order to have a working life making films. Nor does he directly address the impact of unruly workworlds, unruly technologies, and an unruly audience on independent filmmaking practices. If we do this, we may be able to theorise an "edge-in" Independent Promotional Surround (IPS), which will complete the picture produced by Caldwell's research (see "Conclusions", Fig. 12 and 13).

From Chapter 1's scene-setting discussion of independent filmmaking we can produce a set of specific questions for this study. Before matching these questions to the proposed research methods, it may be suggested that the hypothetical IPS will only be turned into a defensible theory if these questions can be related to the idea that a process of cultural jiggling occurs within an actor network in order to sustain a working life in film outside the strict confines of the corporate and organised labour worlds.

Methodology

She extends her hand and what does she find? Almost nothing solid or durable. A sequence, an accumulation, endless layers of successive disorganizations: people come and go, they transport all sorts of

documents, complain, meet, separate, grumble, protest, meet again, organise again, disperse, reconnect, all this in constant disorder: there is no way she could ever define the borders of these entities that keep on expanding or contracting like accordions. The investigator was hoping to get away from stories of invisible phantoms, she finds only new phantoms, just as invisible (Latour, 2013, p. 388).

If this investigator, when she looks at independent filmmaking as a mode of existence, seems to find “endless layers... expanding or contracting like accordions” (Latour, 2013, p. 388), then the challenge becomes one of mapping potential research methods against the questions that are being raised about this mode of existence. What emerged from the various perspectives assembled in Chapter 1, when we allow them to converge on the actor networks at the heart of independent filmmaking and on the hypothesis of an IPS, is: the importance of the community of practice with its network of strong and weak ties; its passionate attachments, its bridging via weak ties; and its repertoire of resources, including discursively shared myths of self-identity as creative labour. Technologically-enabled expanded communities now gather, relocate, re-form, disperse and shift around these core networks via participatory engagements of various kinds. Chapter 1, as a preliminary discussion of the research *topic* has raised twelve questions:

1. What are the deep characteristics of Geuens’ “cinema of routine”, which is how he characterises much non-independent filmmaking (Geuens, 2000)?
2. What are the deep characteristics of “voice”, as a defining aspect of independent filmmaking according to Rodriguez (in Torres, 2013), and how can “voice” be maintained through the development process?
3. What are the deep characteristics of the “special camaraderie”, the “love affairs” that Preston sees as frequently present in independent filmmaking (Shepard, 2009)?
4. Is the contrasting of a “cinema of routine” with a “cinema of voice” a discursive construction or a way of distinguishing actual practices, or some combination of both?

5. If independence in filmmaking can be framed within a general model of radical potential in media histories (Winston, 1998), then is the “cinema of routine” the means by which radical potential is held in check or suppressed?
6. Alternatively, is the suppression of radical potential (Winston, 1998) a phenomenon internal to independent filmmaking itself in some way?
7. How are affective, continuance, and normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997) actually expressed within specific practices of independent production and in relation to a “faith” in independence?
8. To what extent is “independent faith” a commitment to the supposed authenticity of relations in small teams, and in the reciprocal relations of motivation and identity-construction in such teams (Daskalaki & Blair, 2003)?
9. How do the strong and weak ties within teams of independent filmmakers function in relation to “bonding capital” and “bridging capital” (Putnam 2000, as cited in Antcliff et al., 2007; Granovetter, 1973), and how do these relate to “philos” (Krackhardt, 1992) as a bonding agent in such teams, considered as (relatively) small communities of practice?
10. Do independent filmmakers continue to pursue their work when the usual motivations of money and prestige are often so glaringly absent because it makes them happy to do so (Huppert & So, 2013; Seligman, 2011)?
11. If the Sartrean group-in-fusion (Sartre, 1976) is more characteristic of independent filmmaking experiences than of corporate production, where serial/institutional bonds predominate, then what are the particular circumstances that foster it?
12. If a degree of “self-precarisation” is the norm for independent filmmakers, tolerated in part because of the lure of affective satisfactions, to what extent

has self-precarisation also become part of the self-projected image of the independent?

Table 2 maps these questions against four potential research methods.

Before considering these questions and methods further, however, I want to make it clear that these twelve questions are not the central research questions of this project. They are a matrix of questions arising from the scene-setting discussion of independence. As such, they will have to be addressed, in different ways and with varying degrees of emphasis, as the thesis proceeds, and most of them are the specific questions I had in mind when I began interviewing filmmakers.

Assembling them at this point, and mapping them against proposed research methods, is what will allow us to extract the central research questions from the matrix. The Grounded Theory method requires a series of passes through the data and this often involves a funnelling of questions from a general list (Table 2) to the more specific. Some questions from a general list are not so much discarded as turn out to be less relevant to the particular direction the research takes. At this stage the following list is needed in order to start assembling and “slicing” more material, looking for the categories that will eventually support theory building.

. . .

	Auto-ethnography (self)	Production accounts (secondary)	Interviews (primary)	Theory building (grounded)
What are the deep characteristics of Geuens' "cinema of routine", which is how he characterizes much non-independent filmmaking (Geuens, 2000)?		✓		
What are the deep characteristics of "voice", as a defining aspect of independent filmmaking according to Rodriguez (in Torres, 2013)?	✓		✓	
What are the deep characteristics of the "special camaraderie", the "love affairs" that Preston sees as frequently present in independent filmmaking (Shepard, 2009)?	✓		✓	
Is the contrasting of a "cinema of routine" with a "cinema of voice" a discursive construction or a way of distinguishing actual practices, or some combination of both?				✓
If independence in filmmaking can be framed within a general model of radical potential in media histories (Winston, 1998) then is the "cinema of routine" the means by which radical potential is held in check or suppressed?			✓	✓
Alternatively, is the suppression of radical potential (Winston, 1998) a phenomenon internal to independent filmmaking itself in some way?	✓		✓	✓
How are affective, continuance, and normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997) actually expressed within specific practices of independent production and in relation to a "faith" in independence?	✓	✓	✓	
To what extent is "independent faith" a commitment to the supposed authenticity of relations in small teams, and in the reciprocal relations of motivation and identity-construction in such teams (Daskalaki & Blair, 2003)?	✓	✓	✓	
How do the strong and weak ties within teams of independent filmmakers function in relation to "bonding capital" and "bridging capital" (Putnam 2000, as cited in Antcliff et al., 2007; Granovetter, 1973), and how do these relate to "philos" (Krackhardt, 1992) as a bonding agent in such teams, considered as (relatively) small communities of practice?	✓	✓	✓	✓
Do independent filmmakers continue to pursue their work when the usual motivations of money and prestige are often so glaringly absent because it makes them happy to do so (Huppert & So, 2013; Seligman, 2011)?	✓	✓	✓	
If the Sartrean group-in-fusion (Sartre, 1976) is more characteristic of independent filmmaking experiences than of corporate production, where serial/institutional bonds predominate, then what are the particular circumstances that foster it?	✓	✓	✓	
If a degree of "self-precarisation" is the norm for independent filmmakers, tolerated in part because of the lure of affective satisfactions, to what extent has self-precarisation also become part of the self-projected image of the independent?	✓	✓	✓	

Table 2. Questions arising from Chapter 1

Central research questions

Before briefly discussing the four proposed research methods, it is necessary to clarify how the twelve general questions relate to the research *purposes*, to the *central research question(s)*, and to the emerging *theory questions* (Wengraf, 2001). Fuelled by a deep curiosity surrounding the gaps in knowledge experienced by many filmmakers regarding their own lived workworld, this research began with what Wengraf (2001) describes as a “muddle in the middle”, one of the three acceptable places to “complete a well-fitting design” (p. 73). Initial questions that motivated me to explore the topic of independent filmmaking (as both practitioner and researcher) concerned the transformation of independent filmmaking communities, the changing nature of film distribution, and whether participatory cultures and the blurring of the consumer/producer distinction offer new possibilities for filmmakers. These broad initial interests led to additional questions, perspectives and areas for possible inquiry. The possible angles to focus on were wide and varied so *research purposes* needed to be clarified and worked through a *conceptual framework*. This preliminary conceptual framework was provided by the material discussed in Chapter 1, which produced a set of concepts relating to the topic-area that began to pose questions and raise theoretical propositions. This generated the twelve framing questions presented in Table 2.

With these questions derived from a preliminary *conceptual framework*, it became possible to clarify what the one or two overarching central research questions were for this study. What emerged quite clearly were:

1. What is a course of action (Latour) in independent filmmaking as a mode of existence and a career and what are the real value systems that inform it?
2. What consequences do these have for independent filmmaking development practices?

It has already been proposed that mobilised intensities are a crucial aspect of a course of action in this domain, and that the group-in-fusion is a vital vehicle for both mobilising and concentrating these intensities; also that tie relations among knowledgeable actors working within collective understandings are important to any such action; further that these collective understandings draw deeply on a discursive construction of independence.

The edge-in independent promotional surround

These research questions can also be organised around our additional hypothesis: that in addition to Caldwell’s top-down corporate promotional surround and bottom-up workers’ promotional surround there is now what we might term an edge-in independent promotional surround. The present study’s purposes might then include filling in the details as follows:

EDGE-IN INDEPENDENT PROMOTIONAL SURROUND

Independent Logic

a distinctive combination of *course of action* and *value systems* that have distinctive consequences for development, *practices* and *products*.

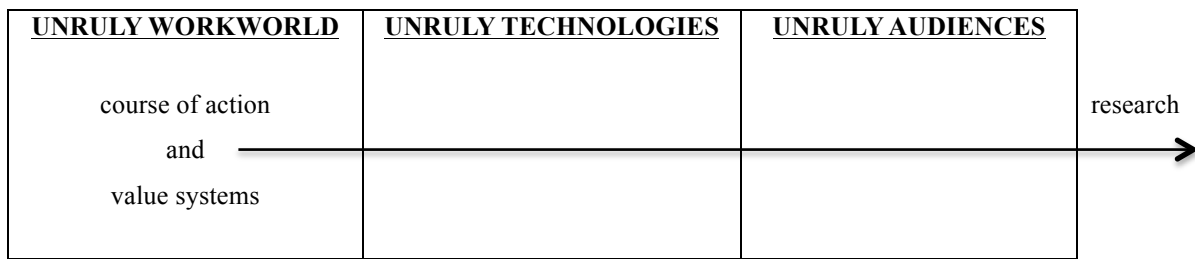


Fig 3. Expanding the promotional surround

At this point in formulating a research design, however, I was confronted by a dilemma. Would the research attempt to progress through all three areas, from left to right in Fig. 3? This was not easy to resolve. At a very early stage of discussing a PhD proposal my interest had focused around the audience and the marketing of independent films (I was even referred at one point to the Waikato Management School to discuss locating the research there). So the entire research project might have been located in that area, and my interest in this remains as strong as it then was. And in later stages of producing *Penny Black*, which coincided with the early stages of the PhD, I developed an interest in researching how independents today can become more technologically knowledgeable. So I joined “Shane’s Inner Circle”, an online training and mentoring service, with courses on career building in technical areas, offered by well-known cinematographer Shane Hurlbut (www.thehurlblog.com). Researching both unruly technologies and unruly audiences from these perspectives seemed to be attractive options and would give the research an impressive scale of ambition (I hoped). However, the more

preparatory research I undertook on the unruly workworld (the research now presented in Chapter 1), the more it became obvious that Fig. 3 charts a huge project of extended research, one that extends well beyond the sensible scope of a single PhD. My central research questions reside within the area of the unruly workworld, with undoubtedly significant consequences for the other two areas. But the decision was taken to concentrate on the workworld and to do that part of the larger research programme as comprehensively as possible, leaving the rest for attention in the future.

Proposed methods

Autoethnography (self): Qualitative field research can help to reveal things that would not be apparent through quantitative research, producing “a richer understanding of many social phenomena than can be achieved through other observational methods” (Babbie, 2007, p. 287) by revealing individuals’ “deep characteristics” (e.g. opinions, values) (Moreland, 2013). Combining the characteristics of both autobiography and ethnography, autoethnography seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience through self-observation and reflexive investigation, performed by a member of the group being studied, and exploring the researcher’s subjective experiences with the goal of understanding cultural or social determinants of experiences (Pace, 2012). Self-observation in a situation minimises the possibility of other participants censoring accounts, and gives access to actions, motivations, emotions, and other crucially important elements of social activities, which are often hidden to a researcher (Chang, 2008). Autoethnography gives the researcher complete access to the rich stream of data they possess through their experiences, and the ability to both see and reflect back upon these experiences and decipher the cultural meanings of events, behaviours and thoughts (Chang, 2007). Self-reflection allows the autoethnographer to examine the forces that have shaped their sense of self and to reflect on their preconceptions and feelings about others, whether they are similar to or different from themselves (Chang, 2007). Readers of autoethnography can also be prompted to self-reflection and self-examination of their own social selves and their practices (Nash, 2004), offering an additional benefit for doing and sharing autoethnographies (e.g. where readers of this research may include other

independent filmmakers).

Production accounts (secondary): As noted already, filmmakers generate a proliferation of textual artefacts in the form of interviews (printed and video), self-published texts (from books and blogs to twitter posts), and professional gatherings. This collective body of reflexive talk can provide evidence of the critical industrial practices of independent filmmakers, potentially revealing characteristics of their practice, their commitment and attitudes towards their work and each other, the circumstances that draw individuals to filmmaking, and the circumstances that enable and motivate them to make (and continue making) films.

Interviews (primary): Evidence gathered through interviews with filmmakers may be similar to that provided by secondary sources, serving to reinforce concepts and emerging theories. Contrary information may highlight areas for further consideration and investigation. The main benefits of primary interview research are that questions can be targeted more directly at the research objectives, and information gathered may reflect recent changes in the filmmaking world. The use of semi-structured interviews gives the interviewee a fair degree of freedom in their responses, and the interviewer can request additional information during the conversation. This may more effectively reveal the deep characteristics of the topic being researched.

Theory Building (Grounded): Theory building will produce transferable knowledge, offering insights and generalisations that will be applicable to other contexts and instances. However, as Grounded Theory did not immediately emerge as important to this research, discussion of it will be held back for the Methodology section of Chapter 3, except for brief discussion below of how the traditional literature review is handled by Grounded Theory.

Methodological issues

There are methodological issues that will need to be kept in mind when using these four methods. Chang (2008) notes, “Memory is not always a friend to autoethnography... It often reveals partial truth and is sometimes unreliable and unpredictable. Memory selects, shapes, limits, and distorts the past” (p. 72). The

same is true, of course, for ethnography, which instead trusts the memory of the observee rather than the observer.

An autoethnographer is committed to developing theoretical understandings through analyses of broader social phenomena, and through dialogue with informants other than themselves (Anderson, 2006). Though visible in the narrative, the autoethnographer attempts to regard themselves as “other”, laying aside assumptions, preconceptions, their status, their self-esteem, etc. (Bigger, 2009), valuing honesty rather than self protection. However, details may still be omitted out of sensitivity to others and information may be deliberately obscured in the writing of the autoethnographic text (Bigger, 2009).

Data generated from the reflexive talk and interviews of filmmakers contain “self-representation, self-critique, and self-reflection” often designed to create an image they wish to project about themselves and their work (Caldwell, 2008, p. 5), which could jeopardise the validity and reliability of the research (McDougall, 2000). However, it should be noted that this “spin” is not a phenomenon reserved for those wanting to place themselves in the public eye. It may also be motivated by a person’s self-image, what they want to see and feel when they look at themselves and their own actions. The distinction between truth and truthfulness is the difference between accurately describing how things *exactly* are, and extracting meaning from our perceptions or feelings about things, respectively. Whether the stories are mine, or from interviewees, or published accounts, autoethnographic “self-narratives involve looking back at the past through the lens of the present”, giving “a measure of coherence and continuity that was not available at the original moment of experience” (Bochner, 2000, p. 270). Bochner continues:

The purpose of self-narratives is to extract meaning from experience rather than to depict experience exactly as it was lived. These narratives are not so much academic as they are existential, reflecting a desire to grasp or seize the possibilities of meaning, which is what gives life its imaginative and poetic qualities. The call of narrative is the inspiration to find language that is adequate to the obscurity and darkness of experience. We narrate to make sense of experience over the course of time (p. 270).

This striking paragraph stuck in my mind from an early stage of formulating a research design and selecting methods. One practice-led dimension of the research was always intended to be the autoethnography of my co-writing and producing *Penny Black*. But Arthur Bochner's paragraph kept nagging in my mind about whether this was enough. This would eventually lead to Chapter 4 in its present form. (Arthur Bochner developed the doctoral program in the Department of Communication at the University of South Florida and is a distinguished award winner from the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry). Chapter 3 includes discussion of the pivotal moment in my research where this paragraph is revisited.

With truthfulness (rather than absolute truth) as a goal, data source triangulation helps avoid the situation whereby "authors purposefully alter or omit a relevant experience because the story that would be told about their character is not desirable" (Medford, 2006). Using evidence from my autobiographical account, and from primary and secondary research, information can be cross-verified to identify and reduce inadequacies or inconsistencies found in one-source data. For example, by triangulating with information from the various communications generated by the *Penny Black* production team during production, my autoethnographic text developed to represent multiple voices (cf. Christians, 2000).

We do have to consider the potential consequences that publishing these stories may have for others and ourselves. Medford (2006) suggests that scholarly writers might assume the subjects of their studies will not read the results, as academic writing is less accessible than other more commonly used media. But living in a searchable digitally connected world I assume anything I write can be discovered, and that it is likely any person connected to my study may access and read this material. However, the consequent ethic of care, not revealing events that were unnecessary to illustrate a point, or omitting names where an incident may be perceived to be negative (Ellis, 2004), was seldom necessary in actuality.

McDougall (2000) considers there may be potential for conflict resulting from "the altered hierarchy in the research relationship" (p. 723). Though this can be an issue for any person asked to recount personal experiences or emotions, I felt my position as interested practitioner may have helped reduce this concern. With ten years experience with filmmaking and filmmakers in California, and a similar length of

experience in New Zealand, I approached interviewees from the perspective of an informed practitioner as well as a researcher. In addition, the conversational nature of semi-structured interviews helped to create an atmosphere where the respondent was more likely to feel “safe talking without being judged” (p. 723). The interview method will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

Côté, Salmela, Baria, & Russell (1993) address the possibility of errors occurring during categorising or *coding* qualitative accounts, especially as the quantity of data increases. However, their concerns centre around losing the meaning of coded material once it is unconnected to its source, confusing the content, or renaming categories. Pace (2012) outlines the method for open coding that I used, allowing for incidents to be assigned multiple codes, emerging concepts to be colour coded, and for data to remain connected to its original document to avoid losing the source meaning of units.

Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory facilitates the move from describing what is happening to understanding what causes it to happen (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). One of the main concerns of building theory using a Grounded Theory methodology relates to some of the basic tenets of theory formation, which led to a split between its founders Glaser and Strauss around the coding of qualitative data. The tension lies between the risk of *forcing* data into previous conceptual categories (not being inductive enough) and producing such a large number of codes that the categorisation and theoretical development process is hindered (Bendassolli, 2013). Glaser (1992) maintained that researchers can approach their field without precise research questions or problems, but rather with the “abstract wonderment of what is going on that is an issue and how it is handled” (p. 22). He maintained that there is no need to perform a self-contained literature review prior to developing a conceptual framework, and considered that applying theoretical background knowledge is often harmful when developing grounded theories (Kelle, 2005). Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) approach considers the role of research literature quite liberally, maintaining that “all kinds of literature can be used before a research study is begun” (p. 56) but they do emphasise the need to position research questions clearly

in relation to the existing research literature. As they further developed their methodology, Strauss and Corbin directed researchers to use procedures in their own way, to trust their instincts and avoid getting focused too closely on the conventions and analytical procedures:

Sometimes, one has to use common sense and not get caught up in worrying about what is the right or wrong way. The important thing is to trust oneself and the process. Students should stay within the general guidelines ... and use the procedures and techniques flexibly according to their abilities and the realities of their studies (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 295).

Another difference of opinion between Glaser and Strauss is that Strauss (1987) specified that induction, deduction, and verification are “absolutely essential” (p. 12), where Glaser (1992) argues that Grounded Theory is largely inductive, and that such research can supply strong evidence for (though not absolute proof of) an emerging theory.

The foregoing issues in research methodology informed my research design as follows: the literature review was integrated into the conceptual framework, which consists of Chapter 1 (scene setting) and Chapter 2 (clarification of the questions and their relation to research methods). While influenced by Glaser’s emphasis on having wonderment about the research topic and maintaining a consequent openness to “what’s going on”, I also tended towards Strauss and Corbin’s emphasis on selecting precise procedures suited to the study. The approach to theory here does remain determinedly *grounded* in the sense that no pre-existing theory has been selected in advance for application to my topic. (Latour’s major influence has not been theoretical but methodological, with the exception of his characterisation of the *passionate being*, which will be further commented on below.) I am turning to theoretical perspectives as and when the developing conceptual framework requires them. Although the research topic was extensively discussed in Chapter 1, the research questions have only emerged fully in the present chapter, in keeping with the inductive principle of grounded thinking. This duplicates the actual process of investigation that preceded the writing of this thesis.

Inductive and abductive thinking

Before presenting the autoethnographic method in practice, it remains to offer an explanation of how I am using Latour's identification of *a mode of existence motivated by passionate interests* (2013). How might this relate to the hypothesis of an Independent Promotional Surround (IPS) within which, for example, practitioner reflexivity does not merely express such passionate interests but is, in a sense, discursively constructed by them? Is this what Habermas (1971) called "the chance of a good idea" (p. 147), the lucky happenstance that delivers to a PhD thesis its "key", something of the sort that I know many other researchers delight to have found (and in which long hours in the library find their justification)? Is this, in short, a prior theory, derived from Latour, which the present research will then prove by apparently discovering that it was there all along in the raw data about independent filmmaking practices, waiting to be uncovered as the "truth" of that data?

The IPS hypothesis needs to be situated in terms of two procedures of research-based thinking, if this familiar sleight of hand is not to be repeated in what follows. The logician and proto-semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce was among the first to distinguish the two procedures in modern times.

From the modern point of view it is beyond question that, up to about 1898, Peirce combined two very different forms of inference under the name of "hypothesis". When he became aware of this unclear use of the term "hypothesis", he elaborated a clear distinction in his later philosophy between the two procedures, and called the one operation "qualitative induction" and the other "abduction" (Reichertz, 2010, para. 10).

The overall method of this research relies on qualitative induction, and as such shall, in due course, demonstrate its credentials as Grounded Theory. Latour's "good idea" is instead a matter of abduction. It was presented at the beginning because it is a starting point, not an explanation of what is to come or a finding. Reichertz makes clear how the process of abductive thinking can require such a starting point. It is an observational vantage point, not a theoretical finding. (If I had wanted to effect the sleight of hand of it apparently emerging from my data, I

would have slyly held it back until an “ah ha” moment much later in the thesis.) The parallel openings in Chapter 1 in effect open the main body of the thesis with and without the observational vantage point, dramatising in a modest way how running grounded and abductive thinking side by side can begin to produce results. The thesis as a whole cannot maintain the physical juxtaposition, except in those short passages, but it remains present throughout as a principle.

If I have only ever seen white swans I may inductively reason that all swans are probably white. I may also abductively reason that all the swans I’ve observed had white parents or (with better ideas as the vantage point) that their parentage included a dominant white gene. A hypothesis might then be that the observed swans have an advantage over predators in the snowy landscape of their northern habitats (and possibly that in snowless habitats there may be swans that are not white). These are different but related procedures of thinking; different but related components of forming a hypothesis. This will become clearer in the following presentation of the autoethnographic method in action, followed by a brief return to the methodological vantage point offered by Latour for abductive thinking about the material.

***Penny Black* autoethnography**

Latour’s identification of beings of passionate interest as a distinctive contemporary phenomenon offered an initial abductive vantage point for this research. Looking at myself, I could ask, “Am I such a being?” Seeing a snooker ball moving towards up, we might abduce that it has been struck by the cue ball. That hypothesis serves our observation, but it is not a guaranteed interpretation. So looking at *Penny Black* both from the ground as it were, and from Latour’s vantage point, it is possible to begin the process of extracting meaning from experience, in Bochner’s terms.


The first stage of the autoethnography was to re-write the experience of making *Penny Black* as a screenplay. The second stage was to *memo* key incidents and ideas. The third stage was to write a summary account and code it. Between the first two stages, I wrote an essay about three representative independents, and the thinking that went into that essay informed the memoing. (In shortened form, the

essay itself eventually appeared here, as a section of Chapter 1, about Rodriguez, Figgis and Preston.

It seems important to note here that this research method (autoethnography that would progressively shade over into Grounded Theory) was prolonged, exploratory, ruminative, evocative in intent, somewhat meandering, largely consigned to the deep background of the thesis, often misunderstood by others as directionless, experimental, frustrating, revelatory, hard work, heavily dependent at times on tacit knowledge, reliant on notecards and pin board, and at its best something that went on within a personal state of reflective concentration. It was also something that would lead to a decision to present a second full screenplay as Chapter 4 of this thesis.

Writing an autoethnography takes place within what Wiebe, Wilson and Cardie (2005) term a private state frame. The research object is framed in the writing by the “opinions, beliefs, thoughts, feelings, emotions, goals, evaluations, and judgments” (p. 167-168) of the writer/researcher composing the account in private. The screenplay + memo approach (which was unique to this research) was designed to explore, if possible, every aspect of this framing. The “opinions, beliefs, thoughts, feelings” etc. are directed at objects or *targets*, in Wiebe et al’s terminology. And this depends upon features of value in which are invested varying degrees of “intensity, significance and type of attitude” (p. 167), which Wiebe et al. term *properties*. The coding of the top-level autoethnographic account (sample below) was achieved by referring back to the memos for evidence of properties and targets.

Creating a coded autoethnographic account

Reflection	Top-layer account
Undertaking a protracted autoethnographic study of a film production allowed me the time to access all planning, and every	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">time as a resource</div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> One of the hardest things about micro-budget filmmaking is freeing yourself from other commitments and </div> </div>

<p>decision, problem, and solution relating to the production. I observed situations from the inside and saw exactly what was done to resolve them and why. The path was messy. We studied other projects, took advice, experimented and learned along the way. Things that worked for others did not always work for us. Failure was balanced over time by unexpected successes. We forged our way through the quagmire of preproduction, production, post-production and distribution. We used a lot of gaffer tape.</p> <p>We developed the script over a year, a <i>road trip</i> story of two people who meet and travel together, unsure of where the journey will take them. This was presented to the lead actors with the suggestion of creative improvisational opportunities while filming. Filming was completed over a twelve-month period, beginning with a two-week road trip, July 2012, with additional material filmed as time and scheduling allowed. Though mostly we shot with a committed core group of eight, at times we had up to twenty people on set. Several times we filmed with a crew of two. During pre and post-production Joe and I often worked alone.</p>	<p>coordinating with everyone to actually film the project. We scheduled the two-week road trip during school and university holidays to make it easier for Joe and me to shuffle kids off to caretakers. Ben took time off work, and Moe was a student, but we lost our sound recordist to paid work a couple of days before the shoot. We were unable to pay wages but felt this resulted in a crew who valued creativity, experience, and enjoyment over financial rewards. As the project cost over NZ\$70,000 it's likely we may not net a profit, however Joe and I devised a points system to distribute any profits based on the number of days each cast or crew member worked, in the event we made a profit. If people weren't committed they didn't last long in the team. We originally cast another actor in a lead role, but he had difficulty getting to rehearsals or meetings and I was very concerned with his performance, so when he announced he could not attend the week of rehearsals because he was going on holiday we decided to recast the role. This was one week before</p> <p>“valued creativity, experience, and enjoyment over financial rewards”</p> <p>“distribute any profits”</p> <p>lacking skills</p>
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<p>Though <i>Penny Black</i> was created with the intention of utilising information from the production as data for my thesis, it was not clear until after production exactly how this would be accomplished or in what form it would be presented. Rather than keeping a detailed description of the unfolding of every day of production, giving equal weight to each occurrence whether significant or trivial, I eventually selected the key incidents, the major and minor turning points that stood out (Denzin, 2013), and filled in everyday detail around these.</p> <p>As we created <i>Penny Black</i> we produced thousands of pieces of incidental information, collectively documenting the process from concept to completion. The multitude of ephemeral texts carry fragments of memory, experiences assembled with hindsight, photos, video, and written words (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011), coded self-portraits recorded as email, plans, lists, schedules, photos, blogs and social media messages mindfully created and passed via the internet. These artefacts evoke recollections of production experiences, including moments shared publicly and private emotions and frustrations, serving</p>	<p>our first scheduled day of the shoot. We had auditioned all the young male actors we were interested in and no one else stood out, so we started to broaden our casting profile. Toni had worked in several stage shows directed by Joe's wife. Toni was in her last year of high school and at an age when she would welcome a couple of weeks travelling away from home. I frantically rewrote the role to suit an actress and we hit the road with a talented, motivated, yet tiny and unpaid cast and crew.</p> <p>Travelling with a micro-crew of director (Joe), camera operator, camera assistant, and make-up artist meant I was the only crew member not required to be on set all the time, and so a lot of tasks fell to me during production. I made sure everyone was fed, found locations as we went, shopped for props and additional wardrobe, took behind the scenes photos, drove production vehicles, rewrote the script, posted on social media in the evenings, and sent out the promised</p>
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prior working relationship



talented



problem solver



<p>as a diary of events. Some memories sparked other recollections of past experiences, expanding critical subjectivity and enhancing understanding of my experiences before, during and after production (Lincoln, 1995).</p> <p>In order to record my personal experiences for use as primary data I used our shooting schedule to construct a chronological framework of events, noting which scenes were filmed in each location, and annotating memorable or significant events that took place off set, in motels, restaurants, vehicles, etc. Seeking an effective form to represent the messiness and complexities of my data, I returned to the conventions of scriptwriting as a way to amalgamate my auto-ethnographic experience from my point of view, without postulating thoughts or projecting inner emotion onto other cast and crew. I developed each event into a <i>scene</i>, written in script format to allow a clearer and less subjective recollection of each event. Dialogue was reconstructed to preserve the significance and sentiment I perceived during each conversation, though pieces of documented text were extracted and used in their original form when appropriate. Social media posts, emails, texts, Skype</p>	<p>postcards to crowdfunding pledgers. I felt responsible for every element of production that didn't involve holding the camera or standing in front of it, and spent a lot of time trudging around in my no-nonsense steel-capped boots making sure that everything was 100% ready for filming the next day, or the next scene, or the next take. It was exhausting but my energy was high as I bounced awake before dawn and didn't feel an ounce of tiredness until I finally forced myself into bed. It was wonderful to be constantly improvising, solving all the unpredictable demands of each day. I found pleasure in finding difficult but important pieces of the jigsaw while we were travelling together, like getting permission to film on the roof of one of the tallest buildings in Wellington within 10 minutes of arriving in the city, and finding both a café location to film and a woman who agreed to play the role of barista on arrival in Taupo. It was more fun to achieve goals</p> <p>“everything was 100% ready”</p> <p>“It was wonderful”</p> <p>“I found pleasure”</p> <p>“café location”</p> <p>new connections</p> <p>“more fun to achieve goals for the group”</p>
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conversations and memories from the cast and crew, were strung on the framework of this reconstruction of experiences. Some scenes became montages, abbreviating events for the sake of clarity and comprehensibility. This early script was intended as a working device rather than as an evidentiary document per se.

With this script in hand, I also wrote a short essay exploring the meaning of “independent” as it manifests in everyday filmmaking practices and ethos. Using three self-evidently passionate independent filmmakers as preliminary case studies, Robert Rodriguez (USA), Mike Figgis (UK) and Gaylene Preston (NZ) (see Chapter 1), I examined some of the practices and belief systems of making films independently, focusing on conditions of production inherent in low-budget filmmaking, with my own experiences very much in mind. Motivations that emerged were: to maintain freedom to tell their own story; to be immersed in the pragmatic problem-solving spirit of low-budget filmmaking; to prioritise improvisation and risk-taking; to utilise the crew’s collective abilities to turn constraints into workable opportunities; and to retain their

“How much is it going to cost?”



for the group than it was crossing things off my to-do list (alone) during preproduction. This was the case even when things went wrong, like when the Zebra van was stopped by the police, and I was thinking, “How much is it going to cost me this time?” but I still jumped out of my car and ran across the road to get a good photo to post on Facebook. It was exciting, energising, and I felt invincible.

The flip-side of my not always being “on set” was that many changes were made in front of camera to what had been scripted, which often meant other pieces of the storyline no longer made sense. I knew the script inside out. If I’d been there I would have tried to point this out, but instead I spent many evenings on the road trying to work out what had been filmed that day, what had been changed and what had been cut (often due to time constraints), and then re-crafting the script to incorporate the alterations. Sometimes even omitting one line

control of output



passion for their work.

I drew on these key concepts to extract, expand and memo a series of illustrative moments from my own filmmaking experience. The essay on directors Rodriguez, Figgis, and Preston became integrated into Chapter 1, shifting status from clarifying notes to final presentation.

This process raised additional questions and unresolved issues that needed to be addressed in order to create another layer of autoethnography that would increase the depth of self-reflection and the quality of generalisation. Questions were arising in my mind as I assembled the layers of material; about film theory's relation to practice; about communication and commitment; the relationships and attachments between cast, crew, and supporters; bonding of the duo and the group; and regarding the virtually "erotic" interests that sometimes deeply permeate a film project.

It started to feel like there was a hierarchy of repeated and criss-crossing elements behind the accumulation of detail, with a base that consisted mostly of increasingly complex interpersonal elements on top of which the

"if I trusted him to direct I had to trust his judgment"

"focus on Astra"

"Anton was more engaging to watch"

assumed stereotypical relationship

impacted several subsequent scenes, but understandably Joe wanted the freedom to make whatever changes he felt necessary on set, and if I trusted him to direct I had to trust his judgment. I also figured we'd sort out any issues later. When I was on set I felt I had to be in the background, and it was a hard line for me not to cross, being ready to help but not interfering. I often had Laura Mulvey in my ear commenting on how Joe put a lot more focus on Astra ("the gaze"). I found Anton more engaging (perhaps because I'm a woman), but apart from asking once if we were getting enough coverage of Anton (sometimes one shot of him compared with five of Astra) I held my tongue. As producer it wasn't "my" movie anymore, it was everyone's movie, but mostly I felt it had become Joe's movie. A few people disapproved, thinking I was just "helping Joe make his movie". That I was "giving him my resources", and it was just another case of a

<p>production's growing momentum sought to harness other resources. As I began to sense this kind of pattern, I realized that my own feelings of self-identity were oscillating between immersed participant and detached researcher. A more completely immersed role for myself in the production (e.g. as director) might not have allowed this stepping-back.</p> <p>Via the underlying layers of autoethnographic script and memoed moments I worked towards a top-layer account (sampled on the right), which was then coded as shown here. (See the colour key below.)</p> <p>The final annotation scheme consisted of the following nine colour-coded categories:</p> <p>Properties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • skills: both existing and the process of acquiring skills • affection: for the project, for others, and for filmmaking in general • trust: in ability, motivation, judgement, etc. • momentum: moving the project to completion • relationships: between cast, crew, with audience, supporters, media, funders, 	<p>woman positioning herself subordinately. But, if I had been the one directing it would have easily doubled my required investment of time, and also my financial commitment to the project. I could have pursued more determinedly my desire to capture emotions and evoke particular meaning through the images, and to explore human nature through the characters. But I would have needed several years break from my thesis, and a full-time nanny.</p> <p>time poor</p> <p>“my skills in these roles increased”</p> <p>“inform my subsequent creative efforts & contribute to my PhD”</p> <p>“crew morale”</p> <p>Of course crew morale is extremely important on any project, so good food, good accommodation, and relaxed people were high on our list of priorities.</p>
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<p>etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reputation: existing and building reputations of the cast and crew and of the project, including promotion <p>Targets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resources: physical objects such as props, financial, including funding and sponsorship • technology: digital camera, Internet, hardware, software, rigs, etc. • output: including the finished film, audience reception, profit, etc. <p>(Note: categories also include the opposite properties and targets, i.e. <i>skills</i> includes lack of skills)</p> <p>It was the memoing of the script that started to generate this coding scheme but it was focused with reference to Wiebe, Wilson and Cardie’s (2005) distinguishing of properties (features of value) and targets (objects towards which those values are directed).</p> <p>The skills, affection, trust, relationships, reputation and achieved momentum among the production group members – centred on Joe and myself, as director and producer – constituted the principal properties.</p>	<p>During the road trip food was always available on and off set. Every evening we all hung out at our shared accommodations after we wrapped, watching dailies, chatting, and playing music. On the first day of filming Anton produced an unusual old banjolele, and as Anton could play it we immediately wrote it into the script. He worked out how to play the songs Joe hoped to include in the soundtrack, and started to teach Astra how to play, too. A week into the trip she decided to purchase her own ukulele in Napier, and then Tanya purchased one soon after. A few weeks later I purchased one for myself (and quickly learned to play a bit before I told anyone), and I bought Toni one for her 18th birthday. The only people on the road trip who didn’t end up buying a ukulele already owned (and were proficient on) their own guitars.</p> <p>As we travelled the cast and crew adopted practices that further united the group.</p> <p>“we all hung out”</p> <p>“an old banjolele”</p> <p>“Anton could play” “teach Astra how to play”</p> <p>bonding behaviour</p> <p>“united the group”</p>
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Mode of existence

There is a similarity between Crawford's (2015) interest in how "energies get ordered" (p. 129) and Latour's (2013) ambitious project to describe modern modes of existence around the channelling of energies into modes that intersect with each other. These intersecting connectors, as Latour terms them, represent a shift of methodological focus off the actants in a network and onto the connectors that channel the energies of actants (including the non-human energies of technologies). The assemblages of actants are formed at and by the *crossings* of modes. Three modes and their crossings persistently came to mind as I developed my top-level coding scheme from the autoethnographic material: [HAB]IT, [ATT]ACHMENT, and [NET]WORK. This is how Latour labels the modes. I also became aware that a fourth mode, [TEC]HNOLOGY, might need a different level of attention than it was receiving in my autoethnography, where it was more of a utilitarian component and *target* of value than itself an actant or connector. (Eventually, however, this issue fell outside the scope of the research).

Very much conscious of the necessity to avoid forcing data into preconceived theoretical categories (the key difference between Grounded Theory and theory-led methods), at this stage I chose to acknowledge the *potential* link with Latour by calling my assemblage of categories the *crossings pyramid* (Fig. 4. below). The [HAB]ITS or courses of action habitually available to or adopted by actants, the [ATT]ACHMENTS of desires and attractions that bind people to projects and to each other, the [NET]WORKS of associations, relationships and reputations that develop: the crossings of these various modes and their specific properties seem to be at work around what has emerged from the coding of the autoethnography. Whether other terms such as [TEC]HNOLOGY and [ORG]ANIZATION also need to be understood as crossings here remained an open question at this point in the inquiry, as did the question of whether Latour's modes in general would prove useful in later theory building. (There is even the intriguing thought that *independent faith* is a kind of secular phenomenon within the [REL]IGION mode). In this context, HAB clearly relates to Biggart and Beamish (2003), discussed in terms of the Film Value Chain in the thesis' introduction.

The crossings pyramid

The foundational dimension of skills, affection, and trust becomes the baseline that institutes the whole process. The trajectory the process takes, and the conditions the process occurs in, include existing and newly formed relationships, and the existing and developing reputations of both people and the project. These give the project momentum, on top of which targets are achieved regarding the identification and accumulation of resources. Technology is utilised to achieve the top-level target of output, the change the process aims to achieve.

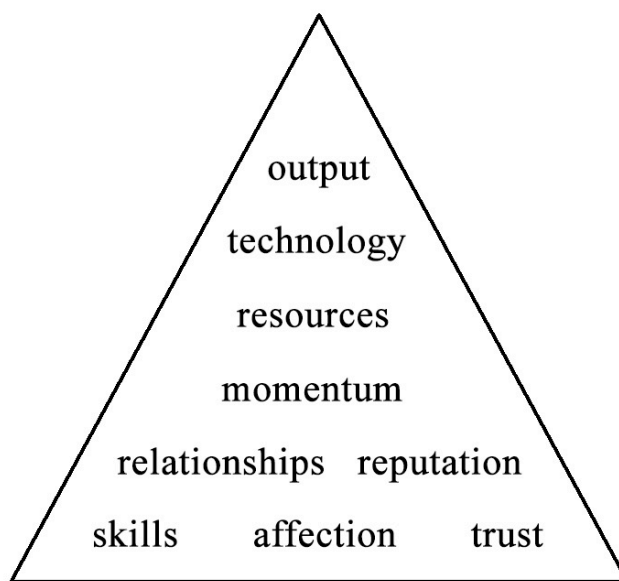


Fig. 4. The crossings pyramid: properties of HAB, ATT and NET

There is a timeline from base to apex, which is the gap between now and then, start and finish. My autoethnographic account provided numerous clusters that demonstrated these categories in action within a specific production culture and process. The full coded-up top-level account that produced the crossings pyramid is not included in the thesis.

One of the most distinctive characteristics of what has come to be known as the evocative style of autoethnography is its closeness to literary form. Combining this with Denzin's call (Denzin, 2013) for more performative styles of qualitative writing led me to choose the screenplay format as my initial mode of evocative autoethnography. It was intriguing to switch in my head between the *Penny Black*

screenplay and a *making of* screenplay that I was crafting for research purposes. The two began to feel like parallel worlds and the latter resonated constantly with traces of the former. A further screenplay (Chapter 4) would eventually emerge to transcend these two predecessors, because by then I was able to filter the material through several layers of research data.

Another characteristic of this kind of writing is its attention to the apparently insignificant, the trivial, the otherwise forgettable, the fleeting, the impressionistic, the momentarily felt or barely noticed. The screenplay format proved to be good for capturing this level of material, as I was able to re-visualise actual days of production in terms of scenes and sequences. So, here are some voices from the shadow economy of film:

The making of *Penny Black* screenplay extract

EXT. LAKE TAUPO PARKING LOT – DAY (MORNING)

The iconic beautiful view of Mt. Ruapehu across the lake is completely obscured by fog. The team stand and look out over the water at the grey lake, the grey sky, the grey hills.

FIONA

I guess it is what it is.

(to Joe)

Are you shooting in sequence? I'll leave you here and go get coffee and sandwiches for the second part. One no tomato, one vegan, and one anything.

(discreetly whispers)

And I'll try to find a location for the café scene so no idea how long I'll be.

Joe nods and starts unpacking the car as Fiona heads into town.

INT. WATER FRONT CAFE – DAY (A FEW MINUTES LATER)

Red tables and chairs are neatly arranged inside a wood panelled café. Two cheerful baristas potter around behind the counter serving the one customer in the café.

The young woman, LAURA, smiles warmly as Fiona enters the cafe.

LAURA

Hello, how are you?

FIONA

Hi, I'm good, thanks. Hey, we're filming a feature film in Taupo today and we're looking for a cafe to film a quick scene in and yours would be perfect. Do you think there's any chance that might be possible?

LAURA

Maybe, you'll have to ask my boss.

Overhearing, her slightly effeminate boss swooshes over dramatically.

DAMIEN

Does somebody want me?

FIONA

Hi, I'm Fiona, I do want to get coffee, but I was also wondering if we could film a quick scene of our feature film in your cafe this afternoon. We have a small crew, and...

DAMIEN

Ooo, in our cafe, of course. That sounds amazing.

FIONA

Wow, cool!

DAMIEN

We don't have to be in it, do we?

FIONA

Not if you don't want to. But you're welcome to if you want. The more people we have the more it looks like a real cafe on screen.

DAMIEN

Ask her, she'll do it. She's prettier than I am.

FIONA

(to Laura)

We do need a barista. You'd just have to be you, make coffee, answer the questions the actress asks you.

LAURA

Okay.

FIONA

Really? Awesome!

LAURA

I've never done acting before.

FIONA

It's just doing what you do every day. You'll be great! We'll be back around 11, is that okay?

LAURA

Sure.

FIONA

Perfect. You've made my day! See you soon.

Fiona starts to leave.

FIONA (CONT'D)

Oh, wait, I forgot to get the coffee. What kind of cups do you have?

EXT. LAKE TAUPO PARKING LOT – DAY (A LITTLE LATER)

Fiona waits for the crew to cut and runs over the road to join them, balancing two cardboard trays of hot drinks.

Toni runs up to her, dragging Anton along by his sleeve.

TONI

We've made up the Lapwing handshake, look.

Toni and Anton slap their left palms together, slap the back of their hands together, and then hook their thumbs and raise their hands into the air as they flap their fingers like bird wings.

TONI AND ANTON

Wooooop!

FIONA

Haha, that's awesome guys. I love it. You have to teach me.

TONI

Oh, I will!

Joe catches Fiona's eye and raises his eyes queryingly. She smiles, nods slightly.

JOE

Sorted?

FIONA

Yup.

Fiona hands the coffee orders around.

JOE

Hey, which cup did you think Penny should drink out of? I like the black one but it has a pretty obvious logo on it.

Fiona takes the cup, pulls out a vivid marker out of her purse, and carefully colours over the logo. She hands it to Joe and grins.

FIONA

Not anymore.

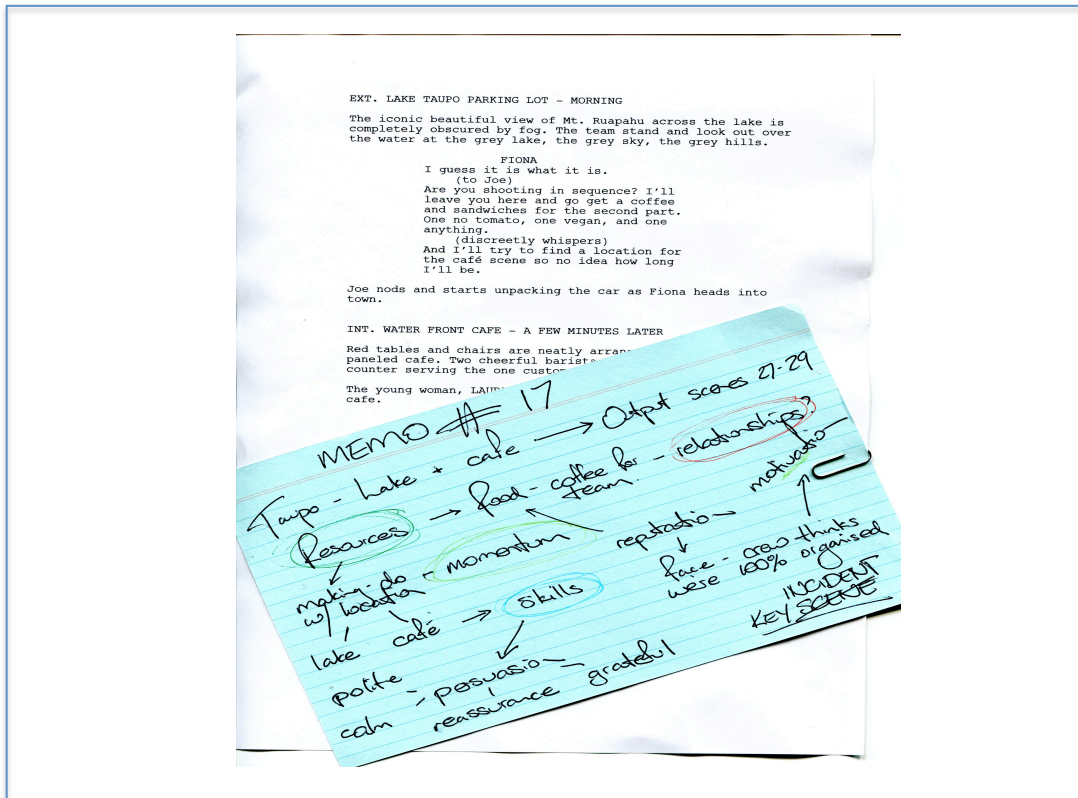


Fig. 5. Memoing initial autoethnography

The autoethnographic script

I want to demonstrate here the process of going back to the original evocative account, after the other layers and coding have been done, and re-reading it. The preceding extract is set during a day of filming in Taupo in the central North Island of New Zealand. This original, unmodified, first-pass performative autoethnography and memos, taken as it was created, were used to create the next layer of autoethnographic writing, the more conventional first-person narrative account, an extract from which has already been reproduced here.

Using the distinction, already discussed, between targets and properties in the expression of the *private state frame* within which this kind of writing occurs, it becomes possible to see how a *target-focused* account might have been written, and how it might have been more conventional in appearance and intention. A day's filming in Taupo could have been described in terms of production resources, technology and output. This might have been a more journalistic or procedural or

even instructional account – focusing on how the day’s production was resourced (from call sheets to script pages), what technology was deployed and how (from RED camera and Steadicam to mics and booms, stored in production vans), and what the day’s output was (from dailies viewed that evening to script changes necessitated for the next day).

Instead, the autoethnographic script seems quite trivial by comparison. Indeed, because of the nature of the reported activity, the account seems to have missed the action as it were, to be off-centred, peripheral. But if we re-read it now in terms of the properties that we have coded for, a meaningful account does in fact emerge.

The improvisational adaptability of this kind of filming is simply a given at the start of this sequence, the crew and cast arriving on location and finding the weather not what they had expected. The opening moments express the taken-for-granted trust and unspoken understanding between producer and director, as they quickly adapt to circumstances. The needed props are real items that have to be quickly sourced. Needing to find an un-scouted location is not something that the rest of the cast and crew have to be told about. This is not just a “need to know” issue, it is also about maintaining “face”; the impression that the producer/director duo are in command of circumstances (reputation at stake). There is also an expression of complementary skillsets – as director starts setting up and producer goes to use her people skills to organise things for the next location – and, therefore, an unspoken agreement about division of labour. The non-verbal communication between the core duo later in the sequence emphasises this, and also suggests an underlying affection between the two that makes reading each other’s minds such a quick and effortless process.

Then the scene in the café expresses in two instances something important about extending the wider network of relationships – on this occasion temporarily, to include the café staff. The relationship building is brisk and seemingly quite effortless. But it is underpinned by an idea about realism. “You’d just have to be you” the barista is told, a moment after the point has been made that the more “real” people there are in the scene the better it will be. The extension of the production team’s relationships to include these temporary connections with just encountered people breaks down any professional/amateur, us/them barriers and

serves as a reminder that without such relationships with the “real” of the location, the production would probably have struggled to get the level of engagement with the place that it needed for there to be verisimilitude and conviction in the material. (Geuen’s “contamination” by the real comes to mind).

As the sequence proceeds, the vital if intangible property of momentum becomes clearly discernible. The day’s production picks up energy which spins-off into minor problem solving by cast members (a piece of performance business that they have worked out and share enthusiastically). Finally, a simple resourcing issue is solved – as a prop is instantly fixed.

Without it all being directly described, we can readily imagine the deployment of the technology to film the required coverage of the performances, and the later viewing of dailies to see how it looked. But what this account reveals are the interconnecting properties that actually underpinned that technical work and output.

These properties are also discernible in studio productions, however they may appear in different measures, from different sources, and appear in a different sequence than on independent films. Certainly skill is apparent in the development of any studio project, and it is widely acknowledged that affection between producers and other members of the team can be responsible for hiring or casting decisions. However, the properties may present in a different manner. Trust may be a key determinant in the making of studio films, however workers can trust that they will receive agreed upon wages and acceptable working conditions because unions protect the interests of workers, forcing employers to be trustworthy. Momentum is dictated by a schedule created by experienced producers and professional schedulers based on their knowledge gained from previous productions. All attempts are made to adhere to this schedule, which coordinates the production departments led by competent, experienced, proven heads of department.

Resources may, of course, be one of the biggest points of difference, with studio budgets in the millions, access to back lots, international locations, star actors, top of the line technology, and all necessary crew paid for and catered for. Technology has both its similarities and its differences. Technology has made high quality film

production values affordable to low-budget productions: Peter Jackson shot *The Hobbit* on RED cameras, as was *Penny Black*. However, studio films have the capacity to create transmedia public experiences where low-budget films most often do not –the former targeting a wide audience long before production begins – ensuring that potential audience members are aware of a project by marketing through print advertising, movie websites, trailers released through social media, television commercials, and filling stores with merchandise. In addition, this “reputation merchandising” is part of a studio production’s output, along with the theatrically released film, DVDs and Blu-rays, broadcast and cable screenings, multiplying their returns on investment.

Many of the elements in these categories are structured to ensure the smooth running of studio films, and this means ensuring all team members are capable of working to the necessary standard, and that conditions for achieving this are provided. These conditions include comfortable working spaces, food available through craft services, catering, or at the studio commissary, storage trucks for departments who require them, and trailers for actors. Many factors considered essential for studio productions are self-evidently lacking in low-budget productions, and without them filmmakers have considerably more work per team member, more distractions and inconveniences, and additional struggles, impacting the final output.

Workworld jiggling

Another way of thinking about all of this is that the pyramid derived from the autoethnographic coding may identify the basic framework for accumulating different modes of capital necessary for filmmakers to successfully complete feature films. As Bourdieu contends, capital is what makes the “games of society” more than simple games of chance (as cited in Kelle, 2005). Studio financing makes accumulation of the monetary capital necessary for successful film production a routine formality. Studio backers and producers know what is needed, or may be needed, and raise the funds necessary to ensure that it is sufficiently provided. The system within which they operate routinely delivers collaborators with the other required forms of capital as well. Independent filmmakers often

struggle to accumulate the various forms of capital, not just the money.

In order to expand these initial autoethnographically derived insights into broader socio-cultural contexts (Chang, 2008), a broader range of data will be needed in due course. Kirsh (1995) uses the example of a restaurant chef who places the items she needs to make a meal in the order she needs them, places her knife next to the item she needs next, etc. in order to simplify the preparation process. The whole workworld is structured to create the most efficient ordering of energies. He compares this with an individual cooking at home, using different parts of the kitchen in a more improvised way for different activities at different times. Two different ways of structuring the workworld, though meals may result from both. Crawford (2015) develops Kirsh's ideas, offering additional ideas about jiggling our work environments that ring true for the independent filmmaker, and also draw attention to (perhaps overlooked) aspects of the corporate system that may be lacking in the independent experience.

All filmmaking utilises types of workworld jiggling to assist the filmmaker. In a studio setting, producers and heads of department jig the director's work by taking responsibility for many tasks and overseeing their completion. A large workforce results in substandard workers being edged out of these positions of responsibility by more capable creatives, who are often handpicked for each project by the director or producer. Studio producers and heads of department often provide a buffer between the world (people and things) and the director, and when problems arise they take responsibility and solve issues, thus carrying the "burden of actively positing hypotheses about bad contingencies" (Crawford, 2015, p. 65). Independent filmmakers often do not have the same level of support and protection from highly skilled and experienced personnel relieving a large part of the enormous cognitive task that is feature filmmaking. This outsourcing of attention is a form of what has been termed distributed cognition (Salomon, 1993). Very little of it is available at the low-budget end of the independent scale, for the following reason.

Experience provides corporate production with a repository of potential bad contingencies (a kind of store of distributed cognition), thus productions are structured to avoid them. Should a problem arise, the appropriate action plan is identified (based on past institutional experience) and instigated. Independent

productions do not necessarily have the types of experiences that would enable them to form a similar set of “problem avoiding hypotheses”. They may not have any awareness of potential problems, especially in areas creatives often have little prior knowledge of. When independent filmmakers are able to get into the flow while they are working, they do so without the safeguards in the form of this bank of bad hypotheses to help them avoid the negative. The smaller and less experienced the crew the more likely they will, as a group, just flow on down the path of production without anyone saying “that’s not right” or “that won’t work” and not realise (or no one draws attention to the fact that) there is a problem until they flow right under that truck (of postproduction, or marketing, or distribution) coming the other way. This suggests perhaps the controlling structure of studio-style productions can give the director a sort of freedom by removing unnecessary distractions, allowing her to focus on creative work.

This may help explain how filmmakers can sometimes be elevated from Svejenova’s exploratory positions in the industry to big-budget director with little experience in the role. They can bypass Svejenova’s stages of career creation as their vision, values, talents, and potentialities are attributed to them based on attributes such as personality, status (financial and class), personal relationships (connections, nepotism), etc. (2005). They get the position based on what the people they know think of them (and whatever type of work they have been doing), and then the structural jigs of studio productions make up for any lack in a director’s prior experience.

Independent filmmakers, however, typically need to be knowledgeable about every element of the production, especially if they are filling several roles. There may be no one there to “cover their back” if they do not notice problems, hazards, or plot holes. Independent filmmakers must be more discriminating about where they focus their attention; they cannot be aware of everything, they must be able to pick out the features of the situation that are significant, eliminating others from their attention.

So the concept of the available workworld jigs – and of jiggling as a process of readying the workworld for a project – definitely helps us to understand the kinds of activity that have just been described. When discussing jiggling Crawford (2015)

does not apply the idea to filmmaking, but in developing the idea of a skilled cook in a kitchen his descriptions are entirely apt: “The cook finds pleasure in his ability to improvise; to meet the unpredictable demands of the situation, and to do so within the structure imposed by the kitchen” (p. 44). The kitchen is not a machine of absolutely fixed parts but rather a workworld that the effective cook jigs in appropriate ways. Indeed, in an ANT-like turn of phrase, Crawford has the satisfied cook proclaim “I’m a *machine*” (p. 44) when the jiggling of the workworld is effective. But what suddenly comes into view for us here is the massive scale of the jiggling that can be achieved by corporate production processes contrasted with the do-it-yourself jiggling that is often necessary for the independent. Crawford (p. 42) describes the liberatory consequence of “jigs for hire” (his example is the accountant to whom one may outsource considerable financial responsibility). The old studio system had all these jigs available in-house, but now the studio principle is maintained by having jigs for hire, instantly and routinely available to cover every aspect of a project and every contingency.

So it becomes clear that a defining feature of independent filmmaking is having to do much more of the workworld jiggling oneself, with the ultra-low-budget independent at the other end of the scale from the studio – having to jig just about every aspect of the workworld every time in order to have anything happen at all. There will still be jigs for hire (e.g. paid-for services) but these will not be givens in the way that they routinely are for the filmmaker working in the corporate environment.

Crawford (2015) is sceptical about what he terms *liberationist* impulses to do without the cultural jigs in the interest of achieving a supposed freedom. It is being able to hire an accountant that is liberatory rather than having the freedom to do one’s own accounts. Similarly the *liberationist* independents may be burdening themselves with endlessly having to jig and re-jig the workworld every time something needs to happen. The core skills of filmmaking may be independently deployed with relative ease these days, but jiggling the workworld in which these skills are deployed may not be so easy. The “kitchen” may need to be rebuilt from scratch every time. And if the kitchen includes accumulated knowledge, contingency-management experience, etc. then the independent may often be significantly disadvantaged when compared with the filmmaker who accesses more

institutional support.

Matchmaking

When we look into Crawford's (2015) forensically detailed account of the "organ makers shop" (pp. 209-246), however, it becomes clear that something more exact than "support" is being provided by jiggling. The pipe organ builders that he analyses operate almost entirely on the basis of what economist Al Roth calls *matchmaking* (2015): matching person to person, person to tools, tools to material, material to task, task to client, etc. It is optimal matchmaking that produces success. In the workworld of filmmaking, corporate production will institutionalise, routinise, and provide as given, much of this matchmaking. By contrast, independent filmmaking will typically have to do much more of this matchmaking on a project-by-project basis. As Crawford (2015) puts it, "in the development of any real competence we don't judge everything for ourselves, starting from scratch each morning" (p. 245). It is not so much that the independent filmmaker does inevitably start from scratch each morning but that they have to work so much harder to avoid having to do so. And a big part of this effort will go towards matchmaking the actants in the actor-network of independent filmmaking, rather than "simply" making a film.

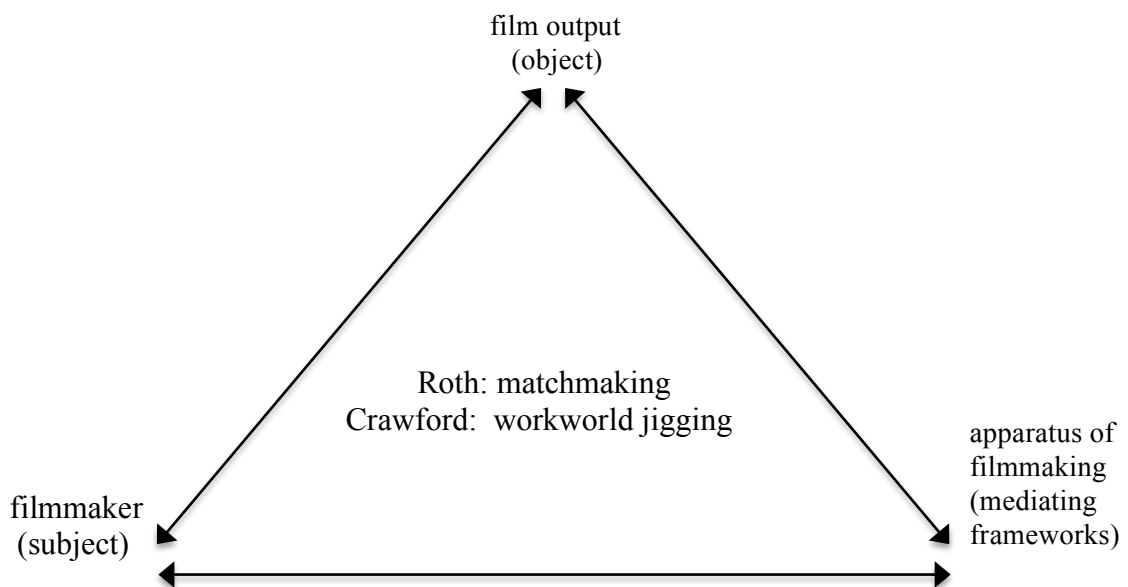


Fig. 6. Filmmaker activity (adapted from Luria (1981))

One of the reasons that Luria's famous schematic depiction of human activity (adapted in Fig. 6) seems inadequate on its own to capture an activity such as filmmaking is, we can now suggest, because it does not identify the "filler" processes of jiggling and matchmaking that bring and bind the other components together. This more complete version takes us a step closer to understanding the kinds of networks and needs (for jiggling and matchmaking) that may counteract unruly characteristics of the workworld for the independent filmmaker.

What this chapter has sought to clarify is first the matrix of questions around independence when viewed in terms of workworld rather than in textualist or auteurist terms, second the key research questions (about course of action and values), methodology, and finally what have been described as the abductive vantage points for the research – the ways in which the independent, as one of Latour's modern beings of passionate interest – is required to hack their workworld (ways we have described as jiggling and matchmaking) in order to accumulate the necessary forms of capital to continue working there, however precariously.

Figures 8 and 9 in the next chapter will continue this development of the Luria-inspired model, after it has been filled in further with the various resources that were coded as such during the process of annotating my autoethnographic material sampled above.

CHAPTER 3

Independence, identity and vocational survival

“The benefit of this concept [identity capital] is that it helps us to understand how a person can deliberately sustain an identity pragmatically situated in a social/occupational matrix” (James Côté & Levine, 2002, p. 157).

With *Penny Black* in post-production, six months completed of autoethnographic writing, memoing and reflecting, notes made for Chapter 1, a matrix of questions compiled, and a basic foundation established as to method, the research project felt like it had made the most of its “private state frame” (Wiebe et al., 2005). The simplest and intuitively most “right” outcome was the crossings pyramid, a schematic representation of the key properties involved in the independent pursuit of meaningful “output” (typically a film such as *Penny Black*, but also the collateral output of increased relational capital, currency in a matchmaking market, etc.). These properties (or categories in terms of the coding of the autoethnographic self-narrative) labelled aspects of a developing understanding that the top of the pyramid, the technologically produced output and the management of resources on which it depended (the stuff of most “how to” guides to independent filmmaking), depended on a base of workworld-related factors that have been less well understood.

The methodological considerations at this stage of the research had also thrown up a nagging insight – that the practice-led component in the form of producing *Penny Black* no longer felt sufficient to the task of more fully understanding, or extracting sufficient meaning from, my experience. Bochner’s “call of narrative” (2000, p. 270) had increased significantly by this point. An additional practice-led component for the research was on the horizon as the work for the present chapter was being undertaken. It would turn out to be a complete feature length screenplay about independent filmmaking, intended as a more public format than the “private state frame” autoethnographic narrativisation of *Penny Black* I had written and used for the previous stage, and from which the crossings pyramid (Fig. 5) had emerged.

The conceptual challenge that the crossings pyramid presents us with is that its categories are of widely differing kinds. Moreover, elements reappear at differing points in the overall assemblage, further complicating the picture. On the other hand, this criss-crossing of elements is what actually emerged from the autoethnographic material, so it is methodologically incumbent to do something with it here. The necessary step is to ask how the ties among people are transformed into the more directly productive elements. Moreover, the Grounded Theory method being followed here suggests that taking this kind of step will require the identification of what is usually termed a *core variable* (Glaser, 1992). Looking at the categories in terms of the capital they represent may help to produce the required conceptual integration, out of which a core variable may emerge.

Identifying Bourdieu's three forms of capital (*economic, cultural, and social* (Bourdieu, 1986)) in terms of filmmaking, *economic* capital consists of money in the form of funding for a project or to support the filmmakers while they perform unpaid film work, equipment that could be used to generate income (cameras, lights, etc.), and workspace utilised for any of the stages of production. *Cultural* capital is knowledge, education, cultural competencies such as taste and style, and *symbolic* assets like reputation. *Social* capital refers to the connections between individuals, networks of collaborators, contacts, acquaintances, and other social ties with those who possess economic and cultural capital, or the ability to help an individual enter or advance into the filmmaking field. An individual must accumulate sufficient capital assets to gain entry into the rule-bound studio or independent (unruly) workworld. The examples of each category below (as developed through the coding of my autoethnography – see Chapter 2) may represent the capital necessary to accrue to complete a project, or perhaps more accurately in matchmaking terms, as the resources necessary to *buy* a potential filmmaker into an initial network.

- **SKILLS:** knowledge, ability, talent, creativity, training, interpersonal competencies
- **AFFECTION:** passion for filmmaking, a project, and for other filmmakers
- **TRUST:** in own abilities, between filmmakers, self esteem, beliefs
- **REPUTATION:** personality, attitude, reliability, demonstrated ability

- RELATIONSHIPS: connections, mentors, encouragement, support, team building
- RESOURCES: project-level, time, funding, education, experience, support, personal wealth
- MOMENTUM: time management, enthusiasm, encouragement, motivation, persistence
- TECHNOLOGY: Whatever can be afforded
- OUTPUT: completed film projects, reputation, publicity, marketability

Identity capital

Côté and Levine (2002) describe resources as assets that people can “‘cash in’ literally or metaphorically” (p. 143). Resources such as the right skills, reputation, and relationships have the potential to buy a filmmaker into a role on a project. The more resources (considered valuable to the team) they have the better the position they might secure, the more they may potentially contribute to the positive outcome of the project, and the more they may receive in return. This creates an *identity exchange*, which if successful involves mutual acceptance within the film team, and as a result the individual gains *identity capital*; there has been an increase in some aspect of who they are professionally (p. 143). By utilising the resources they have accumulated and have at their disposal this *identity capital acquisition* increases the individual’s *net assets*, and this capital becomes useful for securing subsequent positions. Because we have already identified project-level resources as crucial to this mix, we might term what Côté and Levine are describing here “macro-resources” of which project-level resources are a specific subset.

The term “‘identity capital’ denotes ‘investments’ individuals make, and have, in ‘who they are’”; investments which have the potential to “reap future dividends in the ‘identity markets’ of late modern communities” (Côté & Levine, 2002, p. 147). Côté and Levine, who emphasise the increasing importance of identity capital in late modernity, argue that where the notion of identity capital becomes useful, is around the “cognitive skills and personality attributes” necessary for “a series of exchanges with other actors aimed at the validation of personal and social identities”, skills not necessarily learnt through the formal education system (p.

157). This emphasis on exchanges among actors relates closely to Daskalaki's (2010) findings about semi-permanent work patterns in the creative industries, where she states that, "repeated collaborations across projects result in volatile cultural and structural relations among network members" (p. 1649). Daskalaki summarises previous qualitative accounts of networking and concludes, along with a number of previous authors, that "it is *how* a tie functions (the qualitative effects) that becomes the most important platform for theorizing tie relations" (p. 1649). What Daskalaki herself adds to these earlier studies, and what makes her work important for the present study, is a focus on "tie transformation processes" (p. 1649).

Resources (or macro-resources, including the nine categories: skills, affection, trust, relationships, reputation, momentum, project-level resources, technology, output) can be both tangible and intangible identity capital assets. Côté and Levine (2002) refer to intangible resources as having "the right stuff" (p. 159). On a film project this can mean the range of things that have been documented in the autoethnography: being trustworthy; keeping motivated and maintaining momentum; knowing how to behave on set; returning calls promptly; and particularly on a low-budget film, being flexible about conditions and helping with tasks that may not normally be the responsibility of someone in their role. A person with the "right stuff" becomes highly valuable on a film project and will become sought after in film communities, continuing to increase their identity capital with each project they participate in, which illustrates the functioning of an *identity market*. But if Daskalaki's tie transformation processes have the significance for creative projects that her work suggests, then having the right stuff is not just a matter of having a stable package of individual skills, competencies, knowledge, etc. The size and complexity of feature film projects affects the importance of relationships as a resource, both to enter the workworld and to widen and diversify networks in order to encourage creativity and innovation (Ruef, 2002). Daskalaki (2010) argues that as ties are not fixed, static phenomena, a "dynamic framework for the study of tie relations" is necessary to investigate the transformation processes that occur around interpersonal networking as ties activate, reactivate, or eventually dissolve (p. 1649). With this in mind, the present chapter will shift to the unstructured interview method for its primary data, as well as relevant secondary sources.

Ties

Chapter 1 explored the function of strong ties in the creation and accumulation of bonding capital and how the quality of *philos* arises as a consequence (via interaction, affection and time). This bonding capital is evidently a significant aspect of independent communities of practice, which are often small and (while a film project lasts) tight-knit. Understanding the bonding that occurs at the core of such small communities of practice (as we have done with *Penny Black* as the autoethnographic case study) is a key to understanding how they can take on the distinctive characteristics of a successfully functioning Sartrean group-in-fusion, resulting in positive consequences for the momentum of projects. This may mean that bonding capital brings participants together but it may in itself be insufficient to ensure the most creative results. It thus becomes necessary to blend Granovetter's theory about the importance to creativity of weak ties with Törnquist's (1983) statement that "creativity flourishes when different specialities and competences are squeezed together on a small surface" (p. 103) to help illustrate the requirements for independent creativity; to bring individuals with compatible and incompatible ideas together in conditions that encourage collaboration.

If we start to shift focus onto the question of creativity, rather than the formation and maintenance of a community of practice for its own sake as it were, at least two questions arise: whether creativity is thought of in individualistic terms, and what role weaker ties may have in the attainment of optimal creative states (if strong ties are not indeed the only prerequisites).

The process of tie evolution contributes to the *logic* of collaborative behaviour with "the need to balance affective bonding and anti-conformist bridging" driving "transformative creative practices and creative networking" (Daskalaki, 2010, p. 1650). The nature of recurrent project cooperation implies that the "logic of collaborative behaviour cannot be disclosed by narrowly focusing on the actual project" as the logic is "shaped by past experience and affected by the shadow of future (potential) collaboration" (Grabher, 2001, p. 1330). This bonding/bridging dynamic is at the centre of Daskalaki's findings. It determines the qualitative effects of tie relations. It also affords the framework for tie transformation

processes, as emphasis shifts dynamically to and fro between bonding and bridging. For these reasons the bonding/bridging dynamic may start to explain key aspects of creativity in action in semi-permanent work patterns of the kind that characterise so much independent filmmaking. Daskalaki (2010) says, “creativity is not only situated in individual capabilities and talent” but “is also a distributed and embedded cultural process” (p. 1650). At any one time, the bonding/bridging dynamic can generate a *creative state* within the work patterns and within a project.

Affective bonding between work group members encourages conforming attitudes and behaviours, a convergence towards the same creative solutions and compromises, in the interest of maintaining agreement around those solutions. Non-conforming bridging between work group members maintains divergent but still potentially compatible attitudes and behaviours, a focus on the same creative problems but with openness to different solutions. Daskalaki’s work, and the research on which she draws, reveals that a bonding/bridging dynamic creates the optimal creative states. Too much affective bonding and the creative state generated around the bonds can become closed and compromised by too much conformity. Too much non-conforming bridging and the creative state generated can become too open and diffuse. The optimal states created by getting the bonding/bridging dynamic right is what makes the study of tie relations crucial in researching independents’ ways of working, and will consequently be a focus of the interviews reported on in this chapter.

Remaining embedded in a group’s network after a team disperses at the end of a project increases the likelihood an individual will participate in a future project with a similarly composed team. This *tie latency* explains how connections between filmmakers may remain dormant, or with little interaction, until the relationship becomes mutually beneficial and is rekindled for another project, reinforcing Sartre’s notion of a group-in-fusion returning to the series until another group is formed. In a relatively small field such as New Zealand’s film industry, making bridges with additional individuals with creative potential might feel like additional (unwelcome) work for a creative team, especially at the low-budget end of the spectrum, even though it could be beneficial to the project outcome. For an ultra-low-budget project with a duo shouldering the bulk of the work there are times when the filmmakers must make a choice between potentially improving the project

and getting it completed. Building *non-conforming* bridges that “push the creative boundary of the team” (Daskalaki, 2010, p. 1658) might ultimately result in additional rewriting, re-editing, or rerecording, which filmmakers may feel they do not have the time, money, or energy to complete. For *Penny Black*, when we needed advice it felt safer to approach individuals with whom we already had affective bonds, but which offered little scope for constructive challenges to the emerging output. We received a small amount of criticism through a test screening, however the most negative feedback did not *feel* usefully constructive. I felt Joe and I were seeking self-congratulatory reinforcements to fuel our motivation, rather than potentially beneficial non-conforming ideas. The project’s true potential may have been stunted by a focus on “preservation of a stable creative relationship” between Joe and me, and by not “exploring alternative creative states” (Daskalaki, 2010, p. 1656). In this phase of the research, therefore, I want to explore how other duos handle the bonding/bridging dynamic.

If creativity is “a distributed and embedded cultural process” (Daskalaki, 2010, p. 1650) we must consider that autonomous control is not the key to successful independent filmmaking that it is often assumed to be (as illustrated by the “A film by...” credit giving the director complete responsibility for a film in the popular imagination). On ultra-low-budget *Penny Black* Joe and I had control over almost every element, but this meant the process took considerably longer than if we had had more help (particularly the case in pre- and post production), and our skills and energy and concentration were spread thin. Handing some control to additional competent crew members might have allowed us to prioritise our own workload and focus on the things we felt were most important, potentially resulting in a better end product. Though we had both been involved in feature films in the past, our (knowledge) repository of potential bad contingencies was incomplete – even including the knowledge of the rest of our small crew – so we were unable to protect ourselves from certain hazards that hindered progress, such as crew leaving for paid work, actors deciding they could not work on a scheduled weekend (with no notice), locations restricting access previously allowed, nearby sounds making dialogue inaudible. At times we had the knowledge to jig the production or the set to our advantage, but were unable to do so without the personnel or the money. Without being able to pay wages we were not in the best position for effective matchmaking, and were not always able to attract (and retain) our first choice of

crew members. These may be more than the simple facts of life in such a production, if we look at things from a broader perspective.

Zhou et al. (2009) also suggest that though too few weak ties can be detrimental, too many can negatively affect a network by limiting differing ideas and perspectives. In particular this was found to be the case with individuals with *low conformity value*, meaning they have less preference for restraining actions, inclinations, and impulses that could violate social norms or upset others (2009) – a trait often found in individuals in creative fields.

In retrospect, the *Penny Black* duo perhaps erred on the side of allowing too few weak ties. Had we put more effort into bridging via weaker ties in our wider network we may have more highly valued thinking that challenged our existing ideas and in doing so expanded the potential for transforming our creative output. I suspect we subconsciously viewed relationships that challenged our thinking as being incompatible with our project in order to avoid conflict and speed up production, again a process of imagining possible consequences and attempting to avoid them. This may be a common interpretation for filmmakers in the earlier stages of their careers. In subsequent projects we may find it easier to bridge to filmmakers with divergent yet productive ideas as we now have a reputation for completing projects, our network of relationships is wider, and we have additional trust in our own abilities and values. It may be a matter of leveraging our collective identity capital in order to broaden our matchmaking opportunities, or if given the opportunity to work with the New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC) or other funding agencies, their input could be viewed, not just in financial terms, but as offering the challenging potential of bridging and matching.

Matching markets

The Gale-Shapley “deferred acceptance” algorithm is a set of simple rules applied to the challenge of finding stable matches between people and opportunities (Gale & Shapley, 1962). Alvin Roth applied the algorithm to the market for graduating medical students, matching students and high schools, and matching available kidneys and patients in the USA. These are referred to as “matching markets” in

which the players cannot just choose the outcome they prefer but also have to be chosen. Both sides must make active decisions (Roth, 2015), as when the core team for an independent film project are matched with collaborators. The core team approach their desired potential collaborators, and others, often people with less experience and a less developed skill set, are also likely to request inclusion on the team (with the hope of gaining experience, knowledge, connections, and capital to further their career). For low-budget independent filmmakers it becomes more difficult to attract skilled people if they are unable to offer wages, so individuals must decide how a project would benefit them, e.g. financially, experientially, the chance to express their creativity, to have autonomy in their work, or a mutual exchange of unpaid labour.

The preceding discussion leads to this chapter's main hypothesis. For the independent filmmaker, the accumulation of the resources (or macro-resources, where we want to distinguish these from project-level resources) that are needed to accrue the identity capital they require for entry to the workworld's matching processes, is achieved within and around *exchanges* among network members, and these exchanges involve a core bonding/bridging dynamic on which *tie transformation* processes depend. These tie transformation processes – between network actants and over time – may be critical to creative success. This will be the focus of the interviews that furnish this chapter's principal evidence. Before getting to the interviews themselves, it may be helpful to remind ourselves of the methodological principles that are operating here.

Methodology revisited

To better understand the realities of filmmaking in its contexts, my research began by studying the experience of creating *Penny Black*: at home on a computer, meeting with collaborators, and hunting for props and wardrobe in second hand and bargain stores. Once the film project began production, the more pragmatic grounded theoretical approach of revisiting the research field became necessary in order to analyse behaviours of the participants (including myself) in the real setting (Glaser, 1992). This demanded human instrument, the researcher, to gather primary data from the variety of realities encountered. My years of experience in the film

business in California and my experiences with independent filmmaking in New Zealand benefited this process since “It is not possible to describe or explain everything that one ‘knows’ in language for some things must be experienced to be understood” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 195). I utilised tacit knowledge to interpret much of the interaction between myself and other cast and crew, generating and often testing hypothesis on the spot in the situations in which they were created.

As the process of open coding my autoethnography and then the interviews for this chapter progressed, codes began to be saturated with data and the successive requirements for data collection began to emerge. This will be discussed later and include decisions as to which categories and their properties needed to be sampled further and where the data should be collected from (Glaser & Holton, 2004, para. 51). The cluster of concepts around ties and bonds and bridges and identity capital that has emerged thus far, needs to be explored further to provide a filmmaking-specific analysis of how they all work in concert to define a key part of the independent logic.

Pursuing this distinctive logic (in the sense that Caldwell uses the term) is the aim of the project’s two main research questions.

RQ1: What is a course of action (Latour) in independent filmmaking as a mode of existence and a career and what are the real value systems that inform it?

RQ2: What consequences do these have for independent filmmaking development practices and products?

The first question is intentionally double-barrelled as action and values define each other in Latour’s sense of the terms.

One very helpful insight gleaned from the consulted literature on qualitative interviewing techniques (especially Wengraf, 2001) was not just that research questions such as these cannot be asked outright in an interview situation with any hope of success rather than befuddlement! Rather, unstructured interviews should move more freely but within a more “askable” matrix of questions, such as the twelve derived from our earlier scene-setting exploration of independence. So each

of those questions became my own frame for posing more “askable” questions to my interviewees.

Laddered question technique was adopted, which involves beginning an interview with less invasive questions about action (e.g. what have you been working on most recently?), to demonstrate the researcher’s interest, while also collecting contextual information. Once the respondent shows signs of engaging with the developing narrative (becoming more animated with their gestures or voice, offering additional or more personal information) more invasive questioning about the respondent’s knowledge and philosophy about filmmaking was employed. This technique allows interviewees an opportunity to tell their own stories, and is useful “in studies where the goal is to understand the ways in which respondents’ thoughts, beliefs and actions correspond with each other” (Price, 2002, p. 274).

As well as recording the interviews with a digital audio recorder I used pen and paper during interviews, allowing me to jot down notes about topics that were touched upon and passed over, making it “possible therefore to plan new lines of possible inquiry, and to return to these later at an opportune moment in the interview” (Price, 2002, p. 279). This helped facilitate the flow of the discussion, and also allowed me to scan my notes to find a related topic that would steer the conversation to less intrusive lines of inquiry if it felt necessary, or to end the interview on a lighter note. In addition, I found that sharing some of my past experiences in the industry proved critical in developing the respondent’s comfort and trust, and sustaining their reflections (Price, 2002). Once they recognised that I was familiar with filmmaking practices they were able to move their discussion to a deeper level, bypassing the explanatory discussion that would be necessary for an interviewer who was not a practitioner.

For the interview process, fourteen practitioners were selected and interviewed using purposive sampling to increase the range of data and realities uncovered and maximise my ability to “devise grounded theory that takes adequate account of local conditions” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 39) (note: Data from nine of the interviews were included in this chapter, with several ideas from the other five interviews incorporated into the Chapter 4 script). Snowball sampling was used when a potential interviewee was mentioned as being an important person to speak

to in the New Zealand film industry (e.g. Thomas Burstyn). Grounded Theory was utilised in order to avoid forcing data into preconceived ideas and theories, and to allow the theory to emerge from the data. Barney Glaser, in particular, has always been insistent that Grounded Theory's main value as a research method is precisely that it puts researcher preconceptions on hold for much longer than other comparable methods. How this worked in practice was that the interviewees listed below were interviewed in semi-structured ways and the material obtained was then subjected to a preconception-limiting technique called evaluating with gerunds (Table 3).

Interviewees included in Chapter 3:

- Gaylene Preston's film career spans more than three decades. She is a writer, director, and producer, and her works has screened extensively at international festivals including Venice, Sundance, Toronto, and London.
- Mike Riddell is a novelist, screenwriter, and producer. His film *The Insatiable Moon* (Riddell, 2010) won the Atlantis Award at the Moondance International Film Festival for feature films made outside of the USA.
- Rosemary Riddell is a District Court Judge. She directed *The Insatiable Moon* (Riddell, 2010), with her only prior experience of directing being a short film and theatre work.
- Thomas Burstyn is a Canadian-born cinematographer, working in New Zealand and Canada. He also works with his wife Sumner, directing *This Way of Life* (Burstyn, 2006) which the jury prize at the Berlin International Film Festival.
- Sumner Burstyn is a film producer and writer. Her latest film, *Some Kind of Love* (Burstyn, 2015) screened in Palm Springs, Vancouver, Sydney, Toronto, and Israel.
- Andrea Bosshard makes and distributes films with her partner Shane Loader. Their third feature, *Great Maidens Blush* (Bosshard & Loader, 2016) won Best Self-Funded Feature at the 2017 Rialto Channel New Zealand Film Awards.
- Shane Loader is a writer, director, producer, cinematographer, and editor. He collaborates with his partner Andrea, and together they share the tasks of filmmaking, including writing, directing, and producing.

- Anton Steel wrote and directed the eco-comedy feature *Z-Nail gang* (Steel, 2014) filmed in the Coromandel. Before making his own feature, Anton was assistant director or second unit director on many big budget studio films.
- Kirstin Marcon's debut feature *The most fun you can have dying* (Marcon, 2012) was written and directed by Kirstin, funded by the NZFC, and filmed in NZ and Europe.

Interviews

1. What are the deep characteristics of “voice”, as a defining aspect of independent filmmaking according to Rodriguez, and how can “voice” be maintained through the development process?

The term “voice” is sometimes used to represent an almost indescribable element of a creative person that they alone bring to a project. The New Zealand Writers Guild (2015) describes the voice of the writer as “their style and tone” (p. 7), specifying that it must be “original” and “clear” (p. 4). In *Scriptmag* (2015), McKenzie discusses the need for writing voice to be clear, strong and unique, and where regardless of the genre “there is always something personal and truthful of the writer in the work” (para. 6). The *Script Lab* (2015) is simpler still, “Your voice, simply put, is you” (para. 2). Although voice resides in the script, both the style of writing and also the topics and how they are approached, the background of the scriptwriter, their experiences, socio-economic status, education, family life, all inevitably contribute to the voice they employ to tell their stories. Also inevitable are the multiple contributions to voice in the realisation of a script to the screen. When Rodriguez speaks of the voice of Latin filmmakers he refers to both the body of shared culture in the Latin-speaking world, and also the individual stories of Latin people. In a fundamental sense, therefore, it is a production that can have a voice, rather than simply the individuals contributing to it.

Mike Riddell spent years trying to write a script for *The Insatiable Moon* (2010) that the NZFC would agree to fund, and eventually had to choose between making the story he wanted to make, or using the more commercial script the NZFC “loved” in order to receive NZFC funding. “This was a seven year development process so there’d been a hell of a lot of rewriting going on all the way through,

including complete rewrites at the behest of the Film Commission, in fact I did one extensive rewrite using the Film Commission's notes, the director took one look at it and said "if you're going to use that I'm not coming to work on it" so then we had to choose between who do we satisfy, but we had a strong link with the director and so we went down that route". However, without NZFC funding Mike could not afford his first choice for director so turned to his wife, Rosemary, who had experience directing amateur theatre. They, along with their director of photography, Thomas Burstyn, made the decision to complete the film with the funds they had already raised through their own networks. In retrospect they see the benefits that came from having complete control, as Rosemary said, "...we didn't have anyone on set who was putting in big money who wanted it done their way or who wanted changes, we made the movie we wanted to make and that was a real bonus". As writer-turned-producer Mike feels it is his responsibility to protect the voice of a project through to completion, something he feels is easier to do when there are fewer financially invested parties, "...the more money that comes into a project the more people you have to placate or satisfy and it runs the risk of destroying the whole project, so somebody, and I've always said this is the writer's job, somebody's got to hold onto the integrity of the story because it can easily get diluted or shunted around or chopped up".

Gaylene Preston has over three decades experience making film in New Zealand, has served on the NZFC board, and has a strong understanding of how it operates, how decisions are made, and has a proven ability to secure funding from a wide range of sources in New Zealand and internationally. She spoke of having a *conversation* with the NZFC, which echoed the NZFC statement (NZFC, 2015) that they do not want people coming to them only for money, but rather want to have a conversation about both the needs of filmmakers' projects and how they will further their career. Of course with her history, experience, knowledge and connections, Gaylene's conversation with the NZFC will be different from that of an unproven filmmaker. "I went and had a yarn with Dave [Gibson] who said, he was the new CEO at the Film Commission, who said 'I want to know what you've got on your mind', so I went and had a yarn with him. Pitched three possible ideas and he liked the Helen [Clark] tone the best, so I thought well, if you're going to spend a whole lot of time developing a film you want to have one that's got a bit of a tail wind". Thus she began her project about New Zealand's past Prime Minister, knowing she

already had the expressed support of the NZFC, and that they had an interest in the voice she intended to use: “You want people to contribute without suddenly finding your project is now their commission, because you have to retain creative control”.

Reluctant to relinquish control of her projects, Sumner Burstyn has struggled to get funding from the NZFC: “We are, for some reason, completely unfundable by the Film Commission, we’ve not received funding from them”. She believes, “there’s a handful that are, honoured, that are fêted by the funding people, and everyone else can go sing”.

Kirstin Marcon’s first feature was funded through the NZFC. Based on the novel *Seraphim Blues* (Gannaway, 2003), *The Most Fun You Can Have Dying*, Marcon (2012) had a budget of around NZ\$3,000,000. Basing a film on a novel feels like another way to begin a project with a “bit of a tail wind”, the screenplay and director’s vision adding to the existing and proven voice of the author. Also, as the novel was written by the (then) New Zealand Writers Guild president, Steven Gannaway, his connections and reputation are likely to have added perceived value to the project in the eyes of the NZFC. However, Kirstin felt expectations from funders compromised “the integrity of the story”: “The actual functional reality of having three million dollars and international investors is that a huge amount of time pressure is put on you in post and I personally think in our case that was really detrimental to the quality of the film we were able to make, simply because we didn’t have time to step back from it and get the perspective that I think would have served us really well ...”. Though most filmmakers may experience pressure in this situation it is possible that Kirstin felt it particularly difficult as a first time filmmaker who did not have the necessary connections to other filmmakers or to the NZFC that more experienced filmmakers have developed. Next time Kirstin wants to do it differently, “I want to make one film that’s just completely no budget, and it’s cause I want to make a film that’s not for an audience on any level. What I want to experience is not having that pressure on you to conform to whatever marketing box other people can see your film fitting into. And so I wouldn’t even think about it, I’d actually just want to make a very personal project and not worry about any of that stuff, and just see what happens. See if it’s something that does connect with people”.

Though Gaylene makes the point that creative work is an exploration of the creator's voice, she has reached the conclusion that voice involves an unpredictable journey of exploration from heart to head: "it's hard, because you yourself as maker aren't necessarily able to articulate exactly what you are doing, you know what river you're on and you know what waka you're driving, there's a map but nobody's been there before, and it's hard to describe territory you haven't visited yet. Because films are, all creative work is a process of exploration, and if it's not it's not creative... The director's got it in their head. The filmmaker. Well, they've got it in their heart, actually. And pulling it out of your heart and into your head is sort of what the creative process is I suppose".

So voice can be a dialogical construction within the conversations in and around a project; less an always unified, organic authentic presence that gets sustained throughout than an *achievement* of consistency and integrity amidst the chatter of a production. Something that the filmmaker may herself discover in the process, and which must appeal to the industry establishment (NZFC, sales agents, guilds, distributors) to ensure the best chance of having a project made and seen.

2. What are the deep characteristics of the "special camaraderie", the "love affairs" that Preston sees as frequently present in independent filmmaking?

To begin addressing this question, it is worth noting New York independent film producer Ted Hope's views regarding the importance of the relationship between director and producer and between filmmakers and their work, which mirror my interviewees' experiences.

It's so easy to think, 'oh this person has a good track record, this person has a good script', but what you're saying is this is a long term relationship, where I need them to be supportive of me, and I need to be supportive of them... I think there's that question of personality and chemistry in terms of any relationship, are we going to enjoy having dinner together over the course of these next 3-5-7 years, but then there's also what the joint project is. What is it in this script, or this movie, or this story world, series, whatever one might be doing, what are the big ideas and can they sustain me? Will I find them as intriguing to talk about years down the road? ... How people are going to

come together. What are those ideas, themes, characters, objects of beauty, objects of desire, what does it encompass that's going to keep us firing on all cylinders, synapses, across the period of working on it. To make a movie you need that mix of both mad genius that inspires, strong leadership that brings us forward, careful diplomacy that knows how to make sure that each side is represented, and their needs are surfaced and fulfilled, and ultimately friendship and joy. When something moves beyond a job, when it becomes a core aspect of your life, which I think every film is, you better be receiving pleasure from that. Whether they're new ideas, whether they're taking you to new places, whether they're introducing you to new people, all those things, that's why we're so fortunate to get to make movies... (in *Film Courage*, 2014).

Filmmakers will take steps to protect the passion they feel for a project. Just as we asked an insufficiently committed crew member to leave when filming *Penny Black*, Gaylene has asked crew to leave when she felt it was disturbing the atmosphere on-set, or her ability to direct. As director of photography on that project, Thomas Burstyn explained, "it's funny, she fired my assistant who was a grumpy old bastard, very good assistant, but every time she changed the shot, and she changed them quite often, and I understood very quickly that it wasn't an ego trip, she wasn't exerting her power over me, she was thinking, and she'd come up with a better idea, and invariably it was, and then the idea is move the camera from here, put it here, make it do that or whatever it was, it was never a big deal, you just do it, and he would grumble or moan about it, so she asked me if I minded, and she made a big speech in front of the crew after she'd fired him and said that filmmaking was a privilege, and that she'd made twelve films in her career, or however many, and she wanted to be there and she expected the crew to want to be there every day and to give their all, otherwise no hard feelings, you could go and do something else. She said it much better than I just did, but yeah, filmmaking should be a privilege".

When asked to describe some of the important characteristics of good relationships Gaylene responded, "Good communication. And you can say 'good communication' and the words roll off your tongue, but what good communication actually is, well, how long have you got? But I think it's really important to be able

to speak your fears to one another, without blame or rancour, and I think you need to be able to have a few laughs, I think that's really important. And I think you need to be very open because you're often communicating on behalf of one another. So it's very important that that communication's open, one person may say 'I saw so and so and I told them this'. So you're constantly having to feed back to one another as well, so it's pretty demanding. A good collaboration. I suppose it's like a good marriage. If it works it works".

Gaylene balances knowledge of a person's abilities with an instinct for a good collaborative partner. Many filmmakers work with different teams on each film, finding the necessary skills and support in different key personnel. Thomas Burstyn discussed the importance of selecting the right crew: "The thing that usually happens with low-budget films, super-low-budget filmmaking, is the people who are involved are juniors, are people who are just starting out, so the cameraman or the dolly grip or the art director or whoever, is just beginning their career and they take this opportunity to work on a low budget film, and I think that's a mistake, that it's the experience of the support staff that permit a low budget film to at least have a shot at success, so that would be one of my first things. You have a tiny crew but you have a lot of time to achieve your goal, but that tiny crew is very well experienced and well paid technicians". This suggests that in order for ultra-low-budget films to have a chance at success they need the funds to pay experienced crew. An NZFC scheme that helped provide these wages would support both emerging filmmakers and established filmmakers who are between projects, a common situation in a country that makes few films per year. It would also help emerging filmmakers learn from more established filmmakers and potentially give them connections with the industry insiders that would help them in the future.

Interestingly, couples (married or partners) often work successfully as a collaborative duo on a film project. Andrea Bosshard has been making films with her partner Shane Loader for over 20 years and both believe that they wouldn't be making films without the other. Shane explained, "I think in a funny way independently it's too hard to do it yourself, there's too many things to do, like when you're an independent filmmaker and you're directing you're doing more than that, you're producing, you're running around art department stuff, you're doing all sorts of stuff so you've got to divvy the work up and it's a pretty lonely

existence so it's good to have someone's shoulder to cry on". And there is value in knowing your working partner well, knowing their abilities, how they think, and to be able to work long hours together because you are both committed to the project, and are physically living in the same space. Thomas and Sumner Burstyn make documentaries together, of which Sumner said, "It works incredibly well, yeah, we love working together".

So, though weak ties may add an important element to a creative filmmaking team, the love affairs at the heart of good productions are also part of the dialogical process in the sense that they embed passion in communication. The couple may be a kind of ideal manifestation of this; it becomes possible to suggest that creative couplings reveal the deep importance of communicative camaraderie in a more general sense. Where the exertion of power over others may be common in working contexts, substituting privileged moments of communicative camaraderie for this is the empowering aspect of passion, on the evidence assembled here.

3. Is the suppression of radical potential a phenomenon internal to independent filmmaking itself in some way?

The supervening social necessity and the necessary inventions are now readily present to support independent filmmaking, but along with these accelerators are the constraints that suppress radical potential and act as brakes. Distribution deals have become harder to secure and financial returns less reliable. Hollywood branched into independent filmmaking with their subsidiaries (Miramax, Fox Searchlight, etc.), and strong-arm tactics are used with theatres to keep independent films out; these gatekeepers for whom the old model was lucrative remain capable of applying brakes to independent opportunities. In addition, filmmakers who plan to work outside of the traditional methods of making films find resistance from funding bodies such as the NZFC, and often filmmakers will avoid the effort required to tick their boxes and conform to their requirements and attempt to self-finance their films.

Shane Loader discussed the difficulty of finding theatres to screen independent films (without paying a fee): "... it's not easy, the distributors, they do do strong arm tactics, in Auckland they were very successful in basically pushing our film off

the screen because they just told the cinemas that their films have to screen at 6 and 8 or they won't give them *any* films, and we were forced to screen at 10 o'clock [am] and 2 o'clock [pm] and of course no one could come, now other cinemas in other parts of the country said 'oh yeah, they do that to us too, but we just ignore them'. But in Auckland they didn't, they then said 'oh your film's not doing any good' so we didn't really succeed that well in Auckland". Another agreement that works against independent films is the Virtual Print Fee (VPF), which was structured to split the costs of theatres converting to digital projection. Studio distributors pay the theatre a fee for each screening, to reflect their savings by shipping digital prints (compared with 35mm prints). *Variety* magazine explains that "negotiations for indies are stifled" (Lodderhose, 2010, para. 5), as the VPF agreement means theatres receive a subsidy for screening a film whether or not there are any paying patrons. They choose (VPF) films over independent films that may have no guaranteed audience and could potentially result in a loss if attendance is poor. This makes it virtually impossible for an independent film in New Zealand to secure screenings in commercial theatres in large urban centres, the very requirement specified by the NZFC to unlock their post-production funding.

However, with the rise in streamed entertainment, and the percentage of earnings taken by distributors, many filmmakers query the value of theatrical screenings. Andrea Bosshard describes an analysis of New Zealand films that had gone through the NZFC: "...looking at who produced them, what year, when they were released, what their budget was, what their publicity grant from the Film Commission was, and then what their gross box office returns were, and it was incredibly depressing reading, I mean it's a broken, an utterly broken model and in a way that confirmed for us that we have to self distribute, we also knew that we had a responsibility to our cast and crew who had been working on *Hook, Line and Sinker* (2011) for example, for \$300 gross a week, because the distributors just take the lion's share of the return and so we needed to cut them out". This is where Shane believes the NZFC could be more beneficial to self-funded projects, "Where I would really like them to help us out is really at the end of the film. When we've finished it, and we've got this film that we need to take, you know, get out there, they've got all these resources, they do have a lot of knowledge, they're on planes all the time going to all these festivals and rubbing shoulders with this sales agent and that festival curator and all this, so they know them all on a first name basis and they

could really help you out, but they don't, because they just want to push their own release, and that's what I find most frustrating. Instead of having this inclusive [attitude], 'sure, these people have gone off and made their own film then we should include them' [in the slate of films they help promote]". And this includes promoting self-funded films to first-tier festivals: "We've found with festivals it's virtually impossible to get into a major festival just by entering it. You need to be recommended or have some sort of people who know someone who can say this is a good film, and when it comes to New Zealand film, *that's* the Commission. The Commission are kind of like the filter for New Zealand films".

On the other hand, Anton Steel submitted *Z-Nail Gang* (2014) to non A-list festivals and was accepted for several, but discovered the screenings do little to promote the film or the filmmakers, and cost a lot of money to enter. "We've sent it to lots of festivals overseas. We've been in about five festivals overseas. I've submitted it to a lot but I'm not going to probably submit it to any more because it costs money to submit and then when you get into an overseas festival it costs you money to send it over there and you don't see anything back from those festivals..." The most visible piece of the filmmaking establishment in New Zealand is the NZFC, so filmmakers need to have strong NZFC support for their project to gain international attention with A-list festivals and distributors. Filmmaker Vincent Ward explained to me that without their support members of the international filmmaking establishment wonder "what's wrong with it?"

Andrea was very clear that their self-organised theatrical release was their biggest earner. This is contrary to often-repeated wisdom that the bulk of income will be through other avenues, DVD sales, television rights, streaming options. She felt it was a myth that "cinema theatrical distribution doesn't make money... [ideas like this are] put forward as truths in a way, but it's not the case, and there's a lot of hope that's put into downloading and internet and streaming and all of that sort of business but in actual fact it's not delivering at all". Shane's experience of four-walling (where the filmmaker rents a theatre to screen their film and keeps the ticket sales) is that it gives a filmmaker "the ability to maximize on your return, but it's also very risky. In a funny way that Tugg thing is a kind of form of trying to do that". Tugg is a site where individuals can request local screenings of listed films and when enough tickets are sold the screening goes ahead. When I said I didn't

think Tugg works in New Zealand, Andrea replied, “And it’s exactly the thing, we’re too small”.

In these ways, unintentionally, the NZFC applies brakes (Winston’s law of suppression of radical potential) and compounds the difficulty independent filmmakers have promoting their projects. Shane describes the NZFC as “a bit of a state funded mafia really, I do find they tie things up, even with publicity, trying to get an interview on the radio or some sort of print journalism the default fall back for these journalists is ‘oh, the Commission’ and if your film hasn’t gone through the Commission their assumption is ‘oh, well it’s not very good then’”. I experienced this when, before watching or reviewing *Penny Black*, Simon Morris, Radio New Zealand’s movie reviewer, wanted to know, “how extensive the release is and whether it’s a Big Deal Official Film Commission Thingy (BDOFCT) or an Enthusiastic No-Budget Independent (ENBI)”. The reason he gave for this question was, “I generally have a moral obligation to review the BDOFCTs but these days there are so many ENBIs around, often shot on people’s phones backed by their Visa cards, that I have to be a bit picky” (Morris, 2016). His assumption seemed to be that a self-funded film was not worth his or his audience’s time, because all good films are NZFC funded. This does not mean that “his audience” actually go to the NZFC funded films. Several filmmakers noted that NZFC funded films frequently fail to show a return on investment. Shane explained the NZFC requires filmmakers applying for production funding to prove their “fiscal responsibility” by presenting their plan to make the film profitable, and yet the NZFC “spend 3-4-5 million dollars on a film and make no money back. And they’re happy with that because the government will give them another bunch of funding the next year, so they’ve kind of undermined the whole financial acumen of filmmaking, pretending that it’s a business”.

Shane had a similar experience with the NZFC, when applying for post-funding for *Hook, Line and Sinker* (2011), as Joe and I did with *Penny Black*. He said, “...we first approached them when we had 20 cinemas on-board and they said ‘nope, that’s not a criterion, you need to have four screenings in the film festival, and then we’ll give you your post production funding’ and I said ‘this is crazy, we’ve got 22 cinemas’, and they go ‘nope, that’s the rules, that’s the rules’ and I just kept on and every time we got more cinemas on we kept going back to them and eventually we

got to 36 cinemas and they said ‘okay you need to send us a letter from every cinema to prove that you’re telling the truth’. And so we sent them 36 letters and then they basically...rewrote their criteria on that basis”.

Shane feels that Andrea and he have proven themselves by making a return on their investment for their previous work, and have earned the right to be trusted by the NZFC, but they believe their unconventional model of filmmaking does not suit the NZFC (e.g. long periods of improvisation that are used to create a script, having the actors “be” their characters for periods of time in their everyday lives, etc.). Andrea said, “I think the other issue is, and it’s a really big one, is that because they are starting to behave more and more like a studio, and they don’t trust filmmakers, or the filmmaking process, that they become obsessed with the script. And rather than understanding that the script is a blueprint, it’s a map for you to take on set to lead you through the way, if you need it. They have become so obsessed with the detail of the script that it puts a real spanner in the works, and it stops the creative filmmaking processes from developing”. Shane explains, “it’s the one thing that they can control, because once the film’s on the way it’s really out of their control. They can try to control it, but they can’t, so the obsession of the script is just... I mean scripts are important, and they’ve got to be good, but when you’re an independent filmmaker they change constantly”. It is as if completion of an NZFC approved script is another hoop filmmakers must go through to prove to the NZFC that they are able to bring a film to completion, even though in many cases the story will change during filming, and again in post-production.

Many New Zealand filmmakers believe the NZFC relies too heavily on judging projects according to their compliance with the Hollywood screenwriting structure (also known as the archplot structure). Though Mike Riddell is familiar with the “classic Hollywood thing” and sees the importance in understanding the conventional structural elements of a film, he thinks independent films should have more flexibility in their structures. “The writer’s job is to hang on to the integrity of the story and to try to find the best way of telling that story for an audience, and for me I think that requires an understanding of the emotional flow within a film, between the film and the audience, and I’m not sure that some of the people who’ve been in the development team [at the NZFC] in the past have really understood that, they take all their stuff from screenwriting books which are predominantly written

by Americans and it influences the way they put things together”. Heavy reliance on the archplot structure when making funding decisions also suppresses different potential formats for alternate forms of filmmaking.

Despite encouraging progress, it does seem as though Hollywood practices influence many people engaged in independent filmmaking, especially the gatekeeping of the development and production process. Ironically, it may be long after the studio system has seen its heyday, that the enduring legacy is an almost unconscious attachment to the idea of studio processes and values. So part of the dialogical phenomenon of production may be this internal dialogue, as it were, between studio idea and non-studio reality. While independent continues to be self-defined as non-studio, as what it is not more than what it is, it may be complicit in suppressing some of its own radical potential.

4. How are affective, continuance, and normative commitment actually expressed within specific practices of independent production and in relation to a “faith” in independence?

John Meyer and Natalie Allen’s three-component model of commitment has helped us to focus on the ways that production workers commit to the work as a result of an often complex mix of affection for the specific job on a project and/or specific co-workers, fear of losing something (e.g. future employment, reputation), and/or a sense of obligation (e.g. for past favours or opportunities, to a code of professionalism, etc.). In many employment contexts, fear and obligation can be sufficient to sustain commitment, even if this is considerably less than ideal for everybody concerned. Or occasional interludes of affective commitment can sustain an overall commitment that is, at other times, characterised more by the other components. But on the interview evidence, independent film work is often different.

Thomas Burstyn, one of New Zealand’s top cinematographers, finds the filmmaking process energising: “Whatever Gaylene has in mind, I’m on. She’s such a great filmmaker, she’s so, she’s wild in her approach to the work. She changes her mind, it’s always ticking over upstairs. She’s always thinking about what we’re doing next and you have to be on your toes because everything’s gonna

change all the time. I love that, I find it very energising”. As predicted by Meyer and Allen (1997) Thomas’ personal characteristics and prior work experiences (perhaps especially on studio projects in the USA and Canada, and working with his writer/producer wife, Barbara Sumner-Burstyn) correlate to his commitment to Gaylene’s projects (the organisation), increasing his job involvement and job satisfaction, and positively affecting his on-the-job behaviour, in this case, his performance.

Kirstin Marcon’s personal characteristics resulted in her enjoying the freedom of shooting with a small crew in Europe, “... we just kind of ran around and shot outside and shot lots of places without any permission, some places with permission, but it was just hair-raising and glorious [laughs]. And I really wish we’d made the whole film that way”. This experience increased her job satisfaction, and though she does not feel the film was a huge success, this may have contributed to her commitment to working towards completion of this project, and her desire to make a second film.

During their interviews Kirstin Marcon said she “absolutely loved” the year when she was a paid filmmaker and described it as “brilliant”, Gaylene Preston talked about needing to work with people with whom she can “have a few laughs”, and Thomas Burstyn described Gaylene’s style of filmmaking as “very energising”, but by and large filmmakers mostly talked about the challenges of the process. Whether it is securing funding, personality clashes, losing crew during filming, trying to work with the NZFC, or struggling to distribute completed work, the interviewed filmmakers all considered filmmaking to be a worthwhile challenge.

Mathieu and Zajac (1990) state that employees who have a higher level of commitment to an organisation (in this case a film project) may receive increased psychological benefits such as intrinsic job satisfaction and relationships with co-workers, and may be more likely to engage in behaviours such as creativity and innovation, behaviours crucial to the filmmaking process and highly valued in a creative team. They also note that the potential negative effects of high levels of organisational commitment is an area of inquiry that has been largely overlooked, but that “high commitment may lead to greater stress in some instances” (p. 191). This may be a difficult effect to measure, as a director may not be able to accurately

measure their level of commitment to a project and compare it to that which she felt on a past project, or her level of stress may be impacted by other factors relating to the film production or outside influences. Speaking for myself, I experienced a great deal of stress throughout the production of *Penny Black*, and I was completely committed to bringing it to completion. In comparison, I feel considerably less stress working on projects lead by others; though I am still committed to a smaller role I have less responsibility, work less hours, and can spend more time thinking about my duties or socialising with others on set.

Engagement with others was a key factor when discussing their experiences, in particular for Mike Riddell, who was a minister and theology lecturer before becoming a full time writer, and so has prior socialisation experiences that help explain his normative commitment to his own projects, e.g. *The Insatiable Moon* (2010). Mike has long been an advocate for psychiatric patients and low-income tenants and these particular work experiences would have increased his affective commitment to this project about a psychiatric patient who believes he is the second son of God and the communal home where he lives that is threatened with closure. Mike said, "...the biggest thing is having a group of people who know what it's about and want to work together and can go through the hard times and pitch in". And "pitching in" is the "kiwi way" as Rosemary Riddell recounts "At the end we had put some stuff on the walls of... that you smear over it and it makes them look terribly dirty, because it was far too clean a boarding house for our purposes, and at the end, the day we finished shooting there, we all got stuck in and cleaned the walls down, and I think it was Tom [Burstyn] who came in, director of photography, and said 'I have never been on a project where the director starts chipping in and helps clean the place up afterwards.' And it was almost a kind of community feel about it that was just lovely". Though the budget for *The Insatiable Moon* (2010) was not as high as Mike was hoping to raise, Rosemary said, "I probably wouldn't have changed anything, 'cause it was just a fabulous experience, and the cast and crew loved it and we loved it and we did it".

As the interviewees were part of the creative teams for their respective films – the driving force that pushed momentum – if they had abandoned the project when they met hurdles they would have needed to begin the process again with another project, or perhaps give up filmmaking. Andrea and Shane had invested years in

their project *Hook, Line and Sinker* (2011) when they realised they would not receive NZFC funding as they expected: “It went in and out of the Film Commission a few times, always on the cusp of regime changes. It was very disempowering, the process, the whole thing, and then when it looked like it might have gone ahead and we were told we had to come up with 10% of the total budget, and we were going for our million dollar budget, so we had to come up with \$100,000, which we managed to, and then they turned around and said ‘no’... And that money was raised through me just asking people for very large donations. But we felt that we had to make the film, even on that amount, because if we gave the money back and said the film just wasn’t happening it would be very unlikely that they would give money again”. Their investment of time and money increased their continuance commitment, and they persisted with the project using the resources they had already secured. Were they to have had stronger connections with NZFC personnel or a proven record working with the NZFC their request may have been supported through regime changes. Several filmmakers expressed their belief that the NZFC created hurdles for filmmakers in order for them to prove their commitment before funding is granted.

When faced with the prospect of losing years of time invested in his project, Mike Riddell realised his battle to get the film made had value in that it inspired people to help. “Well I think because we were coming back from the dead if you like, we were having to make it work. There was a level of passion and commitment that was there right from the beginning in the core crew and even in the cast. They all understood the thing. We worked hard at building relationships with everybody. We had a gathering, everybody, all the cast and crew, the day before we started filming, and Rawiri [Paratene] spoke – a sort of inspirational thing – and we deliberately cultivated the thing that we were a small production fighting back against the odds”.

Several interviewees spoke of a lack of normative commitment (obligation to remain with a project) in low-budget film workers (not including the core creative team of writer, director, producer). The three-component model of commitment may help to explain some reasons for this. It may be partly the personal characteristics of some individuals who value financial remuneration over experience; they do not perceive an obligation to remain with a project if they are

not benefiting financially. Unless they are working to repay a payment-in-kind debt with a member of the team, or are particularly passionate about the project, they are unlikely to be fully invested in the project. Shane Loader said: “We sort of have to be quite flexible with our crew because people suddenly get a paid job, a proper paid job, and they just leave and we have to be able to go ‘okay, alright, well we’ll grab someone else’, so we went through lots of focus pullers, constantly, because they seem to be able to get lots of work so they’d be on for a week or two and then they would go off and we would have to find another one, so there was a few nervous moments when we were wondering whether we were going to have a full crew”. Anton also mentioned this: “I had a different first AD every week, but they’d just come in for a week and then leave and go to their job so at least I had someone who knew how to run a film set running the film set”. This is the opposite of what I observed in Hollywood, where crew stayed on a project due to continuance commitment, the perceived cost of leaving being earning a negative reputation by causing frustration for the head of department. On studio productions financing is already in place before most of the cast and crew are attached. Not so with independents, as Mike Riddell recalls, “It was at a time when all the money was falling out and we had hoped that Gilles Mckinnen who was [slated to be] the director would stay in, but in the end he said ‘You haven’t got enough money really to make the film, let alone pay me’”. Though potential experience serves to attract crew to low-budget films, money often lures them away.

Examples of affective, continuance, and normative commitment can be found within the interview data, however the strength of these commitments may be less than in other industries. This may be due to the nature of independent filmmaking, the transient nature of available projects, and the lack of a strong sense of an organisation, with groups forming around projects and dispersing at the completion of the work. Though filmmakers expressed passion for a project, the subject matter, and for each other, the faith they carry from project to project may be a more internal belief in their own ability, or in who they are as filmmakers.

5. Do independent filmmakers continue to pursue their work when the usual motivations of money and prestige are often so glaringly absent because it makes them happy to do so?

The value of Huppert and So's analysis of what makes people flourish in their work is that they disaggregate happiness into multifactorial components, rather than essentialising it. Two of the components that emerged strongly from the interviews were the presence of mentoring (teaching/learning relationships and confidence-building) and a certain addictive quality to the work. These are not aspects explicitly identified by Huppert and So, however mentoring helps to increase competence, and can provide positive relationships, and the addictive quality of filmmaking can result in increasing the engagement of enthusiastically devoted team members.

Several of the features Huppert and So (2013) identify that contribute to human flourishing appeared in the interview data, in particular, resilience and positive relationships. Resilience is often portrayed as a badge of honour for filmmakers, with stories about overcoming difficulties popular during "meet the filmmaker" sessions. *Penny Black* director, Joe Hitchcock, said he likes to hear about other filmmakers' struggles with their projects and experiences: "As a filmmaker I like to hear that it was really difficult and that they had to overcome it somehow, and I guess that's the same as an audience watching a film. They want obstacles to overcome". Filmmakers *want* others to overcome problems and to succeed. Mike Riddell recounts his feeling about *The Insatiable Moon* (2010): "I'd been living with it for so long, and it becomes a dream and the chance to make it into reality, to tell the story on the screen, is so wonderful that you'd crawl over broken glass to do it". Referring to the set of *The Insatiable Moon*, Rosemary Riddell said, "[actor] Ian Mune reckons it was one of the happiest film sets he's worked on. Everyone really worked together..." Shane Loader describes the mentoring environment on his films: "So it was interesting this crew we ended up with. There's a whole lot of really new people that have one or two years out of film school or Toi Whakaari, and then there's a whole lot of people right at the end of their career like Annie and Whaka and Brian and Alun and there's nothing in the middle. It's kind of a lot of mentoring going on which has been on-going, and we're just lucky that a lot of those, Alun, Brian, Annie, they're really happy to help young new people out, so it just seems to be quite a good relationship really".

It is important to note that teaching/learning relationships are not only confined to mentor/mentee relationships. Many of the developmental benefits of peer

relationships are similar to the career-enhancing and psychosocial functions observed in conventional mentoring relationships (Kram & Isabella, 1985), and peer relationships are often more accessible for filmmakers. Career enhancing functions of peer relationships include: information sharing, career strategising, job-related feedback. Psychosocial functions include: confirmation, motivational support, personal feedback, and friendship. While many of these attributes are similar to those experienced by a mentee in a mentoring relationship, peer relationships have the special attribute of mutuality, which “enables both individuals to experience being the giver as well as the receiver of these functions” (Kram & Isabella, 1985, p. 118). Learning from and with peers becomes more important for filmmakers who do not have access to a more experienced filmmaker willing to pass on their knowledge.

When Gaylene Preston talked about her passion for filmmaking she admitted, “The trouble is, being an independent filmmaker, it’s kind of a crazy occupation because it’s very ‘look ma no hands’ sort of thing, because it would maybe be easier if you decided to be a painter, because every time I have an idea I have to sort of take a year and a half out to get the money to be able to do the work. So it’s a pretty crazy thing, but once that bit of brain wiring is on, it’s on. And I don’t think there’s much you can do about it. It’s kind of ‘you’re afflicted’”. I asked Gaylene if she believed filmmaking is an addictive environment (Rowlands & Handy, 2012) and she responded, “Well, yeah, it is. And there’s no rehab. And that’s seriously, when you get to be the age I am, I’m the most addicted I’ve ever been in my life. I haven’t got over it. I’m actually more addicted than I ever have been”.

On this kind of evidence it would appear that independent filmmakers typically experience a very particular kind of happiness at work: first, the feeling that they would “crawl over broken glass” (whatever actual form it takes) to make the film is usually present in order for the particular happiness to be experienced and shared; second, that teaching and/or learning is typically part of the process (requiring the right mix of novice and experience); and finally, that a quality of addictiveness, of being “afflicted”, may be deeply characteristic of this mode of being (These insights may have to be revisited in due course, in terms of the pleasure/pain axis, if they are to add substantively to our understanding of these passionate beings, to evoke Latour once again).

Review

In reviewing the interview data, there is reinforcement of the idea that independent filmmaking may develop atypical networks and needs due to the transient nature of projects, and the need for individuals to focus on their own career development, while committing to a series of projects and also bonding with other filmmakers. More specifically:

1. The deep characteristics of “voice” describe an achievement of consistency and integrity in and around a project, but which is not necessarily an unchanging attribute of a project or the filmmakers behind the work.
2. The deep characteristics of the special camaraderie often present between creative couples can be found more widely on occasion and relates primarily to the quality of communication.
3. The suppression of radical potential is inherent not only in the funding and distribution bodies that adhere to traditional notions of both form and audience appeal, but is present in filmmakers’ self-definition in relation to processes and values they may not want to adhere to.
4. The strength of filmmakers’ affective, continuance, and normative commitment may be less than for other organisations, but strong commitment to a project may be a result of an internal faith in a filmmaker’s own ability and belief in their identity as a filmmaker.
5. Even with the absence of money and prestige as motivators, independent filmmakers are motivated by the potential for flourishing, the opportunities to teach and be taught, and due to a passion they feel for filmmaking that is often described as an addiction.

Collectively, the interview data suggest that individuals work to realise and reinforce their own identity (including their perception of what a filmmaker is, how a filmmaker behaves, what they achieve, etc.). We should therefore consider the identity of the filmmaker, and whether it is a construction of the individual, or an accumulation of capital that allows an individual to *become* an independent filmmaker. This shift towards questions of identity is a major effect of the interview material.

Strong/weak ties

Identity capital (the right skills, reputation, relationships, etc.) assists a filmmaker buy into a particular project. For a filmmaker to progress through the steps of an authentic working life (see Fig. 2 again) they must accrue bonding capital, expanding their social network to include filmmakers working at the level the filmmaker is working to attain. These strong ties between filmmakers can result in commitment to future collaboration and support to achieve mutual and separate goals. Though weak ties may provide diverse and innovative ideas, they may fail to provide the relationships necessary for a filmmaker to further their career.

Granovetter's (1973) strength of weak ties theory suggests that because connections between individuals that are weaker are more likely to enable additional connections to different social circles, they are more likely to be a source of nonredundant information. Whether a filmmaker has the propensity to take advantage of diverse, potentially creative contributions may be influenced by their personal values, whether they value conformity or divergence of ideas, and to what extent. As a filmmaker progresses through their career their creative success can modify their conformity value, either towards a more commercial or a more creative risk taking style of filmmaking. If they tend towards a more diverse social network, it can provide more opportunities to be creative and a greater propensity to take advantage of the dissimilar knowledge and perspectives that weak ties can provide (Zhou et al., 2009, p. 1555).

Perry-Smith (2006) found that in general, weaker ties are beneficial for creativity, with stronger ties having neutral effects. "Exposure from weak ties may serve as a seed that causes a person to pursue previously unexplored directions or provides a spark that propels a person to integrate new ideas" (p. 86). This may be true in many cases, but may not take into account the interconnectedness of the internet generation, the increasingly diverse population in some large cities where strong ties may not result in a lack of diversity, and it may not be immediately transferable to the film industry. It may also overlook the increasing exposure to different ideas in the lives of modern filmmakers, including diverse backgrounds, cultures, religions, experiences, and knowledge. As populations blend it is more likely that our friends will have backgrounds quite different to our own and thus provide

diverse, potentially creative information through strong ties. It should also be noted that research has shown weak ties can speed up projects when knowledge is not complex, but slows them down when the knowledge to be transferred is highly complex (Hansen, 1999). In addition, individuals with strong ties are likely to have more interest and investment in the outcome of a project, so in the case of low/no-budget independent films that are unable to pay to buy into connections, existing strong ties may be more beneficial to a project than uncommitted, yet diverse, weak ties.

Zhou, et al. (2009) researched the correlation between weak ties and creativity, proving that either too few or too many weak ties may not provide the optimal conditions for creativity. Their data was collected from employees at a large high-technology company in China, which suggested that “employees exhibit greater creativity when their number of weak ties is at intermediate levels than when it is at lower or higher levels” (p. 1544) as illustrated in Fig. 7. Too few weak ties, and “individuals do not have sufficient dissimilar information and diverse perspectives with which to produce ideas that are novel and useful” (p. 1545). Too many, and there may be too many people and dissimilar ideas to be beneficial (Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003; Ward, Smith, & Finke, 1999).

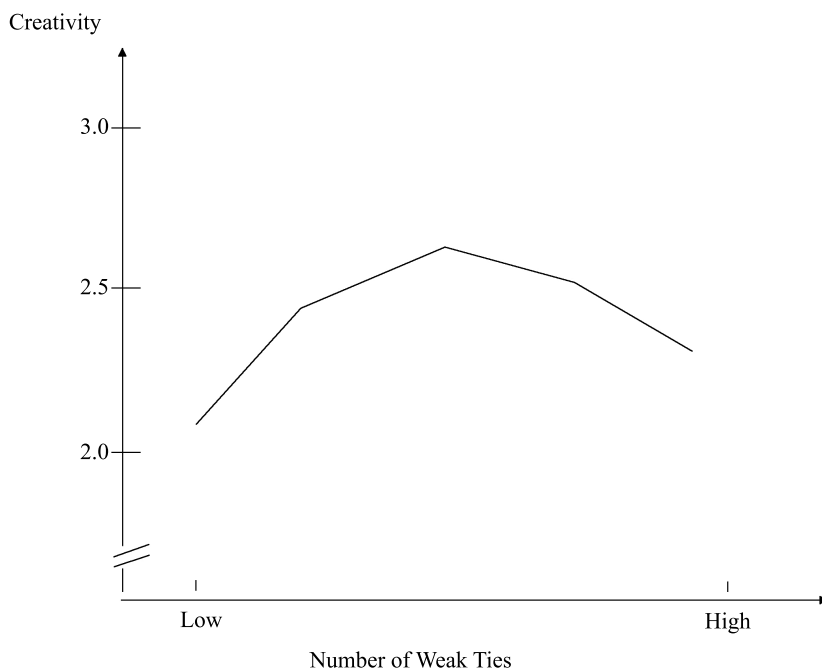


Fig. 7. Curvilinear relationship between number of weak ties and creativity (Zhou et al., 2009, p. 1549), used with permission.

Translated into the field of filmmaking, there may be three reasons for a point of diminishing returns on the number of weak ties: too many weak ties may limit the amount of time an individual (perhaps the writer or director) can spend with others, meaning less involvement and less time for alternative ideas to surface (Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003); developing and maintaining a large number of ties may distract from the time spent on developing ideas; and when the number of weak ties is too large the amount of dissimilar information may become too great and too diverse causing confusion and overload. The curvilinear relationship between the number of weak ties and creativity suggests it would be beneficial for filmmakers to seek out the contribution of weak ties, especially from experienced filmmakers, even if that means they must extend the length of development and pre-production as suggested by Thomas Burstyn: “You have a tiny crew but you have a lot of *time* to achieve your goal”.

This is not to say that strong ties should be avoided on low-budget film productions. Zhou et al. (2009) found no significant relationship between strong ties and creativity, suggesting they may have both positive and negative effects. Madjar, Oldham, and Pratt (2002) suggest that strong ties (work and non-work related) provide personal support which enhances creative performance. Strong ties can help increase the team’s commitment to a project (especially when money is not a motivation), and may assist members in actually implementing creative ideas (Obstfeld, 2005), maintaining momentum, and pushing the project to completion.

Mindsets

Though individuals with weak ties to a project can potentially be as committed as those with strong ties to the filmmakers, it is valuable to reconsider different types of commitment and their implications for independent filmmaking. Meyer and Parfyonova (2010) clarify the original Meyer and Allen (1997) three component model (TCM) of commitment, introduced to acknowledge the multi-dimensionality of workplace commitments, by describing the related mindsets connected to each component.

- Continuance commitment (CC) is characterised by a mindset of *cost-avoidance*, which guides behaviour in social roles based on weighing of personal costs and benefits.
- Affective commitment (AC) is characterised by a mindset of *desire*. AC is “greater in countries scoring high on individualism and low on power distance” (Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010, p. 285) (i.e. “the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede, 2016, para. 3)).
- Normative commitment (NC) is characterised by a mindset of *obligation*, whereby an individual feels obligated to remain with an organisation because they believe it is the right thing to do.

We can explore the idea that the overriding mindset of many independent filmmakers throughout their career is one of *desire*, using the interview data assembled here.

Though at certain stages in life or career financial remuneration becomes necessary in order to continue making films, none of my interviewees mentioned money as a motivation or reason to commit to a project.

Sumner Burstyn talked about her husband Thomas’ commitment based on desire that motivated him to start work in the business despite poor pay: “He started when he was 15 and 16 hanging around the National Film Board of Canada in Montréal and actually ended up being a cinematographer, which is what he always wanted to do, and working pretty much for no money for 10 years just to get started, and so he was never going to be anything else”. Thomas chooses projects based on his desire to work with key members of the creative team, and will not commit if the desire is not there, regardless of how big the project is. He said, “...there’s a guy who’s about to propose a project to me and it’s quite a big thing and I’m thinking ‘do I really want to work with this asshole again’, you know?”.

Kirstin Marcon’s long held desire to make a film fuelled her commitment to the project as she’d “...been wanting to make a feature for about 5 years”. She recognises desire as a strong motivator for filmmakers: “If you want to make a film you’ll find a way, won’t you”. Though Kirstin enjoyed being a paid filmmaker for

the year she made *The Most Fun You Can Have Dying* (2012), cost avoidance (or benefitting financially) is not her motivation for wanting to make another film. In fact she would prefer to make it with no money, as she desires to make it her own way. "...You know when you've got your first film you do it a specific way and you don't necessarily want to repeat. I mean I just want to see what I can learn from doing it differently".

Desire fuels commitment in both crew and key creatives as Andrea Bosshard explains when she discusses the motivation of some of the top NZ filmmakers who want to work on their projects. "They're top people in their field... and they come along just because they want to be involved in this way of filmmaking... they want to be part of it". Thomas described Gaylene's requirement that the crew desire to be on her set: "...She expected the crew to want to be there". She also explained how she wants her funders and supporters in the project's wider network to desire to be part of her projects: "And I think that's really my advice to anybody who is working independently, that whatever you're doing, the more you can think in the round about gathering a constituents community that will *want* to contribute".

No one spoke of making films for any reason relating to cost-avoidance, though Sumner did mention having to make one film in a particular way due to contractual obligation: "...we had to meet certain criterion all the time, and we ended up saying 'fuck you' and we made the film that we wanted to make". Andrea also said, "I don't want to make films if there's no joy in it".

Moran (2009) discusses how types of commitment relate to the ways a creative person invests their resources into their work over long periods of time. These commitment types can be used to identify the level of creative influence the cultural field has attributed to a filmmaker's body of work, and how this affects their commitment. According to Moran, filmmakers can be divided into three categories:

- *Genre conformers* play by established industry rules. They invest in the craft of filmmaking to improve their social standing among other filmmakers, funders, and critics within the field, and their commitment to the field of filmmaking *compensates* them by way of support, power, or money.

- *Experimentalists'* ideas and style have not yet caught on widely. They invest in themselves, expressing themselves through the medium of film, and their commitment to self-expression *defies* traditions and the “right way” to make film.
- *Domain transformers* believe that they will be able to employ some aspect of their beloved medium of film to convert new minds to the possibilities of the domain. They invest in this belief, and their commitment to the idea of independent filmmaking *impassions* them through their love for the work.

“*Creative* is an evaluation of a work product as both *novel* and *appropriate* within a social-cultural setting”, an evaluation which arises from “the interaction of a person, a field of gatekeepers, and a domain of symbolic knowledge” (Moran, 2009, p. 245). The filmmaking *field* is the network of roles and institutions that evaluate the work done by filmmakers, e.g. filmmakers, funders, distributors, and critics, whose judgments aggregate to create hierarchies of status among filmmakers. The industry *domain* is made up of the established forms, the screenplay format, the three-act structure of films, genres, and filmmaking techniques, etc.

Studio work falls at the conforming end of the scale, commissioning a greater degree of what is viewed as *appropriate* and a lesser degree of *novelty*. Filmmakers who “play by the industry rules”, writing in popular genres, writing three-act screenplays tailored to the most popular demographics, are more likely to be supported by the studios and other conforming institutions such as the NZFC. Experimentalists disregard industry rules, resisting the limitations imposed by the field, often exhibiting contempt for the industry gatekeepers. They wish to keep control of their work, and so are least likely to gain support of industry institutions. It would seem logical that domain transformers would fall between these two extremes, and perhaps that is the case, but though they do not subscribe to or fight the members and mores of the field, the passion they feel and express for their work can cultivate support from gatekeepers and funders.

It is possible that domain transformers’ level of authenticity – which falls between a level of novelty that society does not readily accept and a level of appropriateness that does not inspire their interest – provides the right balance between challenge

and expectation to be viewed as a resource, which the filmmakers can use to successfully buy into a network of support. When independent filmmakers are passionate beings that fall into the category of domain transformers, we begin to understand another reason behind the often intense commitment to the field and to their projects that they manage to maintain over time.

Zhou et al. (2009) focus on the benefits of the right level of novel and diverse ideas. However, Moran's (2009) discussion of the roles that commitment plays in careers demonstrates that different types of filmmaker may welcome different levels of novel ideas depending on their type of commitment. Genre conformers invite the lowest level of novelty, so the optimum intermediate level of weak ties may be viewed as providing an unfavourably high level of novelty. Experimentalists may welcome a higher level due to their experimental nature, or a low level due to their commitment to their *own* self-expression. Domain transformers who value moderate levels of novelty (*and* appropriateness) seem more likely to benefit from an intermediate level of weak ties to provide the uniqueness in the work they wish to exhibit.

Filmmakers who decide they cannot afford the cost (financial or time) of weak ties may reduce their level of novelty. They could potentially make up for this shortfall by increasing their level of appropriateness in order to appeal to conforming institutions (funders, distributors, etc.), however, though this may increase their ability to greenlight a project, the influence of the genre conforming institution may compromise the passion they feel for the project. This highlights the delicate balance between ties, passion, novelty and institutional gatekeeping for the independent filmmaker.

New Zealand filmmakers cover a wide spectrum on the conforming, experimental, and transformers scale, with many straddling at least two of the categories. Of my interviewees, Kirstin Marcon falls closest to the conforming end of the field (though this is based on her only feature film and she hopes her next will be more transforming). To increase her chances of securing government funding for *The Most Fun You Can Have Dying* (2012), Kirstin created a script that conformed to the 3-act-structure from an existing property (a novel) by an author known to the NZFC. Mike Riddell initially complied with NZFC requests for script changes

while seeking funding for *The Insatiable Moon* (2010), but became uncomfortable when he felt pressure to make his story overly formulaic. At this point, by resisting established industry rules in order to improve his standing with funders and attract financial support he moved away from the *genre conforming* category towards the *transformer* category, as his love for his work proved to be a more influential motivator.

Though they may see themselves as domain transformers, of my interviewees, Shane Loader and Andrea Bosshard are the nearest to the experimental end of the spectrum. Their method of script development (including improvisation and role playing which meant the actors helped create their roles and dialogue) defies traditional practice, which they considered was too “outside the box” for the NZFC. Anton Steel based the *Z-Nail Gang* on real events, crafting his script around a 3-act-structure. However the project was made in an unconventional way, enlisting help from a wide community, with “over 300 individuals and organisations giving their time and resources for free” (commonUnity Productions, 2014, para. 3). Anton does not want to release the film on DVD because he does not want to “create just another plastic thing that sits on people’s shelves”. But the impassioned way he describes his project and the people involved in its creation put him in the domain transformers category:

Based on true events that took place in the Coromandel during the 1980s, this story depicts how a tiny, disjointed community unified to stand against authority and, against all odds, won. It was a battle that took resilience, creativity, community spirit, passion, humility and humour – exactly the qualities we were after to get this film off the ground (commonUnity Productions, 2014, para. 1).

Anton wants to make a difference in the lives of the people he works with, and to affect the people who watch his films.

Of the interviewees, Gaylene Preston is the most experienced and the most successful at working within the filmmaking institutions in New Zealand. She has found a balance between novelty in her ideas for her own work, and hiring people who challenge her ideas. Her work is novel, yet not so far from what is perceived as

appropriate that she cannot attract funding. She understands how the NZFC functions and is in a position where she can chat with the CEO to gauge the appropriateness of the style and content of potential projects before committing a large amount of time and energy to developing work that she may struggle to gain support for. She demands that the people she work with desire to be there, want to contribute, and are committed to the project. Though she would in no way claim to have found the easy path to filmmaking, Gaylene may have identified a sweet spot that allows her to achieve her goals *and* nurture her passion for independent filmmaking.

Core variable

At this point, if we follow the typical procedure of Grounded Theory, it becomes necessary to identify the *core variable* of the whole study. The core variable is that “which appears to account for most of the variation around the concern or problem that is the focus of the study” and thus “becomes the focus of further selective data collection and coding efforts. It explains how the main concern is continually resolved” (Glaser & Holton, 2004, para. 54). The core variable must be central, it should relate to as many other categories and their properties as possible, and should account for “a large portion of the variation in a pattern of behavior” (Glaser & Holton, 2004, para. 54). I examined the interview transcripts in order to answer the following questions: “What is the main issue or problem with which these people seem to be grappling? What keeps striking me over and over? What comes through, although it might not be said directly?” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 148). By evaluating my interview data with the autoethnographically derived category list and compiling the most appropriate *gerund forms* for each category (informed by earlier coding of my autoethnography), it is possible to “make individual or collective action and process visible and tangible” (Charmaz, 2011, p. 367) and to make additional connections between the categories.

This gerund-based category re-expansion technique, as advocated by Cathy Charmaz, an influential practitioner of Grounded Theory research, allowed me to scan the transcripts for a particular vocabulary, presented below (Table 3).

Category	Gerund form
output	Profiting, Predicting (response), Supporting, Conforming, Appealing (to an audience), Convincing, Responding, Evaluating (response), Distributing, Succeeding, Appreciating, Suppressing , Controlling.
technology	Learning, Mastering, Selecting, Accessing, Owning, Exploiting, Utilizing, Controlling (image).
resources	Planning, Prioritising, Researching, Accumulating, Securing, Attracting, Securing (or not), Compromising, Choosing, Funding, Sharing (gear), Conserving, Improvising, Accessing, Sharing (knowledge, experience), Adapting, Timing, Controlling.
momentum	Beginning, Developing, Maintaining , Pressuring, Achieving, Committing, Persisting, Continuing , Struggling, Controlling.
relationships	Networking, Building, Connecting, Accumulating, Partnering, Challenging, Inspiring, Collaborating, Utilising, Mentoring, Favouring (or not), Managing, Supporting (film), Contacting, Maintaining, Renewing, Resolving (conflict), Complimenting, Controlling (vs. Collaborating).
reputation	Building, Convincing, Promoting (self), Developing (with audience), Establishing, Preserving (own view of self), Protecting, Communicating, Controlling (Manipulating).
skills	Learning, Teaching, Sharing, Acquiring, Training, Developing, Improving, Dividing (tasks) , Demonstrating, Recognising, Knowing, Doing, Improving, Complimenting (the skills of others), Diversifying (skill set), Solving (problems), Adapting, Innovating (experimenting), Exploring, Finding, Communicating, Advising, Controlling.
affection	Respecting, Enjoying , Connecting (to the film), Expressing (opinions, ideas), Feeling, Controlling.
trust	Trusting (self, others, ability, intuition), Maintaining, Committing, Convincing, Controlling.

Table 3. Evaluating with gerunds

The “super-gerund” (to coin a term) that reoccurs in each of the nine categories is *controlling*. The need to control every aspect of their working lives emerges clearly as the central concern of these filmmakers. They control their pursuit of skill acquisition. They behave in a particular way to control their relationships, earning the trust and respect of others. They control their lives and activities in order to ensure continued momentum in their work and career. In learning to build and increase their resources they control their ability to produce work. They control their output, their scripts, their films, their reputation, their position in the industry, and on the path to a final product they must control every aspect of production, budget, casting, locations, etc. The independent filmmaker must employ the habits and mechanisms of control to be successfully complete a film. Control, or lack thereof, would seem to affect all aspects of the independent working life to some degree, and can be expected to relate to my interviewees’ recurrent solutions to their main problem, their desire for an authentic working life.

However, there have already been suggestions in the previous chapters that these day-to-day phenomena, in which control is undoubtedly an important factor, are not the whole story if we want to explain what being an independent filmmaker means. So a principal aim for the remainder of the present chapter is to discover how else we might conceptualise a variable such as control if its explanatory reach is to be as great as it needs to be.

To return to the procedures of Grounded Theory, once a potential core variable has been picked out, selective coding can commence.

Selective coding begins only after the researcher has identified a potential core variable. Subsequent data collection and coding is delimited to that which is relevant to the emerging conceptual framework (the core and those categories that relate to the core). By focusing on the core and other related categories, subsequent data collection can go very quickly; merely minutes, with a few field notes to be captured and analysed. In this way, the researcher can saturate the selected categories that form the basis of the emerging theory without collecting a lot of additional material that has no relevance to the developing grounded theory. This selective data collection and analysis

continues until the researcher has sufficiently elaborated and integrated the core variable, its properties, and its theoretical connections to other relevant categories (Holton, 2010, para. 23).

Moving from open to selective coding is also a move from structural qualitative analysis to a more interpretational qualitative analysis. The structural qualitative analysis of my autoethnographic work and my initial round of interviews assumed that the structure was inherently contained in the data and it was my job to uncover it. “Elements, categories, patterns, and relationships between properties” emerged from the analysis of the data and were not predetermined (Côté et al., 1993, para. 7), the goal being to develop the best classification system that would fit the data. Now with nine categories and a tentative core variable I move to interpretational qualitative analysis by overlaying this potential structure of control on the data as a device for rendering the phenomenon easier to grasp (Tesch, 1990). As the nine categories were already determined before the performing and analysis of the interviews, my function is “to retrieve and make sense of that information throughout the data by working with a set of relationships whose nature is well established” (Côté et al., 1993, para. 6).

Emerging theory

Judith Holton’s promise of an “ah ha” moment, an insight that takes “merely minutes” at this point, bringing months of work to a sudden clarity, seemed too much to expect. These moments are peppered throughout Barney Glaser’s work as well. So it was reassuring, and even a little exciting, to find that it did happen here. The “emerging theory” (Holton, 2010, para. 23) about the independent course of action suddenly came into view as a potential combination of my crossings pyramid and Silviya Svejenova’s model of an authentic working life.

If control is one of the main factors of a filmmaker’s ability to accrue the capital represented by the nine categories, then control is also a factor in whether a filmmaker is able to progress through Svejenova’s four levels of an authentic working life, with control over an increasing amount of macro-resources needed to move to the next level. I have combined the previous diagrammatic representations

(Figs. 2 and 5) to represent how the accrual of macro-resources including positive output may affect the development of an authentic working life (Fig. 8). For a filmmaker to move to the next level of an authentic working life they must accrue and control an increasing amount of resources. The composition and the needed amount of these macro-resources may be different for each filmmaker depending on their role, their existing resources, and which stage they are in. But the really exciting aspect of this insight, and the idea that will now inform the remainder of this thesis, is that independents may also exercise an important degree of control over their own identities as their course of action takes them through the levels represented by Fig. 8.

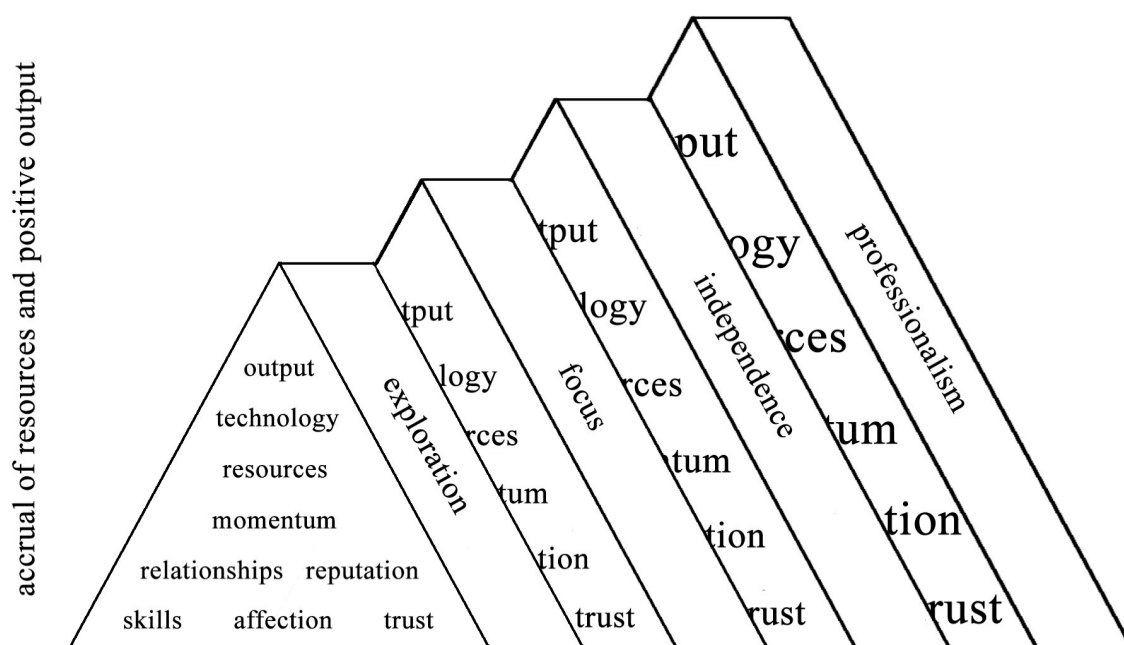


Fig. 8. (Potential) effect of positive output and the accrual of macro-resources on the development of an authentic working life.

The independent identity

What became increasingly clear during the course of my interviews is that these representative independent filmmakers were all describing not just how they maintained their various projects, but how they maintained their identities as independents. Côté (1997) discusses how identities in modern societies “tend to be individually constructed ... [and that] the ability and/or willingness of many new

members [of society] to adopt or construct identities rooted in conventional institutions seems to be diminishing” (p. 577). A non-exhaustive internet search for words and phrases used to describe the qualities independent filmmakers would benefit from having included: being dedicated, driven, myopic, intelligent, knowledgeable, skilled, thick skinned, modest, attractive, well dressed, personable, sociable, charming, responsible, a team leader, knowledgeable about films, creative, motivated, hard working, an idea generator, a storyteller, musical, decisive, driven, ambitious, physically fit, adaptive, calm, prepared, publicity friendly, active in social media, appreciative and respectful of crew, able to handle pressure and stress, a problem solver, technologically savvy, multitalented, visionary, organised, authoritative, arrogant, focused, someone who considers other points of view, having good judge of character, excellent communication skills, a solid work ethic, high stamina, a vast knowledge about the language of film, who is prepared to do whatever it takes, and finishes what they start (Al Jazeera, 2016; Film Schools, 2016; Grove, 2013; Louie, 2012). As individual filmmakers construct their own “filmmaker identity” they may integrate any number of these or additional attributes, which they then actualise as they work towards their filmmaking goals. Côté (1997) suggests that a successful active response to increasingly anomic social conditions deficient in guiding structures requires people to explore their potential, build personal strengths, and sustain some sense of direction and meaning, “undertaking more difficult developmental tasks and social/occupational attainment patterns” (p. 577). This does seem especially necessary for independents.

Identity theory focuses on what occurs when a person takes on a role, “acting to fulfil the expectations of the role, coordinating and negotiating interaction with role partners, and manipulating the environment to control the resources for which the role has responsibility” (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 226). This approach explores how people represent and preserve the meanings and expectations of their role. Stets (1995) observes that when person and role identities conflict an individual may act to maintain the person identity over the role identity as “an individual cannot simply be guided by role identities and have person identities unaffected by them” (p. 143). As filmmakers, whether independent or studio-based, internalise what they think the role they are in requires, identity theory may help clarify the degree to which filmmakers are constrained by structural and institutional expectations of

filmmaking (tied to role identities) or are able to express their identity in the way they work.

As we each have many overlapping identities, which may be activated in various situations, identity theory uses the term *salience* to indicate the likelihood that an identity will be activated in a situation (or role). Related to filmmaking, the likelihood of an appropriate identity being activated depends on the readiness of the identity to become activated; has the person obtained the knowledge and experience that will allow them to competently activate the necessary identity, enabling them to successfully participate in the particular filmmaking role? Whether the identity is successful depends on the individual's ability to accurately perceive congruence between their identity and the requirements of the situation. The likelihood of an identity being activated in a group is both qualitatively and quantitatively affected by the members of the group, the more people one is tied to in a particular group, and the stronger the ties are to the people in the group, the more likely the identity is to be activated (Stets & Burke, 2000). In addition, identity theory recognises a *salience hierarchy*, which addresses the situation where a person must choose between roles in a situation where more than one role may be appropriate. Stryker (1968) hypothesises that people seek out opportunities to activate their more salient identities, which may help account for filmmakers who identify strongly with their filmmaker identity and who continue to make films in order to activate that identity, even when it is not financially rewarding for them to do so. Independence as identity-activation is a promising line of inquiry here.

Social identity theory provides a slightly different yet potentially complimentary approach to identity. Social identity theory focuses on what occurs when a person perceives themselves as sharing characteristics with a distinct in-group. They see members of the in-group more favourably than the out-group, and display “uniformity of perception and action” with other individuals who have taken on the group identity (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 226), subsequently engaging in strategies in order to maintain their group membership, and thus their self-concept (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). A social identity is “that *part* of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). Stronger identification with the group leads members to

experience a greater commitment to the group, even when the group has low status (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997), as may be the case with a low-budget independent film crew. This adds an additional aspect to our previous discussion of commitment.

Where social identity theory tends to see absorption in a group, the central cognitive process in identity theory, however, is *self-verification*; seeing oneself in terms of the meanings and norms one associates with a role (their *identity standard*), and behaving to maintain consistency with this identity standard.

The two theories view salience in different ways. Social identity theory focuses on “characteristics of situations in which the identity may be activated” with individuals seeking to make connections with and join groups that they identify with. Identity theory focuses on “social structural arrangements and the link between persons” (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 231). The more links between persons in a group the more committed an individual is to the group identity. Considering earlier discussions of relationships, actor network theory, communities, bonding and bridging, and matching markets, identity theory’s approach is a closer fit.

Wolff (1993) suggests that becoming an artist as an identity standard is not only an artistic process, but a social one, influenced by both demographic factors and social factors. She explores how social institutions influence what kind of people are able to become artists, how this happens, and if/how their work will be recognised as art. Though different filmmaking roles require different attributes, making some positions more attainable than others, we can look at the role of an independent scriptwriter to explore this idea, following Wolff’s example.

To be a writer in my position, one needs to be sufficiently literate and be educated about script formatting and structure (training, books, internet, etc.). One must have time to nurture one’s ability, so sufficient financial stability and to be able to juggle family commitments (especially childcare duties). This may help explain why women in our society are still struggling to participate equally in the filmmaking world, when, under the guise of equality, they are often expected to obtain a degree, raise children and maintain a household, and also earn money, leaving little time to develop creative ability and output. Wolff says that while the art world seems to

have no rigid barriers to participation, one cannot become an artist by chance, but rather a social structure leads people to an artistic identity. Though an individual may have a degree of creativity, without the necessary supportive social factors their chances of being a successful artist will decrease. Though filmmakers may all share some common characteristics such as creativity, in Ravadrad's (2009) view this is a characteristic of human beings, not solely artists. The deterministic factor is favourable social conditions. The conditions that affect one's ability to make films include the social context: is government funding available; does their society value creativity; do educational expectations foster creative expression; is the cost of living prohibitive; is film equipment available; is the country's creative economy stable? It may be preferable to be born into the dominant social class, and to be the favoured gender (though recent initiatives to encourage women into filmmaking positions may help to address this inequality). In addition, specific characteristics of individual artists can affect their progress: their age, location, race, beliefs, interests, influences, physical appearance, personality, attitude, history, talent, experience, connections, wealth, education, support and encouragement, etc. A myriad factors influence an individual's ability to become known as a filmmaker, not least of which is how they perceive their own identity.

Identity salience

What is starting to come into clearer view here is the connection between control and *identity salience*. George and Qian (2010) argue, "that identity is a driver of behavior; consequently it is a basis of control" (p.167), but the concept of salience allows us to be more precise about this:

Identity salience represents one of the ways, and a theoretically most important way, that the identities making up the self can be organized. Identities, that is, are conceived as being organized into a salience hierarchy. This hierarchical organization of identities is defined by the probabilities of each of the various identities within it being brought into play in a given situation. Alternatively, it is defined by the probabilities each of the identities have of being invoked across a variety of situations. The location of an

identity in this hierarchy is, by definition, its salience (Stryker & Serpe, 1982, p. 206).

To conceive of independent filmmaker as an identity is to pose the question of its location in a salience hierarchy – none of the filmmaker interviews drawn on for this chapter suggested that the identity of independent filmmaker was the only one an interviewee had. All actively maintained this identity amidst the multiple realities of complex working and domestic lives, some more consistently than others. Craft roles (such as writer or director of photography) were given as more specific identities but independent filmmaker as an identity was often invoked when these interviewees took the long view of what they were doing, or stepped back and talked about their general motivations and their positioning in relation to the industry.

To explain *identity salience-based control*, George and Qian (2010) cite the example of a surgical team: “If a surgical team consists of male and female surgeons, anaesthesiologists, and nurses, would individuals act based on gender, based on occupation, or based on identity?” (p.179). There are of course situations in which they would act as male or female or as having a specific occupational role but, the authors argue, citing previous research, in the larger salience hierarchy the *surgical team* identity is a better frame of reference for understanding their commitment and motivation. Better because it explains more about what they do and how they behave: “a salient identity is one that provides a more comprehensive account for the individual in the context rather than other identities” (p.179). Engaged in a specific operating room procedure, team members, in that context, will tacitly invoke their occupational roles. Dealing with hospital working conditions, they may be more likely to invoke a gendered perspective. But in controlling progress through their professional lives, the surgical team identity may account for much more of what goes on overall.

This returns us to the “authentic working life” depiction (Fig. 8), and introduces a new question: How does the salient identity of independent filmmaker itself function in the progression visualised there? This is more than merely observing that independent filmmaker is a self-conception that in all likelihood matters to the kinds of filmmaker interviewed here. The notion of salience prompts us to make the

more interesting observation that what really matters is the probability of this identity being brought into play in a given situation. The interviewees all described situations in which, in effect, they struggled to bring this identity into play. Moreover, the extent to which they felt in control of these situations reflected this related struggle over identity salience.

Speaking of her need to earn conflicting with her desire to make films, Kirstin Marcon said:

The truth is I'm a single Mum and I just have to earn a decent living. My son's at Auckland Grammar and he absolutely loves it, and I work in the tech industry at the moment, which has been quite a surprise but I'm just loving it. It's amazing how much you get out of being involved in a work environment and working in an industry. I guess I feel like I learn an awful lot just by having a normal job and being part of the workforce. I'm so determined to make films that I do just work on them in my own time.

This determination has been present since she began her filmmaking career by self-funding her first short feature.

I used my student loan. Back when I was studying, it was so long ago, twenty years ago, and it was when they first brought student loans out and you could actually just borrow huge amounts of money without saying what it was for. So in my final year I made a 16mm film and it took me ten years to pay it off. But it's good. If you want to make a film you'll find a way, won't you.

Developing one's independent filmmaker identity may itself be a key part of the tiered progression through exploration, focus, independence and professionalism, in the ideal model of accruing macro-resources and positive outputs. As such, this allows us to modify the proposal that control per se has emerged as the core variable exposed by the present research. The proposal should now be that identity salience-based control combines with the more obvious and practical day-to-day forms of control to constitute our core variable.

At this crucial point of emerging theory in the research, it became clear to me that I wanted to explore industry salience-based control more imaginatively. The idea was taking shape of writing a feature-length screenplay about independents. This would eventually become Chapter 4, but first a number of questions had arisen out of the emerging theory. One was whether a course of action in relation to Fig. 8 was a matter of “flow”, a notion popular among creatives since first proposed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.

Flow

Csikszentmihalyi’s (1992) theory of optimal experience proposes that people are happiest when they are in a state of concentration or complete absorption or flow. This occurs when an individual is “so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it” (p. 4). Among the conditions associated with the experience of flow is the presence of relatively difficult challenges that are not beyond the participant’s perceived capacities (Abuhamdeh & Csikszentmihalyi, 2012). When an individual is in a flow state they are completely engaged in an activity in which they are motivated to succeed, and for which they are well trained and which requires high concentration. Though they will not be conscious of this, they in fact have no attention left over to be mindful of anything else; they may forget to call their partner, pick up milk on the way home, even eating can be overlooked. “His body disappears, his identity disappears from his consciousness because he doesn’t have enough attention to really do well something that requires a lot of concentration and at the same time feel that he exists” (TED, 2004). (See Schiepe-Tiska and Engeser (2012) for discussion of flow in nonachievement situations).

There has been research into the application of flow in education, during gaming and using the internet, playing musical instruments, and particularly in elite sport, but there is scant research regarding how flow may affect the process of filmmaking, the experience of filmmakers, or their output. Philipsen (2009) discussed constraints placed on filmmakers during a two day filmmaking competition with a two person filmmaking team and concluded that the stress of the

time-frame and the constraints (e.g. simplification of the task) of creating a short film with a given theme can help filmmakers attain a flow state. Philipsen's later research included five filmmakers participating in a similar competition, whom she also judged to have experienced flow due to reports of time flying and the feeling of the process being more important than the results (Philipsen, 2012). Though the constraints may have helped this particular team focus, a considerably larger sample would be needed to decide if this was the case for all filmmakers who participate in this type of competition. And it is important to note that filmmakers who do not work well with stressful time and theme constraints on their work may be excluded from the sample as they may choose not to enter. Conn (2015) reported that a group of young people learning to animate as part of a community filmmaking project were more engaged and motivated making their projects than they were in other areas of their lives, but they were beginner practitioners making short films, which is a considerably different experience than making a feature film.

Interestingly, deCharms (1968) proposed that giving external rewards to an individual for an activity that they are intrinsically motivated to perform causes them to feel they have become a pawn to the source of the external rewards. If the motivation of money is given and then removed motivation drops to below the initial intrinsic motivation level, perhaps because payment indicates to the individual that they need not be intrinsically motivated to perform the activity (Deci, 1971). This helps to explain one of this thesis' persistent refrains, as expressed by filmmakers in the ethnographic and interview material: the love/hate relationship with funding agencies (specifically the New Zealand Film Commission). As filmmakers court the NZFC and moan about it, express expectations and frustrations about it, eye it jealously and curse it vehemently, it now seems very possible to suggest that their internal identity-activating mechanism is switching disruptively between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

Flow in filmmaking?

To consider how the conditions for experiencing flow may be present in independent filmmaking I look at how they relate to Csikszentmihalyi's nine main elements (1996, p 111-113). These describe how people experience flow.

1. **There are clear goals every step of the way.** Film production has four clear stages of production in the traditional FVC (development, pre-production, production, post-production). These stages are fragmented and shared among department heads, who delegate specific tasks to members of their department. While filming, a daily call sheet is distributed to every member of the cast and crew, which includes the scenes and script pages to be shot that day, enabling cast and crew to plan their day. Moment by moment the experienced director has a plan of action that gives her team clear goals and allows each member to gauge progress.
2. **There is immediate feedback to one's actions.** Shot by shot, the director and other crew members can see the actors performing their roles, either directly or via a monitor, allowing the director and crew to evaluate the performance of the cast, camera, lighting, and sound, and immediately decide if the action needs to be re-shot. At times a crew will even applaud when a take is particularly moving or well executed (this is particularly the case when emotionally or physically difficult action is involved).
3. **There is a balance between challenges and skills.** Experienced filmmakers will have the skills to complete the tasks needed for their role, but challenges constantly occur due to anomalies in the situation: weather changes, personalities or abilities of cast and crew, pressures of time or finance, uncontrollable features of a location, etc. In the case of a beginning director whose skills do not yet match the challenge of completing a short or feature film, a competent crew can help provide necessary skills or knowledge to help them manage the task and remain focused.
4. **Action and awareness are merged.** Due to the clarity of goals and the constant availability of feedback, filmmakers are able to focus their skills on the challenges at hand. In fact, typically on-set etiquette dictates that the director should not be disturbed unless absolutely necessary, enabling them to experience a flow state as much as possible.
5. **Distractions are excluded from consciousness.** Intense concentration (and elimination of unnecessary distractions) allows a filmmaker to focus on what is relevant in the moment. A director will often have an assistant to run errands on and off set, and make sure they have everything they need. (This was my role as director's assistant for director Tom Moore).

6. **There is no worry of failure.** In my experience, once filming is underway, the necessary concentration and focus overshadow the concern of failure. By choosing competent collaborators one feels supported, minimalizing fear of failure. Engeser & Rheinberg (2008) state that “if a task is considered to have very important consequences, flow should only be experienced when skill exceeds difficulty” (p. 158); if a filmmaker feels the threat of potential failure it will hinder their experience of flow.
7. **Self-consciousness disappears.** As directors have little time to focus on their personal image while filming, many have a “uniform” they wear every day that is comfortable, unrestricting to work in, takes minimal thought to organise in the morning, and in which they feel sufficiently presentable. This may be jeans and a sweatshirt, an unbuttoned shirt over a t-shirt, black shirt and black jeans, etc.
8. **The sense of time becomes distorted.** Filmmakers work long hours, often up to sixteen hours (though in Hollywood it seldom goes over this due to a huge jump in union wages at that point), but when they are in a flow state they often do not notice the time passing. For this reason, it is important to have a timekeeper on set to help keep to schedule. If it were the director’s responsibility to keep track of time many would fail to stick to the schedule.
9. **The activity becomes autotelic** (intrinsically rewarding). Though beginning filmmakers may find the process stressful when their skills do not meet the challenge, as their skills increase they may begin to enjoy filmmaking for the sake of it, rather than focusing on an end product and the rewards that might bring. At this point filmmaking becomes autotelic; the experience provided by the activity is a reason for doing it.

What is interesting about this view of flow in filmmaking is how it is largely confined to one “pyramid” at a time in terms of Fig. 8. Flow is about the optimal experience of production itself, much less if at all about progressing through the stages of a working life or dealing with the workworld beyond a production. But something very interesting happens when we look instead at the negative aspects of flow. Identity-related matters then come much more to the fore. Lorraine Rowlands and Jocelyn Handy (2012) have suggested that the small world of project-based work in New Zealand film has features of what they term an “addictive

environment”, but we can push this idea further by looking at the negative side of flow.

The negative side of flow

Though flow is most often associated with high performance, motivation, creativity, and mood elevation (Schüler, 2012), it is important to note the potential downsides of activities that are so absorbing they can be described as addictive. Csikszentmihalyi recognises that flow “is not good in an absolute sense”, stating, “the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost”.

The World Health Organisation’s International Classification of Diseases and Health Problems (2017) defines dependence syndrome (or addiction) as “a cluster of physiological, behavioural, and cognitive phenomena in which the use of a substance or a class of substances takes on a much higher priority for a given individual than other behaviours that once had greater value” (para. 1). Though the diagnostic guidelines are developed for substance use, some of the criteria are applicable for the negative side of flow as experienced by independent filmmakers:

- A strong desire or sense of compulsion to take the substance;
- Evidence of tolerance;
- A physiological withdrawal state when substance use has ceased;
- Progressive neglect of alternative pleasures or interests;
- Persisting with substance use despite clear evidence of overtly harmful consequences (para. 6).

When individuals with a drug addiction experience tolerance for a drug they need for increased doses in order to achieve the same effects. For an “addicted” filmmaker the increasing challenges of longer films (from shorts to features) and higher budgets may effectively provide the same increased “dose”. Though not necessarily described as withdrawal, filmmakers commonly feel a sense of loss after a production finishes filming, and a strong urge to begin another project and feel the “blood surging”. Filmmakers, myself included, can myopically focus on film work to the exclusion of other activities. Social conflicts can occur as

filmmaking work can take over most waking hours of the day, even to the extent of taking work on vacations. Individuals may also neglect alternative interests, which could be due to the enjoyment of the work or the perception that one needs to be constantly pushing projects forward in order to bring them to completion.

Schüler (2012) discusses the “dark side” of flow and how the “optimal experience” of flow refers to the inner state of physical and mental functioning, not to the outcome of the experience and potential negative consequences. Though loss of self-consciousness, complete concentration, feelings of control, and the sense of a slowing or speeding of time can indicate an individual is experiencing flow, the experience does not always guarantee a positive outcome, as indicated in Table 4.

Flow characteristics	The dark sides of flow characteristics in filmmaking
Loss of self-reflection	Neglecting further goals and values (of others), which could result in insufficient budgeting for post-production and marketing, or neglecting family members
Exclusive concentration on the task at hand	Narrowed focus of attention can result in the exclusion of additional information, ie. things which may be relevant to the film story, or social cues about the appropriateness of their behaviour
High control, absence of anxiety	Overestimation of one’s abilities, and an underestimation of one’s psychological and physical vulnerability, leading to unrealistic expectations for the finished film, and high-risk behaviour during production.
Distortion of time	Neglecting temporal information although it is relevant, leading to disruption of production schedule, and subsequent depletion of production resources and financial loss.

Table 4. The dark side of flow in independent filmmaking

(An adaptation of Schüler’s (2012) table: The dark sides of flow characteristics (p. 126))

It becomes clear from the foregoing discussion that the concept of flow relates in an interestingly complex way to the course of action through the levels of the working life and workworld progression for independents. The positive aspects of flow may relate strongly to actual project-level working practices and experiences (although the concept does not add greatly to our existing understanding of what goes on at that level) but the negative aspects of flow clearly relate much more, and in perhaps under-acknowledged ways, to workworld-level progression or lack of progression. Even more interestingly, this looks very much bound up in questions around identity salience-based control.

To put this more simply, as the independent identity comes into sharp focus in the foreground, so to speak, it may be enabling intense project-level concentration of energies, but for independents at lower levels of our workworld progression model that degree of identity salience becomes challenging to maintain without negative side-effects. Fine-tuning the salience of their filmmaker identity may be a key part of the challenge in moving up through the workworld levels, to the point of maximum salience where being an independent is the main thing that a person is. (For this reason, the trajectory of this thesis as it evolves is from me to Jim Jarmusch!) This relates strongly to what Csikszentmihalyi (1992) refers to as “the ultimate control” which is to say “the freedom to determine the content of consciousness” (p. 62).

Adding identity salience to control offers an additional insight, in light of previous material. Modulating the kind and level of desired control at different points of progression in the interests of downstream opportunities may be indispensable to workworld-level progression. So, we have a complex core variable here: control that is salient to the identity that is functioning appropriately at each level of our framework. There is, in a sense, a mode of self-production or identity adjustment at work here, involving the accumulation of something other than conventional and immediate rewards.

Psychic income

Intangible and subjective, psychic income also includes what may be considered negative costs, as Thurow (1978) explains “no job characteristic can be assigned a priori to the positive or negative component” as it depends on the supply and demand for the characteristic, and how a society views the characteristic (p. 142). Instead of financial compensation for their time and efforts, a filmmaker in the exploration stage may prioritise psychic income in the form of skills and knowledge, relationships, and/or reputation building, while a professional may rekindle relationships with peers, mentor younger filmmakers, or experience a production that is taking a novel approach to the filmmaking process. These add to their total “income” and help explain key aspects of their motivation.

An unsustainable situation is created when the attractions of filmmaking are so great that a large number of individuals are prepared to work for psychic income alone. Though no-budget productions have become an important avenue for filmmakers to gain experience and knowledge (often less costly than paying for tertiary education), paid work can obviously become scarce due to the large number of people being willing to work for free. Even experienced practitioners with years of experience in the screen sector take on passion projects, working for token fees or nothing at all, attracted to the content and quality of the project or the people involved (Tabone, 2012).

Filmmakers who work for free, at all levels, contribute to the New Zealand film industry, and also, invisibly, to the economy. In 2011 film and television production supported the employment of 21,315 people (including industry suppliers), contributing a total impact on GDP of \$2,781 million (PricewaterhouseCooper New Zealand, 2014). These statistics do not include the psychic income received by employees, but neither do they include the personal investment filmmakers contribute to the industry freely every year. Malloy and Court (2012) view this investment as a *subsidy* to the film industry, and have attempted to quantify its value in Australia. By calculating the amount of income foregone (by not taking an alternative job with the average income they would receive based on their educational level) they calculated how much psychic income filmmakers would have to earn to make up for this loss. They estimated that if the value of the passion

and commitment of filmmakers in Australia did not exist, then their government (and taxpayers) would have to find an additional “\$150-295 million a year to elicit the current level of production from the screen sector” (p. 39). They suggest that if policy makers recognised this commitment made to the sector by filmmakers it might lead to a change of perspective where industry practitioners could be viewed as co-investors, partners in a cultural venture rather than merely as “policy claimants...seeking subsidy support” from patrons (p. 39). This increasing reliance on creators’ self-subsidising their work raises the question, “At what point does this policy reliance on ‘the love of it’ shade into exploitation?” (p. 39). Discussing producers in Australia, Verhoeven and Cameron (2011) state:

...producers’ attachment to psychic income can be seen in two very different ways:

- As a flaw: because it produces financially unsustainable businesses.
- As a benefit: because it enables the development and production of projects that would otherwise be financially unfeasible.

On the one hand, psychic income might be holding the industry back. On the other, it might be the very element holding it together (p. 57).

The concept of *organizational citizenship behaviour* (OCB), referring to “discretionary, nonrequired contributions by members to the organizations that employ them” (Organ, 2015, p. 317), is related to the concept of psychic income. It is the willingness of the participant to perform the behaviour that increases work satisfaction, thus increasing their psychic income. But when participants feel a pressure to engage in OCB it can contribute to *citizenship fatigue*, making them resistant to performing subsequent acts of OCB (Bolino, Hsiung, Harvey, & LePine, 2015). Organ (2015) states that “...much of what makes an organization effective comes from spontaneous and informal exchanges of help, information, and support” (p. 317), these being “necessary condition[s] for effective collaboration” (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939, p. 562). So if we think of a film industry as the loosely present “organisation” in independents’ lives, then their organisational citizenship behaviour is clearly another complex phenomenon involving identity salience. There is significant psychic income to be derived from participation in a film production culture’s many “spontaneous and informal exchanges” and this may be deeply characteristic of the exploration level of Silviya

Svejenova's model as adapted here. But as the independent's career develops, the expectation of continued OCB may get out of step with the personal rewards (non-psychic income) that will be increasingly expected. When combined with the negative effects of flow (the flow that may have energised the exploration phase) this will lead to disruption in the course of action being pursued (or in the course the independent thought she was pursuing). Long and Spink (2014) note that the work of filmmakers "involves a mode of self-production as a creative professional as much as it does the making of films" (p. 96). Specifically focusing on producers in the UK, Long and Spink turn their attention to how producers manage their "reputation, the articulation of ideas about creativity, competence, and industry knowledge", echoing the approach of John Caldwell, "who suggests that filmmakers constantly reflect on and negotiate their cultural identities" (p. 96), including their technical and craft identities to ensure their vocational survival. It is becoming evident, however, that vocational survival as a key aspect of the independent's course of action, is far from easy.

Vocational survival: AFTRS as a case study

Much of the accrual of macro-resources (Fig. 8) is then invisible work, work done by and for the self to position or reposition oneself in the pyramid. Just as the aggregation of necessary macro-resources varies for person and project, the accrual of necessary macro-resources can be achieved in myriad ways. Though this can be possible through self-teaching and experimentation, learning through free online resources such as *No Film School* or *Film Courage*, paid resources like *Lynda* or *Lights Film School*, a good physical film school can help students fill out their *exploration* triangle and move into the next phase of *focus*. Though it is currently fashionable in some quarters to claim that film schools are an unnecessary waste of time and money, and some may well be, the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) completed an alumni survey in 2011 (Court, Levy, & Totterman, 2012) that suggested the majority of the graduates who responded not only thought their experience at the school was worth their time and money but also recognised the advantage their education gave their career.

The AFTRS survey was designed to discover what happened to their alumni since graduation, both the good and the bad news. 734 graduates (38% of alumni) responded to the surveys, which were conducted through questionnaires, online and email surveys, and telephone interviews. To generate a more complete picture, additional information for 924 graduates was sourced through desk research (12 were deceased). Around three quarters of respondents stated they would recommend studying at AFTRS to someone interested in a career in their field, and that they felt their time at AFTRS opened doors and prepared them for a career in their chosen field. However, the most interesting information from this survey, with regards to this thesis, was the characteristics of the graduates (as filmmakers), what motivates them to do the work, and the nature of their working relationships.

One analyst identified four defining characteristics she thought the graduates needed in order to survive and flourish in the industry: tenacity, optimism, an ability to multi-task and a willingness to collaborate (Brownlow, 2012, p. 19). Some students had been advised they would not make a paid film for at least five years after graduating, and this proved to be the case – a long time to persevere in order to position oneself to be able to do the work one trained for. 67% of AFTRS respondents believed they were earning average or above average wages, with only 30% believing they were earning below average. Though it is possible that AFTRS graduates are more highly paid than the average filmmaker, 81% described themselves as working in their chosen field (within 5 years of graduating) with moderate or a lot of success. Rather than meaning doing two tasks simultaneously, Brownlow uses the term *multi-task* to mean having split lives, employed both in their chosen field and also having another day job to boost their income, a matter of identity salience again. Collaboration encompasses “helping others achieve their creative vision” as an achievement, and also networking with other filmmakers, with many of the respondents speaking positively about the contacts they gained by attending AFTRS. Brownlow’s four defining characteristics are encompassed by the macro-resources triangles. Without tenacity and optimism it would become difficult for filmmakers to maintain sufficient momentum to develop their career and complete projects. Having working identities outside of the industry allows individuals to increase their financial resources in order to upskill, purchase technology, and enables filmmakers to work unpaid on film projects (the survey found that considerably more graduates perform unpaid work now than in the

1980s), and collaboration falls into the categories of reputation and relationships, which we have established are key macro-resources necessary that filmmakers need to accrue.

The respondents' reasons for pursuing filmmaking as a career help to reinforce the notion of psychic income. Only 11% of alumni listed "making a lot of money" as very important. Court and Molloy (2012) augmented the 2012 AFTRS research with data from AFTRS' earlier surveys of screen content producers (2009 and 2011) and found that "satisfying my creative vision" was the strongest motivation of both producers and alumni for working in their chosen career (p. 33), followed by "contributing to the art form". For producers, "helping others realise their creative vision" was the third motivating factor, and for alumni, "creative stimulus of collaboration on set" and "a steady income stream" were third equal. The survey discovered that the amount of people who are willing to work for free (or for psychic benefits) is increasing, which may reflect a change in the workworld, or in individuals' expectations of their life and work. One cinematographer explained, "there is competition to work for free in this country, a concept my parents find hard to understand" (as quoted in Tabone, 2012, p. 52). Though individuals no longer expect to step into a job after university and work there until they retire, there also seems to be a move towards lower expectations of financial reward. Other motivations mentioned included: "the lack of desire to work a 'normal' job, a desire for the unpredictable yet stimulating lifestyle, the collaborative process, engaging with an audience and a want to be an interesting person", with one respondent voicing an experience common outside of Hollywood, "Ultimately, when you go to a dinner party you're the most interesting person there" (IPSOS, 2012, p. 134). That a steady income stream was the third equal motivator for AFTRS graduates (and not in the top three for producers) illustrates that it is not financial reward that most strongly motivates these filmmakers and shows a strong emphasis on the psychic benefits of creativity and teamwork (Court & Molloy, 2012, p. 33).

Tabone (2012) describes the members of the screen industry as a *tribe*, "a group of people connected by cultural similarities and shared motivations" (p. 45) encompassing industry freelancers and creatives who work independently, meet up on a specific project "for a time of collaboration and communion" and then separate

when the project is complete (p. 43). This tribe shares a visual and spoken language, and common motivations that help members relate to each other when outsiders (to the industry) may not understand. These relationships not only aid career progression (networking was identified in the AFTRS research as the single most important factor in career progression (IPSOS, 2012)), they function in the full matchmaking sense to help members expand abilities, face challenges, collaborate, trade ideas, and stretch resources through interaction with others in the tribe. Interaction with crew is often one of the main sources of psychic income experienced by filmmakers, on this reported evidence.

. . .

Following the presentation of Fig. 8 as the beginning of an emerging theory for this research, the foregoing discussion has framed the phase of selective data analysis in GT terms. Concepts concerning identity, identity salience-based control (the GT core variable here), the negative side of flow, and psychic income have created a conceptual framework for the selective analysis that will be a principal focus for the remainder of the thesis. It had become evident by this point in the research that GT was working for me, so the present chapter will conclude with a thorough discussion of GT and why it brought me to the point of needing a substantive practice-led component for the thesis (which relates in part to frustration with interviewing as a tool). That the independent's course of action through a workworld structured like Fig. 8 is, in fact, a matter of vocational survival may not come as a great surprise. But the conceptual framework offered here is helping us to see the complex nature of that vocational course of action.

Theory (forcing) or story (emerging)

A major turning point had been reached at this stage of the research. The Grounded Theory method that I had layered on top of the autoethnography was starting to prove its worth (the capitalisation here refers to the formal method whereas “grounded theory” will be used to refer to the theoretical outcome of the research). The coding (GT's term for the interpretation of data) had been successful in naming key features and then concepts derived from the autoethnographic material and

interviews. A “light” axial coding (GT terminology again) had been effected around the core variable of identity salience-based control. In other words, a cluster of concepts had been identified around those issues of identity and control, structured by the emerging theory about workworld stages, vocational survival and the independent course of action. This had all been achieved with an informing awareness of a difference of opinion between Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss about emergence and forcing. As Böhm (2004) explains, “Glaser (1992) accuses Strauss in this respect of having abandoned the original ideas of allowing the theory to ‘emerge’ in favour of ‘forcing’ theoretical structures” (pp. 274-275). What I have just termed my “light” axial coding was deliberately Glaserian in this sense, the core variable being placed at the centre of a loosely structured constellation of related concepts. It is at precisely this point, however, that the temptation of a more Straussian tightening of the theoretical structure made itself felt as a way forward for the remainder of the thesis.

One phrase from Böhm’s (2004) discussion of this aspect of GT suggests an alternative direction, however: “Here one should ask what ‘story’ the data tell” (p. 274). Forcing the theoretical structure or telling a story? A fourth chapter of theoretical “tightening” or a story? Böhm characterises this moment as the point in the research where there is a “surfeit of important details” (Böhm, 2004, p. 274). One can react to this surfeit either by forcing it into an ever-tighter theoretical structure or by letting it loose again. In this regard, Böhm says we are confronting “the character of grounded theory as a *Kunstdehne* (art)” (p. 274).

The independent producer

Returning to the discussion of how to define an independent filmmaker, this question may be most usefully answered by referring to what is often one of the least understood positions on a film project, the producer. Though there are several different producer credits (e.g. producer, executive producer, co-producer, associate producer, line producer), here the term *producer* refers to the person who would receive the “Produced by” credit, as defined by the Producers Guild of America, as a benchmark standard that is internationally recognised. A non-exhaustive list of responsibilities would be:

- conceiving of or selecting the material;
- selecting key members of the creative team and participating in location scouting, approving the final shooting script, production schedule, and budget;
- supervising day-to-day operations of the production team;
- involvement with the financial and distribution entities.

It is at this point that the role of studio and independent producers diverge in nature as, by definition, independent producers or production companies are not conglomerated with the distribution company but depend on their ability to package project by project, “first to financial backers then subsequently to distributors, in order to stay in business” (Meir, 2009). There are scores of smaller distributors and sales agents who handle independent productions (Erickson, Halloran, & Tulchin, 2007). If a producer takes their film to these distributors, or self-distributes, they can be defined as independent. Filmmakers in other roles are considered independent if their work is being channelled through this kind of producer. This makes the producer of a project a key indicator of its independence.

The “engineered” conversation as a selective interpretation method

Due to the nature of film marketing, filmmakers are frequently interviewed for magazine and newspaper articles, radio, broadcast television and online publications. At key points when public attention would be advantageous, they seek out media in order to tell their stories in a way that they hope will benefit their project and/or their career. Through experience (and human nature) they are likely aware of the potential impact of media attention and mindful of how they present information, omitting facts they judge to be detrimental to themselves or the project, and highlighting details they believe will help attract a potential audience. By the time they are published stories have often become carefully crafted and polished, as much a construction as the film project itself.

My initial interviews resulted in a considerable percentage of data that was very similar to that of the filmmakers’ public interviews. Though repetition of published

anecdotes did not necessarily make the material any less valuable, an attempt to generate data that differed from that which is publicly available seemed worthwhile. As I am also a producer having recently made a film in the same country as my interviewees, experiencing similar challenges, I am familiar with the nature of filmmaking here and issues they may have experienced. This would enable me to better understand their experiences, and to steer the conversation into areas the interviewee may not discuss with media reporters, if I allowed myself to participate as a producer more than an academic researcher.

Denzin (2013) reminds us that it is not possible to record a fully accurate view of our subject's world, but that we must study the way people represent their experiences, both to themselves and to others. He urges researchers to view themselves as bricoleurs, to use multiple strategies including ethnography, Grounded Theory, biography, and participatory research as means of inquiry, and encourages qualitative researchers to find new ways of researching and presenting research. Anderson and Jack (2002) used techniques of participant observation and interviews to explore whether the nature of social capital is a glue that binds individuals to create a network, or a lubricant that facilitates network interaction. Their preliminary interviewees demonstrated their appreciation of the role of social capital, but failed to provide a clear account of the process of the formation of social capital between individuals as either lubricant or glue. The researchers turned to engineering situations between entrepreneurial respondents who were brought together and their conversation analysed. I was interested in creating a situation that would change the dynamics between interviewer and interviewee in a similar way. With this in mind, it seemed that an engineered conversation between two filmmakers might produce data that was more organic and spontaneous and less constructed.

As an interviewee is likely to represent their experiences to a mentee in a different way than they would a media reporter, I wanted to engineer a conversation between two filmmakers who are at different stages in their careers in order to generate a situation conducive to exploring the filmmakers' experiences. As I am a filmmaker at the exploration/focus stages of a workworld trajectory, I decided to approach filmmakers at the "professionalism" end of the spectrum with the hope of discussing how they moved up through their careers. Though they would be aware I

was collecting data for this thesis, this approach would allow me to follow a more organic line of questioning. The conversation would begin with a discussion of their background and mine, projects we worked on at different stages in our career, and proceed to a more in-depth exploration of experiences as the careers progressed. I would lightly structure the conversation using the list of nine categories in the triangles (output, technology, resources, momentum, relationships, reputation, skills, affection, trust) and improvise topics designed to generate information about vocational survival and courses of action. Anecdotes and information conveyed with the goal of enlightening a fellow filmmaker who is interested in moving her career to the next level might be different in tone or content than one told with the view of promoting oneself or one's project or company. I would not be a researcher "pretending" to be a mentee, but rather a practitioner genuinely excited by the opportunity to learn from a producer who has progressed further in their career.

In general, I found the interviewing process difficult. My earliest interviews were with filmmakers I knew, most of whom had recently made or were making their first film. They were generous with their time, patient with my developing and sometimes hesitant interviewing technique, and (I felt) sincere in their responses to my many questions. As my supervisor suggested early on these interviews would not be sufficient for my research and I needed to widen my network to people I did not know, I contacted many filmmakers whose careers were more established than my initial respondents. Most did not respond to my attempts to contact them. Of those that did, I was unable to successfully secure an interview with several due to their "hectic schedules". Several made appointments for Skype conversations and then failed to call. A couple were discouraged after I responded to their request for more information about my project and the questions I would be asking. I felt discouraged, and a failure as a researcher, even though the interviews I did perform (and discussed in the first part of this chapter) were interesting and enlightening and at times even fun. I assumed I would focus on these successful interviews and omit any failed attempts, just as I omitted moments when interviewees told me an anecdote and then immediately regretted it and asked for it to be off the record.

When I decided to seek one last interviewee for an in-depth discussion for the end of this chapter, I figured I would just keep attempting to approach filmmakers until

one agreed. The first few did not respond to my messages. Then another did, but was reluctant for me to perform the interview as I wanted. I wanted to hide these attempts, but then I read Laura Ellingson's account of research crystallization, in which she suggests that researchers "respond to any unexpected deviations from [their] research plan with curiosity rather than with shame and frustration" (Ellingson, 2009, p.177). She says that what we may consider a failure such as an awkward interview or an embarrassing fieldwork incident, "all reveal more about our participants, their worlds, and ourselves as researchers" (ibid). With this in mind, I have recounted below my interaction with one filmmaker who was reluctant for me to interview her using an atypical approach, and then extended pieces from my interview with Fiona Copland, which ended up being more "typical" than I had anticipated. My experience with both these filmmakers, combined with my earlier experiences and the recorded data, resulted in my beginning to doubt the value of interviewing filmmakers as the best way to gain data about independent filmmakers and filmmaking. Exposing more of these behind-the-scenes aspects and feelings as a researcher is very much a consequence of Laura Ellingson's influence.

I contacted two producers I was interested in interviewing. Fiona Copland agreed. However, the other producer wanted more information, including the questions I planned to ask. At that stage I was still planning to use a semi-structured interviewing technique, which I described. While I was waiting for a response I mulled over my concern that filmmakers often merely repeat their crafted "stories" during interviews. When I discovered the engineered conversation approach with its mentor/mentee emphasis I became pretty excited.

So I explained to the producer:

One of the things I have done throughout my studies is find different ways of approaching research, and I thought an interesting idea might be to approach my next interviews as a mentor/mentee conversation. This would work well as I have only one self-funded film under my belt, and it will give our discussion a theme without imposing any particular structure.

The producer responded:

I don't want to undermine your approach, however just to point out that from a professional point of view, relating as a mentor and relating to an academic research project are entirely different – at least for me. I understand that relativism is alive and well in cultural studies, but as a communicator, “who is the audience?” is a key question. As long as I have the ability to review and edit the material you select for the thesis I'm happy to proceed as before [using semi-structured interviewing, rather than the mentor/mentee conversation].

Interestingly, this articulated the exact point I was trying to explore, that “relating as a mentor and relating to an academic research project are entirely different”. Unfortunately, due to this response, I no longer felt the interview would have the same value, so I continued with the interview with Fiona Copland.

Conversation with Fiona Copland

Fiona is one of the three producers behind Field Theory, a production company founded in 2014 with start up investment from the New Zealand Film Commission's Business Development fund. Field Theory's focus is on high-end film and television drama and documentary for the international market. As Fiona is in the upper stages of independence I hoped she would be well positioned to reflect on her movement through the stages of experimentation and focus, to now having a production company.

During the conversation, however, I felt Fiona also did not understand my mentor/mentee approach, perhaps assuming I was solely seeking advice for my own career, and that if I was looking for data for academic research then a more traditional interview approach should be used. For me this illustrated one of the problems of attempting to perform research in an alternative way – the unknown or unfamiliar makes people uncomfortable. As the interview was underway at this point I continued in a more traditional fashion, discussing my findings and research, but trying to use questions that were more likely to produce data that would differ from a media interview (e.g. about her own mentors and her career progression).

I initially told her a little about myself, and in order to discuss my research I explained Silviya Svejenova's four levels of an authentic working life, beginning with experimental shorts, progressing to focus on features, starting an independent production company, and finally professionalism (which I suggested Svejenova did not adequately explain). Fiona felt that this model would be different depending on whether you are talking from the point of view of a director or producer. I suggested that the producer on a project may be the determining factor as to whether the project is considered to be independent or not, for example whether the producer is working within a corporately integrated value chain.

Fiona: We really only have independent production in New Zealand. Other than Peter Jackson, but Peter is independent really. Peter is an independent producer working for, financing his films through bigger companies. We're all just trying to finance our films through companies with money. Some of us finance our films through very small companies with very small amounts of money and others use bigger companies with bigger money, and Peter Jackson uses enormous companies with enormous money. It's really all the same thing.

I disagree that Peter Jackson's films could be considered independent, except at the start of his career. His latest film, *The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies* (2014) had a budget estimated at \$250,000,000, was co-produced by New Line Cinema and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) (along with Peter Jackson's companies), and was distributed by New Line's parent company, Warner Brothers (IMDb, 2014), constituting a tightly integrated value chain.

Fiona did not agree that there were two distinct levels of independence and professionalism.

Fiona: I don't know how useful it is to even categorise people in this way. They're all just trying to make films. I mean Christine Vachon is an incredibly successful independent film producer and enabler of the work of independent film directors because she approaches the job with a great deal of intelligence and market savvy. She understands the niche she's working in and she's able to combine that with her creative drive to produce a certain kind of work that's not necessarily mainstream. So I would say she's highly professional, and probably behaves in a more

professional way, often, than some of the people who are making entirely regulated commercial work.

When a practitioner takes exception to a term used to describe her career trajectory (and that of her peers) it indicates additional consideration and possibly revision may be necessary. I suggested there could be a better word for the fourth level than professionalism, but Fiona disputed whether there was a level above the attainment of independence.

Fiona: Well, I think it's alongside independent. You can be an independent filmmaker your entire career and be very successful and very professional, and you can also do that in a company structure that is set up to facilitate great independent thinking and great independent work.

Silviya Svejenova intends the two higher levels of the model to represent the attainment of independence and then, on that basis, the attainment of professionalism built on continuing independence (i.e. not a transition from independent to professional). But Fiona's unease about the risk in separating the two terms began to consolidate my own view that this needed to be revisited. It feels like there should be a way to describe the difference between a filmmaker like Fiona Copland, and one like Gaylene Preston. It could be that Gaylene has reached the level of being an industry insider, a member of the establishment, which, in New Zealand, may mean being part of the group of people "fêted" (to borrow Sumner Burstyn's term) by the NZFC; those who are asked to "have a chat" with the NZFC Chief Executive about their projects, and who still have to work for funding but who know the process and requirements so well, and the commission know them so well, that there are no "hoops" designed to test their motivation or commitment. And who know, and are known by, the other filmmakers in the industry establishment.

I turned the conversation towards the idea of matching markets, asking how the three producers decided to start their company, Field Theory. This is an abbreviated version of Fiona's explanation:

Fiona: *The reason that we came together, we felt that we would be in a stronger position in the international market. We were three experienced producers and we were kind of experienced in different areas. Tim was experienced on making big films financed usually by other people. Philippa was experienced with auteurs, and I had a breadth of experience. I'd made the art history documentary series, I'd made idiosyncratic films with Harry Sinclair, and a couple of other feature films with first filmmakers, art house films, so I'd worked across the spectrum, really. So we all had different abilities, and Philippa had been a script editor in television before she went into film and I'd been a television producer for 16 years, so we were all professional. We were all reasonably successful at what we were doing. We had slightly different areas of expertise, but we were all kind of lonely, and it was a struggle. It's a very lonely struggle, trying to produce films, and the Film Commission announced a scheme by which they were offering business support to try to get experienced people to join together to create companies of sufficient scale to try to attract international finance, so that's basically the reason. We did it to create a company of sufficient scale to attract international finance.*

This illustrates the way filmmakers will often talk about their experiences and their practice until they have a clear “story” in mind, which will then be repeated the next time the question is asked. Initially the filmmaker may offer a stream of consciousness description of events or emotions to answer a question, but as they talk they think through the different facets of their response – in this case their past, their similarities and complimentary differences, the positives (successful), the negatives (a lonely struggle), business reasons (financially appealing) – until a more succinct, media ready, explanation is crafted. “*We did it to create a company of sufficient scale to attract international finance*”. In this way, individuals create their own *promotional surround*. They practice and perfect self-referencing phrases describing themselves, their work, their business, etc., which they then repeat to the media, share through social media, and in social situations. In this way they help sustain their momentum and build reputation.

It is also an illustration of something described by social identity theory, where the members of Field Theory gain in-group status from membership in their own created group. They are able to list their past individual successes as the group's

collective successes, each attaching themselves to the others' achievements, in a process of in-group identity amplification.

Fiona began her career as an executive producer of in-house production at Television New Zealand, which gave her valuable skills, experience, and the opportunity to build relationships with industry people: *"I was working with artists and meeting people and I was listening to people's ideas and responding to them"*. One of her co-workers, Harry Sinclair, asked Fiona to help him with his projects and one day she did. *"I left TVNZ and started to work with Harry and, we were thinking about all sorts of things. We were developing little dramas and stuff, and then one day he just started shooting"*.

Fiona: *Danielle Cormack was working in a clothes shop around the corner and he thought that was a shame because she's such a good actor she should be acting so he just wrote something for her and we shot it that weekend and we just carried on doing that and before we knew it we had some quite good little episodes and we showed them to the Film Commission and they gave us some money to make a movie and that seemed sensible so we just did it and we kept going really. We just kept making things, so basically everything that I've done has been completely and utterly driven, and often not necessarily just by the script. I mean with Harry we were working without scripts. I was driven by feeling that there was a voice in the talent that would be interesting if we could... that needed an audience, and I always thought that I would like to try and create a platform whereby that could happen.*

On this evidence, Fiona's career has followed the exploration-focus-independence path, beginning with a job where she developed the skills necessary for another filmmaker to want to collaborate, then working on experimental short films to create the output that attracted funding from the NZFC, and then producing several feature films until it was timely to join other producers and start a production company.

Fiona: *Well, kind of, yeah, that lead into features, and it was really experimental the way I worked with Harry, and we were kind of fearless, and I didn't have children then and we weren't too worried about money.*

I asked Fiona about her mentors during her early years in the industry.

Fiona: Well, Keith Hunter taught me how to think about stories. I worked, he was a director, I was a researcher, he was a really good director, and I learned from collaborating from him. [long pause] And... and I learned an awful lot about, my attitudes towards what was a story and how it should happen and my attitudes towards professionalism. A lot of that stuff was really, really shaped by Keith Hunter. Bruce Morrison was a filmmaker that I also worked with, and he, Bruce, gave me a break and gave me my first job as a producer, and you know, nurtured me through that. I also did my first drama with Bruce. I mean looking back I must have just been hopeless. How he ever thought that, I mean, poor Bruce, thinking back I just knew nothing, but he just put me in there and helped me, held me up as I did it, and ... Hal Weston was an interesting case. He was the boss of the factual unit of TVNZ and he was just very supportive of me as a producer. He gave me confidence in myself as a producer, and then the most important person was Caterina De Nave who gave me a big kick, and gave me money to direct something myself. I mean I'd been a director of television, but she gave me my first budget to direct something bigger, and encouraged me to make it non-standard. Catarina was the one who gave me permission to do something outside the mould, and then I think I've really stayed outside the mould ever since.

Starting her career as a TVNZ researcher helped Fiona build both the economic and social capital necessary to take the leap into filmmaking. A filmmaker whose career begins with a good film school may have the chance to produce experimental work, but will likely leave them economically disadvantaged with loans and no capital. A filmmaker who begins their career by making their own experimental work may avoid student debt, but may not have the social capital necessary to get help with projects.

I asked Fiona how she thought young people could get into the industry in New Zealand.

Fiona: I think in New Zealand, now that we don't have public service television I think we ... I think it's much more similar to the way it works in other countries like the US. In the UK they still have public service television so you can go and get a

job with the BBC drama department. You will learn all about story, you'll learn about writing, but in America the way you get into the film or television industry in America is to get a job answering a phone somewhere, and move up. And I'm constantly meeting people at markets who are very powerful indeed, and they have started answering a phone, they've graduated, they've been on a reception desk, they become somebody's assistant, they become junior vice president of something, then they become a vice president, then they become a senior vice president, and then an executive vice president, and the next thing they're president of some branch of the company, and then they've got masses of power, but essentially they've just gone and... they'll go from company to company. They don't just stay in the same company all the time, they'll go from company to company along that ladder, and then they go out on their own. So that's the model in an unregulated market.

I asked Fiona if she felt film school was advantageous for potential filmmakers.

Fiona: I don't really know because I haven't, I never went to film school. I only learned on the job, so, I mean I went directly from waitressing to television, so I imagine that film school is really good in terms of giving you background and breadth. I think it depends on which film school you're at. I think it depends on who's teaching you. I think you could go to film school and be taught by someone really good who knows a lot, or you could go to film school and be taught a whole lot of stuff that isn't quite on the money by somebody who doesn't quite know. So it's hard to say, I don't really know. I've hired a few people. I've hired assistants, and when I hire an assistant I then teach that person everything I know, just because we're working together, and they absorb the same way I absorbed things from working with Keith Hunter and Bruce Morrison. And a couple of those [assistants], one had done a tech course in film. He went to America and got huge jobs with Disney; he went on and did really well. My first assistant had no film school, had a degree in art history and came directly from waitressing. She was brilliant and within three years she produced a documentary series for me and did it brilliantly, and is now back working for Field Theory. So that was the "no film school at all" option. She was just a bright, capable person. I mean what you want is bright, capable people. The only other assistant I've had was a fantastic, bright, capable person who had been to film school and she did her masters in distribution,

and she's gone on and has produced a couple of features and done lots of work in the industry, had done lots of things. So all three of them – you know I've only had three assistants and they've all done well – I haven't chosen them because they've gone to film school and I haven't utilised any of their film school knowledge, I chose them because they were smart and effective.

I suggested that a mentorship might be more valuable than a film school.

Fiona: But then it's very hard to get. How do you know what film school to go to and who's going to be your teacher and what they're going to give you. How do you know who's assistant to be? Because if you're an assistant to a person who has got one end of the stick, then you're going to emerge with that end of the stick. Imagine if you were Julie Christie's assistant, you would come out of that probably really well equipped to make certain kinds of work, and you'd probably be set up for life because it's really commercial and really viable. Jake Mahaffy is a director I really, really admire. If you were Jake Mahaffy's assistant you'd come out equipped, really well equipped to really understand some deep things about filmmaking and its place in our culture, but you might not be that well placed to pay your mortgage. So it's different for every person. It's different for every individual and it's different for every person that you're attached to. There are no clear rules. It's a very complex world full of grey areas and my thing is that you've got to surf it. It's like you're on a surfboard riding, going into the dips and surfing the waves, and I used to say that about the Film Commission when they changed staff, you know, they'd go, you know, is the Film Commission good or is the Film Commission bad? I'd go, well you surf the Film Commission. There will be some things that will be really useful to you that you take, and then maybe it's not your year. Maybe somebody said 'we want comedy this year' and you won't write tragedy. You surf that and take the good things that are available and cope with the rest, and then it changes and you find yourself on a different tack, you know? The whole industry is like that... The film commission has money. All it wants is projects it can finance. They don't want to not finance films. They want to finance films.

At the Big Screen Symposium held in Auckland this year, Dave Gibson, chief executive of the NZFC, announced that they were currently focusing on funding

comedy films due to the recent international success of *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* (Waititi, 2016). I wondered if this would affect Fiona's decisions of what films to take into development.

Fiona: I just ignored it. To be honest, I do. I think our Film Commission are fantastic, I really do. I am a supporter of the Film Commission. I think we're incredibly lucky to have a Film Commission. They have been nothing but 100% supportive of every project I've ever done with them, and I have valued their input and I've valued their support, but I feel they're not much... they are the professionals in New Zealand who are dealing with film more of the time than anyone else is. They're full time every day dealing with it and they're dealing with the international market and they're grownups in the industry, so as colleagues they're good people to deal with and good people to talk with and good people to take advice from. But like the commissioners at the television networks, like the studio executives who are in the acquisitions departments of studios, the acquisitions departments of sales companies and distributors, they really don't know. What they really want is whatever is going to be, whatever the audience is really going to love next, that's all they really want, and they don't really mind if it's Schindler's List, or Inbetweeners, you know? All forms are valid, and there was a period where you used to be able to get quite a good return on your investment from a straight to video horror, and so there was a period where there was a whole lot of horror films being offered, because people could see that was a way to get films financed. And then I remember an email coming out or a press release coming out saying we don't want any more horror films. When the Film Commission says "we want comedy", I don't think that's what they really mean. I think they just mean "we're having difficulty selling emotionally difficult films to international audiences for theatrical release. I think that's what they're saying. They're just saying "times are tough, the world's changing, people want to go home from work, sit down, have a beer and watch something that's a bit light and entertaining, and we're noticing that people are preferring that to going home and watching something that is confronting and upsetting". And so if I heard the Film Commission saying that I would assume that what they were really saying was that. And if you took an extraordinary film to the Film Commission that was confronting and upsetting and it was extraordinary I think they would still finance it, and I think a sales agent would still want to sell it, and I think people would still go to it, and it

would be marketed differently, and you could say, “oh that was an amazing film”. But it doesn’t mean that suddenly top of the menu is dark confronting films. So it’s about the integrity of the idea and the concept and there’s just so many factors in terms of deciding whether something is viable as a film.

I mentioned to Fiona that Gaylene Preston also had a very positive attitude to, and relationship with, the NZFC.

Fiona: *I’m sure that’s true. If you approach the Film Commission going “gosh, we’re lucky to have one, they don’t have one in a lot of countries, and there are ways in which the Film Commission can help me and this year there are these ways, so that’s what I’m going to be pleased about”. And at the same time, I mean I’ve been turned down many, many times. I’ve had many, many scripts turned down by the Film Commission. I’ve been turned down many times, probably about as much as everybody else, but I’ve also had six films succeed through the Film Commission, and I’ve had nothing but support. I feel like I’ve had nothing but support from them. And when they turn down my project it’s probably because the projects were probably not quite as well developed as I thought they were.*

I asked Fiona if she re-approached the NZFC with previously rejected projects.

Fiona: *I continue to develop them. I just never give up. I just never give up. I just don’t ever feel that somebody turning down your project means that’s the end of it. It just means that road forward is not available to you at this junction. So you revisit the project and you work out why it’s not flying and you adapt it so it is better.*

I enquired how Fiona decides which projects she wants to develop.

Fiona: *Um...well it’s really just a question of becoming personally captivated. If somebody comes and sits at my kitchen table and tells me something that is completely intriguing and I can imagine a whole lot of people being captivated by that story then I will want to make that film. Like for example, I read the novel Room, a long time ago, and that is a film about sexual abuse and captivity and it’s terrible. It’s absolutely terrible, and a terrible, terrible thing, and I read that and*

thought “Oh my god this is so beautiful, I’d really like to make a film out of this”, and at the time we knew that dark subjects weren’t going to get a fly for financing, and I’d made The Strength of Water which was dark, and then Matariki which was dark, and had no commercial success with either. But I still wanted to make Room into a film, because I thought it was actually really uplifting and that the audience would find a way of coping with it, and tried to get the rights, failed to get the rights because somebody else had the rights and then they made that fantastic film, which everybody loved, you know? So, you don’t survive or succeed by adhering to a rule book, but the longer you’ve been in the industry the more you understand where you failed last time. What was the tiny subtle thing that made the difference. And you get a kind of feel for it I suppose, and I suppose that’s sort of moving into what you would call “professional”, you know. So somebody can come to me that there’s an idea that a really interesting thrilling concept and I can feel that I’ve seen it before, or something about the way they’re talking about it makes me worry that their view of what it’s going to be is not quite on-point, you know? And it won’t actually be like that and it might disappoint us all. Somebody could come to me saying they want to make a film about an apple, and that could be amazing, you know, or it could be the most boring ridiculous, stupid annoying thing you’d ever imagine. It depends entirely on how they, it depends on what they have to say about the apple. And how they wrap you into the story of it, and how they manipulate your emotions and what journey they take you on across time, the time that you’re going to devote to going to the cinema.

I asked Fiona if she sees value in submitting to and/or attending festivals.

Fiona: They make you grow up as a filmmaker, because you suddenly understand what the industry is. And you suddenly realise that it’s not just about you and your great vision. You go to a few markets and you understand how ridiculous the sense of entitlement as a filmmaker is, you know. That this should be made because, you know, I’m going to be a good filmmaker. That’s just completely irrelevant to the market.

I asked Fiona if she thought festivals help the promotion of films or filmmakers.

Fiona: *Well, obviously getting into festivals creates editorial press so that helps market the film in New Zealand. I mean getting into festivals is crucial. It's key for selling films internationally. Films don't sell if they don't get into festivals. So you go to screen your film in a festival but what's really happening is that you the filmmaker are going to a market. So you go to the festival, but at the same time, the reason you as a filmmaker is going is not just to go to the party. You're there to have meetings with sales agents after the screening of the film, and you're there, as a filmmaker you're there to show the sales agents how you can support their selling of the film internationally and that you're a good interview and somebody that will hold it up in the media and say the right things and you are a filmmaker with potential so that you're a worthy kind of investment, but, and so that obviously is good for filmmakers.*

I asked for her opinion on Taika Waititi's success.

Fiona: *Here's my theory about Taika's films, and this might be, Taika might really disagree with me, but I just think that Hunt for the Wilderpeople is a brilliant example of what can happen if we invest in filmmakers and let them make lots of films. Because to me, I watched Hunt for the Wilderpeople and I go, "Oh my God this is just amazingly well produced, it's beautifully directed, it's really well written, and it's really well produced" and it just feels to me like it's coming from a filmmaker who is starting to really understand his audience and what they need and what he has in his armoury that can deliver, what he has in his store cupboard that will really deliver for them. And I think I can feel in Hunt for the Wilderpeople all the things Taika's learned from Eagle vs. Shark and his shorts and his other films. Like I can feel that it's the work of somebody who's paid attention to what's worked and what hasn't worked for audiences as he's progressed as a filmmaker.*

I queried whether she was suggesting that Taika was given the chance to do that?

Fiona: *No, no, not at all, no, I... No. I mean he was only given the chance to do that because he displayed so much talent. That's not to take away from Taika's natural talent. So, but Taika's always had that natural talent. He's got the same natural talent now as when he was making Eagle vs. Shark. But Hunt for the Wilderpeople is a more successful film because he knows more about filmmaking, he knows more*

about the world the film is going into and he understands more about his potential audience and he really, really worked to serve them. And I, he's maturing as a filmmaker. And I imagine he'll do something amazing with Thor, like... and he was the same bright spark talent at the very beginning of his career as he is now. He's just had some opportunity to work in a few things along the way, and I think it's a really sad thing that people make one film and then don't make another, or they make two and don't make a third or fourth.

I asked Fiona why she thought some independents stop.

Fiona: Well, it's financial. Probably they stop because they have children or need a house or something... You make a few features and you see which ones sell, and you see one that isn't selling and you suddenly understand why it isn't selling and then you become a little more market savvy, and then you become more creatively cautious.

I asked Fiona what she thought helps or hinders films from selling?

Fiona: Two things. One is, it doesn't matter how commercially savvy you are unless you're making a studio picture where nothing is execution dependent. Everything is marketable, everything on the film is already marketable before you'd started. There's no point in trying to make a film that is cynically constructed for the market. If the film doesn't have genuine heart and passion and voice, it's likely to be B-grade. So the only films that really sell as independent films are films that are individual and fresh and emotionally rewarding.

It seems like a fine balance to continue to create films that have “genuine heart and passion and voice” whilst also becoming more “creatively cautious”.

The conversational quality of this exchange is not as apparent from the selected transcript extracts, but it felt as though Fiona's awareness of talking to an early-career filmmaker opened up the conversation beyond the stock stories that others had tended to slip into. In doing so, it also felt that the model in Fig. 8 had been largely tested and had proven robust, with the exception of questions around “professionalism”. Anderson and Jack's (2002) notion of the engineered

conversation, deliberately set up between domain insiders (rather than one supposedly objective interviewer), worked well at this point in my own research (and is certainly worth exploring further as a technique using the mentor/mentee approach). The “engineered” part became the implicit focus on the career progression model and then the conversation was allowed to flow freely around that, rather than working its way through a set of questions predetermined in advance. As a result, Fiona’s responses saturated the categories of the model (in GT’s terminology): she described exploration and the passion or “heart” involved but also, crucially, the focus phase which in her vocabulary was about “becoming savvy” but not slavish or mechanistic. She very clearly described the importance of ties, but also revealingly of tie transformations as relationships and attitudes matured and mutual interests transcended self-interest. This suggested the importance of networked individualism as people stayed true to their “heart” but learnt how to accommodate bridging opportunities via their developing networks, beyond the early bonds.

This conversation made clearer the importance of certain things during the focus phase of the vocational survival trajectory. The most striking image here was Fiona’s mention of “surfing”, of learning how to ride the waves of actual circumstances in an industry, something that was much less characteristic of the exploration phase, which was more about film ideas.

From where she is, the NZFC looks very different to Fiona than it did to Joe and me. The important insight being about the significance of perspective. Different features in the filmmaking landscape will look different depending on where in the model one is looking at them from.

The final really suggestive thing about this conversation, however, was that it forces us to reconsider the “professionalism” level of Svejenova’s model as we have adapted it here. What Svejenova’s levels fail to address is the existence of industry insiders and outsiders. Some filmmakers strive to become industry insiders, to be part of the establishment, which in New Zealand means becoming one of the fêted handful who consistently create projects that receive NZFC (and international) funding, who are the faces of the national industry, and who are

secure enough with their position in the industry that they might consider positioning themselves as mentors to up and coming filmmakers.

Social identity theory supports this idea. Earlier I considered members of a film project as an in-group, and the independent filmmaking *establishment* is another type of group, though perhaps not as distinct. Members of the filmmaking establishment likely perceive themselves as sharing characteristics with other members; their projects have been successful, they are known in the industry, they are able to contact and discuss their needs with other members of the establishment (other filmmakers at the same level, the NZFC, production companies, etc.). They display “uniformity of perception and action” with other individuals who have taken on the group identity (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 226); discussing their interactions with the NZFC in a positive light, complimenting the work of other established filmmakers, and in doing so maintaining a positive evaluation of their group and themselves (Hogg et al., 1995). At the time of my conversation it could be concluded that Fiona had fairly recently joined this establishment.

It should be noted that there is a difference between *established filmmakers* and being part of the *filmmaking establishment*. Not every established independent filmmaker will have become part of the filmmaking establishment, but only established filmmakers will have. Also, people may *act* as an establishment, even if they do not necessarily think of themselves as an establishment. Becoming part of the filmmaking establishment happens over time and there may not be a straightforward way to define those that may be in or may be out. Some people are definitely in, for example Dave Gibson the NZFC chief executive, who (at the NZFC Roadshow 2016) clearly laid out the rules and rituals filmmakers need to follow to get their foot in the door.

New Zealand Film Commission and the establishment

Comments about the sometimes ambiguous importance of the NZFC have been one of the refrains of this thesis. While not reducing the account of independence to the New Zealand situation specifically, we are now in a position to use the example of the NZFC as an instance of how an establishment (of gatekeepers, the *fêted*, the

most successful in-group, the “faces” of an industry, etc.) functions in relation to the independent career trajectory and course of action overall.

Established in 1978, the New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC) is the primary body for grants, loans, and equity financing of feature and short films in New Zealand. Funded largely by government, a share of the Lotteries Commission profits (6.5%), and also film income, interest and reserves, their 2014/15 year budget was just over \$24 million (New Zealand Film Commission, 2017). The New Zealand Film Commission Act of 1978 states the NZFC was designed to encourage, participate and assist in the making, promotion, distribution, and exhibition of films, and to promote cohesion within the New Zealand film industry (New Zealand Film Commission Act, 2013). In its own words the NZFC aims to:

- Find, foster and connect outstanding New Zealand screen talent
- Help exciting ideas become great films
- Promote these films to audiences
- Grow New Zealand’s screen industry (New Zealand Film Commission, 2017, para. 1)

They administer government grants for major New Zealand and international film and television productions, market New Zealand films and filmmakers, and help with training and career development within the industry (New Zealand Film Commission, 2017). Funding is allocated based on the requirement of “significant New Zealand content”, however this involves a broad and liberal interpretation that includes: the subject of a film, locations where it is made, nationalities and places of residence of the filmmakers (including writers, composers, producers, directors, actors, technicians, editors, and others), shareholders and partners, copyright holders, sources of financing, location and ownership of equipment and facilities, anything else the NZFC deems to be relevant, or if the government or NZFC has an agreement with the government or relevant public authority of another country (New Zealand Film Commission Act, 2013).

The NZFC has received a significant amount of criticism from filmmakers for the interpretation and implementation of its policies. Established in 1978 when the industry was in its infancy in New Zealand, many filmmakers began to feel the

NZFC was failing to most effectively serve the industry and its filmmakers. Successive disparagements came from respected New Zealand filmmakers criticising (among other things) the lack of accountability on the part of NZFC employees, the script development process and administrative structure, lack of transparency regarding funding decisions, and an approach that had created a grant-dependent industry (Dunleavy & Joyce, 2011). To this end, in 2010 filmmaker Sir Peter Jackson and head of screen business at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, David Court, were asked to review the NZFC and assess whether it was working “in the most effective way possible as New Zealand’s film funding agency” (Finlayson, 2010, para. 10). The report sought submissions from people who work in the industry who, as part of the NZFC client base, are directly affected by the actions and policies of the NZFC, in order to review and assess the NZFC’s performance over the 30 years of its existence, and suggest ways it might operate more effectively (Jackson & Court, 2010). Among other things, respondents complained of the sense of the NZFC taking an adversarial role towards filmmakers, cultivating an impression of an “us vs. them” attitude. They felt the NZFC were rule-bound and unresponsive, with a narrow and inflexible approach that revolved around box ticking instead of nurturing creativity. They reported sensing the NZFC personnel were not always sufficiently knowledgeable about the industry and the practices of filmmaking. The outcome of this review, as reported by Arts Culture and Heritage Minister Christopher Finlayson, included the NZFC needing a more strategic long-term vision allowing for more flexibility, to be more talent focused rather than project focused, and having a larger development team within the NZFC (Finlayson, 2010). Some changes were implemented, and as a result, several of the NZFC current policies and initiatives are fairly new and untested in practice.

Announced at the 2015 NZFC Roadshow, the NZFC’s long-term goal of supporting, facilitating, and promoting a successful New Zealand screen industry currently involves five medium term goals: to “identify and support New Zealand screen talent”, to “position New Zealand as a leading destination for screen production”, to “provide effective marketing support for cinema releases and additional release platforms”, to “fund the production of culturally significant films”, and to “facilitate film development and production opportunities” (New Zealand Film Commission, 2016, p. 5).

The NZFC has a hand in most of the feature films made in New Zealand, and the NZFC Roadshow was an attempt to educate filmmakers about NZFC policies, and how they want filmmakers to engage with them in order to receive their support. They want to know who is in the talent pool and help to develop talent, and for filmmakers to enter into a conversation with the NZFC rather than it being a faceless institutional entity behind an application form. They want to know, not only the plans for the project (including the requirement of a theatrical release), but how projects will be part of the filmmakers career trajectory, what they want to do, how they plan to do it, and for that to be communicated to the NZFC in a way that is convincing, that they judge to be do-able, and with a plan of how the commission could assist the filmmaker over and above funding. This sounds admirable, and producer Fiona Copland's attitude clearly is that such a framework of support is something that independents can work with successfully.

Jackson and Court's (2010) review of the NZFC was a good source for anonymous quotes that reveal a contrary picture of how many filmmakers feel when they are unable to behave in the way the NZFC expects. The comments illustrate how some filmmakers are not identifying with the ethos of the NZFC, and so find themselves unable to get funding, and to progress their careers (as quoted in Jackson & Court, 2010, pp. 14, 16, 27):

- “The climate is crushing the talent. They don't really see what we're saying. They don't understand our world”.
- “The Film Commission can be very intimidating – that's the perception. They're seen as gatekeepers. They don't have a lot of engagement with the younger film making community...”
- “They don't know how to get in. You've got these cool creative people but they just don't know how to do it”.
- “Most organisations have natural predators – the Film Commission doesn't. People are afraid to voice criticism”.
- “There's no blind mechanism for giving feedback to the Commission, and you can't bite the hand that feeds you” (as quoted in Jackson & Court, 2010, p. 16).

- “There’s often unclear decision-making. They don’t want to say no so they impose impossible conditions...”
- “The Commission tends to use drafts as a way of avoiding decisions – if in doubt write another draft. It’s a momentum killer”.
- “Their process has been about protecting jobs and the organisation and over time that has become their preoccupation” (as quoted in Jackson & Court, 2010, p. 27).

There is no way to be certain using the cited evidence, but a more than reasonable hypothesis would be that many of these comments come from filmmakers in the exploration or focus phases for whom “It’s a momentum killer” means they have been stalled by a wave of professional rituals and expectations that a more advanced practitioner such as Fiona Copland has learnt to surf. What this means, more specifically, is that the perceived value chain is not an agreed upon one. Where industry gatekeepers may be using the traditional FVC, and gatekeeping entry to it, many independents may be living according to alternate values and struggling with their vocational survival as a result.

The greater insight, however, thanks to the conversation with Fiona Copland querying the vocabulary of professionalism, is that “establishment” is the ceiling in our now revised model, and where there are irreconcilable differences in the operative value chains an independent may consciously decide to opt out of playing by a particular establishment’s rules. This then is what we might think of as the paradox of professionalism: that once an independence is achieved its professionalism may either dovetail with the establishment view of things or run counter to it. A solution to this might be to expose more explicitly the value chain captured by our model, so that its effects are less likely to be organised around the discursive struggle revealed in the love/hate relationship with establishment gatekeepers.

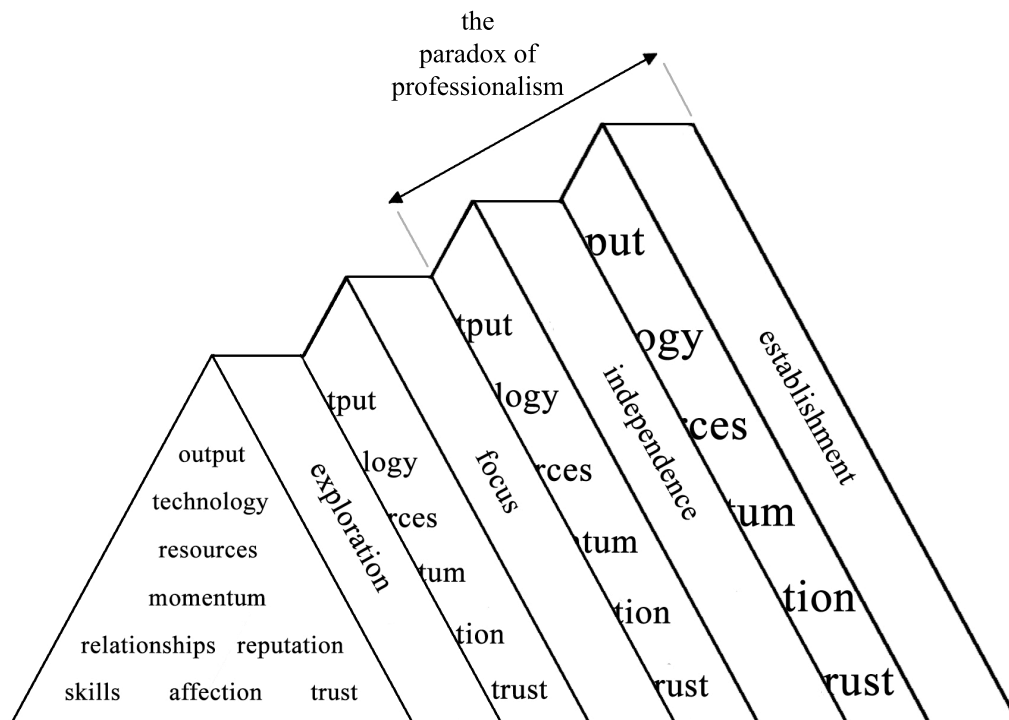


Fig. 9. Adjusted accrual of resources and vocational course of action pyramid

The argument so far

This is a good moment in the thesis to summarise the argument taking shape with the current chapter, which is built on and is now starting to extend the analysis and concepts developed in preceding chapters. The goal, especially as we head towards a “Conclusions” section, is to discover something new, explanatory, and useful in the argument’s developing picture of a dynamic framework for the study of tie relations and transformations in independent filmmaking as a mode of existence and course of action in Latour’s sense. The present chapter has used the semi-structured interview to flesh out this picture. The initial picture of a dynamic relational framework, derived autoethnographically, has been tested and modified as a result, by drawing on the experiences of other filmmakers. But there may still be a considerable way to go here before the picture comes into sufficiently sharp focus to feel like it really captures something about independence that has not hitherto been sufficiently researched or understood.

The conceptual elements are definitely becoming clearer, though. Tie transformation processes have emerged as central. In other words, the ways in

which the dynamic framework under study is based, not so much on ties per se (the relations that link actants together in projects, where the tied actants are both individuals and other kinds of agent) as on transformations through which these ties evolve over time, not least through identifiable phases in a filmmaker's career progression. What has become especially clear in relation to this is that it depends on much more than bonding capital. The original autoethnographic emphasis on bonding capital was unsurprising – strong ties between actors in small networks have self-evident practical utility, as they did in the personal case study. The intensity of these can energise a project, but broader kinds of passion also emerged from the preceding accounts, and in the more coolly reflexive late-stage autoethnographic reconsiderations when some distance had become feasible.

As a consequence, a more nuanced picture emerged of a bonding/bridging dynamic playing out on an instance of what Tornquist terms a *small surface* – in this case, independent filmmaking in a small nation – where the dynamic is always necessarily responding to the smallness, the (over)reliance on bonding capital, the limited range of bridging opportunities, the mismatch between ambitions and opportunities, etc. So transformation processes do not occur easily (more colloquially, things can get stuck on those small surfaces, which is how it often feels to ultra-low-budget independents) and the ongoing achievement of optimal creative states is a very real challenge.

The interviews have helped us understand more of the things that go on here. Instead of the mystification of voice that often occurs in auteurist film studies, voice in relation to the dynamic framework depicted here becomes much more of an achievement than a mysterious presence in the work. Independents develop their voices in the context of tie relations, becoming recognised for having their own distinctive emphases, interests and ways of doing things that get tested relationally as much as (indeed perhaps more than) they are expressed textually. This process typically gets channelled through what we have identified as privileged moments of communicative camaraderie.

Such moments, which on the evidence assembled here mean a great deal to independents, are part of the larger phenomenon of finding the sweet spots on the curvilinear graph of weak ties and creativity. These optimal creative states occur in

a matrix of specific factors, not so much as a result of inspiration conventionally conceived, and these factors include the presence of just enough bridging ties to transcend the inherent limitations of the small surface, but not so many as to dissipate energy. The Sartrean group-in-fusion (another way of describing the sweet spot relationally) becomes something that can be specified more precisely in these terms, as it too might otherwise be subject to some mystification as a concept.

So, as noted before in this chapter, we have identified a delicate balance of ties, passion, novelty, funding, etc. that produces these optimal states. But more significantly for the on-going argument, the question of identity has begun to emerge as having some real explanatory usefulness and particular force here.

This importance of identity-related considerations has arisen in the context of the pleasure/pain axis as experienced by independents: that curious willingness to be “afflicted” by the filmmaking passion despite the stacked odds against any accompanying commitment being unproblematically pleasurable, or sustainably pleasurable and profitable over and above any projects buoyed by beginners’ luck, naivety, or sheer optimism. That such a commitment is indispensably an affective one has become abundantly clear by this point in the overall argument. But the consequences of recognising this have still to be traced in detail back into the specifics of independent identities. The first step in doing so, conceptually, has been to establish the importance of identity salience-based control; in other words, the on-going effort of sustaining independence as a salient identity in lives that are not reducible to that identity. Controlling their on-going identity formation, in this sense, seems to be part of what independents feel they must do, even if this is not pursued on an always-conscious level.

One of the principles of Grounded Theory is that the researcher’s on-going memoing process should be allowed to generate hunches that might become insights. This is especially so if the researcher is herself, to a degree, an insider in relation to the community of practice being studied. As I repeatedly scanned my memos for this project, the recurring theme of affective commitment became more troublesome than straightforwardly revealing. It is interspersed through the whole thesis, in various ways, and yet the notion of affect energising ties started to generate a “so what?” feeling. Of course filmmakers have these affective bonds,

with each other, with projects, with the idea of independence. But then the interviews for the present chapter began to hint that there is more to it than that; that something ties these various forms of affective investment together. Something consolidates the various ties. That was the developing hunch.

It was not until encountering a concept deployed in another field that this hunch started to feel like an insight. The concept is that of the folk model (and was serendipitously drawn to my attention by a screenwriting colleague).

Folk models of independence

Dekker and Hollnagel (2004) summarise the research on this topic when they state that “folk models (1) substitute one label for another rather than decomposing a large construct into more *measurable specifics*; (2) are immune to falsification and so resist the most important scientific quality check; and (3) easily get overgeneralised to situations they were never meant to speak about” (p. 79). They go on to say:

The labels refer to concepts that are intuitively meaningful in the sense that everyone associates something with them, so they feel that they understand them. People furthermore tacitly assume that others understand the concepts named by the labels in the same way and that they therefore also implicitly agree on the underlying “mechanisms”. The ease by which these labels are used and swapped around as common currency in an industry or scientific community reinforces this practice. If this goes on for long enough, it leads to the syndrome of “The Emperor’s New Clothes”: people may no longer dare to ask what these labels mean, lest others suspect they are not really initiated in the particulars of their business (p. 79).

In other words, in many industries (not just the scientific and technical communities Dekker and Hollnagel are particularly interested in), tacit knowledge is often susceptible to the collective construction and reinforcement of folk models that re-label reality at a level of generalisation above measurable specifics. The resulting forms of shared understanding become both intuitively meaningful to insiders as a

“common currency” and, significantly, a means of initiation into insider status. That these forms of understanding, or tacit labelling practices, become “overgeneralised to situations they were never meant to speak about” suggests their power to (re)shape reality in any given occupational field or community of practice.

It has started to become clear in the present research that folk models exist in the sphere of independent filmmaking. Not only do they exist, but their existence may, in some sense, be the defining aspect of independent filmmaking that we have been looking for here. Superimposed on the measurable specifics of the field, (i.e. the numbers of filmmakers at different career stages, the concrete opportunities open to them, the policy frameworks, the sources of funding, the work practices, the distribution options, etc.), may be another reality – that of a powerful, omnipresent and pervasive folk model about independence as a mode of existence, its possibilities and constraints, its strugglers and power brokers, its promises and rewards. Talking tacitly within the frame of this model is a sign of a filmmaker having been “initiated in the particulars of their business” even where an empirical account of those particulars might be at odds with the folk model’s version of them.

Dekker and Hollnagel (2004) take pains to emphasise, however, that folk models are not “immature” forms of understanding. One of their own research questions is, “Can we distinguish folk models from models that are just immature and still lack a firm empirical foundation?”(p. 80). We can ask exactly the same question about independent filmmaking. If the kinds of filmmaker interviewed for this chapter have shown tacit knowledge of an operative folk model, is it because it is a mature one in this context, a re-shaping of an empirically experienced reality rather than, for example, a beginner’s set of naive assumptions as yet untested by reality? This would certainly seem to be the case from the interviews. The model may now, to some degree, be “immune to falsification” as Dekker and Hollnagel suggest, but that is not to say that it was never grounded in verifiable experience. The affective commitment that has emerged as central to the dynamics of independence may, in no small measure, be mediated by felt attachments to this folk model.

Could it be, therefore, a folk model of independence that ultimately consolidates the various ties which crisscross this field of practices, furnishing independent filmmakers with a shared sense of who they are and what the nature of their work

is, including the sorts of working relationships they have, over and above any particular project? Does such a folk model evolve with their passage through the pyramidal structure of career progression? Does it explain the experience of getting stuck at a particular level in that progression? Does the articulation of this model with identity salience-based control constitute the main driver of independence as a mode of existence in this creative domain?

The insight that informs such questions, while based on the experience of interviewing independents in light of the researcher's own insider position as a practitioner, poses a very real problem for the research going forward here. The next chapter can take one of two approaches. In a way, the most obvious and conventional approach would be to step right back, objectively, and strip away the folk model in order to describe the measurable specifics, as Dekker and Hollnagel term the empirical reality in any field of practice before a folk model effects its *label substitutions* for those specifics. This would produce a descriptive chapter about funding models, creative industry policy, alignments between grassroots project generation and top-down policy frameworks, political alignments between industry funders and state apparatus, market influences, the local/global dynamic, etc. It is tempting to take this path, as a great deal of research has already been done on these topics and the secondary sources could be collated to produce such an account. For example, Yeatman (1998) is an early instance of precisely such a source, and itself a collation of earlier research. It was Yeatman who identified *alignment* as a key explanatory concept: that filmmaking (in this instance specifically in New Zealand) entails powerfully enforced alignments (and not infrequent misalignments) of national ideology, funding regimes, sector employment patterns, and communities of practitioners. Updating his data, and re-interrogating his conclusions about these alignments, would not be without value as a research objective. It would produce, in a sense, one set of truths behind the folk model, especially if updated with information from other, more recent sources.

This approach would not, however, further the present study's specific interest in understanding independence as a mode of existence; that is, it would not tell us anything more than we know already about, for example, how affective alignments/misalignments are experienced by independents, or how matters of identity circulate through the matrix of other alignments of the sorts described by

more empirically-focused research. In other words, stripping away the folk model would be to strip away a constitutive layer of the object of inquiry here and to discard it as an irrelevance when in fact it may play a crucial role in and of itself.

So what is the alternative?

Grounded Theory perspective consolidated

At this point it is necessary to visit the Grounded Theory approach of this thesis a penultimate time. Most simply, Grounded Theory:

- develops a theory which
- offers an explanation about
- the main concern of the population of the field of study
- and how that concern is processed or resolved.

However, the inherent complexity and variations of Grounded Theory methods have resulted in many different approaches. GT does not fit comfortably into a simple one-size-fits-all explanation that subsequent researchers can utilise as a road map for their own research. Most researchers adapt or combine methods to find what most suits the specificities of both their work and their preferred research techniques. Though Glaser views any variation from his original tenets as undermining its integrity (unless he changes his own stance), many researchers see these developments to GT as “strengths and enhancements” (A. Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 9). By utilising the strengths of the various approaches to GT, I devised a method that suited the nature of my data, my own research practice, and the study of independent filmmaking.

As my method developed, I found Wiener’s (2007) basic tenets of Grounded Theory most suited to the mixed methods of research and presentation I was using, though I also drew inspiration from Glaser (1978, 1998), Glaser and Strauss (1967), Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998), and Birks and Mills (2011). I began to use the principles of Grounded Theory after filming *Penny Black*

(I had a change of supervision, and direction), collated emails, messages, photos, and memories, and began memo writing as I created my autoethnographic account of the experience of writing and producing the feature film. This account was coded using in vivo codes (the terms used by participants) where appropriate. The coded incidents were then compared to previous incidents and sorted into categories. As coding and sorting continued the categories became fewer as they were combined and refined, and the final assemblage of codes became the categories of the crossings pyramid (Fig. 5), the macro-resources filmmakers need to accrue to progress through the stages of an authentic working life.

In order to add to this analysis, I asked Wiener's (2007) question "What groups or sub-groups of populations, events, and/or activities do I turn to next in order to find varying dimensions, strategies, and/or other action and for what theoretical purpose?" (p. 304). Turning to other filmmakers to explore the questions that had arisen was the logical next step. It is important to note that memoing continued through the interviewing phase, eventually collating the memos into the Chapter 4 script, and writing of the grounded theory. Not only did memoing record my thoughts about the data, but it also helped me think theoretically throughout the research process, and influenced the direction of my investigation.

At this point I encountered some fundamental difficulties in extracting enough from filmmaker interviews – enough, that is, to begin theorising on the basis of the emergent categories, in the GT sense – I also encountered, in effect, a fundamental problem with the GT method. Classic GT pronouncements about the method, of which Glaser and Strauss (1967) is often seen as a foundational statement, seem very clear about what should happen at this stage of a project. Having coded the autoethnographically derived material, and clustered the codes into categories through a process of extensive analysis, the research should be able to begin a final phase of more ambitious theorising centred on a core variable. The core variable is something that emerges as central and relates to as many categories as possible, in ways that the analysis will have made clear.

I adopted a gerund-based approach as shorthand for capturing and understanding how the emergent categories relate to the accounts of independent filmmaking in practice. In other words, having identified the spectrum of “ing” words that contextualised the categories and interwove through the assembled range of data on filmmaking practice. The data was evaluated for the most appropriate gerund forms for each category to make additional connections between the categories more visible. The core variable can be thought of as a super-gerund, and with the gerund *controlling* appearing in each category it emerged as the best candidate here, especially when modified in terms of identity salience and the concept of situationally modulating the desired control in the interests of downstream opportunities.

But this is where the current research hit a problem with the interviews. While some informative incidents were recounted, in general I found myself reading between the lines for much of the significance that my conversations with filmmakers had. The literal transcriptions of things said, while not uninformative, were problematic for several reasons.

Remodelling GT memoing

Bandeira-de-Mello and Garreau (2009), two experienced Brazilian researchers who use GT, state bluntly what other researchers have worried about: interviewees very often cannot articulate what they are really thinking or how they perceive a specific situation” (p. 10). The level or depth of response in order for filmmakers to provide the necessary reflective insight into their own practice might be too much to ask. This concern is in addition to Caldwell’s (2008) statement that personal disclosures in the media industry are always constructed, and are more suspect and spin-driven the higher a worker is found on the “food chain” (p. 3). Bandeira-de-Mello and Garreau call, therefore, for approaches focused on grasping what is behind what interviewees say. This and other shortcomings of the interview method have already been discussed, but such an acknowledgement also creates a crisis of sorts for the GT method itself. If a technique such as the interview cannot reliably, on its own, support the next stage of analysis and focusing,

then how is one to proceed? Does GT need to be remodelled in some way at this point? GT co-founder Barney Glaser has been much concerned to resist such remodelling in order to preserve classic or orthodox GT from what he has called *erosion* (Glaser & Holton, 2004). Ironically, though, an opening for some remodelling around this specific problem may perhaps be found in Glaser's own principal defence against remodelling (Glaser & Holton, 2004), where his discussion of memoing provides an opportunity for some deconstruction or unpicking around a weak spot in his argument.

Memoing takes place on and off throughout the entire process of GT-based research. The researcher's memoing begins the process of theorising about data and categories: memos are in effect notes about how the researcher is thinking as data accumulates. As Glaser describes the process, there is something instinctive, even initially hunch-like, about some of the memoed ideas, as they seek to connect emergent categories, which is why memos are not typically included in the write-up of a research project, even though they bridge between codes/categories and theory. In his 2004 description, Glaser goes further than before in evoking the non-positivist nature of the memoing process. He says that memoing pushes towards "the frontier of the analyst's thinking" (para. 62). And while he goes on to make the process sound dryly scientific when he says, "memos help the analyst to raise the data to a conceptual level and develop the properties of each category that begin to define them operationally" (para. 62), he also says quite clearly that the goal is to "develop ideas on categories with complete freedom" (para. 63). This seemingly intensifying tension in Glaser's work is confined to the practice of memoing. Elsewhere he still staunchly defends classic GT against any remodelling, but his evocations of freedom and a *frontier* to be explored in memoing practices are there to be seized upon by anyone frustrated by this methodological staunchness elsewhere in his defence of GT.

Bandeira-de-Mello and Garreau (2009) are two such frustrated GT researchers. Bryant (2003), while remaining deeply supportive of GT, has gone further than many in critiquing Glaser's perhaps stubborn resistance to change, conceptualising it as an intellectual failure to recognise that constructivist thinking now necessitates a significant degree of change.

Indeed Bryant accuses some of Glaser's more strident defences as having become "incoherent" (para. 2). But Bandeira-de-Mello and Garreau are more solution-focused, and their advocacy of more creativity in GT practice opens the way for what I want to attempt in the next chapter.

Bandeira-de-Mello and Garreau (2009) present a Table of "places for creativity according to the three main GT streams" (p. 5). I have simplified this as follows (Table 5), in order to reduce clutter and include only those aspects relevant to this project.

Table 5. Places for creativity according to the three main GT streams (adapted from Bandeira-de-Mello and Garreau (2009))

choice of substantiative area	ORTHODOX GT	PRAGMATIC GT	CONSTRUCTIVIST GT
Memoing	Ideas about categories and relationships.	An important tool for registering creative ideas.	A record of ideas generated with an emphasis on researcher's reflexivity.
Constant comparisons	Based only on real data.	Based on any type of element, data from the field or other.	Based on any type of element.
Writing	Based on the data gathered and organised through theoretical sorting.	Based on analytic logic that should preconceive a writing process.	Based on the researcher's competencies to make the reader feel the theory .

What is identified here as *orthodox* GT is essentially Glaserian. *Pragmatic* GT is Straussian: the co-founder of the method has been open to more remodelling than Glaser, though much of it in this stream has still been highly formalistic and often based on elaborate coding schemes.

Constructivist GT recognises that theoretical advances in social sciences and humanities research have revealed that “facts” are also constructed meanings and have to be handled as such. (The position of Juliet Corbin, the “third man” of GT’s founding, will be considered separately here).

Bandeira-de-Mello and Garreau (2009) state that “constructivist GT is the paradigm where creativity can take more space” and that “as we know that GT procedures should enable the discovery of new knowledge, creativity is of great utility to reach such [a] result” (p. 5). However, where Bryant (2003) takes Glaser to task for not admitting the value of the constructivist stream across the board in GT (which would lead to extremely extensive remodelling of the method), it is not within the scope of this thesis to rework its own GT method so extensively. Instead I want to focus, for particular reasons, on a creative extension of the memoing that I have done throughout the research, an extension that takes seriously (perhaps more seriously than he would be comfortable with) Glaser’s advocacy of pushing memoing towards “the frontier of the analyst’s thinking” (2004, para. 62).

Glaser (1978) says the conceptual sorting of ideational memos “begins to put the fractured data back together” to create a “rich multi-relation, multi-variate theory” (p. 116), and that the theoretical sorting of memos “forces the element of ‘creativity’ to the degree an analyst has it” (p. 117). In order to push memoing towards the frontier of my thinking, while forcing the element of creativity to the degree that I, as researcher, have it, I looked for a way to consolidate my relevant memos that would draw out their “*connections* and *significance*” and also explore major theoretical themes (p. 85). The constant comparative method requires only saturation of data (rather than consideration of all available data) and is designed to allow flexibility to aid the creative generation of theory that is “integrated, consistent, plausible, [and] close to the data” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 103).

My theoretical sorting, though unorthodox, integrated my relevant data (memos, interview quotes, ideas from books and journals, my autoethnography) into a docu-fiction (see Chapter 4), allowing theory to emerge and intended to “make the reader feel the theory” (see Table 6).

The informing memos identified situations that accounted for “most of the observed behaviour that is relevant and problematic for those involved” (Wiener, 2007, p. 306). The vast majority of these additional memos related to the theme of identity (the filmmaker’s identity, personal identity, constructing identity, salient identities, a public identity, conflicting identities, a project’s identity, group identity, identity of a particular role, etc.).

Crystallization

Richardson (1994) coined the term crystallization as reference to a method of collecting, analysing, and representing data that includes or uses creative forms of representation in order to tap into deeper thinking. The metaphor of the crystal describes the many-faceted approach.

[Crystallization] combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach... Crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. Ingeniously, we know there is always more to know (p. 522).

Building on Richardson’s work, Ellingson (2009) explains that crystallized texts are multi-genre (including at least two genres of writing or representation), arguing that crystallization provides an effective approach for creating very deep, thick, rich descriptions of our findings and making sense of data “through more than one way of knowing” (p. 11). “Crystallization provides another way of achieving depth, through the compilation not only of many details but also of different forms of representing, organizing, and analysing those details” (p. 10). “Incorporating differing forms of analysis and genres enables researchers to cover more ground,

incorporating the researchers' positionality, contrasting or conflicting points of view, patterns, and exceptions" (p. 11). As crystallized texts "feature a significant degree of reflexive consideration of the researcher's self in the process of research design, data collection, and representation" (p. 12), it becomes necessary to incorporate evidence of this authorial reflexivity (e.g. describing the researcher's interactions with participants). Though not explicitly stated, crystallization responds to Denzin's (2013) call to arms, which urges researchers to find and study the many ways experience can be represented, including "rituals, myths, stories, performances, films, songs, memoirs, and autobiography, writing stories, autoethnography" (p. 10). Moreover, Humphreys (2005) also advocates the use of autoethnographic vignettes as a means of "enhancing the representational richness and reflexivity of qualitative research" (p. 480). Research enriched by the addition of autoethnographic detail can illustrate critical aspects of activities ethnographers may be totally unaware of, as subjects may omit information they take for granted or find obvious in their social world (Van Maanen, 1979).

Ellingson (2009) discusses the rigidity of many research publications and the criticism that "alternative" forms of representation frequently receive from both the methodological right and left. She encourages readers to do both more conventional and creative analytic work, advocating a blending of art and science rather than perpetuating the dualistic partitioning of qualitative methods. She says art and science are not a dichotomy, but either ends of a continuum of methodology, along which all academics are situated, and no point should be more valued than any other, with no researcher constrained to remain at a particular point or at only one point. Qualitative researchers are moving towards practices that embrace resistance to social scientific writing conventions, and disrupt conventional methodological practices with "positive interventions into hegemonic (masculinist) disciplinary norms" (p. 3). "While artistic representations cannot fully capture the meaning of any phenomenon, neither can conventional reports" (p. 183), both are constructed texts, influenced by the researcher/writer who decides what to include, what to omit, and how to present findings. Denzin also advocates that there is room for different methods of research, that more voices should be articulated (Denzin, 2013, p. 12). I embraced crystallization as a method of combining "multiple forms of analysis and multiple genres of representation" (Ellingson, 2009, p. 4).

Scriptwriting as constructivist GT research

Filmmakers tell stories. Not just for the screen, also about their experiences with varying degrees of accuracy. I hear stories of events I was present at that are entirely different than my recollection, and these stories are repeated many times for many people, reinforcing the account for both the audience and themselves, and suggesting constructed narratives may be a particular characteristic of the media savvy. In contrast, I have stories about my experiences on various productions that I would never tell, neither publicly nor to a research interviewer. Fundamentally, interviews on their own at this stage of a GT project may be unreliable.

I began to think about an alternative way of investigating the practices of filmmakers. Denzin (2013) said, “storytelling is a way of making sense of a social phenomenon by weaving it into a coherent narrative” (p. 85), and scriptwriting as research is now being used effectively as a tool for exploring identity through autoethnographic and ethnographic scripts and performances (Beattie, 2013; Belliveau, 2015). With this in mind I decided to explore the emerging field of screenwriting practice as research, and more specifically, the screenplay text as research. *TEXT* journal produced two special editions highlighting scriptwriting as creative writing research (Baker, Batty, Beattie, & Davis, 2015; Baker & Beattie, 2013), making it perhaps the only academic journal to treat unproduced scripts as “complete creative and research works that deserve publication” (Baker et al., 2015, p. 2). One of the journal’s goals was to “contribute to the emerging practice of treating creative scripts as research outcomes and scriptwriting itself as a research practice” (p. 2). For me there is another element that I have heard other writers discuss, when the characters in the script seem to take on a life of their own, make decisions that I hadn’t planned, say things that surprise me, refuse to follow my carefully designed plot line. And it is in this space that I learn the most about characters and their journeys.

Academic scriptwriting is ... different from commercial scriptwriting in that it has a stronger critical research focus and often reflects the distinct vision of a single writer-researcher. Academic scriptwriting is also much more self-reflexive. It is a practice undertaken in the context of a discipline and in ways

that mean that the writing is informed more by discipline specific knowledge than by commercial demands or the expectations of wider audiences or readerships (Baker, 2013, p. 4).

The following feature length docu-fiction screenplay is offered in this spirit. It is also a means for thinking about the folk model of independence and how it might be identified.

CHAPTER 4

Four Films

1 INT. UNIVERSITY OFFICE - DAY

1

The walls are covered with notes, handwritten on large sheets of paper. The shelves are filled with books, papers, filing boxes, pens and pushpins, and an assortment of packaged snacks. A handwritten banner of sorts reads "The Nature of Independent Filmmaking (in the Digital Age)". Diagrams below it say "New Technology", "New Media", "Participatory Culture", "Audiences"... One large sheet entitled "My Film" is covered with notes and photos and drawings.

KIM, 35, flops into her office chair. She takes her MacBook Pro out of her bag and puts it on the desk next to the University-issue dinosaur-PC-computer.

She opens the Mac and taps it to life. She sighs.

KIM (V.O.)

The aim of my research is to examine the nature of independent filmmaking. I was going to make a film. In my application to do a PhD that's what I agreed to.

She looks at the note-covered wall, and reaches over to remove the "My Film" page. She rolls it up and tucks it down behind the books on the shelf.

KIM (V.O.)

But it's been strongly suggested that instead I should observe other projects and interview other filmmakers. I have to say, I'm not feeling particularly supported at this point.

She attaches a new page to the wall and writes "potential projects to follow" at the top. Below that she writes "Catherine". Then sighs again. And adds "Adam", "Beth and Brian"...

*Disclaimer: The characters in this chapter are imagined and/or composites rather than being based on actual individuals. Interviewees, friends, and acquaintances may feel they recognise aspects of their own experiences, but any identifying material has been fictionalized and composite characters significantly altered. The screenplay does not merely recount my own experience of undertaking this research but rather synthesises that experience in a creative form. .

ADAM (early 20s) strides confidently towards the cafe. He doesn't see Kim walking towards him.

KIM

Adam.

ADAM

Oh, hi.

He keeps walking, turning to walk backward as he passes.

KIM

Can I interview you for my thesis? About your short films?

ADAM

Sure can. I might make you buy me coffee though.

KIM

Deal.

He salutes a farewell, spins back around and continues on his way.

Kim Blutaks a large sheet of paper to the wall. She divides the page into quarters with a marker and writes "A, B, C, D" in each box. In the A box she writes "short film", in B "first feature", in C "production company". She pauses at D, and then writes "Diane Mayfair".

She sits down at the table and looks at the names. She leans over and writes "why?" in box A and B. She picks up her iPhone and flicks it on to record.

KIM

Maybe I need to work out why people make films at all. I mean, I get it in Hollywood, everyone makes so much money, but here... so many people have to work for free to get experience, then make films for no money, and then struggle to get funding... It's hard work. It seems illogical. What do they get out of it? Why do they keep doing it? Especially considering sometimes no one even sees their work when it's done.

CUT TO:

Adam and Kim sit on low stools in an almost empty coffee shop, two takeout cups on the low orange table between them.

ADAM

How'd you get in touch with Diane Mayfair?

KIM

Linkedin. I paid for a one-month upgrade so I could leave messages for people. I contacted a bunch of filmmakers and she got back right away.

ADAM

Lucky. I'm a big fan.

KIM

Yeah, she's exactly the kind of filmmaker I needed to round out my research. You ready to start?

ADAM

Yeah, let's *do* this.

Kim taps her iPhone to record.

KIM

Alright, let's start with your last project.

ADAM

Sure, it's currently screening at festivals in the USA, Bend Film, and Heartland, and a few others, I can't remember them all. And I'm still waiting to hear from other festivals we've submitted to.

KIM

And what's it about?

ADAM

It's the story of a guy working in retail, in small town New Zealand, and he stumbles onto a mystery in the town, and then accidentally gets involved with the bad guys and inadvertently helps them, and in the end he finally sorts it out, there's a big car chase, and he catches the bad guys.

KIM

And your next project?

ADAM

We're about to go into production with our short film, Lapwing. He's a superhero with undetermined super powers. Actually, he kind of has no defined powers, but he has gadgets and can do kung fu. He works alone, but then his father, who is actually just a brain in a tank, tells him he needs to learn to work with someone else, that's Mousegirl. He's reluctant, but he has to come to terms with the idea. I'm playing Lapwing. We're making it for Armageddon. It's the first time they've had a film festival as part of the expo, so that's our initial goal. And we have some ideas for how we can extend the franchise, like more shorts or a web series. And then after that we'll be in a better position to apply for funding for a feature based on the character. We're trying to make one film a year, you know, and build our audience with each project.

KIM

And who's your audience for Lapwing?

ADAM

I think everyone will like this film. Really. I mean, obviously the kind of people who go to Armageddon, but I think it will have a much wider appeal, young people, older people who liked this kind of film when they were younger. And it's comedy, so...

He lets the sentence hang as if the rest is self-evident.

KIM

And what's your long-term goal?

ADAM

I'd like to be in a position to make my first feature. To build a loyal fan base and be able to attract feature funding.

CUT TO:

5 INT. DOWNTOWN COFFEE SHOP (TEAM B) - DAY

5

BRIAN and BETH (both late 20s) sit at a table in a cafe. Though some clinking of utensils and murmuring can be heard they've found a quiet spot before the lunch rush.

BETH

We wrote it together...

BRIAN

Well, you mostly wrote it, and I consulted. I've had to work during the development stage so we can afford to take the time off to film.

BETH

But we did a lot of the workshopping together. A lot of the character development was done with the collaboration of the actors, and then we spent five weeks working through improvisations with the actors, which we recorded, and then we, well mostly I, sat down and wrote the script using that.

BRIAN

And it was funny because when the actors first read the script they didn't recognise their own dialogue. Some of them.

BETH

The process is based on what an English director does, famous guy, shaggy heard, you know, so though it's a bit experimental, it's not unique...

BRIAN

But it wasn't something the Film Commission had heard of.

BETH

Yeah, they wouldn't fund us to bring over an Australian director to help us do the workshops...

BRIAN

But then they brought him over for their own projects.

BETH

The Commission turned us down
for early development funding.
We applied in the last round...

BRIAN

And the round before that...

BETH

Right, they turned us down then
and said it was a particularly
competitive round and we should
resubmit, address all their
notes and resubmit...

BRIAN

Which we did.

BETH

And we were pretty confident. We
felt sure they'd accept it.

BRIAN

We did everything they asked
for, to the letter.

BETH

They made us... well, it was
strongly suggested we turn it
into a romantic comedy, because
that's what they think will
sell...

BRIAN

And they wanted the characters
to win Lotto, which is always a
bit of a cop out to me. A fluke
of good fortune that makes
everything better.

BETH

And they wanted the love
interest to be a Brazilian
exchange student, and we did all
of that and in the process we
kind of fell out of love with it
a bit I think. And then they
turned us down. And you can only
apply for that funding twice.

BRIAN

So we've gone back to an earlier
version of the script.

BETH

Back when we still loved it.

BRIAN

Though it would have been good to sort of get that foot in the door with the Commission.

BETH

We just didn't fit into their little boxes.

BRIAN

It feels like a sort of initiation, jump through this hoop, fit in this box, and then if we like you we'll think about funding your film.

BETH

They could do so much more to help if they thought a little more outside their own boxes. Like why couldn't they help with theatrical distribution, work out a deal with small theatres that they have an NZ indie night, once a week, once a month, so an audience is built around those screenings rather than each individual filmmaker having to beg theatres to screen and then build all the hype in every location.

BRIAN

The Commission act like every movie has to appeal to a large mainstream audience...

BETH

It's unrealistic.

CUT TO:

6 INT. DARKENED ROOM - DAY

6

Bright light streams through an open window, but the rest of the room is dark, including the silhouette of the two MEN in front of the camera.

MAN #1

We were basically told if this is going to be a Film Commission project it needs to tick certain boxes with the goal of it being commercially successful.

MAN #2

They wanted it to be very formulaic, 3 acts, hitting all the beats. I guess when I look back on it, and I think I'll always respect the 3-act structure, and all those kind of things, but... as a writer I'm not a hundred percent sold that there has to be those set parameters for a story to be successful. I think stories can be told without having to be so rigid.

MAN #1

I feel the Commission want to influence decisions that would normally be up to producers or directors.

MAN #2

When they should be giving a wider range of support, resources, connections, distribution, all that. They won't even put a film on the NZ Film streaming site if they didn't largely fund it.

KIM

I heard that's changing.

MAN #1

Really? Good. I think if a filmmaker has proven themselves, with a successful short, or making their own feature, then they should get the support they need to take their work to the next level.

MAN #2

And their career.

MAN #1

...And their careers to the next level. Not keep tying people to the Commission's idea of what is...

He does air quotes.

MAN #1 (CONT'D)

"financially viable".

MAN #2

They say they want to have a conversation, but we have to engage with them in the way they want us to in order to gain their support.

MAN #1

If we want to play the game we have to play by their rules.

MAN #2

They need to take down the walls that make them unapproachable to first or second time filmmakers and meet us halfway.

They both nod.

7

EXT. CITY PARK (TEAM B) - DAY

7

Kim interviews Beth and Brian in a local park. A few business people hurriedly eat lunch or walk briskly past.

BETH

We went to a film festival in the USA and met some people, people who were making their own work without funding, they were inspired by Rodriguez and Herzog and Kevin Smith...

BRIAN

Kevin Smith in the early years....

BETH

Clerks, yeah, and they encouraged us to just go for it. Get ten grand together and go for it.

BRIAN

Though in retrospect they may have been meaning ten grand U.S.

BETH

Yeah, but they meant do everything on a budget, so we thought what the hell. And we're planning to crowdfund and utilise social media better than we have, really get a group of supporters around us who can help out. And we have people who will work for free...

BRIAN

I've been working on other projects for free so I can call in a lot of favors. Established filmmakers, you know. And we have a ton of great ideas for promotion. We want this to be a movie of and for the people. So we'll get a load of people involved with the making of it. If we can somehow write it so people can actually interact while we film. Keep it fun.

BETH

We want to get a local artist to do a big wall mural, which should help get some media attention, and we're starting our crowdfunding... Well, it was meant to be yesterday, maybe Tuesday.

BRIAN

We haven't designed the t-shirts yet, that's on the never-ending list of things to do. We're planning to crowdsource for things like artwork, and afterwards we'll sell props and wardrobe...

BETH

The stuff we didn't borrow, of course...

BRIAN

...to help fund post production. And I bought a RED camera, 'cause they cost so much to rent that we'll save money in the long run. Especially if we don't get it all filmed in the three weeks, and have to do pick-up shots, and stuff.

BETH

I don't think we'll ever feel completely ready, but at some stage you just have to say...

BRIAN

Fuck it.

BETH

Yeah, and you have to just go for it.

KIM

Can you tell me a bit about the film?

BETH

Ironically, I think we're calling it *Underdogs*. It's the film Brian has always wanted to make. It's based on people he knew back when he was at Uni and some of the things they got into. He was in a punk band and imagined himself living this alternative lifestyle.

BRIAN

And I think a lot of people feel like that, like they should break away from the mainstream and shun consumerism and patriotism and all that crap we're taught is important.

BETH

So it's about two worlds colliding. The male anarchist character who is into leaving no footprints and making street art and sort of 'sticking it to the man' meets this very consumeristic woman, and we see their lives through the other's eyes. The idea is to really make people think.

They look at each other and nod.

BETH (CONT'D)

Usually with our short films and music videos we both produce and direct. We've found it's kind of good to have someone share the load of producing, and to have someone to consult with and make decisions with when directing. And we both usually agree on whether a shot is good, or whether a performance is good or not. But this time Brian wanted to direct so I'll look after our girls a bit more and I'll direct the next one, right?

BRIAN

Right.

KIM

You've told me you also do some corporate video work, do you mind if I ask if you make enough money doing industry-related work to support yourselves and your other projects?

They both laugh.

BRIAN

No.

BETH

Well, nearly. But this is off the record. We supplement it with my part-time gardening work, and Brian shoots and sometimes edits other projects, paid work.

KIM

So what is it that compels you to keep making films if it doesn't pay enough to make a living?

BETH

Well, we hope eventually it will.

BRIAN

It's an addiction.

KIM

If you had to do something else...

Beth and Brian look at each other. They shake their heads.

BETH

Yeah. I can't imagine really doing anything else.

BRIAN

No. It just feels right.

CUT TO:

Light comes through the open window, silhouetting the two WOMEN in front of the camera.

WOMAN #1

I'm not in a position to be able to completely support myself yet, just with filmmaking. I'm on a benefit some of the time but even that's not enough to live on. I have to work under the table.

WOMAN #2

New Zealand isn't set up in a way that many people can make a living just making films. Any filmmaker that manages to make films, especially without Commission money, that's impressive.

WOMAN #1

It would be interesting to do a study into the backgrounds of the people who are championed by the Commission, did they come from wealthy families, good schools, extroverts, attractive, supportive parents, all that, it has to make a difference.

WOMAN #2

I reckon, and there must be other people with amazing stories to tell who just never get the chance.

CUT TO:

Kim's Macbook Pro is open with Skype running. The table is piled with books, pens, and papers. Kim records herself on her computer.

KIM

So I was meant to speak to Catherine at 11, and it's now past noon. I've sent an email. And a text. No response. My supervisor strongly recommended that I use her as my case study because she's a...

She does air quotes.

KIM (CONT'D)
... 'real' filmmaker, and someone
he met back when he worked for
Radio Hauraki or something.

Her phone pings and she checks it and reads the message.

KIM (CONT'D)
Sorry. Something came up. Will
have to reschedule. Maybe early
next week. Question mark.

CUT TO:

10 INT. DIANE'S KITCHEN (TEAM D) - DAY 10

A modern airy home on a hill overlooking the Auckland
harbour bridge. DIANE, 60, slides the signed contract
across the kitchen table. She looks out the window.

DIANE
That looks like Deirdre now.
Shall we wait 'til she comes up?

CUT TO:

DEIRDRE (late 50s) has joined them at the large polished
wood table. Kim has her iPhone recording sound.

DIANE (CONT'D)
I think I was just back from
Sundance, I was workshopping
another project there. You know
about that programme, right?

Kim nods.

DIANE (CONT'D)
An excellent programme if you
get the chance. But I realised
the political climate wasn't
right for that project. It was
about fracking and just as we
began pursuing funding the
government started an
investigation into the impact of
fracking, which was what we were
trying to achieve by drawing
attention to the issue, so I put
that on hold and went and had a
chat with Dave at the Film
Commission.

(MORE)

DIANE (CONT'D)

Of course he knew about the fracking project because I'd received a bit of early development funding and he must have figured at this point it was a bit of a non-starter, so he asked me to come down and have a chat, and I pitched a few projects I'd been tossing around and he liked the sound of this one, so I thought well, if you're going to spend a whole lot of time developing a film you want to have one that's got a bit of a tail wind.

KIM

And have you both worked together before?

DIANE

It's the first film we've co-produced. Deirdre was line producer on a project I worked on in New York...

DEIRDRE

And we met on a commercial you made back in the 90s.

DIANE

And then you went off to work on a couple of humanitarian documentaries, and were advising for projects for the UN...

DEIRDRE

We had been wanting to do a project together but were both really busy and it was never the right time.

KIM

Has it gotten easier to fund your films?

DIANE

If anything it's harder now. Investors used to see, they might make back five times what they invested, so it actually made sense. Then the market fragmented, VHS was invented, the international market fell apart, independent distributors were swallowed by big companies.

DEIRDRE

And that's what we have in New Zealand now, three or four foreign-owned companies that make most of the television drama with NZ on Air money.

KIM

Do funders try to influence your work at all?

DEIRDRE

It's a partnership.

DIANE

Exactly. They've put in the money and you've got the creative force, so it's a discussion.

DEIRDRE

Sometimes they will try to influence the direction a project is taking.

DIANE

It's hard, because you yourself as maker aren't necessarily able to articulate exactly what you are doing, especially at that stage. You know what river you're on and you know the waka you're steering, there's a map but nobody's been there before, and it's hard to describe territory you haven't visited yet. Because films are, all creative work is a process of exploration, and if it's not it's not creative.

DEIRDRE

The director's got it in their head.

DIANE

Well, they've got it in their heart, actually. And pulling it out of your heart and into your head is sort of what the creative process is I suppose. Because once it's in your head you can then articulate it to others, and then they can do their creative work, in a very clever creative system. Clever collaborative system, filmmaking.

KIM

So you always have distribution sorted before you start filming?

DEIRDRE

Oh, you have to. I've never made a film without a sales agent and a distribution plan. I mean you basically can't.

KIM

So you have all your funding in place before you start pre-production?

DEIRDRE

For this project, we've put together our crew, and we have a system of what we call phantom invoices, so everybody has invoiced us as they would normally, knowing they'll get paid on the first day of principal photography, if and when the film gets made.

DIANE

When...

DEIRDRE

Yes, we just secured the last of the production money last week.

DIANE

And we've cast most of our actors.

She gestures to a large wall covered with post-it notes and headshots of well-known New Zealand actors.

DIANE (CONT'D)

And our locations are...

She turns to another wall with images of locations.

DEIRDRE

Done, mostly. It's not location heavy.

DIANE

And our costumier is working day and night.

DEIRDRE

Mostly nights I think. She has kids.

KIM

Are there a lot of women with children making films?

DIANE

I have one daughter. She's grown now. It just sort of added a degree of difficulty. I was one of the first women filmmakers to have a child. I don't think being a parent is very easy anyway. We don't live in an age where parenthood is particularly valued. If you're a woman, as soon as you have a child, generally...

DEIRDRE

There's that... what's that phrase the African woman used...

DIANE

Yes, that really summed it up. She said, "we are punished for being the mothers of the human race", because the minute you're pregnant they don't bring out the bells and whistles and bring you great monetary gifts.

DEIRDRE

Once you have to stop work nobody particularly holds a spot for you.

DIANE

Basically it's difficult. It's no different if you're a filmmaker. However if you've got a supportive partner, and remember I was established as a filmmaker, I'd made quite a few documentaries and a feature film, a dramatic feature, that had made a bit of a splash so I was much more set up than a lot of women are these days having their babies after they've made two or three short films, so I was resourced. And I was able to shoot commercials.

DEIRDRE

We'll have a minute of silence for the God of Commercials here.

CUT TO:

Another woman's silhouette speaks in front of the bright open window.

WOMAN #3

People always talk about the exceptions. "Oh, no, we don't have a gender problem, look, there's Jane Campion and there's Niki Caro", and those exceptions make it even harder because the problem is obscured somewhat. If all the women producers said "we are going to take a year or three and only produce work by and about women" there would be a revolution. And that would be a truly beautiful thing.

CUT TO:

Kim's Macbook Pro is open with Skype running. The table is piled with a different assortment of papers, games, with a vase of cut flowers blooming in the middle of the mess.

KIM

Third time lucky.

She clicks Skype to start the call. It rings then clicks to connect, audio rather than video. A still promotional photo of CATHERINE (40s) appears on screen.

CATHERINE (O.S.)

Hello?

KIM

(Cheery phone voice)

Hi, it's Kim, thanks for making time for this, I know you're busy.

CATHERINE (O.S.)

Hello? Yes. I've had a look at your research consent form, and I think we need a clause so if anyone, the cast or crew, doesn't want footage of themselves used...

KIM

Well, at most I'd be taking audio recordings, but they're only for my use.

There's an awkwardly long pause.

KIM (CONT'D)

No one else will ever hear them.

CATHERINE

Okay, well I'll check with the director that he's not going to find it disruptive to have you on set.

KIM

Okay.

CATHERINE

And I still don't really understand what it is you are trying to do, but if you think this is a valid form of research...

KIM

Yeah, most people research films, but I'm more interested in filmmakers and practice.

CATHERINE

Hmm. Well, okay, I'll have another look at the contract and get back to you.

KIM

Okay, that would be great. Thanks so much.

CATHERINE

Okay, bye.

Kim hangs up and sighs, head in hands.

KIM

The one person my supervisor said I should include.

13

INT. LIBRARY - EVENING

13

Kim is at a desk, a pile of hardbound theses spread around her. She speaks quietly to her iPhone.

KIM

So I just had a meeting with my supervisors to catch them up with what I've been doing. I can't really say it went well.

(MORE)

KIM (CONT'D)

They want me to only follow one film, and to start writing my thesis now, even though I'm not really sure what to write at this point. I have to do a literature review, but how do I know what is important and what I won't end up using? So I'm here looking at other theses trying to work out what I'm meant to be doing.

She looks despairingly at the pile of books.

KIM (CONT'D)

I still don't understand, and I'm feeling really stupid.

She flips the one she's reading shut, rubs her face with her hands and sighs.

KIM (CONT'D)

They're all so different, and wordy and rambling. Some of them barely even make sense. I want to find out things that will actually help filmmakers make films, or develop their careers, or at least understand why they do what they do.

She stacks the hardbound theses beside her.

KIM (CONT'D)

I feel like I've been given a compass but no map.

CUT TO:

14 EXT. UNIVERSITY GROUNDS (TEAM A) - WEEKEND - DAY 14

Adam and his team have taken over a small internal road and parking lot of the otherwise quiet university campus. Actors mill about in outlandishly bright costumes as ABDUL and the crew set up the camera engraved with 'PROPERTY OF AOTEAROA UNIVERSITY'. Adam is dressed in the Lapwing costume, black boots, black lycra pants, white lycra top with a large yellow 'L' on the chest, and a green cape with hockey pads tied to the shoulders. He's helping ANDRE, an actor with brilliant orange hair and beard, into a chainmail vest several sizes too small for him. The small crew all wear jeans, Vans sneakers, and black puffer jackets.

ADAM

Do we have some rope or something we could tie the front together, like a corset.

ANDRE

My shoelaces?

ADAM

Won't your shoes fall off?

ANDRE

Maybe.

Andre sits down on a planter next to the camera and unlaces his boots.

ADAM

Abdul, how long 'til we roll.

ABDUL

Ten minutes, at least.

ADAM

(to Kim)

You want a tour of the sets?

KIM

Sure.

CUT TO:

15

INT. BLACK BOX THEATRE (TEAM A) - SHORTLY AFTER

15

They enter a large black room, black walls, black floor, black wooden boxes scattered about, black curtains partly cover a wall-length mirror. A long loop of silky blue fabric hangs from the ceiling almost to the floor.

ADAM

This is Mousegirl's den. She'll sit in that silk and we'll put mousetraps on the floor as her alarm system. We won't need to do a lot of set dressing because it's dark in a mousehole. We'll also shoot the last scene in here, I'll fall off one of those boxes, silhouetted by the spotlight, arms out, signifying death, or release, or something, and it will all be hazy, you know, to add production value, make it look like we spent a lot more than we have.

CUT TO:

16 EXT. STAIRS (TEAM A) - SHORTLY AFTER

16

Adam points to a flight of concrete steps. From the bottom nothing is visible behind the top step except clear blue sky.

ADAM

And this is the top of the building. We'll shoot it here using the sky as a blue screen, and it's exterior, so we don't have to worry about lights, and then in post we'll make it look like the top of the tallest building in a big city.

17 INT. STUDENT COMMON ROOM - SHORTLY AFTER

17

A tiny room is crammed with a few old chairs, and shelves and shelves of academic books no one wants any more.

ADAM

This is Doctor Curem's science lab. We'll empty this out and I have some sciency stuff from my stepmother who works over in Chemistry. Pretty cool, eh.

18 EXT. UNI GROUNDS (TEAM A) - SHORTLY AFTER

18

Adam walks back to set.

ADAM

Abdul, where's the smoke machine?

ABDUL

I thought you were taking care of that.

ADAM

No, I... No. Okay.

He grabs his cell and dials a number.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Hey, I was wondering if I could rent a smoke machine for tonight.

(beat)

Yeah, a hazer would be better. Okay, great. What time do you close?

(to Abdul)

Can we get someone to pick it up by noon?

ABDUL

Andre?

ADAM

Yep, great.

(beat)

Abdul, did you call security and ask them to turn off the fire alarm in the theatre?

ABDUL

No. They're not around on the weekend.

ADAM

How likely is it to go off?

(beat)

Okay, I'll get back to you.

He hangs up.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Shit, that's our money shot.

He sits down on the ground, leaning against the building, and shuts his eyes.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Let me think.

ABDUL

Can we fix it in post?

KIM

What about chalk? In a sock.

Adam looks up, confused.

KIM (CONT'D)

Do you have any chalk?

CUT TO:

19

EXT. UNI GROUNDS (TEAM A) - WEEKEND - NIGHT

19

Adam and Kim arrive at the next location with gear, followed by the rest of the small crew who are dragging their feet a bit.

ADAM

One more shot and we can wrap for the night.

KIM

Well, it's only been twelve hours.

Adam looks at his watch.

ADAM

Really? Feels like half that.
Did you find the chalk?

Kim tosses him a sock with a knot at the end. He catches it and a plume of chalk dust billows into the air and hangs there, like haze.

KIM

I used to do trapeze. We used chalk on our hands and it would send huge slow clouds down from the platform. Bang it around in the air before the shot.

ADAM

Resourceful. Sci-five.

He raises his hand in a Star Trek salute. Kim raises her hand in the same salute, and 'sci-fives' him back.

CUT TO:

20

INT. DARKENED ROOM - DAY

20

Another MAN's silhouette speaks in front of the bright open window.

MAN #3

My friend did all the sound, like, all his family were involved. The two young boys in the film were his nephews, his sister did our wardrobe, his Mum and Dad helped us with the locations. They're really close friends of ours, but he lives in Auckland now. He studied sound and we made some TV shows together so I got him on to do the sound stuff. He's like a multi-tool, one of those people who's so talented and smart, and like I said, the making of it, he did the whole sound mix in his room, basically in his lounge, and when they needed sounds they'd run outside and record cars driving off. I think someone actually recorded themselves literally weeing in the shower.

CUT TO:

Everyone is in their first positions, ready to roll, as Adam and Abdul fiddle with the camera. Kim checks her email on her iPhone. She hangs up and records a voice memo.

KIM

Write a consent form for Catherine with an out clause.

In the background Adam shouts...

ADAM

Quiet on set.

Kim taps her phone off.

ADAM (CONT'D)

And, action.

The actors begin the scene. Andre swings a plastic mace on a chain menacingly at a young girl in a 60s car. She trembles in terror, until Lapwing leaps into action, stops Andre, fights off several other bad guys using sports equipment as weapons, a lacrosse stick, a hockey stick, a golf club... The young girl runs out of shot, while Mousegirl throws mousetraps at the bad guys.

The scene ends with Andre on the ground, tangled in the chain of his mace, laughing maniacally.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Cut.

The cast and crew all laugh.

ADAM (CONT'D)

That was awesome! Let's get some close up shots, yeah?

Their dining room table is covered in papers and receipts. Brian and Beth sit in front of their two Mac computers.

Beth jiggles a grumpy, grabby six-month old on her knee as she tries to type.

BETH

Can you take her?

BRIAN

Not really. Put her in the bouncy thing Mum got her.

Beth's phone rings. She sighs, picks it up and leaves the room with the baby.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Crowdfunding sucks. It was so much work and our goal is only two thousand, which I guess sounds like a lot to people, but not when you think of how much we're spending.

KIM

So will you reach your goal?

BRIAN

Yeah, but we've had to email or message people individually asking them to pledge. Almost no one just saw the post on Facebook and pledged. And I'm beginning to feel sort of indebted to everyone already. And we had to run the campaign right before filming, 'cause we were told that's the best time, but now we're doing that *and* trying to prep for shooting. I'm thinking of pushing the start date a week.

Beth calls from the other room

BETH (O.S.)

We can't push it, this is the only time my parents can take the girls.

BRIAN

Oh yeah. And Bailey's off school, and we can't recast that role again last minute. I just want everything to be ready.

BETH (O.S.)

It'll be ready.

Brian takes his glasses off and rubs his eyes.

BRIAN

At this stage I need about another eight hands. I'm getting about three hours sleep at the moment.

KIM

You were trying to get in the paper or an industry magazine or something?

BRIAN

We've tried to get media attention but no one is interested. They just want to know when the film is going to be in cinemas, but we want to create a buzz now so we have a bit of audience momentum already when the film comes out. We were on the radio last week, at about 5:30 in the morning so no one heard it. And the local free paper ran a piece, where they misquoted us and made stuff up.

BETH (O.S.)

Apparently our premiere will be at the New Zealand Film Festival.

BRIAN

God, yeah, I specifically said we didn't know, and now I don't feel like we can share that article online because it makes us look overly optimistic and naïve.

KIM

Is it better to get the wrong kind of attention, or none at all?

BRIAN

Good question. I feel like we need to do some kind of media prank to get the press to notice us.

The baby starts to cry in a back room. Beth returns, shuts the door behind her and sits in front of her computer.

BETH

Bea starts tomorrow so that should make things easier. She's awesome, really knows what she's doing.

BRIAN

Bea volunteered to be our assistant. Beth, are you going south? Turn left at the red shop.

Kim looks puzzled. He spins his computer around to show Google Maps.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

I'm scouting locations in South Auckland.

(to Beth)

See that theatre? You think if we filmed there they'd screen for free?

BETH

Worth a try.

KIM

So do you have a strong sense of who your audience will be?

BRIAN

I think it will appeal to an ignored audience, punk counter-culture. It's the kind of thing I would have liked to watch when I was in Uni. I know some groups that will probably be keen to promote it, or at least stick it on their Facebook page. Though a lot of them don't use social media. I like the idea of putting up our own torrent, beat them to it since it's going to end up there anyway. I've heard of other films that have done that.

BETH

Not as our first method of distribution, though.

BRIAN

Yeah, I guess.

CUT TO:

23

EXT. ARTS CENTRE PARKING LOT (TEAM D) - DAY

23

Diane's assistant DELWYN (30) taps her phone as she waits by her car. She sees Kim approach.

DELWYN

Kim?

KIM

Hi.

DELWYN

Hi, I'm Delwyn, Diane's assistant. Diane's inside. Most of the cast arrived a bit early but you won't have missed anything.

Kim and Delwyn head for the arts centre.

KIM

Thanks.

DELWYN

So Diane starts getting a bit busy at this stage of production so probably best to contact me for info, times or directions and stuff like that, or if you need to set up interviews or anything.

KIM

Okay. Thanks.

DELWYN

I'll send you a call sheet each day, so just let me know if you're coming and I'll let security know.

24 INT. ARTS CENTRE CONFERENCE ROOM (TEAM D) - CONTINUOUS 24

Diane sits at the head of a long table (four tables pushed together). The cast sits around the table, heads of department in chairs around the outside of the room. Everyone has a new script, a pencil, and a bottle of water.

Delwyn takes a seat beside Diane.

DIANE

Oh, hi.

(to everyone)

Everyone, this is Kim. She's following the production as part of her film studies, so feel free to ask her about her research. It sounds quite interesting.

(to Kim)

Do you want to set up at the other end of the room? That way you can see everyone.

KIM

That would be great, thanks.

She quietly makes her way to a space left at the back of the room as the door bursts open and DAKOTA (29) bursts in.

DAKOTA

Hi everyone, I'm so sorry, a truck overturned and spilled watermelons all over the road, and everyone was driving sooooo slowly. Is this my seat? Hi everyone. Tracey, James, Alice, oh my God, It's so good to see you, it's been so long.

Everyone waves and greets Dakota.

She kisses Diane on the cheek and takes the only empty seat near the head of the table and leans to hug the actor beside her, and wave at other people she recognises.

DIANE

Okay, let's get started. Thank you all for being here, and being part of this project. As some of you know, it's been a labour of love for several years now, and this, us all here in one room for the first time, is one of my favorite moments, when we see it begin to come alive through the talent of our wonderful actors. It's also a chance to think about any problems, jot them down, and we can talk about them later. For now we'll just do a full read through, and have fun. Is everybody ready?

The group nod and respond 'yes'.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Great. I'll read the action.
Delwyn, you're on time.

Diane glances at her watch. Delwyn sets up her timer on her iPhone. Everyone turns to page 1. Diane reads the action briskly.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Exterior church, New Zealand, nineteen forty eight. A large crowd chatters outside a church. They're dressed in their finest, crisp shirts, pressed suits, hats, matching flowing dresses.

(MORE)

DIANE (CONT'D)

A little boy in an itchy brown wool suit wanders away from his parents and through the throng, touching the fabric of the women's dresses as he passes. He closes his eyes blissfully enjoying the sensory experience.

ALICE (AS MOTHER)

Michael!

CUT TO:

25

INT. UNI BUILDINGS (TEAM A) - DAY

25

Adam's team is filming a fight scene in the corridors. They are filming on an iPhone using available light.

Adam (as Lapwing) is attacked by would-be-assailants as he makes his way down the corridor, effortlessly taking out each attacker as he goes with his hands or his Monkey Fist weapon, a ball made of rope, swung on a rope.

The performances are theatrical, over the top, the attackers hamming it up and overacting their reactions.

ABDUL

Cut.

ADAM

Woo! How'd it look?

Everyone gathers around to watch the playback on the iPhone. They laugh, delighted with the performance.

ADAM (CONT'D)

That's awesome. Great. And I love that we can see your face, Scott, so it's really obvious we're reusing actors for different roles.

ABDUL

Looks great.

ADAM

And that, people, is a wrap!

Everyone cheers.

CUT TO:

In a quieter corner Adam speaks to Kim, iPhone recording in her hand.

ADAM

Yeah, it went really well. We found out yesterday that we couldn't borrow gear from Uni, which sucked a bit. The 48 Hour Film Fest is this weekend and ITS don't want people using the gear for that so they wouldn't let us have it either. I don't know why. You'd think the Uni would want students participating, practicing their craft, getting some attention for the university. So we filmed on Adam's iPhone. He already had Filmic Pro loaded, and an anamorphic lens, so it's probably just as good as the uni gear. We can't get the same shallow depth of field but we can play around with that in post, match the footage we already have.

KIM

So how are you feeling about it at this stage?

ADAM

I don't think there are a lot of people making films specifically for Armageddon so I doubt we'll have a lot of competition. You know the film festival was actually my idea. I contacted the organiser last year and suggested it, and told him how people can submit through FilmFreeway, and what to charge and all that. So as long as the film turns out okay I don't think there's any doubt we'll get in. Hey, we should have a wrap party, are you up for pizza?

(to crew off camera)

Is everyone up for pizza?

The crew mumbles that they all have plans.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Oh, yeah. I forgot it's the 48 Hours competition this weekend. Everyone's working on their friends' films. We'll catch up later. Hey, how was the readthrough with Diane's team?

KIM

It was amazing. The actors just made the whole story come to life.

ADAM

Cool.

KIM

Very cool.

CUT TO:

27

EXT. HUNTLY FARM/ROAD (TEAM B) - MORNING

27

A large billboard has been constructed in the middle of the paddock. It's a beautifully sunny day and the crew are all in jeans, sneakers, and printed t-shirts. Kim joins Brian on the side of the road where he stands with the hero van, which is painted with zebra stripes, and the camera van.

BRIAN

Hey, we've had a bit of a hold up.

KIM

What's up?

BRIAN

Well, Beth was going to get the props for today, but she didn't have time, so we're missing a few things.

KIM

Is she coming?

BRIAN

Yeah in about half an hour. Bea said she wouldn't get the van from downtown so Beth had to do that.

Kim looks to where BEA is chatting with the cast and eating a nutbar.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

As long as I get the billboard
fire shot today I'll be happy.
We've been trying with diesel
but it's not really catching.

KIM

Diesel isn't really a fire
accelerant. Can't Bea go pick up
kerosene or something?

BRIAN

She seems to have a very set
list of things she will and
won't do and I can't deal with
that right now.

KIM

Can you shoot something else
first and ask Beth to pick up
kerosene on her way to set?

CUT TO:

28

EXT. HUNTLY FARM/ROAD (TEAM B) - LATER

28

The cameras roll as BLAINE flicks a lighter under the
billboard and the whole thing goes up in flames. He picks
up his props, a paint tray and roller, and walks casually
out of the paddock towards the road. The cameraman, BEN,
checks the image on the monitor.

BRIAN

Woooo, that was awesome! Keep
rolling, we might use it.

They all applaud and watch the blaze.

BEN

How are we going to stop it
burning?

BRIAN

We're not. It'll burn itself
out. The grass is wet.

BEN

You hope.

BETH

I have the extinguisher in my
car if it gets out of control.

She does the Girl Guide three-fingered salute.

BETH (CONT'D)

Be prepared.

CUT TO:

29

EXT. STREET DOWNTOWN AUCKLAND (TEAM C) - DAY

29

Kim stands on the street corner watching the cast and crew arrive.

It's a sea of black puffer jackets, puffer vests, and printed t-shirts with on-trend messages. Across the street Catherine instructs crew. Though she's smiling no one else seems particularly happy. CINDY (20) touches Kim's arm.

CINDY

Hi. Um...

Kim turns to find Cindy beside her.

CINDY (CONT'D)

Hi, I'm Cindy, Catherine's assistant. Thanks for waiting, she's kind of busy right now, but...

CARLOS, 35, in a linen jacket and jeans, sneaks behind Cindy towards the actors' trailers.

CINDY (CONT'D)

Carlos!

CARLOS

I'll be five minutes, ten tops.

CINDY

(mutters)

Shit.

He runs up the stairs and disappears into one of the rooms in the trailer. Cindy and Kim turn when they hear Catherine's heels clip clop across the road.

CATHERINE

What's going on?

CINDY

Carlos said he'd be ten minutes.

CATHERINE

Christ! Can you get me coffee, please?

Catherine sighs as Cindy heads to the caterers.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Look, I was thinking you should have a chat with the behind-the-scenes camera op and access his footage. It'll be on the DVD.

KIM

Oh, okay, thanks. I think I'll still have to get some interviews though or my supervisors won't consider it's my own work.

Catherine looks at her watch.

CATHERINE

Well, it looks like I have ten minutes now. What do you want to know?

KIM

Oh, sure. Do you mind if I record sound?

CATHERINE

Yeah, that's okay.

Kim switches her iPhone to record sound only.

KIM

Maybe you could tell me a bit about this project, why you chose this story?

CATHERINE

It's based on a book by David Oncler, he's the executive director of the Writers' Guild, and I came across it in a store and thought 'this story has legs'. Have you read it?

KIM

I don't think so.

CATHERINE

Fantastic story. Though of course we had to change it a fair amount for the screen.

KIM

Have you worked with Carlos before?

CATHERINE

Carlos is fantastic. He's very passionate about his work. I've been following his career for a while and it felt like he'd be a good fit for this project. He *is* a good fit.

She glances at the trailer.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

He has such a vision. It's an honour to help bring that to the screen. We're very lucky to have him.

KIM

He sounds great. And how long has Cindy been your assistant?

CATHERINE

Oh, she just started. She's new. I think it's important to help out the next generation, help them get a foot in the door. Some people choose to get a formal education, but I'm not sure that helps. I was an art history major, so I didn't study film. Cindy studied marketing, not film at all. But she learns, she just sort of absorbs it by being around me, and the set, and seeing how things work. My assistants go on to work for big companies, one's in Hollywood, working for Disney, one's just starting her first feature, writing.

KIM

You don't think there's any value in film school then?

CATHERINE

I think it depends, but all the people, everyone I know, has worked their way up, starting at the bottom.

She turns to see Carlos leaving the trailer.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Excuse me. We'll catch up later.

KIM

Okay, thanks.

Catherine rushes to catch up with Carlos, links arms with him, all smiles, and escorts him to set.

A woman's silhouette speaks in front of the bright open window.

WOMAN #4

I can't say that film school is a waste of time. It depends on the school, the tutors, and what you bring to it yourself, in knowledge and energy and determination. Grit. They could be a lot better, really train people for the position they want, give them on-the-job training, connections, which couldn't be more important.

Diane's team has just broken for lunch. Cast and crew mill around the catering truck. Diane sits in a director's chair, ready to speak to Kim. Her assistant hands her takeout sushi, which she eats as politely as possible throughout the interview.

DELWYN

And just so you know, the Herald are waiting.

DIANE

Well, they're early, they'll have to wait. They probably came for lunch. Send them over to catering.

(to Kim)

Are we ready?

Kim taps her iPhone to record.

KIM

Yes. So, how's it going?

DIANE

It's going great. Our actors are fantastic, that's 80% of the puzzle right there. If your actors are good, and everyone's on the same page, it's hard to take a wrong step.

KIM

And the crew?

DIANE

We have a very talented, very experienced crew. I'm in a very fortunate position, I can call almost anyone and if they're not already committed they'll make time to help out. Dev, he's over there, just came off The Hobbit so we were very lucky to get him. I'm always very lucky as far as crew goes.

KIM

Do you have people who are less established as well?

DIANE

We do. We have paid interns, mostly young people, who would like to make films of their own. We need the next generation to be able to tell their stories, too.

KIM

I've heard some people at the top are reluctant to help others up.

DIANE

I hear people saying that and it's disturbing. I think the more people we have at the top the better it is for everyone. I think the top expands to make room. I don't think we can have too much talent, I really don't.

KIM

How did you choose this particular story?

DIANE

Well, it's a good story. It's been in the back of my mind for a few years, and it's based on a New Zealand icon, of course, and I guess the time was just right. I had a chat with Dave, from the Commission, about a few projects, and he liked this one. It's good to start with a bit of a tail wind.

KIM

A lot of people struggle with the Commission and feel they're not given a fair chance or are discriminated against...

DIANE

If you start with a project they're not keen on, and you keep trying to fix it to suit them, change this, tweak that, trying to get them on board, you can lose your own vision. And you'll make yourself mad. And we're all mad enough already without that, aren't we.

She laughs.

KIM

I've heard filmmakers use the word addicted to describe how they feel about filmmaking...

DIANE

I think you have to be or you wouldn't keep doing it. I tried not making films and it just didn't feel right. It didn't work.

Delwyn discretely waves to Diane.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Okay, I need to watch yesterday's dailies. Look, have a chat with Dev, he'll have some good information for you, I'm sure.

JUMP CUT TO:

32 EXT. VIDEO VILLAGE, WATERFRONT SET (TEAM D) - LATER 32

DEV is late 50s, scruffy salt and pepper hair, relaxed and confident. He sits comfortably in a folding set chair.

DEV

Whatever Diane has in mind, I'm on, she's such a great filmmaker, she's so, she's wild in her approach to the work. She changes her mind, it's always ticking over upstairs. She's always thinking about what we're doing next and you have to be on your toes because everything's gonna change all the time, I love that, I find it very energizing.

KIM

Why else do you love filmmaking?

He laughs.

DEV

How long have you got? I think... I've been thinking about an idea for a while, I call it the Zen of filmmaking. I was recording sound one night, middle of the night in winter, and I'm walking down the street in heels to get the sound of footsteps, and I'm in my underwear so I'm not recording the sound of my jeans, and I realised that I experience the world differently than any non-filmmaker. I hear the sound of a car that needs new brakes on the freeway nearby, and the last cicada of the season, and I've already noticed the vanishing point of the sidewalk, and the balance of light and dark as the streetlights illuminate pools of the road and the trees...

He gestures with his hands.

DEV (CONT'D)

...Sort of absorb the light, and I start thinking of mindfulness, and how filmmaking makes you more mindful of everything around you, like a clear continuous awareness of the moment that you are in. And on set when you have the day planned, and the scene planned, so you're thinking ahead, and about what you've already got in the can, but in that moment when you're filming you have to be present, in the moment, like it intensifies your consciousness, and you're more aware of the world, and how things affect other things. And when I realised this, in the middle of the street in my undies and heels, it was a big 'ahhhh' moment. Ahhhh, *this* is why I love my job.

KIM

That's cool. I hadn't thought of it like that before. Your job must have evolved over the years...

DEV

When I started I was pretty green. I started out as the youngest guy on set, just working my way up, and now I'm the oldest or among the oldest on set, and I think I can use it to my advantage. You have those years of experience that you don't even have to bring them up, it's just sort of self evident. I get listened to a lot more now.

KIM

Do you have any advice you give to beginning filmmakers?

DEV

Yeah, I think about this a lot. If they're starting out making their own stuff, I reckon production, especially low-budget production, should be dead simple. Forget the trucks and the cranes and the lights and all that crap. I think when you have more money you don't always do as good a job. I think it's the poverty that urges you forward and makes you make the cheap decisions, which if you're smart, become the good decisions, the right decisions. And you have to be good. I think it was John Barth who said, "In art like in lovemaking, heartfelt ineptitude has its appeal, as does heartless skill, but what you want is passionate virtuosity".

He grins.

DEV (CONT'D)

That's good, right?

CUT TO:

33 EXT. HARDWARE STORE (TEAM B) - DAY

33

The crew are set up to film around a recycling dumpster behind a hardware store. The ground is wet, the sky overcast. Water trickles loudly into a nearby drain. A stack of wooden pallets leans against the back of the store.

BRIDGET finishes BREE's makeup, using the roof of her car as a table.

Brian is pulling large sheets of opaque plastic out of the dumpster.

BETH
How's Bree going to get into the dumpster?

BRIAN
She can just climb over the side. It's not that hard.

BETH
In six-inch heels?

Brian looks at the dumpster, and at Bree's feet, and laughs. Beth starts dragging large wooden pallets over to the dumpster to make steps.

CUT TO:

34

EXT. HARDWARE STORE (TEAM B) - LATER

34

Blaine and Bree are in the dumpster. The sky is filled with puffy white clouds, and brilliant sunshine.

BRIAN
This is going to be hell to match in post. Now we've got shadows on their faces, sun in their hair...

BEN
We could just reshoot the whole scene with sun.

BRIAN
What if we use that big sheet of plastic, hang it up on the fence.

Together Brian and Beth straighten out the huge sheet of plastic. Brian reaches as far up the fence as he can. Not high enough.

BETH
What if you use a pallet as a ladder, it might be high enough. And I'll hold the other end of the plastic.

CUT TO:

Brian stands on top of a pallet leaned up against the wire fence by the dumpster. Together he and Beth hold the plastic out as a diffusion panel as they shoot the scene in the dumpster. Bree stands in the dumpster with Blaine and flicks through a stamp album.

BREE (IN CHARACTER)
I was named after a stamp you know.

BLAINE (IN CHARACTER)
Huh.

Blaine uninterested, climbs out of the dumpster.

BRIAN
And cut!

BEN
That's working really well.

CUT TO:

Brian talks to Kim as he packs up the RED camera and lenses into its hardcase.

BRIAN
It could have been a lost day, with the rain, and then the sun and clouds, which is a nightmare in post, but it actually worked out well. The location was great, cast were great. They've been improvising some of the dialogue that I wasn't completely happy with in the script. It's coming together really well. I'm starting to feel, and I don't even want to say this out loud, because I'm sure everyone thinks this about their own film, but it feels like we have a good chance to be the sleeper hit of the year.

KIM
Yeah, it seems like it's going to be really fun. Have you ever thought about why you like filmmaking so much?

BRIAN

I think it's because it's all the things I like to do rolled into one vocation, music, photography, writing. And it's all about problem solving, which is a lot easier to do when there are more people to do the work. When I'm directing and producing and doing the set and everything it gets a bit hard to think of everything and I start to feel like I'm not doing anything well.

He looks up from his camera to Kim.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

How are your other films going?

KIM

Good. I'm heading over to Diane's set tomorrow.

BRIAN

I could come and do camera, if you want to get some footage.

KIM

Okay, yeah, that would be great.

CUT TO:

37 INT. DARKENED ROOM - DAY

37

Another MAN's silhouette speaks in front of the bright open window.

MAN #4

It's creative. I get to be in control. And I don't get bored with it. I get bored with a lot of things. It's always different. It's challenging. It's intellectual. It's artistic. That sounds dumb, but it's everything because you're basically making a world.

CUT TO:

38 EXT. HARDWARE STORE (TEAM B) - SAME EVENING

38

Kim and Beth sit in the open boot of Beth's station wagon. Kim balances her iPhone on her knee to record.

BETH

Well, it's a bit crazy at the moment, for me, anyway. On one hand it's less stressful since Bea left, 'cause that was... Well, we just didn't ask her to come back. But that means I have to do everything, get meals, make sure there's enough food on set, organise props, wash wardrobe, drive the van, everything. And I'm exhausted every night, which is okay, it's a good tired, but then Brian tells me all the changes he made or pieces he cut out and I have to do rewrites and try and make everything work while he sorts the video files and backs everything up. I don't know what I would have done if my parents couldn't take the kids this month. I think I'll have to bring them when we're shooting pick up shots though.

39

INT. THEATRE (TEAM D) - DAY

39

The theatre is dressed for a show, the interior of a spooky castle. The front of the house is packed with extras, the cast in heavy makeup, some in drag. Brian chats with Dev as they both adjust their cameras.

DEV

Yeah, it sort of has a documentary feel to it, to kind of heighten the sense of reality, primarily in terms of camera movement, a lot of hand-held and Steadicam.

BRIAN

Cool, we've been using a Glidecam but it still looks awesome.

DEV

Yeah, it's a great look. But this tracking shot, followed by the crane shot into close-up will feel really intense, the contrast, you know?

BRIAN

Yeah, yeah. What's that lens?

DEV

It's great, eh. I've got a bunch of these vintage lenses, even though we're shooting digital, they have these interesting imperfections that give the feeling of the 70s without it being a conscious thing. Look.

Dev gestures for Brian to look through the eyepiece.

BRIAN

Cool.

Diane walks by.

DIANE

(to Kim)

You guys doing okay?

KIM

Yeah, great. Brian came to shoot some stills for me if that's okay. He's filming his feature at the moment, too.

Brian shakes Diane's hand.

BRIAN

Brian Johnson.

DIANE

Oh, you're doing the Dogs...

BRIAN

Underdogs, yeah.

DIANE

I heard about it. Our makeup artist worked with yours on *The Hobbit*. Sounds interesting.

BRIAN

Oh, Thanks.

She heads up to the stage.

DEV

So I need a camera assist for the rest of the shoot if you're interested. Diane fired mine this morning for being a grumpy old bastard.

BRIAN

Really?

DEV

Yeah, oh it was the right thing to do. Every time she changed the shot he'd grumble and moan, so she asked me if I minded, and gave a big speech in front of the crew after he'd left, about how filmmaking was a privilege, and that she's made 12 films, or however many, and she wanted to be there and she expected the crew to want to be there and give it their all, otherwise no hard feelings, they could go and do something else. She said it better than I just did.

BRIAN

Respect.

DEV

Yeah, so if you're interested.

BRIAN

Man, I'd love to, but I really need to finish *Underdogs*. If you asked me two months ago, or two months from now.

DEV

Yeah, of course. Well make sure you give me your info before you leave.

Brian pulls out his business card.

DEV (CONT'D)

Great, I'll keep hold of this.

40 INT. HOME - NIGHT

40

Kim, in her pj's, records a voice memo on her iPhone.

KIM

I keep hearing indie filmmakers saying they want to keep control, or that they're worried funders will try to take control of their project, make them change it somehow. But it seems like Diane has managed to do both, she's secured funding from lots of different places, and kept creative control.

(MORE)

KIM (CONT'D)

Now I'm not suggesting this is easy for her, but it makes me wonder if there's a sweet spot, where you're not having to do everything yourself like no-budget filmmakers because you don't have the money to pay people, but you're also not having to jump through hoops to get money from the Commission when you'd be better off using that time and energy to make your film. Like it's a balance between support and control. Diane can afford competent heads of department, and they want to work with her, and they take over a certain amount of control and responsibility, but they're still helping her create her own vision, which leaves her with space, in her head more than anything, to do what she needs to do.

She stops, and thinks.

KIM (CONT'D)

So is it really control filmmakers are seeking, or lack of interference? There's something to that, but I reckon there's more.

She taps the iPhone off.

CUT TO:

41 INT. BRIAN'S GARAGE (TEAM B) - DAY FOR NIGHT 41

Heavy drop cloths cover the windows at each end of the garage making it almost pitch black. Beth sneaks into the dark garage carrying plastic bags filled with takeout food, followed by Kim. Brian's camera is set up in one corner where Blaine and Bree sit cuddled together on the 'set' Brian's created - a mockup of the interior of the van they used for the film.

BETH

(whispers)

Lunch.

BRIAN

Great, thanks. We're almost done.

KIM

Short day.

BRIAN

And hopefully the last day.
Look.

He swivels the small monitor on the top of Brian's RED camera so she can see. He holds a print out next to the monitor; it's the matching shot from three weeks earlier in the van. They look almost identical.

KIM

That's amazing, you'd never know. Impressive.

Brian laughs.

BRIAN

Thanks. They rented the van to someone who took it to the South Island and they don't know when it will be back.

Loud little footsteps stomp across the floor above them.

BETH

They should settle down. They're watching The Lion King.

Brian picks up the boom and tries to balance the camera and angle the mic over Blaine. Beth takes the boom from him.

BRIAN

Thanks. I mostly want the sound of his clothes.

BETH

Okay.

Beth holds the boom over the action. Bree scoots down so her head is in Blaine's lap and closes her eyes.

BREE

Mmm, comfy.

BRIAN

Okay, rolling. Action when you're ready.

Bree pretends to be asleep, as Blaine tries to get his legs out from under her without waking her, and get comfortable in a tiny space so he can sleep. He can't, it's impossible, but he is determined to do it, as awkward as it is.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

And cut.

Blaine and Bree laugh.

BETH
That was great.

BRIAN
And that's a wrap. For the whole
movie.

They all clap, somewhat anticlimactically.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
I feel like we should have a
wrap party now, but we should
probably do it when everyone
else can come.

BREE
Yeah, we could go for drinks.

She checks her phone and smiles.

BREE (CONT'D)
Oh, I'm busy. But we should
definitely do drinks soon.

KIM
I have to head to the other set,
it's their last day too, wrap
party and all.

Brian looks up, interested.

CUT TO:

42 INT. BRIAN'S GARAGE (TEAM B) - DAY FOR NIGHT

42

Diane and the crew work in the background as Kim
interviews the producer, Deirdre.

DEIRDRE
In the Commission's defense, it
must be very hard to separate,
which is why I think they count
on the people who have a track
record. It must be very hard to
separate the people who are pure
dreamers and who have no
possibility of achieving their
dreams, and people that actually
have the wherewithal, the mental
wherewithal to complete a
project as described.

(beat)
And it's hard for filmmakers,
too.

(MORE)

DEIRDRE (CONT'D)

You nurture this baby, getting to know it, helping it develop, and then there comes a point where you have to collaborate, with other people, with funders, and all of a sudden these other people are here helping raise the baby. You really have to learn to open your mind and let conflicting ideas in, know when other ideas are actually better, and when to stick to your guns. It's hard to... not let go, but let other people have a hand without the director losing her vision, that thing that made her passionate about it in the first place.

In the distance an A.D. shouts.

A.D.

Quiet on set!

The camera dollies in to the two actors sitting on the theatre steps. Extras are sent through the frame by the Second A.D. It's too far away to hear the dialogue. The actress stands and walks sadly out of frame.

A.D. (CONT'D)

And cut.

Dakota spins around and stamps her foot theatrically.

DAKOTA

Damn it, sorry, can we do that again?

A.D.

Going again.

The actors and crew move back to their first positions.

DEIRDRE

(to Kim)

It's high stress. Especially today. We have to wrap, we lose our lead actor to another show, and we are already slightly over budget. Not a large amount, but, we have to finish today. We will. She always pulls it together.

KIM

And then you're straight into editing?

DEIRDRE

Actually, now we take six months off. I like to build a huge break into the edit schedule if at all possible. That way Diane will be in a better position to remake the film in the edit suite. If she went straight into it she'd still be trying to make the film she saw as a director, and it's very hard to let go of that if you don't have any opportunity to get perspective. You kind of need to heal from the shoot process, get over what you thought your film was going to be, and come back fresh and look at what you've actually made and go 'okay, we can now make the best possible thing we can make because I'm not going to be getting in my own way anymore'. And you can't do that on someone else's time frame, if you've got funders breathing down your neck.

A.D.

Quiet on set!

CUT TO:

43 EXT. AUCKLAND BAR (TEAM D) - NIGHT 43

Brian is standing in front of the bar when Kim arrives. Crew members mill around drinking and laughing.

BRIAN

Hey.

KIM

You came.

BRIAN

Sure. Why not?

44 INT. AUCKLAND BAR (TEAM B) - CONTINUOUS 44

The bar is packed, standing room only. Considerably more people than just the cast and crew that were on set. Kim makes her way through the crowd to the bar. She turns to find Brian has already found people to chat with.

She takes a glass of wine from the pre-poured selection on the counter and heads out the back door into the courtyard. It's a lot quieter outside. She squints into the darkness in one corner and sees Carlos and Bree standing very close in the shadows. She ducks back inside and finds Brian surrounded by a group of people. She taps him on the shoulder.

KIM

Did you know Bree knows Carlos Garcia, the director?

BRIAN

No. Not surprising though. Everyone seems to know everyone around here.

CUT TO:

45 INT. DARKENED ROOM - DAY

45

Man #4's silhouette speaks in front of the bright open window.

MAN #4

I found recently in Auckland, and maybe it's like this in other cities like Wellington, too, I found everybody kind of knows each other, so it's often, like one degree of separation from each other. At any event you might meet one or two new people, and then if you go to another event and meet one or two people and they're all best friends but you didn't know. So in Auckland I feel like it's really small and interconnected. Which can be great, when it works for you, but if you're not in the group... and it can take just one person to sort of veto your inclusion. So that's why I'm careful what I say about people, you never know whose friends with whom.

CUT TO:

46 INT. BRIAN'S OFFICE (TEAM B) - DAY

46

Brian sits at his desk editing on his Mac with his headphones on. Kim knocks on the open door.

KIM

Hey.

Brian spins around.

BRIAN
Hey. Oh, hey, I didn't hear you
come in.

KIM
So, how's it going?

BRIAN
Good, you want to see?

CUT TO:

47 INT. BRIAN'S OFFICE (TEAM B) - LATER 47

Kim, Brian and Beth sit around the computer monitor as
the credits roll.

BRIAN
Well, what do you think?

KIM
Awesome. How did you get
permission to shoot at
parliament buildings?

BRIAN
Well, technically we weren't
allowed the cameras on their
property, but our actors were
allowed on the grounds, and we
had long lenses.

Kim laughs.

KIM
Good thinking. It's great. The
acting, the story, the
production values...

BRIAN
Yeah, we have almost all the
footage we need, just a few
insert shots, and I can do some
of them myself, like cutaway
shots of hands, I just wear the
actors clothes and use my hands.
Sound...

BETH
Needs work.

KIM
Do you mind if I record this?

Kim pulls out her iPhone and puts it on the desk.

BRIAN

Yeah, sure. And we found a few plot holes. Because we were changing stuff on the go it was a bit hard to hold it all together in my head.

BETH

That's probably the biggest problem. And continuity...

BRIAN

Yeah, I don't know what we can do about that except cut scenes. Bree's appearance is meant to get scruffier and scruffier as the story progresses, and did you spot that shot at the end and her hair is suddenly great...

BETH

I guess we just hope no one notices.

KIM

So what do you have left to do?

Brian points to a huge whiteboard covered in headings and lists.

KIM (CONT'D)

Ah.

BRIAN

Twenty-four visual effects.

BETH

So much for only five.

BRIAN

That was the limit I allowed myself preproduction.

KIM

But you have friends who can help with some of the post, right?

BRIAN

Yeah, Brent kind of did the assemble edit and then got busy again. He's working on, oh, you know her, on Catherine's show.

KIM

Oh.

BRIAN

Yeah.

(beat)

It's okay. I helped him make his first feature so I was kind of counting on him, you know, but he can't turn down work, and since he's working six days a week he wants to spend Sunday with his partner. I have a couple of friends who do visual effects who owe me favours because I worked for them free. If they can do the hardest stuff I might be able to get students to do some of the easier shots. Maybe for their portfolio.

BETH

And I'm back at work now, not that I'm any good with post, really.

BRIAN

And I'm looking after the girls during the week, so... And I'll probably have to get a part-time job. We have insurance and stuff to pay, but I can still work on this in the evenings. I break it up into pieces I can do if I have a small amount of time and just get one piece done at a time.

He looks back to the monitor, and bites the inside of his cheek.

CUT TO:

48 INT. DARKENED ROOM - DAY

48

Another man's silhouette speaks in front of the bright open window.

MAN #5

I'd like to pay people if I can, up front, because filmmakers can be abused and the hours are long and it's a lot to ask of people even though it's a really fun process to do. A lot of people aren't looked after in the film industry and it's something that I'm quite passionate about, so I'd like to do it again, maybe with money, maybe without.

(MORE)

MAN #5 (CONT'D)

I do so much work for no money
and then sometimes you get paid
money and it's good but I just
like doing interesting and cool
and consciousness-raising
things.

CUT TO:

49 INT. ADAM'S LIVING ROOM (TEAM A) - NIGHT

49

Adam sits on the floor with his Mac balanced on his lap. It's hooked up to his 40" Sony Bravia so he can edit. He leans back against the couch and sighs.

ADAM

I think I felt this way with our
last film, too, at about this
point, when everyone has gone
back to work or uni or whatever
and I'm sitting here at night
editing. I mean, I love it, but
you know, everyone else gets on
with life and just waits for it
to be done, you know?

He gestures to the TV.

ADAM (CONT'D)

The story's strong, but I'll
have to get everyone back to ADR
their lines, one at a time
because everyone's busy, and I
think I'll have to rebuild the
sound, like, all of it. Maybe
fill it in with free music, like
from those online sites.

He sighs, and looks up at Kim and nods to her iPhone.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Maybe I should redo this
interview, be a bit more
positive.

CUT TO:

50 EXT. COFFEE SHOP (TEAM D) - DAY

50

Kim sits at a table on a quiet side street in downtown Auckland. She records herself on her iPhone.

KIM

Think about why Catherine doesn't want me on set this week. I could not have been any more inconspicuous.

(beat)

Try calling Brian's editor, ahhhhh... Brent since he's working on Catherine's film now and might know the inside scoop.

She takes a sip of coffee.

KIM (CONT'D)

Remember to check their Facebook page. And look for articles online after it's released.

(beat)

Think about if her lack of communication isn't something I can use somehow. And look up something like truth in interviewing. If it's even possible to discover people's real beliefs and opinions, the things they never say...

She looks up and waves as Diane makes her way over with coffee. She turns off her phone as Diane takes a seat.

DIANE

I love this part of town, doesn't it remind you of Europe? So how is your project going? Are you getting everything you need for your study?

KIM

Yeah, more or less. I have one group who asked me not to come to set because of some secret plot twist or something but it didn't seem...

DIANE

Is that Catherine's team?

KIM

Yeah.

DIANE

Don't take it personally. They've had a few problems, but I can't really say if she doesn't want to make it public.

KIM

Sure, I thought I'd done something...

DIANE

No, don't blame yourself. There's always more going on under the surface that you can't see. Always. Just focus on what you do have. And remember, sometimes when it feels people are being unhelpful they might be inadvertently giving you information you didn't even know you were looking for.

KIM

I was just thinking that exact thing.

DIANE

Well, we're all storytellers, aren't we. We don't want to look like we're struggling, or incompetent, or out of control. An audience doesn't want to hear that. Except perhaps after the fact, and then you can talk about the challenges you faced and had to overcome, then you're highlighting ability, not lack. It's kind of like we're not just creating one story, it's two, or a trilogy. You have the story you're telling, that's your script, though that changes to some extent along the way. Then there's the story you tell when you're getting people on board, why you want to make that particular story, why you fell in love with it. Then you have the story of making it, and you decide what you want to tell and what you want to omit, that's what she's doing now. And lastly your own personal story, that's ongoing and it helps you get work in the future, or not. So it's a quadrilogy, at least.

KIM

Sometimes it feels like I could get as much information from reading articles about films as by interviewing filmmakers?

DIANE

A lot of it would be the same, I'm sure.

(MORE)

DIANE (CONT'D)

We just repeat our stories over and over when they seem appropriate, and even if they are only part fact they feel true after the twentieth telling. You might get different stories in person, it probably depends on the person. Although the amount of times I've been misquoted in the media I guess I'd rather people come directly to me for information than read newspapers or magazines.

KIM

You know, every other project is having troubles. Some bigger than others, but you seem to have everything under control all the time.

Diane laughs.

DIANE

I'm glad it looks that way, it doesn't always feel it.

KIM

But comparatively. Your crew is great, your cast shows up on time and does a fantastic job, your locations are organised and you have all your permits...

DIANE

Well, a lot of that is experience, and having an experienced team who know their jobs and what their responsibilities are. Some is just money, which enables us to buy our way out of difficult situations if necessary. The film becomes my life for months. I neglect my friends and family, and of course a lot of the problems that do come up are kept from me, especially once we start filming. That's part of Deirdre's job, to deal with all that so I can concentrate on directing. But it's all still an awful lot of work.

CUT TO:

Kim calls Brian on Skype. His image appears on the screen.

BRIAN

Hi.

KIM

Hey.

BRIAN

How's it going?

KIM

Ugh, my supervisor just gave me a stack of semi-related journal articles to read and, like, give a report on some at our next meeting.

She picks up the phonebook-thick stack of printed paper beside her to show Brian.

KIM (CONT'D)

It feels like busy work because he wants me to stop following the films and start writing.

BRIAN

Writing what?

KIM

Exactly.

She drops the pile on the floor with a thunk.

KIM (CONT'D)

So, what's new?

BRIAN

Okay, so the Commission woman I met at the industry thing in Auckland said we should apply for funding right away, right?

KIM

Yah.

BRIAN

Like that week, and she said she'd be able to get it through really fast because it was such a small amount it didn't have to go to a committee, just twenty-five grand.

KIM

Yep.

BRIAN

So, we did all the paperwork and Beth called theatres all over the country asking if they'd screen *Underdogs* in February, and 27 of them said 'yes', because, you know, we had to have our distribution plan in place. So we wrote it all down and put in the paperwork and waited. And she didn't get back 'til now and it's been...

He squints at the screen.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

...Over a month. And then she said we have to get written confirmation that two theatres in three cities will screen five times, or something. Beth reckons it's almost impossible to get theatres in cities to screen because they're all tied to chains and they're screening blockbusters, or have contracts with distributors dictating that they have to play their films. And the letters have to say the date and time of the screening, which isn't for three months and they... some of the theatres don't schedule more than a week in advance.

Kim shakes her head.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

It makes me feel like we're considered untrustworthy. Is it common practice for filmmakers to make stuff up just to get funding and then use the money to go on vacation or something? Are they just trying to find a reason not to support us? It's such a tiny amount of money compared with what they give to other projects. And now we have to waste more time jumping through these added hoops, it hardly seems worth it.

CUT TO:

Man #1's silhouette speaks in front of the bright open window.

MAN #1

I would try to avoid the mainstream public sources of funding, find some way to avoid having to deal with them, just in terms of getting something made. I don't want to be quoted on that, but I reckon if you want to get something made... you might want to first, or maybe at the same time, see if you can find an alternative way.

CUT TO:

Kim walks as she records voice notes on her iPhone.

KIM

Google how to get a PhD. Google what is a PhD... and how to write a thesis. And how can a straight-A student struggle at PhD level.

She drops her face into her palms and sighs.

Kim sits in the shade, flicking through a pile of library books. Adam flips down beside her.

ADAM

You're looking too happy.

KIM

Ha. I might have a new supervisor. I had a meeting with the... something of postgrad and she's found someone who might...

She does air quotes.

KIM (CONT'D)

"Be a better fit". He's already given me homework, and it's already been more helpful than the past two years.

Adam's cell phone 'pings'. He checks his phone.

ADAM
Shit. We didn't get into
Armageddon.

KIM
Geez, that sucks.

ADAM
I told you the guy decided he
only wanted films less than ten
minutes, and Lapwing is fourteen
minutes. I said I'd cut it down
and he said submit it as is so I
figured he'd just take it.

KIM
Yeah, especially since you gave
him the idea for the festival.

CUT TO:

55 INT. DARKENED ROOM - DAY 55

Woman #3's silhouette speaks in front of the bright open
window.

WOMAN #3
Festivals don't work for the
filmmaker anymore. Like, for the
New Zealand International Film
Festival you have to have
somebody to advocate for you.
And I've been really outspoken
about the festival, so I imagine
there's no way I'll ever get a
film shown there.

CUT TO:

56 INT. BRIAN AND BETH'S LIVING ROOM (TEAM B) - NIGHT 56

Brian, Beth and Kim watch the TV, computer hooked up to
the monitor. The end credits roll. Brian leans over and
flicks it off.

KIM
Wow, it's looking so much
better.

BRIAN
It'll be even better once we get
money for the colour grade and
sound mix.

BETH
Have you shown anyone else?

BRIAN
Just Brent, why?

BETH
I'm wondering if there's
something that doesn't quite
work, but it might just be me.
(to Kim)
What do you think?

BRIAN
Like, what?

BETH
Something about the beginning
and the end seems a bit
confusing.

BRIAN
I like it. And we can't really
do anything about it now.

BETH
Did you think about editing so
Blaine comes in right at the
beginning? It's like that's when
the movie really starts, when he
appears. Maybe it's 'cause I'm a
girl but that's when the story
starts to really draw me in.

BRIAN
We just don't have time. We have
to have the finished edit in to
the post-production house by
mid-December, if we get the
funding. And we'd have to change
all the premiere dates.

BETH
Yeah...

BRIAN
We can't ask everyone to come
back and reshoot anyway. And I
need to find work.

A toddler starts to cry in another room and Beth leaves.

KIM
What kind of work are you
thinking?

BRIAN
Whatever I can get. I wish I'd
taken that camera assist job
with Dev now.

KIM

Do you know Diane's editor?

BRIAN

I don't think so.

KIM

Remind me to give you her number. Any word from the Commission?

BRIAN

I called, she was out of the office, or out of town or something. I don't want to call too much, I think she's getting annoyed about me bugging her.

KIM

It is her job...

BRIAN

Yeah... Oh, I heard back from that big-shot reviewer guy, the one I asked to review *Underdogs*.

He brings the email up on his phone.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

He wants to know 'how extensive the release is and whether it's a Big Deal Official Film Commission Thingy', that's all in caps, 'or an Enthusiastic, No-Budget Independent'. Then, and this... I just can't even... He says, 'I generally have a moral obligation to review the Big Deal Official Film Commission Thingy's but these days there are so many Enthusiastic, No-Budget Independents around, often shot on people's phones backed by their Visa cards, that I have to be a bit picky'.

KIM

A moral obligation? Like, bound by his religious views, or what he considers to be the morally correct course of action?

BRIAN

And I called Madman and Vendetta and Transmission and Rialto and they all said they don't deal with this genre. I guess they think punks don't watch movies.

Beth returns carrying their crying daughter.

BETH
Or don't pay for them.

BRIAN
Yeah. Which I guess is true.
(beat)
I can't see how we're going to
be ready for the premiere. We're
going to have to push it.

57 INT. KIM'S CAR (TEAM C) - DAY

57

Kim's phone rings from its holder on the dashboard. She flicks on speakerphone.

KIM
Hey Brent, what's up?

BRENT (O.S.)
Are you sitting down?

KIM
Well, yes.

BRENT
They fired Carlos.

KIM
Whoa.

BRENT (O.S.)
Yeah, it had been really weird,
the actress not turning up at
her call time, and Carlos has
been all demanding, like he made
them make one prop about six
times because it wasn't perfect
and it cost thousands. Well,
turns out they were sleeping
together...

KIM
Huh.

BRENT
...which was apparently fine,
until it wasn't fine. I don't
really know what happened, but
then she refused to work with
him, and he... half the time he
couldn't focus on the film and
the other half he was making
ridiculous demands.

(MORE)

BRENT (CONT'D)

The shoot was just dragging on and they were going way over budget, so she fired him. They can make the film without the director but not the lead actor.

KIM

Wow. Who's directing the last week?

BRENT

The D.P.

KIM

Well, that makes sense.

BRENT

Crazy times, man.

58 INT. KIM'S DINING ROOM - DAY

58

Large white A2 pages line the walls. They're covered with different coloured text, diagrams, arrows, symbols. Pages are headed Team A, B, C, and D, and "struggles", "distribution", "festivals", "interviews", and "Funding", with scrawled notes under each.

She writes, "hoops" and, "helping or hindering" on the Funding page, and "What's different?" on Team D's page.

She adds another page and writes, "Control?" in big letters. Under that she writes, "minimal interference" and "outside interests".

She takes a deep breath, then adds a new page. "Identity". Under the title she writes, "reinforcing/negating" and "autonomy".

Then she steps back and looks at the colourful wall.

She cuts a strip of paper and writes, "Idea Quilt", then tacks it to the top of the wall.

She sits in her office chair and just looks at the "Quilt".

CUT TO:

59 INT. EDIT SUIT (TEAM D) - DAY

59

Kim enters the small dark room. It has two computers, each with multiple monitors. Diane sits with her editor at one computer. Brian sits at another.

KIM

Hey, how's it going?

BRIAN

Great. I wish I'd done this before I edited *Underdogs*.

KIM

(to Diane)

Is it okay if I record this?

DIANE

Sure, of course.

Kim sets her iPhone on the desk and sets it to record.

BRIAN

Did you hear Carlos was rehired to do post as soon as they wrapped?

DIANE

Of course he was. He's fabulous, but they had to make a decision that would let them finish the film. It's hard to get a group of creative people to work on a big project like this, that can span many years, and for them all to get along all the time. You can't. You're lucky if you can get a director and producer who want to work together on a subsequent project. It's hard work. It's like a marriage, and sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn't. You have to find the people who you work best with and hold on to them.

KIM

Good advice. So how's it going?

DIANE

Well, the first time I look at an edit I almost always hate it. It must be something about what I imagined I was making, and what we've actually captured. They always feel worlds apart, and sometimes you think "what am I doing pretending to be a filmmaker? I can't do this at all". But then you go away and you think, "I could cut this" or "I could move that there" and slowly it all comes together.

KIM

So once you get back into it do you enjoy this part?

DIANE

I really do. Sometimes I dread it, until I get here and we'll start working and all of a sudden I'll look up and 5 hours will have passed. And it seems redundant to even say it, but you make your film again in the edit suite. You make it three times, first when you write it, then when you shoot it, then again when you edit. And the three stages are all almost independent, of course they're not, but it can feel like it.

60

INT. KIM'S DINING ROOM - DAY

60

The printed sheets are still tacked to the wall, along with more notes, memos, and a "mantra to remove obstacles" clipped out of a magazine. The large wooden table is covered in papers, notes, library books, and several empty teacups.

Kim scoots over to the wall of papers, still seated in her office chair. She picks up Denzin's book *The Qualitative Manifesto* and flicks through to some of the pages where she's inserted tabs.

On a new sheet of paper she writes, "Denzin's Mystory" followed by "balance - PhD/Creativity".

She picks up Seligman's *Flourishing*, flicks through for tabbed pages and adds, "Why do filmmakers make films? = Flourishing?"

She lifts a big book with both hands, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. She flicks through to Ellingson's chapter.

She draws a graph, "ART" at one end, "SCIENCE" at the other, and a bell curve between the two. She titles the page "Crystallisation - a continuum", then writes "RESEARCH" in big letters over the whole graph.

On a large sheet that has a list of chapters, "lit review", "methodology", "chapter 1" etc, she writes, "PhD = archplot structure?", then pushes her chair back to ponder the wall. She leans forward and draws a line through the "=" to make it read "not equal to". She takes the page down, pauses, then screws it into a ball and tosses it into the rubbish bin.

Another page has a graph with "filmmaker career levels" at the top. The levels below are, "focus", "exploration", "independence", and "establishment". She pauses, then picks up her iPhone to take a memo.

KIM

This whole career stages thing, I wonder if it's the same for academics. They learn how to do it as an undergrad, exploration is the PhD stage, independence is when they are a lecturer and trying to do everything right. But then some of them want to start thinking about doing things a bit differently. Take risks instead of just protecting their job. And that's the next level.

61 INT. BRIAN'S OFFICE (TEAM B) - DAY

61

Kim sits down in the spare chair in Brian's office.

BRIAN

Hey, good news. We finally got the grant.

KIM

Really?

BRIAN

So I'm getting the files ready to go to the post-production house and they'll get the foley started a-s-a-p, and I'll get Bree and Blaine in to do their ADR next week.

Beth sticks her head around the door as she passes, arms full of laundry.

KIM

So all that calling theatres and getting letters paid off.

BETH

Well, except off the record, when I asked the theatres for letters of confirmation on their business letterhead, a lot of them just emailed back something like 'Sure, we can screen *Underdogs* in February'. Not on their letterhead, not with a time and date, so I made them up. I took their logos off their websites and made them a letterhead, and picked times and dates.

BRIAN

It's not like we're not going to screen at those theatres.

BETH

That's what I figured. It was a ridiculous hoop requested by someone who doesn't seem to know how things work in the real world.

She heads to the laundry room across the hall.

BRIAN

And we've had to struggle to work out how to do everything. Like DVD distribution. And another thing that would unlock post-production money was proof of acceptance into film festivals or having DVD distribution, right? So we had to send the unfinished film to festivals and DVD distributors, and festivals aren't cheap to enter, and we said that it wasn't finished but would they be interested, 'cause they said they'd look at rough cuts, but of course they weren't interested because they have all these completed films to choose from. And that was our one chance for the film to make a good first impression.

KIM

So do you have a plan for distribution other than the theatre run?

BRIAN

Unfortunately, it took so long for this funding to be approved we can't apply for the distribution fund because you have to do that three months in advance of the premiere and now we only have two months.

KIM

Will you approach more festivals?

BRIAN

Maybe. Can't really afford it at the moment.

(MORE)

BRIAN (CONT'D)

I've heard it's all insider trading - you show my film and I'll show yours. So without the backing of the Commission, or the New Zealand Film Festival, we're screwed. We're just financially supporting all these festivals so they can screen other films that didn't even pay the submission fee. Probably didn't even have to submit, they just picked them from the programmes of other festivals.

KIM

So what's left? Digital distribution.

BRIAN

Well, that was always the plan.

BETH

But how is anyone going to find it with all the other stuff out there.

KIM

Can you get it onto Netflix or iTunes?

BRIAN

iTunes costs sixteen hundred to get listed. U.S.

KIM

Whoa.

BRIAN

And then there's an annual fee. I can't even work out how much it costs for Netflix, or how much they might pay to play it.

KIM

So first you pay to make the film, then you pay to have people see it.

BRIAN

There's always torrenting.

CUT TO:

Man #1's silhouette speaks in front of the bright open window.

MAN #1

When you're judging the success of a film you have to first ask what the project was made for. It feels like a lot of people judge either critical or commercial success - critical being festival acceptance and good reviews, and commercial being sales - but the purpose of this project was kind of like a calling card to get our careers into the next phase, to get our work funded. So success for us, for this project, is getting it out and getting it seen, not so much about making money. It doesn't need to have raving reviews, but it needs to get out into the world. We want people to see it.

CUT TO:

Kim, Brian, and Brent sip wine in the lobby as the cast and crew of Catherine's team make their way out of the theatre. They're all smiles, hugs, and congratulations.

BRENT

So, how did you like it?

KIM

It was good. A bit risky, the subject matter and the approach, but I think it works. Be interesting to see how it does.

CATHERINE

Kim, glad you could come.

Kim turns to find Catherine beside her, smiling.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

It's been so crazy, hasn't it. But we always get there in the end. I think that's what I love about this business.

KIM

The film's great, I really liked it.

CATHERINE

Good, thanks. Sorry we had to close the set like that. We just had to concentrate on finishing the film without distractions.

KIM

It's fine. I'm glad it all worked out so well.

CATHERINE

Yeah, me too. I hope it didn't negatively impact your work at all.

KIM

It's okay.

CATHERINE

Good, well, if you need to talk more give me a call, okay?

KIM

Okay, thanks.

CATHERINE

I better go hear how much everyone liked the film.

Kim raises her eyebrows at Brian.

KIM

I better go, I have to drive home.

BRIAN

I'm going to stay, there's a few people I'd like to meet.

64 INT. KIM'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

64

Kim sits staring at the patchwork of ideas covering her wall. She taps her iPhone to record.

KIM

Why is the protagonist's journey the most accepted way of telling stories? And why do we do PhD's this way? Because it's the right way, or just because it's how we've been doing them for years? Since it was men making all the rules in the past, and still are to a large degree, are we just stuck working with masculine ideas out of unquestioning habit?

(MORE)

KIM (CONT'D)

There must be other ways that are just as good to tell stories, but we just don't know them, or don't use them because they don't feel familiar to the audience. So maybe breaking out of that tradition, that mould, just doesn't feel 'right'.

She looks at the wall, takes it all in.

KIM (CONT'D)

What if my mess of ideas, and mixed up way of exploring and presenting my work is a feminist way of telling stories, with a patchwork of ideas. Ideas linking to the side, the top, to other ideas, stretching through several other ideas, connecting, weaving, intersecting. Like a quilt, with the potential for beauty, and for telling history, and projecting into the future. Still with a framework, but with infinite possibilities. Like that movie, *How to Make an American Quilt*, about a woman who goes back to her hometown and her friends and relations are making her a quilt as a wedding present and they each tell her a story of their life, and all the stories connect - in the same way that the quilt they are making does - and she learns... okay, I don't know what she learns.

She picks up Ellingson's *Engaging Crystallization in Qualitative Research*, which is filled with colourful tabs marking pages.

She opens it to a tab near the middle.

KIM (CONT'D)

Think about how using narrative in academic work might focus the readers' attention on some events and not others, and how ordering events into a narrative constructs meaning, or meanings, which affects the analytical process, both theirs and mine.

(MORE)

KIM (CONT'D)

I've always been told, or it's been inferred, that science, even social science, is looking for fact, truth, explaining what's right in the right way, and I've always wanted to say 'whose truth?' All these grand theories claim to be the right way to think, then a new bunch of thinkers come along and then we have the post-whatever grand theory and it all changes.

She pulls a printed table off the wall.

KIM (CONT'D)

Ellingson points out that even people on the science-slash-realist end of the continuum sew things together, tuck under the edges that don't work for their argument, and highlight the points that match their ideas, designing their output to present their work in the best light, and make themselves look good. And sometimes they find this grain of an idea, a little scrap of information, and then they attach every piece of fabric in their fabric box to make an enormous 600-page quilt, and somehow that's okay. That's acceptable. Whatever gets them the points they need for their University's research output requirements, right?

65 INT. CATHERINE'S OFFICE (TEAM C) - DAY

65

Kim balances her iPhone on her knee to record, as Catherine sits at her computer desk.

CATHERINE

The Commission has been nothing but supportive for all our films, but for this one we wanted to take a different route - give the director a little more creative space, and just speed up the process a little, for him - so we looked for a foreign investor, a single investor, who really believed in the film as much as we did.

(MORE)

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

We did get post-production funding from the Commission, of course, and we'll go back to the Commission for other projects. They are the business, in New Zealand. They have a lot of experience and a lot of knowledge. The director we're looking at for the next film is a citizen of both New Zealand and Brazil so we're looking to apply for co-production funding from both countries.

KIM

Great. So what's next for this film?

CATHERINE

The usual course of action. We've submitted to film festivals and it's starting to get programmed. You know once you have a couple it tends to snowball. And after that we have theatrical release in New Zealand and several international countries. Then DVD and BluRay soon after, concurrently with an online release.

KIM

And your next project?

CATHERINE

Oh, I have several. We all have several in different stages of development. You have to. You don't want an all eggs in one basket situation.

CUT TO:

66 INT. UNI COFFEE SHOP (TEAM A) - DAY

66

Adam and Kim sit in the corner of the coffee shop. Kim taps her phone to record.

ADAM

Ready?

KIM (O.S.)

Rolling. Or, recording, rather. Tell me everything.

ADAM

Haha. Okay, a catch up. Lapwing is going to screen at Sickest Film Festival, Dragon Con, Red Dirt, Phoenix Comicon, two other Comicons, three others, one in Canada, the Superman Celebration Fest, Comics In Film, maybe more, and we're waiting to hear about a few others.

KIM (O.S.)

That's fantastic.

ADAM

Yeah, we're pretty happy. Once we found its market Lapwing just took off, one festival after another.

KIM

And what's next?

ADAM

We're putting Lapwing sequels on hold until we can get the funding to do it justice, and eventually a feature. Whenever that may be.

KIM

Glad to hear you sounding so positive.

ADAM

Yeah, I won't kid you, I was worried after Armageddon. I couldn't work out what we had done wrong, but then it all fell into place, so I guess we did it right after all. From what I hear almost no one went to the Armageddon screening anyway. They didn't advertise it. Kinda hoping they make it more of a big deal and we'll make something another year. Something shorter and maybe we'll have better luck.

CUT TO:

67 INT. DARKENED ROOM - DAY

67

Woman #1's silhouette is in front of the bright open window.

WOMAN #1

I think all of it's a crapshoot.
Much better to train as
accountants.

CUT TO:

68 INT. THEATRE (TEAM B) - NIGHT

68

Brian and Beth stand to the side of the screen at the front of the small but packed theatre.

BRIAN

This premiere marks the start of our national tour, so be sure to tell your friends in other cities how much you loved it.

BETH

Unless you hate it.

BRIAN

Then just don't say anything.

The crowd laughs politely.

BETH

Thank you all for coming. So many of you have helped make this film a reality. Ben, Brent...

She points to people in the audience.

BRIAN

Bree, Blaine, Bailey, I want to thank you all, and say we couldn't have done it without you. Well, we could have, but it would have been shit.

The audience laughs.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Okay, well you didn't come here to hear us talk, so roll the movie.

69 INT. THEATRE (TEAM B) - LATER

69

Kim and Brian are the last to leave the theatre.

KIM

Well, that went pretty well.

BRIAN

Yeah. They laughed in all the right places, and some places I didn't expect.

KIM

Is this the part that makes it all worth it?

BRIAN

I love this part - watching it with an audience. Even though I'm broke. I probably like production more though. This is just the icing. It's just proof that I'm on the right track.

70

INT. THEATRE LOBBY (TEAM B) - CONTINUOUS

70

Everyone mills around in the lobby, drinking wine, eating cheese and grapes, but really waiting for their turn to speak to Brian.

KIM

I didn't know you were doing food. Good call.

BRIAN

Actually, it's left over from the previous party that just left.
Hey, Diane sent a nice letter. I'll forward it later, basically saying what a huge achievement it is completing a film and how proud we should be and to keep in touch.

KIM

Nice. When's her premiere.

BRIAN

Cast and crew screening's coming up, premiere's not for a while.

A friend puts his arm around Brian.

FRIEND

Brian. Great job, man.

Brian turns and hugs his friend.

BRIAN

Hey, thanks man.

SUPPORTER

That was really awesome.

Kim wanders off and looks around the crowd. Everyone is chatting in groups. She heads for the exit.

CUT TO:

71 INT. KIM'S DINING ROOM - THREE YEARS LATER 71

Kim's table is clear, except for a soft bound thesis.

She's carefully taking all her notes off the wall and putting them in a box marked "To Burn - eventually"

KIM (V.O.)

Four films, five years. Everyone asks if it was worth it. It made me think more, about everything, not just filmmaking. I'm not sure if that's a blessing or a curse yet. The more I found out the more I wanted to know, and there's so much more that isn't being discussed or considered. It certainly reinforced the idea that no one should try to make films if they don't really love it and can't see themselves doing anything else. It has to feel like... you. Yourself. That everything about it reinforces who you are. Creative, a problem solver, someone who can use words or images to move people emotionally. Everything comes down to that, no matter which role you are in, the work you're doing has to feel like you are being your authentic self, or why bother. Because that's your reward. It's not the money, fame isn't really part of the equation for most independent filmmakers, but reinforcing your sense of who you are - that's the key. That's what keeps us coming back despite the odds never being in our favour. Okay, time to hand this in.

She picks up the thesis, grabs her skateboard and heads out the door.

72 EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - CONTINUOUS 72

She walks out of her drive, drops her longboard on the sidewalk, and rides away.

FADE TO BLACK

CONCLUSIONS

An expanded Film Value Chain for independents

There is a talent pool here that has learned so much... But whether it can be sustained – whether emerging filmmakers can grow in their careers with resources as they are – isn't an easy question to answer.

– Mike Wallis, director *Good for Nothing* (2011)

(Barnes & Cieply, 2012, para. 16)

The question of emerging filmmakers “growing” in their careers has been central to this thesis, not just because of its autoethnographic and personal basis but, perhaps more importantly, because it is a question that requires us to understand the nature of that growth. Film Studies has tended to focus on artistic growth as “read” off a body of films, with biographical information of interest only when it can help explain that artistic growth. The present research made clear at the outset its interest in thinking differently about filmmakers and their identities.

This research started with the thought that independents are a specific variant of Bruno Latour's beings of passionate interest. Latour sees such beings are subject to the “brutal alternation” between energising passions and “forces that exceed us in all directions” (Latour, 2013, p. 245), sapping or appropriating those energies. The research is ending with an alternative to the passive structures of Latour's Actor Network Theory as a way of understanding this and its consequences for independents. We have seen independents in these terms of mobilized intensities and affective commitments, emerging out of and blending back into the shadow economies of film. We have seen them do so, not just on the basis of their ever-changing and relationally defined communities of practice, but also via tie transformations through which they modulate their desire for control, if they want to progress and find higher-level opportunities, including the availability of workworld “jigs” or support frameworks, so that they do not forever have to do everything themselves. The latter has been described here as a matter of vocational survival. Reaching this point has been an analytic journey. Kerrigan et al. suggest that, “In some practice-led approaches it is possible for the researcher to complete the project before they identify what research was being conducted”

(Kerrigan, Leahy, & Cohan, 2016, p. 86). The method adopted here has prevented that from happening, but there has definitely been a quality of emergence about the whole project.

Juliet Corbin's essay "Taking an Analytic Journey" (Corbin, 2009) is important in several ways, not least because as the third (if sometimes unacknowledged) co-founder of GT she is in a good position to break us out of the Glaser/Strauss debate (dating from the 1990s) about when "forcing" of theoretical interpretations is taking place, as distinct from "emergence". Glaser's commitment to the latter and to the "abstract wonderment" (Glaser, 1992, p. 22) that the researcher brings to a topic diverged eventually from Strauss's commitment to a more prescribed method. While I would hope that an element of "abstract wonderment" has characterised my own inquiry, the differences at stake now seem rather exaggerated. In fact, Juliet Corbin points out that constructivist ideas have largely overtaken many of the ways in which the founders of GT framed their debate, with contemporary GT researchers "taking up the challenge of Denzin ... to move interpretive methods more deeply into the regions of postmodern sensibility" (Corbin, 2009, p. 37). She describes her own journey as a researcher in very much these terms, and places a great deal of emphasis, consequently, on "stories that are told by research participants who are trying to explain and make sense out of their experiences and/or lives" (p.39). The preceding chapter has been offered as one such story. To explain where it fits in the GT framework, reference to a schematic presentation of this framework may be helpful, as our final encounter here with GT methodology.

Fernandez (2005) provides this overview.

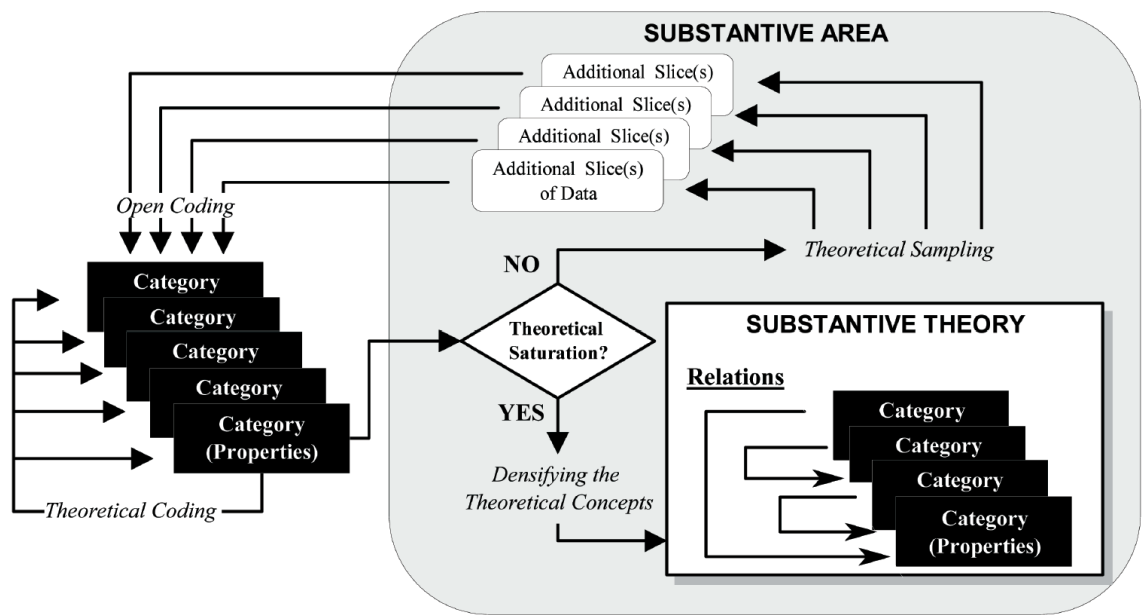


Fig. 10. Grounded Theory's building process (Fernández, 2005, p. 48), *used with permission.*

My “slices of data” from the substantive area of independent filmmaking have been: (1) various versions of an autoethnography around *Penny Black*; (2) a cluster of filmmaker interviews; (3) an in-depth conversation with another producer; and (4) the screenplay. Each of these slices was prompted by the loop on the left: the coding of material for properties that could be categorised. Theoretical “saturation” was not reached until “slice” 3, as discussed in Chapter 3, which is to say that the data did not fully carry the weight of an emergent theory until around that point. “Slice” 4, therefore, the screenplay as a creative constructivist format for further GT-based thinking, was conceived as a final loop through the categories that had become subject to theoretical coding (the theory about the independent’s course of action through the pyramidal structure of vocational survival). As such, it was intended to further “densify” that emergent theory. The latter now has its own theoretical categories (concepts such as identity salience, tie transformations, the self-promotional discourse of independence with its expressed passions and resentments, etc.) but the screenplay, of course, does not present or illustrate theory. It is still a “slice” through the data in the substantive area of interest here. However, it is intended to support one last loop through the theoretical coding, to “densify” the emergent theory in a particular

way: it is intended to take the research closer to answering the question posed in the Introduction about the Film Value Chain for independents.

When Craig Batty (2013, 2015) identifies his screenplays in the journal TEXT as “among only a handful of published ‘academic screenplays’ in the world” (Batty, 2015, p. 17) he positions them by appending a “Research Statement” covering research background, contribution and significance. This entails proposing that an academic screenplay “works on the level of reflexivity, meaning it can be viewed as a research tool as well as a research outcome” (p. 17). Screenplays published in TEXT are understood as a form of research output, not necessarily intended for production, and the same is true for the screenplay that is Chapter 4. Though I have used many of the codes and conventions of screenplay writing, including loosely utilising the three-act structure, I allowed myself to write without the goal of production, thus freeing myself from distractions that would be concerns for potential producers and funders, such as the use of archetypes, excessive dialogue, and the cost of production. Chapter 4 here is clearly underpinned by a similar proposition to those published in TEXT journal, and I want to nominate it to join the “handful” in this regard. But I have also been conscious of a small genre of non-academic screenplays about filmmaking, those behind the films *Day for Night* (written by François Truffaut, Suzanne Schiffman, Jean-Louis Richard, 1973), *Der Stand der Dinge/The State of Things* (Wim Wenders, Robert Kramer, Joshua Wallace, 1982), *S.O.B.* (Blake Edwards, 1981) and *While We’re Young* (Noah Baumbach, 2014). The films made from these screenplays all explore the passions and resentments of filmmakers, from Noah Baumbach’s young idealist on-the-rise who turns out to be a careerist manipulator to what David Cairns in the liner notes for the 2016 Criterion Collection remastered Blu-ray release of *Day for Night* calls “the moviemaking establishment” that ex-rebel Truffaut had by then joined. Where Blake Edwards savagely satirised the studio system, Wim Wenders sent his independents off on an existential journey. All four films contribute something to our understanding of filmmakers’ mode of existence. But perhaps *Four Films* belongs more in Batty’s genre, and its research statement is in effect its position in the present thesis. It can be understood as a creative slice back through much the same material as the interviews covered. What it adds to the interviews, however, is a response to Scheurich’s call for “some new imaginaries of interviewing that open up multiple spaces” (1997, p. 75).

The multiple spaces opened up in *Four Films* are the spaces around each filmmaker at their specific point in the structure of career progression and vocational survival, the spaces around their courses of action as determined by those positions, the space of their folk model, and where they modulate (or fail to modulate) their desire for control.

The voluminous body of academic writing about identity (weighted towards social psychology) has provided this research with relatively few “ah ha” moments, when filmmaker identities have been illuminated by academic knowledge. This is partly to do with the Grounded Theory and (auto)ethnographic methodology per se. In a top-down theory-driven approach, abstractly good ideas, judged initially in isolation from contexts of application, could have been applied to the case of filmmakers. It always seems possible to find some validation of theory in concrete instances, if one looks hard enough. Grounded Theory and ethnographic styles of research are much more messy. So, at this phase of the work, one has to look a good deal harder at the available theoretical literature in order to find a fit with what may still be unruly data.

The needed theoretical perspective now, at this late point in the research, has to help explain several things. It has to help explain “growing” in structural terms: how does the independent filmmaker’s identity map onto something like the pyramidal phases that have emerged from the data assembled here? If we cannot maintain this structural perspective, then we will likely slip back into a textual (or even auteurist) way of thinking about growth as primarily an artistic phenomenon. It may well be, in important measure, an artistic phenomenon but that aspect of film has been well studied and is well understood. The structural perspective, however, may be just as important.

We also need theoretical insight that helps us explain more fully what we have termed the focus phase, especially how it mediates structurally between exploration and becoming established. One thing that emerged from the previous chapter is the possibility that those in the exploration phase understand themselves differently from how they are viewed by those at the establishment level, and vice versa. The focus phase may be where these contradictory understandings meet

most forcefully and play out in ways that we do not yet have theoretical explanations for.

Grammars of identity

Two ethnographically orientated European anthropologists have developed the kinds of theoretical perspective that may help with these questions. Baumann and Gingrich (2004) gather a range of contributions to the anthropologically-grounded theorisation of identity and frame the work of the related researchers in a way that may help answer some of the questions being posed here. In particular, Danish researcher Inger Sjørnslev's contribution to their volume proposes as a core theoretical concept the idea of the "folk model of self-understanding" (2004, p. 80). (Dekker and Hollnagel's work on folk models came out in the same year, 2004). Baumann and Gingrich's framing theory is that there are what they term "grammars of identity" and Sjørnslev proposes that folk models can make up an important part of these grammars. (I am indebted to a colleague for pointing me to Sjørnslev. Part of her ethnographic fieldwork was carried out in Bahia, Brazil, in the mid-1990s when he was a visiting lecturer at the Federal University there). Grounded theory can be grounded in many ways. Sjørnslev was studying differences between Brazilian and Danish culture, so the details of her particular research are largely irrelevant here, but the emergent theoretical concept of the folk model of self-understanding, and its relation to Baumann and Gingrich's ideas, may be of considerable use.

Baumann and Gingrich (2004) provide a definition of identity that fits how the notion has developed in this thesis so far:

Our working definition of identity designates social subjectivities as persons and groups of persons. These subjectivities are multidimensional and fluid; they include power-related ascriptions by selves as well as by others; and they simultaneously combine sameness, or belonging, with alterity, or otherness. This anthropological working definition therefore rejects any essentialist or moralist connotations by embracing a "soft", or in the philosophical sense "weak", concept of identity, and by relating them to social context and social processes (p. x).

Translating this into the field of filmmaking, a very “hard” or “strong” concept of identity would be, for example, the auteurist one, where collective effort, varying conditions of production, and genre-related factors tend to get subsumed under the notion of a singular vision (and where this is a vision of the world, moralist connotations easily enter into the account). By contrast, a “soft” concept of identity sees it as a fluid element caught up in “power-related ascriptions” by selves and others. We can begin to see, in light of Chapter 4, how the focus phase, for instance, may be a field of ascriptions in this sense, where identity is in play within the relevant social processes, not just a fixed element. Baumann and Gingrich go on to theorise various grammars of identity, in order to understand the structures within which identity comes fluidly into play.

One of these grammars they identify as “segmentation”, which “works by context-dependent and hence sliding scales of selfing and otherings among parties” (p. x). They go on to say, “It thus allows fusions and fissions of identity/alterity in a highly context-sensitive manner, but is always subject to disputes” (p. x). A further grammar they term “encompassment”, which “works by a hierarchized sub-inclusion of others who are thought, from a higher level of abstraction, to be really ‘part of us’” (pp. x-xi). But “it tends to minimize the otherness of those it includes” (p. xi).

These grammars of segmentation and encompassment immediately map in informative ways onto both our pyramidal structure and the kinds of conversation captured in the previous chapter. The exploration phase is quite simple in these terms: adventurous beginners, self-styled mavericks, “guerrilla” filmmakers, or just amateurs, jostle for opportunities, attention and resources, driven by passion and ambition. From the “higher level of abstraction”, i.e. the establishment, including production companies and state agencies, the exploration level can be celebrated for its energy and evidence of passion but also (“encompassment”) as where “we” came from (minimising its otherness). From the explorer’s point of view, the establishment level may be seen as “them” but, at this point, so remote as to be largely irrelevant.

At the focus stage, however, we are going to get much more of Baumann and Gingrich's "fusions and fissions of identity/alterity in a highly context-sensitive manner", which Chapter 4 has dramatised. Trying to reach the stage of sustainable independence, filmmakers can no longer be buoyed by passion alone but have to focus more on the pragmatics of obtaining support and better resources. If an "encompassment" grammar of identity is being applied to them from above but, from below, the "segmentation" still seems rigid, then the focus phase will inevitably be fraught with mismatched perspectives.

Baumann and Gingrich point out that what they are trying to avoid is the "false opposition" of structures, on the one hand, and on the other, "the helpless reduction of all social processes to agency and contextual contingency" (p. xi). In this sense, a false mapping of exploration/establishment onto agency/structure needs to be rigorously avoided. And yet, as the preceding "screenplay" chapter has sought to enact, just such a mapping seems to persist quite tenaciously on the ground when filmmakers talk to each other. To understand this better, we can turn to Inger Sjørnslev's argument about the importance in these grammars of the folk model of self-understanding.

Those functioning on our establishment level, if we accept that they function discursively through an encompassment grammar, will view those below them, as it were, as "really part of us", to use Baumann and Gingrich's phrase. These others, on lower levels, may still have to prove themselves (and many will not) but they are nonetheless discursively constructed as "really part of us". The encompassment grammar leads to the levels being described, in whatever vocabulary, as always potentially permeable to the talented, those above as enablers of movement from level to level, or at the very least as not barriers. Discursively constructed from below, however, the grammar is that of segmentation, the levels relatively impermeable, those above representing vested interests, resource competition favouring the established, etc.

Sjørnslev's (2004) insight is that these kinds of understanding, structured by the top-down grammar of encompassment and by the bottom-up grammar of segmentation, become over time folk models, with "implications for mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion" (p. 90). In describing Danish folk models, she

highlights the significance of “sitting down and talking about it” (p. 90) for those who function through the encompassing grammar (such as Danish officials).

There is a striking echo of this in the way that the New Zealand Film Commission, via its 2015 Roadshow presentations to its grassroots constituency, emphasised that they wanted to be in “a conversation” (their repeated phrase) with filmmakers. The folk model for those being invited to sit down and talk about it, however, is much more likely to use a segmentation grammar (in Danish society, Sjørsløv saw this starkly in the case of immigrants): the invitee is more likely to see barriers, resource restrictions, bureaucratic gatekeeping, inequities of opportunity, etc.

We can now begin to see how complex the question of filmmaker identity is in the focus phase, in particular, because the two aspects of the folk model, with their respective grammars of identity, will inevitably begin to grind against each other there. Just as seriously, Sjørsløv points out that a folk model can be used “to deceive oneself” (p. 96). At its simplest, this is evident in the filmmaker who has enjoyed the exploration phase becoming disenchanted as (s)he attempts to progress further and only blames “them” for lack of progress (“them” being the established and the perceived guardians of the latter’s interests). Or in the public funding body that constantly projects a discursive commitment to encompassment, rather than admitting to itself that it often functions as a guardian of specific interests other than the aspiring filmmaker’s (e.g. where a nation-building agenda has been historically present and continues to be reflected in funding policies (see Petrie, 2007)).

Reflecting on methodology

In the preceding chapter, I have used my screenwriting ability as a resource to bring to the surface the folk model within which I have been functioning as an aspiring filmmaker, the identity that has paralleled the researcher’s identity. So a concise summary of the exposed folk model becomes possible. Before offering it, however, a further methodological reflection may be appropriate at this point.

When I embarked on this research (after a false start in which the top-down theory-driven approach failed for me), I was inspired by Norman Denzin's call to arms for qualitative researchers. The messiness that I knew was there in my field of inquiry was no longer a problem to be cleaned up theoretically; it was the very stuff of description, analysis and eventual theory-building. When Laura Ellingson's own response to Denzin's call – her characterisation of interacting qualitative methods as “crystallization” – became my most promising exemplar. The challenge of constructing a “crystalline” thesis of my own felt energising. Of course, making a crystal instead of a mess was never going to be easy. It turned out to be very hard indeed for one particular reason – each stage of the research threw up elements of a developing argument that needed the methods being used to be revisited before the argument could be moved on. The autoethnographic stage originally seemed like it would be an early one, left behind when it had delivered its data to the next stage. But when I sensed a limitation in the later interviews (a limitation that I would now suggest resided in that method's failure to expose enough of the folk model of self-understanding), a return to autoethnography felt like an option worth exploring.

My initial autoethnography represented “The Power of One”, a single story able to explore and illustrate some major themes and issues experienced by independent filmmakers (Gibbs, 2013), which were then able to be critically analysed. However, by merging my personal perspective with stories from additional individuals, a bigger picture of lived experiences was created in order to gain a more “robust and collective understanding of everyday practice and reality” (Gibbs, 2013, p. 23). The combining of experiences allowed linkages between the micro and the macro to become clearer (Wall, 2016), including the ability (or inability) of filmmakers to act independently and control the production of their work within a societal structure which influences and limits their choices and opportunities. In this way I was able to both reinforce and advance my own understanding of the challenges facing independent filmmakers at different stages in their careers, and present these challenges for analysis and discussion.

Four Films was written for two different audiences – members of the academic and the industry communities. Industry practitioners might not wish to labour through the more theoretical sections of the thesis, so the screenplay attempts to

articulate parts of the thesis in a more accessible and industry-familiar form. Academics who have little or no practical experience of production can discern the four levels of filmmaking theorised by the research, which themselves illustrate the lived experience of independent filmmakers. At the time I felt it was necessary to rationalise to academic readers my decision to write Chapter 4 in screenplay form. Paul Willis describes the challenging point that qualitative research can reach: “The conventional process takes its ‘objective’ data-gathering as far as possible and then consigns the rest (what it cannot know, measure or understand) to Art or ‘the problem of subjectivity’” (Willis, 1980, p. 92). Though I was deliberately embarking on a more unconventional process, Willis describes the alarm bells that can still sound in a researcher's mind: “there is a clear sociological fear of naked subjectivity”(Willis, 1980, p. 90), and this fear (others' as well as my own, perhaps unconsciously) helps to explain why I initially felt I needed a strong objective basis for using "Art" to present my data and ideas, e.g. by arguing that the screenplay compensates for shortcomings in the interview material. Though not without weaknesses, I *believed* the resulting screenplay was an effective outcome.

Future exploration of the screenplay as a tool for exploring and presenting findings will hopefully shed additional light on its benefits and weaknesses. The medium allowed me to present findings in a more creative manner, when possible utilising dialogue I had heard rather than putting words into the mouths of my characters and interpreting those words. However, the nature of a screenplay is that you can only see what would potentially be shown on a screen. No effort is generally made to describe the emotional state of the characters, thus requiring the reader to interpret the situations the characters encounter. This could allow readers space for imagining and experiencing, or it could open the text to reinterpretation. This is desirable because creative writing, even in this context, is not about definitively prescribing meaning. An additional benefit was that the reflectively immersive process of collating memos and quotes and writing the screenplay allowed me to go deeper into the ideas as they reflected and refracted through the medium, allowing me to see them from different angles, in a different light than they would appear in a conventional academic text. Paul Willis urges boldness on the part of the qualitative researcher who wants to transition from "data" to "Art", insisting that this is legitimate “...if our focus is

not on isolated, subjective meanings but on their associated symbolic systems and cultural forms” (Willis p. 91). So, Chapter 4 represents the symbolic systems of the research's conceptual journey in the cultural form of the screenplay.

Autonomy and independent spirit

A great deal has changed in our ways of thinking and writing about independent filmmaking between, for example, Geoff Andrew’s 1998 statement, “Towards an Indie Cinema” and John Berra’s 2008 discussion of independent filmmakers’ distinctive forms of “commitment to an autonomous mode of cultural production” (Andrew, 1998, p. 359) (Berra, 2008, p. 93). Berra’s phrase “loyalty to the rhetoric” (p.93) is a revealing one. It suggests not only the discursive construction of “independence”, its rhetorical nature, but also the importance of filmmakers’ affective attachments to this rhetoric and of maintaining their reputations for autonomy, whatever the complex realities of their working situations.

In his exploration of independent filmmaking, Andrew (1998) focused on the “mavericks” of filmmaking, those who “in one way or another stand outside the commercial mainstream” (p. 5). His emphasis was on stylistic strategies and output. This enabled him to encompass not only the independents who worked without Hollywood financing but also those who worked within that system, whose films he nonetheless considered to be outside the “commercial constraints favoured by Hollywood” (p. 6), retaining their own autonomy in their work. The filmmakers whose work he profiled were those he deemed important in terms of their artistic achievements, rather than their source of financing or means of distribution.

Ten years later, Berra (2008) argued that the assumption that independently made films are autonomous of Hollywood studios and the influence of popular media is false. Though independent films may be created through self-financing, in order for the work to connect with an audience it must align with the field of (economic) power in order to be marketed and distributed. As most theatres in the USA are part of chains (including most art house cinemas) with national programming, a grass-roots release would be overshadowed by films that have properly aligned

within the field of power. Because Berra sees a necessary dependence on studios, distributors, exhibitors and media, he asserts that what sets independent films apart from Hollywood production is an “independent spirit”; a concept that allows independent filmmakers to seek corporate funding while staying true to their own vision.

Self production and the establishment

In looking for an alternative to film studies’ textualism in order to define independent filmmaking, this thesis has highlighted the importance of optimal states for creativity in filmmaking – the complex set of conditions that determine whether independent filmmakers find the “sweet spot” that allows them to create their work. When considering the importance of the bonding/bridging dynamic to the attainment of these states, the importance of alternative or non-conforming input has become clear. Whether we think of them as teams, networks, communities of practice, or crews, the sought for moments of Sartrean “group-in-fusion” that independent filmmakers relish take place (or not) in social contexts that are balanced between groupthink (overly conformist bonding) and innovation (openness to bridging). I have argued, therefore, that there are likely to be distinctive tie transformation processes at work in independent filmmaking: in other words, transformations in people’s patterns of relating to each other. More importantly, the hypothesis is that these transformations occur within a pyramidal structure of progression through career phases, and this final chapter continues to refine our understanding of this structure.

Where the initial phases of this research exposed “control” as a potential core variable, perhaps unsurprisingly given the rhetoric of autonomy referred to by Berra, this has now been modified to suggest a more subtle concept: that of identity salience-based control. This reconceptualisation of control derives from the focus on tie transformations within the pyramidal structure of progression. In controlling progress through their professional lives, a salient identity is important to independent filmmakers; that is, a particular creative or professional identity that can be maintained within the shifting hierarchy of identities that independents typically have to juggle and prioritise on an almost daily basis. Their ties with

each other, and with the various network actors they have to deal with, get transformed as they negotiate their ways up (or get stuck within) the levels of the pyramidal structure while maintaining, as much as possible, the salience of this identity. (So the “levels” are also “salience fields”). Many people may have to take time out, as it were, from this salient “identity” when factors conspire against it (opportunities decline, economics intervene, life gets complicated) but its salience likely remains a motivating factor.

So maintaining what can be called an “identity standard” emerges as important to the independent’s self-perception, rhetoric of autonomy, and reputation management. Such a standard may be thought of as creating work that is truthful to that part of them which gets heavily invested in the particular sense of self (creative, autonomous, etc.) that is being constructed and maintained over time and across the progressively negotiated and traversed salience fields.

Put more simply, the independent will have a strong sense of what constitutes good work, in the sense of both working conditions and work produced. Being true to this sense over time presents considerable challenges but, as has been argued, there is considerable psychic income to be derived from doing so, irrespective of how much or how little money might be earned from doing the work.

These questions of self-production as a creative professional go right back into the early, tentative first steps that an aspiring independent makes. So, it has been suggested, “professionalism” cannot sensibly be reserved as a descriptive term for the final salience field of having made it to the top, as it were. Instead, it is more useful and accurate to describe that level as “establishment” in the dual sense of becoming more established (the salient identity of “independent filmmaker” becoming more permanent and recognised by others) and of there being an establishment of independent filmmakers who have “made it”, along with their support structures.

It remains for this chapter to do three things:

- To re-test the abstract description above by applying it to an individual filmmaker who has “made it” all the way to the top of the pyramidal structure;
- To develop an expanded version of John Caldwell’s description of “promotional surrounds” in order to better understand an Independent Promotional Surround understood in terms of the above analysis;
- To consolidate the thesis’ discussion of identity theory as a framework for a non-textualist understanding of independent filmmaking.

***Bonnie and Clyde* – career progression**

The vast bulk of writing about film has been so uninterested in social ties (among the network actors involved) that it proves very difficult to find other accounts of filmmaking, not least independent filmmaking, which might provide additional data to test our largely tie-based pyramidal model of career progression. We have noted at the outset of this research how Hortense Powdermaker’s interest in such things turned out, unfortunately, to have been something of a false dawn for a more anthropologically orientated form of film studies, attuned to tie relations and their transformations over time. As demonstrated by the special issue of a prominent anthropology journal devoted to her legacy, Powdermaker’s research in Hollywood “anticipated many of the anthropological studies of social processes in complex societies” (Cherneff, 1991b, p. 375) that were subsequently undertaken in diverse other fields, but Film Studies was not one of them. John Caldwell’s recent work has not been sufficient on its own to redress this lack, partly because, as the journal editor says about Powdermaker, “she left behind no theoretical ‘school’ nor any new theory” (Cherneff, 1991b, p. 375) and this approach in general is not about the top-down application of big theories that can be adopted by other researchers. Powdermaker’s focus on what Jill Cherneff calls “the human process of film” (Cherneff, 1991a, p. 438), a focus that Caldwell certainly shares, encourages at most a model-building rather than a theory-building approach, as is the case with the present study (and Caldwell’s “promotional surrounds”). Modelling the human processes of independent filmmaking, especially around tie

relations, will not tend to produce a theory that can be readily adopted within sometimes theory-obsessed Film Studies. The hope for this final chapter, nonetheless, is that some theoretical insights can indeed be derived from the iterative process of building and populating with data the model that is being developed here.

New styles of writing about film have developed in recent years and among these Mark Harris' (2008) account of the emergence of the new Hollywood assembles the kinds of detail about "the human process" that Powdermaker would have appreciated. Harris is married to screenwriter Tony Kushner and, as an arts and popular culture journalist, moves easily behind the scenes of the worlds he writes about, gathering the kinds of thick description that an anthropologically orientated film researcher can only envy. In particular, his book about Hollywood includes an immensely detailed account of a seminal moment in the emergence of independent film as a discursive phenomenon: Robert Benton and the 1967 film *Bonnie and Clyde* (directed by Arthur Penn). That film was pivotally positioned between being genuinely independent and Hollywood's discovery of "independent" as a byword for marketable "authenticity". What is immensely useful about Harris' account of the three-year period of its early development, with neophyte independent Robert Benton at the centre, is that he traces in detail what we would call the tie relations. This way of thinking about film, especially a much-celebrated film like *Bonnie and Clyde*, feels rather odd to anybody educated in the dominant perspectives and vocabularies of academic Film Studies. But it is definitely not behind-the-scenes gossip either. Harris' account sees *Bonnie and Clyde* in early gestation in terms of "human process" rather than textual evolution or auteurship, and he takes these processes seriously as constitutive of the film as a cultural artefact, as well as of its "independence".

Although an immensely more sophisticated and accomplished film in many ways, *Bonnie and Clyde* is nevertheless, in a sense, *Penny Black* with guns and a much bigger (though still independent-scale) budget. So it feels like a very appropriate example here. We can map Harris' account onto our model as follows (Fig. 11).

Key to names in Fig. 11.

1. Elinor Wright Jones – wife of Benton’s college roommate, assistant to Lewis Allen
2. Lewis Allen – Broadway producer
3. Norton Wright – Elinor’s brother, production assistant
4. Robert Montgomery – attorney, entertainment lawyer
5. Helen Scott – Paris-raised journalist who knew Francois Truffaut

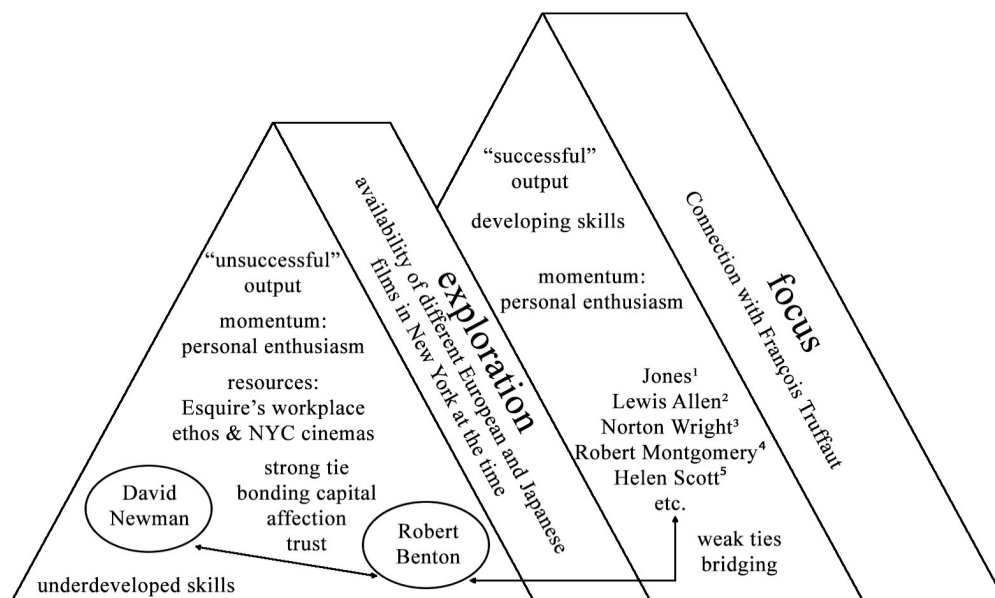


Fig. 11. Newman and Benton’s progression from the exploration to focus phase.

The word “passion” occurs in the very first paragraph of Harris’ account of *Bonnie and Clyde*’s beginnings. He describes thirty-year-old Robert Benton’s personal enthusiasm for the kinds of low-budget and innovative European, especially French, films that were arriving in 1963 in New York cinemas and inspiring Benton, and others like him, to think that making films might not be the expensive preserve of the studios. Benton had no skills or prior experience in filmmaking, just the passion to do what he saw the young Europeans doing: a passion for the non-formulaic, non-studio kinds of films coming out of Europe and, increasingly, Japan as well. New York’s arthouse cinemas at the time were

offering a steady diet of such films, which provided Benton with the opportunity to explore a much broader range of films than Hollywood was then producing. But this exploration phase of what would eventually be an exemplary career as an independent and then a “studio” director, involved more than indulging a passion for seeing new kinds of films.

Benton worked at *Esquire* magazine, where, at that time, according to Harris, the workplace ethos was based on the idea that talent should be given free rein and on contempt for 1950s groupthink. As the magazine’s art director, Benton felt free to indulge his art-house cinema-going openly (often in afternoons away from the office): it was part of the creative identity he was constructing for himself. New York’s cinema scene was the readily available resource for doing so. But crucially, it was something that he had in common with *Esquire* writer David Newman, so the two rapidly developed a bond, roughing out a manifesto for the magazine but at the same time nurturing their ambition to break into films. In the summer of 1963 they decided that the story of Depression-era petty criminals Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow would make a good movie. Despite never even having seen a screenplay, they decided to write one together. Harris describes how the duo’s growing affection and trust fed into an intense working process as they laboured late into the night throughout that summer. Harris (2008) describes their movie-going and writing collaboration as a “crash course” (p. 13) in film, an exploration phase driven by the momentum of deeply personal enthusiasm, and the idea that their creative role model Francois Truffaut might somehow direct their film: “a combination of hubris, sky-high optimism, and a sliver of actual hope” (p. 15).

Unfortunately, the output, a seventy-five page “script” that bore no resemblance to any professional format, was glanced at by theatre and TV director Arthur Penn, whose film directing career was just getting underway. According to Harris (2008), Penn “turned it down on the spot” (p. 16). This unsuccessful outcome was not the pinnacle of their exploration “pyramid” that Benton and Newman would have been hoping for. Yet it feels utterly familiar to anyone who has witnessed the way in which hubris, optimism and slivers of hope are not untypical of the massive energies expended by aspiring independent filmmakers and yet prove, by themselves, insufficient to guarantee any kind of immediate success in this first

phase.

Many aspiring independent filmmakers never actually leave this first phase, except by exhausting their enthusiasm for exploration without reward, other than the inherent rewards of the creative process, bonding and collaborations. Robert Benton, however, was already moving to the next phase, that of “focus” in our model. The wife of his college roommate was Elinor Wright Jones, an assistant to a Broadway producer, Lewis Allen, who had started dabbling in producing art-house films. Benton and Newman visited her with their “script” and, according to Harris (2008), “Jones was dazzled by their enthusiasm” (p. 15). She told her brother about it: Norton Wright was working as a production assistant in the nascent New York filmmaking scene. The brother and sister team decided they would produce Benton and Newman’s film, so Elinor Jones asked her attorney, entertainment lawyer Robert Montgomery, if they could get the “script” into the hands of one of his other clients, Arthur Penn. Undeterred by Penn’s rejection of it on sight, Jones and Wright went to Jones’ boss, Lewis Allen, who informed them that his friend Helen Scott, a Paris-raised journalist, knew Francois Truffaut. He asked Scott to read the “script” and write to Truffaut if she liked it. Harris reports what she wrote: “You know my embarrassment about these things, but I read it last evening and to my surprise...”. Scott went on to praise what she called “the scenario” for its “nuances”, selling Truffaut on its quirky originality (p. 18). Allen was going to France shortly thereafter and undertook to take the “script” to Truffaut but, Harris reports, “either forgot to bring it with him or never showed it to Truffaut” (p. 18). Harris notes that, had Allen delivered it, Truffaut would have discovered that Benton and Newman’s “script” in fact “looked nothing like a filmable screenplay” (p. 19). Truffaut’s interest, however, was caught by Helen Scott’s endorsement.

What is absolutely clear from Harris’ detailed account of this networking is that the seventy-five pages produced by Benton and Newman were not themselves what was interesting people; it was the enthusiasm that had dazzled the well-placed wife of Benton’s ex college roommate. It is as if this enthusiasm ran through the network of loose connections. It was not what Penn saw but it did get communicated to Truffaut instead. These are tie transformations in action.

What is also clear is that Harris has described a network of weak ties and bridging relationships that were indispensable to moving Benton and Newman out of the exploration phase and into the focus phase. By early 1964, things were progressing for them as a result:

In New York, Elinor Jones took steps to formalize her and her brother's role as producers. In February, she had Robert Montgomery start to draft a contract that would give them an eighteen-month option on *Bonnie and Clyde*. Truffaut, unclear about whether Jones or her boss, Lewis Allen, was attached to the script, learned of Jones's involvement from Helen Scott and cautioned Scott, whom he was using as a go-between, not to overstate his commitment to the film, for which he still didn't have a completed French translation (Harris, 2008, p. 35).

The pinnacle of the "focus" pyramid came for Benton and Newman in March 1964 when Truffaut came to New York. Harris (2008) reports: "Truffaut invited 'the boys', as he called them, to his hotel room, where, with Helen Scott translating and Elinor Jones taking notes, he spent two or three days working with them in a combination brainstorming session/tutorial" (p. 36). Benton and Newman, as a result, were well on their way to having a saleable, professionally revised screenplay that effectively packaged their enthusiasm and creativity. Truffaut did not come on board as director in the end, but the focus phase resulted in Arthur Penn being re-approached and ... rejecting it a second time.

Meanwhile, Norton Wright had enrolled in a production management class and brought to bear what he learnt on a proper breakdown of Benton and Newman's newly professionalised screenplay: "I broke it down, added it up, and to my horror, it came to the catastrophically high figure of a million three" (Harris, 2008, p. 63). Still a modest budget in studio terms, even for the 1960s, but well beyond what Wright and his sister had anticipated (due to the cost of recreating the 1930s period setting): "The film was no longer viable as the on-the-fly independent production they had envisioned" (Harris, 2008, p. 63).

Jones and Wright's eighteen-month option expired. It was bought by up-and-coming actor Warren Beatty, who was looking to become a first-time producer

with something he could also take the lead role in. Benton and Newman were no longer practically involved, except for their writing credit. In 1967, at age 28, Beatty produced and acted in *Bonnie and Clyde*, with Arthur Penn directing now that the project had studio backing, and a US\$2.5 million budget from Warner Bros. for which they would see a US\$70 million box-office return. Beatty had had his eye on *Bonnie and Clyde* since Truffaut's friend Jean-Luc Godard visited the set of Beatty's Penn-directed film *Mickey One* three years earlier, and mentioned that he had a copy of Benton and Newman's treatment with him and, if Truffaut didn't take it on, was thinking of making it "as an extremely low-budget film with a quick shoot" (Harris, 2008, p. 40). Whether or not Beatty looked at the treatment at that time – he, and perhaps Penn, seem to have clocked an interest in a property (and the creators' new-found reputation) that had appealed to Truffaut and Godard. Warner Bros. eventually acquired a film that could still be marketed as independent in spirit if not in terms of corporate control.

While Beatty, Penn and Warner Bros. took over his film and took it out of his independent realm, Robert Benton was consolidating the "focus" phase of his career. He was approaching independence on his own terms, ultimately benefiting from an Oscar nomination for the *Bonnie and Clyde* screenplay and culminating with his co-writer/director role on *Bad Company* (1972), written with David Newman again, and the first production of Jafffilms, the independent production company of the former President of Paramount, Stanley R. Jaffe. *Bad Company* used the same episodic road-move structure as *Bonnie and Clyde* but was more the quirky "Benton" film. A 1977 feature article about Benton in *New York* magazine recalled Benton and Newman "giggling and whooping" in an *Esquire* cubicle while working on their first script and used words like "authentic" and phrases like his "crazy-legged point of view" to evoke Benton's spirit of independence (Hayes, 1977). An "independent promotional surround" was starting to appear in such coverage. But we should return to the key point about this case-study: the "focus" phase was primarily based on a network of weak ties through which bridging relationships were crucial in lifting Benton in particular out of "exploration" and into "independence". He would eventually transition into the "New Hollywood" studio system, as has often been the case with independents whose progression has been fast-tracked by early success.

Even given this fast-tracking, however, Robert Benton's combined "exploration" and "focus" phases took three years at least. The lesson we can take from this, for the purpose of the thesis, is that a "focus" phase based around network tie relations and bridging may be just as important as the white heat of passion-driven, bonding-based and intensely pursued creative "exploration" in transitioning an aspiring independent into functional and sustainable independence. These phases are not cut and dried, of course, and personal enthusiasm persists across both, but in the "focus" phase it becomes currency, in a sense, and part of reputation within the tie transformations that move the participants towards a successful output.

The case study of Robert Benton and *Bonnie and Clyde* may be a particularly concentrated and condensed one in terms of illustrating the first phases of the pyramidal structure of independent progression. Although just as much a small surface as the others we have been considering, Benton's small world happened to be in New York where (and when) the right tie relations afforded the needed resources and momentum-sustaining networks for progression. Few neophyte independents get an intensive three-day tutorial from a Francois Truffaut in a New York hotel room to fast-track them from a skills shortfall to being sufficiently skilled. This is very much the point, of course. The emerging model is highlighting the importance, for filmmakers, policy makers, producers, etc., of thinking about the requirements of a "focus" phase and its tie transformations, rather than assuming either that the enthusiasms of an "exploration" phase can simply transform themselves by sheer momentum into a sustainable independent career or that the needed relationships can be left mostly to chance.

In illustrating the pyramidal model of the filmmaker's career progression, we can remind ourselves of some of the findings it encapsulates. The first is that sustainable independence, in career terms, is not the starting place but rather a subsequent achievement. Mistaking the exploration phase for sustainable independence is a significant category error. As was made clear in the thesis Introduction, by surveying the five major ways of thinking about independence, the only meaningful use of the term is to describe the relational dynamic that situates independence within an entrepreneurial appropriation of the different, the virtually integrated field of flexible specialisation, national agendas of cultural

development (and regional variants of that) or some particular combination of these specific to the time and place. There is no outside to these spaces. The outsider in the exploration phase is not an independent in this sense, but rather a beginner, an amateur, an aspirer, a hobbyist, a film student or, ideally, an independent in the making. The focus phase is what transforms the explorer into a sustainable independent filmmaker. However, the focus phase has not tended to be well understood, gets left to chance as often as not, and yet, as we have seen, actually requires some specific things to happen – one of the most important of which is the filmmaker having access to opportunities for tie transformations, within a network of weak and strong ties to people beyond other explorers at the same stage as themselves.

It has become clear, as we elaborated the pyramidal structure around the (auto)ethnographically derived codes, that the focus phase requires the independent-in-the-making to evaluate any encountered opportunities for tie transformation and act on these evaluations. In the process there is often weakening of previously strong ties, strengthening weak ties, or establishing new ties, both weak and strong. The colloquialism of “networking” does not fully capture such transformations and evaluations or how they help produce the necessary focus and downstream opportunities.

Once control had been identified here as key to the core variable, it became possible to see that identity salience-based control is vital in the kinds of evaluation just described. Will I gain or lose some control over what I am doing? Will the locus of control shift from internal to external? Where an affective allegiance to having total control may characterise much of what goes on in the exploration phase, evaluating the pros and cons of accepting external loci of control has to characterise more of the filmmaker’s activity in the focus phase (e.g. obligations to funders, “strings” attached to opportunities, giving people what they want, producing the kind of work that will get distribution, making what is marketable, and so on). But the identity salience aspect of this resides in the process of evaluating its impact on one’s sense of identity and future opportunities relating to this.

We have to ask, therefore, what aspect of identity it is that is at stake. This is where the Grounded Theory and (auto)ethnographically-based method finally intersects with external theory, as it were. One of our (auto)ethnographically-derived codes has not yet featured much in the thesis' account of the filmmaker's journey but becomes pertinent at exactly this point. The quality of "momentum" has been identified in each stage. Momentum occurs naturally, so to speak, in the processes of exploration. Or it is derived through ties and tie transformations (where others contribute to keeping a project going). And it can become institutionalised, e.g. where the later stages of the Film Value Chain take over and marketing and distribution get underway, with their own processes and logic. But from an identity perspective, momentum is clearly a question of motivation and orientation towards future opportunities.

Self-determination theory

As we have seen in the previous two chapters, motivation is a finite resource that can get exhausted as the aspiring independent progresses up through the levels. Passion becomes pragmatism, supposedly permeable barriers between levels suddenly seem impermeable, problem-solving energies wane in the face of bigger problems. If the focus phase does not sufficiently re-focus the more innocent motivations of the exploration phase, the filmmaker may have difficulty transitioning into sustainable independence in the more complex world of entrepreneurial appropriation, virtually integrated flexible specialisation or agendas of cultural development, where maintaining commitment and finding opportunities may be a challenge.

So, with identity theory as the overarching framework, the thesis' argument brings us to the point of needing, if we want to end with a comprehensively detailed theory, some theoretical way of framing the kinds of identity-based evaluations described above, and the kinds of motivational factor just evoked, especially as these relate to the exploration phase and to maintaining commitment beyond that phase (to project, goals, others, etc.).

La Guardia (2009) demonstrates “how the Self-determination Theory framework provides an understanding of motivational processes that influence ... identity concepts of exploration and commitment” (p. 90). She explores “the Self-determination Theory (SDT) perspective (Ryan & Deci, 2003) on the motivational processes that underlie identity formation and maintenance, as well as the social contextual influences on these self-representations across the life span” (p. 90). As a sub-category of general identity theory, SDT has been developed by other researchers, on the basis of Ryan and Deci’s work, in ways that seem largely compatible with the findings of the present research, although SDT has not been applied before to filmmaking. Moreover, there is a sub-category of SDT known as Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET), concerned with how people evaluate the balance between internal and external control of their circumstances.

La Guardia (2009) takes a simple example of an artistic young person moving from exploration to focus:

Using the example of the budding young artist, although his potentials, [which] can be self-evident in the enjoyment, interest, and the facility with which he engages his pursuits, are likely contributors to him developing an identity as an artist, it is the encouragement by those who are close to him (or in other words support for relatedness) that may propel these intrinsic interests into a more rooted identity. ... [H]e may begin to enter his artwork into competitions or he may produce more pieces in his portfolio of work to obtain a job. ... [A]ccording to SDT, through the process of internalization, the child is able to connect more fully with others who also share their abiding interests, goals, values, and behaviors (relatedness); the child is able to develop competencies to capitalize on new opportunities for growth and mastery and cope with environmental challenges as they arise... (pp. 93-94).

La Guardia’s example neatly captures, in a much simpler form, our phases of exploration (“enjoyment, interest”) and focus (“relatedness”) and the importance of tie transformations. But the real value of her analysis is in her identification, based on Ryan & Deci’s work, of an “autonomous style” that relies on cognitive evaluation of the trade-off between self-determination and external determinants. This is a not uncommon finding in SDT/CET research: that an autonomous style

is maintained as a crucial aspect of maintaining motivation in the face of “environmental challenges” that may seem to (or may actually) locate control somewhere else.

In an important attempt to reconcile SDT/CET with Csikszentmihalyi’s flow theory, Abuhamdeh (2012) argues that the former corrects several oversimplifications in the latter, while remaining very much compatible, and that the latter in turn introduces a needed emphasis on momentum to the former. So we do seem to be identifying here a theoretical framework to which the present research may be able to make a contribution, especially around what Abuhamdeh calls “state-level motivational orientations” (p. 109). While it is grossly simplistic to see the pyramidal structure of career progression as providing a flow channel for the independent filmmaker (i.e. whose skills develop in tandem with the increased challenge at each level), it does seem possible to argue that the levels of the pyramidal structure have been defined around something like Abuhamdeh’s state-level motivational orientations. Where both flow theory and SDT/CET emphasise the importance of competence (which flow theory sees as the key factor in generating intrinsic motivation, when competence and challenge are in optimal balance), SDT/CET give equal emphasis to self-determination. (This is the core SDT emphasis, while CET as a theoretical subset of SDT emphasises the evaluations an actor makes of the internal/external control equilibrium in maintaining autonomy as an identity style).

Autonomy is a perceived state, as well as being linked to goal-orientated activity, which is why Abuhamdeh distinguishes motivations that are state-level from those that are goal-directed. Put more simply, in terms of filmmaking, there will of course be motivations tied to the goals of making films and progressing a career, but there will also be motivations tied to the self-perceived state of autonomy a filmmaker has as a result of evaluating the balance between internal control (self as determining) and external control (others as determining, usually in the form of institutions and structures). Just as flow theory suggests that there are optimal experiences of competence/challenge, SDT/CET suggests that there are optimal states of perceived self-determination. We seem to be very close to a theoretical definition of independence here, in structural-functional terms, as follows.

In a hybrid flow/SDT/CET theoretical framework, of the sort proposed by Abuhamdeh, the concept of an optimal state of perceived self-determination is not a way of describing the mythical unencumbered rebel or guerrilla filmmaker who does everything his or her own way and does everything themselves. The notion of “optimal” means optimal in the necessary circumstances, which is to say at a particular place or state in the pyramidal structure, understood according to the present research’s terminology. Abuhamdeh’s emphasis on thresholds is the final bit of the puzzle here, in bringing our pyramidal structure into alignment with the proposed theoretical framework. Beyond specific thresholds, the perceived degree of self-determination has to change in order to be effective, and with it the kind of autonomy being deployed and identity being projected, e.g. through tie relations. This is more than just a matter of compromising with the demands of changed circumstances and others’ expectations, and state-level motivational orientations are not reducible to the notion of compromise. Instead, what is being highlighted in this way of thinking is how these motivational orientations at the various levels, or across the various thresholds, have to include constant re-evaluations of one’s own autonomy in order to maintain forms of self-determination that are appropriate to the circumstances. So, if a little crudely, the “rebel” filmmaker who finds herself in a script development process with a funder and being told to change a screenplay but fails to ask “if I surrender some degree of self-determination here, am I in fact gaining some there?”, is caught in the binary of compromise/don’t compromise, rather than understanding that self-determination is situationally sensitive. For example, an increased freedom to network autonomously at a higher level of filmmaking, and to establish productive ties (thus maintaining motivation), will usually follow from surrendering some of the naïve autonomy that typically characterises the exploration phase. The independent who sees only a series of enforced compromises will likely feel motivation bleeding away as a consequence, according to the SDT/CET perspective. The independent who shifts through a sequence of state-level motivational orientations around differing forms of self-determination will more likely find “flow”.

As a result of theorising it this way, we can begin to see that the focus phase should be, in a sense, a training for this process of shifting through a sequence of state-level motivational orientations around differing forms of self-determination.

However, as this research has abundantly demonstrated, independent filmmakers have a lot of trouble doing precisely this. The thesis has documented many of the difficulties, latterly the “identity grammar” problem of the bottom-up segmentation view versus the top-down encompassment view, as these inform the folk model of independent filmmaking.

So, we need to shift back to practicalities and ask, what can be done? This project will conclude by proposing an expanded view of the Film Value Chain. But another way of approaching this final question might be to take an iconic independent filmmaker and ask whether they have an *autonomous style* that reveals, on closer inspection, a focus stage in their career where self-determination involved the kinds of “cognitive evaluations” we have been theorising; that is, where what may have been a naïve “no compromises” independence was superseded by SDT/CET’s state-level motivational orientations around differing forms of self-determination.

The independence of Jim Jarmusch: modulating control

Jim Jarmusch, a fiercely independent American film director, screenwriter, producer, actor, editor, and composer, is one of a handful of American filmmakers who make intensely personal films while still maintaining complete creative control (Plotnick, 2001). Having never made a film for a major studio (Perry, 2016) he considers himself to be a “hard core amateur”, referring to the origin of the word amateur to mean “love” as opposed to “professional” which implies work that is done for money (Gross, 2017). Though arguably one of the last major truly independent film directors in America, Jarmusch bristles at the use of the term:

It’s all so independent. I’m so sick of that word. I reach for my revolver when I hear the word quirky. Or edgy. Those words are now becoming labels that are slapped on products to sell them. Anyone who makes a film that is the film they want to make, and it is not defined by marketing analysis or a commercial enterprise, is independent. My movies are kind of made by hand. They’re not polished - they’re sort of built in the garage. It’s

more like being an artisan in some way (Jarmusch, as quoted in Hirschberg, 2005, para. 9).

An American and English Literature major, Jarmusch spent his final year in Paris, spending much of his time at the local cinémathèque watching a wide variety of international films. He subsequently enrolled in the graduate film school at New York University, however he failed to graduate at this time as he spent his final year's tuition on making his first feature length film *Permanent Vacation* (1980) (Hertzberg, 2001). With his second film, *Stranger than Paradise* (1984), Jarmusch was credited as having started the American independent film movement (Cheung-Lau, 2009), with New York Times critic Lynn Hirschberg declaring that the film “permanently upended the idea of independent film as an intrinsically inaccessible avant-garde form” (Hirschberg, 2005, para. 2). Blending European and Japanese film style with that of Hollywood (Gelder, 1984), Jarmusch's films often eschew traditional narrative structure, while his minimalist, unhurried style focuses more on mood and character development than clear plot progression (Travers, 1992) (Hattenstone, 2004). His body of work and his publicly proclaimed refusal to accept funding if it means giving up any control has established him as one of the most prominent and influential independent filmmakers of his generation (I. Blair, 2000).

Suárez (2007), Tzioumakis (2006) and Carmichael (1994) allow us to put together a picture of how and why Jim Jarmusch skilfully adjusted what he did at each phase of his career in order to maintain and increase his backing by Japanese corporate funders and others.

Tzioumakis (2006, pp. 208-209) points out that “a new infrastructure in support of this type of filmmaking started emerging” when the US Congress in 1978 mandated that “public television should use substantial amounts of independently produced programming” (her chapter is called “Independent Cinema in the Age of the Conglomerates”): “What is of particular importance here is that the ethos of public service broadcasting became a defining factor (at least initially) for the articulation of the new independent cinema” (p. 209). Thus, “this is the point when American independent feature filmmaking became widely perceived as a vehicle for the articulation of alternative voices” (p. 209). “New distributors, such

as the Samuel Goldwyn Company (established in 1978 by Samuel Goldwyn Jr., son of the legendary independent producer and once part-owner of United Artists)... formed within a few years of each other, were dedicated specifically to releasing this type of film” (p. 209). Samuel Goldwyn Snr. had been one of the old-style independents who “turned out quality titles working in the shadow of the majors, renting their studio facilities and relying on their distribution infrastructure”, according to Suárez (2007): “these independents contracted talent packages and crews for specific projects on a limited-time basis” (p. 39). Samuel Goldwyn Jr’s generation shifted the practice of independent production further away from the studios, forgoing studio facilities (which the studios were selling off anyway) and handling their own distribution. At the same time, there was the “consolidation of a network of festivals, distributors, and exhibition outlets that had supported alternative cinema since the mid-1960s” (p. 43).

One of the early successful releases by the Samuel Goldwyn Company was Jarmusch’s 1984 *Stranger than Paradise* (which grossed US\$2.5 million). So Jarmusch’s independence, in his exploration phase, was already being constructed within this “new infrastructure”, his identity as one of the “alternative voices” meeting an established market-determined demand for such voices. Jarmusch, promoted by the Samuel Goldwyn Company, won the Golden Camera prize at the Cannes Film Festival for *Stranger than Paradise* in 1984, and his career as an off-Hollywood filmmaker had clearly shifted into the focus phase.

Suárez (2007) picks up the story: “European TV stations, especially those funded with public money and interested in alternative programming, were also important backers”. German television station ZDF had put money into *Stranger than Paradise* in collaboration with France’s Studio Canal Plus (p. 44). This international extension of US public service broadcasting’s mandated interest in “alternative voices” offered a filmmaker like Jarmusch an identity template, as it were (as it did for Spike Lee and Steven Soderbergh at much the same time). Autonomy as a self-consciously promoted style had a particular fit with the times:

This awareness of style may have contributed significantly to the popularity of Jarmusch’s films during the Reagan-Thatcher years, a time of sharply diminished expectations, un- and underemployment, and gentrification, and

dominated by the dismantling of the welfare state and political conservatism in the United States as well as in much of Europe. This was a period when the countercultural impulses of the 1960s and early 1970s fragmented and individualized, evolving from utopian mass movements to personal stylistic choices (Suarez, 2007, p. 57).

With this identity established, Jarmusch's focus phase involved a particularly successful positioning of himself and his work in relation to larger corporate and international interests. "Encased in their personal styles, sharply individualistic and self-involved, Jarmusch's characters traverse the world" (Suarez, 2007, p. 57). So too did Jarmusch's own identity, his films reaching a receptive audience in Japan as a result. The huge Japanese corporation JVC started funding Jarmusch's work in 1989 and has continued to do so. When a mysterious Japanese man takes a bench seat beside aspiring poet Paterson in the 2016 Jarmusch film of that name, and begins a conversation, the presence of the Japanese businessman alongside Jarmusch's avatar seems like a moment of almost symbolic acknowledgement.

In Jarmusch's *Mystery Train*, the first storyline centres on two Japanese tourists, the second on an Italian tourist (and the ghost of Elvis in the hotel room she shares with an American woman), while the final storyline is about a British man. In *Night on Earth*, based around a series of taxi journeys, the locations are Los Angeles, New York, Rome, Paris and Helsinki. We hear English, French, German, Italian and Finnish on the soundtrack, and the credits (using the respective languages) list crews hired in the different countries. Suárez identifies the many cinematic homages the film contains to the films of these countries. In addition to JVC as a principal backer, the credits list Pyramide Productions and Le Studio Canal Plus (France), Pandora Filmproduktion (Germany), Locus Solus Entertainment (United States) and Channel Four Films (Great Britain).

It is impossible to reconstruct the tie relations and tie transformations underpinning the focus phase of Jarmusch's career, as we were able to do with Robert Benton, because he does not discuss them in interviews and there has been no insider in a position to document them. But we can see the consequences in what has just been described. Jarmusch exercised his autonomy in order to develop and deliver films that matched content to the international networks he

was increasingly able to do business with, while maintaining an identity as perhaps the archetypal independent. One is tempted to say that his many backers, not least JVC, never interfered in the films he wanted to make because he had already understood their interests so well, including their ongoing interest in the alternative voice that he has come to epitomise.

Carmichael (1994) helps us to see that this was not a matter of slavishly pursuing the money. Jarmusch has also pursued the internationalisation of his voice as an aesthetic project that is deeply embedded in the trajectory of his career. When Jean-François Lyotard (1984) describes “the degree zero of contemporary general culture: one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald’s food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and ‘retro’ clothes in Hong Kong” (p. 76), he could very easily be describing a Jarmusch character. But, beyond this, Carmichael suggests it is Jarmusch’s filmmaking (and other texts Carmichael compares it with) “in their self-conscious acknowledgment of Asian difference, that urge us to recognize the ways in which the American rewritings and appropriations of the sign of the other are also modes of comprehending, in a particularly postmodern sense, one’s lived relation to the world” (p. 232). What JVC got for their money, whether they knew they wanted it or not, was one of the most profound explorations of this in independent cinema (of which the benchmark moment in *Paterson* is only one small instance).

However, for the purpose of bringing the argument of this thesis to a close, the point to be made is that a naïve version of Jarmusch’s independence, which could easily be extracted from his many interviews, has to be replaced by a more nuanced understanding of autonomous styles and states. Jarmusch’s early autonomous style was formed within the “alternative voice” template and he then transitioned, as a result of early success, into an autonomous state that clearly required the kinds of ties needed for the internationalisation of both his opportunities and his aesthetic. Were there any documentary evidence to draw on (perhaps it exists and could be accessed for future research), it should be possible to chart a sequence of such ties and the resulting states, as Jarmusch progressed through focus and sustainable independence to establishment (with his iconic status secure). The generalisation we take from his case, though, is that the focus phase should ideally be a training for this process of moving through a sequence

of state-level motivational orientations (in the terminology of SDT/CET) around differing forms of self-determination, without clinging to a naïve notion of autonomy which might have served one's motivation well in the early stages of exploration.

The three promotional surrounds and the FVC

Caldwell's industrial promotional surround illustrates what is being *predominantly* promoted in the two "warring flipsides". In the corporate promotional surround it is the corporate product, in the worker promotional surround it is their professional status. In the independent promotional surround it is filmmakers' rhetoric of self-determination.

Note on Figs. 12 and 13

The case studies in this chapter allow us finally to extend the "promotional surrounds" model. But I want to suggest that this is not just an addition, even though the following visual presentation necessarily suggests this. There is no adequate way to suggest the dynamic interaction of the "surrounds" as both discursive and material phenomena. But it is this interaction, as evoked in previous pages, that makes the "surround" more than a metaphor (just as the pyramidal structure is intended as more than a metaphor). These are fields of real practices and densely interacting meanings within which an independent's course of action becomes a very real matter of vocational survival.

Two Warring Flipsides In the Industrial Promotional Surround

TOP-DOWN CORPORATE PROMOTIONAL SURROUND (CPS)

(Branding, Marketing, Making-Ofs, Meta-Texts, Franchises, DVD Extras, EPKs, etc.)

Corporate Logic

Industrial Leveling Strategies:

- To level hierarchies in market/distribution chain (fulfills the pre-digital notion of direct-to-consumer marketing)
- To level distinctions in production/labor chain (lower costs, eliminates union entitlements, creates inter-craft conflict)

Specific Film/TV Tactics:

- To create information cascades on multi-platforms (publicity, buzz about 'special' blockbuster properties)
- To cross-promote conglomerate properties (advertising unexceptional content in the clutter)

General Corporate Goals:

- To externalize risk (through co-productions, presales, outsourcing, merchandizing)
 - To cultivate flexibility (through outsourcing, contract labor, project-based incorporation)
-

Impact/Results

UNRULY WORKWORLD	UNRULY TECHNOLOGIES	UNRULY AUDIENCES
<p>CPS stimulates volatile labor contestation while creating over-supply of content (and workers) at industry's 'input boundaries.' Economic anxiety fuels excessive 'spec' project creation. As costs and revenues decrease, and markets become more uncertain, theoretical justifications in ephemeral texts circulated by management to employees increase.</p>	<p>CPS industrially rationalizes new tech as 'user-friendly' to collapse existing, costlier workflows. CE disciplines new tech by theorizing them within traditional aesthetic standards and conventional business practices (but apart from existing labor arrangements). The greater any new tech's disruptiveness, the more extreme the theorizing in ephemeral texts needed to tame it.</p>	<p>CPS brands corporations emotionally by creating psychological relations with fans via viral marketing, multiple platforms, and immersive, ancillary content. Fan loyalty is keyed to relative extent of corporate disclosure and organizational transparency as evidenced by corporate ephemeral texts circulating in viewer's promotional surround.</p>

CPS tries to intellectually manage and monetize instabilities through self-referencing as labor and consumption distinctions are leveled

WPS resuscitates leveled distinctions through self-referencing to maintain professional communities, craft survival, and career advantage

UNRULY WORKWORLD	UNRULY TECHNOLOGIES	UNRULY AUDIENCES
<p>WPS constantly negotiates worker & craft identities for survival. The histories, socio-professional hierarchies, and cultural symbolism of any craft represented in ephemeral texts increase in prominence as the oversupply of production of labor increases.</p>	<p>WPS is used to legitimize one technical or craft group over another competing craft group, and to establish competence and exclusivity. Craft and worker theorizing, self-referencing, and cultural activities in and through ephemeral texts increase as the conveyor belt of technical obsolescence and uncertainty accelerate.</p>	<p>Users and fans increasingly share production and aesthetic competencies with commercial film/TV workers. Thus, worker discourses of "professionalism—vs—amateurism" in ephemera become acute and more exclusionary in the era of prosumer social media and amateur user-generated content (UGC).</p>

Labor's Cultural Practice

Craft Strategies

- Make craft, union or guild self-perpetuating through medieval system of protracted mentoring.
- Maximize and codify degree to which production is distributed across department area and crew.

Cultural Tactics/Contradictions

- Cultivate ideal of unified industry with management to protect incomes after contracts are signed.
- Convert work into cultural capital, via socio-professional rituals, ancestry, and meritocracy.
- Buffer underemployment by displaying and leveraging cultural capital via credits, craft awards, and demo reels.

General Work Goals

- Network to survive morphing, nomadic system of short-term production start-ups/shut-downs in 'gift economy'
 - Maintain high-costs of entry and exclusivity. Preach collectivity in trade fora and texts, but bar aspirants from entry.
-

Labor Logic

GROUND-UP WORKER PROMOTIONAL SURROUND (WPS)

(Mentoring, How-to Panels, Trade Stories, Technical Retreats, Comp Reels, Craft Meritocracy)

(JohnCaldwell,21July09)

Fig. 12. Two warring flipsides in the industrial promotional surround (Caldwell, 2011) , used with permission.

EDGE-IN INDEPENDENT PROMOTIONAL SURROUND (IPS)
(Individualistic “Voice”, Social Media, Interviews, Meet the Filmmaker Panels, Behind the Scenes Clips, Industry Gatherings, Mentoring)

<p><u>UNRULY WORKWORLD</u> IPS constantly negotiates independent filmmaker identities for vocational survival. Lowering of boundaries to entry created an oversupply of content, reducing their ability to distribute and profit from work. Competition for scarce resources creates precarity.</p>
<p><u>UNRULY TECHNOLOGIES</u> IPS embraces the (potential) capacity of new (lower cost) “smart” technology to level the playing field IPS is used to celebrate the disruptiveness of “untamed” new tech, especially for distribution.</p>
<p><u>UNRULY AUDIENCES</u> Fan loyalty is nurtured through direct engagement in social media, in order to manage attention as capital, with fans encouraged to share ephemeral production texts. Prosumers increasingly share production and aesthetic competencies with independent filmmakers. “Professional” and “amateur” have lost distinction, so filmmakers communicate “authentic” identity instead.</p>

Independent Logic
Affective Strategies

- To create, sustain, utilise and transform ties between individuals and attachments to projects.
- To build Trust through the “crossing” of Affection (for projects, work, and people) and Skills (AFF+SKL=TRS).
- To obtain balance between bonding and bridging that produces optimal creative states.

Cultural Tactics

- To convert AFF+SKL=TRS into resource accrual and forward momentum (despite precarious working conditions).
- To build reputation through identity capital.

General Independent Goals

- To transition successfully from exploration through focus to independence.
- To deal with the paradox of professionalism: the perceived impact on self-determination of establishment.

IPS deploys self-referencing through networks to promote a rhetoric of self-determination, as a tactic of vocational survival.

Fig. 13. The edge-in independent promotional surround (AFF, SKL, TRS are properties of Latour’s ATT and NET, discussed in Chapter 2).

The final conclusion here is that we need three things to complete our overall representation of independence: first, recognition that *three* promotional surrounds together constitute the discursive construction of a “film industry” (Fig. 12 + 13), second, that an expanded Film Value Chain is required in order to recognise the needs of independence as a course of action within that industry, and third, that the promotional surround is in fact a folk model. Recognising the IPS as a folk model enables us to see that it is not just a depiction of promotion to others, it is a context for the construction of the independent identity, through which filmmakers tell themselves who they are. However, this IPS/folk model tends to promote a bottom-weighted idea of independence: exploration, simple autonomy, DIY competency, etc. Therefore, part of the challenge for starting out independents is that the promotion of this bottom-weighted picture of the field is itself a barrier to their progression beyond exploration through the focus level to the higher levels of an authentic working life.

This research has exposed four stages of filmmakers’ careers (exploration, focus, independence, and establishment), and currently filmmakers and films in each stage are treated as if they are all the same in terms of the FVC. The traditional FVC is failing and needs to be reformulated; however this reformulation must address both the changing nature of film production and distribution, and also incorporate how our knowledge of career stages, and the importance of reputation and relationships (see Bloore, 2009), adjusts our understanding of the FVC. In each stage of career progression, filmmakers experience points of uncertainty as they move through the FVC. Some of the uncertainty they face is unique to each career stage, yet a grammar of encompassment treats all stages as if they were equal, as if filmmakers in the focus phase should be given the same opportunities as those in the independence and establishment stages. However, we can see from the grammar of segmentation utilised by filmmakers in the earlier stages that they experience the FVC differently, and that the needs of their projects are not adequately supported by the same organisational structures as required by the projects of more experienced filmmakers. Different templates are needed for interpreting situations and planning courses of action for projects at each level, with additional consideration for filmmakers whose view of filmmaking runs counter to that of the establishment.

We can now complete our question from the Introduction in the following way:
 Instead of being driven by the conventions of the traditional FVC, could there be a FVC that encompasses the four phases of independent progression, but treats them differently in terms of development in particular, in order to function more effectively for all independent filmmakers? Fig. 14 presents this in summary form.

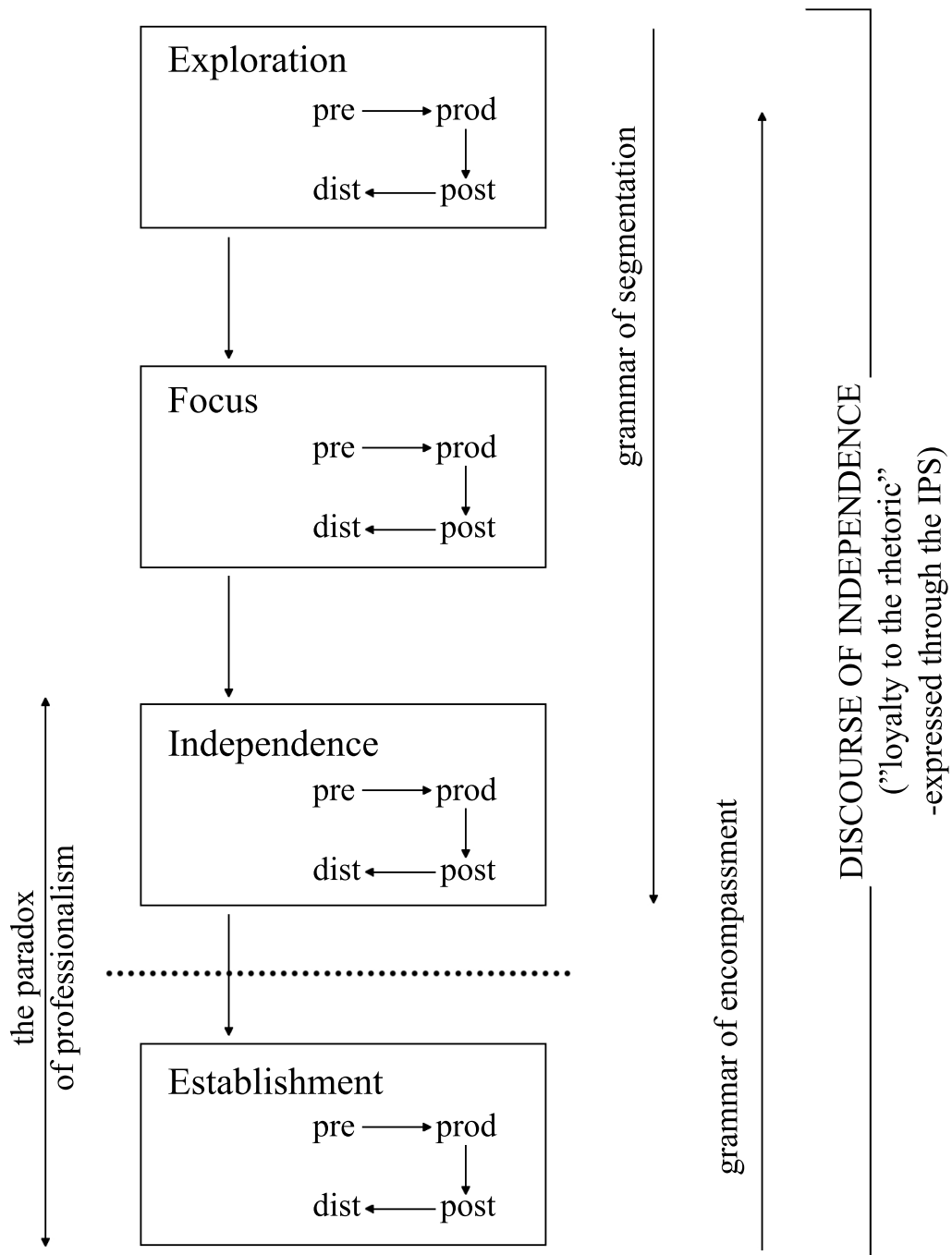


Fig. 14. The expanded Film Value Chain for independents

In the early part of this research, I focused on how optimal creative states are obtained by independents (having found and autoethnographically described some of my own in the creative practice around *Penny Black*). But these have now been re-thought as optimal states of perceived self-determination which is a way of describing, not the mythical unencumbered rebel or guerrilla filmmaker who does everything his or her own way, but rather optimal states achieved within the level-related circumstances of an expanded Film Value Chain. This proposal for an expanded FVC for independents replaces the unitary conventions of the traditional model with an acknowledgment of different socio-professional contexts at each stage, where the energising enthusiasms are differently deployed, where there are different cycles of expectation (and disappointment), where energies are ordered differently by different workworld “jigging”, where the resource accrual works differently, and where different aspects of the folk model of independence may be in tension with each other. This is the grounded theory produced by my research into the independent course of action and the independent’s mode of existence.

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