

Genre Framing in Discourses Surrounding Comedy Television Remakes Between the  
UK and the US

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## Abstract

Traded as a format between Britain and the US, the sitcom has traditionally been understood as closely connected to its socio-cultural context (Tueth, 2005; Wagg, 1998) and as being characterised by its humorous intent (Eaton, 1978; Mills, 2009). Current format studies of sitcoms illustrate the variety of ways in which the final texts relate to their local contexts, offering either comparative analyses between versions or singular critiques of programmes focusing on their suitability for their particular market (Beeden & de Bruin, 2010; Ducray, 2012). While doing well to showcase the nations involved, what is missing is an understanding of the industrial specifics involved. This project seeks to understand how industrial factors impact the format process, specifically what role industry understandings and expectations of genre play. Therefore, to meet the goal of this project, this study is guided by the question of how genre is expressed in industrial discourses surrounding sitcom remakes between Britain and the US and presents its findings in terms of identification, origination, work, and intention. These aspects of the remake process are shown to be framed in terms of genre. As such, genre is significantly utilised as a framing device (Bielby & Bielby, 1994) within the statements surrounding comedy remakes. The publicly made statements under study are a part of the discursive formation of genre for these programmes (Mittell, 2004) and, therefore, their examination contributes to understanding these programmes generically. Understandings of comedy within the statements examined are utilised and expressed with regard to familiarity and a negotiation between similarity and difference. This study is focused on only one remake relationship – that between Britain and the US – and only considers one genre: scripted television comedy. The findings of this study demonstrate the utility of utilising this method for future studies of the relationship between remakes and genre.

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- L. A. B.

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## Introduction

"There's another comedy world here. The Venn diagram crossover is getting thicker and thicker. It's a very stimulating thing to be a part of - a big comedy mash-up" Peter Serafinowicz is quoted as stating with regard to the exchange and blending of comedy between Britain and the US (in Wilson, 2010). While being traded as a format between Britain and the US, the sitcom, as a comedic form, has traditionally been understood as closely connected to its socio-cultural context (Tueth, 2005; Wagg, 1998) and as being characterised by its humorous intent (Eaton, 1978; Mills, 2009). Current format studies of sitcoms illustrate the variety of ways in which the final texts relate to their local contexts, offering either comparative analyses between versions or singular critiques of programmes focusing on their suitability for their particular market (Beeden & de Bruin, 2010; Ducray, 2012; Griffin, 2008). While these studies do well to showcase the role of national culture within the remake process, what is missing is an understanding of the industrial specifics involved. This project seeks to understand how industrial factors impact the format process, specifically what role industry understandings and expectations of genre play. Therefore, to meet the goal of this project, I am guided by the following main research question: To what extent do the industrial discourses surrounding the translation of sitcom formats between Britain and the US reveal the role of genre and wider industrial processes within the remake process? In addition, three supporting questions will be used to aid me in investigating my main research question:

1. How do understandings of genre as discussed by those involved with the production and reproduction of texts impact on industrial understandings of sitcom?;
2. What does how the industrial discourses discuss the cultural translation process tell us about the format process?; and,
3. To what extent does the industry discourse reveal industrial issues at work in the translation process?

I seek to interrogate these questions through the collection and analyses of industry discourses in which it is hypothesised that those involved in the format process will obtain and express their behaviours and opinions. In particular, this study examines the extent to which understandings of genre are framed within these statements and how the various stages of the remake process are rationalised in terms of genre

(Bielby & Bielby, 1994). This study affords an investigation into how understandings of comedy and humour inform the assumptions and work practices of those who create sitcoms and what the format process means to this system. The format process grants the opportunity to explore the production of sitcom in the face of new industrial and cross-cultural demands providing an interrogation of existing assumptions and a contribution to current understandings of comedy and its production. Consequently, this project provides an intervention in the study of television sitcom formats particularly between Britain and the US.

This project is concerned with the format trade and adaptation of television sitcoms between Britain and the US, all of which I will refer to as the “remake process.” I take Britain and the US as my focus for two main reasons. First, Britain is the largest exporter of (scripted) formats (Esser, 2010; Lantsch, Altmeyden, & Will, 2009) and the US is its most important market (Steemers, 2004). Although Britain will readily import complete US sitcoms, the reverse has been demonstrated to be problematic for both issues with programme structure (which complicates scheduling) and with “cultural discount” or questions of taste and humour (Hogg, 2013). Although, arguably, the US is hesitant to import foreign programming, especially comedies, Britain is its number one provider of formats (The Wit, 2014). Second, a common language and similar culture provide reasons for this trade relationship (US Department of State, 2014, p.2), yet there are linguistic and cultural disparities which are used to argue for differences in sense of humour and styles of sitcom (Blake, 2005; Ziv, 1988). Additionally, the similar language removes the need for interlingual translation both for the subjects of my study and for me as the researcher.

The statements investigated in this study demonstrate that genre plays a pivotal role in the rationalisation of remaking as well as the decisions of remake production. This study finds that genre is utilised in order to reveal the negotiation between similarity and difference in the remake process. What is emphasised in these statements is similarity rather than difference. This is important since difference is what is highlighted in format studies: how remaking is the result of cultural and industrial differences and how various versions differ from one another. In the first place, similarity is highlighted throughout the origination stage of remaking with appeal being expressed in terms of shared familiarity and the utility of remaking for industrial strategy for both originators and remakers. Additionally,

individuals reveal an understanding that any modifications made through remake production are frequently due to attempts of replication rather than deviation. Furthermore, the statements in this study express similarity in generic sensibility (i.e., taste and style) which pervades all stages of the remake process.

This study arose from my interest in both British and American television comedies and the remaking between them. There were studies which offered textual analyses and developed arguments based on that, but I was curious about how those involved understood the process. In particular this is because these studies made arguments about industrial processes such as production solely from textual analyses and I was not sure how these arguments could be made and whether they aligned with what the individuals actually stated. Furthermore, I was intrigued by notions of difference in national comedy and I was curious as to the role of remakes within this with a particular interest in how those involved in the remake process understood the relationship between comedy and nation.

Therefore, this study is based on gaps in the current literature and unanswered questions about comedy remakes between, specifically, the US and Britain. Importantly, the remake process involves industry individuals not just the resulting programmes, the latter of which is the primary focus of current studies of comedy remakes between Britain and the US (e.g., Ducray, 2012; Griffin, 2008; Lavigne, 2011). While the findings of current studies are intriguing and valuable they do fail to clearly address industrial issues beyond the final programme text. Studies of unscripted formats are more explicit and detailed in their analyses of industrial processes and such insight leaves much to be desired in scripted studies with regard to similar issues. It is inappropriate to assume that the findings of unscripted formats are applicable for scripted ones, like comedy, and, therefore, I found it necessary to help remedy this lack.

This study and its findings are significant because they respond to the fact that comedy remakes are a substantial part of our television landscape which is increasingly composed of an international exchange of programmes and ideas. In particular, the framing of comedy and remaking in terms of similarity has implications for arguments of national comedic variation and the role of difference in the need for and outcome of remaking.

In order to properly demonstrate from where this study arose as well as to supply the necessary context for this study an overview of the pertinent literature is

necessary. The following literature review will demonstrate the issues in current research to which this present study contributes. Before explaining how the remake process may be problematic for specifically the production of comedies, I will give an overview of the genre as it relates to this project. After this, I will move to a discussion of formats highlighting the aspects of the process that call for a reconsideration of the comedy remake process.

### **Literature Review**

Currently, the study of scripted television comedy formats between Britain and the US is mostly textual, focusing on comparative analyses and issues of nationalisation (Beeden & de Bruin, 2010; Ducray, 2012; Griffin, 2008). These works offer abundant textual support for their arguments, but lack any substantial exploration and interrogation of industrial discourse. My project seeks to rectify this absence by examining industry discourse in order to understand how industry factors impact the format process, specifically the role industry understandings and expectations of genre play. Since present sitcom format studies derive their arguments from understandings of genre, it is necessary to include all aspects of genre which, according to Mittell (2001), is more than the text; it is all the discourse surrounding it such as that produced by the industry. Furthermore, despite the large body of work dedicated to the various British and American television channels as well as to the present “post-network era” and its perceived shifts in televisual production, content, and consumption (Curran & Seaton, 2010; Lotz, 2007), studies of sitcom formats between Britain and the US tend to equate the former with the BBC and the latter with the “Big Four” (i.e., ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox). This association is important because of the absence of adaptations which have and continue to occur between “all” British and American channels, not just the BBC and the “Big Four.” Additionally, this association and absence is particularly notable in the literature on sitcom which, focused on the BBC and the “Big Four,” works to maintain an understanding of difference between sitcom in Britain and the US to the extent that they are even discussed as separate genres (Dannenberg, 2004; Ducray, 2012). Connected to these narrow understandings of British comedy and television and American comedy and television are notions of national style or sense of humour whereby “British sitcom” as aired on “British television” demonstrates “British humour” and “American sitcom” as aired on “American television” showcases “American humour.” These particular, limited associations permeate

work on Anglo-American television trade especially that dedicated to formats. By reviewing the work surrounding genre, specifically as it relates to sitcom in Britain and the US, I will argue that current studies of sitcom formats neglect to consider the impact of industrial factors, particularly the role of industry generic understandings and expectations, in the format process. This review will first examine understandings of sitcom before moving into the role of industry in shaping genre expectations and working practices. After discussing industry culture, I will review the relevant work on comedy and humour as it pertains to sitcom production. I will end the review with the current work on sitcom formats and how what was previously discussed warrants a new approach to sitcom formats. From this discussion I propose an exploration into how industry understands comedy and humour in relation to sitcom and how such generic understandings inform working practices and how variation exists across industry and borders as demonstrated by the format process.

### **Genre.**

In order to explore the first supporting question—How do understandings of genre as discussed by those involved with the production and reproduction of texts impact on industrial understandings of sitcom?—it is necessary to have a foundational understanding of sitcom as a genre. There is an abundance of work dealing with genre and with comedy and humour in particular. This study, however, is concerned primarily with scripted television comedy which most often is discussed with regard to sitcom.

I will begin this review with genre, which functions as a means of structuring production (Cury, 2011; Mills, 2009; Mittell, 2004; Ryan, 1992; Tunstall, 1993). The importance of genre to television is most ardently argued by Mittell (2001; 2004) who views genre as “discursive practices” which are defined by and organise all matter of working practices from production to distribution. These “discursive formations” (Mittell, 2001) inform decisions at every level of the television industry and are informed by and shape assumptions about audiences and those working in the industry (Mills, 2009). Genre is one of the frames employed by industry individuals in rationalising their decision-making including within publicly made statements (Bielby & Bielby, 1994). The pertinence for production is highlighted by Tunstall’s (1993) claim that “Each specific genre has its particular requirements and working cycles, which tend to cut its producers off from producers and others

working in different fields with different timetables” (p. 2). Amongst the various genres which serve as a means of organising working practices is the television sitcom (Mills, 2009; Tunstall, 1993). For those who create sitcom, the genre is “open to negotiation” yet it is the “primary definer of their labour” as they “function *within* genre, altering their behaviour and working practices in response to the norms and conventions associated with sitcom” (Mills, 2009, pp. 2-3). If this is true, that creators of sitcom base their working practices on the expectations of the genre, then it is necessary to know these conventions in order to understand from what they derive their actions.

“Classic” or “traditional” sitcom is typically understood as a series (as opposed to a serial) with episodes of thirty minutes in length and a cyclical narrative defined by stability-destabilization-restabilization (Bowes, 1990; Neale & Krutnik, 1990). The sitcom narrative revolves around an unchanging situation which typically is either domestic or occupational—that is, centred on family or work. Such everyday situations lend sitcoms an air of “realism” with which audiences can identify (Trinidad, 2001). Similarly, sitcoms use recognisable character types—commonly argued to be stereotypes (Bowes, 1990)—who “propel” the narrative, provide its source of humour, and remain consistent throughout the programme’s run (Bowes, 1990; Trinidad, 2001). Based on this understanding of sitcom—an unchanging situation with a consistent group of characters—sitcom has been described as being about “entrapment” (Bowes, 1990).

Despite general definitions of sitcom, it is commonly connected to nation or imbued with “specific national inflections” (Tulloch, 1990, p. 251). In response to the longstanding definition of sitcom, Dannenberg (2004) argues that it “does not, however, do justice to its cultural and generic diversity within specific national media cultures” (p. 169), of which is relevant here is British and American. So while sharing certain characteristics as discussed above, American sitcom and British sitcom are frequently discussed and described as distinct genres (Beeden & de Bruin, 2010; Blake, 2005; Dannenberg, 2004). Ducray (2012) claims that sitcom in Britain and the US developed with their own distinct styles of humour which in turn marked them as separate genres early on in their development.

It is a common view that American sitcom reflects American culture and social codes, and that it usually revolves around “family” whether this is a traditional family or a surrogate family such as a workplace (Pierson, 2005; Quaglio, 2009;

Tueth, 2005; Wells, 1998). Perhaps as a consequence of such values, it is perceived as “optimistic and aspirational” with characters who are “actively involved in trying to solve their problems; in learning, growing and trying to become better people” (Blake, 2005, p. 30).

In contrast, British sitcom does not commonly focus on the “suburban-family” (Tunstall, 1993), but instead is generally understood as focusing on issues of class (Chiaro, 2010; Wagg, 1998). It has been described as similar to theatre of the absurd (Dannenberg, 2004), “oddball and zany” (Tunstall, 1993, p. 126), and a “quintessentially British mix of social satire and broad farce” (Ducray, 2012). So not only is British sitcom described in terms of social class, something which is contextual, but in terms of humour style. The manner in which British sitcom is defined is quite different from American which is described in more general, universal terms.

The extent to which sitcoms are perceived as nation-specific is highlighted by arguments centred on national identity (Medhurst, 2007; Tueth, 2005). This is also demonstrated by analyses of identification and authenticity within sitcom more generally, both of which are connected to language (Al-Surmi, 2012; Quaglio, 2009). Quaglio (2009) states that identification, which is achieved through language, is linked with sitcom success. Although Britain and the US are predominately English-speaking nations, British-English and American-English are not identical and differences can be cause for miscommunication and even humour (Crystal, 2003; Davies, 1990). Furthermore, based on Al-Surmi’s (2012) conclusion that the language used in sitcom is relatively representative of natural conversation, variation in language will be present between British and American sitcoms which will lead to different possibilities for audience identification. Consequently, these generic differences are important as familiarity and identification are claimed as essential for sitcoms (Marc, 1989). The variations between American and British sitcom are mostly cultural, but further differences become apparent when investigating the role of industry.

The biggest limitation with most definitions of sitcom is their datedness as histories of sitcom demonstrate the extent to which sitcom has changed over the years. There is also an issue with what is considered sitcom and what is not. For instance, Savorelli (2010) questions the applicability of the term to programmes like *The Office* (NBC, 2005-2013) and *Scrubs* (NBC, 2001-2008; ABC, 2009-2010), but

acknowledges the use of the designation by audiences and producers. This introduces an important consideration when conducting textual analyses: they can easily omit the industrial aspect. Savorelli makes his argument by maintaining the use of the genre classification—sitcom—and comparing the extent to which certain American sitcoms stray from “traditional or classic sitcom’ (p. 132). By wisely distinguishing between current forms of sitcom and traditional sitcom, Savorelli is able to make his argument without destroying the value of genre. This is important since it is argued that genres, including sitcom, are not static entities, but, rather, evolve across time and space (Feuer, 1992; Mittell, 2004).

Feuer (1992) underscores the danger of genre theory in the “tendency to structuralize the model in such a way that it is impossible to explain changes or to see a genre as a dynamic model” (p. 113). She utilises the sitcom to argue that:

we have to take into account developments in the industry and in social and cultural history as well as developments more or less internal to the genre. These internal developments might be described as *intertextual*. That is, the sitcom develops by reacting to and against previous sitcoms. As the genre ages, it becomes richer by virtue of an increased range of intertexts that can be cited in each new sitcom (p. 113).

Furthermore, changes in sitcom are often attributed to shifts in audience “needs” and cultural matters, but that is not necessarily the case. Rather, Feuer argues, generic developments are due to industrial shifts in how audience is defined and conceptualised by industry whether or not this actually reflects real changes in audience makeup and culture.

Discussing films, Tudor (2003) highlights a dilemma presented to those who undertake genre criticism:

we are caught in a circle that first requires that the films be isolated, for which purpose a criterion is necessary, but the criterion is, in turn, meant to emerge from the empirically established common characteristics of the films. This ‘empiricist dilemma’ has two solutions. One is to classify films according to a priori criteria depending on the critical purpose. This leads back to the earlier position in which the special *genre* term is redundant. The second is to lean on a common cultural consensus as to what constitutes a western and then go on to analyze it in detail. (p. 5).

As Neale (2005) then elaborates:

it raises questions as to how 'a common cultural consensus' is established. What agencies and institutions are involved? What is the role of the film industry? [...] On the one hand it helps underline [...] the importance of distributors, reviewers and critics. On the other it helps stress the culturally relative, and therefore the culturally contingent, nature of genres themselves (p. 16).

From all of this the role of industry becomes apparent. And as Savorelli (2010) noted, the term "sitcom" is important because of its use by the industry. Therefore, instead of trying to determine what constitutes a sitcom or not based on academically derived definitions or from compilations of textual analyses, it may be most useful to explore how those within the television industry utilise and understand the classification. This will allow for a break from assumptions based on reception and a better understanding of how what is perceived as national specificity is embedded within the texts by creators. As such, this study takes as part of its purpose the examination of how these comedic programmes are defined and understood generically particularly with regard to sitcom.

Genre structures industry, but industry also shapes genre. How genre adapts to meet institutional needs can be demonstrated with sitcom as it was developed to meet institutional needs in the first place. Sitcom developed initially to meet the technological and institutional requirements of broadcasting and the perceived needs of the domestic audience and was shaped in order to acquire and maintain a regular audience (Neale & Krutnik, 1990). Eaton (1978) argues that the situations which are common to the sitcom—home and work—are not the result of attempts at "realism," but, rather, are due to industrial factors. Since the sitcom was constructed as a series to be broadcast regularly, the situations are ideal for the "constant repetition of character and theme" and are also economical with regard to staging (p. 70). But aside from these general, developmental industrial factors, American and British sitcom are further differentiated when considering American commercial broadcast sitcoms compared to BBC sitcoms.

Institutional structures impact working practices due to particular aims and requirements. Namely of concern is the extent to which policy and economic imperatives impact television systems and therefore affect the reality of production (Hartley, 2005; Hesmondhalgh, 2013). The role of policy and economics is highlighted in the differing models of American and British broadcast television. The

American commercial model of the major networks and the British public service model of the BBC are exemplars of their type and so it is not difficult to find work detailing their particularities (e.g., Crisell, 2002; Curran & Seaton, 2010; Curtin & Shattuc, 2009; Louw, 2001). While superficially the difference between these two models may be economic in terms of funding source, differences are claimed to be deeper and rooted in national, cultural specificities. Louw (2001) outlines the characteristics of the American (i.e., commercial) and British (i.e., BBC) broadcasting systems highlighting the variation between the two. From such descriptions of broadcasting history, structure, and policy the various factors which come to define and drive each system become apparent and, consequently, the extent to which such factors influence working practices within that system, including those of production. By providing a brief history of broadcast in the US, Britain, and Commonwealth countries, Louw (2001) argues for the development of particular regulatory models within nations. He claims that public service broadcasting was instituted in response to commercial broadcasting and that the BBC sought to protect the masses from commercial broadcasting. This was to be done through “cultural intervention to educate and ‘civilize’ the ‘lower’ masses in order to preserve ‘British cultural standards’ and inculcate appropriate high-culture ‘taste’” (p. 75). Therefore, from the start, the BBC was governed by audience and cultural assumptions. Kellner (2009) similarly argues, from a political economy perspective, that the public service nature of the BBC “might be to promote national British . . . culture” (p. 101). However, the BBC still needs to remain competitive and appeal to the general public in order to justify receiving licence fees. In this way it may not be much different from the major American networks whose only aim is claimed to be making money which is connected to audience size (Gitlin, 1994). There is a difference, nevertheless, with such claims of “culture” and “taste” which are absent from American broadcasting which does not have the same regulation as the BBC.

What is of concern here is the specific impact of television system upon sitcom production, rather than the particularities of each system and any value judgments therein. Therefore, while generic understandings of sitcom in Britain and the US have already been discussed, what now needs to be reviewed is what this means for American commercial broadcasting and the BBC. In the first place, sitcoms are produced differently in Britain than in the US. British sitcoms are usually written by one or two writers and production is writer-driven. In the American

commercial system, sitcoms are written by committee or teams in a writers' room and the producer holds creative control (Blake, 2005; Ducray, 2012; Mills, 2009). Additionally, American sitcoms are commonly written for established stars or to showcase a comedian whereas British sitcoms "make" stars (Blake, 2005). Sitcoms broadcast by the BBC are generally produced six episodes per "series" whereas the major American networks broadcast sitcoms that have twenty-two episodes made per "season" (essentially series and season mean the same thing in this context, although in American parlance "series" would be the completed production run including all seasons). This means in the American system concepts need to be able to stretch out much longer than in the British. Finally, BBC sitcoms can be produced basically as full thirty minute narratives. Conversely, American sitcoms must take into account the inclusion of commercials and, therefore, have to reduce the length of episodes to approximately twenty-two minutes and also consider the structure of the narrative so as to provide logical breaks for advertisements. These differences in episode number and length demonstrate that television system can impact production and not only in terms of numbers, but such nominal considerations have real generic effects particularly with regard to narrative. Furthermore, the large number of episodes in the American system along with the variety of writers is dissimilar from the consistent British writing. Like the studies of genre, these comparisons can be arrived at textually and owe very little to industry-based studies. Insight into differences in the creative process may be difficult to gather from text, albeit the credits and various reception-based texts could provide this information.

The characteristics of American sitcom and British sitcom have both been linked to the system from which they are created (Butsch, 2011; Dannenberg, 2004). This generic impact will be reviewed now for both systems with primary focus upon American commercial and the BBC while also noting other networks and sitcoms found on American and British television.

The American sitcom is claimed to be the product of the commercial system in which it is created (Butsch, 2011; Ducray, 2004; Kohl, 2005). The connection to advertising is cited as the reason for a focus upon "middle-class domesticity" (Ducray, 2004). Similarly, Wells (1998) argues that the optimistic tone characteristic of American sitcoms is related to the need to sell products as what audiences view needs to make them receptive to ads and willing to purchase what they see. The

generic characteristics and particular working practices of American sitcom are demonstrated by Butsch (2011) to be the result of the low-risk, mass audience approach of commercial broadcasting. Kohl (2005) focuses more specifically on the “antagonistic” relationship between creators and executives caused by differing aims and ownership of the text with the product of this tension being the actual sitcom. For both Butsch and Kohl the American sitcom is viewed as the result of the creators’ negotiation with industry structures, expectations, and practices. Whereas Butsch presents the sitcom creator as aware of the limits and repetitiveness, but willing to succumb to such monotony and loss of creativity, Kohl offers a different sitcom creator whereby he or she uses his or her creation as a means of commenting upon such industrial tension. In support of Kohl’s argument, however, he does only provide three examples demonstrating that they may be the exception rather than the rule. Regardless, it is apparent whether through a few detailed case studies (Kohl, 2005) or from a general overview (Butsch, 2011) that American sitcom as a genre is the product of the American television industry.

The BBC is also claimed to have an impact upon the sitcoms produced for its broadcast. Dannenberg (2004) argues that the BBC’s freedom from commercial funding has allowed it to experiment and produce more successful comedies than its commercial rival, ITV. This is because the BBC can allow its audience time to adjust to new programmes since it does not need high ratings right away. This echoes Tunstall’s (1993) claim that the BBC offers “prestige and security” (p. 131). Such a system, therefore, is conducive to “quality” work with writers being argued as the reason for sitcom success (Schaffer, 2010; Taylor, 1988). Taylor (1988) discusses the relationship between sitcom writers and producers and concludes that BBC sitcoms are the way they are because of the nature of television, not comedy (p. 200). He argues that writers and producers have varying degrees of control and differing motivations and allegiances. Ultimately, the argument again becomes that sitcom and the process of its creation are the result of institutional factors. From Taylor’s interviews he reveals that success is attributed to strength of script, a claim made by both writers and producers, though the script is assumed to still meet institutional expectations. And these expectations are that the programmes will help the BBC satisfy its remit and justify receiving licence fees while remaining competitive. Furthermore, it is argued that the BBC views comedy as promoting national culture and identity (Louw, 2001; Mills, 2010). Such a function demonstrates the

institutional influence upon genre and why British sitcom is claimed to be “quintessentially British” (Ducray, 2012; Sanson, 2011): that is its precise purpose. However, according to the BBC Trust Review and Assessment (2013), the Public Remit Survey found that audience agreement that the BBC met its remit of “Representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities” were below average (p. 35). Regardless, for the BBC the British nations are an integral part of its remit and, therefore, the perceived relationship between British sitcom and British culture may be the conscious result of the BBC. Nearly all the sitcoms which are regularly cited for epitomising the British sitcom genre are BBC sitcoms: *Hancock’s Half Hour* (BBC, 1956-1960), *Till Death Us Do Part* (BBC1, 1965-1975), *Steptoe and Son* (BBC1, 1962-1974), *Fawlty Towers* (BBC2, 1975-1979), *The Likely Lads* (BBC2, 1964-1966), *Dad’s Army* (BBC1, 1968-1977), *Are You Being Served?* (BBC1, 1972-1985), *Keeping Up Appearances* (BBC1, 1990-1995), *The Young Ones* (BBC2, 1982-1984), *Absolutely Fabulous* (BBC1, 1992-1996, 2001-2004, 2011-2012), *Only Fools and Horses* (BBC1, 1981-1996, 2001-2003), *Yes, Prime Minister* (BBC2, 1986-1988). Consequently, the manner in which these programmes reflect “Britishness” may have everything to do with their being broadcast by the BBC which selected them in the first place for their particular representation of “Britishness.” Furthermore, these sitcoms are regularly lauded for the talent of their writers (Tunstall, 1993; Wagg, 1998), with Tunstall (1993) claiming that “most comedy writers seem to prefer the BBC’s standard situation-comedy format of 28 continuous minutes” to ITV’s shortened, commercially interrupted format (p. 130). As such, “British sitcom” must be understood within its industrial context; as most often synonymous with BBC sitcom rather than incorporating the full spectrum of British television programming.

Similarly, the review of American sitcom above means commercial broadcast sitcom (i.e., the “Big Four” of ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox). This is a limited conception of sitcom and is not the only manner in which American sitcom is discussed, though it may be the most common way in which it is understood. Williamson (2008) uses the connection between sitcom conventions and American commercial broadcasters as the premise for her argument that HBO sitcoms highlight and break these generic conventions in order to differentiate themselves from network competitors. Furthermore, the freedom exhibited within HBO sitcoms with regard to language and storylines function to underscore the restrictions placed upon broadcast sitcoms. As such, Williamson’s argument reinforces the institutional

role in sitcom production since it is the particularities of HBO which allow its productions to be generically different from and comment upon programming which is associated with broadcast networks. By demonstrating how these sitcoms differ from those found on the major networks—those sitcoms which come to define “American sitcom”—Williamson highlights that such traditional understandings of American sitcom are not only a point of departure for HBO sitcoms, but also fail to represent the variety of sitcoms found on American television. In Savorelli’s (2010) work about the evolution of sitcom in American television, he includes programming from the broadcast networks and from other channels, including HBO’s *The Comeback* (HBO, 2005, 2014). This demonstrates that all channels should be considered and that programming on major broadcast networks is just as capable of generic innovation as that on premium networks. Or perhaps it means that HBO is not as divergent as it is assumed and that its programming is no more “edgy” or “innovative” than that found on the major networks. Tueth (2005) also discusses non-broadcast sitcoms in his work about American comedy, namely *South Park* (Comedy Central, 1997-), which he compares to programming which is available on the major networks, such as Fox’s animated sitcoms (e.g., *The Simpsons* [Fox, 1989-] and *Family Guy* [Fox, 1999-2003, 2005-]). Regardless of whether these arguments serve to undermine claims of the uniqueness of cable and premium network programming by highlighting that similar sitcoms can be found on the major broadcast networks, they do problematize traditional assumptions about American sitcom.

Therefore, sitcoms vary with regard to content, style, and production depending on outlet. These are not only to be understood as generic and aesthetic “standards and practices” (Williamson, 2008, p. 119), but also the frequently overlooked government regulations placed on programming. According to FCC regulation, indecent material cannot be broadcast between 6am and 10pm and since sitcoms are generally viewed as early primetime fare, they fall into this time frame. Ofcom has similar standards for British broadcasting. Consequently, generic expectations are informed by understandings of distribution as defined by not only national television system, but specifics of network and regulation.

### **Comedy and humour.**

The main difference between American and British sitcom then appears to be “cultural.” This is extremely important as the relationship between genre and

culture is pivotal. Genre is dependent on culture for its development and meaning (Mills, 2009; Mittell, 2004). As various histories and socio-cultural studies of sitcom have demonstrated, the sitcom genre is extremely connected to its context (e.g., the essays in Dalton & Linder, 2005; and Wagg, 1998). However, as noted above, such understandings of sitcom tend to ignore industrial factors such as variation across channels and specific creators and production cultures. This is because one of the main issues with these genre descriptions is that they derive their definition of sitcom from the point of view of reception rather than exploring how sitcom is conceived and employed generically by its creators. So while textual analyses may be limited in what they can provide by way of insight into production, at the same time the texts are a part of the culture in which they are consumed and, consequently, serve as a potential source of influence upon genre expectations. Therefore, the sitcom texts should not be viewed as indicative of creators' generic perceptions, but they should be considered as contributing to the formulation of cultural knowledge and subsequent expectations. This circulation and building of expectation is one of the ways in which the television industry shapes genre and, subsequently, working practices.

All genres depend "on many cultural factors for [their] 'meanings'" (Mills, 2009, p. 2), a relationship which is particularly evident in sitcom and its constituent parts: comedy and humour. Mills (2009) argues that it is sitcom's "comic impetus" which is its primary generic feature, and that attention should be turned toward the "comedy" part of its name rather than the commonly explored "situation" (p. 6). To meet this call, therefore, it is necessary to explore understandings of comedy and humour. Furthermore, building off the premise that rules of genre inform production, those who create sitcoms must possess some concept of humour in their attempts to manipulate the texts in a manner which would incite a risible response from the audience. As a result, sitcom creators can be perceived as humour producers. In addition to the generic requirement of comedy and humour theories, it follows that if the television industry theorises, it probably theorises about comedy and humour too. In other words, beyond creators just having some necessary conception of comedy and humour in order to create the texts, they may also have a working understanding of theories.

Comedy and humour are traditionally understood as distinct concepts—the former as a literary form and the latter as a cause of laughter (Grote, 1983)—

however, their often synonymous usage highlights their important relationship as epitomised in the sitcom genre. So having acknowledged their separate histories and meanings, I will review comedy and humour in tandem as they pertain to sitcom production. Since the premise is that genre informs working practices, comedy and humour must, therefore, be understood as genres. Comedy is most commonly understood as a genre in traditional literary studies and more recent genre studies of film and television (Corrigan, 1965; Moine, 2002/2008). Humour, on the other hand, is referred to in a variety of terms with comedy's association as genre as a means of distinction from humour. However, humour is also discussed in generic terms as it depends on the appropriate negotiation of rules and expectations for its success. In defining humour these writers are essentially outlining the generic characteristics of humour: what the necessary conditions are for an event to be considered humorous, how humour is distinct from other forms of expression, and what the functions are of humour. Mulkey's (1988) dichotomous discussion of humour versus serious discourse is reminiscent of the traditional approach to comedy whereby the genre is contrasted to the "serious" genre of tragedy. Furthermore, writers like Ermida (2008) explicitly refer to humour as genre. As Ermida is specifically referring to narratives which are intended to be humorous, this generic use of humour can be applied to sitcom which is similarly understood as a piece of "humour." Such an understanding of humour translates well to the label of "humourist" as someone who produces humour with the distinction made by Ziv (1984) between "amateur" and "professional" humourists, a distinction important to this project. Professional humourists are those who make a living from creating humour, such as sitcom creators.

Comedy and humour, both claimed to be universal, are understood as especially contextual. Comedy is noted as the genre most connected to its time and clime (Davis, 1993; Levin, 1987). Additionally, humour is commonly argued as indicative of the society/culture from which it came (Davies, 1990; Davis, 1993). While definitions and theories of comedy and humour are abundant, they are generally described as deviations from the norm and the norm is contextual, usually culturally defined. Traditional comedy narratives involved changes in social order and inversions of hierarchy (Levin, 1987; Stott, 2005). The purpose of such comedic plots, it is argued, is to highlight how the actual world fails to meet the ideal world (Davis, 1993; Feibleman, 1962). Yet as discussed above, this is achieved differently

between American and British sitcoms with the former focusing on the ideal and the latter on the actual. This means that they meet the generic requirements of comedy in different ways, understanding the purpose of comedy and how to achieve it inversely.

Humour is argued to be the result of breaks in expectation, whether the theory holds these expectations to be social, cultural, psychological, or physiological. Applied to sitcom, Neale and Krutnik (1990) contend that humour arises from “deviations from any social or aesthetic rule, norm, model, convention, or law” (p. 86) which means such breaks can be derived from societal or generic expectations (Dannenberg, 2004). Like Neale and Krutnik, Palmer (1987) offers an explanation for the mechanism by which humour operates within film and television comedy. In an attempt to clarify their claims, both works provide ample examples, but the issue is the datedness. This issue, while harming the comprehension of some of their arguments, also acts to support understandings of the contextual nature of comedy and humour as not only are the texts no longer in regular, popular consumption, but even an encounter with them for the sake of applying Palmer or Neale and Krutnik’s arguments does not ensure success. In other words, the texts which are chosen to demonstrate their claims when viewed today may not be accepted as humorous. Dannenberg (2004) does well to help make up for the limitations found in Neale and Krutnik (1990), namely the issue of datedness. Additionally, these studies demonstrate the relationship between sitcom and humour not only in definition, but in criticism.

Building off the issue of datedness, it is argued that humour does not occur unless it is acknowledged as such (Mulkay, 1988). Therefore, what “produces” humour is a positive reception of it. Consequently, knowledge of humour comprehension is essential for humour production. Furthermore, Kozbelt and Nishioka (2010) conclude from their study that there is a positive correlation between humour comprehension and humour production supporting the importance of comprehension to the successful production of humour. And as genre is informed by culture, contact with forms of humour circulating throughout culture will shape understandings of humour, including own consumption of sitcoms; one’s own experience with viewing sitcom will inevitably have some effect on creation.

From the perspective of reception, Kuipers (2006) concludes that “a significant amount of knowledge is needed” for “enjoyment” (p. 360). This raises

the issue between comprehension and appreciation as it is possible to understand a sitcom, or any other instance of comedy or humour, but that does not necessarily equate enjoyment. This can be demonstrated with stale jokes which can easily be acknowledged as humour, but their predictability makes them more tedious than enjoyable. In such a case, the more predictable a joke, the less it is a deviation, and, therefore, the less it meets the requirements for humour. So in actuality, the creator must also possess “a significant amount of knowledge” in order to not only create something that will be recognised as comedy, but appreciated and found pleasurable. Specifically referring to sitcom, Bowes (1990) argues that for it “to work there must be some kind of ‘common experience’ to draw upon” (p. 140). This can refer to the shared expectation system which is being deviated or to the social function usually ascribed to comedy and humour. As Davis (1993) argues, people find different things funny because they have different expectation systems. While he is referring to socio-cultural systems, expectations can also be structured by the television industry. Television systems have varying requirements and means of organisation as demonstrated by American commercial broadcast and Britain’s BBC. Within these systems, distribution becomes paramount in establishing and maintaining expectations, for audiences as well as working practices. For television, scheduling and programming have been noted as the driving forces of the rest of the industry, including production as such decisions determine what programmes make it to production (Curtin & Shattuc, 2009; Havens, 2006). That is, expectations of genre, including sitcom, not only vary depending on television system, but also from channel-to-channel within systems. Genre can be employed to create niche, genre-based channels as well as distinguish programme style (Mittell, 2004). In this way genre functions to serve channel “brand” (Johnson, 2012) and any production for that channel must fit the expectations set by that brand (Blake, 2005). This is important when exploring creators’ conceptions of comedy and humour since for sitcom production the conceptions of creators have to reflect those of the system for which they are creating. Therefore, comedy and humour as understood for the production of a particular sitcom is not necessarily the same as that created and consumed by creators otherwise. If genres are used to distinguish channels then genres can differ with different expectations depending on channel, not merely with regard to nation. Variation can be found between channels and even within channels due to scheduling.

Studies of humour within institutions are valuable in that they underscore how humour is modified and utilised in relation to position and function. Other studies in social humour similarly highlight how humour style and content varies depending on environmental factors such as setting and relationships (Mulkay, 1988; Palmer, 1994). Just as various social situations and structures have differing expectations, so do sites of sitcom production from television system to channel to production company. So while comedy and humour studies do well to highlight the pivotal role of culture in comedy and humour production and comprehension, the specifics of production culture upon humour production is an area worthy of exploration. For if humour arises from the particularities of its situation—those expectations and relationships—then production culture will have an influence.

Despite the often personal, subjective nature of humour, it is most commonly viewed as social. The extent to which humour is viewed as social is exemplified by sociological studies of and the application of sociological approaches to it (Davis, 1993; Kuipers, 2008). This is clearly understood in sitcom as the inclusion of laughter, with “laugh tracks” and studio audiences, is so generic to the point of parody. Laughter begets laughter or as Bergson (1900/2002) words it: laughter needs “an echo.” This relates to work with humour “cuing” and Wimer and Beins’s (2008) study which found that being told something is funny beforehand will increase the likelihood of judging it positively. These results and arguments from humour studies and the use of such tricks from the television industry support claims that the industry is aware of relevant research and theories. Reception, comprehension, and appreciation are important aspects of humour production as production is aimed at receptive success. However, it must be considered that humour production is based on audience assumptions and this is even more so the case for sitcom production where the humour receiver is completely imagined. Most theories and models of humour take the relationship between producer and receiver as a real, physical one. Further emphasising this is the extent to which humour success is connected to the relationship between sender and receiver, strongly highlighting the role of social and shared knowledge amongst humour participants (Raskin, 1985). While such a relationship is differently realised in sitcom humour, it is still important for success as discussed above with regard to identification (Quaglio, 2009). For sitcom creators this relationship is made with the audience via the characters and situation of the programme, rather than any real

connection had between the creators and audience. As such, the sitcom has to demonstrate this necessary bond of shared knowledge and experience. Since American sitcoms have been described as utilising established stars, audience connection may be achieved through the familiarity of celebrity which creates an imagined relationship.

The team writing approach to American sitcom mirrors arguments of the social nature of humour. Dewitte and Verguts (2001) conclude from their study that “People who both generate a lot of jokes and are sensitive to negative appraisal will be considered to be humorous by their peers” (p. 37). This may mean that successful humour is the result of adapting to audience taste and expectations, with “audience” here meaning the context in which sitcom production occurs including television system, channel, and production team. Just as successful sitcom is claimed to be the product of “good scripts” which Taylor (1988) argues is in part the result of meeting production expectations, a script will not even make it to broadcast without being “signed off” on let alone air long enough to become successful (pp. 183-186). And to be “successful” in making it to production and broadcast even would mean meeting the system’s expectations. Therefore, comedy and humour must align with the expectations and requirements of the broadcaster. If BBC comedy is argued to promote “Britishness,” then such national inflections must be present within the text. American sitcoms in a similar way express a sense of nation in appealing to as vast an audience as possible in order to meet commercial needs.

Nations are argued to have styles of humour and variations in taste, appreciation, and comprehension are attributed to these differences in style (Ziv, 1988). Therefore, just as American and British sitcoms differ, so do their general styles of humour. Ziv (1988) claims that differences in national styles of humour exist and in order to support this he compiles essays which detail the humour history and characteristics of several nations including Great Britain (Palmer, 1988) and the United States (Nilsen, Nilsen, & Donelson, 1988). The problem with such arguments is the sweeping generalisation of a national style. This is a commonly highlighted issue with some noting the variation amongst individuals while others take a broader view and cite regional differences (Romero, Alsua, Hinrichs, & Pearson, 2007). Furthermore, the issue with particularly the essays in Ziv (1988) is the presumptive attribution of humour function. It is one thing to note a national

preference for or prevalence of a particular type of humour, but it is another thing to claim that such tastes hold universal functions, something that Palmer (1988) notes in his essay on Great Britain.

While these responses are correct to underscore the multitude of humour styles within a given locale, what is of most pertinence for this project is the assumed style of humour of the general public as relevant for broadcast television. This includes local assumptions (e.g., American broadcast network assumptions of American sense of humour) as well as foreign assumptions (e.g., American broadcast network assumptions of British sense of humour). Furthermore, a national style of humour may be more emblematic of humour as portrayed through forms like sitcom as opposed to everyday jokes and as such is of more relevance to this project. However, by discussing “American” sitcom and “British” sitcom, it is necessarily creating a general, national style, so it is useful to explore how these genres reflect understandings of national humour. Sitcom as a form of humour represents an example of national humour as it is nationally broadcast and globally available as a product of the nation from which it came, but this does not mean that it is exemplary of a nation’s humour. Rather, it is an example of industrial assumptions of popular taste and global circulation of sitcom is further shaped by industry. For example, British understanding of American humour as informed by the availability of American sitcoms on British television is the result of what American distributors deem fit for international sale and what British programmers perceive as appealing to British audiences; therefore, this cannot be assumed to be an accurate portrayal of American sitcom let alone American humour.

Culture and humour comprehension is a commonly explored topic for specific studies (Bell, 2007; Johnson, 1992) and within wider works of humour (Davis, 1993; Mulkay, 1988; Palmer, 1994). The extent to which humour is culturally linked is highlighted by works which argue that the very aspects that make cross-cultural humour comprehension difficult are the reasons why humour should be utilised to increase non-native language and cultural development (Johnson, 1992). Bore (2011) takes the topic of cross-cultural humour reception and applies it to the sitcom concluding that “getting it” is related to genre rather than nationality. What most of these cross-cultural studies consider is the issue of language. Language is an important aspect of culture and plays an important role in humour (Davis, 1993). While Britain and the US may both have English as their main language, this does not

mean that there are not language differences between the two nations (Crystal, 2003). Variance between American and British English has even been the topic of humour between the two countries (Davies, 1990). Furthermore, there is linguistic variation within each nation as English is not the only language spoken in Britain or the US, nor the only language broadcast. For example, the BBC broadcasts in Gaelic and Welsh, and the US has a number of Spanish networks including Telemundo and Univision; comedic programming is offered on non-English networks in both nations. Therefore, linguistic differences must be considered especially as language is such a major component in understandings of comedy and humour (Bakhtin, 1965/1968; Davis, 1993), and has been linked to sitcom success (Quaglio, 2009)

The cultural specificity and lack of exportability of comedy and humour does not mean that they do not cross national and cultural borders. In form, comedy and humour are found to be present in varying contexts. Davies (1990) argues that the phenomenon of ethnic jokes—namely stupid and canny jokes—is common amongst nations across the world; that the structure of these jokes are fairly universal with the “butt” being changed to fit the context in which the jokes appear. In other words, Davies finds that ethnic jokes vary depending on the teller of the joke as the modification is based on perceived relationships to the teller. Davies’s work with ethnic jokes valuably illustrates the extent to which humour can be universal as well as demonstrates the pivotal role of the speaker in the humour process. However, the problem with ethnic jokes, as Davies points out, is that they are characterised by a “pattern of ‘spontaneous order’” (p. 132) rather than having a single, identifiable author and purposeful construction as is the case with other forms of humour such as plays, cartoons, caricatures, and for the purposes of this project, sitcoms. Furthermore, Davies’s study is concerned with uncovering what common factors contribute to the universal manifestation of humour forms instead of the actual movement of humour across borders.

In order to explore the deliberate cross-cultural exchange of comedy and humour, it is useful to turn to translation studies. Zabalbeascoa (2005) offers various considerations for humour translation, as does Chiaro (2008). The issue with most translation studies is that they are focused upon interlingual translation which British English to American English is not considered. Nevertheless, the cultural considerations are what become valuable. Comedy can travel when norms of culture are recognisable to receiving culture (Miller, 2000), and for British humour, it

is argued that jokes about class make them difficult to export to the US (Chiaro, 2010). It is important to keep in mind that the transfer of comedy between Britain and the US is not merely a cultural concern, but also an industrial one. As such, television industries and production will be discussed next.

### **Industry and production.**

Television industries are not only structured and informed by genre and networks: the industry itself functions and is understood as a culture (Caldwell, 2008). Just as sitcom is argued to be a product of wider culture, it also becomes a product of this specific industry culture. A salient theme in works of industrial working practices is the importance of relationships. This has been noted in studies of corporate executives, but, more importantly for this project, with regard to those involved in production and trade (Gitlin, 1994; Havens, 2006; Ryan, 1992). Building from this is the work of Caldwell (2008) who argues that production occurs and is understood itself as a culture amongst those individuals involved. This work underscores the importance of relationships, practices, and codes within the production environment. Similar to cultures in general, production cultures vary with the production culture of one production not necessarily being the same as another. Variation can be found within and between nations, with differences to be found between Britain and the US. This is similar to Becker's (2008) notion of "art worlds": "patterns of collective activity" produced by routinized "forms of cooperation" which affect "both the production and consumption of art works" (p. 1). Both Becker and Caldwell are important in highlighting that while there are certain conventions within cultural production whereby certain generalisations may be made, as in the systematic description of production and distribution offered by Ryan (1992), each instance of creation is a unique "culture" or "world" with its own understandings of work and genre which may cause variation in output.

Like any culture, industry cultures "talk" about themselves or are reflexive. As Caldwell (2008) argues "industrial reflexivity needs to be understood as forms of local cultural negotiation and expression" (p. 2). It is argued that the industry and creators employ theory and theorise about their work (Caldwell, 2008, 2009 & 2014; Jackson Jr, 2014) and that this is reflected in the texts (Caldwell, 2008, 2009, & 2014; Duffy, Liss-Mariño, & Sender, 2011). As such, reflexive texts may be used to gain insight into industrial understandings. Various industry-made artefacts may be useful for showcasing how the industry talks about itself to itself, and, therefore,

provide a means of understanding how working practices are structured (Caldwell, 2008). Sitcoms are used in studies of industry reflexivity, but Duffy, Liss-Mariño, and Sender (2011) argue that such reflexivity functions to further obscure industrial practices rather than provide insight. Therefore, relying fully on the analysis of programmes may be problematic if hoping to understand production. Instead, engaging with other industrially produced discourse may be more fruitful if aware of the ways in which the industry may provide texts that are “scripted” and, therefore, presumed to be unreliable sources for “truth” (Caldwell, 2009). However, industrial discourses are valuable in providing insight into the particularities of industry cultures even if they are not an actual picture of “reality.” Rather than being a problem, such discursive strategies and understandings of industry talk provide a glimpse into the expectations of discourse and its role in these cultures.

Just as textual forms, like comedy, are structured generically, so are industries. Genres are utilised by production in order to manage labour and govern audience expectations (Mittell, 2004; Ryan, 1992). By employing genres, it is assumed that everyone in production is working under the same set of technical guidelines allowing for the smooth assembly of the text from conception to distribution. The important thing is that these conventions are assumed and it has been clearly shown that genres are not static entities, but, rather, evolving structures which the history of comedy supports (Mittell, 2004). Even with the definition of sitcom not being as universal and concrete as once thought, for those who create it and, therefore, those of concern to this study, it remains the “primary definer of their labour” both in terms of their working practices and identity (Mills, 2009, p. 2). While genre, and in this case specifically sitcom, is employed to help order production, production is further structured through the organisation of labour (Hesmondhalgh, 2013; Ryan 1992). By breaking up production into individual functions, numerous people are given varied positions in the creation of the text and, therefore, potentially differing perspectives on comedy. The way in which production is structured, in terms of labour as well as equipment, space, and other factors, varies and is not the same in all television industries (Utterback, 2007). For the sake of my project, there are differences in the manner in which production occurs between Britain and the US. Division of labour varies between the two nations as writing tends to be done by committee in the US, but alone or in pairs in Britain, and creative control is understood as belonging to the writer in Britain, but

with the producer in the US. This demonstrates that the roles individuals hold and their relationship to the text varies between Britain and the US. There are also differences in more technical considerations such as jargon (Cury, 2011). The last component of television production that I will mention for my project is the system in which television production occurs, or the type regulatory system which governs production decisions. The business of television may have the most profound influence on the decisions that inevitably guide production (Gitlin, 1994; Havens, 2006). Source of finance and policy provide two points of interest which must be balanced in industrial management, and the industry's choice of finance and policy determines how this balance must be achieved. Not all national broadcast television systems have the same structure and the two which are often cited as representing the opposing options are Britain with a public service model and the US with a commercial model. For production this means that programming needs to appeal to the appropriate target audience and this audience will be conceived of differently depending on the governance of the television system. This holds true not only for broadcast television, but for cable, satellite, and premium channels where the scheduling choices need to match the particular brand of the channel, broadcast or otherwise (Blake, 2005; Gitlin, 1994; Havens, 2006; Mittell, 2004). For my project this is important as I am looking at two different systems: the British public service and the US commercial. The economic implications of the chosen system not only influence production through the programmes that are chosen, but in distribution. Of value to this project is the fact that the BBC is bound by its public service model financially and, therefore, turns to its international commercial arm to provide revenue to cycle back into home production (BBC Worldwide, 2013) (although it is also important to note that this study considers other British networks which are funded and regulated differently). Additionally noteworthy is the American networks' desire to increase content, bank on previous success, and reduce risk (Gitlin, 1994). Because of these industrial characteristics, both systems have turned to the television format.

### **Formats.**

The format is another way in which television has become structured, but it is always a structure which exists in context. It is generally understood that a format is some kind of programme structure which is licensed for localisation and that the

exchange involves more than the right to reproduce the programme: it also involves the exchange of people and ideas (Chalaby, 2011; Moran, 2009b). There are studies of formats which illustrate the way in which successful adaptations of formats have gone on to influence the original “bible” and, therefore, subsequent adaptations, thereby creating an ever-evolving format (Njus, 2009). This has been claimed for scripted programming on the basis of textual analysis and not by looking at the actual production (Larkey, 2009). The adaptations of *The Office* (BBC2, 2001-2003) and *Yo soy Betty, la fea* (RCN TV, 1999-2001) have been cited as having wide effects on subsequent programmes (Curtin & Shattuc, 2009; Savorelli, 2010) thereby contributing to the expanding definition of “sitcom” and destabilising of what was once understood to be a clearly defined comedic form (Mills, 2004). It remains unclear how this wider variety of possible conceptions of sitcom are negotiated during the production process since genre is utilised to guide production: a point that needs to be explored and will be by my project. Furthermore, format studies have argued that the television system may play a major role in adaptation; that generic decisions may be governed by the remit of the channel (Jensen, 2009). Additionally, it has been contended that production occurs as a type of culture (Caldwell, 2008) and that through adaptation the consultant brings his or her own production culture along with his or her know-how (Moran, 2009c). This negotiation between television systems and production cultures has not been explored with regard to comedic programming and my project seeks to help satisfy this lack.

Moreover, the remake process involves more than the original production process and then the subsequent remake production; there is also the important stage of trade. For my project, the way in which comedy is sold and bought during format trade is of value because it further highlights how perception and use of the concept influence every aspect of its creation. It is also in this location where it can be explored how original success and potential are defined in connection with predicted failure in its original form and how this failure can be modified into a success. How the format is sold—original success, adaptability based on audience and industrial assumptions, through agent relationships (Steemers, 2004)—needs to be revealed so as to explore the associated expectations that need to be negotiated. The investigation of the second supporting question—How do the industries involved discuss the cultural translation process?—will allow me to move away from

the textual analysis of programmes and contribute to the needed exploration of production and trade within sitcom formats between Britain and the US.

In summary, in the remake process all the characteristics of this process are united with the expectation system already being negotiated by those involved in sitcom production as discussed above. Current research has shown what this means for the comedic texts, but not for the individuals involved in their creation. This project will contribute to this by exploring how the notions of comedy and working practices of those involved impact the format process. This is exemplified by the third supporting question—To what extent does the industry discourse reveal industrial/pragmatic issues at work in the translation process?—whereby my investigation is concerned with the role of industrial factors in the construction of the programme text.

The difficulty of exporting British programming, especially comedy, to the US is due to “cultural discount” (Hogg, 2013, p. 114). In general, sitcom is less likely than other genres to be traded due to its cultural connection (Havens, 2006). Additionally, it is argued that audiences prefer locally produced and/or locally reflective content. The basic structure of a programme, or its format, can be exchanged and adapted to meet such perceived preferences and needs. Furthermore, even if cultural differences were not perceived as an issue, BBC sitcoms are structurally incompatible, as discussed above, with the requirements of the major American networks in terms of episode length and number of episodes per season (Hogg, 2013). The basis of this is generic assumptions, particularly of audience preferences and knowledge, and this contributes to making formats appealing. As such, the format premise reinforces arguments that American and British sitcom are differing genres. This connects to industrial factors whereby audience assumptions drive industrial decisions. As discussed above, for American commercial network executives the main aim is to make money which is achieved by gaining the largest audience size possible in order to receive the highest dollar from advertisers (Gitlin, 1994). However, audience ratings are never guaranteed and according to Curtin and Shattuc (2009) 90% of all new shows will fail. So in order to “reduce the uncertainty and risk that surround the development of new programmes” (Curtin & Shattuc, 2009, p. 63), networks capitalise on recognisable formulas and talent in order to meet audience expectations and increase probability for success (Gitlin, 1994; Hesmondhalgh, 2013; Ryan, 1992). This “recycling” of tried

and tested formulas are classified by Gitlin (1994) as: spin-offs, copies, and recombinants. By having “the ‘science’ of numbers . . . joined to the ‘art’ of hunches” (Gitlin, 1994, p. 55) the networks can feel more confident that they will air something that will prove popular. Butsch (2011) argues that this reliance on formulas is one of the factors in creating the American sitcom genre. So in the American network quest for new programming, this not only leads to the creation and perpetuation of genres, and Gitlin’s three forms, but also formats which have increasingly proven to be an attractive option. For the BBC, formats offer a source of commercial funding. The BBC’s public service model forbids commercial activity except through BBC Worldwide, the commercial arm of the BBC, which is allowed to export programming and then cycle profits back into local production at the BBC. As such, the exportation of programming is an important strategy for the BBC since it is one of the few ways in which it can receive commercial revenue. According to Steemers (2004), Britain has seen a decrease in the global sale of television programmes, but an increase in co-productions, formats, and local productions. With the increasing importance of formats to BBC global strategy, their trade to the US is also growing in significance as the US is Britain’s most important international market (Lantzsch, Altmepfen, & Will, 2009; Steemers, 2004).

Havens (2006) offers a potential challenge to claims of the role that audience assumptions play in programming decisions. While focused on imports rather than local commissions or purchases, Havens argues that “viewers’ tastes and preferences do not decide import choices” although “importers certainly take into account their knowledge of the local audience and culture, typically formed from a combination of research, past experience and intuition” (pp. 3-4). Furthermore, the often used concept of “cultural proximity” is not derived from local viewers, but from programming executives who “develop their ideas about cultural proximity from one another as well as from their local cultures” (p. 4). As this project is concerned with formats which are part of the global television trade, such arguments are relevant. The role of reputations, relationships, and the overall trading culture in determining what is or is not traded, produced, and broadcast has generic implications, particularly as Kohl (2005) argues that creators and executives have differing aims.

British programming is seen as a source of generic reinvigoration (Miller, 2000, p.174). Steemers (2004) argues that “The US market is interested in Britain as

an originator of ideas, innovation and talent, which can stimulate domestic originations, but interest in British content is limited” (p. 144). If we know that creators shape their working practices according to the expectations of genre, then what is the impact of a format derived from a foreign genre upon those working practices? Formats are claimed to be appealing due to their adaptability, but as structures themselves with specific rules, what are their effect? While most studies of formats are concerned with unscripted formats and their impact, scripted programming, such as sitcoms, still dominates programme schedules (Kunz, 2010, p. 319). Most studies of sitcom formats are textual and do not employ production-focused methodology (Ducray, 2012; Griffin, 2008; Miller, 2000). Textual analyses, however, can in many ways be regarded as studies in genre as sitcom versions are critiqued for how well they meet the expectations of local sitcom or the degree to which they stray from the characteristics had by the original. These textual analyses are reinforcing genre claims that American and British sitcoms are different by comparing American versions with American (cultural) expectations and/or contrasting American versions with the British originals. Limitations of current studies of sitcom format trade between Britain and the US are that the problematic “Britishness” of sitcoms from Britain is only demonstrated with BBC sitcoms which according to the organisation’s remit must be “British” and the same adaptations are referenced repeatedly with BBC sitcom remakes receiving the most in-depth attention. What are neglected are adaptations of non-BBC sitcoms as well as American adaptations for channels other than the major broadcasters, such as those done for HBO. Current format studies of British-to-American sitcoms work to reinforce associations of “British” with the BBC and “American” with the “Big Four,” and each of those in the singular further ignoring variation between BBC channels and amongst the major American broadcast networks. This type of criticism reflects that found in general sitcom studies where emphasis is placed upon BBC and “Big Four” sitcoms in order to argue for distinct national sitcom genres.

It is argued that formats aid in reducing risk since they have already proven to be successful and for both British and American television success can be measured by audience ratings. However, each BBC channel has its own target audience so the specifics of audience success depends on the particular channel which may or may not match the mass target of the major American networks. Furthermore, British sitcom success is connected to the programme writers and the

organisational culture of the BBC, all contextual factors of production which are impossible to replicate in American production. Additionally, as just stated, adaptation does not only occur between the BBC and the major American networks and, therefore, further variation in production culture and expectations may be present.

Similar to arguments about sitcom in general, adaptation success is attributed to the ability to localise and appropriately reflect the culture of the new audience. This is not only the defining and appealing feature of formats, but the trait of sitcoms for which success is also credited. In this instance is the idea of “Americanisation,” or the manner in which elements from the original British sitcom—such as characters, setting, and plot—come to reflect American culture and identity (Griffin, 2008). Even though pivotal for success in America, nationalisation is perceived as at odds with the sitcom’s British connection (Sanson, 2011). Sanson (2011) finds that British creators argue that adaptations fail because of the American television industry and networks. Despite apparent resistance from original creators, Beeden and de Bruin (2010) argue that successful American adaptation is connected to the ability to meet the expectations and incorporate the features of American television, sitcom, and culture (p. 17). As such, they highlight the importance of industry, genre, and culture in the format process. However, like most sitcom format studies, their argument is derived from a textual analysis, a comparison of the British and American versions of *The Office*.

What is interesting here is the manner in which success is connected to nation and culture while failure is attributed to industry. However, an understanding of genre is at play: success is linked to meeting the expectations of American sitcom while such adaptation is viewed as incompatible with an understanding of British sitcom. Despite this rare and brief acknowledgment of industry, the overwhelming focus of sitcom formats between Britain and the US is upon nation and national humour.

Dannenberg (2004) cites *The Office* (BBC2, 2001-2003) and *Steptoe and Son* (BBC1, 1962-1974) as examples of BBC sitcoms which utilise generic deviation as a source of humour. These programmes went on to be remade in the US as *The Office* (NBC, 2005-2013) and *Sanford and Son* (NBC, 1972-1977), respectively, and Dannenberg’s argument that the original British sitcoms broke from the expectations of British sitcom may explain their successful American adaptation.

Both programmes were unlike the majority of British sitcoms and this made them less conformed and connected to the genre of British sitcom. Being less generically confined may have enabled them to move across the Atlantic more easily. Furthermore, once remade they retained the characteristic of being generically deviant. *The Office US* and *Sanford and Son* are also both cited for their breaking the expectations of American sitcom. It may be that a common means of breaking from genre expectations was found. This still matters for this project, since as discussed above genre informs working practices so even production based on generic deviance is still work informed by genre.

Formats have also been demonstrated to have generic impact. That is, the circulation of formats goes beyond the actual adapted texts: the generic characteristics of those texts influence already existing programmes and future conventional expectations and possibilities. For instance, the narrative conventions of telenovelas have been used to “liven up” stale American soap operas (Harrington & Bielby, 2005). Additionally, *The Office* is regularly cited for pushing the limits of contemporary sitcom and aiding in the blurring of generic boundaries (Savorelli, 2010). Both the British original and American remake are exemplars for questioning long standing assumptions of concrete sitcom definition. These studies highlight the role formats play in genre and text form evolution. What these works demonstrate through analyses of texts and reviews of reception, they neglect with regard to production. So while it becomes clear that the format process contributes to the change and development of textual expectations, how this is negotiated by those who actually create these texts remains to be fully explored by television scholars. Another commonly cited format is *Ugly Betty* (ABC, 2006-2010) (Curtin & Shattuc, 2009; Savorelli, 2010). The further impact of *Ugly Betty* is demonstrated by its subsequent exportation making it the most seen of the over 70 versions of *Yo Soy Betty, La Fea* (RCN TV, 1999-2001) and making it compete with those versions and the original (Curtin & Shattuc, 2009). This is similarly the case with American remakes of British sitcoms such as *The Office* which was imported into Britain and originally broadcast by ITV2, one of the BBC’s commercial competitors. The potential effects of competition between American and local versions of programming have been explored in contexts such as Latin America with telenovelas, but a similar occurrence in Britain has not been as well investigated. The broadcasting of an American adaptation by a commercial network in Britain has cultural and industrial

implications both of which have been demonstrated to influence working practices. Furthermore, the activities of commercial broadcasters influence those of the BBC as highlighted by Thumim and Chouliaraki (2010) who argue that the BBC implements strategies originating in commercial television in order to remain competitive and legitimate. Therefore, if American adaptations of BBC programming become a part of the BBC's competitors' structure and of wider British cultural knowledge, this aspect of the format process needs to be further studied for its impact on original creators and their systems of expectation.

According to Mittell (2004) "genre mixing brings generic practices to the surface, making the conventions and assumptions clustered within individual categories explicit through the juxtaposition of conflicting or complementary genres" (p. 157) and, therefore, if American and British sitcoms are understood as distinct genres, the format process offers a site in which to examine such elements of genre mixing. Furthermore, "Traditional accounts of genre mixing tend to be limited to the terrain of the text, ignoring sites of context, industry, and audience" (Mittell, 2004, p. 157)

However, this generic impact may involve changing the original genre to meet the local system's generic needs. The movement of text from one nation to another can result in a change in genre due to cultural and industrial factors. Investigating the Australian reality-competition programme *The Block* (Channel Nine, 2003-present) and its Danish remake, *Huset* (TV2, 2004-2005), Jensen (2009) argues that the changes made to the programme as it moved from Australia to Denmark with regard to genre were the result of the local television system. However, the point is even more specific than this as differences are attributed to "the fact that *Huset* is adapted by a broadcaster with a public service remit, while privately owned commercial broadcaster Channel Nine did the original version" (p. 174). As such, Jensen is claiming that textual variation is due not merely to national and cultural differences, but to the specificities of individual networks. To support this claim, Jensen offers another format with a version by a privately owned Australian broadcaster (*Ground Force*, Channel Seven, 2002-2005) and a version by a Danish public service broadcaster (*Hokus Krokus*, DR1, 2000-2003). Furthermore, Jensen bolsters her arguments about TV2's production decisions with regard to *Huset* by contrasting TV2 with its competitor, TV3, claiming that decisions were made in keeping with the strategy of distinguishing TV2's content from that of TV3.

This is important because it demonstrates that adaptation decisions are not only motivated by issues of nation, but of industry. Of more relevance to this project in terms of programming-type and television industries, McFarlane (2009) claims that the generic characteristics of the original *The Office*, which he considers an example of the “cringe television” genre, are lost in its American remake which may be a result of the American commercial system.

Format trade involves more than the exchange of the programme, but also production know-how and people. This important aspect is made clear for unscripted programming, but what it entails for scripted is unclear. The trading of production knowledge may not be relevant for sitcom formats because British and American sitcoms have production processes that differ in many ways. What is pertinent is the actual involvement of original creators in adaptation, but what needs to be clarified is what exactly that involvement entails for British-to-American sitcom formats. The extent of original production involvement in adaptation varies, but consultant producers can have high levels of control over local production. They act as “gatekeepers” and bring their own production culture with them (Moran, 2009c, pp.111-128). Such involvement inevitably will impact local production. The movement of production teams, equipment, and techniques from original locale to site of adaptation has been explored most fully in the context of developing nation adaptations where such original involvement is argued as enhancing production capabilities by providing new equipment and knowledge (Moran, 2009c). The meeting of differing production cultures in British-to-American sitcom adaptations is lacking in academic research. But from what is known about production, the working practices in Britain and the US, the format process, and claims by individuals involved such as those found in Sanson (2011), how those involved in the format process are affected by that very process is a warranted subject of study.

The most commonly argued reason for the trade of formats over canned programming is “cultural discount,” or at least this is how primary motivations are read by studies arguing, in particular, that audiences prefer local content (Chalaby, 2013; Moran, 2009a; Straubhaar, 2007). These popular claims of audience preference for local content are most often interpreted in cultural terms on the national-level. Such arguments overlook that audience preference and expectation are in part developed by the industry since genre and scheduling conventions are shaped by industry. Furthermore, as Havens (2006) argues, perceptions of audience

taste are constructed by trade executives. Since current sitcom format studies focus almost exclusively on programme analyses, this pivotal industrial role is neglected. Consequently, works on sitcom formats reinforce and perpetuate the seemingly natural association of individual channels and programmes with nation as a whole since “American” adaptation of “British” sitcom means any comparisons and issues are in terms of nation rather than industrial specifics. This is furthered by the overwhelming focus upon “Big Four” adaptations of BBC sitcoms which mirrors arguments of American and British sitcom which utilise programmes broadcast by those networks to support such claims. However, despite this focus upon nation as demonstrated above, format trade involves more than considerations of nation. Havens (2006) argues that acquisition decisions begin with viewing the current schedule and aiming to replace poor performing series (p. 97). Therefore, decisions are based on network factors, not merely national or cultural. Granted, programme rights are divided by nation (Havens, 2006, p. 95); however, individual channels compete for these rights so acquisition executives do not represent their nation, but, rather, their specific channel.

Formats are argued also to be appealing not only for their ability to be locally adapted, but because of their previous success, a sort of “proof of concept” (Chalaby, 2011, p. 305). Such a premise means that licensors and licensees both assume that success in one context means success in another. For those involved in trade, understandings of genre structure their working practices and their assumptions of production. As demonstrated above, working practices vary within national television industries and sitcom is not uniform across American or British television. Furthermore, as highlighted by format studies, industrial factors, particularly understandings of genre, can impact production (Jensen, 2009). This needs to be explored across American and British television, beyond the generalisations of the “Big Four” and the BBC in order to better understand the role of institutional factors upon the sitcom format process between Britain and the US. Additionally, it would be valuable to investigate not only British-to-American adaptation, but also American-to-British adaptations as this movement of sitcoms is overlooked by format studies. This would allow for the particularities of industry to be revealed over the generalisations of nation.

It is difficult to ignore the focus upon humour in studies of British-to-American sitcom adaptation and, as such, the issue becomes more than just a

matter of nation, but of national humour (Beeden & de Bruin, 2010; Sanson, 2011). This concern continues the tendency to view American and British sitcoms as distinct genres not only in terms of common situations and character types, but perhaps most importantly with regard to humour (also comedy, but these concepts are commonly used and understood synonymously so I will be employing them similarly here as well). To underscore this point, other sitcom format studies do not necessarily refer to humour. For instance, Larkey (2009) compares two adaptations of *The Office*: what he calls the “US” and the “German” versions, called *The Office* and *Stromberg* (ProSieben, 2004-2012) respectively. He methodically compares the two versions in terms of their cultural specificity, of which humour does not appear to be of note. Similarly, the Polish adaptation of the American sitcom *The Honeymooners* (CBS, 1955-1956) is discussed with regard to script translation and the negotiation between local production and consultant producer over the scripts, therefore placing focus upon language rather than humour (Moran, 2009c).

If format studies of sitcom between Britain and the US insist on focusing upon humour, then an informed analysis of humour is necessary. This means considering all factors which come to inform programme realisation, specifically with regard to humour. Assumptions of singular national sitcom and humour are challenged by studies of sitcom and humour, but format studies seem to perpetuate such traditional understandings. This may be because of the reliance on textual analyses in which the logical approach seems to entail the comparison of versions with each other and/or with other sitcoms from their national context. Therefore, such an approach is based on an understanding of national sitcom and humour in order to make claims about formats and their “localisation.” However, this form of comparison dangerously simplifies all the factors which go into making the format texts as well as the comparative texts, which we may call genres. To help explain this, Neale (2005) argues with regard to film that “The expectations triggered by the name of a star or director are as generic as those triggered by terms like ‘western’, ‘thriller’ or ‘horror film’. One would normally want, though, to distinguish between the two” (p. 24). Applying this to the topic at hand, therefore, it is necessary to clarify whether references to “American” and “British” are truly in reference to distinct sitcom genres and national humour or are, rather, more accurately in reference to specific industrial forms. In order to offer such clarification, it is necessary to move beyond analyses of programmes to an investigation of industrial

factors by exploring the specifics of format trade and production, such as companies, networks, and individuals, as well as the industrial discourse surrounding sitcom formats, particularly understandings and expectations of genre. As Caldwell (2008) has demonstrated, industry discourse can provide valuable insight into industrial practices, and Moran (2009c) argues that those involved in the format process similarly produce and utilise such discourse. An examination of this discourse will help to better understand what industrial factors impact the format process.

Focusing specifically on humour as this is one of the most prominent topics in format studies of sitcoms between Britain and the US, there are a number of aspects which should be approached from an industrial perspective rather than solely a national or cultural one. First is the notion of comedic success as formats are partially premised on previous success and format studies commonly focus upon adaptation “success” and/or “failure.” Both sitcom and sitcom format studies connect success with nation and culture (Beeden & de Bruin, 2010; Quaglio, 2009), but the little discourse offered from creators link success, and failure, with industrial factors (Sanson, 2011; Tunstall, 1993). From textual analyses it is assumed that success is related to appropriately substituting cultural references and, therefore, success is discussed as achievable by conforming to seemingly obvious national generic expectations. However, according to Palmer (1994) humour may fail due to incomprehensibility, performative inadequacy, and/or offensiveness, all of which may be the result of flawed production, not only cultural incompatibility. When considering the successful transmission and reception of humour, Davis (2008) mentions “situational characteristics” such as “mood,” “demographics” and “time of day” (pp. 551-552), all factors which are important to institutional understandings of sitcom as highlighted by scheduling and target audience, which may vary across networks. Additionally, Davis notes the various functions of humour or the “message” as defined by sender’s intent rather than receiver’s interpretation. Purpose of humour may vary and, therefore, it cannot be assumed that all instances of humour or sitcom are intended to transmit the same message or serve the same function. This relates to Zabalbeascoa’s (2005) argument that humour does not need to be the same in both versions of a text. Furthermore, assuming that a previously successful sitcom can be adapted means something about the level of contextual connection. A sitcom cannot be completely perceived as national if

individuals view it as translatable and if individuals are able to view it and want to remake it (i.e., viewing something foreign and enjoying it as was the case with Norman Lear and *Till Death Us Do Part* and Jeff Zucker and *Coupling* [BBC2, 2000-2003, BBC3, 2004]).

Of further importance is the manner in which the format process is discussed and its relationship to genre and humour. Hogg (2013) notes that:

there is a tendency within pre-existing studies of global format flows (presumably because of a primary interest in industry pragmatics over theoretical framing) to deploy terms such as ‘translating’, ‘remaking’, ‘adapting’, ‘reworking’, and ‘rereading’ interchangeably, often with limited (if any) consideration of the possible connotations or theoretical underpinnings that such terms have (p. 112).

Such variation in terminology would have theoretical implications as format studies regularly apply theoretical approaches and models from elsewhere to the study of formats. The use of translation studies or adaptation studies would only make sense if the format process was referred to as translation or adaptation respectively. This includes wider approaches within these traditions as well as the applicability of comedy and humour theories derived from these approaches. While Hogg’s concern is with the theoretical implications of such lax word use, each term also suggests a different form and method of production. The manner in which those involved discuss this process will help to better understand the expectations they have for the process, for both those from original production and adaptation. As such, the degree to which comedy adaptation or humour translation studies may be appropriate for format studies depends on how those involved in the format process define their work. The applicability of various theoretical approaches may vary depending on which terminology is employed. If the format process is perceived and referred to as “translation,” then humour translation and linguistic approaches may be applicable. And if it is described as “adaptation,” then adaptation studies may be valuable. Since current work utilises both “adaptation” and “translation,” I will briefly review the industrial importance to both of these.

Adaptation may be understood as an evolutionary process (Bortolotti & Hutcheon, 2007) and as related to arguments of the development of genre where shifts in form may be the result of industrial redefinition rather than anything inherent within culture (Feuer, 1992). Humour translation is importantly

understood by Zabalbeascoa (2005) as involving more than language, culture, and the text, but as requiring the negotiation of translator, client, recipient, conditions of translation, medium, and translated text's purpose, genre, and expectations (pp. 186-187). He further highlights that:

each one of these variables can be read in the singular or in the plural, as not all texts are monolingual, or single-purpose; more than one person may be responsible for the final product, and so on. The translation of each and every text item (any segment, form, function, or feature of a text, anything from the smallest detail to the whole text) is affected by the nature of these variables (p. 187).

Additionally:

Translators and scholars alike have to weigh the relative importance of humor, along with the importance of a given type of humor, when deciding how to deal with it. A dangerous simplification is to presume that humor will necessarily be equally important in both the translated version and its source text. Or that the nature of the humor must be the same in both source text and its translation (ibid, p. 187).

All of these factors reflect back on various things discussed previously such as genre, humour function, context, production culture; all of which go beyond considerations of nation. Therefore, humour translation involves similar considerations as humour production which are similar to considerations of sitcom and television production in general which are found to be more particular to conditions of production.

This is not to say that nation does not play a pivotal role in sitcom and sitcom format production, but the extreme attention placed upon nation at the expense of key industrial factors may act to obscure important influences upon sitcom production and the expression of humour. By exploring the role of industry in the sitcom format process it may be better understood how industries discuss, create, and understand what then becomes referred to as "national."

As this review has demonstrated, genres are not stable and sitcom has evolved over the years. Furthermore, it is clear that sitcom is not uniform across television. This means that the assumption of national sitcom, along with national humour style, in current format studies should be re-evaluated. Additionally, format studies of other contexts have highlighted the role of industry, a finding supported by non-format studies of genre and production. Therefore, studies of sitcom

formats between Britain and the US need to consider industrial factors as well as look beyond the BBC and the “Big Four.” If genre is to be understood as “discursive practices,” then it is necessary to analyse more than just the text, which currently is the popular method for sitcom format studies between Britain and the US. The above discussion has indicated that format studies would benefit from this approach by giving a fuller consideration to all factors in adaptation and production; that is, all the definers of genre. In conclusion, my project seeks to explore what has come to be understood as questions of genre in American and British sitcoms and their adaptation by supplementing current textual studies with an examination of industrial discourse in order to move away from purely textualist assumptions towards an understanding of genre which includes wider generic enunciations and practices.

**Contribution of study.**

As the preceding literature review has showcased there are considerable questions regarding the relationship between genre (i.e., comedy) and the remaking of scripted television comedy between the UK and the US. This study reveals findings unknowable in present format studies which focus on textual analysis. In particular, this study demonstrates the role of similarity throughout the remake process within industrial discourse

This study provides insight into how industrial factors impact the sitcom remake process while offering some understanding of how the remake process is framed in terms of genre. As such, this project is of value to those in television industry and production studies particularly those interested in genre. It also contributes to wider understandings of comedic production and comedy’s changing nature. By focusing on the format process, my project acknowledges the complexity of production and multitude of players involved and contributes to humour theories by testing their applicability to cross-cultural mass media production. In using the discourse of production and trade, this project contributes to the lack of literature on this aspect of sitcom formats. Therefore, this study can be seen as a supplement to those interested in the production aspects of other types of formats as well as those interested in textual and reception studies of comedic formats. This project also employs comedy and humour theories and therefore is of relevance to those with a particular interest in the applicability of these theories to production and with regard to cross-cultural television. As a final reminder this project is only exploring

the sitcom format process as it occurs between Britain and the US, and, consequently, any significance may not be fully applicable beyond this relationship. However, it is also for that reason that this study is necessary as it cannot be assumed that those studies which already exist for other genres and nations can be directly applied to this one. Yet, these studies all complement each other and allow for the development of a fuller understanding of genre and television. My project contributes to that construction.

### **Method**

In order to explore how working practices and notions of comedy are negotiated during the remake process, my project takes as its primary source of data publicly made industry discourses. Since worker assumptions—generic and industrial, contextual and structural—guide their work, and with no clear, universal definitions, it is appropriate to turn to how they express these perceptions. This project is guided by Mittell's (2001) "genres as discursive practice" approach whereby genres are viewed as a "property and function of discourse" and, therefore, analysis should involve "gather[ing] as many diverse enunciations of the genre from the widest possible range of sources" including various industry discourse in order to "examine the ways in which various forms of communication work to constitute generic definitions and meanings" (pp. 8-9). Therefore, my project takes as its "objects" of analysis not the television programmes themselves, but, rather, the public industrial discourses surrounding them. I have limited my discourse collection to only those programmes which have had remake attempts—either successful or not—since the year 1999 (e.g., *Sirens* [Channel 4, 2011; USA, 2014-], *Free Agents* [Channel 4, 2009; NBC, 2011], *Getting On* [BBC4, 2009-2012; HBO, 2013-], *White Van Man / Family Tools* [BBC3, 2011-2012; ABC, 2013], *Gavin & Stacey / Us & Them* [BBC3, 2007-2008, BBC1, 2009-2010; Fox, 2013-2014], *The Office* [BBC2, 2001-2003; NBC, 2005-2013], *Grounded for Life / In with the Flynns* [Fox, 2001-2003, The WB, 2003-2005; BBC1, 2011-2012]). I have selected this date in order to make the amount of material manageable as well as the tracking of industrial structures (i.e., changes in ownership, management, etc.). Furthermore, this date aligns with the boom of formats, namely unscripted ones such as *Big Brother* and *Idol* (Esser, 2010). I chose these particular programmes since they fell within this time frame and they represent a variety of American and British channels which have aired and/or attempted to remake the production of the other nation.

This has been a limitation of other studies which tend to focus on the programmes of the BBC and the American commercial broadcasters. Due to this issue I chose programmes from as many networks as possible within the constraints of this study. Additionally, these programmes were selected due to my own familiarity with them and availability of statements about them. The pool of programmes utilised for my study was narrowed during initial searches to include only those programmes which had a substantial number of (relevant) statements. It is due to the issue of source availability that *The Office* in particular became a key programme within in this study. *The Office* is the programme, within the parameters of this study, that has the most primary and secondary sources pertaining to it and, consequently, it is the programme referred to most frequently in this study.

For this project, material was gathered, from both Britain and the US, from industrial sites such as network, production, and distribution websites, from individual (i.e., writer, actor, producer, etc.) websites, blogs, and twitter accounts, from interviews and quotes within trade magazines (e.g., *Broadcast*, *Variety*, *Hollywood Reporter*, and *Deadline*) as well as from other press as found from database searches through *Nexis* which have been conducted utilising programme titles, individual names, and industry names in the form of channels and companies (production, distribution). My discourse collection and analysis is conceived of as contributing to the “discursive formation” (Foucault, 1969/2002) by exploring the industrial discourses pertaining to the programmes of interest. As such, this project does not explore all discursive enunciations of a programme but, rather, seeks to investigate a wider number of programmes. In this manner I diverge from Mittell in the variety of discursive enunciations instead focusing on particular industrial discourses across multiple productions. This allows for the exploration of the extent to which genre and translation are discussed across programmes and the extent to which such discourses compare and/or contrast. By investigating statements across programmes rather than just within one it is possible to construct the industrial discourse surrounding genre for comedy remakes (of course only within these particular types of statements). By looking at these “statements” (Foucault, 1969/2002) under study, it is possible to come to understand industry discourse with regard to the topic under study: how this discourse understands and formulates the present concern. I am seeking to “build” the discourse, in a way, from the pieces than come at it from the whole. These statements, in being part of

the discourse, necessarily must adhere to its discursive formation and, therefore, follow its rules. As such, I am seeking to discover these “rules,” specifically generic rules. This is why it is possible to collect a substantial number of statements, but not be compelled to collect “all” of them; just enough to uncover these rules.

Therefore, I follow Caldwell’s (2008) methodological approach in which television production is conceived of as its own culture and, consequently, produces its own expressions (separate from the programme) which can be examined for cultural traces. Furthermore, it follows that it is not my intention to take the industrial discourses as representing or revealing any “fact” or “truth” in an objective sense, but, rather, as representing the communicant’s understanding, intention, purpose, utility, function, etc. for that particular instance keeping in mind all the potential factors which may influence their understanding of what is “appropriate” or “necessary” at that juncture. This is particularly pertinent in that these statements were all made for public reception and, therefore, are guided by the expectations and purposes of such promotional statements.

Just as the statements here are not conceived of as any sort of objective truth, it is important to acknowledge that individuals’ opinions, perspectives, understandings, etc. may change over time and from project-to-project. As such, the statements in this study cannot be assumed to be these individuals’ definitive views, but only as their rationalisation during the particular remake and within publicly made statements. Also, variation may be attributed to various sources and contexts and the expectations and constraints of those. This is why this study seeks to find the overall trends in statements, while still noting any anomalies and providing possible explanations for them. It is the goal of this study to examine the extent to which these remakes are framed in terms of genre and what the rationalisation entails.

It is necessary to explain the parameters of this study with regard to the programmes selected and the statements gathered. Limits had to be set on the number of programmes and statements that could be analysed. Programmes were selected for diversity in terms of network (i.e., British public broadcast and commercial and American broadcast, cable, and premium) as well as for availability of statements. They were also chosen in order to have a variety of remake outcomes from never broadcast to cancellation to renewal. Programme selection was also determined through the systematic search process I took. The final

programmes were chosen based on those which yielded the most relevant sources for this study. Those programmes which had limited relevant discourse are necessarily not included in this study. Also the importance of discourse availability for this study is why *The Office* became a key programme in this analysis. The aspects of each programme that were searched include title, network, and individuals/companies involved. These search criteria were run, through the Nexis search engine, until new results were not found. Additionally, my search included programme pages and news releases from corporate websites such as network and production companies. My search ultimately yielded 1,916 unique sources for me to analyse. The number of sources was reduced in accordance with the aims of this study and the most relevant sources, those which refer to genre, are what are utilised in the findings below. Namely, the goal in searching was to find industrial quotations such as found in interviews. This is why this study does not include reviews or other commentary which are devoid of industry remarks and such a focus allowed me to eliminate numerous sources from my collection. Reception discourse would be another area to explore in the construction of genre surrounding these programmes particularly in examining how reception compares to industry.

I examined these statements for genre themes (the discursive rules) and the extent to which they relate to industrial factors such as creator or broadcast channel. My means of analysis involved the examination of the project's key questions as highlighted above while acknowledging the various contextual factors as described by van Dijk (2008, 2009) and van Leeuwen (2008). My method follows what other studies have demonstrated to be advantageous approaches to production and market discourse (Caldwell, 2008; Gitlin, 1994; Moran, 2009c). My research demonstrates the viability of a discourse analysis approach and previous studies have offered valuable results utilising industry discourse (Caves, 2005; Gray, 2010; Ryan, 1992). For instance, Boyle (2009) utilises industry discourse in his analysis of British business formats, such as *Dragons' Den* (BBC2, 2005-) and *The Apprentice* (BBC2, 2005-2006; BBC1, 2007-), and their connection to the public service culture of the BBC. Likewise, Johnson (2011) employs a similar method to explore the gendered discourse of media franchising. My discourse methodology, based on Caldwell's cultural view of industry and Bielby & Bielby's (1994) industrial framing, is best suited to meet the project aims of investigating the extent to which industrial discourses surrounding the translation of sitcom formats between Britain

and the US reveal the importance of genre and wider industrial processes by focusing directly on the statements of those involved in the remake process and their means of framing and rationalising this process. Since this project is interested in these industrial discourses, it follows that my method needs to include expressions of them. This is formulated in terms of Mittell's model of genre which includes these public statements and how genre is used as a framing device (Bielby & Bielby, 1994).

Genre is utilised in this study along the lines of Bielby & Bielby (1994) whereby it is utilised by industry as a framing device and tool of rationalisation. As such, this study examines how these statements utilise genre strategically, as a means of saying something about the remake process generically. This study is interested in all the levels in which genre is expressed in these statements (Silverblatt, 2007) with a specific focus on comedy. This means that I examined these statements for the ways in which expectation, as related to comedy and humour, are expressed. The method of analysing these statements for genre framing can be further explained by the framework which developed directly from this analysis, which I will discuss next.

### **Framework/Organisation**

The results of this method are organised into four chapters: identification, origination, work, and intention. These could be understood as four components and/or stages of the remake process, but they should not be read as separate or the only aspects of the process. This organisation is also derived from convenience and the necessity to organise the findings in a structured manner. The order in which they are placed should not necessarily be read as chronological as the concerns of each chapter bleed into one another and are found throughout the remake process, but, rather, as a means of allowing for the progression and discussion of key components.

These are the four main concerns/aspects of the process as expressed within these statements that are of significance for the purposes of this study. As such, these statements do reference other components of the process, but they are omitted due to irrelevance. This study is only concerned with how genre is utilised and framed within these publicly made statements. Remake rationalisation may occur in terms other than genre, but this is not considered here.

The framework is comprised of the various aspects of the discourse being analysed and the significant themes within. As such, these four aspects – identification, origination, work, and intention – came to the fore. These align with significant aspects of the remake process which cannot be accurately analysed from textual analyses of finished programmes. The four stages are the different ways in which the remake process is framed in terms of genre: how remake identity, origination, work, and intention are framed generically. These four components were derived from my initial analysis of the statements I gathered. I initially analysed the statements in terms of attribution; that is, for preposition use such as statements claiming that each remake “is” something (identification), “from” somewhere (origination), and “for” something (intention). Another category, ownership, was created from reference to remakes being “of” and/or “by” someone. Aspects of ownership relevant to the generic purposes of this study have been integrated throughout, particularly in the Conclusion in which generic ownership is discussed. Work developed from the necessary examination of the remake production process itself. While I have categorised the findings under these four types, this in no way implies that these are the only stages or that other methods of categorisation are not possible. Furthermore, these types are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, multiple stages are present in most discourses.

This framework offers a convenient way in which to consider the role of genre within the remake process. In particular, these categories signify components of the comedy remake process which cannot be easily examined through textual analyses of programmes alone. As such, they represent a unique contribution of this study. It could be used for future studies with modification as necessary (for instance, the inclusion of ownership for particularly unscripted formats, an issue considered here across the other frames).

My subsequent analysis of the statements under study followed from these four components which I call the framework. I analysed the statements for the ways in which genre was elicited with regard to identification, origination, work, and intention. This process required me to read each source and, utilising my knowledge of genre (namely comedy), highlight those statements which evoked understandings of genre. Once this had been accomplished, I went back through the statements and sorted them according to my framework and continued analysing until patterns and themes became apparent. It was through this examination that particular forms

of framing came to the fore and it is these which came to comprise the thesis that follows.

It is necessary to provide a brief description of each chapter and how each contributes to an issue with current studies. The first chapter is Identification which considers both genre labelling and description as well as the identification of potential. Genre at the most basic level is an exercise in classification so this chapter examines how these programmes are understood generically. This will help guide subsequent issues of genre throughout the remake process. Also, this chapter considers how comedic programmes are identified as having remake potential which cannot be appropriately answered from textual analysis. This segues into Origination which considers what makes remaking comedies appealing. Format studies note the industrial strategic aspects, but this chapter examines appeal particularly in terms of comedy which is noted as contextual. The fact that these programmes have appeal points towards an understanding not of nation exclusionism but of cross-border appreciation. Next is a consideration of the remake production process in Work. Format studies consider this from the outcome rather than the process for comedy remakes. Therefore, this chapter seeks to reveal how individuals discuss/rationalise/frame production decisions. Furthermore, this chapter examines whether or not remakes “work” in terms of success and failure and how such results are framed generically. Finally, all the chapters are brought together with an examination of Intention or the various aims and goals of various remake decisions. This chapter remedies issues of aim and intention as noted within format studies which are primarily textual in nature. Intention will be considered throughout all chapters insofar as the intentions of various statements will be considered; that is, the framing utilised in each statement. Consequently, the chapter on intention is not focused on this aspect of discourse intention, but, rather, intention throughout the remake process as expressed within these statements. After these four stages are considered, this study finishes with a conclusion in which the four preceding chapters are brought together in order to draw some final conclusions and suggest future work.

## Identification

Since this study seeks to examine the understanding of genre within the remake process I will begin by considering how identification is framed in terms of genre. At the fundamental level genre is a tool of identification and classification (Chandler, 1997) with definition being one aspect of Mittell's (2001) genre discursive practise types (p. 8). This chapter considers how individuals label remakes and the generic implications of this. These are statements regarding questions of generic labelling and those pertaining to the identification of remake potential. This chapter focuses on identity only as it pertains to this study: the relationship between genre (i.e., comedy) and formats. It will not consider the multitude of other ways in which programmes are referred, labelled, and described.

This chapter will first examine how remakes are generically described. Generic labelling should not be assumed to be the first part of the remake process chronologically. The labels associated with the original would come before remaking, but those given to remakes apply throughout the process. Individuals utilise genre terminology in order to signal difference from other (types of) programmes, but also to demonstrate similarity between national forms and other genres. It will be considered how referring to programmes as hybrid, unique, and not sitcoms may come to challenge understandings that "comedy" and "humour" (which are generally such all-encompassing terms in studies) are highly nationally and culturally specific.

I will begin by examining generic labelling in order to then get at how potential is identified. Next, this chapter will evaluate how programmes are identified as having remake potential and how this is defined/understood namely in terms of genre. Potential should not be understood in this study as existing before the process begins, but as something which is negotiated throughout, just as generic labels are. Granted, there is an understanding of potential which occurs before all else, but it has to be considered throughout the process as decisions about production and broadcast continually are considered. Similarity is emphasised in statements of potential since it is imperative to underscore that a concept is applicable and understandable in a context other than the original. Format studies do not focus on the issue of potential particularly since many unscripted formats are made as formats in the first place (i.e., potential is part of their definition from the

very start) (Moran & Malbon, 2004). There is little to no attention placed on the potential of scripted programmes such as comedy. After discussing generic labelling and potential some conclusions will be drawn about remake identification and genre.

### **Genre Terminology**

It is first necessary to examine the use of genre terminology because it explicitly demonstrates the manner in which genre is utilised as a framing device (Bielby & Bielby, 1994). Terminology is discussed not only because it is the most basic act of genre framing, but because it helps to set up the subsequent examination of identifying remake potential by revealing generic characteristics of these programmes which are noted as contributing to remake potential.

This begins in the most explicit way to highlight the role of genre in the remake process. Here is the manner in which genre is specifically elicited with regard to labelling and description. As these are statements made for public viewing, this, then, is the way in which genre is utilised in order to communicate to (potential) audiences what to generically expect from these programmes. The use of generic labels is about attracting desired audiences (Bruun, 2011; Silverblatt, 2007). This is significant for an examination of formats because it is argued that programmes are remade in order to appeal to local audiences. As such, genre labels work in a manner similar to remakes through their signalling of expectations and drawing particular audiences.

While an overview of the various generic labels may be interesting, what is of relevance here is the extent to which genre is discussed with regard to remakes. Genre labels may reveal what generic types are understood as transferable and serve to highlight that there is not an industrial understanding that comedy in general cannot travel. Genre terminology will be examined here in terms of nation (styles and in relation to other programmes), difference, and hybridity since these are the key themes revealed within the statements under study.

### **Nation and genre.**

To begin with, genre will be discussed with regard to nation or how programmes are framed in terms of nationally-specific genres. This includes qualifiers, references to national forms, and programme comparisons across

national lines. This is examined here since remakes are connected to nation through their characteristically transnational nature and formats exist in order to provide vehicles to enable concepts to cross borders (Chalaby, 2011). Therefore it is necessary to consider this because the very existence of formats necessitates the localisation of the format within another nation and it can be assumed that nation plays a role in the identification of versions.

First, qualifiers are used in order to frame genre in terms of nation. However, the use of these qualifiers, such as in the news release by Baby Cow Productions which mentions that "*Us & Them* is a remake of British comedy *Gavin & Stacey*" (Baby Cow Productions, 2013), fails to reveal what exactly is meant by "British comedy" or "American comedy." Is this merely a geographical label and/or does it imply a generic understanding? This is impossible to determine from statements like this. Therefore, an exposition of national comedy traits would move us beyond simple qualifiers which reveal little about what they mean (e.g., geographical, industrial, formal, etc.). Consequently, next it is necessary to expand upon notions of national comedy by examining statements about national forms and styles. Comparison between national styles is the result of individuals being asked to comment upon these perceived differences between American and British comedy and humour. This perhaps reveals that individuals may be required to consider such differences and similarities because of assumptions on the part of consumers. It is impossible to say whether these individuals would offer such comments without prompting. As such, this demonstrates the importance of genre framing in publicly made statements. For example, *Free Agents US* co-producer Todd Holland is asked about this comparison and responds that "We love British comedy, but it tends, as [fellow producer] John [Enbom] calls it, toward 'British miserable-ness.' They really love pain, they love the unhappy" (in Bernstein, 2011). This not only gives insight into the characteristics of British comedy, but that it is appreciable beyond national borders (this "love" will be explored in the next chapter with regard to origination appeal). Similarly, Ricky Gervais, co-creator of *The Office*, expresses in an article for TIME Magazine the notion that British humour is self-deprecating and Americans are more about rewarding ambition, utilising *The Office* for this discussion (Gervais, 2011).

Holland and Gervais are pointing out how British and American comedy differs namely in terms of tone and character treatment. Again, however, this is due

to being prompted to compare which may lead individuals to reiterate general conceptions of British and American comedy difference. At the same time, they are certain to demonstrate that while there may be stereotypical national forms these are not exclusive or unappreciable across national borders.

This may point towards why industries attempt to remake foreign comedies despite more general perceptions that comedy does not travel. Television industries may agree with this sentiment to an extent and perhaps that is why remaking is found to be necessary. At the same time, however, there is similarity in appreciation and even style. While not connected to any programmes under study, David Mitchell offers useful insight into understandings of comedy and the transferability of programmes:

I think fundamentally there are more similarities than differences. But comedy relies on shared references. And there are a lot of references in British comedy that an American audience won't get. And it doesn't take long before you start to understand the frame of reference of the other country. I've learned much of the things I know about America through references in sitcoms. You hear a joke, you don't get it, and then you work out (in Simon, 2008)

Mitchell is arguing that there are contextual differences due to variation in references, but that there are more similarities. Also, other comedy can be enjoyed though it just takes more work to get the references. As such, remakes may work to make such processing easier by substituting references (this will be examined in Work).

Similarity is demonstrated in references to the sharing of comedic styles/forms as revealed by Gervais's statements about stylistic inspiration for *The Office*, such as *Larry Sanders*, *Spinal Tap*, and *The Simpsons* (BBC Two, n.d.; in Hansen, 2004). While not about the remake, it is important in that it demonstrates that those programmes being considered for remaking may already possess the characteristics of the remake context's forms. It also clearly challenges assumptions about national styles even if the individuals are still referring to nations within their statements. Therefore, this explicitly dispels the notion of national homogeneity. As James Bobin, co-creator of *Flight of the Conchords* (HBO, 2007-2009), states:

A lot of things that work here (in the US) work in the U.K. There's not one monolithic British comedic sensibility. There's a variety of comedy in

England. There's a fallacy that just because some British comedy is great, all British comedy is great. It's like (in the U.S.). Some of it is awesome, and some of it doesn't work very well (in Siegel, 2011).

To speak of national comedy is to assume homogenous forms or to privilege one as “exemplary” over others. Bobin’s statement also demonstrates this by the various national terms used: UK, British, and England. This complicates any understanding of national references as being purely geographical since these terms do not precisely map in such a manner and of homogenous forms since such boundaries are imprecise. Gervais’s statements also demonstrate that stylistic sharing occurs between nations in general, not just in the form of formats. This similarity is significant in the understanding of comedic transferability. Individuals refer to difference in order to justify remaking, but at the same time highlight similarity to rationalise the transfer. For a programme to be remade there needs to be both similarity (so it can be adapted) and difference (or else why bother remaking).

Understandings of national forms and expectations will continue to be significant for this study as it will be examined how these are understood and the extent to which they inform remake decisions (again, solely in statements made to the public). Similarity will be further revealed below with regard to potential and in the next chapter on origination demonstrating an understanding of similarity as remake justification. The negotiation between similarity and difference will be continually returned to in subsequent chapters.

Nation is also evoked within statements of programme comparisons. The discussion of programmes in relation to other programmes, either in terms of similarity or difference, is a common genre framing device (Bielby & Harrington, 2004), but what is of most relevance here is the manner in which programmes are compared across national lines. Using another nation as a point of comparison is found in statements by the actors Stephen Mangan and Niecy Nash. In describing *Free Agents UK*, Mangan claims that:

A lot of those American series deal with quieter, more adult stuff, and they deal with them with a mixture of comedy and drama, so in that way it's similar. But, frankly, I can't think of another show it's immediately like (in Gilbert, 2009).

Nash, from *Getting On US*, also expresses this sort of uniqueness by acknowledging the original version:

I do not have anything that I think it's like. Not in America. It's much like the BBC version, but in our American catalog of TV shows, I can't call anything that I say it reminds me of. Because not only does it feel fresh, but we're playing in a world that we haven't seen yet in a comedy. Not this sort of a comedy. It's a dark comedy about extended care"(in Highfill, 2015).

Both Mangan and Nash discuss the uniqueness of their respective shows in terms of national context while highlighting originality through a comparison with the other nation's programming. Mangan states that *Free Agents* is unique, yet like American shows and Nash claims that *Getting On* is unlike anything on American television and is like the BBC original (granted, Nash refers to the BBC rather than Britain so this is a specific industrial reference from a different nation). While Mangan's comment is not about the remake, it does demonstrate a possible understanding that *Free Agents* may seem natural and appropriate for it to be remade in the US if it is already understood as "American." Therefore, his statements can be connected to the issue of transferability. Both of these statements are about similarity and difference which is a key aspect of genre signalling and programme promotion (Bielby & Harrington, 2004).

Bielby & Bielby (1994) note how programmes are framed in terms of similarity as "decision makers often attempt to establish legitimacy by imitating the successful efforts of others." This involves the use of "imitation as a rhetorical strategy" by referring to a new programme as similar to one that was already successful, regardless of variation in origin (p. 1293). In the statements here this "imitation" is in relation to foreign programming and balanced with claims of uniqueness. This is in addition to the use of remakes to rationalise to this end (previous success will be examined in the next chapter).

This aspect of transferability relates to cross-border inspiration, such as the statements made by Gervais. Again, these statements were made before the remake, but they reveal an understanding of genre which could link to potential. Gervais states that:

I'm surprised at how big 'The Office' was in England in terms of ratings, but I'm not surprised that some Americans liked it, and I'll tell you why. All my influences are American. [...] It looks quintessentially English because it's parochial and we use English accents, but hopefully the themes and the

style, even directorially, I think, is probably more American than English (in Hansen, 2004).

Although about the original, not the remake, it does support understandings of why the original would later be successful in the US (on BBC America) and perhaps also the remake. This is the same for Mangan's statement above.

It is important to note the extent to which these comparisons are made across national lines. Such statements about the comedy and programming of other nations are also made when attempting to demonstrate the uniqueness of the show (Mangan and Nash). This distinction, consequently, is achieved only within the local context since the show is being likened to that from abroad. These statements challenge an understanding of exclusive national forms while also pointing towards what may make programmes remakeable. Of course, in statements about remake uniqueness, such as Nash's, what is being stated is that the programme is unlike any of those found in the remake nation. By being similar to foreign programmes, it is demonstrating their difference within their own context therefore reinforcing the notion that national forms are different, yet the fact that these programmes are made and have relative success means that foreign forms are able to exist elsewhere.

Ultimately, this just complicates any assumption of monolithic comedic forms with the bringing of foreign styles into local contexts in general (generic sharing). At the same time, the claim of uniqueness requires a sort of acknowledgment of a general national form. As such, nation is utilised as a generic marker regardless of its national exclusivity. This is a negotiation between similarity and difference which is significant within the television industry since it is necessary to signal something familiar and recognisable while also highlighting a programme's uniqueness and why it should be watched. This seeming contradiction is an essential component of television promotion (Ferguson, 2006).

Furthermore, transferability may be expressed by describing the original in relation to programmes of the eventual remake nation. For instance, Mangan likens *Free Agents* to *Sex and the City* (in *This is Derbyshire*, 2009) and *White Van Man* is claimed to have "a kind of *My Name Is Earl* feel to it" (in *Broadcast*, 2010). This latter comparison is particularly interesting in that *White Van Man* was then remade by individuals responsible for *My Name is Earl* (Bowman and Fresco). This also

demonstrates the extent to which foreign programmes are used to describe local ones illustrating that foreign comedy is knowable.

Returning back to Holland's discussion of British comedy, he importantly notes that his "background with *Larry Sanders*" affords him an understanding of British comedy since that show illustrates the "American side of" it and is similar because it "was all about pain and flawed characters and flawed human behaviour" (in Bernstein, 2011). This highlights the understanding that these associated comedic forms, while perhaps more apparent in each nation, are not exclusive to them.

### **Generic difference and hybridity.**

Another way in which individuals discuss programmes generically is in terms of generic difference. This is namely done in terms opposing the label of sitcom. Uniqueness and difference has already been discussed above with regard to programme comparison across national lines. Here it will be examined not how these programmes are unique within their local television context, but how they are generically unique in general (which of course may still be understood as contextual).

Although about the original, actor Will Mellor states that he does not want *White Van Man* "to be pigeonholed as a sitcom, because that says that it's set-up / punchline / set-up / punchline. It's not like that" (in Jeffery, 2012, February). Here Mellor is offering a sort of formulaic definition of "sitcom," one which he wants to reject for his show. Actor Alex Borstein offers a comparable perspective of sitcom by arguing that *Getting On US* is "not a 'punch-line, punch-line' comedy like a typical sitcom" (HBO interview). Such a formulaic understanding of sitcom and television comedy is noted by Neale & Krutnik (1990) and Palmer (1987). Producer Caryn Mandabach similarly finds the term "sitcom" problematic by stating that "there's an old stink to that word" and that *In with the Flynns* "has its own genre. It is very original" (in Henry, 2011). Mandabach also reiterates the extent to which programmes are understood as unique. These claims of uniqueness are a framing device. Programmes are promoted within a generic frame, but, as Ferguson (2006) notes, marketers also "endow each with some unique appeal" (p. 164). Furthermore, genre in general is about variation within similarity (Lüders, Prøitz, & Rasmussen, 2010; Moine, 2002/2008).

With regard to remakes, by rejecting the label of “sitcom” individuals may be opening up the transferability of their show; that is, if humour is indeed perceived of as contextual and not able to travel. Perhaps by “defying” genre labels, these shows are understood as “breaking” the traditional perception that comedy, and particularly sitcom, is difficult to export (Moran, 1985, p. 177). For instance, Mellor’s comment above about *White Van Man* may explain why the show was perceived as transferable. Since these shows are their “own genre,” they then follow their own rules.

Difference is further expressed in terms of generic hybridity which Bielby & Harrington (2004) note as one of the common means of genre framing. In the first place, this is achieved by referring to a programme as both a comedy and a drama as is often done when individuals denounce the label of sitcom (e.g., *Free Agents*, *Getting On*). For instance, Mellor describes *White Van Man* as a “comedy drama” (in Collins, 2011; in Stevens, 2011) further stating that “It’s different, as well, because it’s got that drama element – it’s not necessarily a show full of gags and jokes” (BBC Press Office, 2014). This is important because it is about the original and may point towards why it was perceived as transferable. Genre hybridity is another means by which individuals distance their programmes from the traditional sitcom and claim uniqueness, though still within terms of genre.

*Getting On US* is described by the network as “blending outrageous humor with unexpected moments of tenderness” (HBO, n.d., “About the show”), like Denis Leary’s claim about *Sirens US* that “you’ll be laughing your a-- off and then occasionally get an emotional jolt” (in Hinckley, 2014). Here is the idea that these shows are a mix of comedy and drama even if given the label of “comedy” therefore meaning that comedy does not necessarily equal only humour or that having humour means that it cannot be “more.”

Savorelli (2010) argues that traditional sitcom is “euphoric” with “happy endings,” but that new sitcoms do not intend to (only) evoke laughter and do not avoid dysphoria. This new conceptualisation of television comedy as both comedic and serious (Mills, 2004) connects to the frequent denial of the sitcom label and the sort of hybrid references to these programmes. While the label of “sitcom” may be dismissed it does not mean that these programmes are not understood as humorous comedies, it is just that the formulaic structure of sitcom as noted by Neale &

Krutnik (1990) and Palmer (1987) is not present. Furthermore, it expands the notion of humour to include the more serious and dramatic rather than joke after joke.

So it is the underlying, non-humour core of comedy which is transferable; the elements which humour may derive from not its actual realisation. This core may be likened to the “skeleton” of a format noted by Chalaby (2011) of which the “flesh” may be modified, but not the underlying structure (p. 295). This “flesh” connects back to Mitchell’s comment about the contextuality of references, which would be definitive of humour instances. Nevertheless, within these programmes humour is still understood as a component of (television) comedy. This structural understanding is similar to Davies’s (1991) work with ethnic humour in which the cores of the jokes are “universal,” but the overlying references are local. Consequently, there is similarity in understandings of formats and humour. As such, the rest of this study will include humour in its discussion of comedy while acknowledging the difference between the two.

Hybridity is also noted in reference to unscripted genres such as the mix of comedy and reality. As already noted, there is the argument that comedy does not travel well. Looking at the manner in which individuals describe the genre of their programmes may reveal a different generic understanding of their programmes and, consequently, the extent to which they are “translatable.” This is particularly salient when considering the extent to which programmes are described in terms of “reality.” This is also evident in the referral to drama which is sometimes able to transfer in original form not just as a format like reality (Miller, 2000; Steemers, 2004). Reality is utilised in generic framing in terms of both content and style.

HBO states that *Getting On US* “follows the daily lives of overworked nurses and doctors as they struggle with the darkly comic realities of tending compassionately to their aging charges in a rundown, red-tape-filled hospital extended-care wing” (HBO, n.d., “About the show”). This is about what is represented as Holland’s opinion that “comedy is all about human truth” (in Bernstein, 2011). Of course it cannot be denied that such realities are contextual, but they are not necessarily nation-specific and are found across borders as Holland gestures towards. This “truth” is noted as humorous: for example, Mellor claims that *In with the Flynns* is “truthful, has a bit of edge and is laugh out-loud funny” (in Henry, 2011). So in these statements it is reality or truth which is deemed comical (this will be further discussed in the next chapter).

Connection to reality may even be used as a generic label as done for *The Office*. Greg Daniels, who developed the American version, claims that *The Office US*:

is really a reality show, in the sense that we're looking at behaviour more than we're telling jokes. It's not as if we're saying, 'This is a comedy show and we're here to make you laugh.' We're taking more of a deadpan approach. It's a style of comedy - a style that I think is quite rare on television now. So we have a lot of fresh snow to jump around in (in Strachan, 2005).

If *The Office* is truly understood as a “reality show,” then it would be one of the most transferable (i.e., formattable) television genres. Daniels subsumes humour under the style and intention of reality. He is also again referring to its uniqueness this time via generic hybridity. Elsewhere Daniels states that “I think it's a brilliant format that [Gervais and Merchant] devised, to bring the energy of reality shows into comedies, which I think is terrific to kind of re-energize the comedy genre” (in Salem, 2005). A reconceptualization of comedy may call into question traditional understandings of comedy (Mills, 2004; Savorelli, 2010). This also highlights one of the appeals of formats which, according to Miller (2000) and Steemers (2004), is to “re-energize” or reinvigorate. For Daniels this is not just about reinvigorating schedules by including something foreign, but about reinvigorating the whole genre (which of course may still be understood in industrial terms, but he makes this statement with regard to the format as a whole which implies that this re-energizing occurs across borders, not just limited to one national comedic form). Moran (2009c) confirms this sentiment by stating that industry individuals “warned that [comedy] must constantly update itself and seek to be different. [...] In the face of these different generic preferences, why not combine the two – crossbreed comedy with reality?” Furthermore, he claims that “criss-crossing genres such as comedy and reality was only one of several ways of taking out commercial insurance in the face of the future and its underlying uncertainties” (p. 54). Therefore, generic hybridity, particularly the mixing of comedy and reality, has industrial appeal in the same manner as formats do (risk aversion is discussed in the next chapter).

What is significant here is that there is no uniform, straightforward comedic form and, rather, individuals express an understanding that their programmes, in general, lay outside the bounds of traditional genre conventions. The particular

uniqueness of programmes in terms of genre allows for the movement into the discussion of identifying potential primarily via the argument that comedy and specifically sitcom does not travel well. By underscoring the extent to which individuals perceive their programmes as atypical it is possible to present a claim that pre-existing assumptions about comedy and transferability are not completely appropriate. Since genre is not so straightforward/black and white, neither are associated understandings such as transferability. This is explored next with regard to conceptual and industrial aspects of potential identification.

Being different also relates to identifying potential since it acts to justify bringing these programmes over at all. At the same time, the need to localise provokes individuals to point out how these programmes already are or can be made to reflect local genre expectations. By referring to these programmes in genre defiant ways, concrete expectations can be avoided potentially attracting a wider audience.

### **Identifying Potential**

Having just discussed identity terminology, it is now possible to consider the identification of format potential. The generic understanding of these programmes, as noted above, may connect to this next aspect of identification. Before proceeding, it is essential to clarify what is meant here by “potential.” Granted, any programme could theoretically be remade and, therefore, possess potential. However, what is examined here is how specific programmes are singled out and rationalised as being particularly remakeable. It is important to keep in mind that these are statements about programmes that have already been deemed remakeable and does not include references to what makes a programme unadaptable. As these programmes have been selected to be remade it seems only natural to provide justification for such an (proposed) action. Since clearly all these programmes have been identified as having potential, the question becomes how is such potential expressed/defined?

If it is true that a programme is not a format until it is remade in another market (Chalaby, 2011), then the identification of potential is an essential component of format identity since without it a format would not exist. Since the programmes under consideration originally existed as “isolated” texts, not created with the primary intention of being remade (though future exploitation is a consideration), it would be advantageous to examine how remake potential is

understood and identified with regard to scripted comedy. For many unscripted formats remake potential is a part of the initial conception and development with global transferability being a pivotal aspect of its very definition and existence. For instance, Moran & Malbon (2006) discuss the format process as beginning before initial broadcast and continuing after initial success. However, as Chalaby (2012b) discusses: “It is now understood that a global hit cannot be manufactured in a social vacuum (i.e. for an imaginary global market) but always has a local origin – at first – a local destination” (p. 31). He continues by claiming that “the challenge is *to make the local global* – identifying local formats that have the potential to go around the world – and then *make the global local* by assessing the degree an adaptation a format needs in a specific market” (p. 31). Consequently, the identification of potential is an integral aspect of the remake process, particularly for scripted programmes which do not have the same degree of planned format exploitation inherent in the original conception and creation process.

A key component of global television studies is that of cultural discount or the extent to which programmes are so culturally connected as to hinder their exportability with comedy being one of the most difficult genres to export for this reason (Beeden & de Bruin, 2010; Steemers, 2004; Straubhaar, 2007). It is commonly argued that comedy does not travel well (a “well-worn business adage” challenged by Miller [2000, p. 111]), yet there remains a perception that it can under certain conditions particularly as a format (Ducray, 2012). This persists despite numerous failed remake attempts and statements raising this issue (see Work). Consequently, for this endeavour to continue there must be some understanding of which comedic programmes have the potential to transfer. This could relate to the expressions that these programmes are not like other shows or that they are not even sitcoms, the main example of untranslatability (Moran, 1985, p. 177). Furthermore, referring to these programmes as being like other genres, namely reality, may make them appear more transferable since such genres have a more successful track record as formats. Additionally, the fact that originals are compared to programmes of the remake nation from the start highlights potential since these programmes are understood in terms of that nation already. That is, if a British programme is being described as American then it seems plausible that it could be

transferable to that market. As such, here remake potential is identified and framed in terms of universality, relevance, previous success, and uniqueness.<sup>1</sup>

The first means by which potential is expressed is with regard to the “universality” and “translatability” of concepts and conceptual elements. Anthony Head, actor in both versions of *Free Agents*, stated that “When it’s comedy like this, which is witty and sassy, and based on real emotions and the messiness of real life, I think it basically translates the same” (in Radish, 2011). Here translatability is connected to genre, a particular type of “comedy;” not based on something universal, per se, but something “real” which is understood as transcending national borders. This sense of reality is something that Daniels mentioned years earlier with regard to *The Office* as noted above. He speaks in terms of genre with the specific mention of “reality shows” which may say something about format potential since reality formats had already proven to be highly exploitable by this time and were part of the format “boom” moving into the new millennium (Chalaby, 2011; Esser, 2010). Therefore, Daniels is either pointing out a feature of *The Office* which is in line with already highly translatable formats or he is using the terminology which would identify it as such. Either way, it demonstrates an understanding of formats and translatability.

Consequently, if the comedy of a programme is perceived to be connected to reality, it is not necessarily impeded by cultural differences which could prevent its movement across borders since reality programming has the ability to travel. However, the connection between reality and culture could be what requires remaking rather than direct broadcast of original programme since it has been well demonstrated the extent to which reality and other unscripted genres are transferable only as remakes (de Bruin & Zwaan, 2012; Waisbord, 2004). Therefore, individuals need to demonstrate that such reality is cross-cultural which is then about recognisability. Part of identifying potential is found in perceiving relevance and familiarity; that new audiences will understand and appreciate the concept.

This issue of recognisability for genre is discussed by Paul Lee, then-president of BBC America:

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<sup>1</sup> The focus here is upon statements made early in the process. There are instances of retrospective statements about potentiality namely with regard to remake success (or failure). While these are of significance, what are of particular interest here are those statements made before broadcast. In some cases it is necessary to consider statements made during production as there are few from the negotiation period. Nevertheless, these are still before broadcast and the judgment/critique of the remake.

You do have to ask the question, is it something that works to U.K. ears around U.K. sensibilities or is it something that works on its own? I'm not saying if it's based in Slough and it's full of Brits who have bad teeth it doesn't work. If it makes sense, if it has an internal logic, if it's perfectly structured within its own world, then it will work in any language, any culture (in Ostrow, 2003).

This familiarity is noted in terms of a sort of “universality” of story structure. It can be assumed that Lee used this understanding years later when he moved to ABC where *White Van Man* was remade into *Family Tools*. It aligns with what Paul Buccieri, CEO of ITV Studios America and Managing Director of ITV Studios International, stated about *White Van Man*: that it “is a universal story, one that translates very well across countries and cultures” (in ITV Studios, 2011). This is about narrative structure and coherence, upon which the culturally-specific material is overlaid. Buccieri’s description of *White Van Man* is framed in a manner similar to Lee’s comments years earlier – granting the programme a sort of universal narrative – therefore offering a rationalisation of Lee’s remaking of that show. This connects to the comedic core discussed above with regard to generic difference. This also relates to an integral aspect of genre: that of stock characters and formulaic premise, structure, and plot (Silverblatt, 2007). These are what allow a particular genre to be recognisable and allow for audience engagement. According to Bielby & Harrington (2004), potential is derived from the “subjective perception of the emotional authenticity of a program” which “may originate from the characters, the narrative, or the quality of the writing, or may be identified in visual, action, or other formal aesthetic elements of the program” (p. 88). As such, these elements which may be part of the comedic core are what influence industrial decisions about programme potential, as expressed by Lee.

To aid in the question of whether a concept will make sense in a new context, along with narrative familiarity and logic, potential is identified through the relevance of the show’s premise. For *The Office*, the universality of office life justifies the US remake. Then-president of Universal Sarah Timberman stated: “There's a subtlety to it, and sometimes that feels universal in terms of people who work in any sort of a company or organisation, and have to work out different relationships with their colleagues. I don't see anything particularly British about it” (in Davies, 2003). Daniels later echoed that sentiment with regard to Americans:

"There's something like 40 million people that work in an office. And office life has a particular culture. It's not specifically a British thing" (in Strachan, 2005). This is similarly expressed for *Free Agents* with Holland responding to a question about the transferability of the programme in the following terms: "Americans work more than any other civilization in the world, in hours spent at work, away from family. So it makes a lot of sense. Really, it reflects our society" (in Bernstein, 2011). Daniels is still connecting comedy with culture, but in this instance such culture, that of the workplace, is found throughout the world. As Ducray (2012) claims, *The Office UK* "used situations that had been experienced by the 'global' public, either directly or by proxy [making it] easily exportable" (p. 23). This highlights how such "universal" situations and themes are tied to both comedy and transferability. Ultimately it is about local relevance and if there is something which is broader in its familiarity, then it will be more exportable. What is claimed here is that *The Office* is such a programme and it is framed in universal terms demonstrating that at least this aspect of comedy is transferable. This is about the comedic core, not necessarily the exact instances of humour which may be contextual and unable to transfer without translation.

These statements are not made without some qualification, however, such as the claim that the main character of *The Office*, David Brent, needs some "tweaks." As such, transferability is not necessarily understood as verbatim which is logical since such a perception would warrant finished programme transfer rather than format adaptation. An unidentified US TV source said: "David Brent is a brilliant character. We are fully aware of the fact that humour translates differently across the water but we know that with a few tweaks Brent could be a huge success" (in White, 2002). Here is an acknowledgment of differences in humour, yet it is implied that there is still something about the character that is commonly understood between the two contexts where the differences are presented as minor with changes being "a few tweaks." This doesn't seem like anything major, but it leaves out any specifics about what makes Brent "brilliant" and what the extent of these "tweaks" is. What this also acknowledges is that in its current state *The Office*, or at least David Brent, would not necessarily be a success in the US; those "few tweaks" are needed for that to be possible. It may be necessary to determine what exactly is meant by "success" since the original programme did in fact win two Golden Globes due to its airing on BBC America. However, critical acclaim from

airing on a niche cable channel is not the same as garnering a mass audience on a national broadcast network which may be the difference between just “success” and “huge success,” at least for a network executive.

However, the idea of previous success as a signal of potential (Chalaby, 2011; Esser, 2010; Moran & Malbon, 2006) is problematic on its own since one needs to consider the reasons for and definition of success and how such replication is understood. That is why it is necessary to position this in relation to these other issues of potential as well as to consider industrial aspects. Let us now return to Buccieri’s statement: “‘White Van Man’ has a great following in the UK and is a universal story, one that translates very well across countries and cultures” (in ITV Studios, 2011). Here formatability is connected to the show’s “success” in it having a “great following” along with the universality of story which is perceived as translatable. This latter part of Buccieri’s statement qualifies the assumption that previous success reaps future. In the same ITV Studios press release, Saurabh Kakkar, Creative Director Comedy, ITV Studios UK added “we have very funny and poignant stories from the BBC Three series that can translate brilliantly to the US market. “ Buccieri and Kakkar are both speaking of concept, but in industrial terms: *White Van Man*’s previous success and its transferability to the US market. The issue of previous success will be further discussed in the next chapter with regard to industrial appeal.

Other executives have a similar desire to “exploit”. For instance, individuals from BBCW may state that British programmes and particularly BBC programmes have global interest because that is their business and it serves them in no way to say otherwise so their rhetoric will “always” paint their work positively. For instance, Jane Tranter, then-Head of BBCW Productions, states:

The appetite for American broadcasters to develop reformats is great. They feel very comfortable with having something that has proven success in another country, and that they can then take and build and improve on, making it specifically work for their individual broadcast of audiences (in Saval, 2014).

Here Tranter is referring to all of the concerns discussed above such as previous success and relevance. What is also important in Tranter’s comment is not only the idea that American broadcasters are looking for something that was a previous success, but something that they can “build and improve on.” This means that

potential is found not in what is perceived as a perfected programme. As will be discussed later there is a pervading discourse about “love” and personal taste which permeates statements found throughout all stages of the remake process.

Finally, potential is framed in terms of uniqueness and innovation. Producer Ben Silverman notes how the concept of *The Office* was perceived as having potential because “it was the first of its kind in the UK market” and he “knew it would also be ahead of the game within the US.” Silverman “was burning to take that premise and style and adapt it for [his] home market” and, therefore, was motivated by industrial aims (Silverman, 2005, p. 71). This connects identifying potential with strategy. So potential is not just in terms of what could translate, but what is innovative and new. Silverman sees the appeal of a risk that paid off in another context and hopes to recreate that. Here may be that the concept was not particularly tied to the original context, hence it being described as the “first of its kind” and, therefore, is generically free enough to travel. This reflects the statements made by individuals about how a programme may be generically unfamiliar locally despite its connection/similarity to a foreign programme (Mangan and Nash above). So it is about identifying something that perhaps does not exist in one’s own market, about finding that gap.

This becomes further relevant in the next chapter when discussing the exchange of ideas as well as individuals. Industrial potential may also be connected to the social/networking advantages afforded by remaking. Originators express the sentiment that formats allow them to expand their reach, but this becomes more a concern of intention than identifying potential unless format potential is any programme which allows for this growth. If so, potential identification would inevitably be determined by remakers since a programme is only able to be sold as a format if someone is willing to buy it. This does not negate the fact that certain programmes may be marketed for remaking by originators and never bought or only bought by certain markets. Programmes may only have potential in particular markets which may complicate the business of identifying potential. What is of concern here is how potential is identified between the UK and the US, not in other nations. Potential identification may vary across countries so what is found here does not necessarily apply to another relationship like between Israel or Spain and the US.

Silverman reveals that what he is “buying, most of the time, are the elements.” This is because:

The American market is not interested in an office just off the M4 corridor – the average American doesn’t know where Slough is and can’t understand the accents. It is much more difficult to sell a finished programme in the US market. Most of the time, what interests me and the big networks will be the format and style, adapted for an American audience (Silverman, 2005, p. 71).

He further states that:

This is not to say there is no place at all for original finished British TV product. British drama and comedy series can air successfully on niche channels. Nevertheless, in drama and comedy too it will be more often the concept that makes a big sale rather than the finished series (ibid, p. 72).

Consequently, identifying potential is in terms of concept or the comedic core. This also importantly introduces the relationship between finished programmes and formats by arguing that finished programmes do not air on broadcast networks, only on niche, and, therefore, remakes are justified (Hogg, 2013; Miller, 2000).

### **Identification Conclusion**

Identification as examined here has begun to reveal the negotiation between similarity and difference within the remake process. In the first place, generic descriptions which act to demonstrate difference reveal points of similarity between contexts. For instance, the statements made by Mangan and Nash claim that their programmes are unique within their context by likening them to American and British programming respectively. Furthermore, statements reveal the extent to which programmes possess characteristics of the eventual remake context like the comments made by Gervais. Likewise, potential is similar to generic descriptions in that difference does play a major role in highlighting uniqueness and innovation. Yet, again, this difference is within each context not between them. The emphasis in statements of potential is on similarity such as claims of relevance and familiarity. The issue of potential will be expanded upon in the next chapter: Origination. There the various elements which offer remake appeal and justification will be examined.

## Origination

The next remake aspect to be discussed is origination. Unlike unscripted formats, the scripted remakes in this study are not purpose-created as formats for international adaptation. This was noted in the previous chapter in demonstrating the importance of examining potential which will be further explored in this chapter with regard to origination. Potential and origination are inextricably linked and the former should be understood as an aspect of the latter since the identification of potential is the first step of origination. However, something could have potential (as defined in the previous chapter) yet never be remade thus demonstrating how potential and origination are connected yet different. A significant aspect of origination is that of justification. Statements offer reasoning and attempt to provide legitimacy to the remake process. This chapter explores how the framing device of genre (Bielby & Bielby, 1994) is utilised with regard to remake origination, in rationalising remake origination to the public. This is achieved through expressions of familiarity and recognisability: hallmarks of comedy (Neale & Krutnik, 1990; Tueth, 2005). Additionally, genre is utilised in reference to industrial sensibility and taste rather than audience and the positioning of industrial individuals as consumers who can comprehend and appreciate. This, then, reveals an understanding that comedy is comprehensible outside original national borders. Also, genre plays a role in industrial strategy with regard to exploitation, innovation, and risk mitigation.

Furthermore, this rationalisation occurs as a negotiation between similarity and difference. While format studies do argue that the remake process entails both similarity and difference, they tend to focus on elements of difference (barriers and obstacles) rather than similarity, particularly with regard to origination (Hogg, 2013). It is argued that difference necessitates the need to remake (Ducray, 2012). Such claims are then supported through a textual comparison taking for granted that these differences exist. Origination is an aspect that cannot be accurately examined through textual analyses of programmes. In order to explore the rationalisation of this step it is necessary to analyse material from before the remake itself is created.

In contrast to the arguments of textual analyses, as introduced in the previous chapter, the statements in this study focus upon and highlight aspects of similarity (between the two contexts) more so than difference, a fact which

reaffirms Miller's (2000) claim that television trade between the UK and the US is "a story in which meanings constructed 'here' speak about, with, and to meanings from 'there' — and vice versa—and in which nothing, inevitably, is completely different" (p. 183). This is examined with regard to the manner in which origination is generically framed in both conceptual and industrial terms.

### **Conceptual Origination**

The first aspect of remake origination to examine is conceptual. Here remake appeal and justification are expressed in conceptual terms. In other words, remake appeal is referred to as being found in the programme concept, the format itself, rather than wider industrial motivations. Conceptual origination is generically framed through references to familiarity, relevance, and taste.

Format studies tend to focus on and emphasise the extent to which differing perceptions of conceptual elements leads to the "need" to remake. Differences are most apparent in studies which compare versions of a programme, demonstrating how particular textual elements differ (Griffin, 2008; Larkey, 2009; Lavigne, 2011). These differences are then discussed in terms of cultural (i.e., national) particularities. Statements of conceptual origination in this study especially underscore the perception of similarity over difference. Expressing such a similarity is necessary in order to serve the purposes of justification. These statements operate to justify the movement of the concept from one context to another rather than to explain remaking over broadcast of the original. This is significant to format studies since these statements are about the format itself (i.e., the programme concept) rather than the original finished programme, which is taken as the object of study in scripted format studies (Beeden & de Bruin, 2010; Griffin, 2008). This then is the difference between analysis of finished remake (i.e., the programme itself) and statements regarding the process.

This section addresses these issues by exploring aspects of conceptual origination as expressed in the statements of this study. Conceptual origination involves the expression of remake appeal and justification in terms of personal and cultural relevance as well as taste.

#### **Personal and cultural.**

To begin with, conceptual origination is noted with regard to personal and cultural relevance and familiarity. Familiarity and recognisability are hallmarks of

genre (Lüders et al, 2010; Mikos & Perrotta, 2012; Silverblatt, 2007). Genres function, for production and reception, through their formulaic nature (Silverblatt, 2007). According to Bielby & Bielby (1994) such familiarity and recognisability is pivotal from an industrial perspective since “even before the pilot is produced, the potential new series is linked to a category that is widely perceived as familiar, understandable, and appropriate” (p. 1293). In the statements here this familiarity is not only in terms of generic labels, as discussed in the previous chapter, but with regard to what is represented. This goes beyond the structuring and labelling of programmes as genres are also “barometer[s] of cultural preoccupations” (Silverblatt, 2007, p. 107) demonstrating the role of relevance as well. This cultural “reflection” is particularly argued with regard to comedy (Davis, 1993).

Here such appeal and justification is expressed in statements highlighting the degree to which the format has relevance not just in its original context, but in that of the intended remake. Such applicability and recognition afford the reason for relocating the programme. This demonstrates an understanding that the concept has significance in both contexts and, therefore, both contexts are similar in their relating to the concept. This is not to say that the concept holds the same significance in each context, but simply that it is relevant in each. Nevertheless, these statements reveal a sense of similarity that is overlooked in studies of remake texts which focus on differences. Furthermore, this applicability and familiarity is noted in terms of genre; that is, it is part of the generic frame. Expressions of personal and cultural relevance showcase the role of such elements in the justification and realisation of comedy and humour. Before drawing any further conclusions let me examine these statements of conceptual origination.

The first manner in which relevance is demonstrated is through personal experience and applicability. While connection to personal experience is most apparent in statements by originators about the original (which will not be explored here since it does not pertain to the remake process), remakers do state that programme concepts have some sort of personal link/relevance. For instance, Mark V. Scheffer and Will Olsen claim that they were already working on a concept based on their experiences with their mothers’ health when they came across *Getting On* and since the ideas aligned they were inclined to remake rather than independently develop (in Gross, 2013; in Kouguell, 2014). Their statements reveal that concepts align with those already in development by remakers which explains how remakers

could personally relate with another's idea. And while the appeal may be expressed in terms of conceptual alignment, this is derived from personal experience.

Personal connection to the original by originators makes sense since concepts often derive from individuals' own experiences. However, the fact remakers are also able to point to personal applicability illustrates a sense of similarity and shared experience across borders. This is significant because it highlights not only that there is similar experience across borders, but that conceptual development is also similar demonstrating that remaking is not just simple "imitation." Comedy and humour are related to experience for both production and comprehension (Raskin, 1985) and what is underscored here is that such experience is not exclusive and allows for similar ideas to be constructed across borders.

There is an overriding understanding that individuals should relate to the concept in some manner and that comedy emerges from this connection. This ability to personally relate plays a role in the success of remake origination as remakers recognise something familiar and/or perceive aspects which could be made personal (e.g., setting, characters).

Actors may similarly express this connection as it is commonplace within interviews for actors to be asked how their own experiences relate to those being portrayed and the extent to which they share traits with their characters. Perhaps this is an idea that if the people involved can relate then maybe the audience can too: "see, it is relatable." For example, *The Office US* lead actor Steve Carell states: "I worked in the produce department of a supermarket, and my boss was pretty much this guy [Michael Scott]" (in Bryant, et al, 2005). In a similar manner, Mellor states that his character on *In with the Flynns*:

had kids very young, and I've experienced a bit of that. [...] I could relate to so much of it. I grew up in a very full house where there was always lots going on. And I think we've captured that atmosphere (in Henry, 2011).

Ferguson (2006) connects all of this to the promotion of programmes. He claims that networks try to appeal to audiences and their needs/tastes since "Subconsciously viewers react emotionally and almost immediately to questions like 'Does that appeal to me? Do I have an interest in it?'" (p. 165). Individuals highlight points of relevance in their own lives in order to help (prospective) audiences find relatability in theirs. Such an understanding of comedy is noted by Levin (1987) who finds that

comedy audiences expect comedy “to mirror the circumstances of their lives” (p. 157). While this may be true for other genres what is important here is its role for comedy. In this case actors act as surrogates for the audience and their own lives (this then connects to cultural familiarity which is discussed next). This may also be an issue of qualification and authenticity with individuals arguing that they “get it” and, therefore, can represent it. This addresses the role of genre within reception, as made clear by the regular prompting, in that there is an expectation on the part of interviewees and audiences that individuals should have some sort of personal understanding of their characters and the situations portrayed. Even when direct experience is not present, some sort of relevance is still demonstrated. The situations which are more specific, such as those portrayed in *Sirens* and *Free Agents*, are attempted to appear relevant not so much through the particular workplace/environment, but through the characters and the more general situations they deal with. This reflects the comedic tradition of recognisable, repeated characters and narrative development regardless of specific context (Levin, 1987; Stott, 2005) which is also demonstrated with regard to sitcom (Neale & Krutnik, 1990). Producer Hal Vogel states that *Sirens UK* depicts “universal themes that aren’t specific to ambulance drivers but are actually finally about things that concern us all; sex, power, fear of death” (in Channel 4, 2011). Vogel was producer for *Sirens US* and this statement may link to potential and origination through the claim of “universal themes,” a sort of “delocalisation” (Gray, 1998; Iwabuchi, 2002; Straubhaar, 2007) as discussed in the previous chapter. Of course, again, it would be in Vogel’s best interest to highlight this wider applicability in order to persuade both network and audience to accept the programme. Regardless of the promotional intent of this or any statements in this study, it demonstrates industrial understanding and use of genre (Bielby & Harrington, 2004; Eastman, Ferguson, & Klein, 2006; Havens, 2003).

The issue of material being relatable and recognisable is the cultural aspect of this type of origination. While the first aspect of conceptual origination was concerned with the extent to which concepts derived from individuals’ own lives and experiences, this next aspect involves statements which express concepts as originating from society and culture. As such, here concepts are not necessarily understood as anything unique to the individual creator, but as something shared by a wider populous, such as Vogel’s comment above. Individuals take for granted

shared understandings thereby conceiving of their audience as a sort of “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983/2006). It is important to note that these statements are made in terms of nation rather than particular (intended) audiences, which is the manner in which Anderson uses the notion. This has significance for origination since at this point remakers may not have secured a network and such statements further serve promotional purposes in appealing to the widest demographic possible.

The particular cultural connections and/or significance of programmes are noted in terms of justification or as a means of highlighting why a certain programme has remaking potential. This is achieved by noting the extent to which programme concept speaks to cultural aspects found not only in the original context, but in the remaking one as well. Cultural connection is a significant aspect of genre, particularly comedy and humour which is understood as greatly tied to cultural context (Davis, 1993; Levin, 1987). By making such statements, individuals are also highlighting the universality of comedy and humour, both in form and presence (Levin, 1987; Martin, 2010; Ziv, 1988). It becomes clear that comic concepts are transferable as more general cultural components are shared, what Straubhaar (2007) refers to as “cultural proximity,” while specificities differ leading to the need to modify. It is the expression of these shared aspects which is culturally specific such as the similarity of ethnic humour between nations as discussed by Davies (1990) whereby the basic structure is the same, but the specific reference varies across borders. It should also be considered the extent to which Britain and the US are culturally similar and, therefore, the sharing and comprehension of cultural texts is not as difficult as between other nations (Hilmes, 2010). This could support an understanding of this comedy as being “bi-national” and able to travel due to cultural similarities (Zabalbeascoa, 2005).

This connects to identifying potential where potential was related to cultural relevance. As such, the appeal is found in the justification: that the concept makes sense to the remakers and should to the local audience as well. This use of relevance for justification is demonstrated by the statements about work and *Free Agents* and *The Office* mentioned in the previous chapter. This clearly links potential with familiarity as the concept is deemed as having potential due to its assumed familiarity in the new context. Furthermore, the main character of *The Office* is highlighted as recognisable. For instance, Carell states that “I think everybody

knows somebody like this guy. [...] they say that if you don't know a Michael Scott, then you are Michael Scott" (in Lauer, 2005). While this is referring to the remake character, the same sort of phraseology is used to describe the original main character, David Brent (in Roper, 2016). Changes to the main character may have been made in order to achieve this same understanding. Demonstrating the familiarity of the main character is perhaps more important than that of the situation, such as the relevance of working to Americans, since it more strongly justifies remaking an already existing concept rather than making an original programme also set in an office. Further demonstrating relevance of the main character Wilson considers that "there are plenty of incompetent idiots that stay in power for years in American enterprise" (in Salem, 2005). This also speaks to the potential longevity of the remake highlighting the plausibility of such a character lasting in that context since it has been demonstrated in the "real world" (though a specific context: American enterprise).

These statements demonstrate an understanding of comedy that while, in the words of Tueth (2005), "much of its patterns and techniques are universal and timeless, it must speak in contemporary and recognizable words and images to the society which it entertains" (p. 1). Consequently, as Tueth argues, television comedy depicts, and reinforces, that which is socially and culturally familiar and relevant. Of course, this familiarity and recognisability may not be the case for all members of the public as Tueth refers to a particular target society. Such universality pertains to a constructed and assumed audience (the issue of target audience is discussed in later chapters).

To emphasise, this is about remake origination rather than overall concept origination, which would be the sole purview of originators. Relevance and familiarity are what are highlighted as provoking the beginning of the remake process, as the sources of origination for remakers. Such consistent statements underscore that comedy is connected to personal and/or cultural experience which is also transferable, to an extent, across borders.

Most theories of comedy and humour involve some element of familiarity usually in the form of societal and cultural norms and expectations (e.g., Critchley, 2002; Morrell, 1987). These include conventions of behaviour, manner, and language (Davis, 1993). Comedy/humour then arises from the inversion, deviation, or failure of these expectations (Neale & Krutnik, 1990). The function of comedy

and humour are not of importance here. What is important is that some culturally accepted and expected norm is in place, the familiarity of which is necessary for comprehension. The statements in this study then reinforce this understanding of comedy by demonstrating the extent to which format concepts have cultural relevance which will consequently allow for recognisable comedy and humour to arise. Therefore, here audience preference (Moran, 2009a) and/or “cultural proximity” (Straubhaar, 2007) are expressed in terms of relevance and familiarity. The already inherent cultural recognisability is highlighted which is more a generic issue than anything else. It underscores the necessary role of cultural familiarity for comedy and humour.

This is particularly salient for comedy and humour in that it is not just that audiences simply prefer texts from their own contexts (Moran, 2009a; Chalaby, 2013), but that the essential familiar characteristics of comedy and humour comprehension necessitate local texts. However, this does not mean that audiences cannot appreciate foreign texts if they possess the requisite knowledge or cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984/1996; Straubhaar, 2007). As Mikos & Perrotta (2012) argue, identities are complex and nations are populated with individuals who have a wide variety of tastes and preferences. As will be discussed further below, this is not just about audiences, but the industrial individuals as well.

What is important here is that there is some area of initial familiarity which creators then need to demonstrate to audiences. What allows for remaking is when these particular situations overlap between contexts; that is, when both contexts perceive the same situation as eliciting comedic representation. There needs to be some sort of equivalence in the familiarity of situations. However, this recognition is not necessarily equal or else the finished programmes would be imported.

Format studies generally note the cultural as the area in which changes must occur, as the aspect of difficulty. Here it becomes apparent that such elements are what make remaking appealing or at least such challenges are expressed as able to be overcome. The role of similarity will be further made apparent when examining taste which is discussed next.

### **Taste.**

Finally, conceptual origination is expressed in terms of taste, sensibility, and emotion. Particular concepts are noted as being appealing for reasons of taste and personal preference rather than cultural relevance as discussed above. This is found

in creator and executive statements and demonstrates the role of sensibility throughout the television industry, here, particularly, with regard to remaking. What is significant in these statements is that taste is discussed in terms of the individuals rather than audience or wider populous which is often the focus of format studies. That is, individuals are referring to their own sensibilities as fuelling remake appeal instead of assumptions about audience preferences. Individuals refer to such appeal in personal terms, as it relates to their own sensibility and preferences which Harrington & Bielby (2005) claim “holds considerable sway” in the global television market. Taste is examined here with regard to generic sensibility, specifically that of comedy and humour.

Thus far the appeal for remakers has been the prime focus, but here the appeal for originators becomes more apparent. Originators’ statements in response to and about the appeal of remaking are about “honour” and “excitement.” Therefore, for originators the prospect of a remake is expressed, or rationalised, in terms of accomplishment. This further presents the process as amicable and cooperative. It does not demonstrate that originators want their programmes to be remade, but are nevertheless pleased with it (though some actors express either displeasure [in Docherty, 2003] or apathy [in Deedes, 2008]). This will be further explored in the chapter on intention. This does show that remakes may have personal as well as industrial strategic purposes: a means of expansion and a sign of success (Bourdieu, 1992/1996; Florida, 2012).

Personal fulfilment leads to the expression of origination in terms of emotion as some of the originator statements could be understood. With regard to remake appeal for remakers, both Holland and Scheffer reveal that they “fell in love” with the respective original series (in Bernstein, 2011; in Kouguell, 2014). This demonstrates the importance of emotional resonance in the decision-making process of television trade noted by Bielby & Harrington (2004) not just for buyers and sellers, but for creators as well. Holland further discusses the extent to which he and co-producer John Enbom “love British comedy” and how his previous experience allows him to understand what he perceives to be the difference between American and British comedy (in Bernstein, 2011). Holland frames his and Enbom’s fandom in terms of national genre clearly demonstrating appreciation for comedy outside one’s own national borders. This illustrates the role of “psychologies” and “predispositions to humor” in the remake process (Raskin, 1985)

by underscoring the role of such preferences and taste in remake origination. Holland and Enbom are at least partially attracted to remaking because of their appreciation of British comedy. As such, individuals are drawn to remake programmes that they find enjoyable in their original, finished form. It then could be understood that their own personal enjoyment compels them to share this with their own context which may not be possible in its original form due to cultural and industrial conditions.

This is all rationalisation framed in terms of genre in that individuals are claiming to appreciate what they are (about to) work on therefore demonstrating their own qualifications as well as their fandom particularly when considering that Holland brings up his previous experience to demonstrate his knowledge. This is another example of framing in terms of experience, but is more centred on comedic sensibility as opposed to situational familiarity. That is, individuals are not only familiar with the world being portrayed, but also understand and appreciate the stylistic means by which that world is represented. Individuals are rationalising their involvement in terms of personal qualification and taste which serves to demonstrate their competence and justify their involvement (Caldwell, 2008).

This leads me to discuss the extent to which the alignment of original/originators and remake/remakers is further presented in terms of taste. Originators and remakers are connected in terms of similarity. This can be more specific than Holland's love of British comedy with, for instance, the claim that originators were fans of remakers and their work (in Radish, 2014). In these statements individuals are revealing the importance of generic style and sensibility in origination, not only in connecting with others who identify with comedy, but who share the same sensibility. There is also mention of originators and remakers "hitting it off" through similarity in style and overall "understanding" which further underscores the role of social connection and sensibility (Daskalaki, 2010). This shared sense of style, taste, and comedic sensibility will be explored further in subsequent chapters.

What is significant is that individuals are revealing the role of their own tastes and consumption in the remake process rather than that of audiences. As already mentioned, many studies of formats and those of global television emphasise audience preferences for local content and the role of such tastes in programming decisions. However, the statements in this study point towards the

significance of creators' tastes and preferences, at least for origination. This is something that is considered in works dealing with the industrial aspect of global television trade such as Havens (2003) and Harrington and Bielby (2005) that conceptualise programming buyers as audience "surrogates," which still privileges audience preferences. The findings here expand upon that to include not just those directly involved in trade fairs and markets, but also the creators themselves. Furthermore, here individuals are not expressing themselves as "speaking for" audiences, but for themselves. This is not to say that audiences play no role or a lesser role in origination, but that the personal tastes of those in the industry serve a role that should also be considered.

This sort of connection with the material as well as shared taste is not something explored in format studies. This may be a condition of genre with sensibility and appreciation playing a larger role in comedy than in unscripted genres like game and talent shows. Here is the importance of genre appreciation and comprehension rather than purely economic gain. For remake origination to occur for scripted comedy there must be some sort of shared taste and this must be perceived by both originators and remakers.

Taste is also expressed as a means of industrial justification: why executives select particular projects. For instance, Daniels claims that the reason *The Office US* landed at NBC was because Kevin Reilly loved the concept so it followed him from FX to NBC (in Porter, 2013) (this will be discussed further in Intention). Bill McGoldrick, SVP original scripted programming at USA Network, stated about *Sirens*: "When we read the material, we fell in love with the leads" (in Andreeva, 2011). This correlates with the network's branding with the slogan of "Characters Welcome." This rationalises remaking by positioning it with the programming goals of the network, with love perhaps developing from such alignment. Executive interest is important in getting a remake beyond the earliest stages of origination into actual production and ultimately on the schedule.

These emotional statements from creators and executives alike underscore the industrial inclination to offer public expressions of emotion and sensibility and not just ones of economic interest (Caldwell, 2008). This allows the industry to demonstrate their own investment in the concept which is then hoped to translate over into the audience. Caldwell (2008) emphasises that producers are themselves also consumers which is supported by statements of appreciation and enjoyment of

the original. This resonance is a component of industrial decision-making (Bielby & Harrington, 2004) and the next chapter will examine how modification of aesthetic elements allows for audience resonance as well.

Whether or not these statements are “genuine” is not the point, as noted in production studies such as Caldwell (2008). What is of importance here is the extent to which the comedic elements of familiarity, recognition, and relevance are expressed in and frame such statements. This has been about the manner in which individuals signal and refer to genre; its role in offering remake justification. This is not about how such aspects are represented in the final text, but, instead, how individuals employ generic ideas to rationalise their actions to the public.

Comedic relevance and appreciation are repeatedly noted within statements of origination reinforcing the notion that comedy is connected to society and culture. However, such contextuality is not understood as bound to national borders. Whereas format and humour studies repeatedly claim that cultural elements are obstacles to cross-border transfer thereby providing rationale for remaking (Beeden & de Bruin, 2010; Ducray, 2012; Steemers, 2004), what is demonstrated by the statements in this study is that those elements are actually what make a concept/programme appealing for such movement.

There appears to be an imperative to showcase the extent to which the format aligns with cultural understandings of comedy. This also works to counter claims of the immobility of comedy albeit in the form of a format. The transferability of comedy is further demonstrated in claims of appreciation. Remakers, therefore, present themselves as possessing the comprehension and skill necessary to bring the concept from its original context into their own market.

This all positions remakers as audiences themselves who appreciate and enjoy the texts of other nations. Bore (2011) challenges the notion that individuals do not comprehend or appreciate foreign sitcoms. She concludes that variation in appreciation is not related to national references, but instead to familiarity with the generic form which may be more an issue of prevalence as discussed in the next chapter. The idea of national specificity of humour functions to distinguish a nation and is, consequently, promoted by those within the nation. However, it is found that transnational appreciation is possible and that elements will be interpreted within one’s own context. This sort of appropriation and connection is what

remakers do with their statements about cultural relevance, therefore framing in terms of genre.

Certain cultural elements may be understood as needing to be overcome and modified, but there is still a sense that there is transcultural relevance. This process of inserting “social inflexion and accent” into concepts which are “unbounded and universal” is definitive of formats (Moran, 2009a, p. 117). Origination highlights the aspects which are understood as being shared and transferable. The next chapter will examine the remake production process and, in particular, which components are maintained and which are modified. Here there is a sense that the general, overall concepts are “universal.” This may get further into the identification of potential in that these programmes, or rather their concepts, are understood as recognisable and understandable in the remake country. This could reveal the understanding that comedy is cultural so it must be pointed out the extent to which the original concept relates and is applicable to the new context. At the same time, such statements may be made due to the wider, popular perception that comedy is contextual. This still links with individual understanding since they are producing and broadcasting to the public so audience perceptions and expectations must be taken into account, not just for the programmes but these statements as well. Either way, these statements are framed in terms of genre. This works to reaffirm the connection between comedy and context, but the very act of remaking works to push that understanding in that a foreign form is being brought into the local context. Such actions may then push local generic expectations through this inclusion of foreign concepts aiding genre growth (Bielby & Harrington, 2005; Straubhaar, 2007).

All of these components combine to create an understanding of genre in light of industrial prerogatives. These conceptual ideas are informed/shaped by industrial necessity such as audience expectations which work to reveal/reinforce industrial uses of genre. As such, the role of industry in origination will be explored next.

### **Industrial Origination**

The issues just considered with regard to conceptual origination bring me to a consideration of industrial origination. While the preceding was more individual, there are also significant industrial aspects of origination. Granted, certain parts of conceptual origination are connected to industrial and may in fact overlap, such as

statements of executive appeal. It will be the task of this section to demonstrate how these statements align with elements of industrial origination. Industrial origination is distinguished from conceptual origination in that it refers to the extent to which formats are understood in industrial terms. While conceptual origination may be understood as meeting industrial aims or being influenced by industrial aspects, here the concern is with elements of explicit industry strategy.

The idea of industrial origination cannot be derived from analyses of finished remake texts. Therefore, an examination of statements affords something not available in those studies which focus on textual analyses of programmes. Industrial origination is found within statements about the industrial factors involved in remake origination. These are explored here in terms of global strategy and risk management. Global strategy includes intellectual property exploitation and the appeal of networking and innovation. Risk management considers the advantage of formats in aiding pitches and the role/appeal of (previous) success. While these are wide industrial factors, they will be examined here with particular attention to the manner in which these are generically framed. That is, how these aims influence and are informed by understandings of comedy.

It should not be assumed that these are the only elements of industrial origination as there are numerous aspects which will not be covered, such as scheduling and branding. As with everything in this study, the aspects which are included are those which are noted in the statements studied and those elements excluded, while perhaps important to this process, are not regularly expressed by these individuals or given direct significance to remakes per se.

#### **Global strategy.**

Industrial origination is most commonly expressed in terms of strategy whereby formats and remaking are understood as having strategic purposes and advantages. What I mean here is explicit strategy involving formats including exportation, networking, and innovation.

Formats are noted as an integral aspect of corporate globalisation strategy as they provide a means of enhancing programme exportation and, consequently, financial returns. In the British context, this follows Freedman's (2003) work on the export-led strategy of the British government focused on a "knowledge economy" of British creativity and the commercial value of the global perspective of British quality (namely the BBC). British corporations explicitly state that their commercial

aims involve developing this knowledge economy by capitalising on intellectual property including formats. Such “generation and exploitation of intellectual property” is part of the DCMS definition of creative industries, including television (DCMS, 2001, p.00.05).

For instance, formats are tied into the global strategy of BBC Worldwide (BBCW), which itself is a strategy “to build the BBC’s brands, audiences, commercial returns and reputation across the world [by] investing in, commercialising and showcasing content from the BBC around the world [and] champion[ing] British creativity globally” (BBC, 2014, October). Such a description mimics the sort of rhetoric discussed by Freedman and the DCMS. This is not just about programmes in general as Dannenberg (2004) argues that comedy is a significant aspect of BBCW’s strategy. Shortly after BBCW bought a 25% stake in Big Talk Productions the BBCW director of independents Helen Jackson said “We can’t wait to [...] help take their productions to audiences around the world” (in *The Guardian* 2008). So even before *Free Agents* aired on Channel 4 (but after the Comedy Showcase pilot), BBCW’s involvement and interests already had the idea of pushing productions overseas. This idea of extension will be revisited throughout this paper, particularly within Intention.

Similarly, one of the strategies listed in ITV annual reviews is to “Build a strong international content business” a part of which, according to the 2011 annual review, “revolves around creating long-running, returnable drama and entertainment formats which travel well internationally” (p. 22). This places the heart of the strategy at the home of the original with executives supporting the production of those concepts which from the start have the potential to travel which is reflected in Buccieri’s comment about the universality of *White Van Man* (produced and distributed by ITV though aired on BBC). Such global relevance and ambition is similar to Jackson’s above. Of course a comedic programme needs to exist locally before it can be formatted and according to format studies it would be in the best interest of networks to greenlight concepts which have the potential for local success in order to leverage that success (Moran & Malbon, 2006). Nevertheless, this offers a possible understanding of potential being defined before the original is even produced even if these programmes are not purpose-created for formatting in the same manner as unscripted. This balance/tension between

national and global programme appeal is discussed by Chalaby (2016a) as programmes need to simultaneously speak to both the local and the global.

Consequently, formats must be understood as a strategy from the point of view of originators: as a means of exploiting intellectual property and gaining returns for the central corporation and its production. It is important to note that this is expressed in both industrial and national terms, with an understanding that formats aid in the spread of national forms allowing for economic returns which can bolster industrial corporate and national creative growth. The place of formats in this is logical because formats afford companies export opportunities and, consequently, revenue not otherwise possible with finished programmes (Esser, 2010). This strategy is also increasingly important to US companies as their global revenues become threatened by increased local production and decreased importation of finished programmes (Chalaby, 2016). This may be particularly significant for scripted comedy which is particularly contextual and difficult to export (Moran, 1985).

These statements are not just about financial opportunities, but also about creating “partnerships” and “joint ventures” in order “to ensure [they] are working with the best creative talent” (ITV, 2011, p. 24). Originators may claim to use formats in order to develop international ties and aid in securing future deals and partnerships, which is again about extension (Big Talk Productions, 2011). Steemers (2004) notes that exportation/exploitation is not just financial but also about creating relationships and collaboration. Global television trade is a site dependent upon and ideal for the growth of networks (Havens, 2003). Bielby & Harrington (2005) highlight the “importance of personalized relationships in ‘rationalizing’ such a chaotic and unpredictable business” (p. 76) therefore demonstrating that trade is not just to develop relationships, but trade relies on them in the first place. As such, format trade is dependent upon and utilised for the development of relationships and networks.

Creating international ties for innovation is most clearly and commonly expressed by remakers, though originators refer to themselves as a source of creativity to be “championed” (BBCW description above). Furthermore, part of the DCMS is about “promoting UK creativity and innovation throughout the world” (2001, p.00.13). Innovation is a strategic component of formats as noted by

Silverman in the previous chapters. As such, formats align with what networks are already looking for as explained by ABC Entertainment president, Paul Lee:

US networks and cable networks are looking for great, sophisticated storytelling [...] and the Brits are brilliant at that. [...] Now there's a common currency, it's great not just for British talent, writers and directors, but for British formats and ideas that are now so valuable in the US (in White, 2013).

This was several months after the premiere and cancellation of *Family Tools*. As this quotation and many others from Lee highlight, he (though he says US in general) is interested in British work and workers and this goes back to his experience at BBC America and perhaps being British himself highlighting the importance of relationships beyond the trade fairs. What then is mirrored by others in the industry is not only the willingness to look abroad for ideas and talent, but the desire. Consequently, remaking is rationalised in terms of the quality and creativity of foreign, in this case British, concepts.

This demonstrates a strategy of actively seeking formats from the UK and returns the discussion back to some of the ideas brought up in the previous chapter with regard to identifying potential and connects them to industrial origination as strategy. As such, formats are understood as a strategic component of US networks. Of course, this is a wide statement and does not reveal anything specifically about comedy or the programmes under study. As noted previously with regard to potential, Silverman links the appeal of *The Office* with conceptual innovation. His personal strategy involves “look[ing] for ideas that are distinct and unique: programmes that lead rather than follow” claiming that *The Office* was the “first comedy series to make fun of reality TV with brilliant characterisation and superb writing” and, therefore, since “it was the first of its kind in the UK market, [he] knew it would also be ahead of the game within the US” (Silverman, 2005, p. 71). While this is about conceptual appeal, it is expressed in terms of industrial strategy: being first and “ahead of the game.”

The strategic appeal of innovation could also be understood in terms of conceptual appeal with the programme ideas being sought for just happen to be what the British are making. As such, comedy is not understood as bound by national borders if individuals are searching beyond them for programme ideas. At the same time, however, Miller (2000) and Steemers (2004) note the role of formats

in innovation in terms of “reinvigorating” network schedules. The consequences of remaking are also demonstrated by claims that imported and remade programmes contribute to generic development (Bielby & Harrington, 2005; Straubhaar, 2007). As such, formats may aid in reviving “tired” formulas and conventions as noted by Daniels about *The Office*.

This idea about looking abroad for ideas is also about reputation, particularly national reputation, in that, for instance, Britain is perceived as particularly creative and this is valuable to American networks. Also, Dannenberg (2004) argues that the BBC has particularly innovative comedies which may be why they are often (attempted to be) remade. As such, Britain, and in particular the BBC, has a comedic reputation which is capitalised upon by both originators and remakers (Harrington & Bielby, 2005). This would be about not necessarily the previous success of the programme, but the “track record” of the nation/industry/individuals associated with that programme which is referred here in terms similar to Bielby & Bielby’s (1994) reputation frame. This further highlights the role of industry and the relationships therein throughout the format process, not just the programme itself. Formats are understood as a means of industrial gain, as a means of furthering creative networks and innovation, in a way that is also generic (Silverman, 2005). This underscores the importance of formats as tools of industrial sharing, of both knowledge and talent (Esser, 2010).

Reaching out for international talent and creativity points towards the role of difference in this process; however, such a motivation is still grounded within parameters of similarity. This will become even more apparent in subsequent chapters when considering the sharing of generic sensibilities, but it has already been demonstrated above with regard to taste and appreciation. Furthermore, Silverman’s statement about *The Office* also demonstrates a sense of similarity in the appeal of the programme both originally and for the US in that he claims it was unique. Therefore, *The Office* is understood as different in both contexts and that is what made it appealing to both.

With regard to exportation and networking strategy, scripted comedy formats are not different from unscripted ones. However, the genre element in terms of innovation and novelty is what is emphasised in these statements. The other industrial appeal of formats, risk management, will be discussed next.

### **Risk management.**

The next aspect of industrial origination pertains to risk management. It is commonly argued that television production, and all creative production for that matter, is precarious and riddled with risk (Gitlin, 1994; Caldwell, 2008). As such, industries work to minimise this risk which is posited, consequently, as the reasoning behind genres (Butsch, 2011; Silverblatt, 2007) and formats (Keane & Moran, 2008). Genre is utilised as a framing device to legitimise decisions made in such an ambiguous environment (Bielby & Bielby, 1994). Formats, and genre, are utilised as pitching aids and for their proven track records in order to manage risk. This format appeal will now be discussed.

Chalaby (2016) notes that scripted formats like comedy do not come with the same “guarantees” of success as unscripted ones and still entail the same risk as original productions. Individuals in this study do express an understanding that formats aid in pitches and, therefore, help to minimise risk associated with that. Scheffer and Olsen note that one of the appeals is that having a finished version is an easier way to pitch the idea they were already working on (Kouguell, 2014). This aligns with Esser’s (2010) argument that formats are easier to pitch than one’s own idea. For Scheffer and Olsen the original programme served a strategic purpose because it was similar to what they were already developing. Of course, Scheffer and Olsen were not going into it blindly if they were already working on something similar.

For creators this is about success – pitch success – and, consequently, highlights the advantages of formats for this. According to Silverman, “A filmed version of an idea is far easier for a network president to buy” (Brown, 2003). Michael Davies, an unscripted format producer, describes this in a particularly relevant manner by explaining: “It isn't that American executives are convinced that British TV is fantastic. They just find it easier to imagine what the show's going to be like when you show them a tape of how it looks” (in Geary, 2004). This is poignant in that Davies is claiming that there is not anything particularly special about British programming, it is just formats themselves, having an actual finished show to view, makes the version being pitched “easier to imagine.” This allows the British original to serve as a sort of “pilot” during the pitch meeting (Moran & Malbon, 2006). As such, formats are rationalised as strategic and pragmatic tools in the production process.

Caldwell (2008) argues that visual material is advantageous for the pitching process of all programmes, not just remakes. Originators in this study also express this value. For instance, Gervais claims that the only reason *The Office UK* was given a chance was because they had created and sent in a pilot episode rather than just a script (in Shortlist, n.d.). Such a claim by Gervais further highlights the extent to which formats would be advantageous, particularly for concepts which may not read well and need to be visualised. For generically defiant or innovative concepts, which *The Office* is claimed to be (Dannenberg, 2004; Mills, 2004; Silverman, 2005), there needs to be reassurance that the programme “will be accessible to audiences and commercially viable” (Bielby & Bielby, 1994, p. 1293). Visuals as well as “locating a series pilot with respect to an established genre [provide] an immediate frame of reference for the new and unknown cultural product” (ibid, p. 1293).

The next type of risk aversion afforded by formats is that of previous success. This is one of the most commonly argued justifications for formats as it is claimed that since a programme has proved to be successful in one context, it may be more likely to be so in another (Chalaby, 2013; Esser, 2010; Silverblatt, 2007). As Gitlin (1994) claims, the television industry imitates previous success because “nothing succeeds like success” (p. 55). Simply claiming previous success as an originating factor for formats evades what is meant by “success” and the conditions of it. What this really may amount to is simply the fact that the concept was already successfully produced rather than anything related to ratings or critical acclaim. This form of success is also valuable in that formats further risk aversion through production cost savings (Chalaby, 2013; Steemers, 2004). If success means the latter definition then it becomes a much more subjective and tricky issue. Qualifiers do offer some idea of how companies in particular understand success with the use of terms like “popular” and “award-winning.” Although, again these are vague and open to interpretation, particularly the term “popular”: is this in terms of overall ratings or for a particular demographic/audience? If success is understood in this way, then there must be an understanding of similar conditions for the reproduction of that success. However, Chalaby (2016) argues that previous ratings are less relevant for scripted formats than unscripted. Previous success in terms of acclaim as a means of format justification could be a double-edged sword since, on the one hand, it does mean that the show has the potential to be successful, but, on the other hand, its already existing success may make remaking more precarious and

critical. This previous success is one of the reasons why there is an overriding expression of scepticism from the public regarding remakes (Hogg, 2013). The next chapter will aid in revealing how success and failure is understood, at least with regard to the remake. Presently, it is an issue of how success of the original is understood and used as remake justification.

The notions of previous success and proven track record demonstrate an understanding of similarity rather than difference. If this could be perceived as a motivation to remake then clearly there is an understanding that such success can be replicated and achieved in the new context. There must be an understanding that conditions are similar enough for the concept and its success to be transferred. Furthermore, the seeking of difference as noted above with regard to innovation leads to the already consistent reliance on proven concepts and formulas. This then is about industrial tendency towards similarity in general with the repetition of proven genres, programme formats, etc. Consequently, formats are another instance of the industrial propensity for imitation as a means of risk mitigation as noted by Gitlin.

This is about the role of previous success in potential: the perception that success begets the possibility of further success. Individuals must have their own understandings of what success means in this context and that the sort of success they are attempting to replicate serves their purposes.

Executives in particular note the role of success in the format process. As noted in the previous chapter, Tranter of BBCW stated that "[American broadcasters] feel very comfortable with having something that has proven success in another country" (in Saval, 2014). And this is confirmed by Lee in claiming that "It does help to have the track record of a show" (in White, 2013). While creators may acknowledge previous success it is not expressed as a motivation for remaking, but, rather, a creative challenge and point of public concern needing their reassurances (Guzman, 2005). So while format studies claim that previous success offers justification and motivation for remaking, creators express that this actually is one of the main challenges of the process (this will be developed in the next chapters).

Not only do remakers hope to capitalise on previous success, but originators exploit this success, as noted above, making success beneficial for the industries on both sides. Moran (2004) argues that "formats are almost invariably based on programmes that were successful in other national territories and are therefore

likely to repeat this success in the new territory” (p. 6). This notion is further developed by Gervais’s website which states that “Following its success on BBC America, the show's format has been licensed (by Ricky Gervais and Stephen [Merchant]) to NBC for a US version” (Gervais, 2005). This connects the format process with the success of the original on BBC America, demonstrated by it winning at the Golden Globes, and since it was already a success in the US it was able to be remade. This is in contrast to Moran’s claim that success is defined by the original market since in this instance the programme was a success in the country it was then remade in. Of course, this statement should not be read as causal, but merely chronological. Also, by stating that it was a success in the country it was remade in does not mean that it was not a success in its original country as *The Office* was acclaimed in the UK. I simply mean that previous success cannot only be understood as residing back in the original location/market as demonstrated by the example of *The Office* where it did find success in its original finished form in a location that would eventually remake it. Finding success outside the original market also problematizes arguments about the need to localise since it offers proof that it is possible to succeed in the original form in a new location. Granted, this is where varying definitions of success come in and what *The Office* found in the US was critical acclaim after airing on a niche cable network. This is not the same as success measured by high broadcast network ratings which may not be understood as achievable through the broadcast of a finished import. These two types of success will be further discussed in the next chapter. Returning back to the airing of *The Office* on BBC America, this is just when the rights were purchased by NBC as according to an 18 November 2002 article in The Guardian, Michael Jackson, chairman of the Universal Television Group, was already negotiating US rights for *The Office* (Wells, 2002). This article was before the original premiered on BBC America therefore highlighting that there was already interest in remaking the show despite any success it had in the US. Jackson’s interest may have stemmed from the original success that *The Office* had back in the UK therefore supporting arguments about previous success. Nevertheless, it may be the win that secured the deal since as already noted there are inquiries about a lot of programmes. Of course, it should be kept in mind the extent to which *The Office* is exceptional in this respect. Nevertheless, it does demonstrate that original success in the new market is possible and that it may influence remake origination.

The success of the original version is utilised within statements about remakes, namely within programme descriptions with the use of qualifiers. These could be considered what Bielby & Bielby (1994) refer to as the framing device of imitation. One means of highlighting previous success is through noting the accomplishments of the original such as stating that the remake is “based on the award-winning” original. This returns to the identifying terminology of “based on” whereby here it is referring to not just the programme, but its success. Therefore, it could be presumed that there is an implication that the remake is attempting to also utilise that previous success within its foundation, at least in publicity, but perhaps, somehow, also in production. This does support arguments that formats are “based on” previous success since here are statements which quite explicitly state that. However, Bielby & Harrington (2004) argue that “these emphases are interesting in that it remains unclear how critical evaluation in the domestic context contributes to acceptance by audiences abroad, if at all” (p. 81). Nevertheless, gesturing towards previous success in this way may aid in audience perceptions of the remake. Wimer & Beins (2008) and Johnson & Mistry (2011) conclude from their studies that audiences are more likely to positively rate a comedic performance if they are informed prior that the performance is good or by someone humorous. That is, if audience members are told beforehand that what they are about to witness is humorous, they are more likely to agree. Consequently, industry statements which offer such preliminary information of success may be perceived by those in the industry as helping to positively move (potential) audiences. So these qualifiers not only rationalise remaking, but generically signal “quality.”

Equally important is the understanding of national, industrial, and individual success, not just that of the specific programme. This is about reputation (as noted above) which is another of Bielby & Bielby’s (1994) framing devices. Silverman notes that it is not just the previous success of the programme, but the reputation of the individual representing it:

to have identified Ricky Gervais, Stephen Merchant and The Office ahead of the game, let alone what I did as an agent [dealing with Cracker and Who Wants to be a Millionaire] there's kind of a consistent track record that builds up, so that I don't have to yell as much that these are good ideas. But I do still have to convince people, which is amazing to me. You know, it's like: 'Hey, guys, I've brought more number one hits into this marketplace

than anyone and you're questioning me about whether the docu-soap will work? Believe me, the docu-soap will work!' I don't take no for an answer (in Broadcast, 2005).

What Silverman is revealing is that it is about the reputation and persistence of the individuals involved rather than the programme itself. He is noting his reputation for identifying potential. It is also about confidence and personal branding. Although previous success may be important for individuals like Silverman in their identification of programmes that they then become passionate and relentless about and part of their strategy in convincing the networks. This again highlights the important role of reputation and social dynamics within the industry and the format process specifically.

The idea of reputation is demonstrated by the BBC's working with Mandabach. Mark Freeland, then head of comedy commissioning at the BBC, said that "With her brilliant track record and nose for mainstream hits, we hope that she will complement all the work we already do with U.K. comedy talent" (in Daily Variety April 8, 2005). Here Freeland uses the terms "track record" and "mainstream hits." This is about industry's linking programmes with "reputable producers" (Bielby & Bielby, 1994, p.1293) which Silverman discusses with regard to himself and in the case of Mandabach is generic.

Not only are formats about risk management, but genre in general is as well. Genre is utilised to capitalise on previous success in a manner similar to formats. This is all about reusing proven formulas in order to mitigate the risk and precarious nature of the television industry (Gitlin, 1994).

Industrial origination demonstrates the extent to which the format concept is appealing for both originators and remakers. For originators this is namely expressed in economic terms regarding exportation while remakers note the utility of formats as pitching aids. Formats further offer both originators and remakers a means of developing and maintaining international networks of creativity and cooperation. Overall formats are perceived as another means of risk management just like genres. The overriding appeal of formats for industry as examined for the scripted comedy under study align with those demonstrated in studies of unscripted formats (Esser, 2010). However, the significance of particular aspects differs between scripted and unscripted formats such as the emphasis on innovation.

Furthermore, as Chalaby (2016) notes, the risk mitigation affordances of formats are less for scripted than they are for unscripted in that more adaptation and knowledge are needed for remaking (see next chapter).

The industrial use for pitching does reveal that it includes access to and the ability to utilise the original as a finished programme. It is unclear how remakers use the original in their pitches and what complementary material they bring. It may be that remakers demonstrate how the original can be modified along the lines discussed in conceptual origination; that is, how the concept has local relevance and how that can be developed.

Silverman adds some insight into these issues when discussing options for UK access into the US television market:

The easiest way is to create a programme of merit. What's really damaging and what a lot of UK companies do is to just send a tape to a US network. If I had just sent *No Angels* to the American networks it would have never sold. But you go in with Amy Heckerling and an American point of view, or on a reality show you go in with the right production entity or the right creative element or right business element, and it sells (in Broadcast, 2005).

This statement helps to clarify that what is needed is not just the tape and an imagination, but that local creative element as well to support the original material. The importance of a recognisable and reputable local creator demonstrates that it is not just about the concept, but the accompanying material and individuals as well. This returns back to preparation as demonstrated by Scheffer and Olsen. Just showing a finished programme is not enough for a format to serve pitching properly: one needs to have the extra material as noted by Silverman and exemplified by Scheffer and Olsen (who pitched to HBO with whom they already had a relationship due to *Big Love*). This also connects to the importance of familiarity throughout the origination process. Therefore, just having a finished programme does not necessarily make pitching easier; it does so only if the other elements are successfully in place. One's own idea may be more successful than a format if the format is pitched without the proper knowledge.

Expressions of innovation may be understood as generic such as Silverman's desire to remake *The Office* due to its uniqueness. There may be strategy in a form like *The Office* which capitalises on an already familiar and successful genre and group of formats. This recognition helps to mitigate any risk inherent in an

innovative programme (Bielby & Bielby, 1994). This becomes, as Silverman notes, something unique and appealing, this combining and reconceptualization of already recognisable genres. It is novelty in familiarity, rather than something completely alien. Miller (2000) notes the role of this negotiation between similarity and difference in American use of British programming to reinvigorate schedules. This demonstrates the extent to which industrial origination is also conceptual as remakers are seeking particular concepts to meet industrial ends.

This further connects to success in that formats are understood as a means by which concepts and ideas can be exchanged and, therefore, aid in industrial success, as Szostak (2013) notes in terms of remakers learning and developing through their experience with originators. So formats are understood as serving the successful development and maintenance of international ties and the exchange within. It is not just about the successful production of a programme.

It appears that formats may be utilised to allow for international relationships by meeting the existing conditions of trade (i.e., the difficulty of trading canned programmes and the perceived ease of exchanging formats). These formats are understood as affording the means by which these industries can share ideas and individuals. This includes the cross-border exchange and development of genre (Straubhaar, 2007). This could be understood as a strategy to build social and cultural capital while at the same time it depends on the possession of such capital (Bourdieu, 1984/1996; Straubhaar, 2007). This is particularly claimed by remakers whereas originators, namely executives and corporations, note formats in terms of exploitation and economic interests. However, corporate strategy for originators may involve statements about international networks and cooperation tied in with the commercial.

Format studies note that formats allow for the exchange of knowledge, but what has been demonstrated here is the extent to which such shared understanding already exists and is a significant aspect of the origination and subsequent stages of the format process. That is, there must already have been some sort of alignment and appreciation in place for scripted comedy formats. So what is expressed as a means of expanding creatively only can occur if that perceived innovation is already understood and appreciated.

### **Origination Conclusion**

This chapter has provided insight into how origination is publicly rationalised for a group of scripted comedy remakes. Rationalisation occurs here in both conceptual and industrial terms highlighting the personal as well as strategic appeals of remaking. Furthermore, origination is framed as a negotiation between similarity and difference. Concepts are expressed as having local relevance, as representing things that are already relevant and familiar as well as being similar to that which individuals were already working on. Furthermore, appeal also involves comprehension and appreciation which points towards similarity in generic sensibility. Industry uses genre and formats as a means of risk management by capitalising on that which has already proved successful. That is, there is a sense of relying on similarity rather than taking a chance on difference. However, in order for there to be growth and innovation a bit of difference must be injected. Finally, wanting to recreate previous success is about focusing on (a hope of) similarity.

This chapter ultimately reveals that shared sensibilities are at play in both conceptual and industrial origination. Understandings must be similar in aligning a programme with conceptual and industrial motivations, reasoning, and justification. Potential, then, is found in the appreciation of the original programme whether conceptually (e.g., in terms of cultural relevance and/or generic taste) and/or industrially (e.g., perceiving the strategic affordances). Remakers are exhibiting an understanding of the original through their comedic appreciation and ability to highlight points of local familiarity. The next chapter, *Work*, explores whether or not this leads to successful remaking by considering remake production and its outcome.

## **Work**

Thus far I have explored remake identification and origination and the role of genre in rationalising both. Now it is necessary to examine the framing of the actual remake production process. As such, this chapter seeks to examine the manner in which the remake production process is referred and discussed with particular focus upon how this decision-making is framed in terms of genre. Here the focus is upon statements about “work” which includes both the production process and the functionality (i.e., success and/or failure) of the process/product. Remake production is studied namely with regard to unscripted (e.g., Moran, 2009c; Moran & Malbon, 2006; Njus, 2009) and those for scripted mainly derive their findings from textual analysis (e.g., Larkey, 2009; Mikos & Perrotta, 2012). A few do include some industrial support, such as Adriaens & Biltreyst (2012) and Griffin (2008), but these still depend heavily on programme analysis for their arguments. Such a method is insufficient for drawing conclusions about the production process and rationalisation during since they focus on outcome rather than process. The examination of success/failure here does not rely on the programme itself, but instead considers how the individuals involved explain and rationalise programme success or failure.

I explored how the remake process and resulting text is understood in terms of work as well as what this reveals about the relationship between original and remake. That is, those things which are changed or maintained reveal the perceived relationship between versions and the factors which influence such characteristics (e.g., personal, national, industrial). Therefore, by examining these statements about remake production it is possible to better reveal what understandings of comedy are and how they are utilised in the negotiation between original and remake.

This chapter will first examine the remake production process by considering originator involvement, the role of conceptual and generic understanding, and the elements of tone, style, characters, and narrative. Finally, this chapter investigates the manner in which success and failure are discussed.

### **Remake Production Process**

To begin with, the remake production process will be examined. This is of particular significance since format studies offer insight into the remake production process for unscripted formats, but those for scripted are mainly derived textually

rather than from the remakers themselves. Therefore, this section serves to contribute to the already existing work dealing with remake production by offering an examination of this stage for scripted comedy derived from the statements of remakers and originators as opposed to making assumptions about production based on the final outcome. This examination will allow for scripted comedy remake production to be better understood and for this stage to not be assumed from work dealing with unscripted format production. This is important since scripted remakes are produced in a manner different from unscripted in that it is not as “mechanical” (Chalaby, 2016, p. 6). The examination here involves an interrogation of how production decisions, both changes and similarities between versions, are rationalised within public statements regarding scripted comedy remakes.

In order to explore how this process occurs and is understood, I have separated it into the production components which are most often noted in the publicly made statements for the scripted comedy remake production under study. These themes are: originator involvement, understanding, tone and style, and characters and narrative.

#### **Originator involvement.**

I will begin examining remake production by considering the degree of originator involvement in the remake. What is of interest here is the direct, actual involvement of originators in the remake through some form of communication whether face-to-face, phone, email, or post. Obviously, originators will have a degree of involvement in all remakes by the very fact that their work is being used in order to create another programme. This “absent” involvement is not what is being examined here.

Format studies which focus on unscripted formats note the importance of originator involvement in the remake process most notably through consultancy (Moran, 2009c; Moran & Malbon, 2006), but how does this compare to the scripted format of comedy? Moran (2009c) does offer some insight, but only for linguistically different remake relationships. For instance, he discusses the role of “linguistic templates” in Eastern European adaptations of *The Honeymooners*, particularly the Polish version (p. 82). This fails to take into account remakes between nations with a shared language and to consider the role of originator beyond language. It is

important to examine originator involvement to more fully analyse the understanding of comedy between the UK and the US and how such transference is rationalised and realised beyond issues of language.

In the statements in this study, originator involvement is discussed in different ways and perhaps it is best to start by differentiating between originators who are creators and those from representative companies. Creator involvement would be namely that of the original writers. Creators express varying degrees of involvement and perhaps more importantly differing degrees of desire for involvement. Some originators are happy to allow the remake to happen more or less on its own, whereas *White Van Man* creator Adrian Poynton claims that this is the “worst” thing for creators (Poynton, 2012).

Having direct involvement is most apparent with original actors appearing in the remake. For instance, *Bad Education* creator and star Jack Whitehall states, with regard to the remake, that he is “just playing exactly the same part. A lot of the producers and writers are going but just me as an actor. I am sure they are changing the role a bit but it is quite flattering to be going out there to be me” (in Express, 2013). This is in contrast to Gervais who stated when asked whether he would reprise his role: “No. I was asked and I don't think that's a good idea at all” (Hansen, 2004). Although Whitehall is not strictly reprising his role, he is still maintaining the lead role regardless of modifications to it. Gervais, on the other hand, is not acting in the remake in any capacity (not counting later guest appearances). Whitehall is the only originator to continue in an acting role in the remake (other than Head in *Free Agents*).

Poynton states that “Worst of all for the creators is the lack of involvement or say we get in the end product” (Poynton, 2012); however, in his case with the *White Van Man remake*, he claimed to have had involvement and that it was “A team effort with arms open to everyone's thoughts and without ego” (ibid.). Poynton refers to being allowed to “read scripts and generally stick [his] oar in” and that the remakers “seemed to respect [his] input” and “understood what [he] could bring to the party” (ibid.). He seems to be expressing some level of involvement, a level that he is pleased with, but the extent of it is not exactly clear; it is all quite vague. It is also unclear why this is the worst thing for creators. Clearly Poynton believes that originators should have some sort of involvement and decision-making in the remake, but what that exactly entails is not made known. Based on his

comments about his own involvement it seems to be more a role of support and consultancy. For instance, earlier Poynton had stated that he “was asked to write the script, but decided not to” but that he had “been out to the states [sic] to talk to those involved and also talk regularly on the phone and exchange ideas with Bobby [Bowman]” (in Smyth, 2012). Poynton had declined greater involvement, but still admits to some degree of input, again the extent of which is unclear. What is clear, however, is that Poynton had some level of involvement perhaps in a consultancy position. This is the most common degree of involvement: a self-expressed minor and/or ambiguous role. This degree of originator involvement echoes that expressed by Gervais.

On numerous occasions Gervais expresses a limited amount of involvement in the remake of *The Office*. For instance, Gervais states: “If *The Office* was 100 per cent mine then the American one is about five per cent mine” (in Dougan, 2005). Elsewhere he claims: “This is not my baby. I've handed this over. I haven't got 1 percent of the level of involvement, obviously, I had on the English one” (in Hansen, 2004). Here Gervais is making the connection between involvement and ownership. Accordingly, the originators in this study express little ownership in remakes and, consequently, imply that majority ownership belongs to remakers (however that is defined). This demonstrates ownership not in terms of legal rights, but creative and production contribution. The level of involvement of an individual is understood as related to degree of ownership, as argued by Palamar, Le & Friedman (2012), and since Gervais states to have little involvement he claims minimal ownership of the final product.

Furthermore, Gervais states: “I'm not involved. We're there for support, but that's about it.[...] We've done our bit. It's all theirs now, win, lose or draw.” (in Eldredge, 2004) Consequently, Gervais understands the originators' role as residing with the original, not the remake. Originators may provide some support in the form of consultancy, but the remake is the responsibility of remakers. This level of involvement is noted by Gervais: “I'm not gonna make changes. [...] I was there in a consultancy sort of capacity, and we chose Greg Daniels to write it, who's amazing” (in Hansen, 2004). Therefore, both Poynton and Gervais's statements showcase the sort of consultancy noted in format studies in that originators provide a degree of input in guiding and supporting remakers (Moran, 2009c; Moran & Malbon, 2006). However, Gervais and Poynton seem to be expressing less involvement and

ownership than what is discussed in these studies perhaps since those studies focus on unscripted formats rather than scripted. In the former more guidance is needed in order to ensure that the remakes conform to the format's identity in terms of style whereas the latter is more open. This demonstrates the varying degrees of flexibility granted remakes. Furthermore, the findings here also reveal that originators have a say in choosing remakers as Gervais takes partial credit for selecting Daniels. This means that remaking is not completely out of original creators' hands, at least not initially. This may point towards the importance of taste alignment as introduced in *Origination* and elaborated upon in this study's conclusion.

Gervais connects control to the selling of the format rights when asserting: "We sold the rights. It's like selling a house and then you keep turning up saying 'Why are you changing the fireplace?' I've done my bit." (in Byrne, 2004). He makes a similar comment nearly a year later in *The Herald*: "But when you sell the rights to something, that's it" (in Dougan, 2005). So the significance is that along with rights goes control and the surrendering of it by originators. Furthermore, as noted above, Gervais expresses an understanding that the original is the responsibility of originators, not the remake which is the responsibility of remakers. According to Palamar et al. (2012) ownership is established by responsibility not just by legal or economic means. Therefore, if originators do not perceive themselves as responsible for the remake they will also not grant themselves ownership of it. Gervais is also expressing the reverse of this by associating lack of responsibility to the loss of ownership. As such, he is rationalising his limited involvement in terms of rights ownership.

While Gervais's comments were made before the premiere of the remake of *The Office*, Whitehall offers a statement after the production cancellation of *An American Education*: "We didn't have as much involvement - you sell the format and it probably got too far away from our version" (in Jeffery, 2014, September). It is important to consider the timing of Whitehall's statement since his claim of limited involvement may be due to the programme's fate and, therefore, could be read as a means of passing the blame (see below discussion of success and failure). Nevertheless, Whitehall's comment can be explained by Moran's (2009c) claim that originator ownership and involvement are related to the maintenance of format integrity in that Whitehall is asserting that his lack of involvement led to the straying

of the remake. Conversely, it could be read that his perception of difference led him to take limited ownership. Regardless, there is a relationship being expressed here between originator involvement and format integrity. Similarly speaking after the fact, Allen offers the following advice in the wake of NBC's failed attempt to remake BBC2's *In the Thick of It*: "It was right show, wrong producer and wrong network. Be careful you're selling to the right person" (in Parker, 2008). Though this statement from Allen was made before the *Free Agents* remake, it does demonstrate his understanding of format rights and is particularly valuable in revealing what presumably would have been his understanding at the time in which the rights for *Free Agents* were sold to the remakers. Allen is highlighting the importance of industrial factors in the format process, namely that of selling to the right producer and network and, consequently, that remake success is attributed to these. This is similar to Whitehall's statement from the previous chapter in which he attributes (partial) failure to difference in network. Also, remember that Whitehall links this failure to genre and, therefore, the generic integrity was lost and not maintained.

Despite an understanding that lack of involvement can lead to loss of integrity and, therefore, remake failure, the reasoning behind the decision to have limited involvement is made clear by Gervais and *Gavin & Stacey* creator and actor Ruth Jones. Gervais argues that the remake "has to be made by people who know what it's like working in an American office" (in Geary, 2004). This idea is also expressed with regard to industry not just culture as Jones states with regard to *Us & Them* that:

James [Corden] and I aren't au fait with the sensitivities and nuances of what Fox is looking for, so we leave that to the experts: Jane Tranter and Julie Gardner at [co-producers] BBC Worldwide. They keep us up to speed on everything. We can sit back and watch it all come together without having the same level of responsibility as we did with the British version, so the pressure's off! BBC Worldwide let us have as much or as little involvement as we want. They've invited us over to the writers' room, which would be incredible (in Seale, 2013).

Jones states she does not have the "same level of responsibility" thereby highlighting the fact that the extent of her involvement is not the same as with the original, which reflects Gervais's statements above. This is interesting since it reveals

that Jones understands that the people who know best what Fox is looking for are those at BBCW, not her and Corden.

Poynton also discusses the importance of local knowledge within the remake process with regard to his experiences with remaking *White Van Man*. He states that he understands that remakers “know the US market way better” (Poynton, 2012) and this is why he decided not to write the scripts, but consult instead. This reveals an explicit understanding that while originator involvement is nice, remakers possess the knowledge of the intended market. It should also be noted that Gervais’s comment is more cultural while Jones’s and Poynton’s are industrial. Gervais is expressing what has already been discussed in the previous chapter about familiarity and own experience. This becomes not only a point of format potential, but of appropriate involvement. Jones and Poynton express this with regard to industrial familiarity showcasing that such experience is also important. That is, both cultural and industrial knowledge are salient.

Here then is the importance of competence ownership which is noted by Silverman in claiming that “British producers and production companies cannot expect to hang on to creative control, unless they have a really strong grasp of what American audiences want to see” (Silverman, 2005, p. 73). This importantly connects involvement, and potentially ownership, with intention (see Intention). There is a perceived need to possess local knowledge in order to properly produce a programme and this is why originators opt to grant others overall control, or at least justify such an arrangement. It should be reiterated that competence ownership is both a cultural and industrial concern as noted above. One must possess cultural knowledge and experience as well as industrial awareness in order to properly produce something appealing to both audiences and networks.

Therefore, it is not just about handing over control because it was sold, but also because of requisite competence/knowledge. Possession of local knowledge, or lack thereof, allows individuals to rationalise their (limited) involvement. This is particularly important for comedy and humour since they are connected to context (Davis, 1993) and the possession of particular knowledge or “scripts” (Raskin, 1985). In order to create a comedic text one needs to be aware of what a particular audience expects and comprehends. This is both a cultural and an industrial issue.

Originator involvement is also apparent in statements which promote the remake. For instance Gervais stated that “they've done a great job [in America] and

I want the actors to be rewarded for it. I've had very little involvement outside of it being based on our characters. I really do think it's good and I think people will watch it without prejudice" (in Dougan, 2005). This statement by Gervais is pointing towards his understanding of success: that the remake is a success at least in his view. So the remake has received the originator's stamp of approval which also may serve a promotional purpose. As such, originator involvement extends beyond the actual production process into promotion (all originator statements in this study could be understood in this manner to some extent).

Originators are not the only ones to mention their involvement, remakers too acknowledge their role. For instance, Carell states that Gervais "has been very kind. I've met him a few times; he and his co-writer Stephen Merchant are actually executive producers of our American show, and they've been incredibly supportive" (in Driscoll, 2005). So originator involvement may not be much different from the sort of consultancy discussed in format studies (e.g., Moran, 2009c; Moran & Malbon, 2006), although the level of their involvement here is not made explicit and clear. In contrast to many unscripted formats, however, this consultancy is not understood necessarily as a means of originators maintaining control, but, rather, as a means by which to aid in remaker conceptual understanding, which is discussed next.

### **Understanding.**

One way in which originator involvement may be maintained is through remakers' desire to understand the original. Understanding is highlighted as important not only by remakers, but also by originators. This brings up issues of origination, particularly with regard to originators aligning with the "right" remakers. Writer Mark Bussell states about attempts to remake *The Worst Week of My Life* (BBC1, 2004-2006) that "It's about finding someone who gets your schtick" (in Parker, 2008). But what exactly does that mean? This may pertain to issues of conceptual and genre sensibilities, specifically the sharing of such tastes and styles. The transference of rights to the "right person" (which then relates to right remaker and network) is of importance for these originators. These are statements of similarity in which difference in sensibility is noted as leading to failure. Therefore, Whitehall and Allen above are expressing an understanding that rights should be handed over to someone similar, however that may be defined, and that

transferring rights to someone too different leads to failure (see below for more about success/failure). The importance of conceptual understanding is discussed by Mark Stern, president of original programming at Syfy, who links this with previous success. With regard to the channel's remake of BBC's *Being Human* (BBC3, 2008-2013), Stern states: "There's also a challenge with adaptation to understand where the success of the import is coming from [whether] it's the concept and the premise or [...] from the chemistry of that group of people [...] any successful series, I think it's both" (in Littlejohn, 2011). This statement underscores the perception that previous success may be the appeal for remaking, but that alone cannot be relied upon unless remakers understand the contributing factors to that success and the means of replicating it. The various elements noted by Stern will be further explored below with regard to the programmes under study.

Achieving understanding could involve remakers meeting directly with originators, as expressed by Daniels with regard to *The Office*: "The first thing I did was really try to understand the British show, what was so innovative about it. (We) went to England and met with [Gervais and Merchant] [...] and learned what their process was" (in Salem, 2005). Here, understanding is expressed with regard to direct originator involvement. At the same time, understanding of the original is also mentioned without reference to originators such as Scheffer's explanation about how he and Olsen derived their understanding of *Getting On* through the programme itself, by watching it and "reverse engineering" it (in Kouguell, 2014). Scheffer is referring to revealing the generic stylings of the show, how such a comedy is produced. This dissection of the original is important since according to Silverblatt (2007) "Production elements convey cumulative messages about a genre" (p. 169) and the "configuration of production elements in a genre creates its own distinctive *look* and *feel*" (p. 171). However, this is not just about the genre in general, but each particular programme. For instance, "stylistic innovations can convey messages about the distinctiveness of a generic program" (p. 170). For these individuals, understanding of the original is defined as learning what makes it so unique and popular and how this was accomplished. It is about the process, not just the product, and, then, attempting to replicate that process, but not the product. This underscores the importance of innovation and creative and technical transfer in the format process; that this is perhaps the purpose of remaking for scripted comedy (Esser, 2010; Moran & Malbon, 2006; Szostak, 2013). Furthermore,

remakers are seeking to understand these production elements and their assemblage in order to produce a generically similar programme while also revealing and maintaining the original essence (Chalaby, 2016).

This understanding relates to the ideas of relevance and appreciation brought up in Origination making it perhaps the next step after initially appreciating and comprehending the original. It now becomes an issue of understanding not as a consumer, but as a producer and then being able to translate that for a new audience (Chalaby, 2016). Understanding is about further creating points of similarity between originators and remakers with remakers attempting to understand the original in order to properly “reproduce” the original’s essence. This is a significant aspect of translation: someone cannot translate something without first understanding it (Levý, 2011; Zabalbeascoa, 2005). Remakers need to comprehend what the original is saying and doing in order to be able to reconfigure that for a new audience.

The “production elements” (Silverblatt, 2007) that remakers seek to understand include tone and style as well as characters and narrative. These elements will be explored next in terms of their negotiation within the remake process.

### **Tone and style.**

Individuals typically present understanding of the original with regard to tone and style. While tone and style are technically distinct concepts, they are discussed together here due to the similar manner in which they are noted within in the statements. Like with the rest of this study, what are being examined here are statements about programmes rather than a textual analysis of the programmes’ style and tone. This is about the originators and remakers’ references to style and tone and how these are used to generically frame the programmes.

What remakers are attempting to understand is the process by which tone and style are achieved. The importance of maintaining the tone and style of the original in the remake is offered as justification for mirroring the original so closely in the remake pilot (Keller, 2013). This is rationalisation in terms of genre, the stylistic and tonal aspects of the programme which allow for the comedy to exist in a particular form. This has implications for a traditional understanding of differences in American and British styles of comedy.

It is argued by others elsewhere (e.g., Blake, 2005; Ziv, 1988) that comedy/humour between the UK and US is different in terms of style and tone yet what is demonstrated here is that, through remakes, similarity is (attempted to be) achieved. This does not discount prevalence but challenges essentialist perceptions. Remakes may also aid in furthering the sharing of these styles although it is important to note that there already exists similarity. For instance, Holland refers to his understanding of British comedic style through his previous work (as noted in Identification). This then relates to perceptions of American and British comedic styles: the perceived differences and convergences. While there are studies which function to separate and generalise these national forms (e.g., Nilsen, Nilsen & Donelson, 1988; Palmer, 1988; Ziv, 1988), it is important to note that there is also work which highlights variation within nations, not just between them (e.g., Romero et al., 2007; Daily Record, 2003; Etherington, 2005).

With Holland's comment and those previously mentioned with regard to comedic influences, such a dichotomous view of American and British comedy is flawed and does not align with the understandings presented by these individuals. Furthermore, there are numerous references to the extent to which the lines between American and British comedy and humour are further being blurred, particularly due to the affordances of new media (e.g., Siegel, 2011; Wilson, 2010). It should be kept in mind that individuals are still acknowledging the existence of national comedy/humour styles although this is usually the result of prompts (e.g., in Bernstein, 2011; Gervais, 2011) Nevertheless nation is still used to frame particular styles. For instance, there may be a so-called "British style" or "British tone" but this is also present in the US. Jennings (1970) argues that tone is a marker of comedy/humour rather than nation. Comedy and humour from a nation may have the propensity for a particular style or tone, but it is not something exclusive to that nation, as noted by the individuals in this study. As such, nation is utilised as a means of referring to a particular style and/or tone rather than national exclusivity.

An example of this dichotomous view is the traditional understanding that Brits get irony and Americans do not (Duffy, n.d.; Hall, 2006). However, Gervais states that this:

myth [...] is totally untrue. I mean you just have to look at 'The Simpsons' and 'The Daily Show.' They get irony. I think what that comes from is the fact that Americans don't use irony as much as we do. [...] if two Brits meet, it's

the first one to get out a dark, sarcastic comment [...] that comes from our upbringing. I think in general, Americans are more optimistic, more down the line people [...] than Brits. And we have [...] this dark underbelly of pessimism that comes out. [...] Americans are brought up to believe they can be the next president of the United States. Brits are told it won't happen to you. [...] and that comes out [...] in all art, I think. And I think a big difference in sitcom is probably that Americans celebrate a winner and we like an underdog until he's not an underdog anymore in (Foster, 2010).

Perceptions of difference are then connected to prevalence and socio-cultural elements such as “upbringing.” It is not a matter of incomprehension or lack of appreciation, just prevalence (Hall, 2006; Ziv, 1988). Duffy (n.d.) presents evidence that Americans do use irony, that there are popular sitcoms that do, but like Gervais demonstrates that it may be an issue of prevalence with it not being a typical part of everyday conversation in the US like in the UK, but still exists in comedic programming, which is what this study is about. Furthermore, Detweiler (2012) explores irony in American comedies, namely *The Office* which of course is a remake of a British show. Nevertheless, the show's popularity and success demonstrates that Americans do get and appreciate irony.

This comprehension and understanding are key in Holland's comment about British comedy as he claims that he “gets” it and therefore can appreciate and properly remake *Free Agents*. This brings us back to comprehension as discussed in Origination and generic sensibility which will be discussed in this study's conclusion.

Furthermore, Gervais states that *The Office UK* “looks quintessentially English because it's parochial and we use English accents, but hopefully the themes and the style, even directorially, I think, is probably more American than English” (in Hansen, 2004). Here he is stating that *The Office UK* is actually American in style and only English in setting. This is particularly interesting when considering statements by remakers about understanding *The Office UK* since according to Gervais it is American which would mean that Daniels and his team were seeking to understand something that was already American. This statement is important since Gervais is pointing out that what makes *The Office UK* appear English is location rather than style which is often argued to be nationally specific. As such, in order to make the format American all that needs to be modified would be location and other English references not anything stylistically.

Style and tone are utilised to frame the programme generically. They are framing devices employed for generic ends. In particular, what is being achieved is a framing in terms of nation which is then assumed to elicit particular connotations and expectations. As such, these individuals are presenting an understanding that they are able to suggest an expectation within the audience by reference to a particular national style of comedy. There is some sort of national understanding of genre to which individuals may refer even if this is to claim that these stereotypical forms are not exclusive or monolithic. National genre labels are utilised more to refer to particular styles rather than national exclusivity.

When asked about differences between American and British humour with regard to *The Office*, Carell states that “The tone of the show [*The Office US*] is very similar [to *The Office UK*]” (in Lauer, 2005). This demonstrates that comedic tone is transferable and such a movement is achievable. This is not a commentary on American and British humour in general, but specifically pertains to *The Office*. Nevertheless, it highlights an understanding that similarity can be achieved and remakes may aid in this. As Moran (2009c) argues, part of the role of the traveling consultant is overseeing the maintenance of style. Here it is the remakers who express a desire to understand the original in order to recreate its style and tone not any sort of insistence on the part of originators. Negotiation of the “production elements” of tone and style is important since they “provide subtle commentary on the plot and the characters in genres” (Silverblatt, 2007, p. 170). These textual components, characters and narrative, will be examined next.

### **Characters and narrative.**

While original tone and style are generally understood as needing to be maintained, or at least similar, in remakes, more liberty is taken with characters. This includes adding characters (or expanding the focus upon supporting characters) as well as modifying character attributes. However, as noted above, there is a sense that a wider understanding of what is being portrayed is necessary. So remake characters need not necessarily reproduce those from the original, but they should still reflect the world being portrayed. This potentially brings up cultural differences yet these changes still maintain a sense of similarity in their overall conceptual purpose. This negotiation is made clear by Leary: “There are some crossovers, in terms of the characters, in general, and the ideas in the British show, but Bob

[Fisher] and I had our freedom” (in Radish, 2014). He is referring to the maintenance of particular characters, their traits and relationships, but at the same time Leary and Fisher had the flexibility to make modifications as they saw fit. This demonstrates remake flexibility (Moran, 2004) and the negotiation between similarity and difference in that particular elements “crossover” yet there is still a degree of freedom.

With regard to *Free Agents*, Head reprised his role from the UK original for the US remake. He does state that he is “playing the same basic role” although he claims that the remake is “more about the ensemble” (in Radish, 2011). So while this character and its casting may remain, the overall narrative focus differs. This wider focus has industrial influences such as the longer series run in American television as compared to the British. This is what is attributed as part of the reason for such an expansion: in order to be able to stretch the premise out over a longer period/more episodes. According to Ducray (2012) this is “generic to American television programming” and “such difference in format implied more character development in the US version” of *The Office* (p. 28). That is, due to the expectation of more episodes US remakes can have more characters and development. This is also a narrative issue which will be discussed below.

Originators state that they do not want the remake to seek identical casting and encourage individualisation; for instance, Gervais claims he does not want another him (Hansen, 2004). What is emphasised is the importance of chemistry, such as *Getting On UK* co-creator Joanna Scanlan’s statement about casting for chemistry rather than resemblance (in Fletcher, 2013). This reveals the significance of social relationships both on and off the screen which is noted above by Stern as part of success. This is particularly significant since there are instances in which individuals state that their characters are basically versions of themselves (e.g., in *The New Zealand Herald*, 2012; in *Virtue*, 2001). Therefore, these characters are understood as deriving from those who create and/or portray them and strict imitation would fail to reproduce the original conception in this regard.

Remakers similarly express a desire not to imitate the original in terms of character. Carell in particular frequently states that he in no way intends to reproduce Gervais’s character or acting, but, rather, intends to create his own version of that character’s attributes. For instance, Carell states that:

I felt the more I watched, the more I'd be inclined to do an impersonation of him. And I really didn't want to do that, because there was no way I could improve upon what he did or even match what he did with that character. So I felt that my best bet was try a new character based on similar traits that he has [...] but the actual guy I tried to make a different person (in Driscoll, 2005).

Here is an understanding of not imitating the original, but creating something new “based on” its characteristics. This also demonstrates an understanding that remakes are not about direct imitation as nothing is to be gained from this when the original was already successful. It is not about “improving upon” the original or concept (in Saval, 2014), but creating something new based on that. Carell is referring to intention, that of individualisation, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

In *Origination* the importance of recognisability and relevance were noted. Here this is realised with the characters and the manner in which remake decisions work to re-establish this understanding of characters. For instance, the particular “type” of Michael Scott and David Brent is expressed as recognisable to audiences (in Bryant et al, 2005; in Lauer, 2005; in *The Sun*, 2001). While the manner in which they are discussed is similar, these particular characteristics may only be recognisable in their respective contexts. This is a clear example of the balance between similarity and difference.

Familiarity is noted by Carell who claims that *The Office* “characters are all archetypes, and they're all people that you would see in any office anywhere in the world. So I think that definitely translates” (in Lauer, 2005), which is again about remake potential. Familiarity is not a matter of nation, but of particular environment, in this case that of the office. Carell explicitly states that the characters are applicable to “anywhere in the world.” Furthermore, his claim is generically framed in terms of “universal” comedy archetypes (Feibleman, 1962; Levin, 1987; Stott, 2005). This is a form of rationalisation in that it needs to be demonstrated that these basic character types can travel and are recognisable outside their original context even if they need to then be localised. It is that they derive from some “universal” foundation. However, as Butsch (2011) notes, archetypes are an industrial condition in that US sitcom archetypes are about risk

avoidance and repetition. Consequently, these recognisable characters relate back to industrial appeal as discussed in the previous chapter.

While the basic character types may be “universal,” there is mention of the extent to which comedy character expectations vary between the UK and the US and how these perceptions influence character decisions. For instance, Gervais compares *The Office UK*’s David Brent with *The Office US*’s Michael Scott in terms of British and American humour respectively (Gervais, 2011). However, Carell’s comment above about comedic archetypes and the implication that these are not nationally specific needs to also be considered as a form of rationalisation for format transfer. That is, even though Gervais highlights variation between the two characters it is necessary for Carell to also point out similarities in order to justify the remake. So, rather, it may not be that these characters differ, but their narrative treatment and overall realisation does. The differences between Brent and Scott are also noted with regard to the fact that they are portrayed by different individuals, so that variation may not necessarily be nation-based per se, but derived from the individual sensibilities of the actors which as noted above is part of the basis for these characters.

The connection between characters and narrative is particularly important as creators note the extent to which both are adapted to suit the actors (in Keller, 2013; in Kouguell, 2014). This is clearly demonstrated in the case of *Getting On US* where an original character was “reimagined” in order to allow for the casting of Nash (HBO, “Interview with Niecy Nash”; in Kouguell, 2014). This does not even take into account how scripts are regularly modified due to improvisation and actor involvement as noted in the following statement by *Sirens US* actor Michael Mosley: “[Leary and Fisher are] cool and egalitarian about things. What’s funny floats. We’ll do a couple of takes according to the script and then they’ll change a couple of lines, or let us riff a bit” (in Adams, 2014).

Improvisation as well as the maintenance of “realistic” style is offered as justification for such character changes and adaptation. With regard to imitating the original, Daniels claims that:

what’s more present while you’re shooting is the actors you are working with, and if you’re kind of committing to this style where you’re very realistic and you’re going to be looking for behavior and improvisation and everything, then you’re more influenced to write toward the performer. So a

lot of times we'd be led astray if we went too close to the British one (in Porter, 2013).

Therefore, the argument is that since the original concept calls for “realism,” direct imitation defeats this.

This is one of the issues considered in humour translation. For instance, Zabalbeascoa (2005) notes the difficulty translators may face when dealing with improvised humour. Since remakes interpret rather than reproduce the original, remakers are able to keep the spirit of the original by also integrating improvisation (Venuti, 1995). As such, there is an understanding that the script needs to adapt to the actors/characters as dictated by the original concept.

So while narrative and character may be perceived as different, their changes are in keeping with the original style and, consequently, may not be straightforward changes after all. Rather, such modifications are necessary in order to meet the sources of comedic origination for that particular programme. It would not necessarily make sense to maintain particular elements if they did not derive from the same sense of “reality” or did not correlate with the individuals’ own experiences. This also applies to narrative. If there is an understanding that comedy originates from that which is familiar then logically production would need to adapt to the individuals involved: their own experiences and characteristics. In the original instance, creation derives from characters and situations which are recognisable. So just because a production is a remake does not mean that such an impetus is removed. What is being remade, therefore, is that template in which familiarity is placed. As such, any difference in characters is the result of attempting to recreate the original conceptual and production characteristics such as realism and adapting to those involved.

In a further attempt to recreate the original concept, original scripts are commonly utilised as the starting point for remakes with some remakes even directly reproducing at least the first episode, as noted above with regard to tone and style. As noted by Gervais: “I’ve seen the pilot, and a lot of the plot is the same” (in Eldredge, 2004). What is noted with regard to scripts is a perceived need to expand upon them (in Turnquist, 2011). This could relate to justifying the need to remake in the first place (why bother if you are just going to do it all again and nothing more – seeing some sort of potential in it) as well as differences between industrial expectations with regard to episodes (though individuals do not reference

such technical differences) (Hogg, 2013). This expansion is furthered by Head's claim that the original narrative is the starting point for the remake (in Radish, 2011).

Related to narrative is setting, the most obvious of which would be geographical/municipal changes which are necessary in order to elicit familiarity/recognisability. Important, however, is the extent to which changes in setting are still in keeping with the original in a manner similar to character changes. For instance, Daniels justifies setting *The Office US* in Scranton by claiming that it "maybe had some cultural affinity" to the location of the original (in Jacobs, 2013); in particular since he believed that "the people (of Scranton) have had an industrial history that's similar to England" (in McAuliffe, 2004). Of course, all of this is still expressed in terms of familiarity namely for Daniels himself (in Jacobs, 2013).

Daniels is rationalising his location decision in terms of both familiarity and equivalence. Therefore, again, changes are made in terms of similarity. While setting may be modified in order to align with the new context, it is understood as culturally equivalent. For *In with the Flynns* the only explicit notes about how it was modified involve the change in location: from Staten Island to Manchester. Mellor states that "we were talking about setting it over here, and it made sense to set it in a working-class area of Manchester where the back door's always open" (in Jeffery, 2012, August). This is perhaps an understanding that Manchester embodied/evoked a similar environment as the original, a sort of British equivalent. This similarity in location, as noted by Daniels and Mellor, is important in demonstrating that changes still align with the original/central concept.

There are also changes regarding work environment not just geographical setting. This is demonstrated in *Free Agents* which changed from talent management to public relations (there is no apparent reasoning for this change) and *Getting On* which switched from the specificities of NHS to eldercare (which would be necessary since the NHS is nation-specific and eldercare aligns with what Olsen and Scheffer were already developing). *The Office* and *Sirens* only change geography not work environment. But as Enbom notes, setting does not necessarily equal situation (in Ng, 2011), so just because the setting/environment may change, this does not mean that the situations and narrative necessarily change. The maintenance of situations is demonstrated by the reproduction of the pilot episode and overall preservation of the original concept. This then relates to the very

definition of a sitcom and Grote's (1983) claim that "the series as a whole is built around situation rather than events, actions, or even particular characters for the most part" and that this is what is called the "format" of the programme (p.60). Therefore, it may be the situation which is traded as the format and what needs to be conserved, while elements like setting and characters are adaptable. Directly reproducing the initial episode not only ensures maintenance of original style, but, perhaps more importantly, the proper establishment of the format's situation. Grote further states that "It is this situation that is essential to all understanding of the series as a whole, because the situation is what holds the series together" (p. 61). Such an argument does not contradict the findings from the Identification chapter where individuals claimed that their programmes were not sitcoms. This is because individuals rejected the term not because of the centrality of the situation, but because of the perceived reliance on jokes. This then is about the role and production of humour within the programme: how it develops from the situation. As such, the humour is able to change while maintaining the situation through, for instance, the "Americanisation" of characters, setting, and dialogue (Griffin, 2008).

This section has examined the remake production process in terms of involvement, understanding, tone and style, and characters and narrative. It has been revealed that while there are significant modifications made during remaking these changes are still in keeping with the original "essence" of the format. Important comedic elements are maintained such as style and tone with changes occurring due to variation in industrial expectations. Modification in characters and narrative are to meet industrial conditions, but are also in keeping with the original concept as these are derived from their industrial and cultural context. So changes are not due to difference in national comedy, but to the conceptual requirements of familiarity and relevance. As such, what is discovered is more about similarity than difference.

### **Success and Failure**

The final aspect of remakes that will be examined in this chapter deals with whether or not remakes "work;" that is, success and failure. What is explored is whether remakes are broadcast and/or renewed not the success of origination or any other steps in the process. This is success/failure after (or even during) production.

Success and failure are important components of formats as well as of genre (i.e., comedy and humour) and the industry writ large. A common argument for formats is risk mitigation afforded by previous success as discussed in the previous chapter, so it is important to explore this and whether or not previous success does aid in remake success. However, studies do argue that previous success does not necessarily equal remake success (Chalaby, 2016). Failure is not commonly addressed in format studies as they tend to focus upon those remakes which have been successful, such as *The Office* (e.g., Beeden & de Bruin, 2009; Griffin, 2008) and *Ugly Betty* (e.g., Adriaens & Bilteryst, 2012; Mikos & Perrotta, 2012) along with the unscripted *Idol* (e.g., Zwaan & de Bruin (eds.), 2012) and *Big Brother* formats (e.g., Bignell, 2005) as well as other unscripted reality and game shows (e.g., Hetsroni, 2005; Hoyt, 2010). Two notable exceptions, however, are Hogg's (2013) study of *Cracker* (ITV, 1993-1996; ABC, 1997-1999) and Sanson's (2011) work on *Coupling* (BBC2, 2000-2004; NBC, 2003), both of which were "failed" (i.e., cancelled) American remakes of British scripted programmes. An examination of both success and failure is important since this is a key component of genre. Genres are about replicating successful formulas founded on tried and true conventions and based on audience expectations (Silverblatt, 2007) which offer risk mitigation (Bielby & Bielby, 1994; Gitlin, 1994).

Therefore, what is explored here is discourse on whether remakes "work." This may be about making it to broadcast and/or renewal or may be about particular aspects of reception such as comprehension and acclaim. This section considers the factors which come to bear upon the perceived success or failure of a television comedy remake. While much of this may not be expressed in explicitly generic terms, it can still be understood as such.

Success/failure will first be examined in general with regard to the "track record" of scripted remakes. Next, it will be explored as a general industrial condition followed by its relationship to network involvement. After that, success will be discussed in terms of audience and "resonance." Next, the role of timing and scheduling will be examined. Lastly, success/failure will be explored with regard to the remake production process.

### **General statements about success and failure.**

To begin with are general statements about remake success/failure or whether or not they “work.” This is the term that individuals use in the statements under study. For instance, Mandabach states, shortly after her deal with the BBC, that “Very few (U.S. translations of hit U.K. shows) work” (in Daily Variety, 2005), yet she does go on several years later to try and accomplish the reverse. Additionally, Whitehall acknowledged that “There are some shows that are very good over here [in the UK] and have gone over there and not worked” (in Jeffery, 2014, February). This is a commentary on the notion of previous success and the inadequacy of it for predicting remake success. Both Mandabach and Whitehall are not claiming that all remakes do not work, but that “some” do not and “very few” do. It is difficult to say what is meant by “work” in these statements. Is this about remaking and adapting to another context? Or is this about gaining popularity and ratings? What will be examined here is the extent to which success/failure is generic.

These statements by Mandabach and Whitehall are examples of the various references which highlight the understanding that remakes of comedy programmes usually are not successful. This is an interesting aspect because it points out that individuals are aware of the risk of adapting such programmes, yet still attempt to do so and, therefore, there must be some sort of motivation such as discussed in Origination. With regard to the remake of *The Office*, Attalla notes: “It might work with American characters, but what's amazing is the amount of people saying it's going to be a f\*\*\*ing disaster. The track record with US remakes of British shows is not great” (in Rowan, 2004). Also using the word “disaster” is Saurabh Kakkar, executive producer of *White Van Man*, who states after the cancellation of *Family Tools*: “It's quite a well-trodden path that usually ends in disaster. The re-make of *White Van Man* was pretty good” (in Clarke, 2014). However, the programme was cancelled so being “pretty good” is his evaluation of the remake itself rather than of its reception and/or the network’s evaluation and, therefore, had no bearing on the programmes fate. These individuals do not expand upon these claims by offering examples or explanation (e.g., what is meant by “disaster”), but they do always seem to position their own programme as an exception as demonstrated by Kakkar. While these individuals do not explicitly refer to genre, it could be assumed that both Attalla and Kakkar are referring to comedy remakes. Beeden & de Bruin (2010) claim that this track record of comedy remakes, which includes *Coupling* and *Men*

*Behaving Badly*, is because “These sitcoms all adhered closely to the British originals rather than interpreting the format to fit the American audience, and this is perhaps one of the contributing factors to their failure” (p. 6). This component of production as it relates to success will be examined below.

It should be noted that these statements come from originators even if they are subsequently involved in the remake. Remakers with no involvement in the original do not make such statements perhaps since this may work to illegitimise them. Although remakers may not acknowledge the poor track record of remakes, they do offer expressions to mitigate any public concerns as noted in *Origination*, above, and in the upcoming chapter on intention. These statements are also common amongst originators who have some degree of involvement in the remake.

It should be noted that these are statements about failure rather than pointing out instances of remake success. Individuals make statements in order to quell concerns of remaking and assumed failure instead of referring to instances of previous success and hopes of achieving that (e.g., Norman Lear’s remakes). This may be because most programme concepts in general are not successful (Gitlin, 1994; Mittell, 2009; Steemers, 2004) and this is particularly noted with regard to comedy (Levin, 2011). However, the statements here refer to “disaster” rather than simply cancellation. This may be about the particularity of formats in which a comparison between versions can be made. It could also be examples of individuals addressing public concerns to hedge their bets. It is significant that many of these statements occur before remake premieres when originators are uncertain how the remake will be received.

The fact that remakes are still attempted despite this understanding of failure may be explained by Derks & Havas’s (1988) finding that with regard to humour, quantity leads to quality: the more attempts one makes, the more likely one will find success. This may support industrial success in that many concepts are attempted but few are aired and fewer are renewed. Remakes then are just another attempt to increase quantity in the search for quality. This issue of industrial competition and condition will be considered next.

#### **Failure as an industrial condition.**

Now I move from remake success/failure in general to that of specific programmes whereby success/failure is attributed to factors external to the remake

process itself and as rooted in the industry writ large and/or due to network factors. This is generally with regard to failure rather than success probably due to the fact that failure is more characteristic of the industry than success (Mittell, 2009). Here failure is not the fault of remaking, but as something that could not have been avoided. This is as if all the best efforts were given by all those involved, but something unforeseen, out-of-control, “no one’s” fault caused the remake to fail. For instance, Clarke-Jervoise states the *Bad Education* remake “was a great experience and the pilot was really good, but the competition is so strong” (in Broadcast, 2014). Therefore, according to Clarke-Jervoise, it was the fault of other programmes and the competitive nature of the industry not because the remake was not good enough (though it could be argued that it was not good enough to compete). This is also a means of passing blame from the individual to the industry. This is the general state of the industry in which there are numerous pitches and pilots, but few are ultimately chosen for broadcast (Hogg, 2013, Mittell, 2009).

As such, failure is noted as being unsurprising, whether this is due to being a remake (along the lines of the poor track record comments above) or just conditions of television in general (like Clarke-Jervoise’s comment above). As then-NBC Entertainment president Bob Greenblatt stated: “Was I surprised about *Free Agents* going down? Look, I liked the show. [...] It was based on a British show that I liked a lot [...] I’m really not surprised about anything going down these days, so, no” (in Strachan, 2012). This expresses that it is a typical thing; that the failure was nothing special and just a characteristic and expectation of the industry. This aspect is not stated along the lines of the general statements of remake failure above; that is, unsurprising failure is not due to the track record of remaking, but the industry in general. This may explain why individuals acknowledge the track record of remakes yet still attempt them since failure is common in all types of production. Also, according to Mittell (2009), because of this industrial trait *Free Agents US* should be considered a success for even being broadcast.

While failure is noted as a characteristic of the industry in general, there are statements which claim that failure is particularly the case for comedy which, according to ABC comedy chief Samie Falvey, “tend to have a lower success ratio” (in Levin, 2011). So despite the reliance on genre for risk mitigation, it is still a risky genre (Origination). Regardless, networks still seek out and champion comedic programming. The role of networks in success/failure is discussed next.

### **Role of network involvement.**

This industrial uncertainty is further demonstrated by Mosley in considering the success of *Sirens US*:

Who knows why any of these things work or don't work? [...] *Sirens* had good numbers in its first season, and there seems to be a lot of support from the ground. People who are fans are kind of rabid. [...] we were allowed to do the whole season kind of unencumbered. [...] By the last episode of last season, we really understood what the show was. That's kind of rare, to be allowed to find out what the show is, as opposed to it getting tinkered with while we're shooting and seeing numbers and all that crap. We never had to worry about that stuff. We really got to fly free (in Steiner, 2015).

Mosley is noting the importance of “freedom” from network inference which is something that Leary also highlights as important for that show (in Radish, 2014). Caldwell (2008) highlights the negative impact of network involvement which relates to the freedom discussed about *Sirens US* and to Whitehall’s statement about failure below.

Freedom is noted as important to original success as well. For instance, Gervais claims that “the reason ‘The Office’ worked is that it wasn’t compromised at all” (in Lowry, 2008). Therefore, in remaking the programme such freedom such as that ascribed to the BBC with regard to comedic programming (Dannenberg, 2004) may also need to be recreated. Freedom is linked to creativity and when freedom is compromised so is creativity (Nicoli, 2010). This creative freedom is particularly important for comedy as freedom affords the environment necessary to properly perform the purposes of comedy (Bakhtin, 1965/1968; Levin, 1987).

Mosley’s statement highlights not only the importance of networks being relatively hands-off, but of network patience (which may be part of being hands-off). Mosley also importantly links such freedom with conceptual understanding which is noted as pivotal. Furthermore, he highlights the importance of fans.

### **Audience and resonance in success.**

This understanding of the role of audience in success is not just in terms of ratings, such as the “numbers” mentioned by Mosley, but in how audiences relate to

the programme (which can in turn impact ratings). For instance, USA Network president McCumber stated that *Sirens US* “resonated with a broad fan base, and we are excited to grow this new audience further” (in Friedlander, 2014). As such, success is attributed to the programme itself and its “resonating” with a “broad fan base,” which may be about ratings particularly since he refers to growing the audience. This resonance in terms of audience could connect to the “rabid fans” from Mosley’s statement above.

This resonance may be about relevance, emotion, and/or taste as discussed in *Origination*. Again, comedy and humour are particularly noted as reflective, as a “mirror” (Levin, 1987; Cicero, 1860; Corrigan, 1965). There are various statements about how humour, and therefore comedic success, is derived from this familiarity such as Gervais’s claim that *The Office*, “like many other sitcoms before it, finds humour in a dysfunctional family. The reason why we find this both funny and comforting is that we all belong to a dysfunctional family. If you don’t, there’s something wrong with you” (in Daly, 2015). Granted, this is about the original, but it nevertheless demonstrates how humour success is connected to familiarity and resonance. According to Chalaby (2016), scripted programmes such as comedy “need to resonate more deeply than unscripted shows which viewers may only engage with superficially” (p. 7). This then connects format success and/or failure to cultural overlap. Moran (2009c) claims that a Chilean adaptation of the Australian soap opera *Sons and Daughters* (Seven, 1981-1987) “did not go to air because its apparent cultural incompatibility with social mores operating in the territory had registered during an earlier phase of audience testing” (p. 125). Moran is referring to both familiarity and appropriateness with the remake being considered offensive and morally incomprehensible. Although Moran’s example is a drama such issues apply to comedies since, as Palmer (1994) points out, offense and incomprehension contribute to comedic failure. Therefore, the programme did not resonate with the new audience.

This resonance is reflected by Mellor who claims that the success of *In with the Flynns* “is because we are representing a place in society now” (in Jeffery, 2012, February). These may be genre considerations related to cultural relevance as discussed in *Origination*. However, the show was cancelled after the second series (as was *Sirens US*). According to an article in TVWise, one “insider” stated that *In with the Flynns* “was never a huge hit. We brought it back for a second run even

though it didn't do amazingly well" while another said "We gave it a shot, but unfortunately the audience didn't take to the series as we had hoped; we remain committed to the genre and have a number of other projects in development" (in Munn, 2012). This means that renewal success was due to industrial factors, the decision of executives to "give it a shot." Both Mellor and the executives are referring to audiences and while Mellor may be right in claiming that the show held relevance for its audience, for the network this audience was not large enough (i.e., it may be an issue of ratings). It should also be noted that the executive does explicitly refer to genre: remaining committed to it. So despite failure, networks keep trying to find comedy that audiences respond to which further demonstrates the subjective and difficult nature of comedy and humour despite its arguably formulaic nature.

#### **Issues of timing, scheduling, and promotion.**

Giving a programme a shot, as expressed with regard to *Sirens US* and *In with the Flynns* above, is about patience. Patience is about giving a programme time to not only "find its feet" conceptually, but gather an audience. The importance of patience is noted with regard to *The Office US* as Reilly states "We could not face the prospect of not bringing it back given the history NBC has had with the likes of *Seinfeld*" (in The Guardian, 2005), which also had low initial ratings. This connects success with network patience and fear of missing out on the success not only of the original version but of a previous programme on the network which also had a slow start. It should also be noted that Daniels previously wrote for *Seinfeld* and, therefore, the network was aware of his potential with the genre. This is about both Daniels's and the network's history with the genre in this case comedy. As such, this is another instance of the role of previous success in the process. This network risk-taking may be similar to that argued to occur at the BBC (Dannenberg, 2004) so what is being imitated may not just be the show's content, but the surrounding industrial factors. These may be more important in the remake process; industrial conditions may need to be reproduced as opposed to narrative elements. This connects back to Stern's quote above about understanding and replication beyond textual components. Format studies note that remake production should be modelled on the original production process and this is a service provided by consultancy (Moran, 2009c; Moran & Malbon, 2006). Of course these studies focus

on unscripted formats and it should be considered that scripted formats like “comedy or drama cannot be reproduced as mechanistically as a game show or talent competition” (Chalaby, 2016, p. 6). Regardless, a negotiation between similarity and difference in the remake production process is necessary and what is shown here is that broadcast/distribution should be as well. Similarity in the process traverses all stages.

This could be supported by claims that *The Office UK* started out slowly and the BBC kept it on its schedule despite low initial ratings (Rowan, 2004). If NBC was aware of this, they may have figured similar patience is necessary. Although there are no statements which make this explicit, considering what format studies claim about what is included in the format bible and transfer of know-how this would be included (Moran, 2009c; Moran & Malbon, 2006). Therefore, if (reproduction of) previous success is a component of the remake process, then those factors which contributed to that previous success should be considered.

There is an understanding that comedy/humour takes time, something which Silverblatt (2007) claims gives comedy as a genre a disadvantage (p.201). This is what Dannenberg (2004) argues allows the BBC to produce innovative comedy since it is able to provide this “acclimatisation” period which would help explain why the corporation continued to produce and broadcast *The Office UK* despite low initial ratings. This notion is what is expressed with regard to *The Office US* as Daniels states that “(Like ‘Seinfeld’), [NBC’s] not expecting it to do well out of the gate. I like the fact that they’re going into it knowing that. It’s positive that they’re taking the long-term viewpoint” (in Schneider, 2005). Moreover, the fact that *The Office US* was renewed despite low initial ratings may be linked to the demographic it drew. According to the Guardian article quoted above, *The Office* “attracted upmarket viewers” which may cancel out any concerns over low ratings (in The Guardian, 2005). Silverblatt (2007) explains that “Industry considerations can also explain why genres that suffer from low ratings continue to appear in the media” (p. 199). These “industry considerations” include the profit imperative and certain demographics appeal more strongly to advertisers. He is explicitly referring to genre as some are more profitable than others drawing in a more desirable audience even if small. Griffin (2008) claims this is the reason for *The Office US*’s success in its second season:

In addition to the dramatic increase in the show's overall viewership, another bright spot was the audience demographics. Through the first six weeks of the season, *The Office* ranked fifth among twenty-five- to fifty-four-year old viewers in households with annual incomes of at least \$100,000 (p. 156).

Therefore, resonance as discussed above needs to translate into the right ratings whether in size or "quality."

However, one needs to consider the extent to which networks can afford to be patient. As Greenblatt stated about *Free Agents US*: "We're not fooling ourselves-it isn't going to be easy. We're going to have to be patient and spend a fair amount of money trying to get an audience to that time period in comedy" (in Morabito, 2011). Therefore, it is not just investment in time, but money as well. This demonstrates an understanding that success does not come from just idly sitting and waiting, but from actively pursuing it, which in this case probably means some form of marketing initiative. The connection between patience and money is an important one in the television industry. According to Silverblatt (2007) "Because of the profit imperative, the media industry is very conservative in its approach to programming" (p. 199) which is why the industry cannot have the patience it once had and shows are cancelled after only a couple episodes. This quick turnaround was the case with *Free Agents US* which was cancelled after only four episodes despite Greenblatt's commitment to patience and monetary support.

The variation in patience afforded *The Office US* and *Free Agents US* despite airing on the same network could be attributed to changes in ownership and management. Therefore, understandings and goals may have shifted. Furthermore, *Free Agents UK* did not have the sort of previous success as *The Office UK* in the US or the UK. As such, previous success may influence network patience, although there are no explicit statements of such.

Greenblatt's statement also points to an industrial issue of genre: that of scheduling. Greenblatt is highlighting the idea that there are particular time periods suitable for genres, in this case comedy on NBC. Therefore, timing is not just about patience, but also scheduling. Failure is claimed to be unsurprising due to promotional and scheduling deficits rather than general industrial features. Poynton stated that the cancellation of *Family Tools* "was sad but unsurprising. It didn't have a lot of promotion and it was a strange time in the season to start screening"

(Smyth, 2013). It should be noted that this is not that unusual as there are numerous programmes which are midseason premieres such as *The Office US*. *Family Tools* was scheduled to take over the time slot left over after *Suburgatory* ended so there was some sort of strategy in place (ABC, 2012). This scheduling, the potential reason for the remake in the first place, is then what Poynton blames for its failure. Consequently, just because formats are argued to be an easier way to get on schedules does not mean that they do not have to compete like all other programmes.

Competition and scheduling are also about patience as television comedy which is noted as taking time to develop a following (Chalaby, 2016; Dannenberg, 2004). This need for time is what Chalaby (2016) claims is one of the challenges of the genre and difficulties of it as a format which, as noted in the previous chapter, are said to be appealing because of their low-risk and speed. Therefore, in this regard, scripted comedy formats differ from unscripted ones.

As said for *Free Agents US*, the network needed to be patient and allow the show to get its bearings, yet it was cancelled rather quickly. Therefore, it may follow the understanding that particularly the US broadcast networks are quick and impatient and such logic of patience may not be suitable (Silverblatt, 2007). Yet, in order for networks to be patient there needs to be some sign of potential, however that is measured. The previous success of *The Office UK* and of *Seinfeld* may have been perceived as markers of potential thereby warranting patience. Consequently, comedic formats may not be appropriate if "acclimatisation" is not allowed. At the same time, these programmes need to be considered in the wider industrial context in which numerous other programmes are being pitched, aired and cancelled. In that sense these remakes perhaps should not be thought of as such and just viewed as programmes which failed like so many others and it is not necessary to make failure a question of translation success, but of market.

As Allen stated about *Free Agents US*: "To this date I don't think we've ever had a phone call from NBC to say your show's been cancelled. It's just America - they don't talk about failure; it's on to the next thing" (in Plunkett, 2012). This serves to position the occurrence as something typical and not spectacular which aligns with what was discussed above about failure being unsurprising. Therefore, failure is understood as both a reality of the remake process and production in general as alluded to by Allen. These programmes are not different from any other in that

regard (Hogg, 2013; Steemers, 2004). Most importantly is that failure is not unique to the format process even if it is pointed out. The majority of programme concepts, pitches, and pilots are never aired and those which are similarly have low odds of staying on the schedule for long.

#### **Relationship between remake process and success/failure.**

Failure is also attributed to the remake process itself namely in terms of the relationship between remake and original with regard to the negotiation between maintenance and change. For instance, Whitehall claims that *An American*

*Education*:

ended up quite rom-commy - it became very different to the English version of the show. We didn't have as much involvement - you sell the format and it probably got too far away from our version. It was a different network... and they weren't as keen on knob gags (in Jeffery, 2014, September).

Here Whitehall is attributing failure to the remake straying from the original, their lack of involvement, and the network's sensibilities, so the process itself. What is particularly salient is the fact that such failure is framed in generic terms: "rom-commy" (i.e., romantic comedy). Therefore, generic difference is to blame which resulted from lack of involvement and network sensibilities (which is noted with regard to a type of humour). The role of network also relates to network involvement discussed above. Whitehall refers to "different network" rather than different nation or industry so ostensibly it may have worked with a different American network. This may be another instance in which wider industrial conditions need to be similar as well as the textual elements.

Whitehall's claim that failure is due to straying from the original is in opposition to arguments put forth by Beeden & de Bruin (2010) and Kunz (2010) that attribute failure to imitation/replication and success to deviation. However, Chalaby (2016) states that "While everything else can be touched, the essence of the story must remain across cultures, else the story crumbles" (p.16). So Whitehall may be referring to this "essence" as the thing that was strayed from and such an essence is framed in terms of a genre and humour style. As such, if the comedic elements of the format are not maintained, it may lead to failure. This underscores the importance of understanding, particularly in terms of style and tone, as discussed above. Whitehall is also pointing out that the selling of the format and his

lack of involvement in the remake is why comedic style was not maintained. Consequently, it could be assumed that part of originator consultancy is to aid in remaker understanding in order to maintain generic sensibilities.

Whitehall's statement, like all those above about external fault, operates to remove any blame from the speaker. They claim that failure was out of their control and was someone else's fault. Furthermore, one needs to consider who is speaking. Failure due to disconnect from the original is a sentiment expressed by originators, not remakers. This frustration is shared by those from other programmes, not just those under study here as demonstrated by the Broadcast article "Comedy writers reveal US challenges" (Parker, 2008). Individuals placing blame for failure on industrial conditions or network priorities is common throughout the television industry (Gitlin, 1994) and, therefore, is not unique to remakes. What is unique, however, is the extent to which failure is blamed on difference between versions such as Whitehall's claim of comedic variation being the cause.

Success and failure of comedic remakes has been examined here with particular focus upon the role of industry. There is a general understanding that programmes are more likely to fail than succeed and this is particularly emphasised with regard to remakes. Format studies tend to attribute success, and failure, to cultural factors: the success, or failure, if adaptation to cultural norms and expectations (Beeden & de Bruin, 2010). What has been showcased here is the significant role of industrial factors in both remake success and failure. However, this does not necessarily completely negate cultural arguments as "audience expectations" (Mikos & Perrotta, 2012; Wells-Lassagne, 2012) is both an industrial and cultural concern. As such, it is better to consider the role of such cultural elements within an industrial framework. That is, modifications to meet the new context go beyond just changing location and references to include adaptation to industrial conditions (Jensen, 2009). The individuals in this study discuss success/failure not in cultural terms, but in industrial ones whereby the conditions and expectations set forth by networks come to determine the longevity of the remake. Even when discussing the process specifically it is the network which is referred to such as in Whitehall's placing the blame on difference in network expectations. Consequently, success and/or failure is framed in terms of industrial understandings and conditions of comedy.

## **Work Conclusion**

This chapter has further examined generic similarity and difference in comedy remake statements by focusing specifically on the remake production process. The negotiation between similarity and difference is revealed through which elements are maintained and which are changed and how these decisions relate to genre framing. Even those elements which are changed are still understood in terms of similarity as individuals maintain the original concept through changes (e.g., reality and improvisation). Furthermore, the role of conceptual understanding clearly underscores the importance of similarity within the process and comments about the maintenance of tone and style come to challenge assumptions of national comedy by emphasising similarity over difference. Many differences may be attributed to industrial conventions/expectations such as variation in series length. Similarity also plays a major role in the success of remakes, with variation being to blame for failure. This is in contrast to format studies which link difference with success (Kunz, 2010) and similarity with failure (Beeden & de Bruin, 2010). The statements here reveal that similarity in strategy, such as patience, allows for success while difference, such as the variation in genre and network expectations expressed by Whitehall with regard to *An American Education*, leads to failure. In the next chapter the intentions, aims, and goals behind these decisions, as well as those discussed in previous chapters, will be examined.

## Intention

The previous chapters dealt with several aspects of scripted comedy formats including generic identification, identifying potential, origination appeal, remake production, and success and failure. What has not been explored in detail yet are the intentions behind such decisions and strategies. In this chapter the various motivations, goals, and purposes will be examined with particular focus on how intention is framed in terms of genre. The content of this chapter should in no way be thought of as coming after that of the preceding chapters in terms of chronology. On the contrary, as Griswold (1987) argues, intention is the first component of cultural production. However, it is placed here since intention pervades all steps of the remake process from programme selection through remake production.

This is particularly an aspect of the process which is not considered in format studies which focus on textual analyses of finished programmes. In those studies (e.g., Beeden & de Bruin, 2010, Conway, 2012; Griffin, 2008) arguments of intention are derived from outcome. The actual outcome of a programme – how it is received and read – may not be the same as its intention. Textual analysis is insufficient for examining intention since, according to Griswold (1987), “intention [should not] be confused with consequences. A cultural object may fail to realize the intentions of its creative agent” (p. 9). Therefore, by examining how intention is discussed it is possible to understand both the process and outcome. The rationales behind remakes have already been discussed, but are such reasons part of remake intention? For instance, it is argued by scholars that programmes are remade due to cultural factors, but do such considerations inform remake decisions in a strategic manner or is such an argument only found in analyses of the finished product? Care needs to be given in order to make sure focus is upon intention rather than outcome in accordance with Griswold’s argument. This chapter examines intention rather than outcome since the latter is well documented in current studies (e.g., Conway, 2012; Larkey, 2009). Furthermore, outcome was briefly touched upon in previous chapters such as the discussion of success/failure. By examining intention this chapter is able to contribute to those studies which already exist that focus on textual analysis and outcome. There are instances in this chapter, however, where outcome is noted though it is always connected back to intention. It is difficult to

discuss one without the other as the previous chapters demonstrate. This chapter is about examining intention in order to better understand both process and outcome.

Intention is a component of genre (Mittell, 2004) and those intentions will be examined here with regard to remakes; not genre as a general concept, but the purposes and intentions of comedy and humour. However, this is all with regard to the programme as a remake. Since these are statements made for the public it is about how individuals frame remake intention in terms of genre. This is namely about the individuals' intentions, but also includes how they intend the audience to "read" the remakes (i.e., shaping audience expectations and reception).

Following what has been discussed about the remake process in previous chapters, this chapter considers what remakers intend throughout the whole process. What is of relevance here is intention in terms of genre, not other motivations and strategies such as personal or economic, although genre may play a role in these and, if so, may be touched upon. Furthermore, these are intentions as related to the remake process rather than production in general so intentions involve a relation between the two versions. This considers the intentions of the remakers, not the intentions of the original or remakers' negotiation of original intentions. However, this latter aspect is considered within the frame of remake intention; that is, how the remake intends to recreate original intentions. Remaker negotiation of original intentions is an aspect of translation whereby the translator translates the intentions of the original for the new context whether through domestication or foreignization (Venuti, 1995).

I have positioned this chapter after the other four because not only is it comprised of its own material, but it also takes into consideration ideas and questions raised in the preceding chapters. As such, this chapter allows the opportunity to explore in more detail the various reasoning, justification, and motivation offered by individuals throughout the format process. These format intentions relate to the concepts of the preceding chapters, many of which were already flagged. Intention continues what was discussed in *Work* by examining further why individuals maintain certain things and change others. It also further provides a discussion of justification in that intentions align with rationalisation as discussed in *Identity and Origination*. It will be explored how intention in this chapter aligns with the purported purposes of formats/remaking.

I have divided intention into five categories: honour, extension, individualisation, society and culture, and industry. These categories are not mutually exclusive, as will be demonstrated, with remakes possessing more than one intention. Furthermore, these are not necessarily the only types of intention, but, rather, are the most apparent and salient for the purposes of this study.

There is also the issue of different “levels” of intention in that a programme may be stated as having particular aims while at the same time that programme was created within certain parameters. A programme could have specific purposes (e.g., for audiences), while various forms of intention also informed its conception, pitch, production, and distribution. That is, the intention of the show as text itself as well as all the creation-related intentions. So the various intentions throughout the process will be considered.

### **Honour**

The first type of intention is honour which deals mainly with the intent to respect the original. Honouring the original should not be confused with imitation or replication. This is more about not “disrespecting” the original and aligns well with statements about the apprehension towards remakes. Claims to honour could be understood as attempts to allay such trepidation. Additionally, the intention of honour is expressed through emotional language whereby the intent to honour the original is framed in terms of an emotional investment in/attachment to it.

Enbom states that he did not want to “jettison” the aspects of the original that he loved (in Turnquist, 2011). As such, this relates back to appeal as discussed in Origination in that remakers are so fond of the original that they want to remain faithful to it and not lose what it was that drew them to the programme in the first place. There may be a sense that what it was that attracted an individual to a project should be “honoured” which is further exemplified by Holland’s comment that they “fell in love with the British series and wanted to honor it” (in Bernstein, 2011). This demonstrates the connection between the origination appeal of love and the intention of honouring the original. Statements about the remake maintaining the original essence would support an argument that it was successful in honouring the original; so for Enbom who did not want to “jettison” the original, Head’s comment about the remake having the same essence would lead to a conclusion that *Free Agents US* was successful in meeting the intention of honour even though

it was cancelled and due to its cancellation it would seem that it was not fully successful in achieving the intention of extension (see below).

Part of statements regarding honouring the original derive from concerns surrounding remakes and, therefore, these statements could be viewed as means of quelling such apprehensions. In *Work* the track record of failure and public concern over remakes, the perceived relationship between original and remake in that somehow the remake could “harm” the original, was discussed. As such, statements of honour function to mediate this as do statements of originality (see below) in that they express an intention of not attempting to imitate. So this is also about successfully convincing the public, and the originator, that the remake will work and not be disrespectful. This highlights the perhaps negative aspect of remaking something that was already successful. This will be discussed in more detail below, but I will touch on it briefly here as part of some comments made regarding *The Office*. Daniels claimed that remaking “was scary because everybody's first impression was that [the remake] would be terrible,” to which he proceeds to state “But we wanted to be faithful to this show that we loved. It was my decision to stick closer to the original in the pilot and see if we could get the same tone” (in Guzman, 2005). Again there is mention of love for the original demonstrating that statements about honouring the original underscore the remakers’ intention to do no harm to the original. They appreciate the show that concerned parties care about; that is, there is a shared love and concern for its maintained well-being and respect.

Honouring the original is also about honouring initial appeal and rationalisation, as discussed in Identification and Origination. Daniels goes a step further, however, in stating that not only does he intend to honour the original in terms of maintaining its integrity, similar to Enbom’s statement above, but he admits to close imitation, at least in the pilot as a means of tonal replication. Silverman reiterates this in saying: “We're really going to be true to the unbelievable stylistic choices that served the British show so well” (in McGinty, 2003). This pushes aside any understandings of cultural differences, at least stylistically, expressing an understanding that style and tone “translate.” This also connects honour with success in that part of the motivation for similarity is replicating previous success.

Furthermore, both Daniels and Silverman are linking the intention of honour with tone and style reproduction. Therefore, the understanding and replication discussed in *Work* pertaining to style and tone could be connected to the intention

of honouring the original as well as banking on previous success as noted in Origination. Consequently, work decisions are made with the intent to honour the appeal/justification of origination. Additionally, this honouring of tone and style presents an important aspect of genre intention in that these statements are about wanting to stay true to particular comedic forms or styles. As such, remake decisions are framed in terms of honouring original generic (i.e., comedic) choices and attributes.

It is also worth noting the extent to which originators refer to the prospect of having their programmes remade as an “honour.” These are not necessarily expressions of intent, but could point towards a sort of personal-professional aim on the part of originators whereby formats serve as another sign of achievement. This connects to the next type of intention, extension, in that having one’s work remade is perceived as an expansion of accomplishment.

### **Extension**

This leads us to the next type of intention: extension. Extension may initially be understood with regard to the expansion of concept, but it also pertains to industrial aspects such as corporate expansion and achievement. This latter form connects back to the strategic appeal discussed in Origination. Extension also has emotional implications in that originators in particular frame this intention in terms of emotion and passion.

In the first place, this type of intention relates to how the remake process is perceived as an “extension” or “continuation” of the original programme. For originators this also showcases their passion for their work. For instance, in the Big Talk Productions (2011) press release for the remake of *Free Agents*, Nira Park is quoted as stating: “Free Agents was a true passion project for myself and Chris Niel. We were hugely proud of the Channel 4 series but to be able to develop the series further with NBC for audiences in the US is a dream come true.” What is of particular relevance here is Park’s expression “to develop the series further.” In the case here it may be that such “development” and programme extension is connected with emotional investment (i.e., “passion”). It could also be seen as the extension of further personal interests through the addition of the last part of the statement, which could be read as a form of professional advancement. This demonstrates the relationship between emotional and professional fulfilment and advancement in that emotional investment motivates and rationalises professional

ambition. This is where the above mentions of remakes being an “honour” become significant. Poynton also expresses delight with news of the remake of *White Van Man* particularly due to his “disappointment of the UK show being cancelled” (in Broadcast, 2012). This further demonstrates the manner in which emotion is utilised within remake rationalisation in that remaking affords a counteraction to the negative caused by original cancellation. Poynton further states that the “keys to the van might well be being passed over the pond but they're in very good hands indeed” (in Broadcast, 2012). This is an example of continuation, rather than the more specific “development” language of Park. Also, the difference between the two statements can be found in that Park expresses a sense of collaboration between the originators and the remakers, while Poynton suggests that the remakers are entirely taking over (though he does express some involvement elsewhere as previously discussed). So for Poynton it may be the case that the remake is an opportunity for the programme to continue, but not necessarily for his own personal interests to extend in any manner, like those of Park. This all links back to emotion as discussed in Origination and the idea of personal accomplishment and advancement, but here it is about intention rather than appeal. As such, appeal and intention are inextricably connected in that something may be appealing because it aligns with intentions. This relationship is of relevance throughout this chapter.

It may seem that extension is an aspect of “failed” or incomplete programmes. This is demonstrated with *Free Agents* in statements made during the production and broadcast of the original such as creator Chris Niel stating that he “think[s] [they] can get a few series out of it” (in Gilbert, 2009). As such, the remake affords the opportunity for that to be realised when Channel 4 only allows for one series to be produced and broadcast. Therefore, a remake allows for the continuation of creative potential on the part of originators. This idea of continuation is particularly made clear by Head when he states in an interview for Collider that the original “is the starting point for [the remake]. It’s a bouncing off place [...] It’s where we go from there, which makes it an interesting journey” (in Radish, 2011). Therefore, this aspect of format intention only follows in instances where the initial programme was cut short. Remaking is also rationalised here in terms of expansion being “interesting.” This may problematize the idea of formats being based on programmes that were previously successful. Of course, that

depends on how success is defined whether in terms of ratings, number of episodes, or critical acclaim. But in terms of the creators' hopes for a programme like *Free Agents* its potential was not realised and in that way it failed or is at least incomplete. However, extension is not only found with regard to cancelled programmes. With regard to remaking *Gavin & Stacey*, Julie Gardner, of BBCW Productions, states that "it's an opportunity for it to live in another country. I love seeing shows travel abroad and watching local versions" (in Price, 2013). *Gavin & Stacey* was a success in Britain garnering high ratings and being nominated for and winning numerous awards including BAFTAs and British Comedy Awards so its multiple remake attempts cannot easily be perceived as mere attempts to continue something that was cut short. Instead, this extension is expressed in a different manner to the above examples. In Park's statement, she refers to developing the series further while Poynton explicitly mentions *White Van Man's* cancellation. Park and Poynton seem more to express "unfinished business" that will hopefully be resolved. Gardner, on the other hand, does not represent *Gavin & Stacey* as in anyway incomplete, but, rather, as if it has done what it can in Britain and now it is time to travel the world. This traveling could still be understood as a component of completing a programme; that is, it may be perceived as incomplete until it is broadcast and remade elsewhere.

Extension is not only expressed by originators, but also by remakers. (Gardner, above, could be considered a remaker as she is a part of BBCW Productions and executive produced *Us & Them*). Connected to Park's comment about developing *Free Agents*, both Holland and Enbom refer to doing just that in terms of story, as noted by Head above. As discussed in Work, Holland stated that "we need to expand the canvas, we're just adding more story" (in Bernstein, 2011) while Enbom mentioned that "one of the challenges we have is to make it larger, and more open-ended" (in Turnquist, 2011). Additionally, part of the expansion of *Free Agents* entailed the addition of and more focus upon other characters. Differences in series length between the UK and the US cannot be ignored, as noted by Hogg (2013), and such a fact may be significant in rationalising remaker need to extend. For instance, *Free Agents* only had six episodes in the UK (seven including the pilot) which in the US is not enough material for an entire season run so by necessity the remakers would need to expand upon the source material if they planned to last beyond six episodes (ironically, *Free Agents US* was cancelled after

only four episodes so that expansion was unnecessary). Returning back to the comments made by Holland and Enbom above with regard to honour, the statements here demonstrate that intentions are not mutually exclusive and that honouring the original does not necessarily mean pure replication and absence of change.

Extension is not only extending or continuing the original programme, but it can also be understood in terms of extending industrial interests. This is expressed by both originators and remakers and relates back to industrial strategy as discussed in *Origination*. This was implicitly mentioned above by Park and the idea of expanding personal emotional and professional interests. However, it could be even more explicitly industrial in nature as well. Formats can be perceived as an opportunity to broaden a company such as Kenton Allen's statement about *Free Agents*: "This is a hugely significant new chapter in the Big Talk story. To have a US network pick up on our first pilot is an amazing start for our US business" (in *Big Talk Productions*, 2011). Similarly, Hal Vogel of Daybreak Pictures states with regard to *Sirens*: "It's a really exciting break-through for Daybreak to have its first format picked up in the US and we're absolutely thrilled to have USA Networks, Fox TV Studios and Apostle as our partners" (in *Daybreak Pictures*, 2013, June 27). Consequently, format pick-up and global collaboration are understood as accomplishments as formats play a role in territorial expansion (Chalaby, 2012). Formats afford both originators and remakers the ability to further expand their industrial capabilities such as creativity and social networks, as discussed in *Origination*. Furthermore, the overall industry strategy of formats relates to corporate extension in that entities aim to expand externally in order to expand internally as especially noted by BBCW (see below under *Industrial*).

Related to company expansion is the extension of brand. An example of this is *Sirens* which was part of USA's strategy to leverage its acquisition of *Modern Family* to introduce half hour comedies to the network. Additionally, according to *Variety*, Jackie de Crinis, executive VP of scripted programming, "noted that USA Network's dramas have often been in the dramedy vein [and that the] new slate of half-hours 'are an extension of that brand'" (in *Littleton*, 2014). This is an extension of network branding that is generically framed. Furthermore, this points towards another potential appeal for remaking or at least for remake success (of getting broadcast and renewed): alignment with network strategy is potentially why

executives “fell in love” with concepts, again demonstrating the relationship between intention and appeal.

The above connect to the idea of conceptual expansion in terms of narrative and characters (*Free Agents*) as well as in the service of industrial interests (USA). The perceived need for extension also highlights understandings of genre and industry conventions between the UK and the US; for instance, the expansion of *Free Agents* as noted by Enbom and Holland. This underscores the notion that concepts can be extended and, in particular, do so across borders. Furthermore, remakes serve as a strategy to “reinvigorate” and aid in genre development. This returns us to the idea of formats aiding in innovation such as Silverman’s comment about the uniqueness of *The Office* and how this informed his intentions to bring the format to the US. This has been a longstanding aspect of remaking as Miller (2000) notes by examining how Norman Lear utilised British sitcoms in order to “revive” American sitcoms in the 1970s.

This is also about expanding genre conventions and expectations in that genre hybridity could be perceived as a form of extension particularly when considering that particular genres are drawn from in order to increase marketability. This is noted by Gail Berman, previous president of entertainment for Fox, who stated that there is a need for networks to uncover what it is about reality programming that “feels vital to the audience.” She further states that “We are attempting to see if there is a flavour we can extricate and try to enliven our scripted shows (in Faulder, 2003). This is the sort of logic employed by the creators of *The Office* who cite a capitalising on the success and conventions of unscripted formats (see Identification) thereby attempting to “extend” that popularity and expectation into comedy, which, again, Silverman found appealing and as justification for transfer. This also highlights an even further notion of formats as extension in that reality formats are used to create comedy formats thereby expanding the reach of reality formats into a whole other set of formats. These references to innovation lead to the next type of intention: individualisation.

### **Individualisation**

The next type of intention that will be explored is that of individualisation. This is examined in terms of remaker sensibility and style as a negotiation between change and maintenance. Making a remake one’s own does not mean to disregard the original and, in fact, may actually also intend to honour it. This is another

instance of the negotiation discussed in previous chapters between similarity and difference.

To being with, individualisation is expressed in explicit references to making remakes one's own. This type of intention can be seen in questions about the remake having its own identity as in the Spoiler TV interview with Mosley regarding *Sirens* where he is asked whether there is "extra pressure to give this version its own identity" and he answers "Yes. But, I think Denis [Leary] and Bob [Fisher] have put their stamp on it" (in Adams, 2014). This may be in reference to generic sensibility. The connection between individualisation and sensibility is expressed in McCumber's statement about the renewal of *Sirens US*: "We're pleased to continue our partnership with Denis Leary and Bob Fisher, whose unique brand of witty, off-kilter and laugh-out-loud writing is brought to life by the immensely talented cast" (in Friedlander, 2014). As such, individuality and authorship are framed in terms of generic sensibility.

This "pressure" referred to by Mosley's interviewer is echoed by Carell. He discusses "pressure to bring [*The Office*] to the United States and make it as funny" as the original: "the original is so great and so definitive, all we were trying to do was make a good show based on that template. And [...] I think that's what we did" (in Lauer, 2005). Here is the intention of humour as it relates to the outcome of the original: a programme which was perceived as funny. This is not to say that the original intention was humour, but since it was received as humorous the remake intends to be funny as well. Here is also concern for the identity of the remake, but often the concern is with the original and with the remake somehow harming it. According to a BBC News article about *The Office*, Carell stated: "It was no-one's intention to be better than or to equal the BBC version. Just to make a very funny, rich show based on that template" (in Youngs, 2005). This can be seen as an instance of warding off concerns related to remakes, something that would be particularly appropriate for Carell to discuss about a BBC programme for the BBC News. Individuals note that they never intended for the remake to be the same as the original. Carell further claims that:

any time you're held up to that sort of scrutiny, critically, it is a bit nerve-wracking. The BBC show is iconic, and you can't set that as a goal. All we tried to do was make a funny show based on the template, which is hilarious. And that was really our only goal (in Driscoll, 2005).

This is again about humour with the intention to be funny and utilising the template to achieve this. Additionally, utilising the original to be funny demonstrates the extent to which the “template” of humour travels beyond borders.

Echoing this is Silverman saying "We want it to be the same without being equivalent" (in Adalian & Schneider, 2003). This is an odd statement by Silverman as “same” and “equivalent” are synonymous, but there is an implied meaning in the ambiguity. Perhaps Silverman means that they want the remake to be stylistically and generically the same, to produce the same effect without being a straight imitation, without warranting direct comparisons. This is about the negotiation between similarity and difference which is expressed as important in the remake process. Silverman further demonstrates this in stating that "It will utilize some of the best ideas of the British show but will be its own American idea" (in Keveney, 2004). So this demonstrates the understood negotiation between using original material while imbuing the remake with its own identity.

Like *The Office*, Scheffer and Olsen discuss the maintenance of style and tone while making it their own through casting, characters, and locational elements. Scheffer takes the relationship between the two versions and describes it as familial: “If you compare the shows they look like -- well sisters” (in Kouguell, 2014). The metaphor of “sisters” reveals an understanding of formats in which they are both descended from the same “parent” (i.e., format). This is similar to the idea expressed by Carell about building off of the same template, but creating something individual; unless Carell is referring to the original as the template which would make the remake more like a child than a sibling. Nevertheless, the two versions are related in some manner, but not identical. Here again is the negotiation between similarity and difference as found within genres though formats provide a more structured and clear example of this already prevalent practise. Therefore, for *Getting On* just as with *The Office* there are clear statements about the negotiation between maintenance and change, similarity and difference. This is not just in terms of changes but how such changes are in keeping with the original essence, with honouring it (e.g., the need to adapt to actors, realistic aesthetic, improvisation, etc.). This was noted in the previous chapter, but here it is highlighted how such a negotiation is intentional.

Individualisation is further highlighted in Scheffer’s statement that “It was impossible not to make it our own” (in Kouguell, 2014); however, this was after

being asked “How have you made it your own?” which is similar to the exchange involving Mosley above. So it needs to be considered the extent to which remakers are prompted into taking ownership of remakes. While there is an understanding that programmes all borrow from one other, there is still an expectation of originality which Ferguson (2006) notes is an important aspect of programme promotion and public rationalisation.

Originators also offer statements unconcerned with or encouraging remaker individualisation. According to Leary, the British producers of *Sirens UK* told him to “do whatever you want” (in Radish, 2014). Mat Horne explicitly expresses disinterest in the 2008 NBC remake attempt of *Gavin & Stacey* (the first American remake attempt): “To be honest I couldn't care less - they can do what they want with it” (in Deedes, 2008). Here originator intention is for remakers to do whatever they want, to make it their own. This differs from Scanlan's comment that *Getting On US* is “very truthful to the original spirit of the show, yet they've been able to make it their own” (in Fletcher, 2013) in that she states after the fact that the remakers made it their own rather than this being her, or their, initial intention. This encouragement and/or lack of interest illustrates that there is an understanding of remake flexibility on the part of originators. These scripted comedy formats are not intended to be strictly imitated, but instead are granted a high degree of remaker freedom. This is in contrast to the greater originator control exhibited with unscripted formats (Moran, 2009c).

Furthermore, individualisation is demonstrated through the notion that genre develops and evolves and that all programmes are an individual instance of making it one's own. For the programmes being here, individuals regularly cite their comedic inspirations (as noted in Identification) and it could be understood that they then take these previous iterations and make their own. As such, genre in general is about both similarity and difference: creating something unique from understood and recognisable conventions. This then relates to all identity claims of being different, innovative, novel, and/or unique and the extent to which these boil down to the intention of being generically unique, of making one's own comedic text. Of course, these statements need to be about intention and not just identity even if it could be argued they are related. This can be illustrated by the comments above about templates and familial relationships with the creation of a unique text through the process of sharing. As such, formats allow a more concrete means of

engaging in the already existing industrial practise of repetition and balancing conventions with individualisation.

So along with the intention of honouring the original, there is the intention of making the remake the remakers' own. This often occurs in some sort of relationship with the original; that is, there is no disregard for the original. Rather, the intentional focus is upon doing one's own version instead of feeling compelled to imitation and equivalency. This can be viewed more as an intention of interpretation and relationship. As Beeden & de Bruin (2010) state, the purpose of remaking is "to interpret rather than copy the original program" (p. 4). The negotiation between similarity and difference in this regard is demonstrated by Daniels who states:

I think we were way more conscious of the British show back then. In the very beginning, it was trying to be faithful to it and then early on it was trying to be different from it or to be independent of it or to make some course corrections to it for TV and the U.S. But I think after a few years or probably even less, we weren't thinking about it that much. On a daily basis, you're working with Steve Carell, you're not working with Ricky Gervais. You try a line and you can't be writing for David Brent. You have to be writing for Michael Scott because Steve is Michael Scott. So pretty quickly I wasn't thinking about it other than trying not to imitate it exactly (in Keller, 2013).

Not only is Daniels referring to the balance between honour and individualisation, but he is explaining the reasoning behind such a negotiation. In particular, he is pointing towards cultural and industrial reasons for the changes such as writing for Carell and his character as well as for the expectations of American industry and audiences. These cultural and industrial aims will be examined next beginning with how society and culture play into intention.

### **Culture**

The fourth type of intention is cultural. Cultural intention is the most commonly argued reason for formats in that programmes are adapted to local cultural references, sensibilities, and expectations, also called "localisation" (Moran, 2009c; Straubhaar, 2007). Here it will be examined whether such cultural components are part of remake intention. That is, whether individuals make reference to such elements as being intentional rather than simply a result of the final product as is argued in current textual format studies. So here will be explored

references to remake intention related to cultural aspects such as familiarity, relevance, and audience.

In justifying the remake of *The Office*, Gervais states: "You compare yourself to your neighbour, not to someone who lives 10,000 miles away" (in Jeffries, 2004). This is about a contextual understanding of comedy and humour in general. According to the BBC News, reporting on *The Office*, Daniels "says there are important 'cultural differences' between the two countries and wants American viewers to say 'oh my God, that's exactly how it is in my office'. They cannot relate so closely to the original [...] he says" (in Youngs, 2005). This connects back to identification and origination and the idea that concepts have cultural relevance for audiences. Therefore, cultural intention is not just in the adaptation choices/changes, but in the overall justification for the remake, as explained by Scheffer regarding *Getting On*:

We wanted to create a place where our friends and family, our audience who we knew was aging and dealing with dementia and death in their loved ones, could come and laugh. [...] it can be funny and sad at the same time. It hits close to home and that's a good thing (in Kouguell, 2014).

This rationale relates to genre in that Scheffer is referring to one of the aims of comedy: providing a medium in which to confront shared issues in a safe and humorous manner (see below).

This rationalisation as well as production aim is noted as definitive of formats in format studies. Beeden & de Bruin (2010) argue that adaptations have "the aim of achieving a sense of cultural belonging for audiences" (p. 6) and this is in terms of Waisbord's (2004) claim that formats "organize experiences of the national" (p. 372). Therefore, this is not just the intention to appeal to cultural elements such as familiarity, but the extent to which programmes are intended for social functions such as eliciting cultural/national characteristics and "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983/2006). This relates to Gervais's comment about individuals comparing themselves to their neighbours in which a collective or "imagined community" is constructed for that comparison to occur. This is particularly a component of comedy and humour both of which are claimed to be cultural in reference and purpose (Davis, 1993; Kuipers, 2008) as discussed in terms of remake appeal and justification in Origination. Therefore, the intent to express

particular cultural/national characteristics informs the appeal of remaking certain programmes and the production decisions therein.

Gervais states that he “always felt that comedy's contextual and that you've got to connect on an emotional level” (in Wray & Friedlander, 2005), but this does not mean that such context is exclusive to one nation or another. What he is pointing towards is recognisability and familiarity, what was previously discussed in terms of “resonance.”

This offers an understanding of humour deriving from familiarity, the aim of capitalising on culturally recognisable settings, characters, and situations (a point raised in *Origination*). Consequently, this reveals an understanding of humour as arising from that which is familiar and recognisable or otherwise relatable. This is a common argument in humour studies particularly those which utilise the incongruity theory of humour in which humour arises from a deviation of recognisable norms and expectations (e.g., Billig, 2005; Kant, 1892/1914; Morreall, 1983; Schopenhauer, 1909/2011).

This is the idea that audience appeal may derive from the recognisability and familiarity of programmes as they relate to the audience's own lives and experiences, a point raised in *Origination*. This could be important for formats in that creators may have a different perception of what audiences will relate to and what their experiences construct in terms of taste, a variation in the construction of the “imagined community.” This all reflects back upon originators expressing the need to leave remakes in the hands of those who understand their market.

Experience connects to comments about reality. Statements about *Getting On* express the sentiment that such inevitability and reality and its comic treatment are intended to create an exploratory experience for audiences. As Scheffer claims: “we try and, like, show that reality and then bring some laughter into it so it's safe to go there” (in Gross, 2013). This is the idea that humour allows a “safe” means of approaching and dealing with real and difficult situations (Levin, 1987; Stott, 2005). So it is not about “making fun” of anything portrayed, but making it accessible along the lines of Bakhtin's (1965/1968) notion of the carnivalesque as well as humour theories of relief/release (Bain, 1865; Freud, 1905/2002; Spencer, 1891) whereby the comical is employed to make constraining and difficult situations accessible and comfortable. Therefore, humour provides a means of approaching and dealing with serious issues and situations.

Also regarding *Getting On US*, actor Laurie Metcalf states:

I hope it's well-received. Not because selfishly I just want to make more of them because I loved it so much, but I really believe in it. I'm really behind what it's trying to show -- this world that gets shuttered up sometimes. Let alone in a hospital world, but for all of us (in Harnick, 2013).

Here the hope for success is related to her belief in the show's concept; the aim being to show this world which is perceived as important and relevant. This is intending to reveal something that is otherwise hidden, a sort of cultural cause.

This all connects to the idea of comedy as being "real" and "believable" along the lines of Neale & Krutnik's (1991) verisimilitude. However, Metcalf is referring to representing something that is otherwise hidden from general audiences rather than something that is already familiar and recognisable, although this world is connected to something that is still relevant and meaningful as noted by Scheffer and Olsen. So while it may be a world unknown to most audience members, it is still one which is significant, relevant, and/or contemporary.

Finally, cultural intention is revealed through statements which claim that programmes are "for" particular cultural contexts. This can be expressed through stating that a remake is "for America" or "for American audiences." For instance, NBC states that Silverman and Daniels "developed the series [*The Office*] for American audiences" (NBC, n.d.). This phraseology is unique to remakes and points towards the national (i.e., local) nature of remakes and how they are identified in terms of nation. Yet, one needs to be cognisant of the extent to which seemingly cultural terms and phrases may also be understood as industrial. This is an especially significant point since textual analyses of remakes argue that intention is national in a cultural rather than industrial sense. It should, however, not be assumed that "American" and "British" are solely cultural terms particularly when considering phrases like "American audience" which clearly is within an industrial frame. As such, the notion of particular target audiences leads us into industrial intention.

### **Industry**

The final type of intention examined here is industrial. As discussed in *Origination*, industry informs origination in a number of ways and these aspects are closely connected to intention. That is, many of the decisions are made with the aim of meeting industrial strategies such as exploitation, risk mitigation, branding, and

scheduling, amongst others. Here the interest is remake intention rather than remake appeal although, as will be discussed below, aspects of industrial appeal are closely related to intention. That is, justification is often expressed in line with wider industrial aims.

To begin with is the extent to which being “for” audiences is an industrial not (only) cultural construction as discussed in the last section. For instance, Nira Park refers to “audiences in the US” (in Big Talk Productions, 2011) which can be understood as an industrial understanding, as could “American audiences” since an audience is at least partly defined by the expectations set by the industry, even though the audience does in return influence the industry. “Audiences” implies industrial expectations on the part of that audience, wherever those expectations may come from is not particularly relevant. The conceptualisation of audiences is an industrial concern (Ang, 1991/2004; Napoli, 2003). Furthermore, audiences in this vein should not be understood as encompassing all Americans, for instance, but particular audiences within that national context. This is most clear in Park’s statement, but also relates to NBC’s above about “American audiences.” These statements are not referring to all Americans, only audiences comprised of Americans for a particular programme.

Industrial intention is often understood in terms of audience. For example, scheduling and branding are formulated with the intention of attracting and maintaining particular audiences (Ellis, 2000; Ferguson, 2006). This is constructed in socio-cultural terms (demographics) which then feed into programme success/failure with regard to ratings. This also relates back to identifying potential in that a concept may be perceived as aligning with particular scheduling and branding aims. For instance, *Sirens* was noted as aligning with the new comedy strategy of USA developed after acquiring *Modern Family* and *Family Tools* was developed to fit a scheduling slot that ABC had difficulty filling. Both USA and ABC utilised these shows to fit scheduling needs defined in terms of genre.

This is made even more explicit when rather than referring to the remake as being “intended” for a particular audience, programmes are referred to as being “for American television” (BBC, 2014, September; HBO, 2013; HBO, n.d., “Getting On: About the show”). This refers to the industrial conditions to which programmes are adapted. This means not only American audiences, but technical aspects like episode length and number along with the various expectations the industry and

audiences have for such programming. This aspect of adaptation has been noted within format studies, including those for scripted remakes (Beeden & de Bruin, 2010; Hogg, 2014; Moran, 2011). As such, adapting for another nation does not only mean changing cultural references, but also modifying to meet industrial expectations as well.

Furthermore, Jensen (2009) and Hogg (2013) importantly note that the institutional context, as opposed to larger national context, should be considered such as particular networks (such as the “Big Four”) versus television networks as a whole. Essentially, he is opposed to the monolithic conceptualisation and assumptions found in current format studies. He furthermore demonstrates that comments in industrial statements, such as those in this study, should not assume that references to “American television” mean television more generally, but could, and most likely do, refer to the major broadcast networks. However, *Getting On US* is noted as being “for American television” and this is claimed by HBO. As such, it should be understood that the show is being remade for American television as HBO, not any other network.

This brings the discussion to how programmes may be noted as being “for” a particular network. For instance, an ITV Studios press release states that “ITV Studios America is developing ‘White Man Van’ for ABC” (ITV Studios, 2011). Similarly, Daybreak Pictures refers to the *Sirens* remake as being made “for the NBCUniversal cable network” (2011), “for the top-rated cable network” (2011), and “for the US cable channel USA NETWORK” (2013) within its news releases. This positions the remake efforts as being intended for industrial purposes; that is, for the network rather than for a particular nation or audience as would be the case with cultural intention.

Being “for” a network introduces the role of network expectations. It is important to keep in mind that there is variation between broadcast, cable, and premium but also amongst the networks within each type. As far as genre is concerned the particularities of any given network inform the type of comedy expected and allowed. This relationship between network expectations and creators is highlighted in statements about the network influence on production. For instance, Jamie Glazebrook, executive producer for *In with the Flynns*, worked in order to meet the expectations of a BBC1 sitcom (Glazebrook, 2012). For him, his

intention was to create a comedy that would be appropriate for and air on the network.

Variation in network can further impact remaking due to commercial constraints such as reliance on advertising. According to Silverblatt (2007):

Advertising can have an influence on the content of a genre. Producers are careful to present content that is unlikely to offend potential customers. Further, advertisers prefer to buy commercial time in shows that accentuate the positive, to help put viewers in an upbeat, consuming mood. In contrast, premium cable television channels are free of the industry considerations that constrain broadcast networks (p. 213).

For instance, Williamson (2008) discusses how comedy at HBO differs from that of namely broadcast due to the affordances of being a premium network. Likewise, Dannenberg (2004) notes how not being reliant on advertising allows the BBC to take risks with its comedy. In these two instances it is funding which is linked to programme possibilities. Difference in network not only exists within industries, but between them. For instance, *The Office* originated at the public broadcaster BBC and then was remade for commercial broadcaster NBC. All the American networks under study are commercial with variation only in manner of income. Furthermore, advertiser preference for optimistic programming may go hand-in-hand with the variation between American and British comedy with the former being more positive than the latter as noted in the previous chapter. As such, modifications to this effect may be intended to appeal to commercial interests.

These (perceived) expectations are particularly apparent in comments which compare networks. For example, Daniels notes that for *The Office US* they had different pitches at various networks leading them to think that it would air on FX, but the show eventually ended up at NBC because of Reilly (in Porter, 2013). Again this also brings up the importance of relationships in that individuals discuss the people involved in the networks rather than the networks as some faceless monolith. The role of relationships is further demonstrated with *Getting On US* in that it ended up at HBO because Scheffer and Olsen already had a relationship with the network as their previous production, *Big Love*, aired there. From the start, then, they intended to remake the show for that network.

While these individuals may not make explicit note to how each network impacts their production generically, it is undeniable that various network

affordances and expectations inform programme possibilities. However, the human component of the industry is highlighted as playing a role, not just how creators perceive the possibilities granted them at each network. This is clearly demonstrated by Daniels in that his preference for FX was overridden by the relationship formed with Reilly, namely that Reilly believed in and liked the pitch. It is then about working with individuals who understand their comedic vision rather than some soulless company.

Industrial intention then relates to success and failure as discussed in Work. For instance, individuals state that the success of *Sirens US* can at least partially be attributed to USA Network's "hands-off" approach. Network intention and success is further demonstrated by *The Office US* as some credit for its success can be granted to NBC for keeping the programme on the air despite low initial ratings. There are several references back to the network's experience with *Seinfeld* and the outstanding result of allowing that show to continue despite its slow start (Schneider, 2005; The Guardian, 2005). Therefore, NBC had the aim of giving *The Office US* a chance. The industrial intention of patience is further exemplified by NBC with *Free Agents US* where it is claimed that Greenblatt would allow the programme time to gain an audience and individuals had hope that this would lead to its success; however, the show was cancelled after only four episodes. It is impossible to know if *Free Agents US* would have gone on to become successful if NBC had been patient, had stuck to its intention, like it had with *The Office US*.

Furthermore, shift in aim affects success, such as the structural changes within companies/networks. For example, the failure of the ABC attempt to remake *Gavin & Stacey* (the 2009-2010 attempt following NBC's and before Fox's) is linked to structural changes (Robertson, 2010). Additionally, the extensive restructuring at NBC during the production of *Free Agents US* may have shifted priorities and aims making it no longer appropriate for the network's goals. This may be partially why NBC acted differently with *Free Agents US* than it did for *The Office US*. The relationship between intention and success is further demonstrated by Whitehall. He grants some blame for *An American Education's* failure to the fact that the remake network, ABC, is different from the original, BBC3, therefore implying that network aims and expectations impact the programme.

Additionally, aspects of extension are components of Industrial intention such as USA using *Sirens* to expand its schedule generically and Allen and Park's

statements above about developing their productions in the US. This is extension for industrial purposes: expanding production reach and networking. Furthermore, extension is an aspect of industrial strategy (i.e., globalisation). At the same time, these efforts are worded in such a way as to imply that expansion is intended to “honour” the original industry/context/market by bringing profits back in order to aid expansion of the original industry. Therefore, there is an aim to extend externally in order to extend internally. For instance, Tranter states that the aim of BBCWP, which co-produces *Getting On*, is to “enhance the creative reputation of the BBC and the particular types of programming it does” and to “return money back to the mothership in the UK” (in Clarke, 2014). Consequently, remakes, including *Getting On*, are about helping to enable the BBC and production back in the UK as well as bolstering the BBC’s reputation. According to John Smith, chief executive of BBCW in 2011: “I am proud of the unique role we play in helping our sectors of the UK creative industries to expand through exports” (in Bizcommunity, 2011). This relates to the comments made by Tranter about the purpose of BBC Worldwide and its international efforts being to invest back in UK production; therefore, formats could be understood as a means to an ends rather than the end goal themselves. This connects to the DCMS definition and export-led strategy discussed in Origination (Freedman, 2003; Steemers, 2004). Formats are argued as being a means of exploiting intellectual property (Esser, 2010). So for originators, formats are intended to increase revenues. As previously noted, BBCW makes it explicit that part of its business is exploiting BBC intellectual property through both the selling of finished programmes to networks like BBC America and the licensing of those formats to be remade for broadcast elsewhere.

For remakers, the industrial advantages of formats include innovation, risk mitigation, and networking as already discussed in Origination. As such, these aspects are found appealing due to their strategic affordances thus demonstrating that appeal and intention are connected. That is, remaking may be deemed appealing due to its alignment with industrial aims such as extension: formats aid in industrial expansion through innovation and networking. Furthermore, remakes themselves are intended to meet these industrial strategies such as risk mitigation due to previous success and pitch support.

I will finish this section on industrial intention by considering what the success of *The Office US* means for BBCW since it allows for a consideration of

various industrial issues connected to comedy remakes. This was not necessarily an initial intention of the format, but supports comedy formats as strategy and aligns with format studies which note the extent to which remakes come to inform the original format and strengthen further remake endeavours (Chalaby, 2011; Moran & Malbon, 2008, p. 30). According to the BBC Media Centre:

BBC Worldwide today announces [...] the acquisition of the rights to the scripts for the US adaptation of *The Office*. The partnership with NBC Universal, gives BBC Worldwide the rights to over 100 scripts for the hit US comedy, extending the number of episodes available to be sold as a format from 14 to 192. [...] Nicki McDermott Head of Format Acquisitions at BBC Worldwide said 'We are thrilled to be offering more scripts to the US version of *The Office* to broadcasters around the world. The series has kept audiences, certainly in America, entertained for over a decade and this access to more episodes means International broadcasters now have more storylines to play with when adapting locally' (BBC, 2015).

By allowing the original to be adapted it has afforded for more material to be exploited, so it is advantageous for British companies to have American remakes if the remake material then becomes part of the overall format to then license elsewhere. This is an appealing attribute of formats, as Moran & Malbon (2004) note, in that each iteration, each successful remake contributes to the evolution of the core format and, therefore, aids in its marketability. Since British comedies have limited material, a successful American remake can offer a huge multiple (note in this example 14 scripts is the same as the original *The Office*). This demonstrates the economic value of a successful remake and this is not even referring to the large potential of exploiting the actual programme in terms of exporting the finished programme, selling merchandise, etc. This is both an outcome of the process (a high measure of success) as well as a motivation/strategy. This also has to do with extension: while it may not have initially been the intention to remake *The Office* as a form of continuation, it ended up being a welcome consequence. Therefore, extension operates in various ways.

This economic value is described by Chalaby (2011) in terms of remakes informing the core format bible:

These documents are constantly updated with information accumulated in the territories where the show is produced. If an idea that is tried in a

market works, it is passed on; if it fails, licensees are warned against it. As Sue Green, an industry veteran, explains, a format is a show that has ‘been debugged’ to remove ‘the mistakes that have been made that won’t be made again’ (Green, interview 2010). And therein lies one of the economic reasons for licensing a format. As production is being refined from one territory to another – and from one year to the next – costs are gradually driven down. The refinement of the model, which is consigned in the bible, constitutes one of the key economic benefits of format licensing (p. 295). Therefore, it cannot be denied that formats, including scripted ones, provide industrial benefits if successful. As highlighted by Chalaby (2011) and the example of *The Office* above, remaking is advantageous for both remakers and originators and such industrial benefits should be understood as part of remake intention.

### **Intention Conclusion**

This chapter has considered remake intention in terms of honour, extension, and individualisation as well as cultural and industrial aims. These intentions can be connected to what has been discussed in previous chapters. In particular, it is clear how intention connects to origination appeals and strategies. For instance, those conceptual aspects which were deemed appealing are then intended to be honoured. Additionally, industrial intention showcases the extent to which the format process is intended to bring about industrial advantages such as creative and networking gain.

By focusing on statements made about remakes rather than examining the remakes themselves, this chapter has allowed for intention to be explored. The findings here can then be compared to those derived from textual analyses in order to discover the extent to which these intentions were successful. For instance, the negotiation between honour and individualisation as expressed with regard to *The Office US* aligns with Ducray’s (2012) conclusion that:

By retooling *The Office* both culturally and generically, aesthetically and narratively, Greg Daniels has thus managed to create what reviewers eventually praised as ‘that rarest of anomalies: a remake of a classic show that both does right by its source and carves out its own strong identity’ (p. 28).

Therefore, through the decisions of remake production, the negotiation between maintenance and change as discussed in the previous chapter, *The Office* remakers

were able to make manifest textually their intentions of both honour and individualisation. Without an examination of remaker statements, however, it would be impossible to know if this outcome as noted by Ducray was in fact an intention of the remake. Consequently, this chapter has allowed for outcome to be connected to intention. For instance, it becomes apparent that the negotiation of maintenance and change as discussed in the last chapter on remake production aligns with statements of intention.

This chapter has further exposed and examined the negotiation of similarity and difference within the remake process by showcasing the balancing of various intentions such as honour and individualisation. These statements consider questions dealing with intention of the remake as pertain to genre; namely, the motivation and purpose behind maintenance and change and how these are framed generically. The next chapter, where concluding arguments will be made, will draw together the extent to which generic components have been utilised in remake rationalisation and how this rationalisation has been expressed in the various statements under study.

## Conclusion

This study has been guided by the question of how genre is expressed in industrial discourses surrounding sitcom remakes between Britain and the US. The preceding chapters have presented the findings of this study in terms of identification, origination, work, and intention. These aspects of the remake process have been shown to be framed in terms of genre. As such, genre is significantly utilised as a framing device within the statements surrounding comedy remakes. Understandings of comedy are utilised and expressed with regard to familiarity and a negotiation between similarity and difference. Furthermore, this study has found that the remake process is discussed in terms of industrial factors. That is, remaking is expressed as occurring within the structures and in response to the expectations of particular industrial components, namely those of specific networks. This is privileged in these statements above the sort of adapting to national cultures which is emphasised in textual analyses of remakes.

### Concluding Arguments

I will begin by discussing how the three supporting questions of this study have been addressed throughout the preceding chapters and what conclusions can be made regarding them. The first of these questions asked: How do understandings of genre as discussed by those involved with the production and reproduction of texts impact on industrial understandings of sitcom? The statements in this study reveal the extent to which understandings of comedy are expressed in terms of familiarity and recognisability which is aligned with traditional understandings of sitcom (e.g., Bowes, 1990; Dalton & Linder, 2005; Neale & Krutnik, 1990; Trinidad, 2001; Tueth, 2005). However, what has been found here is that the sharing of comedic taste and style transcends national borders with individuals referring to cross-cultural inspiration such as Gervais claiming that *The Office* was informed by American comedies and Holland referring to *The Larry Sanders Show*, which he previously worked on, as being akin to British comedy. As such, remakes aid in the already existent cross-border sharing and development of television sitcom.

Furthermore, individuals renounce the label of sitcom and describe their programmes in terms of generic difference, uniqueness, and hybridity with formats aiding in this quest for uniqueness and innovation. This demonstrates the industrial

use of genre as both a means of structure in terms of familiarity and repetition, but also as a basis for innovation and modification. This study particularly focused on how remakes play into this already present negotiation by showcasing how both familiarity and difference are utilised to frame statements made throughout the remake process from the identification of potential through production.

Next this study considered the following question: What does how the industries involved discuss the cultural translation process tell us about the format process? Overall, the remake process has been framed as a negotiation heavily favouring similarity over difference. Individuals reveal the central role of familiarity which is discussed in terms of similarity (e.g., appeal, production, etc.) rather than difference or a point needed to be overcome. Additionally, the remake process is discussed as a means of sharing and innovation which is founded on an already existing foundation of similarity. This similarity is found within remake appeal with regard to style and cultural familiarity. Also, originals incorporate elements of programming from the remake television market in the first place (e.g., *The Office*). Therefore, the format process allows for the incorporation of programming which is familiar, not necessarily different. Of course, this may be an issue of identifying potential in that programmes too different are not even selected. As such, remaking is founded on points of similarity and recognisability. The remake process is framed in terms of generic similarity and familiarity and not as something intended to challenge present genre expectations, though there still is the appeal of innovation. Individuals also note that the format process is a means to an end such as the value of formats as pitching aids (Esser, 2010) or when individuals are already working on an idea anyways (e.g., as Scheffer and Olsen noted with regard to their development prior to remaking *Getting On* [Gross, 2013]). This and other comments made throughout this study importantly showcase that the process involves industrial considerations, more so than cultural ones, the latter of which is the prime focus of scripted format studies (Ducray, 2004; Griffin, 2008; Larkey, 2009). While these cultural elements are important to the process, a focus solely on them fails to present all the factors which inform remaking and this study has contributed to expanding the view to include particular industrial elements as expressed within publicly made statements.

Finally, this leads to the last supporting question: To what extent does the industry discourse reveal industrial issues at work in the translation process? The

statements in this study have revealed the significant role of industrial expectations and strategy throughout the process. For instance, modifications/decisions are made in accordance with network prerogatives. This was able to be examined by considering a variety of networks, not just the BBC and the “Big Four.” Also, success/failure are expressed as being connected with industrial issues, just like any other programme making remakes in this sense not particularly unique. Success/failure is noted as being importantly informed by industrial expectations and conditions, not just alignment with cultural expectations divorced from industry as argued in format studies. Further highlighting the role of network is that there are claims that variation in success between original and remake is due to change in network. For instance, Whitehall claims that failure is due to conforming to the new network and straying from the original rather than merely changing nation. Additionally, success is linked to lack of network interference. Individuals do point towards cultural aspects such as resonance which still demonstrates that cultural conditions are important, such as speaking to relevance and familiarity. However, the findings of this study go beyond just cultural claims to highlight and emphasise industrial factors. Studies which focus on textual analyses of finished programmes (e.g., Ducray, 2012; Larkey, 2009) argue that intention is cultural (i.e., national); yet, this study highlights the multitude of industrial elements which inform intention. Remake decisions are often made with the intention of meeting industrial conditions and expectations. Furthermore, appeal in the first place is discussed as industrial: risk mitigation, exploitation, innovation, and networking. These industrial appeals and strategies align well with those noted with regard to unscripted formats (Esser, 2010; Steemers, 2004). What is significant is that the industrial appears to be highlighted more in these statements than the cultural which is usually what is argued in format studies of scripted programming. As such this study underscores the industrial, not purely cultural, utility and understanding of genre and formats. This is particularly salient in considering television with attention to particular industrial contexts (Jensen, 2009), rather than in monolithic terms such as “American television” and “British television.” It is imperative that the specifics of each production are considered, such as the style and expectations of particular creators and networks. A shift in focus from an essentialist national television to individual programme contexts allows for a more nuanced analysis of television programmes, such as the comedy remakes examined here.

The findings of this study include the role of industrial processes within the remake process (Griffin, 2008; Larkey, 2009). What has been revealed with regard to this is unique from other studies in that it is not observable within the finished programmes; it is only possible on an assumptive level (e.g., noting how programme elements align with what the network already serves). The individuals in this study express how their decisions are informed by industrial expectations and realities. Remake appeal and potential are connected to industrial strategies, as noted in format studies (Esser, 2010, Steemers, 2004). However, this study expands upon those arguments to include not just affordances of exploitation and risk management, but the appeal of conceptual and generic alignment and innovation. This is important since the majority of these studies focus on unscripted programmes and the findings here point towards the appeals of scripted comedy which, as Chalaby (2016) notes, does not come with the same guarantees of risk avoidance as unscripted.

#### **Similarity vs. difference.**

Significantly, this study has highlighted the negotiation between similarity and difference in the comedy remake process between the UK and the US. This negotiation is found throughout the various stages examined in this study. For instance, aspects of production and intention are revealed in terms of similarity such as understanding and honouring the original. It is expressed within these statements that conceptual maintenance is essential to remake success.

Difference is found in the manner in which programmes are identified generically, but this is intracontextual whereby these programmes offer a point of departure from current offerings in their own context. This in no way argues that versions differ from one another just that they differ from other programmes. As such, versions are similar in that they are positioned as generically unique. Of course, this framing practice is not unique to remakes (Ferguson, 2006). This is one of the appeals of remaking in that the process aids in generic innovation.

Remake appeal is found in alignment of concept and taste (see below) which has industrial advantages such as risk management in that individuals can utilise the original versions to develop their own programme ideas. This is in addition to the other strategic affordances of remakes such as exploitation, networking, and banking on previous success (although arguably some of the programmes, such as *Free Agents* and *White Van Man*, did not have original success). The latter of these

highlights another point of similarity in that it is the intention of networks to replicate the success had by the original. Also, while it is true that remakes are appealing due to innovation, this appeal is expressed as something similar between the two contexts (e.g., Silverman's statement about *The Office's* innovative appeal due to its uniqueness not only in America but in its original British context as well).

In textual-based format studies it is argued that remake success is found in those remakes which differ from the original (Beeden & de Bruin, 2010; Kunz, 2010), but here individuals express an understanding that difference leads to failure (e.g., Whitehall's comment about *An American Education* failing due to straying from the original [in Jeffery, 2014, September]) while a tendency towards similarity can lead to success. This similarity is not about direct imitation, however, but involves conceptual and generic understanding and the ability to maintain the original "essence" of the format.

As has been demonstrated throughout this study, familiarity is a central component in comedic remakes as it is pivotal to sitcoms in general. Importantly, however, is that this familiarity is discussed in terms of similarity between versions. That is, while changes may be made, the initial appeal and basic concept are founded on understandings of similarity between the two contexts. Even when changes are made these are in keeping with similarity as familiarity is essential for sitcom in both the UK and the US and, therefore, any modifications are to maintain familiarity.

This familiarity is beyond changing minor references as Gervais explains: "Little bits and pieces can be different. It's got to be more than changing 'tap' to 'faucet' and 'tomato sauce' to 'ketchup,' otherwise you might as well just show the English version and hand out a glossary" (in Porter, 2003). Here Gervais is also rationalising remaking rather than airing the original and providing some support for comprehension. As other studies have noted, these changes are wider in scope (Beeden & de Bruin, 2010; Griffin, 2008). These substitutions are about contextual equivalence and still point towards similarity between versions. This is a common practice within translation whereby changes are in keeping with the original intentions of reception (Venuti, 1995).

The uniqueness of the context under study here, between Britain and the US, can be found in this negotiation. Britain and the US have many cultural and historical (both of which include industrial) similarities which make remaking

between them unique from other trade relationships that are often studied in format studies (e.g., those which consider the various remakes of *Yo Soy Betty, La Fea*: Mikos & Perrotta, 2012 [American remake: *Ugly Betty*]; Zhang & Fung, 2014 [Chinese remake: *Ugly Wudi*]; or studies of other versions of *The Office* such as Larkey, 2009 [German version: *Stromberg*] and Wells-Lassagne, 2012 [French version: *Le Bureau*])

This negotiation between similarity and difference underscores a point of convergence between industrial uses of formats and genre as it is a characteristic of both. As such, it highlights the value of approaching remakes generically. The importance of similarity is further demonstrated through the role of comedic sensibility which is discussed next.

### **Genre ownership.**

An important theme throughout this study has been genre ownership (i.e., possession of comedic taste, sensibility, style, etc.). Sensibility has played a role throughout the process, in identification, origination, work, and intention. Significantly, what was found was the importance of similarity in comedic sensibility throughout the remake process. This was demonstrated in initial appeal as well as throughout the actual production process and within intention. Similarity in genre and concept influences the appeal of remaking particular programmes and in bringing originators and remakers together. This shared style and taste is maintained throughout the process informing decision making. As such, these remakes are framed in a way in which to demonstrate an understanding of comedic similarity between Britain and the US that existed before and persists throughout the remake process. This is an important contribution to work dealing with national comedy.

For identification the role of sensibility was noted by Holland and his experience with *The Larry Sanders Show* which he expresses as similar to British comedy. Holland's previous work is utilised to rationalise his involvement in the remake since it frames him as understanding and being appreciative of British comedy. Furthermore, Gervais's comments on inspiration demonstrate that generic style crosses borders in situations other than remaking as *The Office UK* is claimed to be comprised of American comedic elements. This could be further expanded to include *White Van Man* and *Family Tools* in that the former was referred to as like *My Name is Earl* and then it was remade by individuals from that show. This means

that *White Van Man* was identified as possessing traits similar to *My Name is Earl* and, therefore, those involved in *Earl* and *Family Tools* would share a similar sensibility. The role of similar sensibility is not made explicit, but the means of framing utilised within these statements allows for such an association to be made.

The expression that similarity in sensibility plays a pivotal role in appeal makes this connection more explicit. This goes beyond just conceptual alignment such as that claimed by Scheffer with regard to *Getting On*. Similarity in taste was demonstrated as a means of rationalisation whereby remakers claim to understand and appreciate the comedy of the original context/programme. For instance, Holland claims to have experience with and to be a fan of British comedic sensibility. Again, this has industrial implications in that formats have strategic appeal in terms of genre and executives express this in terms of taste as well as strategy. This is found in branding and scheduling such as USA's greenlighting of *Sirens US* due to its acquisition of *Modern Family* and expansion into comedic programming as well as ABC's development of *Family Tools* in order to fill a comedy scheduling slot. While not explicitly mentioned, it must be assumed that there is an understanding that these formats and their eventual local versions are appealing due to their perceived generic alignment with industrial goals.

There are further ways in which particular generic sensibilities and experience are noted as having a role in origination. For instance, individuals reveal that styles somehow align so the remake relationship is not completely arbitrary. With regard to remake origination, Daniels refers to the shared sensibility between himself and the originators:

[We had a] commonality in taste, maybe, in terms of some of the stuff I had done on *King of the Hill*. It was pretty realistic for a cartoon and often poignant. I don't know. It felt like we were on the same page. So I got the gig (in Porter, 2013).

As such, the style of Daniels's previous work is used as a means of rationalising the remake relationship between him and the originators. He is revealing that his comedic style frames him as understanding and in alignment with the original. This also demonstrates the understanding that genre crosses borders. Additionally, this alignment is found in references to individuals being "fans" of one another, such as claimed by Leary about the British originators (in Radish, 2014), which would imply a similar sense of comedic taste and appreciation.

Shared sensibility is noted with regard not only to origination, but also work in that individuals highlight the desire to and enjoyment of working with others with similar tastes. The role of similar sensibility is most generally expressed in terms of working with other comedians, with people who “get” one another such as the comments made by the cast of *Free Agents US* (in Furlong, 2011). These statements reveal the extent to which genre structures the industry as individuals with similar genre roles and sensibilities are drawn together. While this may be perceived as exclusionary and reproducing already existing ties, formats offer a means by which that can be expanded to include individuals from other industrial contexts. That is, genre may act to bridge social gaps caused by national borders and enable the bonding of international creators who may otherwise be disparate (Daskalaki, 2010). As such, similarity in generic sensibility allows for those from different contexts to be brought together demonstrating the unifying role of comedy and humour which is explained by Curry & Dunbar (2013). They find in their experiment that “shared appreciation is used to identify others with shared expectations of behavior, which in turn makes them attractive partners for collaboration” (p. 128). Furthermore, “the experiment provides specific support for the theory that humor provides a particularly effective means of identifying others with such shared expectations” (p. 128). This demonstrates that similarity in humour style makes collaboration appealing between originators and remakers as well as within each production. In noting that individuals share comedic and humour taste and style, they are justifying their collaboration. Curry and Dunbar are supporting what was discussed in *Origination* by arguing that similarity in sensibility makes the remake relationship possible or at least easier. Similarity in style allows for individuals to identify remaking partners and rationalise that relationship in such terms.

Generic similarity brings me back to the comments made previously about finding the “right person” or someone who gets your “schtick.” For originators finding individuals who share similarity in comedic style and taste may fulfil these requirements. Additionally, this is not just about already existing similarity, but the role of understanding, as discussed in *Work*, in that individuals seek to share generic styles in order to properly portray the programme concept. So the “right person” may be someone who is willing and able to properly share comedic style. Furthermore, local competence and knowledge can be generic. This is not just about connecting individuals with similarity in style, but in finding individuals who

can properly translate that style from one context to another. Originators are expressing the importance of finding remakers who get their “schtick” and are able to then adapt that concept and style to the remakers’ own context without losing the comedic core of the format. This idea is important as it highlights the role of comedic taste in the remake process, elements of genre beyond just the technical aspects discussed in textual format studies (Beeden & de Bruin, 2010; Mikos & Perrotta, 2012).

The ability for comedy formats to aid in such bonding challenges the notion that comedy and humour are nation specific. It does not, on the other hand, pose an issue for the understanding that comedy and humour are cultural in that those who are connected may share such dispositions (Bourdieu, 1992/1996). In this case, cultural would be understood in a wider or industrial sense since industries are cultural (Becker, 2008; Caldwell, 2008). Therefore, it should be kept in mind that this bridging still involves similarity in that it is those with compatible styles and tastes which are being brought together. It makes sense that individuals would express a desire and perhaps a need to work with others who share their taste and style as opposing sensibilities may make comedic production difficult or even impossible. This may mean that such tastes are not unique, but they could provide a means of inclusion and exclusion. This is a noted aspect of humour: its social role. Individuals will be attracted to others with a similar sensibility as well as to networks which also share this or at least embrace it. Since the television industry is collaborative (Becker, 2008; Caldwell, 2008) similarity in taste and style aids in the functioning of this collaboration which is of particular importance when bringing together individuals from different nations and television industries. Such understandings further support viewing remakes in terms of industrial particularities (i.e., cultures) rather than solely nation.

Individuals may understand that they have a particular comedic style or taste, but generic elements are not perceived as unique. As Gervais states: "A joke isn't yours, it's used and you don't know where it's been" (in Hanks, 2002). The implications of such an understanding are that generic elements are shared even if unwittingly. So while programmes may be claimed to be “unique” or “innovative,” the components of them are not so exceptional. Therefore, comedic sharing and overlap is already understood as existing by those in the industry, not only occurring through the remake process. Formats may just take this recycling and

reconstruction to the extreme. Comedic replication is understood as an inevitability and normal condition therefore making remaking nothing particularly unique. Formats allow for a more structured means of comedic sharing and collaboration with a particular focus across national borders (and television industries). Humour in general is argued as social (Douglas, 1968; Kuipers, 2008) and remakes allow for this social purpose to extend across national television industries.

These statements present genre as playing a significant role in the framing of the remake process for the public. Genre is utilised for sense-making and rationalisation, in order to justify the process and the decisions made throughout. This utilisation is in terms of a negotiation between similarity and difference and a highlighting of the role of generic (i.e., comedic) sensibility. Additionally, genre is employed in order to demonstrate familiarity. Furthermore, this is expressed in industrial as well as conceptual terms whereby genre is understood as both a means of industrial and conceptual structuring and rationalisation. In this way, genre is a framing device (Bielby & Bielby, 1994) within statements surrounding comedy remakes between Britain and the US and these statements contribute to the discursive formation of genre (Mittell, 2001; Mittell, 2004)

These findings expand upon those of pre-existing works by not only examining surrounding statements and not the programmes themselves, but by showcasing that similarity of generic concerns between these contexts is highlighted. As such, generic similarity is presented in order to rationalise the various stages of the process examined here (i.e., identification, origination, work, and intention). Consequently, these programmes are remade not due to inherent national differences, but actually due to generic and industrial crossover. By examining the surrounding statements rather than the programmes themselves it has been possible to reveal generic implications not readily available within the programmes themselves. This examination has also further constructed the generic discursive formation of these programmes.

### **Limitations and Future Work**

The first limitation of this study is that it only considered a selection of programmes remade between the UK and the US. Part of this limitation was due to the constraints of this project. Additionally, programme selection was limited due to availability of sources. For instance, the multitude of programmes which are noted as being remade, but do not go beyond the stage of announcement (i.e., cancelled

before major production begins). The limited availability of sources about these programmes made any detailed examination impossible. It would be possible to examine other programmes remade during this period such as *Shameless* (Channel 4, 2004-2013; Showtime, 2011-present), *The Inbetweeners* (E4, 2008-2010; MTV, 2012), *The Worst Week of My Life* (BBC1, 2004-2006; CBS, 2008-2009), and *Coupling* (BBC2, 2000-2003; BBC3, 2004; NBC, 2003). This would only work to bolster the arguments of this study as well as perhaps offer instances of challenge and expansion. This would demonstrate further the utility of genre as a framing device through the remake process and the negotiation of similarity and difference during it.

This study was also limited to comedy remakes between the UK and the US and, therefore, did not consider any other genres or trade relationships/nations. The findings of this study reveal how genre is utilised for comedic remakes. The extent of genre framing in other genres, such as drama, may differ. As such, this study only argues for the manner in which understandings of comedy and humour are utilised within rationalising remaking between Britain and the US. So while the findings of this study are significant, it cannot be assumed that they can be applied to other contexts. This wider applicability to other genres and nations is one of the reasons this study was undertaken in the first place. As such, others may find similar gaps in this research as I found in other studies. This study can be used to undertake similar ones focused on different genres and/or TV markets. This will only function to expand understandings of the relationship between genre and the remake process.

Furthermore, this study was limited to one type of discursive enunciation and future work would benefit by considering the multitude of others ways in which genre is signalled in order to more fully construct the generic discourse surrounding these programmes (Mittell, 2001, 2004). A useful organising of these other discourses is Caldwell's (2008) list of "fully embedded," "semiembedded," and "publicly disclosed deep texts and rituals" (p. 347). These various "artifacts and practices" could be examined, if possible, in order to further develop and understand the generic discourse surrounding these programmes. In light of these limitations and opportunities for future research this study has made significant contributions.

## **Contributions**

The findings of this study are particular to remakes between British and American producers. This unique relationship highlights the issues of applying format studies across contexts and genres. There is a need to consider the particularities of each remake situation. In the case here, linguistic and other cultural similarities single this relationship out from many of the others found within format studies.

Furthermore, this study contributes to studies of scripted formats by examining the discourses surrounding the programmes. The findings of this study contribute to an understanding of these programmes generically by considering particular aspects of their discursive formation. This is important since, according to Mittell (2004), genre is expressed beyond the programme itself and, therefore, in order to more fully examine and understand these programmes generically it is essential to move beyond just the programme. As such, this study has demonstrated that remake discourse also goes beyond the programmes themselves to include the surrounding discourses such as the publicly made statements examined here. As such, format studies can benefit from a method similar to that proposed by Mittell. This allows for generic considerations to be brought into conversation with remake ones.

In addition, I have employed an analytical framework derived from the discourse which can be utilised in future studies. As such, other analyses of programmes, namely remakes, could benefit from considerations of identity, origination, work, and intention (as well as ownership as applicable). This framework allows for both structure and a means of criticism whereby statements are categorised and related across stages/themes. Furthermore, this framework is useful for both scripted and unscripted remakes and could potentially provide a means by which to compare various types (i.e., scripted and unscripted as well as different genres). It is also possible to implement the method by which the framework was derived in order to reveal additional and/or different stages/themes that were not discussed in the present study.

This study demonstrates the value of analysing the entire remake process for scripted remakes, not just unscripted ones. This is particularly significant due to the particularities of scripted programming (Chalaby, 2016). Additionally, this study contributes to a fuller examination of the scripted remake process by beginning to

consider components of production and other industrial factors which Caldwell (2008) argues are integral to the understanding of the finished programmes.

Importantly, this study finds that comedic remakes are framed in terms of similarity rather than difference the latter of which is utilised as the main argument for remaking in format studies based on textual analysis. It is important to consider remakes in terms of what is shared and how they highlight points of similarity between nations, not just divergences. This similarity is expressed by some in terms of the blending of comedy and humour between Britain and the US. I will end by re quoting Bobin:

In the past 10-15 years, our cultures have kind of merged because of the Internet. A lot of things that work here [in the U.S.] work in the U.K. There's not one monolithic British comedic sensibility. There's a variety of comedy in England. There's a fallacy that just because some British comedy is great, all British comedy is great. It's like (in the U.S.). Some of it is awesome, and some of it doesn't work very well (in Siegel, 2011).

As such, the line between American and British comedy has been blurred and where once there were arguable differences now there are growing similarities with sitcom remakes representing such a “merging.”

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