



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

TRiSS Working Paper Series
TRiSS-WPS-06-2019

Do State Funding, Geographic Location, and Networks Matter?

The Case of Prominent Irish Actors, Directors and Writers

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18th November 2019

Abstract:

Using a uniquely constructed data set, we look at the ecologies of creative careers in film/TV-drama/theatre, using a detailed interview-questionnaire case study of eighty-two prominent workers in the Irish film/TV-drama/theatre sectors. Three influences on career progression are given special attention: state patronage, geographic location and networks. There is strong evidence to show that those interviewed consider state patronage as very important to their career development, particularly in relation to 'breakthrough' events. Even this group though depend on outside work to supplement their incomes, particularly in advertising. The findings confirm that successful creative workers tend to be geographically concentrated and consider such proximity to other creative workers as important. A very large proportion of them also consider networks/personal connections as very important to career success, in terms of three main advantages: work/job contacts, the generation of new ideas and moral support/understanding.

Keywords: cultural economics, film/theatre, careers

Primary disciplines: economics, film studies

1 Introduction

The focus of this paper will be on career construction in film, TV-drama and theatre – how do the more successful creative people enter the fields of filmmaking and theatre, and how do they build and develop their careers?

The data source is a comprehensive interview survey of 82 prominent creative workers (actors, writers, and directors in film, TV-drama and theatre).¹ To inform our knowledge of the ecology of creativity in the film/TV-drama and theatre sectors, and using the information elicited from these data, the paper aims to do the following.²

- Understand more fully how creative workers in film, TV-drama and theatre enter the sector and progress their careers.
- Examine the role of state funding in their education and later career development
- Examine their geographical distribution in terms of potential locational clustering
- Examine the extent to which creative workers in these sectors supplement their incomes from other sources
- Examine the evolution and impact of early creative connections (e.g. family, drama societies, etc.)

The sample is comprised of award-winners and award nominees (see later).

Section 2 will set out the labour market situation for such creative workers, to provide context for the questionnaire and the findings thereof. Section 3 will outline the survey and questionnaire used. Section 4 will outline the key findings in terms of education and background of the sample, while Section 5 will examine the core issues of the paper, namely the role of state funding in career progression, the extent of supplementary work, geographical location and networks effects with other creative workers. Section 6 provides some concluding observations.

2 Some Features of the Market for Creative Workers

Sources of income

One of the earliest and perhaps most interesting overviews of the market for creative workers can be found in Frey and Pommerehne (1989). Their focus was on the incomes of creative people, where they argue that in every other profession the best worker is paid the most, but not necessarily so in the creative sector. In fact, in cinema and TV production it could be

¹ The project upon which the work is based is funded, following a competitive process, by *Creative Ireland*, a five-year initiative led by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dublin

² It is hoped that later work will compare the sample of successful creative workers looked at here, to an equally large sample of those who have not received awards

argued that the opposite often holds: the creation of less innovative but more marketable works may often be the most financially rewarding.³

A feature of the incomes of creative people is that they are usually derived from various sources (see for example, Throsby and Zednik, 2011). Creative workers in the sectors on which this paper is focused are mostly self-employed, with very variable employment conditions and hence unpredictable income. Many have other jobs at least tangentially related to their art: teaching, working on commercials, doing voiceovers, acting in radio plays, etc. Some less financially secure people may even have to undertake work totally unrelated to their art, such as restaurant or retail jobs. The survey inquired into this aspect of their income situation but did not ask for data on incomes per se.

State patronage

There is also income available through patronage. In the past, the Church was the major patron, and later the bourgeois merchant class who had acquired surplus wealth. Today, at least in Europe, patronage is derived mostly from the state at various levels, for example through direct grants for cultural production, indirectly benefitting creative workers by increasing employment opportunities. State (or public) patronage is usually given where the market on its own would not support the activity. Examples are innovative theatre work; experimental design; work aimed at minority audiences; arts that challenge or critique societal norms; and so on (see O'Hagan, 2016).

Much of this work is not obviously commercial and requires market support, not just for the writer who creates the original script, but also for the designers, technicians and actors who further develop and perform the new work. Patronage can thus encourage artistic innovation that, left purely to market forces, might otherwise not happen. It is interesting to see the extent to which the interviewees indicate that state patronage impacted on their careers.

Related to state patronage are exchequer-led measures like tax breaks, tax credits and tax refunds, which also contribute to the cultural production 'ecology'. Film production (both the commercial and 'arthouse' variety) is now routinely carried out on a global or transnational basis, incentivised by the availability of generous tax credits and other state subsidies. The scale of such incentives is driven by the desire of many countries to attract mobile film investment, providing valuable employment opportunities but also potential spin-

³ Many of the most renowned creative workers in the past, they point out, were almost penniless during their lifetime, but as always with many exceptions. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was, for example, an extraordinarily successful author from the economic point of view. William Shakespeare was also a very wealthy man for his time, with three main sources of income; a fixed salary as an actor, profits from part-ownership of the Globe and Blackfriars Theatres, and further income for his work as a playwright. Georg Friedrich Handel lived like a wealthy gentleman and left a fortune in his will. Top opera singers, like top film stars today, were always paid exceedingly well and would have earned around €250,000 (in today's money) each night at *La Scala*, for example. Star conductors and directors of opera were paid even more.

off benefits such as film tourism. In this sense they are part of industrial policy rather than cultural policy per se.⁴

Education system and awards/prizes

In many countries the education system is funded at least partly by the state. This is certainly the case in Ireland, where even private primary and secondary schools receive significant state subvention. While ‘free’ education in Ireland is often accompanied by substantial ‘registration fees’ that must be borne by students and parents, the major costs are nevertheless met from the public finances. Thus – as with most other occupations – the state is a major funder of career initiation and development through its support of film and drama studies at degree and postgraduate level, an aspect of state patronage that must not be overlooked. Our study also probes the relevance of alternative professional training organisations – both public and private – to career construction, and the extent to which later career success is linked to such a specialised educational/training background.

Awards and prizes can provide creative workers with considerable income too, although not always directly. Some awards do include a major financial element that provides a temporary income boost, but arguably the greater benefit is the resulting publicity and thereby possible increased demand for their creative output. The sample for this study in fact was chosen solely because each had won or been nominated for at least one important industry award.⁵ There may be no connection as noted above between an award (if assumed it is a measure of quality) and income. High-quality in fact may imply ‘high-brow’ and hence not be very marketable. What though are the features of the people who win awards, other than incomes?

Monetary versus psychic income

Menger (2006, 2015) argues that income in creative jobs is of two sorts; monetary and psychic. The latter has a much higher impact in artistic work than in other occupations, he argues, because of the variety of the work, the high level of personal autonomy in using one’s own initiative, the opportunities to use a wide range of skills/abilities and to feel self-actualized at work, an idiosyncratic way of life, a low level of routine and a high degree of social recognition for successful creative workers. Thus, he argues, creative workers may be seen more like ‘rational fools’ than people at the mercy of the market circumstances in which they find themselves.

⁴ To this end, Ireland’s Section 481 tax credit is competitive with similar schemes all over the world. It can refund up to 32 percent of local production costs and is therefore the most lucrative subsidy available in Europe (Buder 2016). On an individual level, eligible creative writers, musicians, sculptors and painters can ‘shelter’ up to €50,000 per year from income tax under the so-called Artists Exemption scheme. In addition, donations to theatre companies are generally tax deductible, incentivising both personal and corporate patronage of the performing arts.

⁵ While none of the awards or nominations on which our sample is based includes a financial prize, some of the individuals in the sample have won considerable (usually literary) prizes such as the E.M. Forster Award or the Wyndham-Campbell Literature Prize.

The focus of this study is not on incomes of creative workers, however, except in the sense of being involved in other non-creative work, and as such this is not of immediate relevance. Many other studies have addressed this issue though and show the very precarious employment and income conditions for creative workers (see for example Banks. and Hesmondhaigh, 2009, Comunian et al, 2001; Ashton, 2015, Bridgstock et al, 2015). A Europe-wide survey of 'audio-visual content creators' (predominantly screenwriters and film/television directors) found that there were high levels of intrinsic job satisfaction but also widespread dissatisfaction with job security and remuneration (Willekens et al. 2019). The combination then of both monetary and non-monetary income is a characteristic of the work of creative workers that might be borne in mind in the later discussion.

Creative worker as freelance entrepreneur

Greffe (2002) provides an apt description of creative workers, even though their type varies enormously from one activity to the next, for example a visual artist compared to a movie director compared to a member of an orchestra. Irregularity, he argues, is the basic characteristic of all creative activity, leading to low *median* wages for most creative workers. The nature of the work entails involvement in a host of projects, each executed to different contractual terms. In this sense, it is difficult to talk of a career, as artistic activity becomes a process where the concept of freelance worker/agent replaces that of traditional employment:

In the artistic field, there is a direct link between the artist's skill and the nature of the activity or project, so that one artist cannot easily replace another within the same project. The relationship between an artist and a producer is valid only for a particular project and it will not be the same for a different project. It is therefore necessary to define a project and look for a particular skill at the same time in the market and this is not concerned with the period of activity but with the type of talent required for a particular activity. (Greffe, 2002, p. 114)

The consequences of this are three-fold. The project cannot be implemented unless the requisite skills are found; artistic skills will remain underutilized due to lack of projects needing these special and specific skills; and the working period will be linked exclusively to the duration of the project. This certainly seems to describe the position of many creative workers in the film, TV drama and theatre worlds. Moreover, in film and television drama production the nature of the creative work involved varies enormously across occupations and over time with rapid technological change (eliminating some occupations while creating others).⁶

⁶ Digital film production, for example, has seen the elimination or transformation of camera assistant roles such as clapper/loader, while creating new ones such as Digital Intermediate Supervisor

Role of agents

While some of this management of creative resources is undoubtedly undertaken by film, television and theatre producers, who utilise their networks of personal and professional contacts to assemble creative project teams, an important role is also played by talent agents. In return for a portion (traditionally 10 percent) of their client's earnings, talent agents act as intermediaries for actors, directors, writers and other creative workers. Agents representing the client in contract negotiations, adding value by offering their business and negotiating skills to creative workers not necessarily well versed in such hard-nosed aspects of the entertainment industry.⁷

As film workers became self-employed, talent agents arose in response, adding representational value in a similar manner to literary agents, helping clients find work and negotiate contracts. Larger talent agencies also acquired industry power by representing a diverse 'stable' of talented clients, allowing them to offer 'packages' of complementary creative workers (lead and supporting actors, director, writer), sometimes in return for a portion of profits generated by the project in question. The existence of agents impacted directly on our work, as to contact many of those we wished to interview we had to go through their talent agents, often with little success. They were also perhaps limited through privacy legislation to provide the contact information we needed, but ultimately, perhaps, may have seen no benefit to their clients (or themselves) in our survey.

Locational choices

Grefe (2002) and Noonan (2015) argue that location is an important factor for creative success. Mitchell (2019), O'Hagan (2019), Borowiecki (2013), and Hellmanzik (2012) clearly demonstrate that artistic activities of various sorts tend to be concentrated in cities and towns, and often within a small district within metropolitan cities. Once a creative worker is actively engaged in projects that need constant revision or performance, he/she must be in constant close contact and be able to move quickly from one project to another as opportunities arise, as noted above. This is possible only in areas with large populations and a wide variety of activities (in our case, film, TV, theatre, commercials, teaching and so on). Producers/directors must also locate in places where they can easily find people with specialised talents and minimise their respective transaction costs. The need for such contiguity largely explains the existence of cultural clusters/districts.

There are other advantages to contiguity for creative workers (see O'Hagan, 2019). These arise from personal contacts as outlined well by Collins (1998):

⁷ West (1988) notes how the literary agent arose in response to the power imbalance between authors and publishers, as the latter became increasingly professionalised in the early 20th century. In the film industry, talent agents arose in different circumstances. A series of events, most notably the decline of film audiences in response to competition from television and the forced divestment of the studios' cinema exhibition divisions under antitrust legislation, saw the major Hollywood studios enter a long period of decline that ended the traditional practice of long-term direct employment of actors, writers, directors, film technicians and studio craft workers.

I suggest three processes, overlapping but analytically distinct, that operate through personal contacts. One is the passing of cultural capital, of ideas and the sense of what to do with them; another is the transfer of emotional energy, both from the exemplars of previous successes and from contemporaneous build-up in the cauldron of a group; the third involves the structural sense of intellectual possibilities, especially rivalrous ones. (p. 71)

These processes operate in all types of personal contacts and especially perhaps among creative workers.

Some more recent studies relate to clustering in large cities. Drawing on Storper and Venables (2004), O'Hagan (2019) argues that cities enjoy an advantage because of their economic and social diversity and that this diversity facilitates haphazard, serendipitous contact among creative people. Further, the diversity found in cosmopolitan cities facilitates 'creativity' because of the openness of their networks and the liberating force of resistance to hide-bound tradition. Moreover, as creative workers in the arts sometimes rely on part-time work in other areas to finance their writing and creative endeavours, cities are preferable because of the more numerous employment opportunities available. Their work also demonstrated the existence of close personal network connections between various classes of creative workers, based on historical evidence. One of the key foci of this paper as noted earlier in fact is to explore in greater depth the extent to which such personal and work connections are perceived to operate in the film/TV-drama and theatre sectors today.

3 Choice of Sample of Creative Workers and Questionnaire

Sample construction

The need to go deeper than census data to investigate career trajectories was highlighted by Bridgstock et al (2015), as such data ignore portfolio career arrangements entirely. We attempted to do this by constructing a sample of specific creative workers, namely 'prominent' creative workers in the film/television and theatre fields. We chose to link the selection to major film, television and theatre industry awards.⁸ As it is customary for prominent practitioners to seek work in the wider anglophone market, we included awards in the UK and the US as well as in Ireland. For the film and television sector, the awards ceremonies chosen were those organised by the Irish Film and Television Academy (IFTA); the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA); and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences ('Oscars'). For the theatre sector, we chose the *Irish Times* awards; the Olivier awards granted by the Society of London Theatre; and the US 'Tony' awards for excellence in

⁸ Lincoln examined award winners in a different context, mainly in terms of the existence and causes of gendered age disparities.

Broadway Theatre. UK and US awards/nominations won during the 1990-2018 period were considered. As the Irish award ceremonies have a shorter history, theatre awards dating back to 1997 and film awards back to 2003 were considered.

The creative professions chosen for our sample comprised directors, writers, and actors. While there are many other 'creative' occupations in film and theatre (e.g. cinematographers, editors, sound designers, set designers), the scope of the current project necessitated a narrower focus. Due to the small size of the Irish entertainment industries relative to their US and UK counterparts, it was decided to include all Irish nominees for awards in those countries, whereas in Ireland only award *winners* were included in the sample. Given this, the total came to 206 creative people in the film/TV drama and theatre sectors to be surveyed.

Questionnaire design and response rate

As the focus of our research – access to and progression within the creative industries – is not occupation-specific, it was decided to design a general set of questions applicable to all creative workers in our sample. Questions were devised around the following general areas of enquiry: base information; education and professional training; geographic location; access to funding (public and private); work outside of Film/TV and theatre; and professional networks. The questionnaire was designed to form the basis of structured interviews, to be carried out face-to-face or, if necessary, over a telephone or skype/facetime connection.

The 206 creative workers were approached, either directly (where contact information was available) or through their agents. 110 responses (53 percent of the sample) were received, and 82 of these (40 percent of the sample) agreed to be interviewed. This represents a high response rate, comparing favourably with previous surveys in this general area.⁹

Of the 82 completed interviews, 55 were conducted face-to-face, usually in a coffee shop. The rest were conducted in person by telephone or skype/facetime. Subjects had generally been sent the questionnaire in advance, so had an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the questions, if desired. In general, the interviews were affable, and subjects seemed to enjoy talking about their careers. For those individuals who declined to be interviewed or failed to respond to the request, a version of the interview, designed for collecting broadly similar data from online sources (where available) was constructed.

Figure 1 outlines the breakdown of the total (TG, n=206) and the interview group (IG, n=82). The response rate for those in film/TV-drama was 32 per cent, compared to 44 per cent for those in theatre and 27 per cent for those in both. The higher response rate for those in theatre may perhaps reflect the public concerns in Ireland evident at the time the survey was undertaken about pay, conditions, and employment rates in the theatre industry. Whatever the reason, it should be borne in mind that the total number interviewed in the film/TV-drama award category was 38, with 52 in the theatre sector, including eight who won

⁹ A recent survey, of European audio-visual authors, for example, had a response rate of 25 percent overall, with a slightly lower rate among Irish respondents (Willekens et al 2019).

awards in both (see Figure 1). As such, it is difficult to break these down any further with any degree of confidence, given the small numbers.

Figure. 1: total group (n=206), interview group (n=82) by sector where award won

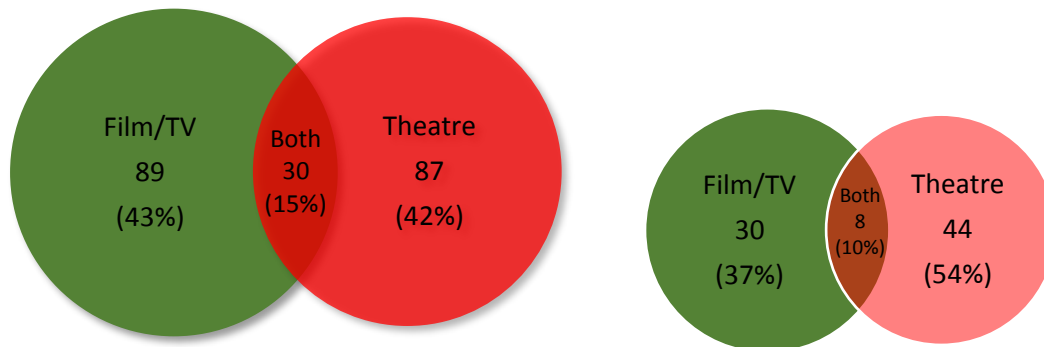
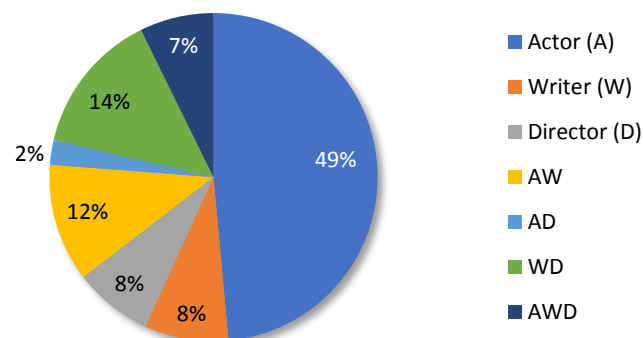


Figure 2 provides further information on the total group, in terms of their stated occupation. Not surprisingly perhaps, 49 per cent are actors, with a further 35 per cent either actor plus either writer, director or writer/director. There were only eight per cent who listed writer-only and another eight per cent director-only. What is of interest for the later discussion perhaps is that so many have more than one type of occupation within the sector, with around sixteen per cent having all three roles (actor, writer, director). While this phenomenon needs further investigation, it perhaps reflects the value, in a precarious career environment, of an actor's ability to create employment for oneself by writing own material, especially material that can be efficiently 'toured', such as a one-person show.

Figure. 2: Total group (n=206) by occupation



4.1 Findings: Education and State Patronage

Education and early involvement

Figure 3 shows the educational attainment, with 71 per cent of the survey having a third-level degree or higher, well above the national average. In relation to occupation (not shown in

Figure), there are some differences, with directors being the most highly-educated, 23 per cent of them possessing a postgraduate degree. Actors on the other hand are least likely to have attended College.

Figure 3: Formal education: highest level achieved (n=82)

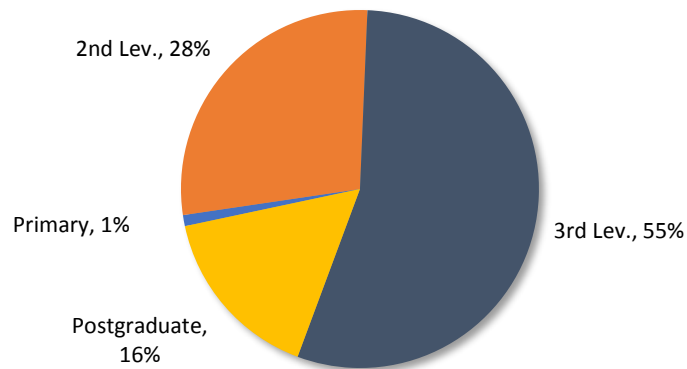
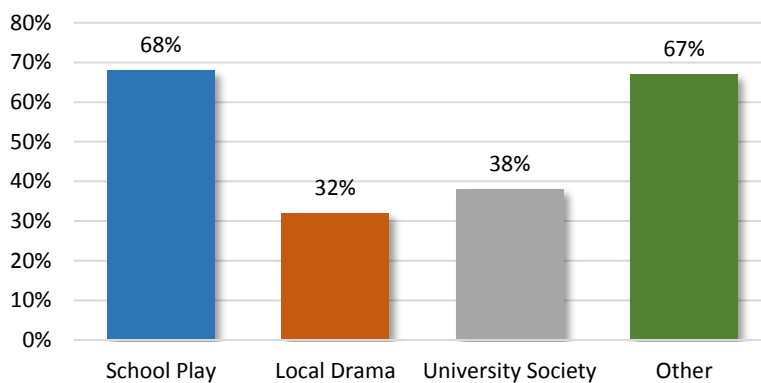


Figure 4 provides data on first exposure to participation in drama, theatre and film. Clearly, school plays are an important introduction to performance, for all categories in fact. University societies also, it seems, were important for introducing creatives to their eventual careers, especially among directors. These societies provide ideal opportunities to form contacts/networks for later life as shall be seen. Many other 'early exposure' factors were cited as can be seen in Figure 4. While the numbers are small, some talked of a 'sympathetic' home environment (perhaps through parental interest or profession), and, interestingly, access to equipment (in the case of some who ended up making films for a career) proving motivational. This perhaps underlines the importance of early hands-on experience for developing this career interest. This may also have implications for second-level education, where perhaps more practice-based media exposure might be of value. Equally, of course, it could be an anachronism, given that access to cameras has become much more widespread, than it would have been during the formative years of the film/TV directors interviewed.

Figure 4: First exposure to theatre/filmmaking (n=82)

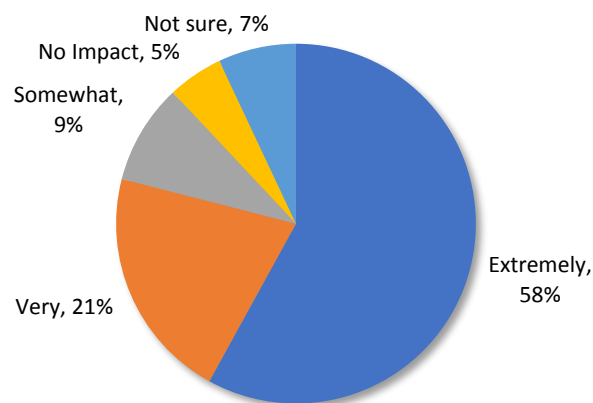


State patronage

More than two-thirds of the sample group received direct grants or subsidy (that is where the individual was a named recipient of the funding). As can be seen in Figure 5, almost 80 per cent of them indicated that this funding was extremely or very important for their careers, a strikingly high figure considering media comment over the years suggesting that funding levels were so low as to be meaningless to career development. It may be of course on the other hand that since the interviewees knew that this project was funded by a public agency, Creative Ireland, that they would overstate the importance of state funding. Nonetheless what is not in doubt is that 70 per cent of these prominent creative workers had received state funding in terms of grants and/or bursaries.

When these figures are broken down by occupation, it becomes clear that writers (88 per cent) and directors (90 per cent) particularly were most in receipt of state funding. Actors were less reliant, as they were probably less likely to be project initiators and recipients of development funding in both theatre and film/TV-drama (although they do of course benefit indirectly from employment on publicly funded projects). When asked to specify the main sources of public funding, a multitude of providers were listed, but the Arts Council of Ireland and Screen Ireland were the major sources of funds by far. Interestingly, the Artists' Tax incentive in Ireland, which potentially applies to all writers of plays and screenplays was not mentioned by anyone.

Figure 5: Public funding: helpfulness for career development (n=82)

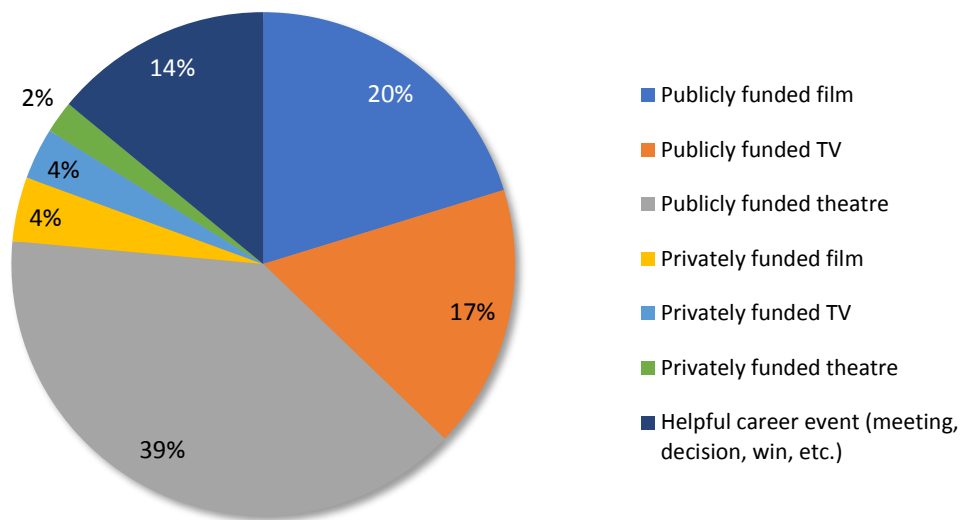


A very large proportion of the total are *aware* (as opposed to being in receipt of) not only of grants etc., but also tax breaks. Almost all consider them extremely important, again difficult to interpret correctly. They might as mentioned have listed them as unimportant because of their low level, or in complete contrast overstated their importance in the drive to increase the levels of the funding involved. The interviewees were asked though at what stage of their careers they received state funding: 54 per cent stated early in their careers with only 9 per cent indicating late in career. This would suggest that public funding was indeed important in their development and that there may have been no incentive to overstate its importance.

Thus, overall the evidence seems to be convincingly indicating that state patronage was a very important part of the career development of those interviewed.

This issue was looked at in another way. When asked to name (up to three) career breakthrough incidents, interviewees listed a variety of roles, projects, career events etc, that were subsequently classified as in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Career breakthroughs classified by type (n=82)



Publicly-funded theatre was the largest category, followed by publicly-funded film and then publicly-funded television. In total, publicly-funded projects accounted for 76 per cent of all mentions, underlining the clear role of film, TV and theatre subsidy in launching prominent careers. This finding reinforces the above findings highlighting the centrality of public funding to career construction.

4.2 Findings: Geographic Location, Supplementary Work and Networks

Residential location

As may be seen in Figure 7, almost a quarter of interviewees reside outside Ireland, with the vast majority though living in Ireland. While there were no remarkable differences when these figures were broken down further, it seems that there was a greater propensity for females to be resident abroad, although too much should not be suggested from this given the small numbers involved.

Looking at the place of residence, a clear picture emerges. The dominance of Dublin within Ireland and London for those UK-based is striking, with 73 per cent of all those interviewed, resident in one and/or other of these locations. As Dublin is a small city it is likely that, many of these, live geographically close to each other. Regarding occupation, residential location in London appears particularly important for actors; given the concentration of the theatre sector, and the late hours of work there would also suggest that

they live in close geographic proximity. Figure 8 bears this out quite convincingly. Almost three-quarters live in close geographic proximity to others in the sector, and almost half consider near proximity to be very important, with a further quarter deeming it somewhat important.

It is perhaps surprising that so few individuals are based in the USA, given the importance of Hollywood and Broadway and the long tradition of Irish creative workers moving there.

Figure 7: Residential location (n=206)

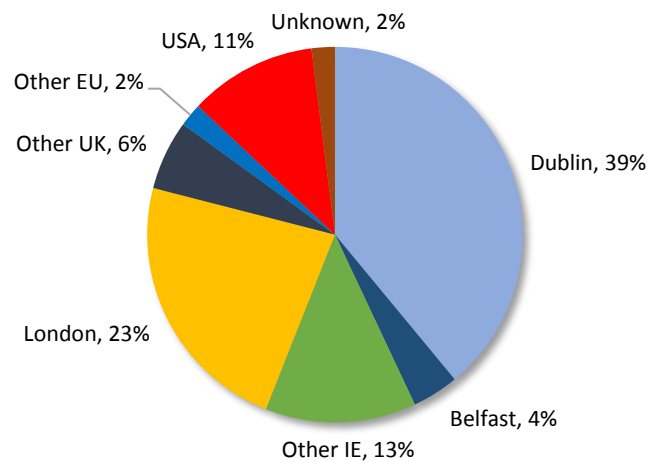
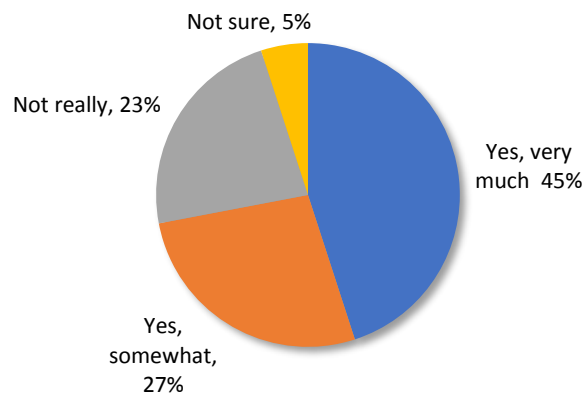


Figure 8: How much geographical proximity matters (n=82)

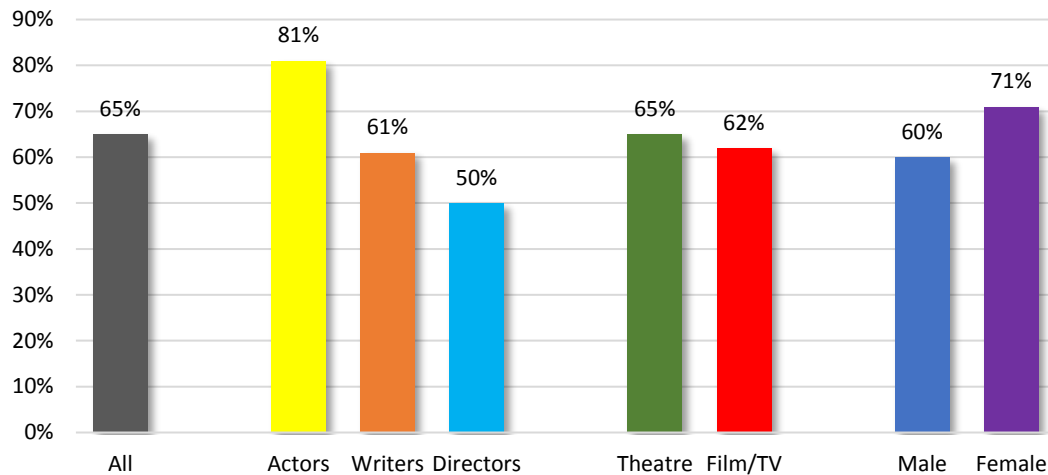


Supplementary work

While information on incomes was not sought in the survey, as it was thought its inclusion might deter participation, some questions were asked about the extent and nature of supplementary work undertaken. The most common area by far for such work was in advertising, with 65 per cent undertaking work there. The next most common types of supplementary work, at around one-fifth for each category, were music videos, workshops, 'related occupations' and teaching/lecturing.

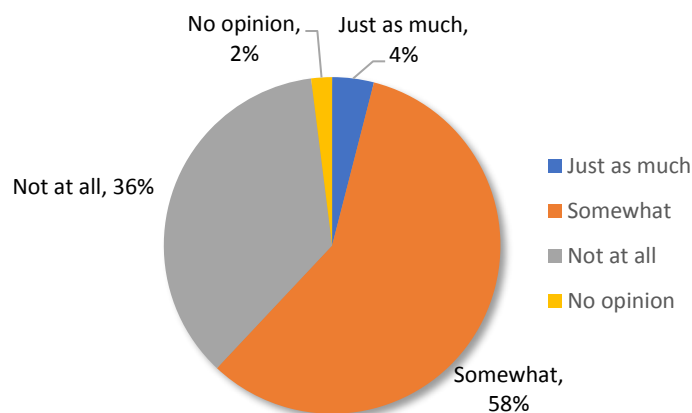
Figure 9 breaks down the reliance on advertising by occupation, sector and gender. It is noteworthy that actors have the highest dependence, with directors having the least. Women also have a higher dependence, but the gap with men is not large.

Figure 9: Reliance on advertising work to supplement income (n=82)



The interviewees were asked then about the perceived creativity involved in such work, with a clear message emerging. In relation to the main supplementary work, namely advertising, the vast majority thought it had no or only a somewhat creative dimension. This would suggest that this type of work then is not particularly satisfying and therefore undertaken primarily to supplement low average and unpredictable incomes arising in the creative sectors discussed earlier. It seems that involvement in music videos and other work is much more creative, especially in relation to the former. However, just around a fifth as mentioned already are involved in such work.

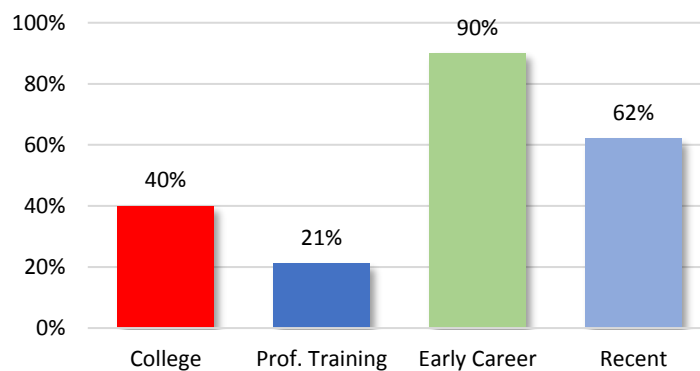
Figure 10: Creative content of advertising work (n=82)



Networks/personal connections

It was mentioned in the earlier sections that networks and personal connections have been shown to be important to career success for a variety of creative worker in a historical context. As such, it is interesting to explore the existence and nature of such connections, if any, for the group under study here. Figure 11 outlines the extent of such connections and their origins. As one might expect, early and recent career were the most important origins of current networks/personal connections. However, friendship at College were also listed for 40 per cent of the sample, with in some cases these lasting, judging from some responses, throughout life.

Figure 11: Networks and their origins (n=82)



What was much more interesting to ascertain from the survey was the extent to which these connections were perceived as helpful/important and in what ways. Figure 12 portrays a surprisingly strong perceived role for networks in career success. Almost three-quarters consider them greatly or very important to career success, with only 7 per cent indicating that they were not at all important. If they are so important the question arises then in what ways. Three ways in which they help are very evident, as can be seen in Figure 13; jobs/work, ideas and moral support. This is much clearer evidence than previously suggested by historical studies (see Mitchell, 2019; O'Hagan, 2019), and it is striking in its strength. What was also clear from the survey was how such work connections sometimes developed into strong personal/family connections such as marriage, 'best' friendships, godparent roles, and so on. Again, this is evident from anecdotal historical information in relation to prominent philosophers and writers (see O'Hagan and Walsh, 2017, and O'Hagan 2019).

Figure 12: How important are networks? (n=82)

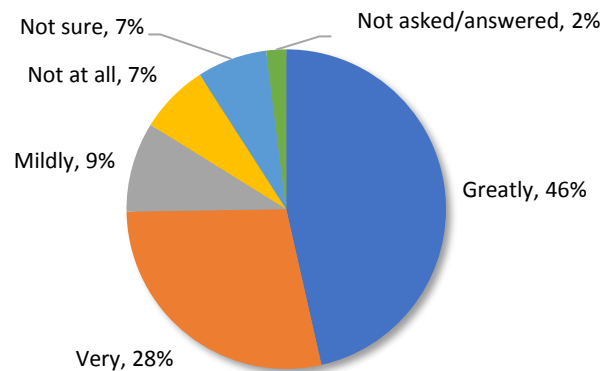
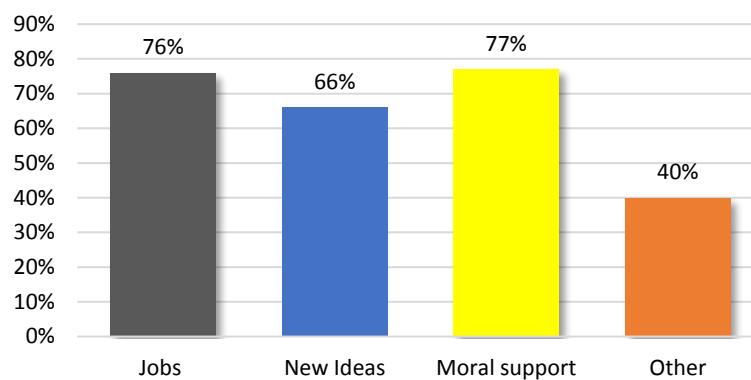


Fig. 13: How networks help



5 Concluding Comments

The purpose of this paper, and the extensive interview programme underlying it, was to throw some light on the ecologies of creative careers in the film/TV-drama and theatre sectors in Ireland, thereby adding to the evidence base in general for such creative workers. It was shown how different forms of early exposure to such work played a role in their later career development, with school plays and local amateur productions emerging as particularly important. So also, did home background matter greatly for some, as well as university societies. It is also clear that this group have above average education, with over 70 per cent having a third-level degree or higher.

The role of state patronage in their career development is perceived as very strong, with not only a large proportion receiving such funding but most of them considering it very important to their early career development, a finding which is in line with main rationale for such funding, namely providing the 'space' for the exploration of innovative creative output free from the constraints of the market place.

While the issue of low, average monetary incomes in the sector was not addressed in the survey, it was addressed in the empirical section in terms of what supplementary work the interviewees undertook and the creative nature, if any, of this work. Large percentages of them have been involved with supplementary work, most of it with very little creative

content, suggesting that the main purpose is to earn an income to support the unpredictable and often low level of income from their main occupation. Bear in mind that those under study here are the more successful creatives, as all have won an Irish award or been nominated for an international award.

The findings also confirm, in this instance, the belief that successful creative workers tend to be geographically concentrated, for all the reasons stated in Section 2. Not only are the creative workers under review in this study predominantly located in two places, Dublin particularly but also London, but the findings indicate that a large majority considers geographic proximity to be somewhat or very important. This is related to the later finding that a very large proportion of them consider networks/personal connections as very important to career success, connections which can best be facilitated through close geographic proximity. The benefits of such close personal connections it seems are threefold, as suggested by many other studies based simply on anecdotal evidence, namely: work/job contacts, the generation of ideas and moral support/understanding.

The policy implications of the above are clear. Early exposure to participation in drama and film making should be encouraged by the state, with each person making sure that contacts/connections developed later via College societies and early career are nourished and developed. It seems also that the perception is that state funding, especially in early and middle career stages, is vital to later career success. The funding sources are varied but clearly Arts Council of Ireland and Screen Ireland are by far the most important sources for such funding. Given the importance of close geographic proximity to other creatives and the various advantages of large cities for creative industries and workers, then it is important that the high costs of renting/buying in these locations does not act as deterrent to creative workers. The benefits are two-way; cities have advantages for innovative work, but also the presence of innovative workers can make in turn cities more attractive (Andersson et al, 2014.)

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