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Ethics?
Stress, Rifts, and Bad Behavior

When you search Unruly Agency the first thing you see is about women empowerment. . . .

These guys are basically pimps. . . .

[They] are pretty bloodthirsty and money hungry [and] treat their talent as objects. They most definitely don’t have your best interests in mind. . . .

—Blowback by coerced online creators and content removal specialists against “cash-grabbing” Unruly and Behave “talent agencies”

We seldom think of artistic accomplishment through the lens of bad behavior. We pay less attention to the industrial infrastructure that facilitates managerial harm or enables untoward acting-out, even as it produces media content. Instead, we continue to pose media aesthetics as largely disconnected from ethics per se. Large commercial industries, however, sorely complicate our habit of segregating the individual production of creative work from collective questions about right and wrong, power and domination. Several contentious controversies in the film and TV industries that recently became reform movements—MeToo, OscarsSoWhite, TimesUp, Black Lives Matter, the 2021 Golden Globes racial diversity takedown—suggest just how shortsighted (or lazy) our neat critical distinctions between artistry and domination may be. How can the victims that MeToo and TimesUp advocated for be understood as outcomes of standard business practices, as logical (even if unintended) industrial productions?

I undertook this book because I wanted to better understand film and media production workers as communities interacting and contending
with each other. I was much more interested in long-standing norms and routines used offscreen to find intertrade advantage or consensus than in short-lived celebrity controversies about racial or sexual harassment of the sort in which the tabloids excel. Yet in trying to map how film and media production are embedded within a complex industrial ecosystem, I repeatedly ran into stress points, faults, and rifts that appeared to function as logical parts of corporate and industrial advancement. As a result, I came to understand the structural stresses in contact zones between embedded production groups as viable routes for researching the industrial production system as a whole. Finally, while I was finishing this manuscript during the COVID-19 pandemic, an immense amount of racial pushback and cultural vitriol in the political sphere churned within film and television as well. As such, I now approach the tabloid manic news cycles differently: as symptoms, as surface flags connected to longer-term trade fault lines. They often serve as warning signs connected to deeper structural stresses, like precarity, that I had been studying for several decades.

My nagging sense that bad behavior and ethical minefields might naturally result from routine industrial practice may be a by-product of the way ethical problems frame the very research methods that my UCLA doctoral students and I employ in fieldwork. In ethnographic research the ethnographer is inseparably linked to the problem of protecting human subjects. The scholar’s professional protocols are established to ensure the ethical protections of informants in the field. Yet this sole focus on the scholar’s ethic makes little sense when we research large corporate organizations. There, the power imbalance between the researcher and researched is flipped; the tables are turned, so that the researcher is more legally at risk than the research subject (the corporation). The reasons for this risk asymmetry are many.

Outside funding, national policies requiring supportive partnerships between academics and creative industries, and lock-tight legal constraints in the proprietary digital media platform era all complicate the role of ethics in production culture studies. Patrick Vonderau’s recent critique of the absence of ethical considerations in “media industry studies” offers a compelling analysis. His indictment—“Do ethics matter?”—strikes me not just as a shot across the bow of the maturing media industries field. The critique also gives me a chance to briefly reflect on and question my own journey in the field. How and in what ways are my work and the methods I propose in the chapters ahead “ethical”? I take this question as an opportunity for retrospection—a chance to unpack
how and why ethics informs my approach in this book to researching stressors in embedded production systems (fig. 1.1).

Even if my students hope to research production tools, trade texts, or media markets, I require that they complete the “protection of human subjects protocols” and IRB (Institutional Research Board) workshops in my graduate foundation “Cultures of Production” seminar at UCLA. I view this requirement as an instructive, and at times necessary, reset. This especially holds for graduate students trained in the arts and
humanities, like myself. Why had many humanities fields somehow never deemed such human ethical protections important enough to the discipline to be required in those fields?

Fieldwork opened up one troubling void in IRB protocols that still nags me. Twenty-first-century media companies necessarily dwarf me (and my doctoral researchers) in terms of economic clout, institutional leverage, and the sheer size of their legal divisions. In a potentially litigious “stare-down” over information or disclosure, I am clearly the “human subject” at risk—not my corporate “research subjects.” How do university review boards protect professors from giant multinationals that may not like independent views of their corporate brands or criticisms published by researchers? Should corporations be able to censor independent scholarship with threats and excessive lawyering in this way?

Unfortunately, university IRB offices have never been able to provide me with a parallel request: a “protection of human researcher” protocols or workshops. My university seems uninterested or blind to the very acute legal and ethical asymmetry that defines most media industries research encounters. This institutional indifference toward protecting human professors from the corporations they write about or critique may be sustained by the deep positivist tradition that establishes how researchable information is defined in the physical and social sciences. There, data is deemed neutral (not socially constructed a priori). In effect, data is bracketed off categorically from the scholar’s professional standards and protocols meant to oversee and protect that collected data.

Early on in a research project, I remind my hesitant or anxious students to “remember that the marketing or publicity staffer that you have contacted (or been shunted off to by the creative workers you actually want to talk to) is employed precisely to get company information out. At least initially, you represent a possible route to achieve that company’s disclosure goal. So learn to factor in what you think they want with what you need as you negotiate for access. You might not get what you want, but your haggling will likely tell much about what is going on there, even if you don’t get the data you initially asked for. Analyze and treat that haggling not as secondary, or as flak, but as fundamental to your production research.”

Unlike the text-based humanities, anthropologists have been tangling with the muddy politics of slippery research encounters for some time. They have developed various ways to address the ethics of how knowledge is coproduced by ethnographers and informants. Many of these fieldwork strategies require “reflexivity” on the part of the ethnogra-
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PhD. Vonderau makes a persuasive case that reflexivity (self-reflection, disclosure, and critique) reveals how a researcher’s knowledge is “produced” and how it can provide a viable and preferable alternative to simply falling back on (or deferring to) a scholar’s “professional” protocols. After all, IRBs can be deployed (and then buried). IRB checklisting can easily cloak problematic ways that project researchers may have captured industry knowledge in the first place.

While I have not written separately about ethics in my earlier media industries or production studies, my practical decisions about how to research have likely been guided by a moral framework that I developed much earlier in life. I hope to briefly sketch out here three themes that recur in decisions I have made about what in production I choose to study and how. These themes are even more basic and less clinical than the IRB checklist of topics and protections. All three target fundamental media industrial and production workplace behaviors that (somehow) mostly pass as legitimate in the professional world. These suspect but normalized production standards include industrial deception (lying), industrial intimidation (coercion and bullying), and industrial extraction (stealing, under another name).

My argument here is that the production culture practices I focus on interest me in part because they express or involve a range of unethical industry fundamentals. These suspect tactics and postures are arguably pernicious because they are normalized through otherwise innocuous-looking everyday working interactions and trade reporting. Beyond my primary research task of describing complex embedded production systems more accurately, I believe that a secondary goal is inseparable from it. Specifically, I presuppose that sound critical cultural analysis of production can also meaningfully unpack unethical normalizing and legitimation habits. Production culture research on system stressors can add ethical dimensions to the insights organizational sociology and political economics achieve in their analyses (fig. 1.2).

Production studies are often effective because they are good at clear-eyed observation and close, “thick” description. Research subjects and human informants necessarily complicate that descriptive dimension. Yet as research objectives, the researcher’s descriptive mission and ethical obligations are not mutually exclusive. Stated differently: when students ask me why I take on the research that I do, I’ve come to confess in retrospect that, frankly, I must have chosen to study things that make me angry. I do not like liars, bullies, or thieves. Never have. Whether in production work or academia. The complex industries that I study seem
to have mainstreamed and justified several suspect dispositions—
deception, coercion, and extraction. Such things are often normalized
as benign and sanctioned as managerial realities in production. This
presupposes that they are parts of some odd professional skill set, things
to be accepted “if you want to make it in the industry.” I address each
of these three normalized dispositions in turn.

INDUSTRIAL DECEPTION (DISINFORMATION)

I have caught more grief from my “inverse credibility law,” which I
originally put forth in Production Culture, than from just about any-
thing else in that book. I stated there that the value of information often
diminishes as the scholar ascends in the media industrial hierarchy in
search of information. Thus the formula: More Authority = Less Verac-
ity at the executive level; and Less Authority = More Authenticity at the
worker level. My personal experience of industry’s food chain informed
that principle. Producers and management-types always seemed to get the better of me in discussions, or they offered little more than their publicity machines had already advertised online or in the trades. I reasoned that what higher-ups said casually to me must also have already been masterfully “scripted” from talking points in their branding or business plans. My interviews or panels with professionals on media matters, therefore, actually served as stages for a kind of stealth marketing-art-of-disclosure by insiders. I reasoned that their staying on point so authentically, in the ways they answered my questions, probably also contributed and added value to the respective media business and creative successes those same individuals had achieved.

I recognize the inverse credibility law as one factor that justified shifting my research focus away from higher-ups and auteurs to below-the-line workers, who are normally anonymous. I offered “standpoint theory” to bolster this shift in view. This framework builds on the idea that persons at the bottom of a complex system often have more accurate understandings of the system as a whole than persons at the top. While I still consider that standpoint logic sound, I confess here that I also intended the inverse credibility law at the time as an academic provocation, as well. I reasoned that scholars, myself included, are usually so grateful to have been given access to any higher-level in the industry that we/I bend over backward to reframe their words positively. Regardless of our misgivings.

I want to double down here on the insight that industrial information is usually less cloaked by vested corporate interests if you can access it below or outside management’s official bureaucratic sphere. In reality, spin, misinformation, and disinformation go far beyond what a high-up says in an interview. Arguably, industrial deception is a widely sanctioned premise across industry in both high and low production sectors. Standard managerial tactics for deception that industry normalizes include spin, dissembling, integrated product sponsorship, viral marketing, public-relations fixer interventions, unacknowledged intraconglomerate cross-promotions, countermarketing and disinformation campaigns, and trade-show keynotes.

Think about the many ways that companies say one thing when they mean something else, or when they simply want fans or the press not to look at some rift, trend, or problem area in the firm. Token “diversity initiatives,” “third-rail” marketing campaigns, publicity firms, back-channel social media sharing, fan initiatives, meet-and-greets, and industry’s various professional associations and shadow academies can all kick into gear when internal problems are disclosed publicly—or
FIGURE 1.3. Studio flack buffers dissent. Here, a picketing VFX worker in Hollywood protests coercive international tax subsidies, which spur LA studios’ “runaway production” and union-busting (labor strategies that are celebrated both by nearby executives and producers elsewhere in the world). Photo: © 2015, by J. Caldwell.
when they are leaked or hacked. As a result, beware of the launch of sunny “overly ethical” corporate initiatives. Yet even as they misdirect, they offer valuable sites for critical production research. By overselling a progressive social initiative, a company often inadvertently flags a site or industrial practice that is necessarily less sunny than the misdirection initiatives launched to cover it in public.

Trade behaviors that steer perception by dissembling or disinformation can frustrate scholarly attempts at “direct” empirical observation, objective description, documentation of industry, or statistical quantification. Some “objective” quantitative methods—like randomized sampling to create a representative data set—become absurd measures in the context of industrial disinformation. Publishing conclusions from a data set consisting of planted information, for example, can reduce the scholar’s role to a mere mouthpiece for a firm’s proprietary talking points. I argue that industrial dissembling usually requires research methods that go beyond the statistical analysis of a randomized data set. These alternatives can include considerable further textual deconstruction by the scholar via the textual analysis of deep trade artifacts (EPKs, demos, clip-reels); embedded discourse analysis (planted trade stories or industry news cycles); Geertzian interpretation (behind-the-scenes looks, explanations, or “mentoring” of the researcher by a craft master or industry “expert”); or ritual analysis from symbolic anthropology (to unpack affiliate meetings, upfronts, or executive internship programs). Industrial deception is precisely why deep textual deconstruction can be so crucial as a foundation or prerequisite for industry disembedding research of the sort this book features (fig. 1.3).

INDUSTRIAL COERCION (BULLYING AND INTIMIDATION)

I learned a great deal when I worked for a television art director in my first significant job after college. The backroom file cabinets we had that were stuffed with mountains of photographic visuals and style references awed me. This working research archive was far more comprehensive than comparable files I had seen in university settings. But I also quickly ran into work behaviors with which I was completely unfamiliar. I had never in my life seen so much periodic dormant-then-vitriolic anger and loud intermittent acting-out in the workplace. Let alone as part of a creative work process. I realized these behavioral habits might say more about my own rural thin skin than about creativity or other forms of masculine insecurity. Yet I also noted that our group did
indeed make *collective* progress, meet deadlines, and succeed. This impressive success came in spite of (or maybe because of?) the vocal venting and short-term catharsis that made it all, apparently, possible.

OK, I reasoned, production’s rage-caste system somehow works. I was uncomfortable with the culture shock in my initially unsettled reaction. I thought at the time that film and television in Los Angeles must in some way sanction emotional behaviors that agriculture or construction would never tolerate in the Midwest. Hollywood’s variant of collective work, that is, must be distinctive. But appropriate? I puzzled over that question. This contention unfolded four decades before the “MeToo” movement fractured and exposed the once neatly laminated facade of many Hollywood companies. Eventually, the public reckoning of #MeToo and #OscarsSoWhite exposed deep systemic rifts and power fault lines in the long-embedded work layers of major and minor firms alike (table 1.1).

A range of standard managerial practices likely facilitate and normalize conditions that perpetuate intimidation and coercion. As the chapters ahead will show, these include inordinately long employment periods as personal assistants, the use of unpaid interns for necessary work, endless “creative” outsourcing, cease-and-desist actions, take-down orders for “fair-use” indie docs, paying-your-dues rationales to salve long-suffering and underpaid underlings, and coercive end-title and credit politics for contract workers. These production *norms* all represent ethical minefields with industrial downsides that effective production research can highlight.

If chosen as a research topic, industrial intimidation arrangements actually provide scholars with ample sites or locations for production study. Mid- and lower-level companies and subfirms offer scholars more varied forms of access than the big “go-to” firms with Hollywood A-listers offer “at the top.” These sub- and paraindustry research sites can include unregulated business and creative management offices, suppliers and support firms, nonunion shoots, runaway productions, blind but parallel VFX contracting, union-busting campaigns, and the study of localized cultural politics ingrained in below-the-line work standards. At the same time, such topics and sites force production studies to shift from or deemphasize the deconstruction of deep trade texts in order to add research methods more appropriate for human subjects and paraindustrial spaces. These methods might include oral histories, participant observation, standpoint theory interviews, emotional labor studies, sociologies of consensus and hegemony, and labor precarity
<table>
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<th>Normalized industry practice</th>
<th>Standard managerial tactics</th>
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<td><strong>Industrial deception</strong> (lying)</td>
<td>Spin, dissembling, viral and integrated marketing, PR fixers, cross-promotions, countermarketing, disinformation, trade-show keynotes</td>
<td>Marketing departments, publicity, diversity initiatives, back-channel social media info, fan confabs, links to cultural nonprofits, shadow academies</td>
<td>Deep trade textual analysis, embedded discourse analysis, Geertzian symbolic anthropology, follow-the-money to find interfirm logic</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Industrial coercion</strong> (bullying)</td>
<td>Personal assistanting, unpaid internships, outsourcing, cease-and-desist actions, takedown orders, paying-your-dues mythologies, coercive end-title and credit politics</td>
<td>Unregulated creative management offices, nonunion shoots, runway production, parallel FX contracts, union busting, below-the-line work habits</td>
<td>Oral histories, participant observation, standpoint theory, emotional labor studies, sociologies of consensus &amp; hegemony, precarity labor research, fracture research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Industrial extraction</strong> (stealing)</td>
<td>Online platform analytics, soft-capital erasures, symbolic capital exchange, indie’s pretesting task, aspirant’s fan burden, for-profit film schools, influencer how-to workshops</td>
<td>Fake contests, entrant-funded film festivals, pitchfests, co-branding opportunities, oversupply of intermediary wannabes, showrunner-absent writers rooms, off-the-clock work expectations</td>
<td>Political economy, surveillance capitalism, platform studies, media ecosystem studies, organizational sociology, breaching experiments, prioritizing union negotiating in research</td>
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As the chapters ahead show, such qualitative research methods often prove more sensitive to the rifts and complexities that exist within occluded faults and fractures.

Bullying in production is so commonplace that “how-to-make-it” books in screenwriting and production often feel like a user’s guide to S&M boot camp. Some justify masochism as part of the skill set that rising screenwriters need:

Life can be shockingly tough. Sometimes we take a real blow. Fate sneaks up and steals something from us. . . . Accept that there is no off switch for stress in our bodies. But you can live with it, wear it down, mold it, take charge of it, use it. . . . More good things about stress. . . . Stress can give you the gift of insight. It can make you more poetic, more aware of the human condition; it is a dark gift, but a gift nevertheless. (Pen Densham, “A Filmmaker’s ‘Positive’ Thoughts on Stress”)

FIGURE 1.4. Media industry research without human subjects can veer into research overly deferent to corporate intentions and to the myth that everything researched in industry was indeed intended or designed by management. Scholars should avoid creating analytic echo chambers that amplify managerial utopias. Industry’s cultural trade expressions naturalize and embed human labor inside managerial norms that can be ethically problematic. Left: Rigging lights at Paramount Studios. Right: Tools should matter to media industry researchers. Photos: © 2011 and 2017, by J. Caldwell.
Suffer on, good creator soldier! This same vocational cheerleader account indicts industrial masochism’s flip side—industry’s sadism—largely by conspicuous omission. Specifically, it does so by not acknowledging the extent of bad behavior by bad actors who (by implications) would trigger and then revel in creating stress among their employees or contacts. If “how-to” production books normalize overlord perpetrators of industry stress, then production culture research can indeed have a mitigating role in at least outing the bullies or documenting the bullying conventions. Such research can also call to attention a necessary question: what corporate rationality can this systemic and managerial sadism possibly bring to profitable media production? (fig. 1.4).

INDUSTRIAL EXTRACTION (STEALING)

Like soft-coal strip-mining, extraction economies now surround production in the online platform era. Explicit accusations of stealing often generate little attention in the world of skeptical professionals. This general disregard may be pervasive because so much self-justification and volunteerism drive aspirational and underemployed specwork and social media creation. Victim narratives only occasionally show up in the professional trade space (since most creative workers want “to work in this town again”). While career-burnout videos made by twenty-two-year-old YouTubers are indeed a genre, they don’t dominate rankings. Instead, the platform system promotes a countervailing manic fortitude among makers (never-stop-uploading), underscoring it as a key to both successful content creation and Gen-Z “authenticity.” Platform pedagogy provides aspiring creators with endless reasons to give content away. This is why I prefer the structural term extraction rather than theft as a term to describe this third unethical foundation in media industries practice that researchers can harvest.

This book’s case studies of aspiring maker/influencer creators offer a glimpse at the automated ways that social media creator platforms like YouTube, Vimeo, and Patreon manage, harvest, and monetize the aspirational surge of young content creators. Chapters 4 and 8 examine how professional production normalizes ostensibly collective “insourcing,” “credit-jumping,” and “you-share-we-take” arrangements to keep the production pipeline humming. In addition to these automated extraction behaviors (which are now driven by online platform analytics), there are many other tacit, implicit, and de facto extraction dynamics at work. Examples that depend on leveraging symbolic
capital or employing soft-capital budgeting include pressuring aspirant creators to predevelop and deliver a packageable fan base to the platform or studio; expecting indie filmmakers to pay for the pretesting of their spec project at festivals and cultural venues; and culling aspirants produced by the predatory economies of for-profit film schools, getting-an-agent workshops, and influencer how-to confabs.

Industry does not just extract surplus economic value in these ways from creative workers. It legitimizes the taking by employing a range of symbolic cultural rituals and by marshaling the industrial reflexivities that production culture research excels at unpacking. This book will feature many examples of extractive schemes that industry uses to culturally normalize theft: fake script contests, entrant-funded film festivals, pitchfests led by mid- or low-level “experts,” cobranding merchandizing opportunities, showrunner-absent writers rooms, and the perpetual oversupply of unqualified wannabe agents, intermediaries, and reps. All of these industrial cultural schemes make draining money from the independent creator community and underemployed professionals seem productive and to-be-expected.

Researching this third element of my ethical compass for production studies challenges CMS scholars to integrate research methodologies that go beyond either close textual analysis or closely observed ethnography. For production scholars, these adaptive lenses (methods and frameworks that are more sensitive to the structures and infrastructures of extraction) include political economy, surveillance capitalism studies, platform research, media ecosystem studies, organizational sociology, the text-finance scaffolding research of deWaard, and the breaching experiments of Vonderau and his Spotify research colleagues.

A package of such methods is not just suitable for researching online aspirant creators in the media “platform” era either. We also need to adapt those methods, and expand our research tool kit so that they are able to unpack the ethics of high-budget production, as well. In high production, for example, recent managerial “innovations” that changed the creative workflow can trigger rifts in the once stabilized fault lines that hold writers and studios in productive tension. Consider the acutely divergent definitions of creativity between screenwriters and producers in the following trade account. This pitched battle was triggered in the trades by studio executives who proudly celebrated the collective “televisioning” of film (bureaucratic creativity) as innovative in massive blockbusters and feature franchises like Marvel’s Spider-Man and Hasbro/Paramount’s Transformers: “There is such reciprocity between TV
and movies now, that we’re borrowing this from TV... The whole process of the story room was really delightful, and we are seeing it more in movies as this moves toward serialized storytelling. ... *We’re trying to beg borrow and steal from the best of them*, and gathered a group of folks interested in developing and broadening this franchise.”

Studios create an ethical swamp when they brag about internally crowdsourcing feature-film scripts through grateful staff-sharing. Remarkably, the producers do not even try to hide, deny, or bury their writer-demeaning management “innovation” in this published trade account of their new form of creativity. This, after all, has been normalized as the Michael Bay era of vulgar auteurism. Yet the angry push-back from actual creators and “real” screenwriters against this studio—for publicly bragging about its enlightened harvesting of script ideas from staff—was immediate and unequivocal:

Wonder what the WGA will say about this? Does the writer of the script get credit for the [*sic*] all the work that’s been “fleshed-out” by other writers? (Hmm)

No legitimate, established writer should take part in this nonsense. This is why these movies are unintelligent messes to watch. They are assembled from the half-baked ideas of these group-think jerk off sessions. This is a scheme hatched up by studios to cut costs and take people’s ideas and ... credit bonuses. ... This is why these movies make no sense and have no structural, stylistic or tonal integrity. They are just assembled from everyone’s half-thought-through spare parts. (YUP)

Jeez this is grim. Millions of dollars that could have been spent on original stories about people instead of loud, frenzied chicken-fried crap that you can’t see, hear or understand. ... This sheltered workshop for hacks ... (Loathe Transformers)

None of the writers of the comic books or the old animated TV episodes will get any credit from this room. They will be able to lift whatever stories they want and they won’t have to share credit with the original writers. This is criminal and the WGA should slam them for doing this... Those humans deserve to be credited and compensated by this overpaid room. (Optimus Prime)

To add insult to injury, executive apologists for the Paramount film “writers room” in question actually echoed the soft-coal strip-mining metaphor with which I began this book. To justify the brilliance of their industrial extraction scheme without shame, Goldsman explained wistfully: “It just felt like such fertile ground and a rich environment for storytelling, and there has already been thoughtful work done before
any of us came into the room. We will be innovative miners, and we will have fun and get to do what we imagined this was all about when we were kids.” To which another less-joy-filled “Wga Writer” retorted cynically: “Fuck us all. Really. Great job Hollywood. Fantastic.”

Accounts of habitual speculation-work throughout this book suggest and underscore the necessity of a darker flip side in production’s economic system; that is, the wide-ranging scope of specwork only makes sense if media industries employ an analogous big-volume system to harvest both content and aspirants. An institutional structure approximating the same scale is needed to effectively redeem speculation work and gifted content ideas. This preemptive media alliance often applies—in different ways—both to hopeful “outsider” online creator aspirants and to precariously employed “insider” creative professionals.

The immersive, exploratory approach to qualitative research I favor employs evidence gathering, inductive theory-building, and multimodal analysis. This approach allows for fits and starts and readjustments during research and an openness to fold-in new information and factor unpredictable insights from constantly looking across intersecting or adjacent embedded production sectors. This approach may suggest that I’ve invested more in building a foundation of insights and recurring research principles than in highlighting research ethics. Yet I would like to think that my production culture research also follows the “situative, recursive, and grounded” ethics proposed by Vonderau: “Production studies follows a situative approach to ethics, making ethical judgment integral to a process of grounded theorizing. . . . While the positivist tradition often bases ethical rigor on rigid procedure and replicability, rigor in this more qualitatively oriented area stems precisely from reflexivity. Here, ‘good’ research practice is marked by ethical revisionings and the need for researchers to be recursive in their thinking and actions, making ethics an engaging dialogue and negotiation with multiple stakeholders.”

By identifying parts of production industries as unethical and systemic, and by adapting methods to highlight, analyze, and mitigate those unethical practices, I may have flipped the conventional roles presupposed in one important academic protocol. That is, the research I push for in this book may position production scholars as a kind of uninvited but de facto IRB that monitors media industry (rather than an IRB that oversees the scholars). Yes, protection of human subjects is central to our research, but this applies equally as much to our goal of seeking out, isolating, and outing regressive industrial managerial practices. Research ethics do not just apply to necessary technical matters