‘What has the BBC ever done for us?’

Ontological security and broadcasting in an online era

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Abstract

To inform, educate, and entertain are the three guiding value principles that have shaped the BBC and its remit since its inception under Lord Reith, its founder and first Director-General. However, with a century-long existence, the BBC faces ongoing challenges to its perceived value and role within an ever-evolving media landscape characterised by technological innovation, the proliferation of online media services, and audience fragmentation. This thesis explores and redefines the value of the BBC within Britain by interrogating its ontological function within everyday life.

The industrial challenges encountered by the BBC have sparked academic, political, and industrial debates regarding its role and value. These debates often evaluate the BBC's value through an economic lens focusing on creating and assessing 'value for money' for individual consumers or through a public value lens focusing on the benefits to British culture and society as a collective of individual citizens. Departing from these traditional economic and public value perspectives, this research proposes an alternative conceptual framework that considers the BBC's value in relation to ontological security. Ontological security refers to the human need for confidence, comfort and consistency when dealing with everyday life's unexpected and unpredictable circumstances. The conceptual framework developed in this thesis connects the BBC's value to individuals' sense of structure, stability, comfort, reassurance, belonging and identity through their media experiences.

Employing a case study approach, this research combines textual analysis of BBC and industry discourse with practitioner interviews to investigate how the value of the BBC is understood and constructed in an online media landscape. By focusing on three pivotal moments within the BBC's current charter period, this study identifies the key social and cultural functions of the BBC and demonstrates that its value lies in its ability to sustain ontological security for British audiences.

The ontological security framework developed in this thesis contributes to media industry studies, offering an innovative way to understand the value of the BBC in an environment marked by online media fragmentation. By examining the complex dynamics between broadcasting, everyday life, and ontological security, this research deepens our comprehension of the BBC's significance and provides useful insights for the future of public service broadcasting.

Acknowledgements

Wow, what an incredible, unconventional PhD journey! It has been a tough challenge, and there have been so many moments throughout it when I've questioned my decision and capabilities of being able to do this. However, I could always see light at the end of what seemed like a never-ending tunnel. When I started this journey, I knew I wanted a career within the media industries and still retain that connection to academia. I had little industry experience at the time and was unsure what that might look like. Yet throughout this journey, God has continued to guide me and provide me with many opportunities, helping me craft my career while doing this. Thank you!

Thank you to my parents, Alex and Claudine, brother Shakeel and grandparents for their unwavering prayers, love and support. Thank you to my friends (Damali, Charelle, Mariya, Funmi, Faye and Kiran) and family (the Jamaican Crombies and Sierra Leonean Taylor-Camaras), who have continuously encouraged me. Thank you to the members of the African Caribbean Research Collective and West African Research Collective; continually seeing you achieve your PhDs has been a source of empowerment. Many thanks to the Midlands4Cities Doctoral Training Partnership and the Arts and Humanities Research Council for their financial support.

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Introduction – What has the BBC ever done for us?

> 58 quid for the privilege of sitting in your own home, watching your own television set. It's diabolical; what's the BBC ever given us for 58 quid?
>
> John Cleese

In 1986, the BBC released a TV advertisement titled 'What has the BBC ever given us?' based on the Monty Python sketch 'What have the Romans ever done for us? from *The Life of Brian (1979).* The advertisement portrays John Cleese as a customer in a pub complaining about the licence fee cost. He asks the landlord (played by Michael Horden), 'What have the BBC ever given us?' We then see a range of prominent BBC talent, such as David Attenborough, David Coleman, Moira Stewart, David Dimbleby, Terry Wogan, etc., list the range of services and programmes the BBC offers. After carefully leading audiences on a journey to equate the BBC's value to its variety of content, such as drama, natural history, sport, news, politics, documentaries, radio and children's TV, the advertisement closes with the caption 'The BBC. Is 16p a day too much to ask?' The BBC created the advertisement in response to Margret Thatcher and the Conservative government setting up the Peacock Committee to consult on the BBC's funding structure in the hopes of replacing the licence fee with advertising. The advertisement intended to illustrate the BBC's value for money during a period marked by significant changes within

the television landscape that saw the rise of cable and satellite services and, thus, more competition for audience attention.

In January 2022, the same advert resurfaced on Twitter in response to the Conservative government's plans to change the BBC's licence fee funding model. The tweet that BBC Presenter Adil Ray made had 9.5k retweets and 31k likes as of 25th July 2023 and reintroduced debates about the future of the BBC and public service broadcasting in Britain. The advert resurfaced in a similar political and industrial context to 1986 when the media landscape was characterised by technological innovation, the proliferation of new television services, and audience fragmentation, which pressured the BBC to assert its value and role. These debates about the future of the BBC are not new and have happened consistently throughout the BBC's 100 years. However, they tend to appear more prominently when the institution's charter is up for renewal, when there is an internal incident with senior staff or when there are major changes or shifts within the media landscape, like in the 80s/90s and 2010s/2020s. When these debates do arise, the BBC often turns to emphasising its importance through 'value for money' by homing in on the breadth and depth of its services.

*'*What has the BBC ever given us?*'* emphasises the economic value of the BBC by highlighting its value for money. It attempts to encourage us to value the BBC for the relatively low cost of its breadth of content and services. The economic appeal to the audience works to reaffirm the licence fee as a culturally good funding model. Here, the BBC attaches its cultural goodness

and public value to its public ownership, which is only enabled by its funding model, the licence fee. As such, the value of the BBC is rationalised through an economic lens. However, as I argue in this thesis, the value of the BBC should be seen through something other than a purely economic or public value lens. Value frameworks that are created from an economic or public value perspective are always at the mercy of the market or the political landscape, which is why, during shifts in the media landscape, like with the impact of the online streaming era, we see a return to strategies and defences for the BBC that are focused on elevating its value for money. Economic and public value frameworks are focused on rationalising and quantifying value to influence audience behaviour but are unhelpful in understanding the underlying fundamentals behind what the BBC does for us in everyday life.

This thesis advocates for an alternative way of thinking about value in the context of the BBC that departs from traditional economic and public value perspectives. In it, I propose an alternative conceptual framework that considers the BBC's value in relation to its ontological function, i.e., the meaning of the BBC within everyday life. Such framework enables us to interrogate the value of the BBC beyond its value for money and the breadth and depth of its services and asks what values the BBC provides within everyday life and what these can tell us about its role within the ever-evolving media landscape.

Debates about the value of the BBC have been constant throughout its existence. The current media landscape is characterised by technological

innovation, the proliferation of online media services, and audience fragmentation (Lotz, 2014; Freedman and Goblot, 2018; Jenner, 2018; Johnson, 2019). There is also a paradigmatic shift towards privileging online/on-demand media over broadcasting, i.e., non-linear over linear, thus creating the perception that organisations like the BBC, born in the broadcasting era, are less valuable or relevant in today's online/on-demand media world. The BBC itself recognises these challenges, framing it as a two-horse race 'serving those who have adopted the internet as their primary medium, while at the same time making sure that those who want to carry on watching and listening to traditional channels continue to be properly served, too' (BBC Annual Plan, 2017: 4). This uncertainty about the value of the BBC is directly connected to the uncertainty about broadcasting's role within an online media landscape, despite the BBC's developments in digital and online services such as BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds[1].

The BBC's conceptualisation of the evolving media landscape as a two-horse race indicates its assumption that the values provided through traditional broadcasting are different and separate from those obtained through online television, thus meaning that the corporation needs to balance the two. However, before we can assume that the BBC's value via broadcasting is different from the values provided through its online services, we must first distinguish what core value the BBC provides from a broadcasting perspective. Once we can determine such values, we can assess whether these values are

[1] BBC has multiple digital and online services, including BBC News, BBC Bitesize, BBC iPlayer Kids, BBC Sport and BBC Weather.

indeed different from those provided online. This relationship between the BBC, broadcasting and everyday life is at the centre of this thesis. In it, I hypothesise that the value of the BBC in Britain today is in the significance of its everydayness. This significance is the BBC's ability to cater to our ontological security, which I define in the next chapter as our confidence, comfort and consistency in who we are within our everyday lives.

The BBC is a unique transmedia organisation providing a media experience across multiple platforms, operating as a television and radio broadcaster. However, television and radio have evolved as two separate mediums within the media industries and academia. In the media industries, most media organisations operate in one or the other rather than both. In academia, radio as a field of study has long been described as an 'emerging field', often 'seen through the lens of larger disciplines in media studies, like television or screen studies' (Lindgren and Loviglio, 2022: 1). It is 'ignored' (Loviglio and Hilmes, 2013: 1) and perceived as 'underrepresented in the field of media and cultural studies in comparison to that on television, film and print, and increasingly, of course, the "new media"' (Lacey, 2018: 109). Kate Lacey argues that:

> When we think of radio as a broadcasting institution, our comparisons and connections are made with television. This was probably the default position in the post-1960s rise of media studies when television seemed inexorably on the rise, and radio tended to be treated as a mere precursor to television, or worse, a medium that was defined by its

> assumed deficiencies, as a blind medium, an invisible medium, a secondary medium.
>
> (2018: 115)

As such, television tends to get more attention than radio due to its pervasiveness. In the case of the BBC, television receives a higher allocation of licence fee funds than radio, with £6.42 of the monthly £13.13 household fee spent towards television compared to £2.29 for radio (TV Licensing, 2021). To add, the BBC's income through the licence fee is called the television licence rather than the broadcasting or radio and television licence, further emphasising the hierarchy between radio and television broadcasting.

Lacey argues that 'for all that media studies has relegated the study of radio over the years, radio remains one of the most ubiquitous, influential, resilient and pioneering of all the modern communication forms' (2018: 113) and states that 'it continues on all its varied platforms, and in all its myriad communicative contexts, to engage its listeners with all manner of information, education and entertainment' (ibid). This reference to the classic public service triad of inform, educate, and entertainment alludes to radio's inherent public service qualities and points to Kathryn McDonald and Hugh Chignell, who note that the strength of public service broadcasting has played a part in how radio has survived and arguably thrived within visual culture (2023: 1).

As this thesis explores the BBC as a transmedia public service institution that operates within both radio and television broadcasting, it cannot treat these two mediums as separate but instead integrated. In addition, considering the lack of visibility of radio broadcasting within media industry studies and its similarity to television broadcasting in terms of its resilience within the media landscape, this thesis includes radio broadcasting when interrogating the role of the BBC within everyday life. As such, the primary evidence gathered in this thesis also features radio broadcasting, thus contributing to the visibility of radio in the broader media industries.

This thesis returns to critical questions asked in television studies in the 1980s/1990s - what is television broadcasting and its role in audiences' everyday lives? Television studies has shifted away from understanding the relationship between television and everyday life towards understanding the new 'messy' television landscape (Johnson, 2019), characterised by the proliferation of online media services. As argued by Johnathan Gray and Amanda Lotz, this new environment has changed technological and business practices and, for some, has profoundly shifted 'the felt experience of engaging with television' (2019: 7). Technological changes within the new media landscape once drove regular predictions about the death of broadcast television in the 90s/early 00s, yet broadcast television remains.

Internet-distributed television, as argued by Gray and Lotz, may not be an 'emergent future that replaces the past, but a widening of the range of practices and technologies television encompasses' (2019: 7). As such, 'our

understandings thus must incorporate these new developments, but also remain cognizant of the previous organisations and structures that persist' (ibid). These practices and technologies of televisions past, whilst they have not yet been replaced, have been taken for granted. To understand the new media environment, we need to understand why broadcasting remains resilient despite many significant changes to the television and radio landscape.

This thesis builds on the theoretical work of Roger Silverstone (1994), who observes television as an ontological and phenomenological reality. Interrogating the value of television broadcasting through its ontological function is fundamental for understanding what television does for us in our daily lives. In this thesis, I take this ontological perspective of television broadcasting - its ability to sustain our ontological security - and apply it to the BBC. Borrowing from Anthony Giddens' (1990) concept of ontological security, I use ontological security as an analytical tool to interrogate the elements contributing to how the BBC thinks it provides value. As we shall see in Chapter 1, I build an ontological security framework that considers the components of everyday life and explores how television broadcasting navigates our ontological security. The framework constructs the activities of everyday life as working to provide structure to our lives. It considers television's everydayness critical for navigating and sustaining our ontological security.

This thesis is situated within media industry studies. I use existing conceptualisations of media industry studies as the contextualised critical

analysis of the production of texts, processes, practices, and infrastructural dynamics (McDonald, 2013; Freeman, 2016; Herbert et al., 2020). From there, I conceptualise the BBC's broadcasting activities as a place where meanings and values about everyday life are constructed and articulated and where power and ideologies operate. I take issue with how the BBC produces these meanings and use these to better understand how and why the BBC may or may not be valued in Britain. Understanding the role of BBC broadcasting in everyday life requires us to think about its complex interconnecting components, including texts, paratexts, audiences, and industrial structures shaped by socio-economic, technological, political and historical conditions. As such, I use a diverse approach that takes inspiration from various fields and methodologies to provide a holistic and richer analysis of such a ubiquitous and everyday social phenomenon.

Methods

To interrogate the BBC's ontological function, this thesis uses the culmination of four theoretical approaches: *media industries research* that critically analyses the industrial dynamics that influence how and why texts are produced; *textual analysis,* taken from a humanities perspective that investigates how the television industry works to create meaning and the relationship of that meaning to the society that consumes them; *cultural studies* that interrogate how television performs ideological work in constructing and representing specific notions such as nation, youth, gender, class and race; and *Uses and Gratifications theory* born from a social science perspective that is interested in how and why audiences engage in various forms of media

behaviour. This thesis is not an audience research study; however, it takes the perspectives of Uses and Gratifications theory that highlight the fluidity and variability of audience needs within their media experiences and applies them to the industrial strategies used to manage audiences.

Media Industries Research

The media industries, as argued by Paul McDonald,

> provide an unstable object for research for they become meeting points where the interests of multiple stakeholders – consumers, labor, owners, et cetera – congregate and compete. They represent an arena of cultural and economic power, enacted at micro- and macro-scales, in which participants contest the range of cultural expressions and meanings generated, and how the commercial value of culture should be accumulated and invested.
>
> (2022: 1)

Therefore, media industries research requires various approaches to understand the relationship between these multiple stakeholders and the powers they enact over those who consume the texts, services and products these industries produce. As shown below, through textual analysis, cultural studies and U&G, I take inspiration from a variety of theoretical approaches and methodologies to both build my ontological security value framework and explore how it works in practice, as ‘no one set of concepts or explanatory frameworks can

universally account for how and why media industries work in the ways they do' (McDonald, 2022: 2). Through media industries research, I analyse media industry 'paratexts' (Genette, 1997), which refers to all the components and elements of a published work that are not the main text but frame and shape the narrative and interpretations we make about a given text. These include press statements, logos, idents and marketing assets such as cover art, advertisements and trailers. In the case of this thesis, I explore press statements, online articles, charter renewal documents, annual reports, audience research reports, user interfaces (UI), television advertisements, logos, idents and trailers. I consider these paratexts to be the variety of components other than the TV and radio programmes the BBC makes that create and shape our meanings about the BBC.

Building on the work of Genette, John Caldwell (2008), Paul Grainge (2008), Jonathan Gray (2010), and Grainge and Johnson (2015), who emphasise the importance of paratextual analysis and what Gray calls 'off-screen studies' (2010: 4), I use paratextual analysis to emphasise the important role paratexts play in constructing the value of the BBC. I hypothesise that viewers consume more of the BBC's paratexts than its programmes and that these paratexts articulate the values of the BBC to its audiences. As noted by Johnathan Gray, 'We often know many texts only at the paratextual level' (2010: 26). These paratexts help us decide what to watch, read or listen to, and because we consume more paratexts than TV shows, radio programmes, podcasts etc., 'paratexts, then, become the very stuff upon which much popular interpretation is based' (ibid). Gray goes further to suggest that those paratexts also 'attempt

to create interpretive communities and hermeneutic recipes for daily living in a media-saturated world' (2010: 36). In this way, using paratextual analysis enables us to deconstruct the BBC's value in Britain by working through the discursive strategies it uses to produce specific narratives within everyday life.

In addition to paratextual analysis, I have conducted fifteen 30–60-minute semi-structured interviews with BBC and Ex-BBC Staff across strategy, marketing, radio, television and audience research. Interviewees were of varying levels of seniority, though most were at a manager, producer or director level, as the intention was to understand management strategies and ideologies. In addition, I spoke with one senior director at Ofcom, the Deputy CEO at Pact[2] and one freelancer who has worked with the BBC to provide an external perspective whilst maintaining that level of seniority.

The questionnaire used for the interviews primarily sought to uncover what those working within the media industries think about the role and value of the BBC, the BBC's most significant challenges and opportunities, and understanding each person's current role and working relationship with the BBC. This enabled me to see what challenges were top of mind and prioritised across different BBC departments. Through these interviews, I was able to generate a thematic understanding of the internal and external industrial perceptions of audiences and the BBC's value in the current online media landscape. As all interviews were conducted between 2020 and 2022, I could

[2] Ofcom is the BBC's regulator, and Pact is the UK screen sector trade body representing and supporting independent production and distribution companies.

also capture the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the BBC's operations as it happened in real time. By speaking to those within the audience research department, I got some insight into what they saw in their audience research during the first UK lockdown, as well as supplementing this with published audience research documents, as seen in Chapter 2.

Textual analysis

Textual analysis enables us to understand content as combining multiple meanings (Barthes, 1977) that can be interpreted in many ways (Fiske, 1989). In this sense, content is not a fixed entity but a 'complex set of discursive strategies that are generated in a special social, political, historical, and cultural context' (Fürsich, 2018). Scholars such as John Fiske and John Hartley in their book *Reading Television* (1978), Raymond Williams in *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (2003 [1974]), Charlotte Brunsdon and David Morley in *Everyday Television 'Nationwide'* (1978) and Karen Lury in *Interpreting Television* (2005) examine how meaning is constructed from television and how it carries its set of ideologies, values and norms. Whilst textual analysis has its criticisms, the most prominent being the validity and relevance of one textual interpretation that does not have any audience research or empirical evidence to back it up (Creeber, 2006), textual analysis can be helpful as it positions television as not just a reflection of reality but a space where ideas about the society and culture we live in are produced, maintained and challenged (Fürsich, 2018). It is important to note here that the goal of textual analysis is not to find the one true meaning of a text but to interrogate and explain how texts work to produce a 'preferred meaning', i.e., a dominant

ideology (Hall, 2003). Textual analysis in the context of this thesis is about identifying patterns that lead the media industries to such preferred meanings.

Cultural Studies

Textual analysis within cultural studies goes beyond the text or paratexts. A contemporary cultural studies approach to television explores '"texts" varying roles within society, especially as purveyors of power' (Gray and Lotz, 2019: 15). As suggested by Johnathan Gray and Amanda Lotz in their book *Television Studies*, cultural studies:

> represented a move beyond the humanistic determinism that the text answered all relevant questions, the political economic determinism that the structure of the industry answered all relevant questions, and the reduction of audience behaviour to quantifiable effects.
>
> (2019: 16)

Whilst textual analysis allows us to examine the patterns of how texts can shape meanings, a cultural studies approach enables us to move beyond these texts and think about the context behind the framing and construction of specific ideologies. This thesis is situated primarily within media industry studies. Still, as we will see in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, I draw on the work of Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, and Raymond Williams to look at how the BBC constructs notions of race, nation and youth and what the maintenance of these

specific narratives tells us about what it thinks of the audience it serves and what it considers its value to be.

Uses & Gratifications

Although traditionally used within audience studies, Uses and Gratifications theory offers a useful framework for understanding media industry strategy and practice. Uses and Gratifications is an audience-oriented theory that presents the audience as a challenge to producers to cater to the rich multiplicity of audience needs, uses, and gratifications (Katz et al., 1973a: 521). The theory was developed through the lens of mass media and sought to categorise, chart and profile the functions of specific content or mediums. This later developed into examining 'audience motivations and developed additional typologies of the uses people made of the media to gratify social and psychological needs' (Ruggiero, 2000: 6). For example, Katz, Haas and Gurevitch argue that audiences use media to 'connect (or sometimes to disconnect) themselves-via instrumental, affective, or integrative relations-with different kinds of others (self, family, friends, nation, etc.)' (1973b: 513). They clustered thirty-five social and psychological needs that are gratified by media use into five categories according to their resource and mode - the mode being whether these media-related needs are strengthened, weakened or acquired and the resources meaning an aspect of connection. The categories were defined as our *cognitive needs*, which are about knowledge, information and understanding; *affective needs,* which are our emotional, aesthetic and pleasurable experiences; *integrative needs,* which are our confidence, credibility, stability, and status; *contact* with family, friends, and the world; and

lastly, *escape/tension-release*, defined as weakening connection with self and one's social roles (Katz et al., 1973b). Their classification also included a frame of reference such as self, family, friends, state, society, tradition, culture, and world.

U&G research is a valuable approach within the ever-evolving television landscape in helping to understand why and how people use and adopt new mediums and platforms. For example, a U&G perspective offers the media industries a valuable framework for designing the user experience (UX) on streaming platforms that take into consideration people's *functional needs*, i.e., the information and knowledge required to decide to use the platform and watch or listen to the content on offer; *emotional and motivational needs*, i.e., being able to access content that matches their mood and motivations when interacting with the platform; and *social needs*, i.e., how the content offered on the platform provides the ability to connect with their interests, and with other people. Thomas Ruggiero argues that the emergence of the internet and new media has bolstered the 'theoretical potency of U&G', which 'has always provided a cutting-edge theoretical approach in the initial stages of each new mass communication medium' (2000: 27). Ruggiero notes that there are theoretical dichotomies concerning media and U&G research; those scholars who think of the audience as active, and those who attribute media use behaviour to structural factors. But the fact that both are being considered enables us to think more holistically about how and why we use media and how industrial structures impact such experiences.

U&G research also accounts for the variability of audience activity and motivations. These motivations could predominately be to escape or pass the time (Barwise et al., 1982; Kubey, 1986; Horna, 1988) or, as suggested by Rubin (1984), for ritualised and habitual use, that is more attached to the medium, e.g. television or radio broadcasting or instrumental use, that is more about using content to gratify our needs. Regardless, there is an expectation that our needs will be satisfied by traditional broadcasting or a particular piece of content or medium (Katz et al., 1973a). U&G is helpful for this thesis in that it enables us to think about the basic core needs that broadcasting functions to cater for, which I argue is our ontological security.

This perspective is particularly important as it helps us recognise that value is not linear and is more complex than tangible outcomes such as money. Value in the context of the media industries is a relational activity composed of intangible and tangible outcomes formed from the relationship between individual users and their media experiences (Webster, 2014: 1; Evans, 2019: 127). These outcomes are created from the dynamic relationship between content makers, users and their media experiences. Value is a relational activity that, in the context of the media industries, requires us to understand how organisations frame and construct the value of media experiences, how these constructions are accepted or rejected by both audiences and other organisations within the industry, and the conditions that influence how and why those constructions are made. Cultural, temporal, spatial, technological, political, economic and social conditions impact how the media industries construct, organise and manage our media experiences (see Figure 1). As such,

foreseen and unforeseen circumstances affect our relationship with the media experiences we value and devalue.

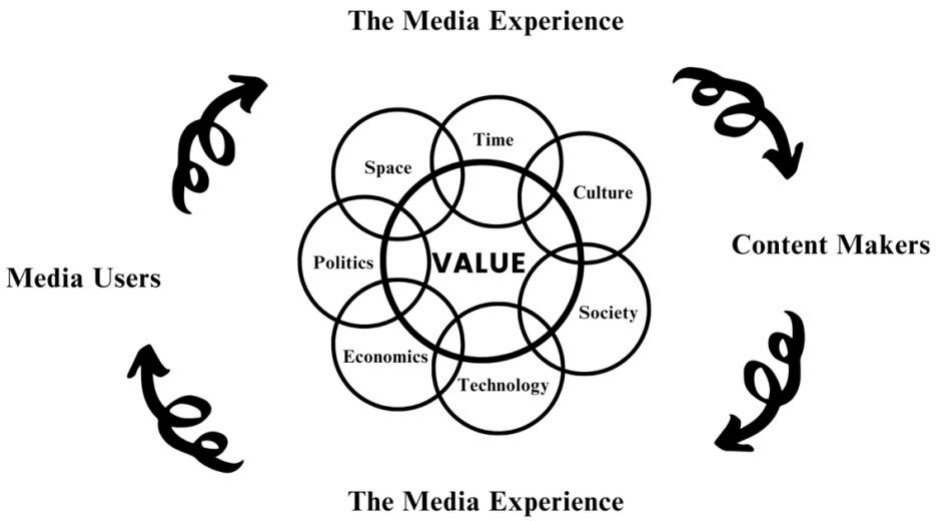


Figure 1 – A framework for understanding value within media experiences

Additionally, values mean different things to different people in different ways and depend upon different contexts, which can change at any given moment. The price paid for media products/services, the time spent using them or the intangible satisfaction or gratifications attributed to them are birthed from the rhythms and routines of our everyday lives. Thinking about value through the U&G perspective of cognitive, affective and relational needs is important for media industry studies. Audience need states, such as learning something new, social connection and winding down, are core elements of what the media industries think about when creating and curating content. This is particularly important for public service broadcasters like the BBC, whose ideologies are about specifically serving the needs of the public or nation. For example, the

BBC's Reithian mission to inform, educate and entertain is entrenched in public service assumptions about what the BBC thinks the public needs and not what they want, as will be explored more closely in Chapter 3.

Using textual analysis, cultural studies, and U&G emphasises the complex nature of the media industries and, as such, the complexity of critically analysing them. This thesis, however, could be criticised for needing an audience perspective that considers what audiences have to say about how they value the BBC. David Gauntlett and Annette Hill note that Silverstone's work, which this thesis builds upon, has been similarly criticised for containing 'very little grounded analysis of either television or everyday life as they are actually experienced in the world' (1999: 10). They state that his work could be regarded as premature as 'Before we can begin to understand the symbolic, material and political structures in everyday life, it is important to consider what people have to say about their own experience of television and everyday life' (1999: 9-10). Rather than taking an audience research approach that looks at what audiences think about the BBC, this thesis seeks to uncover how the BBC constructs and frames value for its audiences through ontological security and how this sometimes fails.

To understand how the BBC conceive of their audiences, I have conducted practitioner interviews with those who work within audience research departments to understand their assumptions about audience needs and the perceived value of the BBC to cater to these needs. As media industries research, this thesis acts as a bridge between theory and practice and industry

and academia by using theoretical approaches alongside interviewing those working in the media industry. As a media industries study, this thesis engages and embraces 'the ephemerality of the media industries' (Freeman, 2016: 8) and proposes an ontological security framework, outlined in Chapter 1, for examining a fundamental medium and institution within the media industries that is important for both academia and industry.

Thesis structure

To apply the ontological security framework, I employ a case study approach that combines paratextual analysis of BBC and industry discourse with practitioner interviews to investigate how the value of the BBC is understood and constructed within the fragmented online media landscape. It is a snapshot within the BBC's 100 years of existence and thus by no means attempts to account for the value of the BBC throughout the entirety of its history. However, by focusing on three pivotal moments within the BBC's recent charter period, it attempts to identify the critical social-cultural functions of the BBC. It demonstrates that the construction of the BBC's value lies in its ability to sustain ontological security for British audiences.

I have structured the thesis into four chapters. Chapter 1 outlines my conceptual framework for interrogating the BBC's construction of its position within British everyday life, with the remaining three chapters subsequently following as case studies that apply the framework. Chapter 1 provides a detailed conceptualisation of everyday life and its relationship to ontological security and broadcasting. In it, I define ontological security and lay out the

three pillars of the conceptual framework (*Structure and stability*, *comfort and reassurance*, *belonging and identity*) that I will apply to the three case studies. I argue that the value placed on the BBC lies within the concept of the ontological security of everyday life and the BBC's significance within this.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 each take a challenge within the BBC's current charter period as a case study. They use one of the three pillars of the ontological security framework to interrogate how the BBC attempts to construct its value within foreseen and unforeseen circumstances. Chapter 2 examines how the BBC seeks to maintain audiences' ontological security and takes the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic as its case study. During the COVID-19 pandemic, everyday life took on new meanings, and the BBC, as a national broadcaster, had to adapt and work to preserve audiences' ontological security. This chapter looks at the BBC during the first lockdown, which drove several newspaper opinion pieces to suggest that the BBC was now 'untouchable' and had staved off licence fee threats. It illustrates how the BBC uses notions of routine, rituals and nation to manage an ontologically insecure audience. In the chapter, I show how the BBC created meaning in everyday life during the first UK lockdown, albeit portraying itself as perhaps only valuable in times of crisis.

Chapter 3 uses the BBC's response to two race-related issues to examine the BBC's relationship with ethnic diversity. Throughout history, the BBC has been criticised for its lack of diversity on and behind the screen. The resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 brought this to the forefront. Whilst the BBC has a public purpose 'to reflect, represent and serve

the diverse communities of all of the United Kingdom's nations and regions' (BBC Royal Charter, 2017), it raises questions about the meaning of the term 'diverse communities' and what they are diverse from. Chapter 3 reveals how the BBC uses 'Diversity' as an ontological security tool for managing a complex multi-ethnic and multicultural Britain. It draws attention to the BBC's power in constructing a multicultural and ethnically diverse Britain and how it perceives its value as protecting eroded collective social identities. Whilst Chapter 2 shows how notions of the nation provide an element of ontological security, Chapter 3 questions what happens when the ontological insecurities of those who do not easily fit into the previously constructed neatly packed forms of national identity are exposed and how the BBC deals with these insecurities. The chapter challenges two of the BBC's core public service values, *impartiality* and *objectivity,* to argue that the BBC's perceived value as Britain's 'social glue' (Malik and Newton, 2017: 1) is outdated.

Lastly, Chapter 4 delves into the BBC's challenge of retaining youth audiences. In 2021, the BBC decided to bring its youth channel, BBC Three, back as a linear broadcast channel after it originally moved the channel online. Chapter 4 interrogates aspects of BBC Three's branding, content distribution, and marketing strategies over its six years online to highlight how the BBC attempted to translate BBC Three's broadcast values in an online-only space. It reveals that the application of branding, content distribution and marketing contradicted the BBC's original rationale for moving BBC Three online. The chapter also shows how the BBC uses flow as an ontological security tool for retaining a youth audience but fails. In the chapter, I argue that flow is a core

component of television broadcasting and remains a crucial partner in delivering value to audiences, even online.

How the BBC conceptualises its value and communicates this to audiences over the next few years will determine its future. The economic and public value perspectives it often portrays limit our understanding of the value of the BBC within everyday life. The ontological security value framework developed in this thesis contributes to media industry studies by offering an innovative way to understand the value of the BBC in an environment marked by audience fragmentation. Examining the complex and interconnected dynamics between broadcasting and everyday life through an ontological security framework deepens our comprehension of the BBC's significance. It provides useful insights into how we think about what the BBC does for us within a changing online television landscape.

Chapter 1 – An Ontological Security Value Framework

> The BBC has a very simple aim. We are here to make great programmes and services. That is why people love the BBC. That is why they enjoy it. That is why they trust it. That is why they value it. The BBC enhances the lives of everyone in the UK in more ways than ever before and more often than ever before. 44 million British people use the BBC every day, virtually every adult in the UK every week.
>
> (BBC Annual Plan, 2017)

Television and radio are a part of everyday life and, alongside other cultural mediums, help us navigate through life and help us to feel ontologically secure (Silverstone, 1994). Ontological security refers to our emotional sense of being in the world. As defined by Anthony Giddens (1990), it is the confidence we have in the continuity of our self-identity and a sense of trust and reliability in the constancy of our social and material environments. As we live in a world that presents us with risk every day, we require coping mechanisms to deal with this to help us feel safe. Such coping mechanisms work to order our daily lives and manage our social, temporal and spatial relationships with people and things. Television and radio broadcasting are embedded in how we socially and culturally navigate our ontological security and can act as coping mechanisms. It is this sense of ontological security and television's 'veritable dailiness' that Roger Silverstone (1994) argues is fundamental to

understanding how television as a technology and medium has found its way so profoundly and intimately into the fabric of our daily lives and stays there. Dailiness is the continuous and recurring flow of events that make up our sense of everyday existence or what Paddy Scannell calls the 'everyday existence as being-in-the-world' (1996: 145). This continuous flow of events creates routines through which we develop a sense of expectation, trust and confidence in everyday life. As explored in this chapter and throughout the thesis, broadcasting offers ontological security and impacts and shapes our sense of everyday life.

The quote used to open this chapter from the BBC's 2017/18 Annual Plan, which marked the start of a new 11-year charter and the BBC's 95 years of existence in Britain, explicitly points to this sense of dailiness. Here, the BBC uses the daily use of its services to strengthen and establish its continued value within Britain. The BBC has played a significant role in everyday life in Britain through its broadcasting operations. As a cultural institution with a historical monopoly on television and radio broadcasting, the BBC's for-anyone-as-someone communicative ethos (Scannell, 2000a: 9) that articulates a sense of 'we-ness' has set the foundation for how we have come to understand broadcasting, particularly public service broadcasting, and how Britain comes to understand itself (Barwise and York, 2020). The BBC's reference to its dailiness in the 2017/18 annual plan reinforces how intertwined the BBC is with British everyday life. Its 2021/2022 annual report, which saw the BBC celebrate its centenary, states that 90% of UK adults used BBC

television, radio or online per week (BBC Annual Report, 2022: 6), further emphasising its 'everydayness'.

So, how is it that a cultural institution continues to have such a profound impact on the dailiness of everyday life? So much so that after 100 years of existence, nearly every adult in the UK, on average, continues to use its services every single week. In a time where our 'lifestyles have become increasingly idiosyncratic' and many institutions like religion, government, nation, the household, and the monarchy have waning influence over the activities of everyday life (Areni, 2019: 89), how has the BBC managed to maintain its significance (albeit not without struggles) within the current British media landscape after all this time? The answers lie within our understanding of the BBC's ontological function within everyday life. To understand how the BBC maintains a key player within the ever-evolving media landscape, we must first understand at a basic level what function it serves within our everyday lives.

As Silverstone does with the relationship between television and domesticity in his book *Television and Everyday Life*, I want to approach these questions by providing a framework for thinking through the functionality of the BBC's integration into everyday life. In this chapter, I lay out a conceptual framework that situates the significance of the BBC's relationship with everyday life through its ontological function. I consider the BBC's ontological function through the relationship between broadcasting and everyday life. Understanding this allows us to see how broadcasting serves our needs and

desires and, thus, what leads to 90% of the population using the BBC each week.

This chapter is configured into three parts. First, I look at the construct of everyday life and provide a detailed conceptualisation of the four components that characterise it. Second, I delve into ontological security and its relationship with broadcasting. Lastly, I consider the role television broadcasting plays in navigating our ontological security and the three pillars of this process that form a conceptual framework for interrogating the BBC's significance within British everyday life.

The components of everyday life

Television broadcasting, like other media communication, plays a role within our everyday lives and can be understood as what Roger Silverstone notes as 'part of the taken-for-granted seriality and spatiality of everyday life' (1994: 20) or as described by Claus Dieter Rath (Moores, 2000: 15) part of the social fabric and a contributor to our daily routine experiences. The term 'everyday' is often used interchangeably with the ordinary, the familiar, the normal, the regular, daily, common and repetition. As argued by Selberg (1993), the concept of 'Everyday' can create negative connotations that imply that the routines of everyday life lack rationality simply because people do not always think about why they do things in a particular way. Similarly, Anthony Giddens argues that it is the aspect of routinisation 'which gives meaning to the phrases 'daily life' or 'day-to-day life' as a regular round of activities' (1981: 38). However, he goes on to state that 'everyday life' is distinct from 'day-to-day

life' or 'daily life' and must be understood within a technical sense of the routinisation of day-to-day activities (ibid: 154).

Connecting everyday life to the regular, ordinary, familiar, normal, etc., can lead to a simplistic understanding of the meaning of everyday life that makes it appear self-evident and objectively known, thus not warranting any further interrogation. However, further analysis of the 'everyday', as argued by Mark Paterson, shows that it brings with it 'a series of assumptions, problems, and further questions' that connect it to 'identity, status, aspirations, cultural capital, and position within a social group' (2006: 5–7), thus revealing its complexities. What on the surface may seem like a routinised series of relatively banal activities, behind the 'taken-for-grantedness' of everyday life lays processes that are composed of spatial and temporal, conscious and unconscious, active and passive transactions that tell us more about the socio-economic environment of the person partaking in these activities. Understanding the meaning of everyday life is more than identifying the total sum of the specific activities within a routine; it is about understanding how and in what ways these routines work to structure and thus provide value within our lives. Everyday life, I argue, could be thought of as composed of 4 key dimensions: *Cycles*, *Flow*, *Routines*, and *Ontology*.

Cycles

Cycles refer to everyday life's relationship with time or what Paddy Scannell refers to as the 'temporality of the life cycle of living organisms' (Scannell, 1986: 2). Building upon Anthony Giddens' structuration of time and space,

Scannell defines the temporality of everyday life as composed of three intersecting planes. The first is 'Clock time', which relates to the 'continuous flow of day-to-day life'. Second is 'life time', which is about the human life cycle and third, 'calendrical time', which he calls the 'longue durée' – the slow, glacial movement of institutional time - that outlives our lifetime (ibid).

For Henri Lefebvre and Christine Levich,

> The everyday is situated at the intersection of two modes of repetition: the cyclical, which dominates in nature, and the linear, which dominates in processes known as "rational". The everyday implies, on the one hand, cycles, nights and days, seasons and harvests, activity and rest, hunger and satisfaction, desire and its fulfilment, life and death, and it implies, on the other hand, the repetitive gestures of work and consumption.
>
> (Lefebvre and Levich, 1987: 10)

They state that this repetitiveness masks the cycles and imposes its monotony whilst presenting the contradiction of everydayness. They argue that

> The days follow one after another and resemble one another, and yet- here lies the contradiction at the heart of everydayness - everything changes. But the change is programmed: obsolescence is planned. Production anticipates reproduction; production produces change in such a way as to superimpose the impression of speed onto that of monotony.

(ibid)

In critiquing everyday life, Lefebvre states that it is constructed through various series of recurring temporal and spatial dimensions that shape our social relations and reproduce dominant ideologies. He views everyday life as a site where people's 'dreams and fantasies' are increasingly commodified under neo-capitalism as 'political and social activities converge to consolidate, structure, and functionalize' everyday life (1984: 64–65). This functionalisation of everyday life has led to a homogenised conception of collective social identities (discussed later in Chapter 3) and, as argued by Gardiner,

> represents a 'flattening out' of the qualitative distinctions found in everyday life and their replacement by purely quantitative ones, as embodied in the abstract commodity form. This has resulted in a loss of depth, complexity and difference. The repetitive character of daily life makes it particularly vulnerable to the incursion of functionalist logic and the homogenisation of human experience.
>
> (Gardiner, 2000: 91)

This higher emphasis on the quantitative distinction within everyday life makes measuring and managing cyclical time easier.

To summarise the relationship between cycles and everyday life, cycles are the continuity of the rhythms of everyday life. The temporal dimensions of these rhythms (the 24-hour day, our lifetime or institutional time) work to shape our

social relations and identities. Connecting the different temporal dimensions to our everyday activities enables us to see how these rhythms impact our experience of everyday life and reproduce the ideologies that shape our relationships with others, ourselves and our activities.

Flow

Flow is about the relationship between the activities within everyday life and how they work together to create meanings. The concept was pioneered by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who described it in his book B*eyond Boredom and Anxiety* as the 'optimal experience' and a 'holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total engagement' (1975: 36). In defining it, he described flow as consisting of six parts; *Merging of action and awareness* – where you are aware of your actions but not of the awareness itself; *Centering of attention* – having high concentration levels; *Loss of self-consciousness* – when you are in a state of 'self-forgetfulness' (ibid: 42) to a point where considerations about yourself become irrelevant; *The feeling of control* – where you feel in control over your environment; *Coherent, noncontradictory demands* – where the actions of the activity you are partaking in and the next steps are clear and undemanding and, *Autolic nature* – where there are no additional requirements for external rewards or goals as the activity itself is the reward. For Csikszentmihalyi, the concept of flow was about determining what makes activities valuable and satisfying (Engeser and Schiepe-Tiska, 2012).

Engeser and Schiepe-Tiska summarise the six components of flow as the total immersion into activities, where ‘a person experiencing flow has a strong feeling of control’. Here:

> The demands are clear and noncontradictory, and the next steps of the action feel natural and occur without consciously thinking about the action itself, the pursuit of the action or distant goals. The action runs smoothly without the feeling of effort or will, and it is experienced as enjoyable and rewarding in itself.
>
> (Engeser and Schiepe-Tiska, 2012: 2).

They argue that flow is a multifaceted experience and that each component could be ‘highly correlated but at times dissociated’ and ‘therefore, taking only one component as a single indicator for flow would be misleading’. For them,

> flow is an experience with different components, which, in their interplay, represent the experience of flow. As a result, flow cannot be reduced to a single component, and all attempts to take one component of flow as the definitional aspect of flow will consequently disregard essential parts.
>
> (ibid: 4)

Concerning the domestic experience of television broadcasting, Raymond Williams’ (2003 [1974]) study of television found that the experience of television viewing within the home is characterised by ‘flow’, i.e., a continuous stream of content rather than individually separate units. Williams

theorises that there are components of television within the context of the television schedule and channel that create a flow. This leads him to state that it is this flow that is real broadcasting (2003 [1974]: 90). For Williams, television needs to be understood through the concept of flow. Like Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow, Williams' flow also enables us to understand how the different elements of the broadcasting flow work to create a meaningful experience. As discussed in chapters 2 and 4, this continuous flow is 'organised into a schedule according to perceived understandings of the rhythms of everyday life' (Johnson, 2019: 7). It contributes to meanings 'of individual programmes and channels, and of television overall as a medium' (ibid).

Building upon these definitions, in the context of everyday life, flow is a useful tool for helping us understand the meanings behind our daily activities, such as watching television and listening to the radio. As an experience, flow is the *holistic* value and gratification gained from the relationship between the activities we partake in our daily routines. It is the state of being completely immersed in the activities in daily routines and rituals without a sense of self-consciousness but with a deep sense of clarity and control and being truly satisfied and rewarded by the experience of the activity itself. In the case of television broadcasting as a continuous stream of content, flow offers a different way to understand how broadcasting creates this holistic value.

Routines

Routines refer to the ritualisation of everyday life. They are the product of temporalities such as 'work and leisure, of getting up and going to bed, or

housework and homework' (Silverstone, 1994: 20). These routines create order within our lives, an order that is necessary for carrying out everyday life (Leach, 1976; Silverstone, 1994). Silverstone writes:

> Everyday life, it is argued, cannot be sustained without order—an order manifested in our various traditions, rituals, routines and taken for granted activities—in which we, paradoxically, invest so much energy, effort and so many cognitive and emotional resources. In the ordering of daily life we avoid panic, we construct and maintain our identities, we manage our social relationships in time and space, sharing meanings, fulfilling our responsibilities, experiencing pleasure and pain, with greater or lesser degrees of satisfaction and control, but avoiding, for the most part, the blank and numbing horror of the threat of chaos.
>
> (1994: 1).

Routines are vital for organising time and managing the foreseeable and unforeseeable future. Routines and rituals provide an opportunity to manage the anxieties of imagined communities (Anderson, 1983) by offering a sense of confidence and normality (discussed in Chapter 2). Anthony Giddens describes the 'routinisation of day-to-day life most profoundly anchored in the "deep" traditions of "reversible time"' as being 'the single most important source of ontological security' (Giddens, 1981: 37). Routines and rituals help us to establish trust and assurances about the past, present and future and can be understood as coping mechanisms.

Using Norwegian culture as a case study, Torunn Selberg (1993) argues that television plays a role in the ritualisation of everyday life. The most important aspect of its use is how it structures our daily life in space, time and social relations. Routines are a necessary tool to cope with and manage the anxieties, risks and stress that everyday life presents. They help create structure through trust and confidence in the known, 'normal' or 'ordinary'. Routines allow us to have a degree of control and satisfaction over the unknown.

Ontology

Ontology is the final component of everyday life and is the aspect of being in the world. It is this sense of 'being-in-the-world' that Martin Heidegger (1962) claims characterises everydayness. As a philosophical term, ontology refers to understanding what it means for something to exist (Jacquette, 2002) and is 'the science of what is [and] of the kinds and structures of objects, properties, events, processes, and relations in every area of reality' (Smith, 2003: 155). Jean-Paul Sartre (2022 [1943]) describes three kinds of being: the in-itself (en-soi) – which is fixed and lacks freedom and choice; the for-itself (pour-soi) – which is fluid, dynamic, self-aware and has the capacity for freedom and action and, the for-others (pour-autrui) – which refers to how we perceive ourselves through others and shape our identity through our social interactions. For Sartre, the distinction between these three kinds of being creates a struggle to find meaning within the world.

Our ontological beliefs and assumptions shape how we understand our world—these influence and impact how we interact within everyday life. Our

understanding of ‘being-in-the-world’ provides a foundation for how we perceive the world and construct our identity for participating in it. Our ontology’s coherence, stability, continuity, and confidence are fundamental to our sense of security and how we navigate everyday life. Everyday life is ‘what holds us intimately, from the inside’ and ‘what we are given every day (or what is willed to us), what presses us, even oppresses us, because there does exist an oppression of the present’ (de Certeau et al., 1998: 3). Michel de Certeau argues that we are not passive within our everyday life experiences, but that everyday life is a site of resistance against the ‘strategies’ that are the dominant systems imposed by institutions and authorities to exert power and control, and creativity in the ‘tactics’ we use to negotiate, subvert, appropriate and reinterpret these strategies (1984: 29–32). Lefebvre considers everyday life as ‘the place in which and from which real creations are accomplished, those which produce what is human and, in the course of their humanisation, the people: *the deeds and actions’* (Lefebvre, 1977: 52, original emphasis qt in Sünker, 2014: 326). He demands that critiquing everyday life must include a ‘rehabilitation of everyday life’ (ibid: 135 qt in Sünker, 2014: 325). Ontology in the context of everyday life provides us with a framework for understanding the fundamental structures of ‘being-in-the-world’ that influence our social relations and interactions within our daily activities, such as watching television. It allows us to make sense of our experiences, question the dominant structures and systems, and think through ways to transform or ‘rehabilitate’ everyday life.

To summarise, taking each of these four components of everyday life into consideration (Cycles, Flow, Routines and Ontology), we can describe the construct of everyday life as a series of emotional and cognitive cyclical social activities that work to provide structure to our lives, influence our daily interactions, shape our identity and social relations and gratify our experience of everydayness. These activities sustain our sense of continuity and confidence of 'being-in-the-world', i.e., our ontological security. Building on Silverstone's argument that 'Everyday life becomes then the site for, and the product of, the working out of significance' (1994: 164), as identified above, everyday life and its connection to ontological security provides us with a tool for interrogating the value of the BBC within British everyday life. However, to examine such value requires an ontological security framework.

Ontological Security

The concept of ontological security was initially conceptualised and coined by psychologist R. D. Laing, who described it as a person's need to cope with 'all the hazards of life' (1965: 39) and 'have a sense of his presence in the world as a real, alive, whole, and in a temporal sense, a continuous person' (ibid). For Laing, ontological security 'varies along a continuum' and refers to 'the fundamental existential need to maintain a sense of a continuous self who exists over time' (Areni, 2019: 76). As such, our position on that continuum can change and dependent upon 'ordinary circumstances of everyday life' (Laing, 1965: 42), we can experience ontological insecurity. Laing conceptualises ontological insecurity as stemming from a sense of precariousness. An ontologically insecure person feels 'precariously

differentiated from the rest of the world so that his identity and autonomy are always in question' (ibid). This precariousness of self-identity produces anxiety.

Anthony Giddens develops the concept of ontological security from a sociology perspective, defining it as:

> The confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action. A sense of the reliability of persons and things, so central to the notion of trust, is basic to feelings of ontological security; hence the two are psychologically related. Ontological security has to do with "being" or, in the terms of phenomenology, "being-in-the-world." But it is an emotional, rather than a cognitive phenomenon, and it is rooted in the unconscious.
>
> (1990: 92)

He considers human beings to be ontologically secure when we have sufficient coping mechanisms that provide a stable set of expectations for dealing with the unpredictability and uncertainty of everyday life. On the other hand, ontological insecurity is characterised by overwhelming anxieties about self-identity and the world around us. However, it is essential to note that anxiety concerning ontological security operates at a different level than the anxiety felt from externalised threats.

Giddens argues that ‘Anxiety has to be understood in relation to the overall security system the individual develops, rather than only as a situationally specific phenomenon connected to particular risks or dangers’ (1991: 42). He goes on to define anxiety within the realm of ontological security as:

> Fear which has lost its object through unconsciously formed emotive tensions that express ‘internal dangers’ rather than externalised threats. We should understand anxiety essentially as an unconsciously organised state of fear. Anxious feelings can to some degree be experienced consciously, but a person who says ‘I feel anxious’ is normally also aware of what he or she is anxious about. This situation is specifically different from the ‘free-floating’ character of anxiety on the level of the unconscious.
>
> (Giddens, 1991: 44)

Ontological insecurity is about the ‘perceived threats to the integrity of the security system of the individual’ (ibid) and operates within the unconscious. Our ontological security frameworks for dealing with such threats differ from one another and, as I have discussed earlier, become fundamental to how we navigate everyday life. As argued by Giddens, ‘People handle dangers, and the fears associated with them, in terms of the emotional and behavioural ‘formulae’ which have come to be part of their everyday behaviour and thought’ (ibid). Such ‘formulae’ include the cyclical patterns, flow and routinisation of our social, temporal and spatial activities. Whilst ontological

security operates privately, it is not limited by this privacy. It can also involve a ‘public concern for the deterioration of social networks and relations that could threaten collective identity and undermine the very foundation of mutual trust’ (Giddens, 1991; Valente and Valera Pertegas, 2018: 162).

Bauman (2007) suggests that our loss of security is experienced at three interconnected levels: *insecurity* (of position, entitlements and livelihood), *uncertainty* (as to our continuation and future stability) and *unsafety* (of our body, ourselves and our extensions: possessions, neighbourhood, community). This loss level has paradoxically increased in the Western World over time despite drastic improvements and changes to medical health and other social and material conditions of modern life. Giddens (1991: 53) explains that external environments full of changes impact our ability to feel ontologically secure as our present identity becomes psychologically distant from our past identity. He argues that the threats to our ontological security have intensified due to technological and industrial changes that have brought us new risks that we are now more aware of. Simultaneously, these changes have significantly shifted how we relate to one another:

> From being primarily face-to-face to being increasingly mediated and dependent on abstract systems of effective management of risks. As a consequence, systems of trust have been reconfigured with space-time distanciation, and individuals have increasingly grounded their sense of ontological security on relational networks, which are often dislocated from the immediate locality.

(Georgiou, 2013: 306)

As Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) explained, modern life and contemporary society are characterised by the loss of certainty. What emerges out of this uncertainty is a 'risk society' (Beck, 1992) that 'introduces new forms of danger which humanity has to face' (Giddens, 1991: 28). As we live within this society, we formulate a calculative attitude toward the positive and negative open possibilities that confront us, and as such, society favours the ideals of security over that of equality (Beck, 1998; Valente and Valera Pertegas, 2018). Areni (2019) summarises the increased level of ontological insecurity in the modern world as being impacted by three key things. The first is *the increased chronological and psychological longevity* of life, as humans live longer than ever, and such longevity has been rather sudden. He states that 'When people reflect on a period of their past, perceived duration is influenced by how many distinct events they can recall as having occurred during the interval' (2019: 78). The more events a person can recall, the further the events get pushed back in terms of psychological time; the fewer events remembered, the closer they become to the feeling of 'it seems like yesterday'. Second, the *proliferation of people, places and technology.* The accelerating rate of technological change has enabled new advances in technology and products to disrupt everyday life, resulting in the sense that our 'past is moving away from us at frightening speed' (Gombrich, 1969: 65). He points to Eviatar Zerubavel (2003) and Svetlana Boym (2001) who highlight that this acceleration triggers a conservative urge for the preservation of the past and longing for social

cohesion and tradition, as will be explored in chapter 3. Lastly, the *secularisation of society* where, identity affirming institutions that have historically provided a sense of identity and purpose in life, especially religion, have waned in influence (Areni, 2019: 80). Each of these characteristics of modern life has further exposed us to more ontological insecurities.

Our ontological security starts developing from childhood, and Giddens argues that it is never fully established (1991: 45). As such, what is at play within our ontological frameworks is how the closeness of the psychological distance between our past, present and future selves impacts our level of ontological security. The development of our ontological security speaks to our awareness of our position within time and space and the experience of time-space distanctiation, which is about our interactions and social relations with people who are absent in the indefinite space of time and space (Giddens, 1991; Lippuner and Werlen, 2009). What is critical here is how the media industries, including television and radio broadcasting, play a role in managing this distance and transition. This is what leads Silverstone (1994) to claim that television operates as a transitional object.

Silverstone borrows from Winnicott's (2005 [1974]) concept of transitional objects that argues that

> The emergence of the individual is a process involving both social and symbolic dimensions, substantially grounded in the experience of space

> and time, and substantially relevant to an understanding of the emergence of culture.
>
> (Silverstone, 1994: 9)

Our understanding of ourselves as individuals involve the creation of transitional objects such as a teddy or blanket that enables us to navigate our separation from others in time and space. Silverstone argues that media and television cathartically and culturally function as transitional objects that replace the space of the blanket or teddy.

To summarise, ontological security can be thought of as composed of three key elements: confidence (in the continuity of our self-identity), consistency (with the structures and routines of daily life) and comfort (in our formulaic navigation and flow of time and space). Each is interconnected and should not individually define the framework for ontological security. The level of confidence we have in our self-identity is impacted by how we navigate and flow through our temporal and spatial activities, which in turn are impacted by the consistency of the structures and routines of daily life. As a reminder, our ontological security is not static. It is fluid, fragile, and shaped by the uncertainty within everyday life's spatial, temporal, social and cultural conditions. Being ontologically secure is about sustaining coping mechanisms for managing and navigating the unpredictability and uncertainty of everyday life. Television and radio broadcasting operate as coping mechanisms and can be considered ontological security blankets.

Navigating ontological security through television

Television plays a critical role within our ontological security frameworks as it influences our sense of distance between time and space by portraying the sheer number of events that happen throughout the days, weeks and years. It impacts our sense of the continuity of our self-identity by creating structure and trust in our lives through formulaic cyclical patterns (such as the schedule) that mirror the rhythms of everyday life. As our lives become fragmented, we increasingly ground our sense of ontological security within our social relations. Television mediates these relations and allows us to connect and distance our self-identity from others. The significance of television within everyday life is that it acts as a coping mechanism and an ontological security blanket in a society that presents us with risk. Through broadcasting, television primarily functions to cater to our ontological security in three ways: by providing structure and stability, comfort and reassurance, and belonging and identity.

Structure and Stability

Television broadcasting provides ***structure,*** both temporally and spatially, by creating routines, rituals and cycles that order everyday life and provides a sense of ***stability*** within everyday life. The curation of programming schedules often reflects the routinisation of daily life. They create a sense of continuity through a constant flow of content from breakfast shows, afternoon game shows, midday and evening news to late-night comedy. These schedules offer us fixed marker points, not only throughout the day but also the week or year

or what I mentioned earlier and defined by Paddy Scannell as ‘Clock-time’, ‘Life-time’, and ‘Calendrical-time’ (1986: 2). For example, the daily news bulletins throughout the day can function as a structuring device for tuning in to find out what is happening in the world around us and as explored in the next chapter, act as a boundary marker between the shifts of daytime, evening and nighttime. Archive content and media events such as coronations and royal weddings deliver a commemorative and restorative function (Dayan and Katz, 1992) that communicates the movement of lifetime and its passing away (Scannell 1986: 2), evoking a sense of nostalgia. Sports and national events such as the Olympics, FIFA World Cup or Eurovision Song Contest bridge the gap between public and private life. These become more than just events and instead, taken-for-granted traditions and rituals that people interrupt their regular routine (Scannell, 1986; Dayan and Katz, 1992; McQuail, 1997) in order to participate in the experience of a shared national life. Simultaneously, the repetition and recirculation of ‘classic’ programmes slow down the pace at which we psychologically pass through time by reconnecting the past with the present.

As mentioned above, in a society characterised by uncertainty and where technological innovation contributes to the proliferation of media services and audience fragmentation, there is often an urge to preserve traditions and emphasise social cohesion. Television broadcasting is well-positioned to satisfy and manage such urges. It does so through constructing a collective social identity and shared memory, as will be explored in the next chapter. This system of what Amy Holdsworth calls the ‘system of everyday memory-

making' (2011: 3), alongside Derek Kompare's 'regime of repetition' (Kompare, 2002b: 20), are tools used to maintain our ontological security.

Comfort and Reassurance

Broadcasting provides ***comfort and reassurance*** within our daily lives, offering both social and solitary satisfaction (longer-lasting fulfilment) and gratification (immediate pleasure fulfilment). As such, our media experience has become tightly woven into our everyday lives to the point where we can speak of our experience of time through our relationship with media. In this way, broadcasting and our relationship with it could be thought of as what James Lull (1980) calls a 'behaviour regulator'. We may refer to our daily routines through our encounters with media. For example, we may describe our weekday routines like watching a news breakfast show as we have our morning coffee in order to keep up with what is going on in the outside world, listening to the radio to keep us company as we commute to work; indulging in our current favourite television show in the evening to escape the busyness of everyday life; or listening to a podcast to unwind and relax as we get ready for bed. Regardless of whether our media interactions are used instrumentally (i.e. goal-directed, e.g. to seek information) or ritualistically (i.e. habitually to consume time) (Rubin, 1984), both offer a sense of comfort or reassurance. How we continuously flow through each of these activities, and our overall experience of such flow is what provides a level of comfort and reassurance within our ontological security. For instance, when immersed in a TV series, the world seems cut from us. Although we are aware that we are watching television and are in control of such actions, at that moment, any

contemplations about the anxieties presented by everyday life become irrelevant. There is no need for any external mechanisms to comfort and reassure us.

Television broadcasting is designed to maintain and shape the flow of everyday life (as will be explored in chapters 2 and 4). It does so through scheduling and programming within a dedicated channel. However, in an ever-evolving media landscape that consists of 'on-demand', 'catch-up' and 'streaming' as well as broadcasting, the televisual flow is no longer solely constructed by the schedule or channel. Instead, media organisations attempt to remediate such flows (as explored in Chapter 4) within the online space, such as automatically playing the next episode once one has finished. The flow of our televisual experience and its ability to match and regulate our moods and ontological insecurities is necessary to manage our ontological security.

Belonging and Identity

Broadcasting provides us with a locality in our ***belonging and identity***. It gives us a sense of identity in who we are or should be and where we belong. In order to have confidence in who we are, we must also be able to distinguish who we are not. Whilst we need to feel ontologically secure, we can experience ontological insecurity depending on unpredictable circumstances that everyday life throws up. Encountering an external environment full of change creates a psychological distance between our former and present selves (Giddens, 1991: 53). Television broadcasting provides us with the opportunity to understand and reflect on our place in the world by producing images of

individual and collective identities that can attempt to fix our identities. These images construct various ideologies that may encourage individuals to accept a fixed identity; for example, television advertisements of household products may depict a woman carrying out 'domestic' activities such as cooking and cleaning. These ideologies can also encourage people to accept a specific historical narrative, as discussed in Chapter 3, through how the televised docking of the Empire Windrush at Tilbury Docks on 22nd June 1948 worked to cement the myth of the first arrival of Black people in Britain despite their presence since the 1400s (Newton, 2011: 3). Through strong and identifiable claims on social realities, the stories created in the content we watch are developed in a way that provokes aspiration, i.e., for us to be like what we think we are not, or developed in a way that is either coherent or non-coherent with our own life experiences and thus which we can identify or choose to distance ourselves from.

Internet-enabled technologies and devices have produced an online diversified media landscape that, on the one hand, has created interconnected and collaborative spaces for audiences and, on the other, has fragmented both their media experiences and social relations (Georgiou, 2013: 305). The growth in online digital media has created more audience choices in the type of content we watch, read or listen to, how we do this, at what time and on what device. However, these diversified media experiences have opened the opportunity to challenge 'the boundedness of spaces of identity as contained within the nation-state' (ibid) and other identity-affirming institutions. As mentioned above, the influence of such institutions has waned and, as a result, impacted

confidence and stability in our self-identities. Whilst we have always had the chance to look beyond these institutions for identity affirmations, the proliferation of online media services has further opened this up by enabling us to look beyond the broadcast schedule for content that connects with our identities. As will be explored in Chapter 3, challenging spaces that bound identity is essential for managing the ontological security of ethnically minoritised.

The value of broadcasting lies within the concept of the ontological security of everyday life. Structure and stability, comfort and reassurance, and belonging and identity are the three core pillars of ontological security that are fundamental for identifying the value of broadcasting in everyday life. These three pillars of ontological security are interrelated and do not operate independently of one another. As will be shown in this thesis through the three key case studies, these pillars are not mutually exclusive. The maintenance of flow that provides comfort and reassurance can also provide stability and structure; the routinisation and ritualised routines that give us stability can also work to construct our sense of belonging and identity. Furthermore, our sense of who we are and where we belong will influence how and where we find social and solitary satisfaction and gratification to feel comfortable and reassured. The value of a cultural institution like the BBC is in how well it sustains our ontological security.

To understand the significance of the BBC within everyday life, I have built an ontological security value framework tool (see Figure 2) that comprises four sections:

1. **Ontological security pillars**: Structure and Stability, Comfort and Reassurance, Belonging and Identity.
2. **Ontological questions that ask**: Where am I?, When am I?, How am I?, Who am I? and Where do I belong?
3. **The function of ontological security within everyday life**. This includes consistency with the routines and cycles within my everyday life, comfort in my formulaic navigation of time and space, and confidence in the continuity of who I am.
4. **The way broadcasting functions to provide ontological security**. This includes asking questions such as how broadcasting constructs a sense of stability that mirrors everyday life's consistent routines and cycles, a sense of reassurance within the flow of time and space, and a sense of belonging that contributes to confidence in self-identity.

	The pillars of ontological security		
	Structure and Stability	*Comfort and Reassurance*	*Belonging and Identity*
Ontological Questions	Where am I? When am I?	How am I?	Who am I? Where do I belong?

Ontological Security Function	Consistency with the routines and cycles within my everyday life	Comfort in my formulaic navigation of time and space	Confidence in the continuity of who I am
Broadcasting Functions	How broadcasting constructs a sense of stability that mirrors the consistent routines and cycles of everyday life	How broadcasting constructs a sense of reassurance within the flow of time and space	How broadcasting constructs a sense of belonging that contributes to confidence in self-identity

Figure 2 – The ontological security framework for understanding the value of the BBC within everyday life

An ontological security framework offers us an innovative way to understand the BBC's significance in everyday life; it is the significance of the BBC's everydayness where its value is determined. Throughout the remainder of this thesis, I will use this framework as a tool to identify how the BBC frames its value.

Chapter 2 – 'You can't rely on a pandemic to keep your audiences strong forever' – COVID-19 and Maintaining Audiences' Ontological Security

> The role of the BBC is never clearer than at times of national crisis. We provide the public – in great numbers, locally, nationally and internationally – with trusted, impartial news and information they can rely on. We help bring the country together, to share, to understand, to laugh and to commemorate. We examine the big decisions taken by those with responsibility over our lives, explaining the choices and making sense of the challenges. We connect people who are isolated, bringing companionship and a link to the world.
>
> (BBC Annual Plan, 2020)

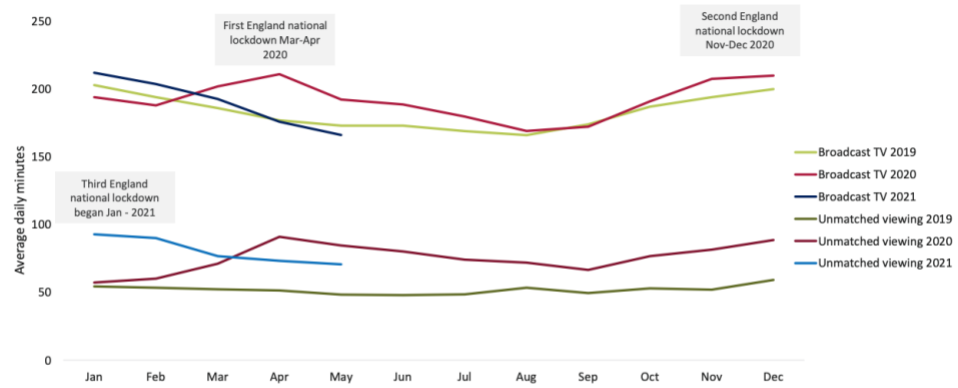
In March 2020, the United Kingdom went into its first COVID-19 lockdown, which created a new version of everyday life that put many people's regular daily activities, such as commuting to work and school and face-to-face social connections, on hold. This unforeseen pandemic disrupted the rhythms of everyday life and created uncertainty about future stability, contributing to a sense of ontological insecurity, identified in Chapter 1 as the precarity about our self-identity and navigation of daily life's temporal and spatial activities. As part of measures to overcome such insecurities, public health advice urged people to establish new daily routines and maintain social connections to support their mental health and well-being (Public Health England, 2020). The

broadcast television schedule, which provides 'a ready-made structure of routines' (Ellis, 2020: 393), was ideally situated as a coping mechanism to assist people with maintaining routines and social connections. As a result, during the lockdown, BARB measured a significant rise in broadcast TV set viewing. Ofcom's *Media Nations Report 2021* stated that the average monthly time spent viewing broadcast TV peaked at just over three and a half hours in April 2020 during the first lockdown, the highest figure for April in five years.

Both broadcast television viewing and online streaming grew during the lockdown. 'Unmatched viewing'[3] (i.e. streaming via Subscription Video On-demand (SVODs), Broadcaster Video On-Demand services (BVODs) and gaming via the TV set) was up an average of 40 mins per person per day in April 2020 to 91 minutes compared to 51 minutes in April 2019 (Ofcom, 2021a). However, following the easing of lockdown restrictions, the average daily time spent on broadcast TV fell back to pre-COVID levels, whilst unmatched viewing remained consistently above 2019 levels throughout 2020. Viewing levels in the first few months of 2021 exhibited the same pattern, where broadcast viewing in 2021 was higher than in 2019 and 2020 at the very start of the year due to the third UK lockdown. Once lockdown restrictions began to ease in April 2021, they fell below 2020 levels (see Figure 3). These viewing patterns raise questions about the kinds of needs linear broadcast television served audiences at specific points during the pandemic that perhaps lessened once restrictions eased.

[3] Unmatched viewing is viewing on a TV set that cannot be audio-matched and attributed to broadcast programming and includes both streaming via subscription video-on-demand services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video and streaming on Broadcast Video-on-demand services such as BBC iPlayer, ITV Hub (now ITVx), All 4 (now Channel 4).

Figure 1.3: Average daily minutes of total TV and unmatched viewing, by month



Source: BARB. Total TV, all individuals (4+). Note: Unmatched viewing = TV in use, but content cannot be audio-matched or otherwise identified. Includes gaming, viewing DVDs/box sets/archives, SVoD, time-shifted viewing beyond 28 days, apps on smart TVs and navigation around EPG guides where there is no in-picture broadcast content.

Figure 3 - Average daily minutes of total TV to BARB-reported channels and unmatched TV set viewing for 2019, 2020 and up to May 2021 (Source - Ofcom *Media Nations* Report 2021/BARB)

In its 2020/21 Annual Plan, titled *Bringing Us Closer*, the BBC uses these increased broadcast TV viewing metrics to argue for the importance of public service broadcasting, saying that the pandemic has 'proved' that the BBC's mission to inform, educate and entertain, is 'timeless and more relevant than ever' (BBC Annual Plan, 2020: 3). This sense of the proven value of the BBC and public service broadcasting was also reflected in hyperbolic statements and news headlines from *The Guardian*, *New Statesman* and *The Independent* that referred to the BBC as having 'proved its worth' (Mosey, 2020), 'untouchable' (Hornby, 2020), and 'staved off threats to BBC licence fee' (O'Carroll, 2020). Likewise, with the BBC's 2020/21 annual plan, these headlines used the pandemic to present a case for the BBC's worthiness, which the rise of online

TV streaming services had been challenging pre-pandemic. Suppose the BBC did indeed prove its value during the pandemic. In that case, the pandemic provides a helpful snapshot for thinking about the role of broadcasting in everyday life and how the BBC uses broadcasting to construct its value. This chapter uses the pandemic as a case study to understand the value of broadcasting and how the BBC uses specific broadcasting components to frame its meaningfulness. In this chapter, I argue that the COVID-19 pandemic emphasises three critical elements of broadcasting that provide ontological security: *scheduling*, *liveness* and *imagined communities*. Taking each component, I illustrate how the BBC used these components to manage an ontologically insecure nation and assert its value.

Before the pandemic, there had been a paradigmatic shift in the online media landscape towards privileging online/on-demand media over broadcasting. This shift primarily focuses on framing online media's capabilities as providing more choice and agency for people. The dominant industry narrative about online video streaming services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Disney + is that they enable us to watch what we want when we want. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the proliferation of these new online streaming services and audience fragmentation brings forth questions about the value of the BBC and public service broadcasting in an online world. However, industrial constructions of the televisual experience across these mediums influence perceptions of their value within everyday life. Chapter 1 discussed how everyday life is more than the 'normal', 'simple' or 'usual' activities carried out in day-to-day life. The concept of 'everyday life' seems

simple to define and often implies unconscious, irrational, ordinary and straightforward processes, which contribute to its 'taken-for-grantedness'. However, everyday life is produced; it is technical and sustained through the routinisation and ritualisation of certain practices (Giddens, 1981; Silverstone, 1994). Roger Silverstone argues that everyday life is how we order and sustain daily life. We invest in cognitive and emotional resources like television to avoid panic and threats to our ontological security.

Broadcast television has meaning in our everyday lives, and as discussed in Chapter 1, television is part of structuring daily life (Selberg, 1993). As such, one of the best ways to understand the value of broadcasting is through disruptions to everyday life. This chapter uses the pandemic as a case study and tool to show how it reminds us that at the heart of broadcasting's 'everydayness', the televisual experience is a cognitive, affective, and social act. This chapter demonstrates how the BBC uses the ontological security afforded by essential broadcasting components to frame the BBC's meaning in everyday life in Britain.

The chapter begins by problematising industry narratives that frame passive media experiences often found in broadcasting as less valuable than the active media experiences offered by online television that are assumed to enable more choice and agency. It challenges the idea that choice provides more value to media experiences. I argue that the curation of choice also provides value as curation offers ontological security. Next, I show how the pandemic emphasised the importance of curation and revealed *scheduling*, *liveness* and

imagined communities as three critical components of broadcasting. I interrogate *the power of scheduling* in constructing routines that mimic the ritualisation of everyday life and offer ontological security. To do this, I take BBC News as a case study to illustrate how the news operates as a transition marker between the boundaries of work and leisure. This notion as the transition marker transforms BBC News from being viewed as just one aspect of the BBC's many services to being a critical service through which the BBC is valued.

I then interrogate *the power of liveness* in fostering social connections. Using sports and soaps, I explore how the liveness of ordinary and event broadcasting offers ontological security. I argue that liveness is a core component of how the BBC frames its value. However, when liveness was disrupted during the pandemic, the BBC used BBC iPlayer and archive content to not only recreate a sense of social connection but also to re-establish the meaningfulness of BBC in everyday life.

Lastly, I explore the *power of imagined communities* in maintaining meaningful notions of collective identities that aspire to offer ontological security. I interrogate the BBC's *Bringing Us Closer* and *Make a Difference* marketing campaigns and the refreshed creation of its *Oneness* idents. I argue that these paratexts use notions of 'nation' to provide a common anchor that provides a sense of continuity and stability to people's self-identity. These paratexts not only worked to offer an imagined shared national life but also worked to reassert the perception of the BBC as Britain's social glue.

It is important to reiterate that in the same way the three pillars of ontological security, as outlined in the previous chapter, are interrelated, how they show up in scheduling, liveness, and imagined communities is also interlinked; how these three components of broadcasting offer ontological security are not neatly distinct from one another. This chapter highlights the purpose of broadcasting within everyday life and its role in the online world. By interrogating scheduling, liveness and imagined communities, I illustrate how broadcasting enables the BBC to construct its value within an ever-evolving media landscape.

The choice problem

The notion of audiences as active and passive and notions of agency have been a core tension within academic research into understanding how and why people watch television. Su Jung Kim and Vijay Viswanathan (2015) note how research in this area typically falls into two approaches: individual and structural factors. The individual approach, grounded in Uses and Gratification theory, argues that the gratification of audience needs guides media choice and reinforces the importance of agency within media choice. The structural approach, however, argues that structural factors such as viewing environment and programming strategies influence media choice and constrain agency (Webster, 2009). The technological, industrial, social and cultural shifts within the media industries have further complicated matters and brought about attempts to integrate the two and consider what James Webster (2011) defines as the 'duality of media'. Jung Kim and Viswanathan (2015: 3504) note how

Webster borrowed from Anthony Giddens' 'duality of structure' to conceptualise the duality of media as a structuration process whereby people actively fulfil their needs and gratifications simultaneously as media structures constrain the enactment of such gratifications. These choices then go on to shape and change media structures. Webster views agency and media as mutually constituted and that this duality happens in linear and non-linear systems.

Whilst academic research has attempted to integrate individual and structural factors of television viewing (Webster and Wakshlag, 1983; Kim and Viswanathan, 2015), the dominant industrial narrative constructs the value of online media experiences on the idea that it offers a seemingly ubiquitous and limitless choice and agency. This appearance of televisual ubiquity, i.e., its ability to be everywhere and accessed at any time, has contributed to the fragmented media experience. The BBC adopts this dominant industrial narrative, stating that 'For British audiences, today's media landscape offers unlimited choice and absolute control, for a price' and 'rapid technological changes driven, in particular, by the internet and mobile devices mean that, more and more, audiences are choosing to enjoy what they want, whenever they want, wherever they are' (BBC Annual Plan, 2018). This narrative suggests that more choice over how, when, and where you have your media experience enables greater agency and control.

Elizabeth Evans speaks of broadcasting as offering viewers immediacy but less control over what they watch. When discussing viewers ability to download

television, she notes how the choice provided by downloading is 'perceived and valued as a "liberator", allowing the viewer greater control over how and when they access television content' (2011: 156) but provides less immediacy or reliability (ibid: 149). The sense that broadcasting offers a more reliable televisual experience that Evans alludes to suggests that it has a structuring ability that, as mentioned in Chapter 1, is necessary for providing ontological security in moments of uncertainty.

Furthermore, in her book *Online TV*, Catherine Johnson (2019) argues that this 'liberator' narrative of choice paints a picture of our online television experience as not limited by linear television's temporal constraints. Johnson notes that such rhetoric is 'the epitome of the ways in which enlightenment notions of public service television operated in the interests of citizens, nations and democracy have been replaced by commercial, neoliberal notions of user choice' (2019: 164). In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, this choice and agency offered by streaming services could be positioned as a coping mechanism to help people gain control over the uncertainty of the pandemic, as they could choose what to watch and feel liberated from the constraints of the television schedule. However, as argued by John Ellis, 'there are moments when choice is an imposition rather than a freedom' (2000a: 171). Barry Schwartz also speaks about this in his book *The Choice Paradox*. He argues that

> When people have no choice, life is almost unbearable. As the number of available choices increases, as it has in our consumer culture, the

> autonomy, control, and liberation this variety brings are powerful and positive. But as the number of choices keeps growing, negative aspects of having a multitude of options begin to appear. As the number of choices grows further, the negatives escalate until we become overloaded. At this point, choice no longer liberates but deliberates.
>
> (2004: 2).

This chapter will show how the pandemic highlights the importance of curated choices for providing ontological security.

These notions of 'liberation' and 'imposition' can be connected to ideas around the passivity of media experiences. Helen Katz argues that 'TV viewing tends to be a more passive, "lean back" experience, in contrast to the active involvement required of the "lean forward" computer/Internet activity' (2003: 63). Evans et al. (2017) note how 'From the very beginning of audience research, there has been concern over the potential for media texts to create "passive" experiences' (2017: 199) and argue that 'the default assumption that passive, distracted viewing behaviours are bad, non-existent or simply uninteresting remains' (ibid: 198). They add that even when scholars attempt to demonstrate that television audiences are not 'passive', they perpetuate a value association that connotes 'passivity' as 'bad' (ibid). As such, Evans et al. attempt to reclaim the term 'passive'. Their research found that people use the '*lack* of activity' (original emphasis, ibid: 199) to make media choices and that the ease of access afforded by digital technologies is valuable. As such, they

argue that passivity warrants further interrogation as it offers significant insights into the daily practices of the audience.

With a new media landscape comprised of digital technologies, acknowledging the value of 'passivity' and 'lean back' media experiences is ever more important for understanding the meaningfulness of media within everyday life. Scholars such as Powell (2013), Grainge and Johnson (2015) and Johnson (2012, 2019) have argued that the new media landscape characterised by digitalisation is adjusting from push-to-pull media engagement experiences. Johnson writes:

> In the broadcast era, television viewing was controlled by the scheduling of television channels, with programmes "pushed" to the viewer by broadcasters. Since the emergence of the VCR in the 1980s, new technologies have given viewers greater control over their experience of television, enabling them to "pull" the programmes that they want to watch.
>
> (Johnson, 2019: 135)

Challenging the negative narratives concerning broadcasting's passivity and restricted audience agency is essential for this chapter as they affect how broadcasting and, thus, the BBC is valued within the online media landscape.

To summarise, industrial and scholarly conceptions of media choice within broadcasting have positioned the televisual experience as a passive engagement. This passivity often connotes 'lean-back', 'ordinary' and 'easy' media as unfavourable, lacking audience agency and thus unworthy of further investigation. In contrast, the online televisual experience continues to be considered 'active', offers more audience control, and is framed as a more valuable experience. These conceptions can lead to a narrative that constructs broadcast viewing as being a less valuable experience than online viewing. It values choice and 'activity' within the online media landscape for its liberating qualities. Still, it fails to consider that choice can also be a burden and that there is value in the media's passivity. As such, it does not acknowledge the structural functions influencing perceptions of choice and passivity. As Evans et al. (2017) found, the passive televisual experience or lack of activity can be positively valued for how it easily integrates into daily life.

The structural functions of broadcasting and online viewing influence the management of ontological security. In online media, these functions curate an appearance of an experience that offers a limitless choice and liberates people from the confines and restrictiveness of broadcasting. This narrative enables the online media experience to be valued for what I'd call 'everywhereness'. 'Everywhereness' is the continuous flow of media activities through space and time. Unlike dailiness and everydayness, as mentioned in Chapter 1, *everywhereness* is not temporally or spatially bound. For example, the online television experience is no longer specifically reserved for the television set/screen or a domestic setting and can happen anywhere at any time. Here,

ontological security is managed through perceptions of agency and control over the media experience.

In contrast, broadcasting is ignored for its passivity and structural functions that restrict agency and is thus undervalued or dismissed because of its 'everydayness'. Constructing broadcasting and online television in opposition can lead to a perspective that either devalues or ignores how broadcasting's 'passivity' functions within everyday life. However, as the remainder of this chapter will show, there is value in broadcasting's everydayness, which can be found in scheduling, liveness and the construction of imagined communities. This everydayness enabled the BBC to assert its value during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The power of scheduling

BBC, Channel 4, ITV and Channel 5 increased their share of viewing to their highest levels in 6 years during the first UK lockdown. In March 2020, PSB channel share peaked at 58.8%, the highest monthly share since February 2014, driven mainly by the news on BBC One and the BBC News channel (Ofcom, 2021a). The peak in share during the lockdown did not last, and the overall PSB share levels remained broadly consistent with previous years, thus implying that PSB content served a purpose during lockdown that was less required post-lockdown.

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic disrupted global and national everyday life. Daily life activities came to a halt, along with the severe interruption to the

routinisation of day-to-day life, threatening our physical and ontological security. Broadcasting acted as a coping mechanism to mitigate this threat. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, viewing figures for both broadcast TV and unmatched viewing increased significantly during the first UK lockdown. John Ellis speaks of lockdown viewing behaviour as a resurgence of 'everyday TV' viewing as the public sought connection, consolation and establishing a routine. Routinisation is embedded into the structure of broadcasting, and as such, it provides the perfect substitute for maintaining ontological security. As mentioned in Chapter 1, routine is a core element for maintaining ontological security, and a lack of it in day-to-day life creates ontological insecurity. Routines help anchor us and bring our threats under control (Giddens, 1991; Mitzen, 2006). Routine is a defining characteristic of broadcasting and functions as a coping mechanism at times of physical and ontological threat.

Scheduling is a critical structural broadcasting function that enables routinisation. Scheduling is much more than organising and distributing content. It is 'communication and relationship building with an audience', as argued by Hanne Bruun, who suggests that schedules are a genre in their own right (2019: 12). Using the television schedule to understand television's role within society and culture has been an essential aspect of television studies (see Williams, 2003 [1974]; Fiske and Hartley, 1978; Browne, 1984; Ellis, 2000a; Johnson, 2013; Bruun, 2019). The routinisation of the televisual experience is produced and maintained through what Raymond Williams (2003 [1974]) theorised as 'flow'. Flow, as well as liveness, ephemerality, rituals,

imagined communities and identity, are attributes that work together to produce traditional broadcasting viewing cultures. The structure of televisual flow contributes to the formation of meanings about content and the 'channel' distributing that content (Bruun, 2019; Johnson, 2019, 2013; Ellis, 2011). Used to explain television broadcasting in the 1970s, Williams' (2003 [1974]) concept of flow helps us understand how television broadcasting forms meanings in ways not limited to the individual content displayed.

The value of television broadcasting is more than the value of the individual content it displays. The components of television broadcasting, such as the programmes, interstitials, idents, adverts, continuity announcements, etc., within the television schedule work together to create a flow. For Williams, an unknown televisual flow (in his case, US broadcasting) can develop a sense of unfamiliarity. We can think of this as creating a sense of ontological insecurity. On the other hand, a known flow does the opposite. It is effortless and provides a sense of familiarity, certainty and social connection to identity. For Williams, it is 'flow' that is the real broadcasting (2003 [1974]: 90).

Despite its relatively mono-directional flow, broadcasting creates the illusion of an imagined united community (Anderson, 1983) and the feeling that the nation is simultaneously watching with you. As mentioned in Chapter 1, flow offers a sense of clarity and being immersed in a continuous flow is rewarding in and of itself. During the pandemic, the BBC's broadcasting flow offered people a sense of ontological security and spoke to the familiarity of everyday life that had been disrupted. It provided the opportunity to connect to a

collective identity of people whose lives had also been disrupted. Elizabeth Evans notes that 'One of the key characteristics of television broadcasting is that thousands (or millions) of viewers are watching the same thing at the same time' (Evans, 2011: 162). Broadcasting as a medium encourages simultaneous viewing and listening with others, and the flow of broadcasting presented an opportunity to connect with others at a time that prevented 'in-person' social interaction.

Interviewee Emma Theedom, Head of News Audiences at the BBC, reflected on this social connection aspect of broadcasting and suggested that in the early stages of the pandemic, BBC News and news watching, in general, offered this sense of connection to audiences:

> I think that TV does this really well like it used to when I was at Uni, through programmes like *X Factor*, and you know that you're watching at the same time as millions of other people and you're there with your mates and you know you're connecting through having that shared experience. I think the news possibly offered that during the early phases of the pandemic and more so than it normally does. I think the news probably always does that. I think that's why there's news at six when you come back from work, and you're connecting back into the world and understanding what's going on around you. I think with COVID, though, there was even more need to connect because, obviously, we were all in our houses, and you sort of want to know that there is a world going on where people are experiencing the same thing

> as you, whether that is at a super local level or globally. So, I think the BBC and all the news during that time were doing that for people.
>
> (Emma Theedom, Head of News Audiences, BBC - Interview)

Theedom suggests that television was doing something more during the pandemic than it used to do pre-pandemic. The news examples she uses imply two things. First, the audience's inability to connect face-to-face heightened the socio-connectivity of television programmes such as the news. Second, the routinising characteristic of news that follows the flow of everyday life allowed people to transition between modes of work and home when commutes between these physical spaces were impossible. Here, news provided ontological security by operating as a transition marker within people's daily lives.

News as a valued transition marker

News provided stability and routine in the people's daily lockdown lives. The purpose of BBC News, as per the Royal Charter, is 'To provide impartial news and information to help people understand and engage with the world around them' (BBC Royal Charter, 2017); however, during the pandemic, BBC News became more than an informer of news. News watching was not only used to stay informed or in touch with local, national or global events, but due to its structure within the schedule that is tuned to the rhythms of everyday life, watching the news helped to organise life. News, like other programmes such as breakfast shows, magazine shows, and soap operas, act as transition markers

for daily life and are scheduled in a way that helps to arrange everyday life socially. Furthermore, transmission times for these programmes generally coincide with the busiest periods within a household to ensure the widest audience availability (Lull 1980; Gauntlett and Hill 1999).

The daily Prime Minister briefings and the lockdown announcements helped drive household reach, with many households tuned in to watch BBC One and the BBC News channel every week (see Figure 4).

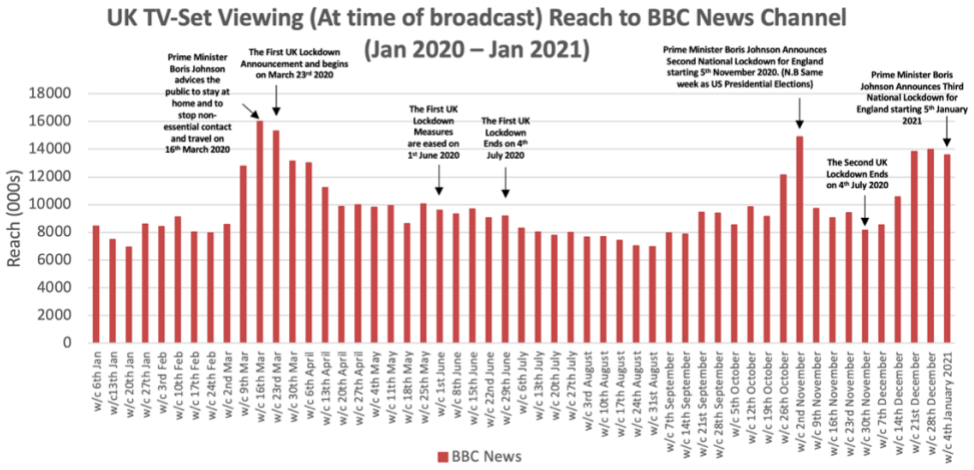


Figure 4 –BBC News Channel reach at time of broadcast via a TV-Set (Source – BARB)

Through its broadcast of the announcements and daily briefings, the BBC worked to establish a shared national life throughout the pandemic that slowly became a daily national ritual. As Theedom highlights:

> You know, some weeks we were seeing 90% of the UK population coming to the BBC News in one form or another in that week, it was

> delivering the information that people needed to live their lives in a much more critical way than it normally does. Partway through the early stages of the pandemic, I did think, well; literally, people in the UK are in their houses because the BBC has told them to do that. Although it was Boris, people were getting that information from the BBC, much more so than our competitors. So, I think that for all the reasons that people came for that very practical and critical information, that sense of connection and reassurance, I think in those moments, the BBC was able to provide it.
>
> (Emma Theedom, Head of News Audiences, BBC - Interview)

Here, the BBC acted as a producer of a shared national life. The BBC's ability to provide more than just information perhaps helped attract large audiences. Theedom also suggested that practical and critical information was vital for audiences and that audiences felt that this information was delivered more clearly than by the government.

Whilst the 'bad' news of the pandemic could contribute to ontological insecurity as it reinforces uncertainty, its ability to structure daily routines can counter the bad news being communicated. Torunn Selberg speaks about the News Paradox and how telling us about the insecurities in the world actually makes us feel under control. He goes on to suggest that the reason for this could be that 'it makes an ambiguous reality one-dimensional' or that 'the program gives us a feeling that things are as they should be because watching

the news is part of our transition from work to leisure' (1993: 6). Both making reality 'one-dimensional' and assisting the transition between work and leisure point to the capability of the news to provide ontological security by structuring everyday life.

As mentioned above, the lockdown heightened the need to establish a transition marker between work and leisure time. Although work and leisure were relatively separated temporally, they were spatially blurred. Edmond Leach suggests that when we make category distinctions, the differences between the categories are what we focus on rather than the similarities, and that is what 'makes us feel that the markers of such boundaries are of special value, "sacred", "taboo"' (Leach in Selberg, 1993: 5). The news schedule established boundaries between what Paddy Scannell (1986) terms 'clock-time' and 'life-time' and as such delivered as a valued transition marker.

Due to its transition and boundary marking, we can understand how news helped to heighten the BBC's value during the lockdown. It became a core part of the narrative around the BBC's reassertion of value during the first UK lockdown, as suggested in the news article headlines and in the BBC's summary of its value during the pandemic shown in its 2021 Annual plan, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The BBC helped to produce a shared national life through the news. BBC News illuminated its purpose and value in everyday life by assisting people to navigate their ontological insecurity (fears about the uncertainty of the pandemic) by connecting to others and implementing routines into their disrupted lives.

Theedom speaks about mitigating fear as a critical audience need in the earlier stages of the pandemic. However, once restrictions eased and pandemic fears lessened, audience needs from the BBC shifted. She referred to 2021 audience viewing figures to BBC News being higher than they were pre-pandemic but not as high as they were during lockdown:

> Now, figures are much higher than they were, but they've come down to where their peak was because of that fear factor for many. But actually, you do still need to know what the hell is going on because the rules are changing all the time, and you need to know what you are able to do, but it comes without that large dose of fear that we saw for quite a long-time last year, even into the autumn when we saw the second wave.
>
> (Emma Theedom, Head of News Audiences, BBC - Interview)

Whilst the BBC may have done well in reassuring, connecting and organising audiences' everyday lives, once the novelty of the virus subsided and fear was mitigated, pre-pandemic media behaviours began to resurface. As such, the BBC acted as a safe haven for audiences and became valuable because it provided a sense of ontological security. When asked why large numbers of the public came to the BBC during the lockdown, Theedom pointed to her department's audience research and responded:

> One was pure survival. “I need this information in order to figure out what to do today so that I can be safe and my family can be safe”. I think it is very rare that news does that role in such a pure way. I think it does, perhaps during terror attacks, where you get a similar sort of thing; you need to consume news in order to be safe in every meaning of the word, psychologically safe, literally safe. So, I think that was driving a lot of the behaviour, at least initially. That sort of need to survive. Obviously, those constantly changing rules and regulations that still do exist to a certain extent. But I think that the fear factor has gone for many, but I think that that drove consumption in the early days. I also think practicalities. There were more people at home at one and six, so we saw more people consuming because they just happened to be in.
>
> (Emma Theedom, Head of News Audiences, BBC - Interview)

Both fear and the practicalities of lockdown must be considered when exploring the BBC's value during lockdown. Metrics such as viewing figures or time spent only tell a small proportion of the story. Theedom suggests that more people were consuming more news out of fear and a need for physical and ontological security, but also because they happened to be at home and thus available to watch more of it.

Theedom spoke about the importance of considering how news is organised in the schedule when using metrics to assess value.

> Someone emailed me last week saying, "The 10 o'clock news a couple of Sundays ago had an absolutely amazing audience; can you think of a story that drove it?" Ah, it wasn't a story, Line of Duty was on before it, and that has driven it to the biggest audiences it has seen all year.
>
> (Emma Theedom, Head of News Audiences, BBC - Interview)

Theedom refers to 'hammocking' or 'inheritance' (Ellis, 2013), which are key scheduling strategies broadcasters use. Hammocking is whereby a programme preconceived of having a smaller audience is scheduled between two widely viewed programs (tent-pole), whilst inheritance is where audiences of a popular programme stay watching a channel and the following programme in the schedule. John Ellis refers to this as channel controllers and schedulers 'pre echoes' and 'echoes'

> Which they hope will provide an inheritance and perhaps even maintain an audience across the "junction points"…Junction points provide the opportunity to find new recruits as well. They have "tent pole" programmes, the "bankers", which provide a dependable lift to the graph of audience share.
>
> (Ellis, 2000b: 29)

In Theedom's example, Line of Duty was the 'tent-pole' programme where the BBC Ten O'clock news inherited some of its audience. Jane Lingham, Director of BBC Brand, discusses how BBC News as a brand is not just a 'tent-pole' programme within the schedule but plays a more significant role in maintaining audiences across other BBC Brands.

> I think that [the BBC] was incredibly valuable in keeping the nation informed and aware and being able to provide the right level of reassurance and understanding as to what was going on in people's local lives and the world at large. But the double-edged sword of that is it sort of has reinforced our credentials as a bit of a crisis brand, and what we weren't able to do was bring in the huge audiences who were coming to us for BBC News. We didn't really successfully tip those into consuming light-hearted drama content or entertainment content. Actually, people have gone to the SVOD platforms for that, so we've seen in the last year that SVOD subscriptions have gone up hugely because people have been seeking out different types of content.
>
> (Jane Lingham, Director of BBC Brand, BBC - Interview)

Lingham suggests the BBC lacks the ability to transfer and maintain audiences across the various genres it provides. This highlights that BBC News is perceived as being a tent-pole for the broader breadth of the BBC's portfolio. Not only does it need hammocking and inheritance to increase its audience, but it also needs to act as a tent-pole programme to other programmes in the

schedule and the wider BBC portfolio. However, the problem is that if news heavily relies upon linear viewing, then the BBC has a challenge of attracting audiences to linear viewing of non-news programmes that BBC News can then hammock itself in between.

Theedom demonstrated this when saying, 'Without huge linear audiences, you're going to struggle to get the levels of viewing that we were seeing previously in those main TV bulletins'. This reveals a somewhat chicken and egg problem for the BBC, where audiences won't watch linear broadcast television as they don't perceive there to be the kinds of programmes they want to watch, and those that do tune in to watch BBC News don't stay watching for the same reasons. As such, BBC News is then the primary service through which the BBC is valued. This puts pressure on the institution to uphold specific news values, such as impartiality, objectivity and trustworthiness, as will be explored in the next chapter. In this sense, the BBC is only valued because of BBC News and can be seen as only valuable in times of crisis or when ontological insecurity is heightened.

Lingham states that the BBC is quite formal, and whilst people admire what the BBC does, they don't necessarily love the BBC:

> We're still quite formal, and what we find is that people often, if people are positive about the BBC, the way they talk about the BBC, they will admire the BBC, but they don't love the BBC in the way they might love Netflix, because actually, they get excited about the content there.

(Jane Lingham, Director of BBC Brand, BBC - Interview)

This formality of the BBC causes friction between what is admirable and what is loved. This emphasises the complex nature of the term ‘value’. According to Lingham, current value perceptions of the BBC are of admiration, which I would argue are linked to public value and the sense that the BBC is doing something that benefits Britain as a collective of citizens who are all trying to navigate a pandemic; in a different way to how the competitive market (ad-funded PSB and SVODs) needed to address such uncertainties. However, it seems that the BBC wants to sustain being admirable but obtain a love value. The pandemic drove admiration for the BBC as it was able to help structure and stabilise everyday lockdown lives. However, this admiration did not transition into brand love.

Whilst BBC News drove high numbers of viewers to the BBC, Theedom suggests that the BBC must rely on something other than linear viewing.

> We’ve seen some of the highest figures ever in history. So, when there was a critical need, audiences did come back, but you can't rely on a pandemic to keep your audiences strong forever, I don’t think.

(Emma Theedom, Head of News Audiences, BBC - Interview)

To summarise, during the first UK lockdown, BBC News broadcasting provided the opportunity to mitigate some of BBC audiences' physical and ontological insecurities. The news schedule helps to maintain the routinisation of a disrupted everyday life by marking the boundaries between 'clock-time' and 'life-time'. This structuring and stability component of news broadcasting offers ontological security and enables the BBC to receive high linear viewing figures. However, the BBC's lack of ability to hammock and transition audiences across its services contributes to the BBC being seen as a crisis brand. This, in turn, has a wider impact on the BBC's value as it puts pressure on BBC News to be the embodiment of the value of the BBC. This enables us to see how the value of the BBC is attributed through BBC News.

The news was one of many types of content to experience increased viewing during the lockdown. When television productions stopped, 'ordinary TV' or consolation 'sit back, lean back' TV also saw an increase in viewing, whilst special and 'media event' TV, as termed by Dayan and Katz (1992), declined. As mentioned earlier, Lingham shared how the BBC was unsuccessful in 'tipping' news audiences over to 'consuming light-hearted drama content or entertainment content'. As I will argue next, this is due to the lack of 'liveness' within the BBC's schedule. Liveness is a core component of broadcasting and has been argued to be the feature that distinguishes broadcasting from other mediums (Gripsrud, 1998; Evans, 2011). Pre-pandemic, it played a vital role in how the BBC delivers ontological security. When liveness became challenging to recreate, the BBC had to turn to other means to reassert its value.

The power of liveness

Compared to news, 'consolatory entertainment' (Ellis, 2020: 394), referred to as 'ordinary TV' (Bonner, 2003), is about evoking an emotion rather than delivering a message; it is comfortable and familiar and does not challenge. For Bonner, 'the uneventful' is a 'valuable synonym for the ordinary', and programmes classified as 'ordinary' are the opposite of special or event television and 'centre on home and family, holidays and relationships and, of course, mediated entertainment' (2003: 63). Lifestyle programmes, game shows, chat shows, reality shows, talk shows, advice shows, breakfast, morning and tonight shows are considered ordinary television and exhibit their ordinariness through characteristics like mundanity, liveness, flow and direct address of the audience (ibid: 3). On the other hand, special or media event television, such as sporting events or ceremonial events like the football World Cup or the Queen's Funeral, have ritualistic tendencies and tends to bring large audiences together, command attention, and encourage social and national connection. They often privilege the home, interrupt the flow of day-to-day life and the usual television broadcasting schedule (Dayan and Katz, 1992), and are broadcast live.

The notion of liveness has been and continues to be the critical characteristic of broadcasting. It has been argued to be the element that culturally elevated and distinguished it from other media (Levine, 2008). Even though the majority of television broadcasting is pre-recorded and not live, broadcasting comes with an expectation of liveness. Karen Van Es (Van Es, 2017a) discusses three approaches to 'live' in media studies: ontological, phenomenological and

rhetorical. In her discussion, she argues that each of these views only provides a 'single piece of a much larger puzzle', which leads her to conclude that they all, in some fashion, reduce 'the live to a technical performance' and that 'For *always* a construction, the live has never *not* been social' (2017b: 1248, original emphasis). In alignment with (Couldry, 2004), she argues that liveness functions to 'establish that something needs to be attended to now rather than later because it is important to us as members of society. This is the collective function of live media, and what binds those media together as a group' (2017b: 1249).

For Paddy Scannell (1996), the liveness of broadcasting is:

> The key to its impact since it offers a real sense of access to an event in its moment-by-moment unfolding. This presencing, this re-presenting of a present occasion to an absent audience, can powerfully produce the effect of being-there, of being involved (caught up) in the here-and-now of the occasion. This being in the moment, especially in its "unfolding", creates the mood of expectancy: what's happening? What's next?
>
> (1996: 84).

This immediacy and presencing is expected within linear broadcasting. Regardless of whether broadcast content is performed live or 'live-to-air' in the sense that

> the presenters and reporters speak to the camera, as if the person spoken to (the home audience members as individuals) was present at the time of the speaking, rather than hearing the recorded words after the passage of days, weeks or even months
>
> (Bonner, 2003: 63)

the construction of liveness articulates specific values. For example, Karen Van Es points out that:

> With regard to news broadcasts, for example, the live is used to frame the programme as *authentic* and *real*. The live broadcasts of sports draw more on the *unpredictability* of the competition – the excitement that comes from the awareness that anything can happen – and on notions of *presence*. In yet other cases, the programme might stress *participation*. All these ideas are associated with the live and can be foregrounded depending on the particular constellation that is relevant in each case.
>
> (Van Es, 2017b: 1249, original emphasis)

Due to its public service broadcasting principle of universality that allows everyone in the UK to access its broadcasts at the point of reception, the BBC has historically used media events, sports events and soaps like *EastEnders* (BBC, 1985-present) to establish itself as a producer of a shared national life.

Paddy Scannell notes how public service broadcasting's ability to 'promote a sense of social unity, particularly through the live relay of those national ceremonies and functions' (2000b: 48) is a core component of Lord Reith (the BBC's first Director-General) conceptualisation of public service broadcasting. Through its national calendar of events, whether a Royal Wedding, the Olympics or an *EastEnders* Christmas Day episode, the BBC has cemented these events into its yearly calendar, creating a ritualistic televisual experience. This calendar of ritualised events takes on wider meanings. What was once a wedding, sports event, or soap opera episode can become something more.

Paddy Scannell argues that the events within the BBC calendar 'became and have remained punctual moments in a shared national life' (1992: 323). He states that 'the calendar not only organizes and coordinates social life but gives it a renewable content, anticipatory pleasure, a horizon of expectations' (ibid). Anticipatory pleasure and the horizon of expectation in media experiences provide comfort in knowing what is coming up and create 'an active period of looking forward' (Dayan and Katz, 1992: 7), benefiting ontological security. As argued by Anthony Giddens (1981) and discussed in Chapter 1, to be ontologically secure, we rely on stable expectations. However, due to the national lockdown, the BBC lacked the ability to provide stable expectations offered by programmes such as live sports and soaps.

The expectation of broadcasting as a social connection facilitator

The BBC has always prided itself on bringing people together and creating shared experiences. A marketing manager at the BBC revealed how the

liveness of broadcasting enabled mood management and social connection. They compared the BBC pop radio stations with its speech stations, particularly Radio 4, which found it more challenging to flow through the different phases of lockdown due to relying on pre-recorded content in its schedule.

> The listening pattern happened the same in our pop stations as it did in our speech stations, so that kind of demonstrates to me that the type of content output isn't illustrative of the need state that radio provides audiences and the mood management entertainment that it provides audiences. As different phases of lockdown happened through COVID, we noticed that audiences gravitated towards different things at different points. So, for want of another term, they gravitated towards more positive, uplifting "we can do this, we are in it together". And actually, the pop stations could very easily do that. They could reflect more positive listener stories, news stories, music, and uplifting music, and use the presenters to give people the morale boost they need to make it through that day. It is harder to do on speech networks like Radio 4, where a lot of the output is pre-recorded.
>
> (Marketing Manager, BBC - Interview)

Whilst the marketing manager speaks of radio broadcasting and not television broadcasting, it is important to note that the term 'live' originated from radio (Auslander, 2008) as a way to help listeners discern if what people were

‘hearing was recorded or transmitted at the time of its production, as he or she was unable to see the source of the sounds’ (van Es, 2017b: 1246). The marketing manager’s mention of audiences’ sense of ‘we are in it together’ points to Benedict Anderson’s conception of the nation as an ‘imagined community’ as a deep, horizontal comradeship (1983: 6). For Anderson’s the nation is an imagined comradeship because ‘the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion’ (ibid). This emphasis on the social connectivity of the liveness of broadcasting during the pandemic was further illustrated throughout interviews with BBC staff:

> We lost a sway of our audience from those that would get in the car and go on a commute, that kind of habitual get up in the morning routine. For the people who continued to use us, they used us far more than ever before. I think the response we got from audiences was so positive, of the kind of companionship, deep shared experiences and the kind of community spirit of radio that you simply don’t get through, you know, clearly on-demand TV, or you’re on-demand music. I think this is broadly true of radio, actually and not just a BBC phenomenon.
>
> (Strategy Manager, BBC - Interview)

> We noticed that the radio peak moved later. So, whereas it tended to be in an early breakfast, “I'm getting up, I'm getting ready for the day ahead”, actually, the peak moved later. It tended to be at the start of the

> workday, so it's really interesting to look at that thought around social connection and people having company while working.
>
> (Marketing Manager, BBC - Interview)

The strategy manager also went on to express how the UK lockdown emphasised the value of the liveness of radio as it offered 'companionship, support and empathy' (Strategy Manager, BBC - Interview). They shared:

> We had two broad terms, which was kind of uplifting to get us through the day, you know, Radio 1 daytime, but we also had spaces on *Radio 2 Breakfast with Zoe Ball*, where it was a space to have actual conversations about "look we're all struggling here"—examples of people that were happy to share their lockdown mishaps and things like that. I think the liveness of radio has never been more valued than in lockdown. And it is a great demonstration for in times of not just national strife but personal strife, it can be a great companion. I think even though overall time spent with radio is declining and touchpoints with radio might decline, it is such a great demonstration of why it's so important to maintain at least a critical mass of public service radio.
>
> (Strategy Manager, BBC - Interview)

Both interviewees' responses shed light on the close connection between routines/rituals and companionship. The public looked for companionship and

social connection when there was a lack of routine. This suggests that when a lack of structure causes ontological insecurity, people also pursue social connection to outweigh the disorganisation. The liveness of broadcasting allowed the BBC to be flexible in how it sustained ontological security during the lockdown. This relates to the level of expectation that comes with broadcasting. There is an expectation that broadcasting, due to its liveness, is tuned and organised to the rhythms and moods of everyday life; thus, meaning that you will receive just the right kind of content you want at the right time.

According to Uses and Gratification theory, expectation motivates and guides people's behaviour and can even determine the public's perception of the usefulness of a medium (Katz et al., 1973a; Windahl, 1981; Rubin, 1984; Fry and McCain, 1983). If the expectations of the liveness of BBC broadcasting contributes to how people value the BBC, then such expectations should be considered when trying to understand how the BBC provides value. Furthermore, the expectations of broadcasting may be different from the expectations of online television, thus providing a different type of value across mediums.

When speaking about the differences between audience expectations of standards in the on-demand landscape vs broadcasting, Adam Baxter, Director of broadcasting standards at Ofcom, talks about Ofcom's 2020 research on audience expectations in a digital world:

> One interesting finding was that there was some evidence that audiences do differentiate between linear broadcast and on-demand. Some companies call it "lean back, lean forward". The idea is that on linear broadcast, you're more of a passive recipient of a prearranged schedule set by broadcasters and have more expectations about standards or about certain high standards, whereas, on demand, you are seeking out material. You're choosing to watch at a time of your choosing, and maybe expectations and slightly different standards apply.
>
> (Adam Baxter, Director of Broadcasting Standards, Ofcom - Interview)

Baxter's reference to 'lean back' and 'lean forward' televisual experiences and the expectations that come with passive media experiences nods to the argument made at the beginning of the chapter about how the construction of the structural functions of viewing in broadcasting and online influence how these mediums are valued. The distinction between 'lean back' and 'lean forward', as coined by web usability consultant Jakob Nielson in 2008 (Deuze, 2016), relates to a similar notion of 'push' and 'pull' media (mentioned at the beginning of this chapter) and suggests that the experience of television impacts content perceptions. In our interview, Jane Lingham discussed how the development of 'lean back' content is one of the BBC's weaknesses.

> Like any media organisation, we know where the weaknesses are in our portfolio in terms of the types of content we have and our weakness in what I would call the sort of sit back lean back, don't really have to think about too much, reassuring familiar content that I think Channel 4 have done an amazing job within the last year on All4. They've got so much content on the platform that seems really fitting to the mood of the nation. Like *Gogglebox* is just an outstanding piece of television, it's just interesting, fun, profound, recognisable, and friendly. You know, all that kind of human stuff that you get from watching a programme like that.
>
> (Jane Lingham, Director of BBC Brand, BBC - Interview)

Lingham and Baxter's reference to the expectations that come with 'sit back, lean back' content and 'fitting the mood of the nation' suggests that there was a value in passive media consumption during the pandemic. These notions speak to Mood Management theory (a subset of Uses and Gratification Theory) and offer insight into the intention of media selection. Mood Management theory argues that media selection (e.g. Lean Back or Lean Forward) is motivated by the optimisation goals (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2014) or by the current mood (Greenwood and Long, 2009) or by aligning/reinforcing pre-existing views (Zillmann, 1988). Lean-back and lean-forward content, I argue, however, should not be viewed as mutually exclusive notions but interrelated.

The notion of lean-back and lean-forward content relates to what some scholars (Rubin, 1984; Phalen and Ducey, 2012) have categorised as 'instrumental' and 'ritualistic'. This view 'formerly esteemed information-seeking over entertainment-seeking behaviours' (Ruggiero, 2000: 13). Instrumental behaviours are more content-oriented and where viewers 'will seek out the content they want on whichever screen has it' (Phalen and Ducey, 2012: 146) to gratify their needs. This is compared to ritualistic viewing, which is more habitual and diversionary (Rubin, 1984), 'where viewers are generally more medium oriented—they will watch the screen that is available to them' (Phalen and Ducey, 2012: 146). Ruggiero notes Rubin's (1984) caution that these categories are not neatly dichotomous, suggesting that 'Just as audience activity is variable, individuals may use media ritualistically or instrumentally depending on background, time, and situational demands' (2000: 10). Robert Kubey argued that the 'Examination of the moods in which TV viewing is embedded should lead to greater success in establishing when and why people watch television. Moods, after all, are the very stuff of human experience, playing a crucial role in initiating, maintaining, and regulating behaviour' (1986: 110).

Lingham suggests that the breadth of content on the online streaming platform All4 enables Channel 4 to fit the nation's mood. This seems counter to what the marketing manager alluded to earlier about the liveness of broadcasting as an enabler of mood management, thus showing how perceptions of lean-back and lean-forward experiences are intertwined with the mediums that deliver them and are not mutually tied to a specific medium. This highlights Elana

Levine's argument that Liveness can be used to create a hierarchy of value (Levine, 2008) and highlights the idea made earlier in this chapter about how the construction of the structural functions of viewing (or listening in the case of radio), can influence the value of broadcasting. Expectations of on-demand media may be different as you are, as mentioned earlier by Baxter, 'seeking out the material and you're choosing to watch at a time of your choosing' and thus perhaps less concerned with the appropriateness of the content to fit your mood as long as it does fit your mood. John Ellis captures the expectations of broadcasting when discussing television's function within the era of availability and plenty. He suggests that television is a 'safe area in which uncertainty can be entertained' (2000: 82). Scheduling (as argued earlier) and liveness stabilise this uncertainty.

Broadcasting comes with an expectation of liveness and is an essential characteristic of the technology (Zettl, 1978). As shown by the examples provided by managers at the BBC, broadcasting's presence grounds people to the here and now that works to establish their ontological security through creating an 'imagined community'. Sports and soaps are two important programme genres that the BBC uses to create an imagined community. However, the cancellation of live sports and the postponement of the productions of soaps like *EastEnders* forced the BBC to look elsewhere to recreate this unified audience.

When the BBC was limited in creating liveness during lockdown through event-like television, it turned to ordinary TV to organise a shared national

lockdown life, providing audiences with an element of ontological security through the structure. For example, the BBC turned to ordinary TV programmes like *University Challenge* (ITV, 1962-1987; BBC Two, 1994 - present), *Masterchef* (BBC One 1990-2000/2009- present; BBC Two, 2005-2008), *Antiques Roadshow* (1979 - present), *The Repair Shop* (BBC Two, 2017-2018; BBC One 2018 - present) and *Race Across the World* (BBC Two, 2019-2020; BBC One 2023 - present), to replace event-like television. They even created new formats, such as *Morning Live* (BBC One, 2020 - present) and strategically moved some of its ordinary TV programmes usually reserved for a BBC Two audience to BBC One, such as *The Great British Sewing Bee* (BBC Two, 2013-2019; BBC One, 2020 - present). According to the BBC's annual plan, many of these programmes saw record audiences during lockdown.

John Ellis (2020) suggests that many people chose to watch ordinary television in the early weeks of lockdown because of its ability to connect. Bonner's categorisation of ordinary TV sees it in opposition to special and event-like television. However, whilst event/special television intervenes day-to-day life and interrupts routine (Dayan and Katz, 1992) and ordinary TV is characterised by routine or mundanity, through broadcasting, both types of television use 'liveness' to create communal viewing experiences. Before the pandemic, we might have seen these categories on two different ends of the TV spectrum due to their relationship with the routinisation of everyday life; lockdown potentially illuminated how they are perhaps two sides of the same coin.

Ordinary TV and event-like television use time as a defining characteristic for their categorisations, notably the notion of liveness. For ordinary TV, most programmes are performed live rather than 'live-to-air'. For media events/event-like television, most are live-to-air in that the events unfolding on-screen are happening live. This characteristic of liveness ties these programmes to real-time. This real-time connection brings a sense of immediacy and hyper-ephemerality of having to be there at that specific moment in time to have the best pleasurable viewing experience. Liveness also creates participatory pleasure by encouraging people to enhance their televisual experience by interacting with the show, whether to tweet about it using hashtags, write a post in a forum, talk about it with friends and family or get involved by calling into the show. As such, liveness brings people together, and in the case of lockdown, these ordinary television programmes encouraged shared family viewing and reminded us that television is social.

The organisational functions of event-like television were replaced by ordinary TV. Before the pandemic, sports may not have fit the category of ordinary TV and were more suited to a special category of television by the way they intervene in day-to-day life and command people to join in. However, the lockdown revealed that this intervention makes it worthy of the ordinary. Once live sports events were cancelled, such as the *Euro 2020* men's football tournament, *Wimbledon*, *The Olympics,* etc., its ability to interrupt day-to-day life was missed. Pre-pandemic sports interruption provided people with a means to escape the stresses and insecurities of everyday life. Whilst sport may not have a daily regularity on non-sport-specific channels, its irregularity does

not disqualify it from being ordinary. On the contrary, its irregularity in this space is what makes it a part of the everyday.

Although sports may not be a daily measure, passer, or keeper of time, like with other ordinary TV programmes, it is a marker of seasonal time, and it is this marking of time through which it provides structure to one's everyday life. Guardian sportswriter Jonathan Liew captured this when speaking about sports in March 2020 when sports events began to close down –

> For so many of us, sport isn't simply a way of passing the time but a way of marking it. It offers a liturgy, a structure on which to measure the passing days and seasons . . . In frightening times, virus or no virus, these are the rituals that offer the veneer of normality, a background noise as reassuring and immutable as the ticking of a clock.
>
> (Liew, 2020)

Sport is as much part of the ordinary as soap operas, talk shows, game shows and morning shows, as the ritualistic behaviour it encourages offers a sense of normality and reassurance of ontological security.

Like sporting schedules, soap opera schedules were also disrupted. The halt of productions forced the BBC to reduce the number of episodes it broadcast per week. In the case of *EastEnders*, this was reduced from four to two times a week to keep the show on TV for as long as possible. While *EastEnders* can be

seen as ordinary television, its regularity, which pre-pandemic was on Mondays and Fridays at 8pm and Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7:30pm, demanded attention similarly to programmes reserved for the special or media events category. Eight years ago, *EastEnders* 'routinely share[d] the top position in the ratings with its great rival Coronation Street, with current figures of around 10-11m viewers' (Lamuedra and O'Donnell, 2013: 59); however, this has halved to about 5million.

Nevertheless, despite suffering from a significant decline in audience figures, soaps like *EastEnders* continue to draw in large numbers to broadcast TV channels and are often the most consistently popular content on TV. Judith Franco argues that soaps help enculturate the public by promoting 'a sense of community and identity among a particular group of viewers within a national territory' (Franco, 2001: 453). If television aims to create a community of viewers who watch the same content simultaneously, in real-time, then soaps can be considered 'the ultimate ritualistic experience perfectly suited to define and bind a community' (Mulgan in Franco 2001: 453). At the beginning of the first UK lockdown, the soap opera schedule's neatness and regularity offered audiences a sense of 'normality'. Despite the pandemic's disruption to the routinisation of daily life, the soap schedule was initially immune to disruption. However, once the BBC announced that it would reduce the amount of *EastEnders* episodes it broadcast each week, it needed to replace the ritualistic liveness of the soap experience elsewhere.

As Elizabeth Evans suggests and mentioned earlier in the chapter, broadcasting's capability to distribute the same content simultaneously to millions of people affords it 'the opportunity to create a unified national audience' (2011: 163). Before the pandemic, the BBC acted as an organiser of a shared national life. It used its sports and soap schedule to produce and maintain a sense of social and national connection by encouraging participatory and anticipatory pleasure through a ritualistic televisual experience. In what follows, I examine how the BBC sought to mitigate the lack of liveness by turning to its archive and BBC iPlayer.

Recreating the liveness of sports and soaps

As live television productions stopped, the BBC soon turned to its archive to sustain its meaningfulness in the people's lockdown lives. In late March-April 2020, BBC iPlayer was recording over 20m daily programme requests for some days (BBC Media Centre, 2020a). In April 2020, it announced that it would be bringing a number of its most popular box sets to iPlayer, such as *Taboo* (BBC One, 2017), *Dracula* (BBC One, 2020*)*, *Doctor Foster* (BBC One, 2015), and *The Kumars at No.42* (BBC Two, 2001-2004; BBC One, 2005-2006; Sky One, 2014*)* (ibid). The box set viewing culture, originally birthed within the broadcasting era and pushed through the introduction of DVDs, has now taken on new forms as binge-watching within the on-demand era. Whilst the definition of what constitutes binge-watching is still up for debate, 'binge-watching is changing how television is seen and understood technologically and culturally' (Steiner and Xu, 2020: 85), by both viewers who have adopted the behaviour and the industry who uses it to organise the

viewing experience. During the pandemic, the BBC encouraged binge-watching through its iPlayer Box Sets to replace the lack of ritual within its linear schedule. With a lack of hyper-ephemeral content in its linear broadcast schedules, such as sports broadcasting, soaps and live entertainment that often encourage ritual viewing, the BBC sought to encourage the ritualistic televisual experiences offered by liveness through binge-watching and boxsets.

To bolster its lockdown content offering, the BBC replaced the hyper-ephemeral 'having to "be there" at the exact moment of first availability' (Hills, 2017: 227) with the anti-ephemeral. Stephanie Janes (2016) defines 'anti-ephemeral' as those that commemorate, celebrate and create television history. Using the anti-ephemeral and hyper-ephemeral as a framework to discuss elements in alternate reality games, she describes that the anti-ephemeral and hyper-ephemeral offer media producers and marketers a valuable opportunity to survive within the current online and on-demand media landscape that is fighting for people's attention (2016: 194). The types of content the BBC made available on iPlayer were what it believed to be its quality programmes. They were quality not because of the large audiences they may have received or how aesthetically pleasing they might be. They were quality due to their historical role in the community they serve (Mulgan, 1990: 20), i.e. bringing people together through shared viewing. They were valued, as they offered ontological security by providing a shared viewing experience.

A Policy Advisor at the BBC who wished to remain anonymous echoed this:

> Value has been generated and shown through being able to draw on its archive when suddenly, programmes that were meant to be delivered just couldn't be like bringing back *EastEnders* or football or whatever those gaps are and keeping a schedule running on both TV and radio, particularly for a lot of people who have been on their own for large tracts of the year and TV or the radio has been there for them.
>
> (Policy Advisor, BBC - Interview)

The BBC aimed to provide ontological security by combining its iPlayer platform and archive with binge-watching. This, in turn, worked to sustain the BBC's meaningfulness within everyday life by organising viewers' online televisual experience and managing how they value the BBC.

To replace live sports, in a press release, the BBC announced that it would be using its archive of sporting events to allow viewers to 'relive some of the most epic sporting moments in recent history' (BBC Media Centre, 2020b). For example, Barbara Slater, the Director of Sport at the BBC, outlined that these epic sporting moments included 'glorious moments at the Olympics, including the magic of London 2012, thrilling Euro'96 matches, wonderful Wimbledon moments, and the best of World Championship snooker' (ibid). The press release went on to illustrate that the London 2012 Olympic games enabled audiences to relive the spectacle of the Opening Ceremony 'that celebrated all that is great about Great Britain', with 'key moments from the rest of London 2012, including Super Saturday, allowing audiences to once

again get lost in the moments that united the nation' (ibid). The BBC's choice to feature sporting moments that they believed created a 'sense of national pride', like when Alan Shearer took home the Golden Boot at Euro '96' (ibid)[4], specifically worked towards reaffirming the BBC's value with British culture and society—the careful selection of these 'glorious moments' works to reproduce a collective public memory. Live sports events can be thought of as 'hyper-ephemeral. Replacing them with the anti-ephemeral archive enabled the audience to bring forth textual and paratextual memories from the past whilst articulating personal and popular memories (Hills, 2017; Janes, 2016). Whilst this archived content no longer had the ritual characteristics such as 'shouting and cheering around the television set, wearing clothes of identification and sharing a few drinks' (Lines, 2000: 676), the public's memories of participating in these behaviours at the time of the original broadcast of these events, were now brought forward into the present.

Pre-pandemic, the sporting rituals that the BBC developed through the Olympics, Wimbledon and Euros 'consolidated the BBC's cultural role, celebrated national pride, and reinforced a sense that such events belonged to the nation, not just supporters' (Huggins, 2007: 494). This notion of 'belonging' creates a shared national value in these events that are projected onto the BBC and speak to the Reithian belief of being able to 'make the nation one man' (John Reith qt in Scannell, 1990: 14) and the role of the BBC

[4] Other broadcasters had similar strategies, such as ITV, who put the 2003 Rugby World Cup (that England won) on the ITV Hub.

as a national broadcaster that operates as a 'kind of "social glue"' (Malik and Newton, 2017: 1). By bringing the careful selection of these past sporting events to BBC iPlayer, the BBC reasserts the values attributed to these events. As people could not participate in the national sporting rituals, the cultural meanings of these events heightened the meaningfulness of the BBC in daily life.

The BBC transformed these hyper-ephemeral cultural moments into 'anti-ephemeral' ones. During the lockdown, the anti-ephemeral offered an inexpensive and risk-averse replacement for the hyper-ephemeral. The anti-ephemeral acted as the BBC's ontological security coping mechanism when it could not deliver what it wanted. Whilst these new meanings attached to these sporting events may provide a stronger cultural relevance for audiences through their anti-ephemerality, the hyper-ephemerality associated with the liveness of the sports events continues to privilege the engagement with that particular sporting event that can't ever be replicated (Evans, 2019: 156). The nostalgia-evoking quality of anti-ephemeral content would not have replicated the sporting liveness that audiences longed for.

The BBC's inability to replicate the hyper-ephemeral reflects Abreu et al.'s (2017) proposal that certain content best suits a particular platform. Hyper-ephemeral content such as news and sport require an instant audience and often lose their relevance over time (Abreu et al., 2017: 69). On the surface, the archived sports events seem to present people with memorable moments that provide comfort at a time of crisis, however, through canonising these events

and constructing certain moments as memorable, the BBC also presented what it deems to be memorable and how it wants to represent its history. These memorable moments seek to get people to forget about the interruption of the usual national calendar of events and remember how great the BBC was at broadcasting these events and currently is. As such, offering repeats of these events encourages viewers to reconsider the BBC's relevance.

The BBC used a similar strategy with *EastEnders* by utilising the power of nostalgia. In June 2020, the BBC continued to provide audiences with *EastEnders* content after it ran out of episodes to air. On Tuesday, 16th June 2020, the BBC ran out of new episodes of the soap. The following week, on Monday, 22nd June 2020, during the soap's usual timeslot, it replaced it with a new spin-off series, *Secrets From The Square* (BBC One, 2020) and broadcast 'classic' episodes from the programme. *Secrets From The Square* saw actors from the show share their memories of working on the programme and celebrate the soap's history (BBC Media Centre, 2020c). In addition to this new programme, the BBC also utilised BBC iPlayer by making episodes from 2008, which it describes as a 'classic' year, available for audiences to watch, titling it *EastEnders 2008*.

Secrets From The Square and *EastEnders 2008* work to construct and organise the best memories of *EastEnders* in a shared collective way. Instead of making all the episodes of *EastEnders 2008* available on iPlayer at once, the BBC wanted to maintain the ritualistic behaviour of watching the soap by releasing

four episodes a week, the same amount of episodes audiences would usually watch per week, pre-pandemic.

Whilst audiences could binge these episodes in one go, they could also maintain an element of ritual by waiting each week for more episodes. Whilst iPlayer provided the opportunity for *EastEnders*' audience to preserve aspects of their pre-pandemic soap-watching behaviours, the participatory pleasure of watching *EastEnders* at the same time as others and the creation of water-cooler moments were lost. Pre-pandemic, the storylines in soaps often trended online and generated 'tweetability' on social media - i.e. worthy of talking and tweeting about. However, watching *EastEnders 2008* via iPlayer 'undermined the necessity or likelihood for the "water-cooler moment"' (Kelly, 2011: 132). For example, if audiences were all watching at different times, they would have been less likely to discuss the storylines. In addition, as they may have already watched the episodes, the storyline cliff-hangers would have been less powerful in generating these discussions. Nevertheless, the nostalgic characteristic of *EastEnders 2008* and *Secrets From The Square* helped recreate shared collective moments and memories in the same way as the BBC's glorious sporting moments archive.

In this way, nostalgia was more than reminiscing; during lockdown, it operated as what Areni (2019) describes as a 'compensatory mechanism'. Areni argues that when there are threats to our present, future and past selves, we seek refuge in the past through psychological comfort from reflection or psychological recovery. This notion of safety is also reflected by Amy

Holdsworth (2011), who refers to the notion of 'safe return' as being something that 'responds to the conservative applications of nostalgia and the safety of the past in an idealised or anodyne form, but it also relates to a notion of nostalgia where recovery or return is not the object of desire but the relative safety of distance and longing' (2011: 97). During lockdown, BBC iPlayer and the BBC's archive of shared collective memorable content offered audiences a safe return to the past. Nostalgia sought to provide a moment of escapism and distraction from the immediate concerns of COVID-19.

BBC archive content offered audiences an escape to a period when social norms did not include social distancing, wearing face coverings, shielding, and self-isolation. Scholars have previously suggested that nostalgia's function via television is not to restore or re-experience but to reorder, reframe, and repurpose (Stewart, 1993; Holdsworth, 2011: 98). For the BBC, restoration did formulate part of how it sustained ontological security during lockdown. Verification and validation are fundamental motivators for nostalgia (Kessous et al., 2015), and sustaining ontological security requires verifying and validating the past. For people to be ontologically secure in the present, there must be a connection to the past, i.e., you cannot be insecure without knowing what it is like to feel secure. In the case of the first lockdown, this was life before the pandemic.

Nostalgia is evoked by what Derick Kompare calls the 'Regime of representation'- 'the constant recirculation of the nation's pasts in the present (Kompare, 2002a; Holdsworth, 2011). This helped sustain people's ontological

security and the ontological security of the BBC's relevance and certainty in the current media landscape. The BBC's distribution of archived sports events and *EastEnders* worked to 'organise and tame' the BBC's 'meaningfulness in everyday life by couching the past in the safety of the anodyne' (Holdsworth, 2011: 101). This 'anodylisation' worked in two ways: to lessen the pain and insecurities inflicted by lockdown restrictions on audiences and by numbing the pre-pandemic hostile forces and criticism of the BBC's wider value. Both construct a happier, lovable and more relevant BBC through images of the past that are unlikely to offend. The value offered by the nostalgia of the BBC archive was emotional rather than a rational value for money, which the BBC had focused on showcasing before the pandemic. It worked as a reminder to audiences of the meaningful role the BBC has played in bringing people together, something people could not physically do during lockdown. When a new self finds it difficult to connect with an old self, there can be a nostalgic yearning for the past; this yearning or longing for the past seeks to integrate the past with the present or, in the case of the BBC, integrate the anti-ephemeral with hyper-ephemeral.

Through the 'regime of representation' and showing repeats of its past, the BBC simultaneously attempts to recover its former self and reintegrate this into the present narrative regarding its value whilst comforting audiences by helping them reintegrate their pre-pandemic memories into the present. Interestingly, a lot of the box sets and archive content that the BBC prided itself on delivering to audiences during lockdown pre-dates 2010, implying that the BBC frames its value on its past broadcasting success, before the

proliferation of online television streaming, including the introduction of Netflix to the UK market in 2012. Nevertheless, the archive compensated for liveness and offered a safe return to the past to alleviate the fears of COVID-19 in the present.

In our interview, Alison Winter, Head of Audiences for BBC Radio, alluded to the value of this sense of reintegrating the past with the present. She shared how the power of liveness enabled BBC Radio 5 Live, the BBC's news and sports radio station, to create collective conversations about sporting pasts. By connecting the sport's past with audiences' thoughts about the future of the sport, the station overcame the lack of live sports in the present.

> We had no sport, which was really difficult. 5 Live relied not just on football but on the Euros and Olympics this year; initially, the schedule was sort of barren. Very quickly, they realised that although there were no live sports, people wanted sport in some form of it in their lives.
>
> (Alison Winter, Head of BBC Radio Audiences, BBC - Interview)

She goes on to mention how BBC Radio 5 Live used the early evening football phone-in programme *606* (BBC Radio 5 1991-1994; BBC Radio 5 Live 1994 – present) to fill the gap and ask questions about the future of football.

> [The programme asked questions such as] "How do you see it coming back?" "What do you think happens now with the premiership?" "What should happen here?" "Should these teams automatically be relegated?" And that really filled a gap in people's lives, and we saw that people really really appreciated that. Now the sport has been coming back in some form; goodness, those figures were amazing; you see them shoot up around. You know people are really keen to have that back in their life. So, I think that is an interesting lesson that they learnt very quickly: a lack of live sport doesn't mean people don't want to engage and talk about sport.
>
> (Alison Winter, Head of BBC Radio Audiences, BBC - Interview)

The BBC 5 Live example shows that the liveness of radio broadcasting facilitated a different kind of media experience when there was no live sport. It highlighted liveness' ability to enable the BBC to cater to audiences' ontological security without its archive. Broadcasting's capability to facilitate conversations catered to the comfort and reassurance aspect of ontological security by creating an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983) of listeners who were also experiencing ontological insecurity simultaneously. The pandemic helped to reinforce the social aspect of broadcasting and exemplified how the components of broadcasting create value.

Before the pandemic, the value of the BBC's broadcasting due to its everydayness was struggling to be seen in the online media landscape. It took a disruption to daily routines for the BBC to reassert itself. In the case of sports and soaps, during lockdown, the BBC used nostalgia as an ontological tool to reorder and restore the BBC's meaningfulness in everyday life. As shown thus far in the chapter, the BBC functioned as an organiser of time and a shared national life. The BBC used BBC iPlayer and its archive to replace ritualistic televisual experiences found in the liveness of broadcast television, which works to sustain our ontological security.

The increase in viewing figures to broadcast television during the early stages of the pandemic highlighted the importance of liveness in televisual experiences and the need for boundary marking and a shared national life. The lack of liveness within the BBC's schedule also reminded us of its value in creating an imagined community of people who are all partaking in the same activity at the same time. Here, as argued by Elizabeth Evans (2011: 163), that community becomes bound both geographically (within the borders of where the BBC broadcasts that content) and temporally (within the time frame that it broadcasts it). This community binding is a key aspect of sustaining ontological security as it connects to the ontology component of everyday life and the third pillar of ontological security – belonging and identity. As a reminder, Chapter 1 explored how ontology is our sense of being in the world and is a foundational property for how we construct our identity and navigate everyday life. We shape our identity and sense of belonging through our social interactions, and as we identified above, television broadcasting is a social

medium; therefore, constructing an 'imagined community' allows us to navigate these social interactions.

Now that this has been established, I want to show how the BBC uses marketing and branding to elevate this sense of an imagined community and to reaffirm its ontological security in the ever-evolving online media landscape while simultaneously offering ontological security to its audiences. To do this, I will explore the elements of two marketing campaigns (*Bringing Us Closer* and *Make a Difference*) and the BBC One ident refresh that launched during the pandemic.

The power of imagined communities

Bringing Us Closer

Fifteen days after the first UK lockdown, the BBC released a 90-second film titled 'Bringing Us Closer'. The film featured a montage of news footage, personal videos and clips from BBC programme archives and was accompanied by a voice-over of actor Idris Elba reading the poem 'Don't Quit' by Edgar Guest. The footage featured included a range of clips such as broadcast journalist Huw Edwards presenting the news, NHS workers in PPE, the Downing Street daily briefings, empty supermarket shelves, standstill airport runways, empty children's playgrounds, empty classrooms, Fiona Bruce presenting the political chat show *Question Time* (BBC One, 1979) with no studio audience and *Line of Duty* (BBC Two, 2012-2016; BBC One, 2017-2021) actor Stephen Graham getting a hair cut from his son in his kitchen. These clips are visually tied together by the brand message 'Bringing Us

Closer' with the BBC logo closing the film. The re-combinatory arrangement of these audio-visual clips, alongside the accompaniment of Idris Elba's voice-over of 'Don't Quit', carefully works together to construct the meaning of the BBC as a brand that helps bring the nation together. The film's title, 'Bringing Us Closer,' became the new slogan for the BBC's brand campaign during the pandemic and consisted of 5 additional films. Two Bringing Us Closer films spoke to the BBC News brand's role and value during the pandemic - 'One Day I Will Tell You There Are No New Cases' and 'The Future Is Not Cancelled'. Three films promoted the role and value of BBC Local Radio and their 'Make A Difference' lockdown initiative.

The 'Bringing Us Closer' film launched on 10th April 2020, 18 days after the UK went into its first national lockdown. The film, as mentioned above, was a montage of visual clips from news footage, personal videos, and BBC programmes. By re-combining various video clips, the BBC uses montage to redefine and construct a meaning of itself as being a part of people's lives throughout the pandemic, a technique often used in broadcasting. The clips were carefully selected and sequenced in an order that works to re-shape and re-establish the BBC's role.

The film carefully positions the footage from BBC news coverage in the first 10 seconds, before Idris Elba reads the first line of the 'Don't Quit' poem 'When things go wrong, as they sometimes will'. The sequencing of the two paints a worrying picture of society and simultaneously works to reassure the public. The news coverage, including the clip of news presenter Huw Edwards,

which opens the film, reinforces the narrative that the BBC has continued to carry out its Reithian mission to inform despite all that is happening in the outside world. It provides an initial sense of the BBC's ability to provide ontological security as news helps to 'situate oneself in time, space, and a community' (Gray and Lotz, 2019: 183). Despite the mostly negative news broadcasts about the pandemic when the brand film was released, as established earlier, news as a regular cyclical medium operates as an attachment tool to navigate the negativity of the unpredictable outside world. Positioning the worrying societal picture next to and later accompanied by Idris Elba, who recovered from COVID-19 weeks before the film's release, aims to give the viewers a sense of comfort and reassurance. Idris Elba was one of three actors chosen to read the poem, with an additional 2 x 60' second edits of the film with *Line of Duty* actors Vicky McClure and Stephen Graham also reading the poem. Using three actors who all play police officers in popular BBC crime dramas further aims to reinforce a sense of security. The words of the poem that repeat to the public not to quit sit alongside the voices of Idris Elba, Vicky McClure and Stephen Graham and merge the wisdom of the words of the poem with the wisdom and moral reassurance often attributed in television crime dramas' formulaic nature (Nichols-Pethick, 2012; Turnbull, 2014: 2).

In the press release for the film, the BBC's Chief Customer Officer, Kerris Bright, states that the film 'reinforces the things which connect us in these difficult times' by 'focus[ing] on the things which actually, are bringing us together' (BBC Media Centre, 2020a). In the case of the film, the BBC is

portrayed as the thing that brings people together in times of crisis. It does this through the assemblage of BBC-recorded footage and videos recorded by the public. By intertwining the two, it repositions the BBC as a core facilitator of the relationship between people who at the time were physically separated. On their own, the clips of goats running across a residential street, a violinist playing through an open window, a crying member of the public, empty supermarket shelves, members of the public participating in clapping for carers, etc., are just pocket documentation of people's everyday lives during the beginning of the pandemic. Together, alongside clips from BBC Three's *People Just Do Nothing* (BBC Three, 2014-2018), *The Mighty Boosh* (BBC Three, 2004-2007), *Gavin and Stacey* (BBC Three, 2007-2008; BBC One, 2008-2010/2019), Mr Motivator leading a workout on live TV and Danny Dyer on an episode of *Who Do You Think You Are?* (BBC Two, 2004-2006; BBC One, 2006 - present) etc., new meanings are formed that put the BBC at the centre of bringing people together.

Here, BBC content becomes entangled with these private pocket documentations, blurring the real-world experience with fiction to situate the BBC into daily lockdown lives. The press release also states that 'the BBC is helping us create shared experiences and emotions that will bring us closer as a society when we need it most' (BBC Media Centre, 2020c). The film acts as a tangible embodiment of the creation of shared experiences by actively joining these previously separated, private and single moments together and into the public eye. Whilst the film does depict the shared experiences the BBC created through its live and 'as live' broadcasting content such as the News, *The One*

Show (BBC One, 2006 - present), *Question Time,* etc., the number of these shown in the film in comparison to the number of videos by members of the public are a minority. On another level, the BBC also presents itself as, like the public, also going through the same experience of re-adjusting to lockdown life through the clips of *Have I Got News For You?* (BBC Two, 1990-2000; BBC One, 2000 - present) being recorded over video conferencing, Fiona Bruce presenting Question Time with no studio audience and 1Xtra presenter Snoochie Shy recording her radio show underneath her duvet.

Bringing Us Closer takes the viewers on a journey from fear to reassurance. The montage re-constructs the original meaning of the individual clips and works to shape the BBC's role during the pandemic. Bringing Us Closer steers the BBC from being seen as just a public service broadcaster towards a remediated identity as 'Auntie'. Not the paternalistic Auntie who knows best but one who creates, shares and participates in daily lockdown life. Here, the BBC does not want to be valued as your public service broadcaster but as a member of your family experiencing the pandemic in the same way as you.

The BBC followed up the Bringing Us Closer film with, 'One Day I Will Tell You There Are No New Cases'. The 60-second film sees a variety of BBC News presenters directly speaking to the camera about the positive news stories they hope to tell the public in the future. Where Bringing Us Closer was about the BBC Masterbrand, 'One Day I Will Tell You There Are No New Cases' is specifically about BBC News' role during the pandemic. As argued earlier in this chapter, the news is a core part of the BBC's operations and

becomes the service through which the value and relevance of the BBC are attributed. The decision to use BBC News at the forefront of the Bringing Us Closer campaign further emphasises the argument made earlier in the chapter about the BBC's reliance upon its News service in producing and sustaining its value. The choice to specifically create two news brand films as part of the wider 'Bringing Us Closer' campaign also contributes to this notion of the reliance upon news in proving the BBC's value in everyday life.

BBC News' strive for impartiality and objectivity enables it to be a helpful tool for navigating the outside world. Although these will be challenged in the next chapter, this impartiality works to build trust among the public. Regardless of whether it succeeds, people's attachment to the impartiality of the BBC's News delivery is enough in and of itself to build trust. As argued by Anthony Giddens, trust is linked to achieving an early sense of ontological security (1991: 3). Regardless of whether individuals agree with or like the BBC, the association of trust with the BBC News brand suggests that the notion of trust helped draw in an extra 10 million people daily to the BBC News TV service in the early stages of the first UK lockdown. The Bringing Us Closer annual plan and the BBC News Channel's increased reach mentioned earlier in the chapter (see Figure 4) highlight this. Chapter 1 noted how trust is central in Anthony Giddens' concept of ontological security (1990: 92). In this case, trust becomes a value attributed to the BBC and is a characteristic useful for retaining audiences.

The ‘One Day I Will Tell You There Are No New Cases’ film signals a more personable and warm BBC News in two ways. The first sees BBC News swap the reality of negative news for a future with positive news. The comfort of intimate memories and nostalgia signals warmth. Whist directly speaking to the camera, the presenters indirectly ask the audience to call upon heart-warming pre-COVID memories, putting a positive spin on the negative news BBC News had been covering regarding the pandemic. Instead of reading the negative news about COVID-19’s impact on the world, a positive news-filled future is imagined and constructed through different BBC News presenters mentioning future news bulletins that touch on topics that speak to the rhythms and routines of daily life that were disrupted during the lockdown. This imagined future connects the BBC with memories of hugging family and friends, children being in school, working at the office, watching sports fixtures and going to cafés, shops and cinemas. It reshapes our relationship with the BBC from being the bearer of bad news to the friend helping us get through it.

Furthermore, the film frames the presenters as more relatable than they usually would during news broadcasts; this is achieved by capturing them adjusting their cameras and preparing themselves to speak. This speaks to Erving Goffman’s notion of dramaturgical action, which is a performative social action that carefully constructs a view of the ‘self’ that is accepted by others and thus improves self-image. In his book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1959) defines three key spaces where we conduct this performance: front stage (what we do when we know someone is watching - so

our behaviours reflect the internalised norms and expectations of the setting. It can be thought of as the version of ourselves that we perform to others), backstage (what we do when we think no one is looking and are freed from the norms and expectations of a setting but are still aware of them. It can be thought of as how we perform in front of those closest to us, e.g., family and friends, etc.) and off stage (what we do when we are not engaged in performance and reflect on how we perform). In 'One Day I Will Tell You There Are No New Cases', the BBC uses the notion of the backstage self to build ideas of trust and social connection. By bringing its presenters' 'backstage' selves to the 'front stage', which is usually reserved for tradition and routinisation of broadcasting norms, it aims to drive the audience to call upon their experiences of doing the same in their own lives when preparing for video and conference calls, which became more common during lockdown due to the inability to have face-to-face meetings. It impacts the power dynamic between the presenters and the audience. Presenters are framed as no longer being in the know-how about the pandemic, but instead, like the public, they are adjusting and trying to navigate it. The BBC swaps 'knowledge as reliability' for 'preparation as relatability' to connect more closely with the audience. The film's final line further enforces this - 'we'll be here to help you understand what's happening every step of the way'.

Warmth and relatability help portray the BBC as a friend-like corporation and reflect Mark Deuze's (2016) claim that the future of advertising focuses on human experience and emotions. He argues that the future of advertising:

> Become[s] part of people's lives, building and sustaining personal relationships through human buy-in, emoting based on human needs, setting brands and consumers on an emotional journey where advertising becomes a sustained and rewarding presence in people's lives.
>
> (2016: 330).

By bringing the 'backstage' to the 'front-stage', the BBC frames itself as relatable and uses this to enhance its trustworthiness. The preparedness of the presenters when presenting the news constructs the idea that the news you are about to receive is trustworthy and reliable. On the other hand, the unpreparedness in the case of this brand film creates the illusion of a level playing field and works to dismantle the paternalistic aspect of the BBC. It distances the BBC as a public service broadcaster away from the paternalistic policies imposed by the government during the crisis. Here, BBC News is impartial, reliable, and trustworthy and becomes your helpful, relatable and dependable friend.

The next chapter will show how the role of the BBC's strong association with *impartiality* and *objectivity* throughout its history reinforces this notion of trust. However, I want to highlight how the BBC's shift towards relatability shows the weakness of these value attributions when fear and anxiety are alleviated and ontological security is restored. It could be argued that impartiality, objectivity and trustworthiness are not what people truly value the BBC for in an ontologically secured everyday life, but more of what they value

it for when there is a disruption to daily life or they are experiencing ontological insecurity. Impartiality, objectivity and trustworthiness were fundamental to the BBC when it became a public service and were values used to restore the ontological security of the public following WWI and during WWII. At the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned how the BBC was said to have proved its value during the pandemic and starved off its licence fee threats; this is because the core values associated with the BBC's meaningfulness in everyday life are tied to its purpose and values that were conceived initially at a time of national crisis. This notion of the BBC acting as a crisis manager is reflected in its 2020 'Make A Difference' campaign, explored next.

Make a Difference

The launch of the BBC's 'Make A Difference' campaign further emphasises the meaningfulness of the BBC in everyday life. In March 2020, BBC local radio stations launched the 'Make a Difference' initiative. The initiative intended to reinforce the power of local radio in bringing together communities and being a 'beacon of hope during a crisis' as described by Paulette Edwards (BBC Sheffield Presenter) at The Radio Academy Festival 2020. It brought together all 39 BBC local radio stations and turned them into coronavirus helplines that provided local coronavirus updates and connected those in need with those who could help (BBC Media Centre, 2020d). In marketing the initiative, the BBC sought to show the relevance of local radio, a service severely impacted by the changing digital media landscape. In the lead-up to the pandemic, BBC local radio faced economic cuts to its services, which was

later postponed in March 2020 because of COVID-19. Before the pandemic, the local radio stations had multiple daytime shows, sometimes hosted by two presenters. However, the BBC simplified this with each local radio station having three daytime shows with one presenter and any shows with two hosts cut to one. This simplified schedule was later made permanent.

Promoting the 'Make a Difference' initiative involved three animated films that aimed to 'bring to life real heart-warming and inspiring stories of people doing good during the Coronavirus lockdown' (BBC Creative, 2020). Members of the public voice the animated films and share their stories of how they or people in their local community have helped one another. For example, in the first film, we hear a woman who is part of a mum's group; in the second, we hear a mother speaking about caring for her disabled child; and lastly, we hear a father and his children talk about delivering food to those in need. All three stories have an empowering tone that reinforces the power of local communities. The films are all stories from parents dealing with the stress of juggling unstable finances, home-schooling and work during lockdown, rescuing or being rescued by local communities, and overcoming difficult circumstances. Although in the films, the BBC itself is not the rescuer, it positions its local radio stations as a comfort blanket, reassuring the public through 'hear[ing] how people are making a difference on your local BBC radio station' as stated in the end board of each film.

In our interview, a strategy manager at the BBC highlighted the local presence of the BBC and its ability to connect audiences through sharing their stories on

the radio, suggesting that this is what enables the BBC to fulfil its role better than commercial radio:

> I would like to think that both with our scale and our public purposes and actually our local presence as well where we were coordinating and helping the people across the UK, we will have fulfilled that role slightly better than commercial radio. I think it should be noted that they did a very good job as well.
>
> (Strategy Manager, BBC - Interview)

Promoting the 'Make a Difference' initiative functioned in three ways: firstly, offering comfort to the public during lockdown by reassuring them that people in their local community were willing to help where needed. Second, it helped frame the BBC as still being able to provide a valuable service to local communities with a reduced budget, which later comforted its own economic decisions. Lastly, the importance of shared everyday life and how the public can participate in this shared localised life through its local radio stations. Alongside the 'Bringing Us Closer' and 'Make a Difference' campaign, the BBC also created new 'Oneness' idents that reflected lockdown life. Next, I will explore how the BBC uses the notion of 'oneness' to create an imagined community and uses it to provide ontological security.

Oneness

In 2020, the BBC refreshed its 'Oneness' idents used between junctions on the BBC One TV channel. The series of idents show a 'range of difference and eclectic activities people have been doing to stay connected during isolation' (BBC qt in Wong, 2020) and work to position the BBC at the centre of that connection. The refreshed idents extend the heightened value of togetherness and a shared national lockdown life throughout the pandemic that the BBC attempted to display through its 'Bringing Us Closer' campaign. The notion of 'oneness' has a strong history of framing BBC One's channel identity for decades through symbols of clocks, globes and circles. Particularly in the early 2000s, when the then BBC One controller Lorraine Heggessey drove this notion of 'oneness' by introducing idents that reflected rhythm and movement with video clips of dancers, acrobats, capoeira, salsa, ballet and the Māori haka in outdoor locations in Britain (Bryant and Mawer, 2016). However, as Andy Bryant and Charlie Mawer reflect in their book *The TV Brand Builders*, it was not until the advent of digital TV that the BBC began to feel the pressure to assert its ability to bring people together. 'Oneness' is a value instilled into the BBC since its formation by its first Director-General Lord Reith, in the early 1920s at a time of political, social and economic transition, whose hope for the corporation was to help, heal, bind and consolidate the nation following the war (Madge, 1989; Debrett, 2014: 14). However, lockdown and the enforcement of social distancing provided the perfect opportunity for the BBC to emphasise its 'oneness' and reassert its nation-building value.

Eight One-ness idents were released in May 2020 and used footage recorded by the public to show how people across the country connect despite not being physically in the same space. The idents included an ‘isolation disco’ of neighbours virtually partying with one another, a ‘tea break’, with different clips showing how other members of the public have been having their tea breaks during the lockdown, cats napping across the country and groups of teammates such as a football league virtually training together, capoeira group practice, cabaret cooking, a knitting club, and a choir rehearsal. These idents were built on the idents created by artist Martin Parr in 2017, which showed people from around the country coming together around mutual interests.

Bryant and Mawer, who are managing director and creative director of Red Bee Media (a broadcasting and creative media service company), share that the creative brief for the BBC One idents in autumn 2005 delivered by the then BBC One Controller Peter Fincham and the BBC marketing team was ‘people do amazing things’ and were ‘asked to think of a symbol of togetherness for idents, not just content-related images and the channel’s logo’ (2016: 71). Bryant and Mawer realised that a circle was the most universally recognised symbol of togetherness and that it had always been a part of the visual identity of BBC One. This led them to create the iconic BBC One swimming hippos ident, alongside other ideas such as ‘motorcycle stuntmen riding a circular wall of death; extreme kite flyers forming a circle of giant red kites; a ring of footballers kicking balls to each other at high speed’ (ibid: 72). In 2017 there was a turn away from the symbolism of the circle to reflect togetherness and a harking back towards Lorraine Heggessey’s rhythm and movement era. The

notion of ordinary people doing extraordinary things returned with idents such as Mountain Rescue, Wheelchair Rugby, Bhangra Dancers, Cavers, Allotment Holders, etc., suggesting that perhaps symbolism was not enough for audiences to receive the affective value of idents, i.e., the value evoked through emotions and feelings. Audiences may cognitively understand the value of oneness through the symbol of a circle and go on to share and speak about these idents; however, for its meaningfulness to hit home, physically seeing ordinary people like themselves unite perhaps proved more effective.

The idents shown during lockdown were a remediation of Lorraine Heggessey's 'Rhythm and Movement' era and Peter Fincham's 'People Do Amazing Things' era. It showed that togetherness is spatial and temporal and does not rely on occupying the same physical space and time. Togetherness can be recreated virtually and remind the public that the BBC has been doing this for decades through broadcasting practices that create an imagined community. Showing people doing the same things can bring people together, even if it is in everyday activities like making tea, dancing, knitting, singing, or napping. Showing ordinary people doing ordinary things offered a sense of ontological security through the reassurance of an imagined community. They are imagined as you can't see all the other community members who are being framed as being like you. The BBC reminded people that although they were in isolation and could not physically be with others, doing everyday activities in separate environments, like simply watching BBC One, you are still connected to others around the nation.

The split screen used in the idents works as a narrative construction of 'real-time' (Lury, 2005; Evans, 2011) and even, to an extent 'liveness', reflecting a simultaneous lockdown life. The use of a split screen implied that by simply doing everyday activities like watching BBC One, which through the idents broadcasted other people's daily activities, they too are participating in a shared national life. On one level, the idents do what Charlotte Moore, Director of Content at the BBC, says 'reflects what we're all going through', 'reflect social distancing', and 'help bring audiences together to unwind, relax and escape through this crisis' (Moore qt in BBC News, 2020b). On another level, they demonstrate what Chris Hooper, Head of BBC Marketing, states as: 'BBC One's unique ability to bring large and disparate groups of people together through their shared passions and interests' (Hooper, qt in ibid). The BBC Oneness idents imply that the temporal element of togetherness is more powerful than the spatial.

Furthermore, on a more significant level, the idents also reinforce the value of BBC broadcasting in the online media landscape. The split screens' capacity to narratively construct a sense of liveness further emphasises the capabilities of broadcasting, as explored earlier, that perhaps is less frequent in online streaming. For example, while many people may watch the same show on Netflix or Amazon Prime Video, they are less likely to do this simultaneously due to the temporal flexibility of the online televisual experience. This temporal occupation of a shared national life is not native to online television streaming services, which often prefer temporal flexibility over temporal rigidness found in linear broadcasting, as will be explored in Chapter 4. The

temporality constructed in the idents allows for liveness, ephemerality and the creation of a shared national life, which the public yearned for during lockdown, given their inability to connect physically.

To affirm this notion of an 'imagined community', the accents for each of the continuity announcers speaking over the idents differed for each nation. However, the visual content was consistent across all nations. Additionally, three national versions had text below the BBC One logo towards the end of the ident stating the country, i.e. 'Northern Ireland', 'Wales' and 'Scotland'. However, this is not present in the version for England, implying an Anglo-centred bias towards England as being the 'norm' and, therefore, not in need of establishing national relevance, as the southern English accent of the continuity announcer speaks for itself. In the past, the previous oneness idents specifically called out where the people in the idents were based, for example, the 2017 *Bhangra Dancers* in Edinburgh, New Town or the 2018 *Sausage Dog Walkers* in Newcastle Upon Tyne. However, the lockdown idents all referred to the activities as taking place at home. The omittance of location and the replacement of locality with the home aimed to construct a sense of 'oneness' as everyone was at home during lockdown. However, the different versions of the BBC logo reveal how the BBC's construction of 'oneness' is indeed imagined as it does not speak for the 'oneness' of the UK but of each devolved nation.

Despite all UK nations operating under the 'stay at home' requirement, the different lockdown rules of the devolved governments divided them. The UK

government was only responsible for the lockdown in England, as health is politically devolved. The Scottish and Welsh parliaments and the Northern Ireland Assembly were responsible for public health policies in their respective territories (The Institute for Government, 2020). On a macro scale, the lockdown revealed just how un-united the United Kingdom is. It showed how the BBC could not construct the imagined community as just the English public; instead, it is an imagined community that is based in different nations and comprised of people from different regions and ethnicities.

The ethnicities of those included in the idents, such as the '*Cabaret Cooking'* and '*Knit Club'*, which feature an ethnically diverse public, also shape ideas of what being a part of an imagined community means. This presents a challenge for the BBC, whose branding (as noted earlier), particularly of BBC One's 'oneness', is firmly connected to the notion of a single nation. On the one hand, the idents speak to the BBC's role as a public service provider who can unite the nation in ways another public service, such as public health, is politically unable to do. On the other hand, it questions nationhood and collective identity and how the BBC shapes and constructs identity in Britain through its content. Identity, as explored in Chapter 1 and in more detail in the next Chapter, is a core pillar of ontological security.

During the first lockdown, the BBC used the nation's collective identity of being at home to unify and restore ontological security by reaffirming its 'oneness' branding, which signals it can provide ontological security where the government is unable. Caterina Kinnvall (2004), citing Michael Skey, speaks

about nationalism as an identity signifier. The 'strength of nationalism … as [a] powerful identity-signifier … [comes from being able] to convey unity, security and inclusiveness in times of crisis' (2004: 721). In managing perceptions of a devolved nation, the BBC uses the notion of 'oneness' to offer a single collective identity. However, the notion of one single collective identity is an illusion. As argued by Alexandria Innes, 'identity is not a simple linear and complete narrative' but is 'plural and or hybrid and are made and remade as they rub up against other identities in social and environmental interactions' (2017: 383). Thus, the notion of 'oneness' and a common national self can change. Understanding how ontological security is obtained and produced through collective identities requires a more profound analysis. This is explored in Chapter 3, which looks at how particular identities attribute ontological security in relation to other identities that include typical narratives of the national self in the UK.

To summarise, the 'Bringing Us Closer', 'Make A Difference' campaign and 'Oneness' idents worked to reassert the meaningfulness of the BBC in everyday British life during lockdown through the notion of the comfort of participating in a shared national life. The content worked on re-framing and reconstructing the narrative of the BBC as an ontological security blanket and what Anthony Giddens (1991) calls a 'protective cocoon' for ontological security, bracketing out the chaos, anxieties and threats of COVID-19. As ephemeral paratexts, they are a performative construction of the BBC's value of itself at a relatively brief moment that creates and shapes people's meanings about, beyond and adjacent to the BBC. Together, they illustrate how the BBC

sought to sustain ontological security during the first UK lockdown by constructing a narrative of being a comfort blanket. These brand films and idents demonstrate how the BBC's branding and marketing uses a narrative construction of 'reassurance', 'companionship' and 'shared national life' to produce and manage the BBC's meaningfulness in everyday British life.

As argued by Catherine Johnson, branding is a 'dynamic communication' that relies upon a relationship between producers, products (or in the case of media), texts or services and consumers. It is interactive, and for brand campaigns to be 'successful', the symbolic values attributed to the text by the producers need to be accepted by the consumer (2012: 3–4). To reference Stuart Hall, 'meaning is a dialogue-always only partially understood, always an unequal exchange' (1997: 4). For the public to receive the affective value of the idents and brand films, they needed to be relatable. That relatability came through bringing the backstage to the frontstage and the reflection and creation of shared moments in everyday lockdown life, which work to reassure audiences and give confidence in their ontological security.

The 'Bringing Us Closer' and 'One Day I Will Tell You There Are No New Cases' films also highlight that BBC News' purpose is not just to inform; informing alone is not enough to create value. What made the BBC and BBC News valuable during the pandemic was the televisual experience created. The first UK lockdown highlighted how important routinisation is in protecting our ontological security. The lockdown Oneness idents showed that togetherness could escape its spatial logic and be restored temporally through collective

identities. However, as will be explored in the next chapter, there are limitations to these identities.

Conclusion – The BBC as a crisis brand

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the value of three critical components of broadcasting: *scheduling*, *liveness* and *imagined communities* that provide ontological security. Lockdown introduced a new kind of everyday life that disrupted the routinisation of pre-pandemic everyday life and prevented face-to-face social connections. Consequently, organisations such as the BBC used broadcasting as a coping mechanism to fill the gaps in the public's lockdown lives and restore ontological security. This chapter has shown how the pandemic reinforced the essential capabilities of broadcasting in delivering liveness, social connection and structuring daily life. It demonstrated that constructions of broadcasting as providing passive and 'lean back' televisual experiences can influence media expectations. These expectations create a sense of continuity and certainty, which are relied upon to produce ontological security and attribute value. As such, when wanting to understand how and why people watch television and value the BBC, we should consider how media experiences are framed.

Using BBC News as a case study, scheduling was identified as a core broadcasting component that constructs routines that mimic the ritualisation of everyday life and provide ontological security by offering a sense of structure and stable expectations. Scheduling operates as a transition and boundary marker that makes us feel secure through establishing routines and

constructing a shared national life and acts as a structuring device that enables people to establish the cut-off times between work and leisure that had been spatially blurred. In addition, the immediacy of news related to the 'liveness' of linear viewing creates a reliance upon linear viewing that, when coupled with broadcasting acting as a structuring device in times of national crisis, contributes to the BBC being seen as a crisis brand. This notion of a crisis brand puts pressure on the BBC to uphold specific news values, such as impartiality, objectivity and trustworthiness, to mitigate ontological insecurity, i.e., feelings of uncertainty. This significantly impacts how the BBC is valued as BBC News becomes an essential service through which value is attributed to the BBC.

In this chapter, I also identified liveness as a core component of broadcasting that brings ontological security. Liveness offers the ability to connect through television socially and constructs a shared national life by grounding people in the here and now. The increased broadcast viewing figures during the first UK lockdown highlighted the importance of liveness within the current media landscape characterised by audience fragmentation. I explored how, pre-pandemic, the BBC used the liveness of live sports broadcasts and ritualised soap schedules to provide ontological security. However, once sports events were cancelled and soap productions were postponed due to the spread of COVID-19, the BBC was forced to turn to its archive and BBC content to recreate a sense of liveness. The BBC's carefully selected archive offered nostalgia-inducing content that enabled it to reaffirm its meaningfulness in everyday life and create an 'imagined community' that provided ontological

security by binding people together into one collective identity. This construction of an imagined community works to position the BBC as an ontological security blanket by creating a collective identity that aspires to offer ontological security through stable notions of identity. From here, the BBC reframes its identity from being a broadcaster in service to people's daily lives to an active participant within it. Doing so reasserts its meaningfulness in everyday life while simultaneously upholding and reaffirming historical Reithian ideologies that frame the BBC as Britain's social glue.

If scheduling, liveness and notions of an imagined community were vital in bringing audiences to the BBC's broadcast television services during the pandemic and helped provide routine and connection, then perhaps the value of broadcasting lies within the structure and connectivity it plays in everyday life – its everydayness. COVID-19 reaffirmed the need for structure and social connection in everyday life to sustain ontological security. Having examined how the BBC used scheduling, liveness and an imagined community to manage an ontologically insecure nation, the next chapter focuses on exploring what it means to participate in the BBC's construction of an imagined community, i.e., shared national life. It asks two questions: What happens to the BBC when its constructed identity as Britain's social glue is challenged? And why is creating collective identities important for the BBC's capacity to provide ontological security?

Chapter 3 – 'They don't value Black people, Black voices, Black audiences' – Balancing Audience Diversity and Institutional Ontological Security

> The BBC should reflect the diversity of the United Kingdom both in its output and services. In doing so, the BBC should accurately and authentically represent and portray the lives of the people of the United Kingdom today and raise awareness of the different cultures and alternative viewpoints that make up its society. It should ensure that it provides output and services that meet the needs of the United Kingdom's nations, regions and communities. The BBC should bring people together for shared experiences and help contribute to the social cohesion and wellbeing of the United Kingdom. In commissioning and delivering output, the BBC should invest in the creative economies of each of the nations and contribute to their development.
>
> (BBC Royal Charter, 2017)

In 2020, the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, reignited the global Black Lives Matter movement and demanded the world's attention towards the racism, racial inequality, injustice and oppression faced by Black people across all areas of life. The movement created a sense of urgency across many industries, including the media, to better address and tackle the structural issues contributing to these inequalities. Like other organisations in the media industries, the BBC used the movement to attempt

to tackle racial disparities by rewriting and publishing their diversity and inclusion commitments to target the underrepresentation of non-white people in its content and workforce. For example, the BBC's Creative Diversity report published in the wake of the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement states that 'The demand for greater inclusion and authentic representation forced our sector to take a hard look at itself" and that 'Never has there been a greater need to ensure underrepresented groups see themselves reflected at all levels of our industry' (BBC, 2020a: 5). This recognition of the importance of representation has been incorporated into the BBC's Royal Charter[5] since 2007 when the charter introduced the BBC's public purposes[6].

The public purposes outlined in the charter were formed to promote the BBC's pursuit of public value through democratic, educational, cultural and creative, social and community and global value (BBC, 2004). The 2007 charter acknowledged the need for the BBC to be representative of the UK through the introduction of public purpose (d) 'representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities' (BBC Royal Charter, 2007), which was later developed in the 2017 charter. The fourth public purpose in the 2017 charter recognises that the BBC should 'reflect, represent and serve the diverse communities of all of the United Kingdom's nations and regions', 'accurately and authentically

[5] The Royal Charter set out the constitutional basis for the BBC and began on 1st January 1927 for ten years. The BBC is currently within its ninth charter period, which began on 1st January 2017 and runs for an 11-year period.

[6] The BBC introduced public purposes following a public sector management shift towards creating and measuring public value. The BBC's Public value framework was built on Mark Moore's concept of public value that mixes economics and management theory as a method for decision-making. The BBC refered to using public value in practice as "an attempt to create a framework in which such judgements can be made as soundly as possible—rooted in the purposes of the organisation and based on evidence—and explained to the wider public that is paying for services" (BBC Trust, 2010).

represent and portray the lives of the people of the United Kingdom today', 'raise awareness of the different cultures and alternative viewpoints that make up its society' and 'should bring people together for shared experiences and help contribute to the social cohesion and wellbeing of the United Kingdom' (BBC Royal Charter, 2017). This chapter interrogates the tension between the BBC's pursuit of accurately representing Britain's diverse communities and its intent to facilitate 'shared experiences' and 'social cohesion'.

The BBC's fourth public purpose highlights how the BBC has a constitutional need to bring people together and foster a sense of belonging. Belonging and identity operate as a core pillar of ontological security as they give us confidence and discernment in who we are, who we should be and where we belong, as explored in Chapter 1. Such confidence allows us to deal with the unpredictable circumstances of everyday life. The BBC constructs an imagined community that participates in a shared national life to provide this confidence, as explored in the previous chapter. This notion of a 'shared national life' can be tied to Reithian ideologies of being able to 'make the nation one man' (John Reith qt in Scannell, 1990: 14). In building its public purposes, Michael Grade, the then BBC Chairman explicitly mentions how 'At the heart of Building public value is a vision of a BBC that maintains the ideals of its founders' (BBC, 2004: 3), thus showing how notions of a homogenised vision of Britain has laid the foundation for the BBC's attempt to provide ontological security to Britons.

There are arguments that national identity and feeling like a part of an 'imagined community' provides ontological security (Anderson, 1983; see also Staniševski, 2011). However, what happens when the ontological insecurities of those who do not easily fit into the previously constructed forms of this imagined community are exposed? The BBC's fourth public purpose raises questions about who the BBC believes belongs in this imagined community and what it means by 'diverse communities'. In understanding the BBC's definition of diversity, this chapter will challenge the BBC's pursuit of a shared national life. This chapter examines how the BBC's ideological goal of a collective, socially unified nation inhibits the BBC from accurately and authentically reflecting and representing Britain's diverse communities, thus preventing it from providing ontological security to a non-white audience.

The BBC's ideological pursuit of national identity was not only a narrowly defined view of the nation (Creeber, 2004) but also worked to perpetuate and maintain such views. As Britain's first radio and television broadcaster, the BBC's construction of the nation set the terms of national identity for other public service broadcasters whether they agreed with the BBC's ideologies or decided to counter such notions like Channel 4. Stuart Hall (Hall, 1975), also referenced by Creeber, stated that BBC television, through 'Monopolizing the channels of public discussion and debate in the society…also centralised the power to make its images of social life stick' (Hall, 1975: 281). Such ideologies have been built on a problematic paternalistic Reithian ethos, in which the BBC dictates what it thinks the public needs based on its imagined ideals of a British nation, formed from a small subset of cultures, attitudes,

ideologies and opinions within Britain. For example, Reith asserted in an interview in 1967 that the BBC's monopoly 'occasionally indicated to us that we are apparently setting out to give the public what we think they need and not what they want, but few know what they want, and very few what they need'[7]. Sarita Malik and Darrell Newton note how the notion of public service broadcasting as a 'social glue' (2017: 1) that binds the nation together through a homogenised vision of what Raymond Williams (1986) once referred to as a 'common culture', 'has become increasingly problematic' (Malik and Newton, 2017: 1). As this chapter will explore, the organisational principles used by the BBC, to pursue these ideals, obstruct the ontological security of those who are non-white.

The BBC's construction of national life and culture disregarded and rejected the tastes and interests of Britain's diverse communities and eventually laid the ground for the formation of Channel 4 in 1982 to specifically cater to a multicultural Britain and serve the audience neglected and minoritised by the BBC (Malik and Newton, 2017). It could be argued that the introduction of Channel 4 reprieved the BBC from addressing its lack of diversity on and off-screen. In this way, we could view the 2017 charter as the BBC's attempt to explicitly address its historical diversity issues by overtly assigning a diversity commitment to its public purposes. This chapter uses the BBC's fourth public purpose to explore the institution's relationship with ethnic diversity. The chapter's core focus is to understand how the BBC fails to use its fourth public

[7] John Reith speaking in an interview with Malcolm Muggeridge. Reith Looks Back, Thursday 23rd November 1967, 21:05 BBC One. https://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/100-voices/inventingthefuture/reithianism/ (Accessed 26th August 2023)

purpose to provide ontological security for a complex, multi-ethnic, multicultural Britain. I argue that if the BBC is to take a hard look at itself, as it said the Black Lives Matter Movement demanded, it needs to challenge its historical ideologies that influence how it constructs a shared national life. In doing so, it cannot overlook the historical power entrenched in its ideologies and how its diversity operates in practice.

To show how the BBC neglects the ontological security of non-white audiences in its pursuit of a shared national life, this chapter interrogates how the BBC frames narratives around how it delivers its commitment to accurately and authentically portray Britain's diverse communities and what this means in practice. This chapter argues that the BBC's attempt to provide ontological security to non-white audiences fails due to outdated notions of its perception as Britain's social glue. This chapter identifies and challenges two core BBC principles contributing to this outdated view – *Impartiality* and *objectivity*. Impartiality and objectivity are core organisational principles that the BBC has continued to use in post-war and post-empire Britain to help cultivate a tidy sense of collective social identity in pursuing national unity and 'value for all'. This chapter argues that the BBC operationalises impartiality and objectivity as strategies for dealing with the 'problems of diversity and multiplicity which multicultural societies throw up' (Hall, 2019a [1998]: 96). In this way, these two principles fix notions of the 'other' or 'difference' into a place where they can be controlled or corrected. I argue that impartiality and objectivity are unhelpful when attempting to provide ontological security to Britain's diverse communities, as they conceal diverse communities' core issues and enable the

BBC to avoid questions concerning its role in constructing and representing a multicultural and multi-ethnic Britain.

This chapter is organised into two parts. To begin, the first part looks at how the BBC defines diversity, how this definition influences how the BBC's diversity works in practice, and what this looks like internally within the organisation by drawing on interviews with BBC staff. I then identify mainstreaming as a tool the BBC uses to govern aspects of diversity, such as disabilities and race and ethnicity. I examine how mainstreaming works at the BBC within its workforce and how it distributes content to its audiences. I argue that the tension between mainstreaming and diversity prevents the BBC from providing ontological security to its 'diverse' staff and audiences.

In the second part of the chapter, I explore what the BBC's management of diversity looks like externally when it needs to handle race-related issues. I briefly explain how the BBC historically uses organisational principles to navigate race. I then interrogate impartiality and objectivity by looking at how the BBC handled two race-related incidents, the Naga Munchetty impartiality saga that happened before the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement and the N-word incident that occurred during it. I argue that the BBC operationalises these two principles as tools to maintain a sense of *trustworthiness,* which is necessary for the BBC's ontological security in the evolving media landscape. I show how the BBC uses impartiality as a defence mechanism to uphold its virtuous identity as Britain's social glue and how it uses objectivity to platform the 'debatability' of racism while distancing itself from race-related issues. In

operationalising impartiality and objectivity, I argue that the BBC fails to provide ontological security for non-white audiences.

At the time of the Black Lives Matter Movement, the then Director-General of the BBC stated via the Creative Diversity Website, 'Our agenda for creative diversity has a simple aim at its heart – to inspire action and measure its success. In the midst of all the recent uncertainties, there's an opportunity to effect real change'[8]. Both parts of this chapter argue how a failure to address ontological security for non-white audiences can lead to the BBC's creative diversity strategy as being 'impression management' (Goffman, 1959) rather than what Tony Hall stated as a moment for change.

How the BBC frames diversity

Across the media industries and academia, there is an absence of conceptual clarity around 'diversity' (Cox, 1994). Organisations often use diversity with other words, such as inclusion, equality and equity. For example, there are variations of interchangeable acronyms and terms, such as EDI vs D&I or BAME vs BME or LGBTQIA+ vs LGBT, which, in some cases, are used uncritically. If organisations like the BBC, as per its fourth public purpose, aim to serve 'diverse communities', then defining what diversity means is crucial as the language we use to discuss diversity holds important implications for theory and practice (ibid). As such, the BBC's incorporation of the term

[8] Tony Hall quoted on the BBC Creative Diversity Website Page. https://www.bbc.co.uk/creativediversity/ (accessed 1st August 2022)

‘diversity’ into its public purposes requires examining how the BBC defines diversity and what this means for how its diversity work operates in practice.

In its 2016-2020 Diversity and Inclusion strategy, the BBC defined *diversity* as how we differ. This definition includes visible differences (gender, race, ethnicity, and visible disabilities), non-visible differences (sexual orientation, social class, heritage, religion, unseen disabilities, different perspectives and thought processes, education, family status and age) and nations and regions (BBC, 2016a). The BBC defines diversity as the characteristics that differentiate groups from one another and illustrates Loden and Rosener’s (1990) primary and secondary dimensions of diversity. Primary dimensions ‘shape our basic self-image as well as our fundamental world views’ and are ‘those exerting primary influences on our identities’ like our ‘gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, age and mental or physical abilities and characteristics’ (Mazur, 2010: 6). Our secondary dimensions have a ‘more variable influence on the personal identity and add a more subtle richness to the primary dimensions of diversity’ (ibid). These include educational background, geographic location, family status and income. These definitions of diversity speak to Laura Dobusch's (2017) diversity research that found that those working within the diversity space in public organisations define these differences by referring to mostly sociodemographic characteristics influenced by European and national non-discrimination laws and reflect The Equality Act

2010[9] that legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and wider society.

Diversity, for the BBC, is an umbrella term used to describe those that it defines as different from the norm (e.g., male, white, non-disabled, heterosexual) or 'diversity-relevant' (Dobusch, 2017). Dobusch uses the term 'diversity-relevant' to conceptualise the attributes attached to groups of people characterised as 'different'. She argues that as a collective, these characteristics provide a 'common ground for defining the umbrella function of diversity'; however, 'which attributes become diversity-relevant in everyday organisational discourse and its related practices depend on the objectives of the organisation and working priorities of the organisational actors' (Dobusch, 2017: 1651). The BBC's framing of diversity as an umbrella term to describe the visible and non-visible differences that people share illustrates what Barbara Mazur notes as 'a definite trend towards definitions of a multiplicity of diversity dimensions' (2010: 6). Mazur supports this trend and proposes that diversity be redefined as 'the collective, all encompassing mix of human differences and similarities along any given dimension' (ibid). However, she also describes diversity 'as a subjective phenomenon, created by group members themselves who on the basis of their different social identities categorize others as similar or dissimilar' (ibid). If we take diversity to be a

[9] The Equality Act 2010 merged nine separate discrimination legislation into one act. Age, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, religion or belief, race, disability, pregnancy and maternity became the nine characteristics that are protected legally from discrimination.

subjective phenomenon that can be imposed by others and consciously assumed by self-identification (Jenkins, 2014: 42; Kirton and Greene, 2015: 5), then we also need to consider the power dynamics and ideologies of those who oversee categorising others as similar or dissimilar, as this will impact how diversity is managed.

As Sara Ahmed describes, diversity as an umbrella term with no referent is problematic as it constructs diversity as being flexible and results in it meaning 'anything and everything', turning diversity into an 'empty container' (2012: 79–80). As an 'empty container', the term 'diversity' or 'diverse communities' therefore enables the BBC to throw anything under the diversity heading to pursue what they think the diversity relevant need, pointing back to the paternalistic Reithian ethos of the BBC mentioned earlier, that positions people as not knowing what they want or need. In Chapter 2 of her book *On Being Included*, Sara Ahmed argues that

> The mobility of the word "diversity" means that it is unclear what diversity is doing, even when it is understood as a convention of speech. Diversity might be more easily incorporated into official speech because it can be used as a description or affirmation of anything.
>
> (2012: 58)

In the case of the BBC, this ease of mobility can feed into the ideological powers of the out-group, i.e., white, men, non-disabled, heterosexuals, etc.,

who are often in charge of defining what is 'diversity-relevant' and can thus neglect the needs of those whom diversity strategies seek to empower, e.g., women, non-white, disabled and LGBTQ communities.

The BBC's definition of diversity points to a broader media industry diversity discourse that has evolved from multiculturalist policies centred on race and ethnicity that aimed to tackle the marginalisation and racism faced by Black and South Asian people in the UK to guidelines that aim to reflect the United Kingdom's socio-cultural makeup, create social cohesion, whilst driving economic growth. The BBC's fourth public purpose explicitly highlights this new diversity discourse by stating that the BBC must reflect, represent, and serve a diverse Britain and, in doing so, 'support the creative economy across the United Kingdom' and 'contribute to the social cohesion and wellbeing of the United Kingdom' (BBC Royal Charter, 2017). Diversity has shifted from dealing with the specific race-related issues targeted at anti-racism to an all-encompassing term that guides the management of societal differences.

Scholars have noted this paradigmatic diversity shift from multiculturalism to cultural diversity and now creative diversity (see Garnham, 2005; Khan, 2010; Malik, 2015; Nwonka, 2015; Saha, 2018). In 2019, the BBC changed organisational diversity and inclusion commitments that shifted towards creative diversity by establishing a Creative Diversity team. Within the creative industries, the turn to creative diversity emerged in the 2010s following The Equality Act 2010. The Cultural Diversity Network (CDN), initially set up in 2000 to tackle diversity issues, drove this shift in 2011 when it replaced

‘Cultural’ with ‘Creative’ when it merged with the Broadcasting and Creative Industries Disability Network. The significance of the change is that ‘the network’s members include[d] all the major UK public service and commercial broadcasters, demonstrating both the current expansiveness of creative diversity and its triumph over cultural diversity within media policy’ (Malik, 2015: 95). Nicholas Garnham (2005) argues that the industrial shift from cultural diversity to creative diversity is not just a mere neutral change of labels. It is a more comprehensive theoretical and ideological shift in arts and media policy discourse that was motivated by a historically specific political context that encouraged a movement away from the state and towards the market across the whole range of public provision, initiated under the Thatcher government and accelerated by The Labour Party (rebranded as “New Labour”). This shift turned notions of diversity into a creative and economic good and business case. As a creative and economic good, diversity must be framed as non-disruptive to the continuity of the creative industries.

The BBC explicitly frames diversity in this way in its Creative Diversity Report 2020 when saying that ‘the business case for inclusion has never been clearer and the moment to capitalise on it has to be now’ (BBC, 2020a: 5). For the BBC, framing diversity in this way provides a way to develop and maintain its position as a global powerhouse within the transnational creative sector that blurs and expands cultural and identity boundaries, in addition to fulfilling its duty and responsibility to reflect and represent a diverse Britain. If the diversity discourse has shifted from multiculturalism as a strategy for managing the problems multicultural societies bring (Hall, 2019a [1998]: 96),

then creative diversity has become the solution for bringing social cohesion. Diversity framed in this way has become a softer and less disruptive form of cultural policy. Here, diversity is framed as 'happy talk' (Bell and Hartmann, 2007) or 'good diversity' (Ahmed, 2012: 80). Creative diversity then becomes what Sarita Malik argues as being 'founded upon the denial of social and cultural difference' and that within public service broadcasting contexts, 'demonstrates the depoliticisation of race' (2015: 98–99). When diversity concerns race and ethnicity, Anamika Saha (2018) argues that diversity can operate as 'racialised governmentalities' that govern ideals of race and ethnicity.

By extending this idea of 'racialised governmentalities' to the BBC's diversity umbrella, next, I want to show how the BBC's broad definition of diversity functions as an 'othering governmentality' that enables the BBC to govern who, or what does or does not threaten the main, favoured or majority group. Othering, as explained by john a. powell (2017), 'is not about liking or disliking someone. It is based on the conscious or unconscious assumption that a certain identified group poses a threat to the favoured group'. As identified earlier in this thesis, threats towards identity and belonging cause ontological insecurities. The BBC's definition of diversity, which sits within the broader industrial shift that frames diversity as a social cohesion solution, is perfectly positioned as an ontological tool for constructing a comfortable or 'happy' diverse Britain and managing ontological anxieties, which in the BBC's case, are threats towards its construction of a socially cohesive Britain. Framed in this way, the BBC's diversity can 'ignore deep-seated societal discrimination

and patterns of disadvantage' (Kirton and Greene, 2015: 131) that previous diversity discourse primarily aimed to manage. I argue that the BBC uses ideas of 'mainstreaming' to ignore such patterns and govern diverse communities. However, such strategies prevent it from being able to provide ontological security to those identified as different.

Mainstreaming as an 'othering' governmentality

The pursuit of national unity and a shared national life is embedded within how the BBC frames its value. Through broadcasting, the BBC offers a space where notions of collective identities take on their everyday shape. In everyday life, we encounter expressions of these collective identities that continually construct specific ideas around identity and narratives of belonging that are essential for ontological security. In speaking about the construction of nations and national identities, which are a form of collective identity, Daniel Hammett contends that multiple processes, institutions, sites, and spaces are implicated in such constructions 'with common efforts including centralising (a common) language through education, privileging a specific historical narrative and set of traditions and values' (2021: 18). These narratives are communicated to the people through media organisations like the BBC. Through its content and services, the BBC has played an active role in how people encounter everyday expressions of identity and belonging.

Diversity helps the BBC to govern its construction of a shared national life. The previous chapter showed how the BBC attempts to provide ontological security, and thus value, by establishing itself as a producer of shared national

life through its branding, advertising and programming that offers ritualisation and routine. As identified above, this production of a shared national life is integral to the BBC's public purpose. If we accept that the BBC shapes the nation and national life, we must also recognise the BBC's role in representing the nation and actively producing and establishing it. What constitutes a nation, national identity and nationhood, has been widely discussed and defined by (Anderson, 1983; Gilroy, 2002; Smith, 1991; Giddens, 1991; Colley, 2009; Hall, 1992; Crawford and Jones, 1998). However, most discussions take issue with the construction of nations and the shared cultural practices, myths, memories and history that forge collective identities.

The BBC's construction of national life speaks to the 'invented-ness' (Hammett, 2021: 17) or 'imagined-ness' of nations, where, as mentioned in Chapter 2, people will never all meet face to face but believe they share connections with other members (Anderson, 1983). Stuart Hall argues that these 'large scale, all-encompassing, homogenous' collective social identities such as class, race, nation, and gender have fragmented and eroded (2019b [1991]: 66). Hall clarifies this erosion as a disruption to how we think about these identities and not that they have disappeared. This disruption to the homogenisation of collective identities has created challenges for the BBC and complicated how it provides ontological security to its audience. Scholars have argued that this multicultural and non-homogenised vision of the nation does not have one common anchor. This lack of a common anchor provokes a sense of uncertainty, insecurity and anxiety for majority groups who may feel a sense of loss, whether in culture, control, power or status (Howarth, 2016; see also

Gilroy, 2004; Calhoun, 2007; Verkuyten, 2007; Modood, 2014). The sense of nationhood within the BBC's 'shared national life' offers stability to this uncertainty and aspires to provide a sense of ontological security. As stated in the previous chapter, this shared national life has a binding authority and is a powerful tool for providing a sense of continuity and certainty, which contributes to functioning effectively in the world.

To combat the uncertainty and continuity that come with the disruption to Reithian ideologies of 'making the nation one man', the BBC uses an umbrella definition of diversity to illustrate its attempt to change its historical homogenous thinking of these collective social identities. However, in doing so, the all-encompassing definition of diversity also works to manage and homogenise those categorised as different from what it identifies as 'mainstream' by throwing those identified as different into the same container. The mainstream is a collective social identity used to describe the dominant majority identities within a society. When something or someone belongs to the mainstream, they are often regarded as being a part of or sharing the 'normal', 'usual' and 'conventional' attitudes, tastes, ideas or activities that are accepted by most people in a society. Anything that is not within the mainstream is categorised as different, secondary or abnormal and thus in opposition to the prevailing 'norms' or 'status quo' within a society. Mainstreaming is a media industry strategy used to provide a common identity anchor for coping with a heterogeneous society characterised by ontological insecurity.

Mainstreaming as a diversity management strategy

Mainstreaming has stabilising and structuring qualities that help manage ontological security and speak to Anthony Giddens' notion of a 'protective cocoon'. A protective cocoon guards the self in everyday life by bracketing out any potential circumstances that may harm or disrupt a person's ontological security. Taking this notion of a protective cocoon and applying it to the BBC, mainstreaming acts as a protective cocoon for the BBC's ideological position as Britain's social glue. It does this by bracketing out diversity away from the mainstream (white, non-disabled, heterosexual) and by separating it from structural or organisational issues through dedicated diversity units, like the Creative Diversity team. Ex-BBC broadcaster and producer Mik Scarlet alluded to this in our interview when sharing how the BBC's introduction of its Disability Programmes Unit was set up to train and hire people whom the BBC don't usually hire.

> Disabled people have not been well served. So, the plan was to treat this new department as a kind of training ground. And that was, I think, the first time that anyone went, 'Let's train up some people to get them to work in the media from a group that we don't normally hire'. And it kind of ended up more being like a ghetto. We didn't really get out. We sort of stayed in our little hole, the whole floor of White City.
>
> (Mik Scarlet, Ex-BBC Broadcaster and Producer - Interview)

Mik's reference to the 'ghettoisation' of the Disability Programmes Unit points to Kirton and Greene's criticisms of some approaches to diversity, like the BBC's, that see it as a business case and can lead to a position where

'Individuals from "minority" groups are thus vulnerable to becoming "ghettoised" and exploited for the purposes of organisational gains' (Kirton and Greene, 2015: 131). Liff (1997) describes this approach as 'utilising difference'. Kirton and Greene, referring to Billing and Sundin (2006), state that such approaches 'might be described as a "special contribution" perspective, which argues that different groups (women, BME people, etc.) might be able to contribute to organizations in different ways with their different values, experiences, ways of thinking, etc.' (2015: 129).

This special contribution perspective of diversity that assists the wider organisation was mentioned by a Research Manager who worked closely with the BBC's Creative Diversity team to create a toolkit for the BBC. Speaking about the BBC's nuanced portrayals research report that they said 'called out how much stereotyping is still a prevalent way of portraying audiences', they state that 'off the back of that insight is we've built this toolkit' and have run 'a series of workshops [and] we're working really closely with the commissioning teams'. They also mention how although the toolkit has been made available internally, they are working 'with external comms on making an external version of it so that it's available to the industry as well' [10] as the BBC works with independent production studios (Research Manager, BBC - Interview). The creation of a toolkit highlights how the special contribution of the creative diversity team is not only to provide solutions to problems but to

[10] The BBC's Inclusion Toolkit has since been made available externally. It is housed on the BBC's Creative Diversity website page and consists of what it calls 'resources and tools to support creative reimagine inclusive content'. The toolkit includes a variety of reports including the B.A.M.E.: We're Not The Same report.
https://www.bbc.co.uk/creativediversity/inclusion-toolkit/

actively implement them within the wider BBC organisation. This special contribution not only impacts the BBC internally through the implementation of workshops but reaches beyond the walls of the BBC and impacts the BBC's relationship with production companies within the wider media industries.

Scarlet also alluded to this sense of the special contribution that the Disability Programmes Units offered the BBC. He said,

> We made all these guides for everybody in the BBC to follow, about how to shoot someone in a wheelchair or someone shorter and make sure that you shoot for the sign language interpreter. There's a whole way we always shot and had a sign language interpreter for everything we released.
>
> (Mik Scarlet, Ex-BBC Broadcaster and Producer - Interview)

As special contributors to the wider business, the BBC frames diversity as a problem for diversity groups and units to solve, shifting responsibility away from staff working in mainstream structures to diversity and inclusion staff. Not only do these teams have to solve the problem, but they also govern how solutions are implemented. The Disabilities Programme Unit and Creative Diversity team became the space to teach the wider BBC about how to do diversity. However, Scarlet's earlier mention of not getting out and 'saying in our little hole' suggests an aspect of governmentality where diversity, in this case, disability, is still confined. He said that those who could go out into the

world and produce content were those whose impairments were less visible and wouldn't stand out in a room full of non-disabled individuals.

> The ones that did sort of get out tended to be the ones that had impairments that weren't heavily impacting their look or ability. So, you could kind of plant them into a room full of non-disabled people, and no one really noticed.
>
> (Mik Scarlet, Ex-BBC Broadcaster and Producer - Interview)

Here, only those individuals who can assimilate into existing norms and do not disrupt the status quo can be fully included. This assimilation creates the notion of diversity as a non-disruptive means for achieving organisational success. Second, 'getting out' suggests that diverse programme makers are stuck creating content that only relates to an aspect of that individual's identity that falls within the BBC's definition of diversity. In his book *Paving the Empire Road: BBC Television and Black Britons*, Darrell Newton (2011) also identified this sense of confined identity within the BBC's African-Caribbean Programmes Unit. He noted that although the unit was created to get more Black people in front and behind the screen and to serve ethnic minority television audiences better when Black people were offered the opportunity to create programmes, these were often focused on documentaries about race and immigration.

Scarlet spoke about how the younger talent with disabilities are coming into the industry and do not want productions to pigeonhole them into only doing disability content. According to Scarlet, this younger community say, 'I don't

want to do stuff about being disabled. I want to be mainstream,' and 'I don't want to do a show about X, You know, anything that might be about me being disabled. I want to do something about cooking or travel or war.' (Mik Scarlet, Ex-BBC Broadcaster and Producer - Interview). This highlights the tension between 'mainstreaming' and 'diversity' and, as mentioned earlier, how they are opposites, where the BBC perceives those defined as 'diversity-relevant' are irrelevant to the 'mainstream'. As a result, there is a danger for those who fall within the BBC's diversity categories of being shoehorned into creating content that specifically relates to one aspect of their identity whilst putting other aspects of their identities to one side.

Another Ex-BBC broadcaster and producer who has mixed South Asian heritage referred to this tension as being a box-ticking opportunity:

> They thought that you should only be nominated for an award if there's a purpose in terms of race, like we need to tick a box. And then I got entered into these Asian business awards, right, which was hysterical because I wasn't in business.
>
> (Ex-BBC Broadcaster and Producer - Interview)

They also went on to say how, because of their Asian heritage, people constantly told them that they should be working for BBC Asian Network as opposed to where they were currently working:

> And the number of times I'd have people say, "Oh, you should be working at Asian Network. Why are you working here? You know, you

> should be at Asian Network". I was at Radio 1 Newsbeat for a bit, and it was like, "You should be on the Asian network". I don't understand why. Why do I have to be at Asian Network?
>
> (Ex-BBC Broadcaster and Producer - Interview)

Whilst Scarlet and the Ex-BBC Broadcaster and Producer spoke about their time at the BBC in the 90s and early 2000s, a freelance audio producer who has worked with the BBC more recently also reiterated the tension between mainstreaming and diversity at the BBC and the idea that the mainstream cannot relate to those who are diverse. Speaking about some of the senior colleagues they have worked with, they shared:

> I think it's a subconscious thing. They [the BBC] have this term where they talk about being relatable to the audience or being mainstream. I definitely think that those departments see people like myself as not relatable and mainstream. I fit the narrative of being loud. You know, you could even say, I'm ghetto. Everything that makes me the me that I love is the sort of stereotype of a loud Black person. So, I think because I match that, it's like, oh, "arts and factual hmmm. Well, you can talk about race, but mainstream stuff, we're not really too sure where we would put you."
>
> (Freelance Audio Producer - Interview)

Mainstreaming brackets out those considered diverse from entering its spaces through perpetuating stereotypes. Kirton and Greene mention how the utilising diversity approach mentioned above 'might also serve to reinforce stereotyping' and 'can contribute to the perpetuation of disadvantage' (2015: 132). The above examples show the othering governmentality of the BBC's diversity, where non-white staff are confined to the limits of race-related spaces. Such modes of governmentality bracket diversity away from the mainstream and manage what the BBC think its diverse staff should talk about.

This governmentality also impacts the autonomy of staff when the ontological insecurities of those who do not fit the mainstream are exposed. In our interview, an ex-radio manager at the BBC spoke about the challenges faced within 1Xtra when creating Black-centred programming. They spoke of the challenges presenters and producers of entertainment music shows face when wanting to cover specific current affairs topics, such as the Grenfell Tower fire that centres on the experiences of ethnic minorities. They mention how production staff 'weren't quite sure whether they had the licence to do that, on air' and 'didn't necessarily feel equipped to do it'. They also spoke about the organisational friction in the wake of the police murder of George Floyd that led to #BlackoutTuesday.

Two Black Women music executives (not at the BBC), Brianna Agyemang and Jamila Thomas, started a campaign that asked the music industry to put the business on hold for one day to 'pause and reflect on the ways it disenfranchises Black employees' whilst profiting predominantly from Black

art (Sinanan, 2020). This movement initially began as #theshowmustbepaused and soon evolved into #BlackoutTuesday, which led people to post a black square on their social media accounts. The ex-BBC radio manager described 1Xtra's inability to navigate this conversation as follows:

> [There was] a huge jeopardy for 1Xtra as well at a time when there was a call for the industry literally to blackout and effectively cower down, shut down, pause and let the absence be noted because the contribution of Black music to the music industry extends beyond the Black music community. So, its absence in that moment of pause should be noted. But we clearly couldn't do that as a BBC station. And we also can't be engaged in campaigning or accused of being partisan, even when the cause is right and the cause is just. So, we covered it editorially to open the debate and discussion. The rest of the BBC, which took time to power up, really focused on what we were doing, and we were the centre on that day that everyone pointed to.
>
> (Ex-Radio Manager, BBC - Interview)

In the case of the BBC's position within the Black Lives Matter movement, 1Xtra became the space all other networks and services could 'point to'. However, this dynamic can reinforce the idea that specific conversations are not for mainstream discussions and puts the onus on 1Xtra as the BBC's only platform for discussing race relations. The Ex-BBC Radio Manager recognised this tension. They shared how, despite 1Xtra being a point of reference to other

parts of the BBC during the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement, they did not believe that it was the 'centre of excellence' that provided the opportunity for other parts of the BBC to 'abdicate responsibility' however, stated that '1Xtra has its own job to do'. This speaks to Tim Havens' (2013) concept of 'industry lore', where particular processes and practices within the television industry police blackness. In this case, it could be argued that 1Xtra becomes a tool for the BBC to govern blackness. 1Xtra becomes a service that contains blackness in one space and does not allow it to spill into and disrupt other parts of the BBC. This inability to disrupt the mainstream means that diverse staff are seen as a specialist topic or niche, as referred to by the freelance audio producer.

> Mainstream for me is, every day, the masses, and I think that what I do is. I can be mainstream. I think someone who's gone and got a Master's who is educated. I'm mainstream. I've come through the mainstream channels, yet you'll still be boxed. So, I think a lot of the time, Black people and their skills are looked at as a niche rather than mainstream.
>
> (Freelance Audio Producer - Interview)

Diversity being confined to the outskirts of the mainstream not only impacts the BBC's ability to serve diverse audiences but also the wider industry. The freelance audio producer suggests that Black voices don't cross into the mainstream because the BBC does not inject money into them. Until they do, the production companies that the BBC works with won't invest their money either.

> The BBC, if there was enough noise, and when I say noise, noise isn't like Black people telling you that their stories are important; they don't give a s**t about that. But enough noise in terms of you; you disrupt the status quo. And you show that there is value in terms of monetary value, then people like *Pressed* podcast and those sorts of things, people do invest in more privately and make their co-productions, and that's why we [the BBC] get these things in.
>
> (Freelance Audio Producer - Interview)

To disrupt the status quo, as expressed here, is to disrupt the entire industry lore that 'provides the conduit through which the economic demands of the cultural industries get transcoded into concrete representational practices' (Havens, 2013: 4). The tension of these organisational dynamics that mainstreaming contributes to can lead to what Simon Cottle refers to as being stuck between 'a rock and a hard place' that marginalises programme makers and can lead them to 'adopt a disinterested programme-making stance that disengages from the surrounding field of race and minority ethnicity' (2000: 103). This stance 'seeks to avoid community backlash and corporate censure by avoiding difficult issues' (ibid). As such, mainstreaming acts as a non-disruptive ideological tool for the BBC and attempts to manage the ontological security of diverse communities at a distance.

Through the interviews with people who have worked at and with the BBC, this section has illustrated how the BBC's mainstreaming brackets the primary dimensions of diversity (e.g., disabilities, race and ethnicity) as defined earlier,

from other dimensions of diversity that add a more subtle richness to our personal identities. Those categorised as diverse cannot enter the mainstream as they are only valued for their primary dimensions of what makes them diverse, e.g., race, ethnicity or disability and not for other dimensions, such as attitudes, feelings, values, interests, life experiences, etc. The lack of consideration for diverse communities' different diversity dimensions speaks to the idea of diversity as a specialist area, whereby the BBC boxes staff into one-dimensional categories. From this perspective, non-white practitioners or those who fall into a specific diversity category are not only ticking boxes for the BBC. They have themselves become boxed in by that particular category. As a result, Black, South Asian, and disabled staff are not seen as part of the mainstream but are instead utilised for their diverse characteristics. If the BBC perceives Black, South Asian and disabled staff as unable to cater to the mainstream, then the Black, South Asian and disabled audiences that these producers cater to are also not considered part of the mainstream. Mainstreaming is not just an internal diversity management strategy but filters into how the BBC manages the ontological security of diverse audiences.

Mainstreaming the schedule

Mainstreaming is a BBC issue and a broader creative industry issue that reflects cultural perceptions that Black-centred or Asian-centered content is not widely relatable to the White majority. Anamick Saha's research highlights how broadcasters marginalise British South Asians by representation through scheduling British Asian television content to 'efnik graveyard' slots and perceiving 'British Asian television as niche, with little mainstream appeal'

(2017: 57). As such, for content to receive a prime-time slot on a mainstream service, content must be portrayed in a way that is relatable to the mainstream audience. The BBC has a remit to cater to 'niche audiences' through specific services like Asian Network, 1Xtra, BBC Scotland, and its local radio and television output. However, if the content is ever to escape the confines of locality or being niche and expand to bigger services and get more exposure, there is the perception, as explored in the above section, that such content must have an appeal to a mainstream audience as well as those initial 'niche' and 'diverse' audiences.

In speaking about the audience of BBC One, Jane Lingham, Director of BBC Brand, however, shared that although BBC One is for a mainstream audience, the content is not curated for a specific type of audience and, from a brand perspective, results in BBC One being a 'very difficult channel' manage. She shared:

> BBC One has a mainstream audience. But that's kind of as specific as you get on the audience for it. It's a very, very difficult channel, BBC One. Over the years, there have been lots of writers who are really, really worried because it's a very exposing platform. If your work appears on BBC One, it's a big platform. So, although it's not specifically curated for an audience, the fact that it's quite general actually makes it really hard to write for as well.
>
> (Jane Lingham, Director of BBC Brand, BBC - Interview)

The relationship Lingham makes between the mainstream and its difficulties, due to a lack of specificities about its audience, reflects earlier arguments about the problems of diversity as an umbrella term with no particular referent. Due to its openness and lack of a specific audience reference, mainstreaming, like diversity, becomes industry speech. As industry speech, mainstreaming avoids considering the power dynamics and ideologies involved in categorising audiences and programming as within or outside the mainstream. Although Lingham refers to BBC One as not being curated explicitly for an audience, ideologies about the mainstream audience still occur and govern what should and should not be distributed on BBC One.

Another issue with mainstreaming through scheduling is the lack of consistent programming for diverse audiences. The previous chapter established how scheduling offers ontological security through routinisation. However, in the case of diverse audiences, mainstreaming prevents them from obtaining ontological security by providing them with less consistent programming. In our interview, the Ex-BBC Radio Manager mentioned how there aren't enough 'specific shows in the schedule that allowed conversations, discussion and debate to take place' (Ex-Radio Manager, BBC – Interview) and how there was 'special programming around Black History Month or two or three months in the year, but not on a consistent basis'. This led to creating *1Xtra Talks* (BBC 1Xtra, 2019 - present), a programme within the 1Xtra radio schedule dedicated to such discussions and conversations. However, a closer look at the scheduling of *1Xtra Talks* finds it confined to a 1hr slot at 9pm on a Sunday.

This inconsistent scheduling can continue to reinforce certain narratives around Black audiences. For instance, the freelance audio producer spoke about *IXtra Talks* and how being BBC 1Xtra's only speech show feeds into 'the narrative that Black people only like music'. They said that *1Xtra Talks* is 'the only current affairs speech show. Yet, there are so many other things. If 1Xtra is for a Black audience, why are we only given the music?'. Asking them what they think leads to there only being one speech show on 1Xtra, they said: 'Because whoever is in charge believed that that's what Black people like to listen to think. It's that simple. And I think it goes into their perceptions and stereotypes of what they think Black people are about' (Freelance Audio Producer - Interview). This lack of content within the schedule highlights how diversity work extends beyond programmes and includes considering the spaces and places given to such content through scheduling.

This tension between mainstream and race and ethnicity feeds into what John Gabriel (2000) described as the 'Widespread tendency to equate ethnic with minority culture as if dominant culture has no ethnicity', thus leading to a homogenised misconception of Whiteness. However, Gabriel notes, 'Whiteness is not a monolithic discourse, and whites are not a cohesive, homogeneous, ethnic group'. He goes on to argue:

> The fact that Whiteness is constantly threatened by its own heterogeneity and hybridity reveals it for what it is: an intrinsically pathological discourse which has been constructed to create the fiction of a unitary and a homogeneous culture and people (that is,

> essentialist). The effective mobilisation of Whiteness bolsters what appears [to be] a threatened and anxious, although not yet marginalised, ethnicity.
>
> (Gabriel, 2000: 68)

If we take the perception of the mainstream as meaning the majority White audience, we can see why the constructed mainstream removes race and ethnicity. Gabriel's view of Whiteness as a constructed fiction of unitary homogenisation provides an insight into why diversity is framed in non-disruptive ways so as not to further threaten or cause anxiety to this fictional unitary homogeneous culture that the BBC has helped to produce and maintain. Topics of race, ethnicity and diversity are boxed in or scheduled to one side to avoid causing ontological insecurities. This construction of mainstreaming provides the BBC with space to 'bracket out' or manage 'anxieties of difference'.

The lack of consistent programming for Black audiences across BBC services often means that special moments and seasons are created to generate space. However, these seasons are usually on channels like BBC Two and BBC Four or housed on BBC 1Xtra, scheduled away from the larger, more mainstream channels and networks like BBC One. For example, when the BBC commissioned its 'Black and British Season' in 2016, most of the content for this season was housed on BBC Two and BBC Four as opposed to its wider 'mainstream' channel, BBC One. This was the same for its 'Gay Britannia'

season in 2017 and 'The Big British Asian Summer' season in 2018. The creation of seasons contains this content, constructing the narrative that they are 'special' rather than being a part of the BBC's daily or usual programming. This separated space pressures these channels, and special seasons cover everything. For example, the freelance audio producer commented how the lack of consistent programming for Black audiences across all BBC services means that 1Xtra alone is left to cater to all Black audiences.

> I would like to see more of the different platforms, the Radio 4s and places where we can have seats at the table. And it doesn't have to just be housed on 1Xtra. We have this debate on our team. They [the BBC] say 1Xtra is aimed at a younger audience. But we [1Xtra] are trying to cater to almost everyone Black because no one else is doing that. And that itself, even though we are doing our best, really isn't the greatest because, well, 5 Live should have a segment for them. And Radio 4 should. That's why I'm talking about taking a different route than just race. Well, there's an intellectual person who loves arts and culture and is Black. And if they are not getting enough content on Radio 4, then where are they going to go?
>
> (Freelance Audio Producer – BBC)

The notion of 'niche' meaning 'diverse' and 'mainstream' representing the 'White and non-disabled majority' reiterates my earlier argument that the BBC frames diversity as being something that should be non-disruptive and that which is comfortable.

In speaking about African-American TV programmes, Richard Carter (1988) calls this the 'comfort zone' in arguing that Black-centred television programmes are only successful if white audiences perceive them as comfortable to watch - here, success is achieving high television audience ratings and shares. Brenda Hughes' (2014) study, *Viewing Race in the Comfort Zone,* rejects the idea that black-centredness within television programmes negatively influences programme ratings or shares. However, she takes Carter's concept of the 'comfort zone' to argue that

> viewing is an active process through which audience members decide to accept or reject media content as they perceive its compatibility with their personal preferences for not merely an acceptable world but a comfortable world.
>
> (2014: 2)

The freelance audio producer referred to the BBC as being comfortable and not valuing Black voices because they do not fit into its perceptions of whom it considers part of its mainstream audience.

> I can tell you one thing: the BBC have got so comfortable. They don't value Black people who come into their walls. It's not about the Black Pound because we know they don't make any money from us, but they don't value Black people, Black voices, and Black audiences. A lot of

> times when I've even said to the World Service, "Oh, like when a Black…" they respond, this is for all the audiences. "Okay, so Black people are not part of the audience?"
>
> (Freelance Audio Producer - Interview)

This idea of comfortability relates to the second pillar of this thesis' ontological security value framework (comfort & reassurance) outlined in Chapter 1. This helps us understand why mainstreaming audiences is essential for the BBC while undermining its ability to provide ontological security for non-white audiences. Mainstreaming, through scheduling, provides a comfort zone for the dominant audience (non-white, non-disabled, heterosexual) that brackets out any potential anxieties that diversity may bring. As mentioned earlier, a multicultural heterogeneous society disturbs collective social identities like a national audience, thus disrupting a sense of a common identity anchor and creating ontological insecurity. By separating diverse audiences, who are constructed as the disruptors, from mainstream audiences, channels like BBC One or the popular scheduling hours prevent ontological insecurity by acting as an ontological security comfort zone for the mainstream audience. Here, the BBC uses mainstreaming as a strategic coping mechanism for maintaining ontological security for mainstream audiences. However, as diverse audiences are prevented or restricted from entering the mainstream, the BBC is unable to provide the same type of ontological security to them.

The mainstreaming problem

Mainstreaming and diversity act as ontological security tools for the BBC to attempt to homogenise its audiences into collective social identities that make them easier to manage. However, neither offers ontological security to non-white audiences. Diversity acts as a happy solution for maintaining a socially cohesive Britain that gives audiences a sense of identity and belonging that is crucial for being ontologically secure. The BBC frames diversity through outdated Reithian conceptions of national unity, and homogenised collective social identities, which I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, have been disrupted. Rather than dealing with specific diversity-related issues, the BBC's diversity as an all-encompassing term is a guide for managing societal differences. Mainstreaming operates as an ontological tool for protecting the BBC's ideological value as Britain's social glue. As an open term with no specific referent, the BBC uses mainstreaming to bracket out anxieties of difference and move diversity-related issues away from its more prominent platforms to its smaller ones.

The BBC operationalises mainstreaming as a tool for managing and governing diversity by segregating it into specific places and spaces, e.g., 'niche channels', specialist programming, 'efnik graveyards' and confining programme-makers to working on diversity-related issues or topics that the BBC think are relevant. Diversity defined in this way works to fix notions of the 'other' or 'difference' into a place where they can be controlled or corrected. Fixing diversity in one space enables other aspects of the BBC to avoid doing the diversity work and abdicates the BBC from addressing wider

structural issues. Here, 'the differentials of power and historical privilege embedded in the institutions, practices and thinking' (Cottle, 2000: 29) are looked over. The core and challenging issues at the heart of the question of what a diverse Britain looks like in practice are side-lined (ibid). This makes diversity units such as the BBC's Creative Diversity team both the solution to the problem and in charge of managing how these solutions are implemented. Side-lining diversity to the outskirts of the mainstream leads diversity work to serve as educational tools and lead programming for diverse audiences to become specials and seasons rather than consistently existing across BBC platforms and services. This inhibits the BBC from providing ontological security to these audiences as its programming through scheduling lacks the structuring and stabilising qualities necessary for sustaining ontological security in everyday life.

Diversity and mainstreaming operate as othering governmentalities that manage the BBC's ideological ideals of diversity, which, as established at the beginning of this chapter, is to maintain a socially cohesive Britain. To borrow from Sara Ahmed's concept of diversity, mainstreaming and diversity act as a containment strategy (2012: 53) and function as a 'coping mechanism for dealing with conflicting heterogeneity' (Bannerji, 2000: 37). They work to manage the precarious space between the BBC's pursuit of accurately representing Britain's diverse communities and how it strives to facilitate 'shared experiences' and 'social cohesion'. This management of representation and facilitation of 'social cohesion' creates tension within the BBC's internal organisational dynamics and how it delivers ontological security to its

audiences through its programmes. This ontological security, however, identified thus far, is aimed at mainstream audiences. Whilst these mainstream audiences do not have a specific referent, we can assume, by how the BBC distances diversity from it, that such ontological security is aimed at those described as fitting the norm and status quo, e.g., males, white, non-disabled, heterosexual audiences.

Restricting diversity from entering the mainstream and framing diversity as a 'niche' can result in the BBC using diversity to tick boxes that help it achieve its organisational goals. In this way, the primary aspect that makes a person niche in the context of the BBC workforce is their Blackness. This niche staff member functions as a diversity representative (Dobusch, 2017) and overshadows the individuality of group members. This reinforces the idea that certain diverse groups are a monolith. In framing non-white staff as a 'niche', the BBC further homogenises the marginalised by assuming that every member of such a group shares the same experiences because of their 'diversity-relevant' similarities. This perspective contrasts with dominant groups (males, white, able-bodied, heterosexual) who are not presented as group representatives but instead seen as individuals with individual needs. By framing individuals as representatives for entire groups, the BBC turns diversity into tracking the visibility of difference, and what is trackable becomes less complicated to manage by being visible.

A BBC research manager spoke about how the BBC is good at measuring representation but needs to go beyond the figures. Talking about the

BBC's *BAME, We're Not The Same* report[11] and the BBC's *50/50 Equality Project* report[12], they said:

> I think one of the things we've done well over the last few years but something we need to evolve into is we've done really well at looking at and measuring representation. And by that, I mean the quantity of faces and voices we hear and see on screen and on air. And that's what 50/50 is all about. It's about how we get more people behind the camera and in front of the screen that reflects the diversity of the UK. But then it comes down to how well we are doing that. Because the *BAME We're Not the Same* report called out how much stereotyping is still a prevalent way of portraying audiences. And you know, as a researcher, it's really hard to measure the quality of something; it's a lot easier to measure the quantity of it.
>
> (Research Manager, BBC – Interview)

The difficulties in qualitatively measuring diversity that focuses more on people's identities and experiences mean that quantitative data that counts the number of Black, Asian, and Disabled staff on and off screen becomes an ideological tool. It becomes the focus of diversity work, where 'data is assumed to be a "hard" form of evidence whose "truth" is detached from an emotional orientation to the world ("a warm and fuzzy feeling")' (Ahmed,

[11] The BBC's BAME we're not the Same report explores the nuances within the acronym 'BAME'.
[12] The 50/50 report initially started in 2017 to measure and increase the representation of women working in BBC News teams. It has since involved more teams across the BBC. In October 2020, the project expanded to increase disability and ethnicity representation.

2012: 75). This is in stark contrast to the mainstream and the notion of national unity through social cohesion which is precisely attached to the emotional orientation of 'being-in-the-world' and thus being ontologically secure. Diversity data as objective truth, detached from emotion, and visible and easy to measure, make the diversity narrative easier to swallow, reflecting the earlier argument about the BBC's diversity being 'happy talk'.

Malik and Newton (2017) share how although diversity has become entrenched into the BBC's future strategy, positioning the institution as 'remaining a major advocate for representing diversity both on screen and behind the cameras', there is still a problem of

> how to make meaningful diversity interventions and encourage deeper, more critical ways of opening up debates around cultural representation, rather than "quick fix" solutions such as specialist diversity training or placing more BAME faces on, or indeed off, screen.
>
> (Malik and Newton, 2017: 8)

Diversity data that track the visibility of differences within its workforce or on-screen talent provides the BBC with an easy metric for measuring the achievement of its fourth public purpose. Here, the BBC equivocates success to targets often set based on achieving demographic parity. However, such data fails to acknowledge social and personal identity interaction. For example,

Herman Gray speaks of the media's understanding of diversity through the 'assumed link between representation and demography' (2016: 242–3). This 'representation and demography' angle constructs 'diversity as a fixed outcome, measurable in the number and distribution of discrete indicators like the number of minority showrunners or the number of women in lead roles' (ibid: 246). However, relying on such targets often obscures the reality of working within the organisation, as shown above through the interviews with those who have worked at the BBC and can create false impressions.

An Ex-BBC strategist spoke of the false impressions given by data and diversity targets. They said:

> [The] BBC has got a huge challenge. The BBC is nationally representative. It has the stats to back that up, but the stats don't really tell the full story. The BBC is only nationally representative because 70%, or whatever the number, of their BAME demographic within the organisation, work in roles between A and C, some of the most junior. And again, 50% of women work in the organisation, but most of those women work in more junior roles.
>
> (Ex-BBC Strategist - Interview)

The strategist alludes to the sense that the BBC needs to do more work beyond representation. When looking at the BBC's *Equality Information Report* published as part of its 2020-21 Annual Report, it seems as though the BBC

has overachieved its 15% BAME target initially set out in its Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2016-2020, as 15.9% of its staff that year were either Black, Asian or of another minority ethnicity. However, as the Ex-BBC Strategist alluded to above, a closer look at the report reveals how Black, Asian and other minority ethnic staff are distributed across the business. First, the BBC World Service significantly drives the number of Black, Asian and other minority ethnic staff working at the BBC. Second, the BBC's UK Public Service arm underperforms in terms of Black, Asian, and other minority ethnic staff. Third, the BBC's Public Service content division and Chief customer officer group fall short of the target. These divisions include the BBC's Marketing and Audiences Team and Licence Fee Unit, i.e., those responsible for creating, producing, and distributing content and understanding audiences' needs. Lastly, most BBC staff of Asian, Black, or other minority ethnic heritage work in roles graded within the lower salary bands of the BBC, as highlighted by the Ex-BBC Strategist. More specifically, whilst the proportion of White British staff increases as salary bands increase, this is in stark contrast to Black staff.

The BBC's Annual *Equality Information Report* 'provides an update on the progress [the BBC has] made in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion for our workforce' (BBC Annual Report, 2021). It shows how the BBC conceives diversity as quantifiable. The Ex-BBC strategist alludes to the idea that such data can make it seem like the BBC is diverse but is instead what they referred to as 'lacking in real genuine diversity' as representation is not consistent across the entire organisation. Speaking about the distribution of staff across all levels of the BBC, the Ex-BBC Strategist said:

> Okay, the BBC is nationally representative in theory, but it's not in the positions that can create and set the culture and the agendas. And that's where the problem is. So that's why the BBC struggles so much, because it's just the same people from the same places, with the same backgrounds, making the same decisions over and over again, and it's just a closed shop.
>
> (Ex-BBC Strategist – Interview)

Herman Gray (2016) poses the question of looking at the absence of diversity through a new lens. He proposes seeing the absence of diversity as a crucial component of creative production instead of seeing it as discrete outcomes within the associated fields of production aimed at achieving representational and demographic parity. By framing diversity as representational demography, the BBC can distance its structural processes and organisational culture from being seen as the cause of its lack of diversity. Instead, lack of diversity is framed as a chanced outcome within the media production process that 'just so happens to be' instead of a component of media production itself. Diversity then becomes a way to transform the look and perceptions of an organisation but not its structures.

Criticisms of the BBC's lack of diversity within its workforce are not new. In 2001, Greg Dyke, the BBC's then Director-General, famously criticised the corporation for being 'hideously white' (Creeber, 2004). He suggested that race relations within the corporation were as bad as some of the UK's Police forces

(Ibrahim and Howarth, 2021: 232). He suggested that the BBC's high turnover in staff from those with ethnic minority backgrounds was perhaps due to them not feeling welcome (Helen, 2001, as cited in Creeber, 2004: 32). This reference to not feeling welcome connects to a sense of belonging which is necessary for ontological security. It suggests that there is more to diversity than the perception of difference. Diversity must do more than just change how an organisation looks. However, whilst Dyke's comments expose the whiteness of the BBC and indicate some structural issues, it also works to conceal the BBC's whiteness as a perception issue instead of something structural. Choosing to frame the BBC as 'hideously white' instead of hideously unwelcoming, which creates ontological insecurity in non-white staff, leads us to conceive diversity as an individual issue solved through a perception change. Diversity then becomes a reference for only minority groups or non-white people. It encourages a misconception of diversity being a 'them' issue that those in the majority can distance themselves from.

Through mainstreaming, the BBC's diversity becomes solely focused on perceptions of diversity and enables the BBC to continually contribute to creating and maintaining the distance of difference (Thanem, 2008: 583). This focus fixes differences as something that ought to be managed. Thus, as argued by Laura Dobusch, this distance of difference may unintentionally further confirm dominant organisational values and norms (e.g., working full-time vs part-time, working in the office vs from home), as well as already powerful groups (e.g., male white, non-disabled, 'mainstream-religious', heterosexual) (2017: 1646). Mainstreaming allows the BBC to distance itself from its

'hideous whiteness'. The hideous whiteness is framed as a perception of its image and is not integral to its organisational culture. Diversity for the BBC can then become about changing perceptions of whiteness rather than changing the structural whiteness of the BBC. Changing perceptions of whiteness, as argued by Ahmed, can be how an institution like the BBC 'can reproduce whiteness, as that which exists but is no longer perceived' (2012: 34). Here, the BBC's image is questioned instead of these more comprehensive cultural and organisational values and norms contributing to its unwelcoming culture that affects the majority, not just the minority, categorised as 'diversity-relevant' (Dobusch, 2017: 1652).

By creating separate spaces for diversity and hiring staff to make programmes for those spaces, the BBC can change the perceptions of their organisational identity from being 'hideously white' to 'culturally diverse' and create a place and space that offers safety and protection, by simply increasing the visibility of such characteristics through representational strategies. To use Stuart Hall, these 'regimes of representation' (Hall, 1997: 269) work to 'fix' (Hall, 1997; Ibrahim and Howarth, 2021) diversity as a mechanism for changing perceptions. For example, changing perceptions may help to re-direct the BBC from being seen as 'hideously white' to more culturally diverse, thus representing the UK's diversity as its public purpose permits. However, a sole perception level approach does little to change the organisational structures contributing to such perceptions. This inability to change organisational structure was mentioned by Scarlet when speaking about how the BBC started to get diversity experts and diversity leads. He said, 'These people came in and

weren't saying “Let's get the culture, right”. They were always just saying, “You’ve got disabled people in it. Yeah, fine, great”. And then it starts to be a numbers game’ (Mik Scarlet, Ex-BBC Broadcaster and Producer – Interview). Changing perceptions may work to better measure ethnic and cultural differences quantitively but not qualitatively reflect the range of voices to which this altered perception seeks to attach itself. As identified above, this view of diversity puts the burden of change on individual members of the organisation (Cox, 1994) or diversity and inclusion departments instead of structural reformation as the driver for change.

The first half of this chapter has shown how the BBC has the challenge of managing diversity internally, and this impacts its ability to provide ontological security to diverse audiences. It has also shown that understanding how the BBC defines diversity in both theory and practice is essential, as diversity not only feeds into how content represents audiences but also what type of content is delivered and how. Next, I want to show how two core BBC principles, *impartiality* and *objectivity*, contribute to the BBC’s inability to provide ontological security to diverse audiences. As the BBC’s diversity definition is an umbrella term with various characteristics, looking at all of them is outside the scope of this chapter. As a result, I’ve specifically chosen to look at the BBC’s relationship with race and ethnicity, as this has been a prominent criticism throughout its existence.

Navigating race through impartiality and objectivity

As a public service broadcaster, the BBC is battling with having to manage its founding Reithian ideologies of building and maintaining a national public culture whilst also being '"representative" and grappling with the nuances of living with differences – cultural, racial or otherwise – in a multicultural, if not multiculturalist, society' (Malik and Newton, 2017: 1). How the BBC responds to social and cultural differences within Britain, including race and ethnicity, organises and regulates social practices within the nation and beyond (Hall, 1997: 3; Malik, 2013: 2). The COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement have heightened discussions about Britain's relationship with race. Adam Baxter, the Director of Broadcasting Standards at Ofcom, emulated this heightened discussion, revealing that:

> On both COVID and issues relating to racial offence in the wake of those awful events involving George Floyd, we saw these massive upticks in our complaints. In the 2019 to 2020 financial year, we received 34,500 complaints, which is probably a higher year than usual than we previously tended to expect. This past year…I think it's about 160,000. It's about a 450% increase, and that's been driven partially by COVID complaints. I think we had roughly 13,000 COVID-related complaints, which is obviously quite a chunky number, and then we've had a lot of complaints, a lot of complaints about racial offence. People are much more sensitive to this.

(Adam Baxter, Director of Broadcasting Standards, Ofcom - Interview)

Whilst the increase in complaints may indicate increased sensitivity to racial offences, as Baxter suggests, it also shows that audiences have become more vocal on such issues. In trying to understand what type of content was driving the increased complaints, Baxter went on to say:

> It could come in different ways. It could be from people calling out in their view of broadcasters being insensitive to the interests, needs, and sensitivities of particular ethnic communities. Or it could be people coming from the very much "oh, what is this Black lives matter? All lives matter" approach.
>
> (Adam Baxter, Director of Broadcasting Standards, Ofcom - Interview)

The increase in racial offence complaints, whether for 'calling out' broadcasters for their lack of care towards specific ethnic communities or a lack of understanding about the Black Lives Matter movement, speaks to Britain's complicated relationship with race and the nation. Paul Gilroy notes that discourses of 'race' and the 'nation' are constantly being struggled over. Writing about the relationship between race and Britain in the 1980s, he mentions that 'the politics of "race" in this country is fired by conceptions of national belonging and homogeneity which not only blur the distinction

between “race” and nation but rely on that very ambiguity for their effect’ (1987/2002: 44).

In their reading of Linda Colley’s *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, Crawford and Jones remind us that

> Britain invented itself as a united nation, and British nationalism was characterised by exclusivity where identity was created in opposition to those who were not Britons: Britons were Protestants, not Catholics, Britons were not French or colonial peoples. The collective sense was defined in terms of culture and social issues which were not shared by other societies.
>
> (Crawford and Jones, 1998: 2)

The ambiguity of who does and does not belong in Britain and who Britain is continues to drive the politics of race today as it did decades ago when Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall were speaking on the matter. An ambiguous understanding of race within British identity reflects the earlier argument about the flexibility of definitions of diversity and further amplifies the role broadcasters like the BBC play in representing race in their content. How they chose to portray the relationship between race and Britain through regimes of representation (Hall, 1997: 269) can uphold and maintain the struggle between race and the nation.

The BBC has been instrumental in constructing this relationship between race and the nation through notions of 'we-ness' (as explored in Chapter 2) and integrating 'otherness' within Britain and Britishness. It has a historical role in helping to define how Britishness is understood and representing race in Britain's national identity. One of the most well-known and consistently reused historical moments that helped foster such integration of the 'colonial other' into Britain was the docking of the Empire Windrush at the Tilbury Docks on 22nd June 1948. The British Pathé newsreel, titled '*Jamaican Emigrants arrive',* visually documented the dis-embarkment of 492 West Indians, mostly Jamaican men, from the ship. The item was shown on the BBC's *Television Newsreel* programme (BBC, 1948–54) and impacted notions of Britishness (Newton, 2011). The segment featured Calypso artist Lord Kitchener singing his song *London Is The Place For Me* (1948) and described arrivals as 'citizens of the British empire coming to the Mother country with good intent' and being met with a cordial reception. These elements contributed to notions of an open, comforting and welcoming Britain.

Darrell Newton (2011) notes how, despite only a small proportion of Britons having a TV and radio licence at the time, the 'televisation' of such events has worked to cement the myth that this was the first moment Black people arrived in Britain, despite Black people having a presence in England since the fifteenth century. Sitting alongside other Newsreels in the few years before this, such as *West Indies Calling* (BBC, 1943), Newton argues that the narratives within the films assisted the BBC in framing England as a far more tolerant nation than the US by avoiding any mentions of tension or racism

(2011: 3). The visual content worked in a similar way to content produced by the BBC Empire Service (now known as the World Service) in the years prior, that sought to create an imagined global collective British community that combined those audiences in Britain and those within the British colonies (Potter, 2012). The constriction of such narratives has historically implicated the BBC 'in fashioning the subjectivity of colonial subjects to feel part of the empire' (Ibrahim and Howarth, 2021: 236). Simon Potter argues that through the Empire Service, the BBC played a role in preserving Britishness as an 'expansive imperial identity' and a 'means of integrating diverse peoples not just at home but also overseas' (2013: 41). It is worth noting that the Empire Service's target population was White settlers in the British colonies. As such, the construction of Britishness acted as a sentimental bond and identity reference point for 'British whites living under other flags', with the UK's Colonial Office using the service as a way of cementing British values and perspectives in a time of competing national cultures (ibid: 41-42).

The BBC Television Service had a similar objective to the Empire Service. Whilst the core audience remained the same, i.e., White Britons, the television service catered to those living in Britain and 'attempted to assist White Britons in understanding the impact of African-Caribbeans, and their assimilation into constructs of Britishness' (Newton, 2011: 4). As Newton explains in his book *Paving the Empire Road: BBC Television and Black Britons,* the construction of the colonial assimilation into Britishness meant that the BBC took 'the responsibility of creating programmes that addressed the impact of Black Britons' (ibid). As such, it 'attempted to establish citizenship within

England, and subsequent issues of race relations and colour prejudice' (ibid) with the creation of programmes like *Race and Colour: A Scientific Introduction to the Problem of Racial Relations* (BBC, 1952), *Has Britain a Colour Bar? (BBC, 1955), Man from the Sun* (BBC, 1956).

This brief historical outline contextualises the BBC's relationship with race and the nation at the beginning of its TV service and its role in assimilating and integrating 'otherness' into Britishness. The BBC's history with race reveals what Ibrahim and Howarth (2021) identify as the dual consciousness of the BBC. They argue that the BBC operates within 'an ideological and ideational space, where its origins and formation merge with the empire, appropriating an active agentic role in the representation and production of race in the UK, during and after the empire' (Ibrahim and Howarth, 2021: 236). This brief historical context highlights how the BBC has helped to construct Britishness in opposition to the colonial other and racialise Britishness as White. As a result, the BBC became a primary representative site for reimagining a multicultural Britain that kept whiteness at its centre. This led the BBC to integrate multiculturalism into national identities using racial stereotypes and caricaturing Blackness (Malik, 2002), as seen in *The Black and White Minstrel Show* (1958–1978). This attempt to create an imagined collective diverse Britain simultaneously and consistently worked to sideline race issues that threatened Britain's image as a welcoming, stable, comfortable, familiar and homely nation (Skey, 2010). Amy Clarke (2019) refers to such attempts as a re-branding tool, where fostering belongingness often sidelines the racism and discrimination against the same groups that such re-brands promote.

The dual consciousness of the BBC and its battle of representing and catering to all, i.e. an ethnically and culturally heterogeneous Britain, reminds us of what Roger Silverstone (2007) identified as the media's primary cultural role in boundary work. He notes that public service broadcasting articulated and, to a degree, continues to articulate the boundaries of community construction at national, subnational, regional and local levels. However, as put by Silverstone, 'this boundary work is becoming even more significant, if not more complex and challenging' as we are

> now in an age where the media are more centrifugal, and where the internet, above all, is helping to spread the loci of cultural and political activity to the social margins, and in so doing is upsetting the integrative role of broadcasting and the national press.
>
> (ibid: 19)

He speaks of the media's macro and micro-boundary work. Macro work collectively connects us through shared experiences or interests or simply through reporting global events, and micro work continuously inscribes differences. Mainstreaming and diversity outlined in part 1 of this chapter are specific examples of this boundary work. He defines this 'endless, endless, endless, playing with difference and sameness' as what the media do and that such boundary work is simultaneously a 'source of both the pleasure and the irritation' (ibid).

The BBC's commitment to impartiality and objectivity leads the BBC to manage its boundary work in ways that are non-disruptive to a white majority. Together, they encourage the BBC to have a 'symmetrical alignment of arguments' (Hall, 2018 [1972]: 288) and always to find compromise in all conflicts. Such ideals, as argued by Stuart Hall, are 'operational fiction' and 'leads to the impasse of false symmetry of issues' (ibid). Here, the BBC ignores the essential aspects of debates that impact the real world to give both sides rough equality. Such boundary work positions controversial debates as inherently and fundamentally having two sides and the real-world impact as having little or no relevance. By pursuing these two ideals, the BBC becomes the neutral fence sitter, detaching itself from real-world issues. Here, the BBC becomes an enabler within what Gavan Titley (2019) refers to as the 'debatability of racism', where real-world issues such as inequality, oppression, and power at the heart of race relations lose their meaning within the debate.

The debatability of conversations regarding race and diversity leaves race and the nation as a precarious space and illustrates the tension between the two sides of its fourth public purpose, national unity and representing diverse communities. Conversations on race become a 'constant contest as to what counts as racism and whose reality counts in this evaluation, a process that renders it a matter of opinion and speculative churn, not history, experience and power' (Titley, 2019: ix). The BBC categorically states that it is not impartial on race; however, its pursuit of impartiality and objectivity provides a platform for such debatability, as will be explored in the subsequent sections of

this chapter. This brings us to question what impartiality and objectivity mean for the BBC.

Defining the BBC's impartiality and objectivity

According to the BBC's editorial guidelines, which are the BBC's values and standards that apply to all of its content, 'The BBC is committed to achieving due impartiality in all its output'. Impartiality is 'fundamental to [its] reputation, [its] values and the trust of audiences'. In clarifying what is meant by 'due impartiality', the guidelines state that 'The term "due" means that the impartiality must be adequate and appropriate to the output, taking account of the subject and nature of the content, the likely audience expectation and any signposting that may influence that expectation' (BBC Editorial Guidelines, 2020). This definition of impartiality reveals the subjective nature of deciding what is adequate and appropriate and considers audience expectations that may influence the application of due impartiality. If, as identified above, the BBC primarily caters to the White majority audience, and if sustaining the ontological security of such an audience is how the BBC delivers value, then the BBC will always, as per its guidelines, consider applying impartiality in ways that offer a sense of stability, comfort and belonging for this majority. Accounting for this audience will naturally take priority over non-white audiences as it protects the BBC's pursuit of audience trust and national unity.

The BBC does state that due impartiality is more than balancing opposing viewpoints and that it 'must be inclusive, considering the broad perspective and ensuring that the existence of a range of views is appropriately reflected',

taking into account ‘different cultural views in other communities’ and that it is ‘committed to reflecting a wide range of subject matter and perspectives across [its] output as a whole and over an appropriate timeframe so that no significant strand of thought is under-represented or omitted’ (ibid). However, power dynamics are involved in applying due impartiality as it is a flexible term. Interviewee Adam Baxter mentioned how this flexibility contributes to misinterpretation. Speaking in length about different approaches to the ‘due’ aspect of Ofcom's definition of impartiality in the broadcasting code, he talks about ‘due impartiality’ as being deliberately flexible.

> And due is deliberately flexible...the definition of impartiality states quite clearly it means not favouring one side over the other. And contextual factors are really important. By which, I mean the approach to impartiality when you have a serious documentary or character show will be quite dramatically different from what the approach would be to a shiny floor variety family show.
>
> (Adam Baxter, Director of Broadcasting Standards, Ofcom - Interview)

He also mentioned how there are often misconceptions about approaches to impartiality:

> But there are a lot of misconceptions about impartiality. There's no requirement, for instance, to give you an exact arithmetic balance between competing sides. There are also a lot of editorial ways you can

> achieve your impartiality. So, just because a broadcast interviewed Person X from Organisation A doesn't mean they have to balance that out with a similar interview with Person Y from Organisation B. For instance, in that interview with the first person, you could just achieve your impartiality by the interviewer posing critical questions, devil's advocate questions, critiquing what that interviewee is saying, and putting the other side's point of view in summary. So, there are a lot of different ways you can achieve your impartiality.
>
> (Adam Baxter, Director of Broadcasting Standards, Ofcom - Interview)

Baxter highlights the role of TV producers' subjective editorial choices in attempting to create due impartiality. His reference to the different editorial ways that broadcasters can achieve impartiality reflects the subjectivity of impartiality, which, as the following case studies will show, proves problematic for the BBC. As a flexible term, impartiality becomes empty. Per its editorial guidelines, it enables the BBC to govern what it thinks 'does not require absolute neutrality on every issue or detachment from fundamental democratic principles' (BBC Editorial Guidelines, 2020). As the two case studies will show, impartiality closely relates to the BBC's pursuit of objectivity, which provides a sense of trust crucial for delivering ontological security. Objectivity, however, is about detaching the 'personal' from things that may influence the representation and consideration of facts, whilst impartiality is the balancing tool used to achieve objectivity. Impartiality and objectivity are used as a

defence and disciplining mechanism that enacts a ritual to retain the BBC's virtuous identity (Ibrahim and Howarth, 2021: 237). Therefore, they are part of the BBC's discursive formation of t*rustworthiness*. This defence mechanism effectively works as 'impression management' (Goffman, 1959) and can contribute to ontological insecurities caused by a tension between how the BBC's organisational principles work ideologically and practically.

I argue that challenging the BBC's ideals of impartiality and objectivity reveals that diversity for the BBC is an impression management strategy to control the audience's impressions of them and present themselves in the best way to achieve a desired goal, which I argue is trust. Impression management is subject to social context and depends upon how the BBC wants specific audiences to perceive it at particular moments. This means that the BBC can behave differently in one context compared to another. In the context of race and ethnicity, this behaviour contradiction causes tension. This approach creates tension for non-white audiences by failing to provide them with ontological security by favouring the impressions of mainstream audiences over diverse ones. To show this, first, I will look at the 2019 Naga Munchetty controversy to explore how the BBC uses impartiality as a defence mechanism to uphold its virtuous identity, followed by the 2020 N-Word incident, which saw the BBC's initial defence of a White journalist using the N-word to examine how the BBC uses objectivity to manage race-related issues.

Impartiality and The Naga Munchetty Saga

On 16th July 2019, then US President Donald Trump tweeted that four congresswomen, Ilhan Omar, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib and Ayanna Pressley, who are all non-white US citizens, should 'go back to the totally broken and crime-infested places from which they came'. The tweet, condemned as racist by the US House of Representatives, became the top news story on BBC Breakfast the following day. A discussion between the two BBC Breakfast presenters, Dan Walker (A White British man) and Naga Munchetty (A British Asian woman with Indian-Mauritian heritage), in which Munchetty shared her personal experience of racism, went viral. The exchange went as follows:

> **Dan Walker:** That was the most telling quote for me last night; I can't remember who said it, but she said I've been told to go home many times, many times in my life, but I've never been told by the man whose sitting in the oval office.
>
> **Naga Munchetty:** And every time I have been told, as a woman of colour, to go back to where I came from, that was embedded in racism, now I'm not accusing anyone of anything here, but you know what certain phrases mean.
>
> **Walker:** Are you still told that? Do you hear that quite regularly?
>
> **Munchtetty:** Yes, not regularly, but you know, I've been told it.

Walker: I know you're sitting here not giving an opinion, but how do you feel then, as a someone who has been told that before when you hear that

Munchetty: Furious.

Walker: When you hear that from him?

Munchetty: Absolutely furious. And I can imagine lots of people in this country will be feeling absolutely furious that a man in that position thinks it's OK to skirt the lines by using language like that.

Walker: Does that then, do you feel that use of that, because that's the point I was trying to make, legitimises other people to use it?

Munchetty: Yes

Walker: And as our guest was saying there, it feels like a thought-out strategy to strengthen his position.

Munchetty: And it's not enough to do it just to get attention. He's in a responsible position. Anyway, look, I'm not here to give my opinion. The lady gave her opinion.

Throughout the exchange, we can see that both presenters are conscious of BBC impartiality guidelines and make clear to the audience that they are not sharing opinions. However, two months following the discussion, on 25th September 2019, the BBC censured Naga Munchetty for breaching impartiality guidelines. Whilst the BBC received several complaints, it was a complaint initially titled '*Blatant political bias from both presenters'* (Waterson, 2019a) that elevated the matter to the BBC's Editorial Complaints Unit (ECU). The BBC went on to partially uphold the complaint, stating that:

> There was nothing wrong with her talking about her own experiences of racism. However, our editorial guidelines do not allow for journalists to then give their opinions about the individual making the remarks or their motives for doing so … and it was for this reason that the complaint was partially upheld. Those judgments are for the audience to make.
>
> (ECU qt in The Guardian, 2019)

The BBC's ECU continued to defend further and clarify its decision. David Jordan, the head of the ECU, went on BBC Radio 4 and shared that the BBC's ruling had been misrepresented and that the issue was not about 'calling out racist comments – which is perfectly acceptable when things are clearly framed in racist language – it's about how you go on to discuss the person who made the comments and make assumptions or remarks about that'. Jordan went on to state that,

> it's probably unwise of the BBC to be calling out people for being liars or racist. However, if someone's made a racist remark, we make sure people are aware that they're inherently racist… The issue is about when she went on further to discuss President Trump himself, what his motivations were for that, and that breached our impartiality requirements.
>
> (David Jordan qt in Waterson, 2019b)

While defending its decision, in a letter to staff, the BBC's Executive Committee declared, 'The BBC is not impartial on racism. Racism is not an opinion, and it is not a matter for debate. Racism is racism'. Adding that, it shared admiration for Munchetty for speaking about her experiences. It said, 'Diversity matters hugely. The success of the BBC is built on the quality and diversity of our people. That is not negotiable' (BBC News, 2019). The BBC contradicts itself by approving the attachment of subjectivity and what is personal when speaking about experiences of racism and disapproving of this attachment when it concerns the individual making the racist remark. Its decision to partially uphold the complaint detaches individuals who make racist remarks from the act of racism. It also shows how applying its definition of impartiality enables the BBC to use misrepresentation to defend itself against criticism.

We can see how the BBC frames its view on racism in different contexts. To its staff, the BBC explicitly states that it is not impartial on racism. However, for

the public it takes a less confident stance on racism and instead re-affirms its broader impartiality values by using it to defend and justify its decision. This highlights how the BBC alters its impression depending on the perception it wants to achieve. For staff, the BBC wanted to insist that racism is not up for debate, whilst for the public, the main goal was to assert the importance of impartiality, leaving the audience to deliberate its position on racism. However, as its letter to staff made its way into the public, this disrupted the BBC's overall impression management and revealed how the BBC operationalises impartiality in different ways to frame how it manages race-related matters. This tension between the impressions the BBC makes to its staff vs the public prevents the BBC from providing ontological security to non-white audiences by not comforting and reassuring them that it is not impartial and complicit to racism. Instead, its staff's ontological security was favoured over its audiences' ontological security.

The Guardian newspaper obtained leaked internal correspondence that revealed that the original complaint was also about co-host Dan Walker. In contrast, in defending the BBC's decision, Jordan said that the co-host was not investigated because 'The simple fact is we haven't had a complaint about Dan Walker's role'. The original complaint said:

> Dan Walker, whilst interviewing a guest about President Trump's recent tweets regarding 4 Democrat politicians in the USA, repeatedly expressed incredulity that anybody could defend Trump's tweets. Very unprofessionally, he then asked his fellow presenter, Naga Munchetty,

> for her personal opinions on this news story! She foolishly complied with his request and launched into an attack on Trump, including stating that she was personally 'furious' about his comments. These two presenters have never made any secret of their left-wing and anti-Trump bias, but usually in more subtle ways, such as eye-rolling and looks of exasperation when reporting on news stories. However, personal commentary on controversial news stories is surely going too far and is way outside of their remit. They are employed as presenters, not political commentators, and as such, should at least feign impartiality. It's about time they were reminded of this.
>
> (Complainant qt in Waterson, 2019a)

A closer look at the original complaint reveals why the BBC's framing of racism was different to staff as it was to the public. The complaint explicitly attacks the BBC's inability to enforce its impartiality guidelines on its news presenters, who, the complaint says, can't even 'feign impartiality'. As such, its public-facing decision focuses on reinforcing that the BBC values impartiality and can control and govern its staff when such guidelines are not adhered to.

The ECU's decision to uphold the complaint led to widespread public criticism, resulting in a published open letter to the BBC in *The Guardian* from various Black and Asian British broadcasters and journalists. The letter criticised the ECU for not reflecting 'the diverse cultural views in the BAME

communities in the UK' (Open letter published in The Guardian, 2019). The letter also criticised the ECU's failure to acknowledge that racism is not impartial nor a valid opinion. It stated that expecting a person to treat racist ideas this way has consequences on the 'dignity and ability to work in a professional environment, as well as being contrary to race equality and human rights legislation' (ibid). Furthermore, the letter stated that being able to talk about personal experiences of racism without the inability to critique the author of racism implies that racism is legitimate.

The open letter drove Tony Hall to overturn the ECU's decision on 30th September 2019. Hall's decision to overturn the sanction was not made to the public but in an email to staff that said, 'In this instance, I don't think Naga's words were sufficient to merit a partial uphold of the complaint around the comments she made', and how he has 'asked the editorial and leadership teams to discuss how we manage live exchanges on air around these topics in the future. Our impartiality is fundamental to our journalism and is what our audiences expect of us.' (Hall qt in Waterson, 2019c). Hall asserts that impartiality is fundamental in managing audience expectations, although affirming this to staff. Hall overturning the decision illustrates how due impartiality as a fundamental organising principle for the BBC is subjective.

The Naga Munchetty saga disrupted the liberal-progressive fantasy of Britain as a post-racial society (Shrivastava, 2019), firmly reattaching issues of race to the multicultural British narrative that often disguises it. The original upheld decision highlighted the BBC's inability to understand the practical

implications of its ideological pursuits of due impartiality. What is interesting about the exchange is that both presenters were fully aware of the real-world impact that such conversations and language around race can have. For instance, when Walker asks Munchetty, 'Do you feel that use of that [language] because that's the point I was trying to make, legitimises other people to use it', Munchetty replies, 'Yes'. The open letter that criticised the BBC also recognised this, stating that treating racism impartially and objectively impacts people's dignity and ability to work. Nevertheless, the BBC being seen as impartial was more important until it was publicly pulled up on it. Even then, its stance on racism was not explicitly addressed to the public but reserved internally for staff. This illustrates Stuart Hall's argument that impartiality is an 'operational fiction' (2018 [1972]: 289).

The Naga Munchetty saga highlights the role of impartiality in maintaining impressions of the BBC both internally and externally. It reiterates the tension between impartiality as an ideological principle and how it works in practice. Ibrahim and Howarth argue that objectivity and impartiality are myths incorporated into the BBC's brand values. They act 'as its point of distinctiveness in competitive markets, lending it journalistic authority, elitism, and untouchability' (Ibrahim and Howarth, 2021: 237). Due impartiality as operationalised by the BBC is fiction because the editorial judgements that enforce it are, as mentioned earlier, flexible and thus open for debate. Ideologically due impartiality positions the BBC as a fair, objective arbiter of the truth and, therefore, a trustworthy organisation. However, in practice, this is fictional, as how due impartiality is applied is always subjective whether it is

enforced by a team such as the Editorial Complaints Unit or individuals who have the authority to overturn decisions like Tony Hall.

Due impartiality prevents the BBC from providing ontological security to non-white audiences as it fails to reassure this audience that it does not tolerate racism. In doing so, the BBC fails to provide comfort and support to this audience. Instead of delivering ontological security, it reinforces how race remains precarious in Britain. The saga reveals how the impression of the BBC as an impartial organisation takes precedence over understanding the implications of due impartiality in practice. As a result, impartiality lacks clarity when applied. One interviewee described the BBC's approach to impartiality as 'messy'. They said:

> [The] BBC feels like it can't make a comment on anything. But then it does without realising it. And I think that's where it gets into this messy position of like, oh, you're impartial, but you're not because you do this, and you say this, but then you don't do this. And you don't do that.
>
> (Ex-BBC Strategist - Interview)

This sense of messiness suggests that ontological security is not just communicated by what is said but also through what is not and the contradictions between what is said and what is done. The BBC is saying one thing, then doing one thing, then responding differently, highlighting how the

pursuit of impartiality as a core organisational principle for the BBC is complex and challenging. How the BBC performs its ideals of due impartiality or, as put by Stuart Hall, how broadcasting constructs its impression of 'fierce impartiality' (2018 [1972]) negatively impacts the provision of ontological security, particularly for those audiences whose 'diversity-relevant' attributes are at the centre of the impartial debates. This is also the case for the BBC's pursuit of objectivity.

Objectivity and The N-word Incident

Almost a year following the Walker and Munchetty exchange, the BBC decided to allow Fiona Lamdin, a White journalist, to use the uncensored n-word in an evening BBC Points West news report about a racially aggravated attack on a young Black NHS worker in Bristol. The initial report broadcast on BBC Points West at 1:30 pm on 28th July 2020 did not include the use of the racially offensive word; however, the 6:30 pm edition of the programme and the 10:30 pm edition, which went on to be repeated the following day on the BBC News Channel, did. The report received 18,656 complaints about its use of racially offensive language by 2nd August 2020 (BBC News, 2020a), making the incident the second-most complained about within the BBC's current charter period. Nevertheless, on 4th August 2020, the BBC defended the report's broadcast, stating that the decision to use the word in full 'was made by a team of people including a number of senior editorial figures'. It also noted that the decision was 'editorially justified' due to 'the family's wishes', who were 'determined that we should report the racist language, in full' (BBC qt in Ofcom, 2021b). Five days later, Tony Hall emailed staff

stating that the BBC had acknowledged that it had made a mistake despite having 'good intentions' (BBC, 2020b). Following this, the ECU sent a letter to complainants explaining that 'the judgment to include the word was not easy to make' and that

> Work is being carried out on the use of language on the BBC led by our diversity and inclusion team, and new instructions have been issued on the need for decisions on the inclusion of racist terms in output to be referred to Heads of Divisions.
>
> (ECU qt in Ofcom, 2021b)

Like the Naga Munchetty saga, the BBC favoured the ontological security of staff over the ontological security of audiences it had offended with its original decision. To audiences, it asserts the objectivity of its decision both when defending its decision and after acknowledging its mistake. Whilst to staff, it explicitly acknowledges its mistake. The N-word incident speaks to the debatability of racism as it re-ignited conversations about who has the right to use the term and its derivatives, including in the media. However, in the case of the BBC, the decision was in the hands of senior editorial figures, thus highlighting how the decision to use the word in full involves subjective perceptions.

Objectivity, as I defined earlier, is about the detachment of the subjective during the representation and consideration of facts. The N-word incident

highlights how subjectivity cannot be detached from issues about race and speaks to the BBC's understanding and application of objectivity in race-related conversations. As put by Stuart Hall, 'Objectivity, like impartiality, is operational fiction' (2018 [1972]: 289), in that filming and editing are the manipulation of what has been captured on camera as 'all filmed accounts of reality are selective' (ibid). The BBC operationalises objectivity to defend against its decision-making and to re-confirm its neutral position on race-related topics. The fact that the incident was the BBC's second-highest complaint issue within its current charter period emphasises how race-related issues are a core concern within British society, as highlighted earlier in this chapter. The incident firmly reminds us that regardless of the BBC's pursuit of objectivity, 'Human beings do not live in the objective world alone ... but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society' (Sapir, 1929: 58). It re-establishes the importance of meaning within language, culture, and communication and the BBC's critical role in communicating and representing Britain's diverse communities.

Like the Naga Munchetty saga, criticisms of the BBC's handling of such incidents encourage questions regarding the makeup of the teams of people who make key editorial decisions and those who argue for such justifications. However, the ECU's response to complainants detailed that their diversity and inclusion team is leading work on language use. This assignment to diversity teams is indicative of the current diversity paradigm. As argued earlier, this paradigm sees diversity as a 'them' issue that happens 'over there', thus

making ‘diverse issues’, like race, something the wider BBC can distance its organisational identity from. Here, diversity becomes a reference for only minority groups or non-white people and distorts it as an individual issue (Cox, 1994: 52) to be resolved independently instead of collaboratively. The BBC’s response to the n-word incident shifts it from a systemic problem within the news service and its Editorial Complaints Unit to an issue for diversity and inclusion teams. It takes responsibility from senior editorial figures and puts the onus on diversity and inclusion staff and departments.

The BBC’s initial defence of the broadcast reveals how impression management within its workforce takes priority over the real-world impact on its audiences, as the mistake was never addressed to audiences, only to its staff. In defending the broadcast to audiences, the BBC sought to reassert the impression that it is objective with its decision-making with little regard to the effects of such decisions on Black audiences. The BBC produces a reality that its audience needs to hear and thus be offended by the full use of insulting derogatory terms in the name of well-intentioned ‘objective’ journalism. The BBC uses objectivity to justify editorial decisions around using racist words in its output. The initial defence that stated that the BBC’s decision was editorially justified illustrates how the BBC uses objectivity to govern race. The defence exposes objectivity as a myth, as the BBC’s decision to use such language was not objective but a subjective collaboration between the BBC and ‘the family's wishes’. By mentioning that the decision was the family’s wish, the BBC attempts to absolve itself from criticism whilst simultaneously implicating its lack of authority in being objective. Allowing a white journalist

to use the n-word in its entirety was not an objective, neutral decision. This speaks to Hall's definition of news values as 'value loaded systems of relevancies' (2018 [1972]: 291). Applying this to the BBC's editorial decisions and guidelines, the BBC is a value-loaded system whereby people decide how to frame topics and what they perceive as relevant for audiences.

In the case of broadcasting, it can never truly be objective as broadcasting inherently involves subjective choices regarding what to show, when to show it, and how. Such structures and processes are not neutral; they have meaning within their framing, thus showing how objectivity becomes an operationalised myth to govern what the BBC thinks is relevant and for whom. The BBC's responses to the incident reveal how the BBC's broadcasting guidelines can operate as 'racialised governmentalities' (Saha, 2018). It shows how the guidelines can work to govern race and decide what is and is not offensive to whom and support the justification for such decisions. Acknowledging its mistake to staff whilst justifying the difficulty in being objective to its audience highlights the disruption to the BBC's impression management as an objective organisation. The impression of objectivity is valued over the ontological security of Black audiences. This leaves the ontological security of Black audiences to hang in the balance.

The myth of impartiality and objectivity

How the BBC handled both the N-word incident and the Naga Munchetty saga reveals how when the BBC needs to take accountability for its mistakes concerning race-related issues, its failure to provide ontological security to

non-white audiences is intentional. It is intentional because the impressions of being impartial and objective and the ontological security of its staff are privileged over the audience's ontological security. The BBC chooses to operationalise objectivity and impartiality in its discursive formation as a trustworthy organisation, which it defines as a crucial role. For example, in its 2019 annual plan, the BBC states that

> In a democracy, everyone must be able to benefit from the most trusted news and the finest programmes and services. Everyone should have the right to share in the cultural wealth that defines us as a country and helps bind us together. This, uniquely, is the role of the BBC.
>
> (BBC Annual Plan, 2019)

As such, the BBC doesn't explicitly admit that it is wrong to the public, only to staff, as publicly acknowledging that it is wrong is to recognise its ineffectiveness in being Britain's social glue and providing ontological security for all.

The BBC prioritises the impression of objectivity and impartiality over providing ontological security for non-white audiences. In doing so, it governs race-related issues based on what it thinks is relevant to audiences. The BBC uses the ideological perceptions of objectivity and impartiality that appeal to a sense of trustworthiness to govern race within its facilitation of social cohesion as required by its fourth public purpose. Managing this impression is a priority that extends to governing what its staff does outside the BBC. As its

impartiality guidelines state, ‘The external activities and public comments, for example on social media, of staff, presenters and others who contribute to our output can also affect perceptions of the BBC’s impartiality’ (BBC Editorial Guidelines, 2020). This can be illustrated through the various emails sent to staff during the height of the Black Lives Matter movement, which later resulted in the BBC updating its editorial impartiality guidelines in 2020.

In June 2020, during the height of the Black Lives Matter movement, the BBC sent the following in an email to staff:

> Our opposition to racism is a fundamental democratic principle - and so is consistent with the BBC’s editorial guidelines. Once opposition to racism becomes aligned with a particular campaign, we begin to express a view about what the response to racism should be. And this gets us into areas where we have to be impartial.
>
> It's not that we can't have opinions – it’s just that we can’t express them in ways that can be identified by audiences. For News journalists, it means we can’t publicly support campaigns, whether through social media, articles, speeches or by attending demonstrations.
>
> It’s not easy, but it means that we retain audience confidence in our ability to be impartial. And that impartiality is central to the incredibly high levels of trust that the public have in us. It’s also especially

> important in the case of the BBC, where our funding comes from the people.
>
> (BBC qt in O'Toole, 2020)

The email indicates not only the operationalised myths of impartiality and objectivity but also why the impression of them takes priority over the ontological security of non-white audiences. First, the BBC associates its opposition to racism by aligning it with its editorial guidelines. Second, it implicitly admits that impartiality is fiction, as it is not that staff can't be impartial but that the audience should not identify the expression of opinion. This reflects the performance of impartiality within the BBC's impression management strategies. Third, it shows that impartiality is central to maintaining audience confidence and trust. Trustworthiness is essential to the BBC as it is integral to the continuity of its funding, which comes from the public. Whilst the BBC recognises the connection between impartiality, trustworthiness and the continuity of its existence being in the hands of the public, the Naga Munchetty saga and N-word incident show that to maintain the impression of being an impartial and objective organisation during race-related issues, the ontological security of non-white audience must be sacrificed for sustaining the ontological security of staff or the white majority audience.

Rather than saying that the BBC is against racism because racism is wrong, it leans on its guidelines, which are its values and standards, to justify its view on racism. Although the BBC, as mentioned earlier, stated to staff that racism is

not a matter of debate, using its guidelines to objectively justify its opposition to racism frames racism as a matter of debate. The BBC opposes racism only because its editorial guidelines say so, thus maintaining an objective position on racism. Its editorial guidelines prevent it from saying that racism is wrong because its guidelines state that it has to be impartial in debates about responses to racism when these responses are aligned to particular campaigns. As a result, the BBC frames its stance on racism through impartiality rather than making a moral judgement. Not explicitly taking a stance on something that it identifies as being in opposition to democratic principles hinders the BBC from being able to provide ontological security to non-white audiences and staff as it does not comfort their sense of identity and belonging within Britain.

An Ex-BBC Strategist reflected that the BBC has a responsibility and duty to distinguish between right and wrong, which they felt does not take away from being impartial. They said, 'I think the BBC perceives impartiality to be just reporting the facts' and went on to say:

> I think impartiality is important. But I think there are certain things that you should just be able to turn around and say, "that is wrong". Like impartiality is kind of saying, there's an election going on, there are two candidates, there's this guy and there's this guy. This is what this guy stands for, this is what that guy stands for, and then presenting everybody with the facts, like cool, do that. But then the BBC should also, and I think the BBC has a duty to turn around and say, if that guy

> over there is saying, if you vote me in, I'm going to lock up every single person who's not white and put them in a detention centre or concentration camp. The BBC should turn around and say, "that is wrong, and that is not right". And "not a good thing to do, that's a bad thing to do". And I think you can still say that and be impartial.
>
> (Ex-BBC Strategist – Interview)

This version of impartiality points to Silverstone, who argues that the responsibilities of the media are not confined to representation but also include the 'principles which underlie those responsibilities, and which in turn need to be based on an interrogation of the context, the increasingly global context, in which they have to be exercised and which significantly increases them' (Silverstone, 2007: 21–22). He states that as audiences' dependence upon media is no longer an issue, audiences have the responsibility to interrogate the media's role as a global civic space.

The Naga Munchetty saga and the N-word incident show how the BBC performs impartiality and objectivity and contributes to the precarity around topics of race. However, the openness of due impartiality and the subjective decisions made in applying objectivity open the BBC to criticism and the risk of misinterpretation. In my interviews, when I asked practitioners to define impartiality, notions of 'balance', 'not taking sides', and 'presenting facts' were given, alongside the credibility of debates in how impartiality is

constructed. They described impartiality as not just about objectively presenting facts but being more complex than that. One defined it as:

> Impartiality is not taking sides in a debate but sharing as many credible angles on the debate as you can. I think for some issues, they're just, you know, there is no debate.
>
> (Policy Advisor, BBC - Interview)

This notion of the credibility of angles alludes to the subjectivity involved in framing debates. It brings to question who decides what constitutes a credible angle. It highlights the subjectivity involved in the due impartiality process, how viewpoints can be critiqued and that there is no one way of achieving impartiality. Thus, due impartiality as an objective ideal is a myth or, as mentioned earlier, operational fiction, as the choice to give space to certain aspects or views over others is subjective in and of itself. Due impartiality becomes a tool for the BBC to maintain the fiction that it is an objective and trustworthy organisation that the public should continue to fund through the licence fee. The BBC manages this fiction by creating different internal and external impressions. However, as Stuart Hall argues, this approach and pursuit of objectivity damages specific audiences (in this case, non-white audiences) who are encouraged to identify with those on-screen presenters and reporters. As a result of objectivity, staff members and audiences can perceive themselves ‘as a neutral and dispassionate party to a partisan and impassioned struggle: the disinvolved spectator before the spectacle of conflict’ (Hall, 2018

[1972]: 289). I would further argue that this pursuit of objectivity, irrespective of real-world impact, damages the BBC's current goal of providing value for all, as ontological security has not been provided for all.

When reporting on racism, the pursuit of objectivity enables the BBC to govern staff who can only reflect on such conflicts and objectively present them (through editorial guidelines) but not participate. The BBC broadcasting then seems to stand outside the topics at the heart of issues (Hall, 2018 [1972]). As such, the BBC raises above the conflict. Such an approach, however, asks programme-makers to repress aspects of their social identities in favour of objectivity by not responding to racism, which, as an act, attacks aspects of belonging and identity, creating ontological insecurity. Despite the BBC stating that it is not impartial on racism and that racism is not a matter for debate, the two case studies have shown how the BBC's structural processes enable such debatability. By examining how the BBC presents its ideals of impartiality and objectivity, I have shown how these structures' performances shape impressions of the BBC. There are inconsistencies between the impressions made to different audiences and those made to staff. This is intentional as it enables the BBC to approach conflict resolution within its facilitation of a socially cohesive Britain by compromising one audience over another in different contexts. The pragmatic ideals of impartiality and objectivity reveal the perhaps taken-for-granted broadcasting power of the BBC. Whilst objectivity and impartiality have ideological use as a defence and governing mechanism, the detachment from the real-world impact, when applied practically, is unhelpful for providing ontological security for non-white

audiences. This operationalised fiction of objectivity and impartiality enables the BBC to distance itself from the precarious space of race.

The argument for part two of this chapter has not been to suggest that objectivity and impartiality have no place in the BBC's work or in valuing that work. Instead, such pursuits are illusions that allow the BBC to perform ethnic diversity and manage impressions of itself as a trustworthy organisation. The above case studies reveal how trust as an organisational identity embeds the pursuit of impartiality and objectivity and obscures how the BBC systemically enables specific societal issues, such as racism, to be framed as balanced, negotiated and debatable, irrespective of the BBC's rhetoric. Both case studies resulted in the issue of new instructions regarding how the BBC deals with racism, thus showing how the BBC is not currently fit to deal with race-related topics and, therefore, needs work. It also illustrates how the BBC uses objectivity and impartiality in managing difference, alluding to the critical argument of this chapter that diversity is performed as a tool to manage impressions and change perceptions, albeit one that does not disrupt the comfortability of the BBC's organisational identity as Britain's social glue. Impartiality and objectivity give the impression of trust, which is central to ontological security, but fail to do so for non-white audiences.

Conclusion - Diversity as impression management

As a cultural institution and public service broadcaster, the BBC acts as an anchor and a vessel through which the public encounters their identities. In the BBC's own words, 'Audiences rely on the BBC to be the place that brings the

country together and helps it understand itself; that keeps reminding us of everything we have in common as well as celebrating what makes our diverse communities different' (BBC Annual Plan, 2019). Since 1922, the BBC has been a primary representational site for creating, reinforcing, and cementing British identity (Creeber, 2004: 28; Ibrahim and Howarth, 2021: 237). As recognised in its fourth public purpose, 'The BBC should bring people together for shared experiences and help contribute to the social cohesion and wellbeing of the United Kingdom'. In contributing to the social cohesiveness of the UK, the BBC has 'played a crucial role in conceiving and cementing notions of "Britishness" (both at home and abroad), intent on constructing a deep sense of national consciousness and consensus' (Creeber, 2004: 29). The BBC's historical monopoly over the radio and broadcasting landscape made it significantly responsible for constructing, managing and reinforcing these narratives and has, over its centenary, cemented specific identities within a shared national life. This shared national life was framed as reaffirming the public's sense of belonging and identity, providing ontological security previously disrupted in the earlier years of the BBC's formation.

This cultural hegemonic ideology of a shared national life sought to unite the nation and make it 'one man'. However, as Searle-White argues, 'our actual identity—who we think we are, the way we think of ourselves—is constantly shifting and changing' (2001: 51). Thus, how people think of themselves within the BBC's constructed nation can also shift and change. As such, this Reithian ideology has been challenged over the years for neglecting the tastes and interests of non-white, working-class, non-English, and non-London

residents. Identity is fragile, which creates a sense of fear and lack of ontological security that leads to an attachment to fixed notions of identity. To resolve the fragility of identity, the BBC persists in pursuing the construction of a shared national life, which aspires to provide ontological security through its binding authority that offers a sense of continuity and certainty to our feelings of belonging, contributing to how we can function effectively in everyday life. The BBC does this not only for its staff and audience but also to provide ontological reassurance as a relevant and valued institution within the evolving online media landscape.

The BBC has adopted the binding authority of shared national life to formulate an impression of it being a trustworthy nation-builder. In times of uncertainty, like during the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement or the COVID-19 pandemic, as shown in the previous chapter, it leans more into this. The BBC's pursuit of trustworthiness means that the BBC creates different impressions of itself that appeal to the audience's truth. The truth here is not 'the truth' as an objective, fixed, impartial position but truths that relate to individuals' reflexive construction of their identities. However, despite a commitment to diversity, the centralised internal structures within the BBC help construct a homogenised vision of Britishness and culture (Creeber, 2004) that neglects specific audiences.

How the BBC constructs this homogenised vision of a shared national life involves including and excluding certain narratives. In doing so, this shared national life, as conveyed through the BBC's content, services and the

workforce that make and manage those content and services, can contribute to feelings of ontological security and insecurity. To combat criticism regarding the exclusion of specific narratives, the BBC creates spaces for these neglected voices through radio services like *BBC 1Xtra,* BBC Asian Network, and BBC Scotland. It also creates teams and units dedicated to supporting programming for these excluded audiences through departs like the Disability Programmes Unit and African-Caribbean Programmes Unit in the 90s-2000s to now the Creative Diversity team. These teams may increase the number of diverse staff on and behind screen and air, enabling the BBC to show how it reflects, represents and serves the diverse communities as required by the Royal Charter. However, by restricting staff and the content they help to create from moving into the mainstream, the BBC excludes these communities and perpetuates stereotypes and disadvantages. Consequently, the BBC's diversity becomes a number game about quantifiably creating the impression that it is a diverse organisation by increasing the number of diverse people on and off screen rather than changing internal cultures. Framing diversity through a representation lens lends itself to being seen as an impression management strategy.

Whilst the BBC's Creative Diversity research and toolkits recognise the prevalence of stereotyping in portraying audiences on-screen and how diverse audiences are not a monolith, as shown in its *Nuanced Portrayal* and *B.A.M.E.: We're Not The SAME* reports, its internal organisational structures continually maintain stereotypes and monolithic discourses about diverse communities. Containing diversity to specific places and spaces is unhelpful in

providing ontological security for non-white audiences as it creates the idea that they are not welcome, impacting identity and belonging and countering ideas of social cohesion. In this way, the BBC's diversity becomes a containment strategy for managing any issues that a diverse UK may bring up, such as racism or ableism. Diversity becomes something for minorities to deal with. As such, creative diversity teams not only need to find solutions to these issues but also educate and implement tools for the entire BBC business. The inability to address the inconsistencies between its regimes of representation (Hall, 1997) for its audiences, workforce, and organisational structures and processes that shape its everyday regimes of representation means that these creative diversity teams are fighting a losing battle. As such, the BBC's creative diversity work and how it achieves its fourth public purpose can be deemed as performative impression management with little commitment to addressing the structures that influence such impressions.

The BBC has a public purpose to raise the awareness of different cultures and viewpoints, but as noted in the chapter, these are often sidelined to specific paces of the BBC through mainstreaming. When they do enter the mainstream, the BBC uses impartiality and objectivity to govern race and maintain the impression that it is a trustworthy organisation. This impression is central to the BBC's ontological security within the evolving media landscape. However, examining how the BBC handled the Naga Munchetty saga and the N-word incident, this chapter has shown how impartiality and objectivity are operationalised fiction as broadcasting always inherently involves individuals making subjective choices when applying due impartiality and maintaining

objectivity. Using impartiality and objectivity as defence mechanisms and a way to govern and limit conversations about race can threaten ontological security. These case studies illustrate the relationship between race and the nation as an unresolved understanding within the BBC. This framing has enabled the BBC to detach real-world issues and historical context from its role and responsibility as a public service broadcaster. For example, the BBC can remove race-related topics from being seen as a systemic issue by positioning itself as the objective mediator seeking compromise and never being a participant in such debates or a contributor to race-related problems.

In pursuing trust and bringing shared experiences and social cohesion, the BBC maintains different impressions to different audiences. As mentioned earlier, Ibrahim and Howarth speak of the dual consciousness of the BBC's organisational identity and refer to the BBC's inside (intrinsic organisation) and outside (broadcast space) identities that merge in the production of race and centre race as an unresolved matter (2021: 232). They state that the BBC's dual consciousness is impacted, disrupted and fragmented by how race relations unfold within Britain. These impressions created while managing race-related issues often privilege mainstream dominant identities over diverse communities, thus failing to provide ontological security for non-white audiences. Pursuing trust through the myths of objectivity and impartiality that do not consider or interrogate contextual factors leads to a misalignment between what the BBC says it does and how this works in practice. As a result, the BBC's diversity work, which it acknowledges as integral to its quality and

success, can be perceived as surface-level impression management statements that lack the commitment to tackling structures.

This chapter intended to show the tension between two parts of the BBC's fourth public purpose, which aims to provide ontological security through feelings of belonging and continuity of identity. The first part of the public purpose concerns representing and reflecting diverse communities, and the second part is about fostering shared experiences that contribute to the social cohesiveness of the UK. The tension between these two parts illustrates the BBC's macro-micro boundary work that prevents the BBC from providing ontological security to diverse communities. The BBC's macro work concerned with fostering shared experiences is favoured over its micro work concerned with diverse communities. Silverstone notes that this macro-micro boundary work is a 'source of both the pleasure and the irritation' (2007: 19). Here, it is the irritation that causes ontological insecurities within the BBC's micro boundary work. When carrying out its macro boundary work, the BBC creates the impression of a socially cohesive UK, which is tied to historical Reithan notions of national unity and is integral to how the BBC thinks it should be perceived as Britain's social glue. This perception is favoured over the ontological securities of the diverse communities the BBC ought to represent. As such, achieving the BBC's fourth public purpose and doing diversity is impression management rather than cultural change.

Chapter 4 – 'It's funny how they took BBC Three off and made it just online, and now they've put it back on' – BBC Three and Retaining Youth Audiences' Ontological Security

> Our ambition to reinvent the BBC for a new generation is our biggest priority for next year. Younger and older people's consumption habits are increasingly different. Younger people watch less television than older people. They listen to less radio. And where young audiences go now, older audiences will likely follow. Online innovation has slowed the decline seen across all traditional media companies. It has not reversed it.
>
> (BBC Annual Plan, 2017)

Tuesday, 1st February 2022, saw the return of the BBC Three linear broadcast channel after a 6-year hiatus. In its Public Interest Test[13] submission, the BBC noted that since BBC Three's move online, the BBC's impact on younger audiences, 'particularly those who maintain a broadcast TV habit and are lighter users of on-demand services,' had been reduced. It added that restoring BBC Three as a broadcast channel would help the BBC to reach and deliver value to these audiences (BBC Public Interest Test, 2021: 3). This discursive positioning of broadcast television as being the necessary medium in which to

[13] The Public Interest Test is designed to ensure that any proposed changes to the BBC's Public Services, contribute to its Mission and Public Purposes and demonstrate that the additional public value justifies any potential adverse impact on its competitors or the market. The BBC must pass all the stages of the test before it can make any changes.

provide value to youth audiences, sits in opposition to its positioning in the 2015 proposal to move BBC Three online. In the proposal, the corporation framed BBC Three's online move as a 'strategic opportunity' (BBC Trust, 2015a: 2), providing what they considered to be an opportunity to reinvent the channel in a way that would 'enhance the BBC's reputation with young audiences' (ibid). In 2015, the BBC positioned the online and on-demand TV landscape as a suitable space to deliver value to youth audiences and enhance the BBC's relationship with them. However, six years later, it similarly positioned broadcast TV.

The dominant industrial narrative adopted by the BBC in the earlier years of BBC Three's online move framed the value of online media through notions of 'unlimited choice and absolute control' (BBC Annual Plan, 2018). In contrast, broadcasting was framed as restrictive and something BBC Three as an online channel now had 'the freedom to break' (BBC Media Centre, 2014a). As argued in Chapter 2, these narratives privilege online/on-demand media over broadcasting and lead to a position where the value of the online television's 'everywhereness' overshadows the importance of broadcasting's 'everydayness', essential for sustaining ontological security. The decision to bring back BBC Three as a linear broadcast channel suggests that despite BBC Three having more 'freedom' in the online world, its 'everywhereness' did not allow it to provide the same level of ontological security to audiences as broadcasting.

BBC Three's return to broadcast television implies that the BBC's initial assumptions about the affordances of on-demand media as being better at catering to youth audiences than broadcasting were false, as they turned back to broadcast television for help. The question is, why does the BBC believe that a return to broadcasting can reverse this? An Ex-BBC Broadcaster and producer echoed this in our interview. They said:

> It's funny how they took BBC Three off and made it just online, and they've put it back on. And I'm thinking, well, that's interesting because I don't know why you would put it back on if it's the sort of content you're just going to access on iPlayer.
>
> (Ex-BBC Broadcaster and Producer – Interview)

They went on to question the BBC's ability to cater to youth audiences by saying:

> Are they still unsure? Are they still not quite getting it right for this current age? Are they still struggling? They shouldn't be. They should be really getting to grips. So, something in that organisation, to me, still says that they're not quite there yet with modern day content and how it works.
>
> (Ex-BBC Broadcaster and Producer – Interview)

This chapter explores how the BBC use BBC Three to frame the online televisual experience as better than that offered through broadcasting. It asks, how does constructing these experiences impact the BBC's ability to provide ontological security to youth audiences? This chapter argues that the BBC Three strategy used over the six years it went online (2016-2021) contradicts the strategic rationale for moving BBC Three online and shows how BBC Three gets caught in the middle of assumptions made about young audiences and their readiness to move online and the wider reinvention of the BBC within the online media landscape.

The BBC predicts online television as the future winner in the TV battle. For example, in its 2018 Annual Plan, when referring to the internet and mobile devices, the BBC stated, 'We are approaching the time when this will become the main route to what the BBC does. It will not come immediately, but already it is happening far quicker than many predicted' (2018: 2). They go on to say that 'We must be ready for an internet-only world whenever it comes – and it is coming soon – but we must try to serve all our audiences brilliantly in the transition' (ibid: 3). In comparison, broadcast television is positioned as having little chance of winning due to changing audience consumption habits that it states are primarily being driven by young people. For example, its 2017 Annual plan said, 'Younger people watch less television than older people. They listen to less radio. And where young audiences go now, older audiences will likely follow' (2017: 5). Its 2019 Annual Plan said, 'consumption habits are changing at an extraordinary pace, and young people are at the forefront of these trends' (2019: 2). Whilst the BBC did recognise that the early closure of

the channel would negatively impact the BBC's reach and share among younger audiences in the short term, it framed BBC Three as a guinea pig in its experiment 'to modernise the BBC's portfolio to ensure that it remains relevant to licence fee payers in a financially challenging climate' (BBC, 2015: 2). However, this chapter will show that in the BBC's struggle to modernise itself through moving BBC Three online, it fails in its attempt to remediate key broadcasting components such as flow to shape young people's online BBC Three experience and continue to provide ontological security.

The BBC disclosed that its decision to close the BBC Three broadcast channel and reinvent it online was 'driven by financial necessity' and that 'the BBC would have preferred to have waited for a greater shift to on-demand viewing among younger audiences' (BBC, 2015: 2). In framing the closure of BBC Three as a financial necessity the BBC suggests that the closure was the only viable and justifiable option to help the BBC deliver its savings programme caused by the licence fee freeze that financially constrained the BBC. It stated:

> Given these financial constraints, it has become clear that in order to sustain the quality of the BBC's main TV services, BBC One and BBC Two, the continued salami-slicing of existing TV programme budgets is not a feasible option. To find sufficient savings within the TV portfolio, it is necessary, alongside continued efficiencies, to close one of the BBC's TV services. The BBC cannot keep doing the same amount for less.
>
> (ibid)

The choice to protect BBC One and BBC Two rather than BBC Three illustrates how the BBC privileges the ontological security that some BBC channels provide audiences over the ontological security provided by others. As discussed in the previous chapter, the BBC One audience is conceived as mainstream, and whilst it doesn't cater to a specific audience, how the BBC distances diversity from it enables us to assume that the ontological security BBC One provides is aimed at those who fit the 'norm' (males, white, non-disabled, heterosexual audiences). On the other hand, BBC Three has a very specific audience - young people aged 16-34. As such, the BBC's decision to close the BBC Three broadcast channel illustrates how the BBC prefers to save mainstream audiences over youth audiences in its financial and industrial battle. Here, the BBC values the BBC One and BBC Two audiences more than BBC Three audiences for helping the BBC cope with its ontological insecurity in the media landscape. This ontological insecurity, as I identified in the introduction to this thesis, is the BBC's uncertainty about broadcasting's role within the online media landscape.

This chapter will show that BBC Three's online move acted as a financial and political response to reinforce the idea that the BBC can move with the changing audience consumption patterns and thus remain a relevant and vital organisation within the changing online media landscape. By interrogating BBC Three's branding, marketing and content distribution before and during its online move, I explore how the BBC suppresses the value of broadcasting while simultaneously attempting to remediate its everydayness online to

provide ontological security to young audiences. This chapter shows that although the BBC positions the move as an opportunity to enhance its relationship with young people, it was also about establishing the whole of the BBC's ontological security within the online media landscape.

It is essential to clarify that three critical levels of ontological security are at play. First, the BBC is battling with its industrial ontological security within an ecosystem that sees its share within the media landscape being taken up by other forms of online media such as streaming, on-demand audio, and short-form mobile-first video. As highlighted in the introduction to this thesis, this context also lays against a Conservative government that seeks to privatise public service broadcasting and calls for an SVOD model to replace the Licence Fee. According to the former Culture Secretary John Whittingdale, this replacement would mean that 'a "core" BBC, delivering public service broadcasting including news and children's programming, could be funded by the taxpayer with viewers paying a Netflix-style subscription for additional content.' (Whittingdale qt in Sherwin, 2022). Second, the BBC is itself ontologically insecure about youth audiences. The BBC has constantly been battling its ontological insecurities about youth audiences, defining them as 'hard-to-reach'. Throughout its history, it has employed various coping mechanisms to deal with these insecurities, such as channel branding, commissioning strands and scheduling. However, as I will argue in this chapter, such coping mechanisms were lost in translation when BBC Three moved from linear broadcasting to online. Lastly, the third level of ontological security is the ontological security of youth audiences themselves. This

security offers a sense of structure to their everyday lives, comfort and reassurance from the pleasures obtained or earned from watching BBC Three and confidence and belonging that the BBC is a relevant place for them. All three levels of ontological security intersect and show how ontological security can get lost in translation from broadcast television to online television. By analysing how the BBC sought to maintain its value with young audiences through BBC Three's move to online only, this chapter will show how some of the significant characteristics of broadcast television do not easily translate online and how this lack of understanding in the translation of broadcast to online media has forced it to revisit broadcast television as the place and space to rebuild its reputation with young people.

The chapter is organised into four sections. First, I contextualise how the BBC construct the youth audience as hard-to-reach and the implications this has on how it uses BBC Three as a platform to solve the youth problem, thus influencing its decision to move BBC Three online. Next, I explore *branding* to see how the BBC reimagined the BBC Three audience online to argue that branding is a coping mechanism for maintaining the ontological security of youth audiences. Using the 2016 rebrand and 2017 brand refresh as case studies, this section identifies how BBC Three sought to position online TV as a strategic opportunity to enhance its brand identity with youth audiences and distance itself from broadcasting. Third, I then look at BBC Three's *content distribution* and how the BBC positioned BBC Three within BBC iPlayer. It shows how the lack of a broadcast flow within an online BBC Three meant that BBC Three needed to work harder to provide ontological security to an

audience it frames as hard to reach. I then delve into the challenges BBC Three faced within its relationship with iPlayer to show how BBC iPlayer failed to act as a source of ontological security for BBC Three. Lastly, I look at the *marketing* of BBC Three that attached itself to broadcasting, highlighting that the constructions of broadcasting that the BBC gave in the earlier years of BBC Three's online move are problematic. Using the 2019 *It's Three Time* marketing campaign; this section shows how the BBC uses BBC One as a source of ontological security, how BBC One continues to be considered a site and source of legitimacy, and what this implies about the value of linear broadcasting in the online media landscape. This chapter aims to show how the BBC sought and failed to provide ontological security to young audiences through BBC Three's move online.

What does the BBC mean when it says youth?

The words and phrases used to define an audience act as a discursive construct (Stein, 2015: 7; Frith, 1993: 64) to signify a particular demographic. Such constructs work to carefully manage those defined by it, as explored in the previous chapter through terms like 'mainstream' and 'diverse'. The youth' or 'young people', are often temporally signified via age (16-34s) or by a set of generations such as Generation X, Millennials, Generation Z and more recently, Generation Alpha. David Buckingham argues that the

> invention and use of a category like "Generation X" (and its subsequent mutations) reflects both the importance and the complexity of age-based distinctions in contemporary consumer culture. As this implies,

> "youth" is essentially a social and historical construct rather than a universal state of being.
>
> (2008: 4)

For Karen Lury, youth 'is not determined by age, but relates to a historical and mediated construction of 'youth' or 'youthfulness' as an attitude, or a series of traits, habits and beliefs' (2001: 126). Building on Lury's work, Faye Woods uses the term in the same way the television industry does to describe the 'demographic category of those aged 16-34'. However, within the realms of British youth television, she adds that this is 'a televisual construct defined by tone, address, and its location within defined youth spaces in the schedule and channel line-up' (2016: 6). This notion of a defined youth space that resides within the schedule and channel line-up is the core contention of this chapter's argument. Whilst Wood's work maps British youth television through the rise of digital television and multiplatform screens until 2015, this chapter focuses on BBC Three in the lead-up to and during its online-only era post-2016 until its announced return to broadcast television in 2021.

The remit in place for BBC Three at the time of its online transition explicitly calls out the channel's youth audience as those aged between 16 and 34. BBC Three is not the only BBC channel that defines its audience by age, as CBBC provides content for 6–12-year-olds, and CBeebies' remit speaks of catering to children aged 6 or under (BBC Trust, 2013). These, however, are the only BBC television channels with a remit to cater to audiences by age. Brett Mills argues

that this structure intends to encourage audiences to move with the BBC as they age, yet it assumes that the audience no longer needs such encouragement beyond the age of 34, as BBC One, Two and Four are defined by their tone and content (2015: 222). Mills argues that such remits indicate what is assumed to be mainstream and what is specialist.

As channels, BBC Three, CBBC and CBeebies help to position these audiences as unique and treat them as such by delivering a dedicated service to cater to them. The remits for the BBC's television channels imply that children and youth are part of the imagined community that makes up the nation that the BBC serves whilst simultaneously being a niche specialist audience whose televisual engagement 'cannot be encompassed within a mainstream channel like BBC One' (Mills, 2015: 222). As explored in the previous chapter, categorising audiences as niche and special and limiting how they enter the mainstream creates ontological insecurities by attacking audiences' sense of belonging and identity within the BBC's pursuit of shared national experiences. It is important to consider what mainstream means when thinking about these audiences and, in the case of BBC Three, what these exclusionary consequences entail (ibid: 223) and how they impact BBC Three's provision of ontological security for its target audience.

A closer look at these remits emphasises the BBC's significant problem with constructing its channels and, thus, constructing these audiences. If we are to assume that the BBC encourages younger audiences to move with the BBC as they age, then the reputation issue the BBC had with younger audiences in the

lead-up to BBC Three's online transition began before this audience reached BBC Three. If CBeebies is to cater to 0-6-year-olds, CBBC to 6–12-year-olds, and BBC Three to 16-34-year-olds, then where do 12-16-year-olds go? This point reflects arguments about the lack of provision of public service content for the full range of children 0-17 (Livingstone and Local, 2016; Steemers, 2016). This lack of provision, I would argue, has contributed to the fragmentation of younger audiences across media platforms and services. In 2016, Sonia Livingstone and Claire Local asserted that,

> This lack of provision to children by PSBs may well have far-reaching consequences; not only in terms of the social value that PSBs provide to their audiences and society as a whole but also in terms of PSBs losing their entire future audience. If children are forced to search for content elsewhere (as they will be if PSBs continue to desert them), there is no guarantee that they will return later in life.
>
> (Livingstone and Local, 2016: 8)

This connection between the value of the BBC and childhood was echoed in interviewees' answers when I asked what the BBC meant to them. Some reflected with a passionate belief in what the BBC is trying to do, whilst others reflected on the role the BBC played in their lives at a young age or didn't. For example:

I can give you a rational response, which is, again, as a British institution, it's like it's a safety net. It's a cultural explorer. It's bringing people together, you know, and then on the other hand, I will give you the emotional response, which is that it's just part of my life, and it feels like a privilege to love to work there and to get to play on some of the things that you listened to when you were growing up, and you love.

(Marketing Manager, BBC – Interview)

For me personally, it's about my childhood. You know, I grew up in a very BBC household. The radio was always on Radio 4 comedies at 6:30 on a Monday night. I never really watched ITV children's content. I was always watching BBC *Blue Peter*, you know. It was the soundtrack of my childhood growing up.

(Jane Lingham, Director of BBC Brand, BBC - Interview)

It depends on who you speak to. There are people who haven't grown up with the BBC, so they don't have as many fond memories; so, therefore, that reflects on your current view of the BBC. We see that a little bit with younger people who have had so much more of a wider choice of media than when I was growing up, and that reflects in the individuals.

(Policy Advisor, BBC – Interview)

Illuminating the policy advisor's point about not growing up with the BBC, Jeroen Verspeek, Head of Audience Measurement at the BBC, found initial difficulties answering the question, eventually responding:

> Um, yeah. I don't. Because I've only lived in the UK for nearly six years, I've been across the BBC for some time, but it isn't something I grew up with.
>
> (Jeroen Verspeek, Head of Audience Measurement, BBC – Interview)

The above reflections highlight that for constructing its value, it is important for the BBC to establish its meaningfulness within people's childhoods and how such construction, at an early age, can impact value attribution as people transition from children to youth and to adults.

In 2019, 4 years after BBC Three moved online, Ofcom warned the BBC that 'as children and young people age, they do not come to engage with the BBC as previous generations once did' (2019: 13) and in 2020, it reported that 45% of UK 5–15-year-olds would pick YouTube as their favourite platform ahead of TV channels like the BBC (Ofcom, 2020). Whilst this brings into question whether YouTube is television, which Amanda Lotz (2017) and Catherine Johnson (2019) exclude from their definitions of online television, from the

perspective of ontological security and value, both compete for the same attention of the same audience. As argued by Potter and Steemers, we should not exclude YouTube from any overview of screen media industries targeted at children, as many children see it 'in numerous but not all countries around the world (especially China) as their preferred alternative to subscription and linear broadcasting services' (2021: 250).

Since the BBC's new charter period that began in 2017, there is now a more ambiguous construction of children in the BBC's Public Services definition. CBeebies is described as 'a channel providing a range of programming to educate and entertain very young children'; CBBC is described as 'a mixed-schedule channel for pre-teen children'; whilst BBC Three continues to precisely define its audience as 16-34s – 'mixed-genre channel aimed at younger audiences (16-34) across the UK, with a particular focus on innovative entertainment, comedy, drama and factual programmes' (BBC, 2022). Whilst the chapter focuses on BBC Three's audience (16-34s), it is essential to emphasise that how the BBC provides for audiences under 16 impacts its ability to provide for those over 16, as how the BBC positions its role within audiences' early everyday lives contributes to routines that are important for structure and stability, thus building ontological security and the values attributed to the BBC in the later years of audiences' lives.

The BBC's focus on 16-34s as a definition for youth audiences is born from the commercial market notion that this audience is most desirable due to their buying habits and close affinity with being early adopters of new technology.

These notions frame this audience as 'indicators of future patterns of consumption' (Woods, 2016: 7). This notion of being an indicator of future consumption habits and having a close relation to being early adopters of technology is what the BBC used to frame BBC Three's online move. For example, Tony Hall described young audiences as being the 'most ready to move to an online world' (Plunkett and Sweney, 2014) and as explored earlier, the BBC states that young people's consumption habits differ from older audiences and that older audiences are likely to follow young people's current viewing behaviours.

The categorisation of youth audiences as being the indicators of the future and having different behaviours to mainstream audiences or 'different to the 'normal' behaviour of those who watch its other channels' (Mills, 2015: 221) has laid the foundation for the BBC and other public service broadcaster to discursively construct this audience as 'hard-to-reach', due to their traditionally low viewing ratings (Woods, 2016: 7). The phrase 'hard-to-reach' is a discursive construct often used within market research and the media industries to describe the challenge of connecting with different audiences and not seeing high viewing levels in comparison to mainstream audiences within audience measurement metrics or segmentations like TV ratings. Verspeek alluded to this challenge. When speaking about the challenges of panel measurement within the BBC's Cross Media Measurement Study, he stated:

> One challenge is getting engagement from sufficient young people, or lower social class, part of the hard-to-reach audiences. It is always

> easier to get higher social class, middle England people to get engaged with research. It is much trickier to get sufficient numbers of young people, or B.A.M.E, of C2DE[14] people. So, that is an ongoing challenge.
>
> (Jeroen Verspeek, Head of Audience Measurement, BBC – Interview)

The audience measurement challenge noted by Verspeek shows that one of the reasons why television broadcasting struggles to see higher viewing ratings among these 'hard-to-reach' audiences; is due to difficulties with audience participation in the audience measurement and market research panels that such ratings rely on. The hard-to-reach label, as mentioned by Verspeek, is reserved not only for younger audiences but also for the ethnically minoritised and those with a lower socioeconomic status, often industrially described as BAME and C2DE audiences. Such labels are pejorative and often offer preconceptions about such audiences that work to minoritise them. Hard-to-reach is pejorative as it is a homogenising language that neglects how the identities in these groups 'may be recognized as more or less legitimate by those who hold power in society' (Buckingham, 2008: 7). As explored in the previous chapter, terms like BAME and 'diversity' are operationalised to homogenise collective social identities in a way that makes them easier to manage or ignore.

[14] B.A.M.E and C2DE are acronyms used within the media industries. B.A.M.E refers to Black, Asian, and minority ethnicities, whilst C2DE refers to those with a lower social and economic status, often used to describe the 'working class'.

The hard-to-reach status of youth audiences has resulted in a provision for these audiences as part of public service broadcasting remits, particularly that of BBC and Channel 4 (Woods, 2016: 7). As such, this has often provided a top-down, paternalistic approach to programming which in the case of the BBC, has often privileged the education and information parts of the Reithian triad (inform, educate, entertain), over entertainment. Jonah Hill speaks of the BBC's tension between entertainment and education in the development of the pop music programme *Six-Five Special* (BBC, 1957-1958), which contained 'small doses of information and education' within the format (Hill, 1991: 92). These doses prevented it from being solely about music, indicating the BBC's lack of understanding of youth audiences (Mills, 2015: 225). Hill also speaks of the paternalistic nature of the BBC, pointing to a 1950s policy that required the BBC and ITV to suspend broadcasting between 6-7 pm in order not to disrupt children's bedtime routines and homework time (Hill, 1991: 91). Whilst these examples refer to an older part of the BBC's history, a similar compromise between education and entertainment laid at the heart of BBC Three's commissioning strategy both during its inception in 2003 and its transition to online only in 2016.

Privileging education and information over entertainment helped approve BBC Three in the early 2000s. BBC Three's limited market impact was framed through a focus on the news, current affairs, and documentaries, as such informational/educational content was absent from 'its advertising-driven 16–34 competitor channels due to their expense and perceived low audience

return' (Woods, 2016: 49). Woods (2016) noted how the BBC has historically faced criticisms for targeting commercially viable audiences and for having an over-reliance of entertainment programmes such as celebrity, relationship, and lifestyle programming. This balance between its public service educational and information commitments with entertainment content, which often attracts youth audiences, is a key contributing factor to the Corporation's ontological insecurities about youth audiences, disguised through the construction of youth as hard-to-reach.

Ascribing the 'hard-to-reach' label to audiences leads to presumptive preconceptions about audiences. This presumption led to thinking of youth audiences as the readiest audience for an online BBC television channel. It problematised the youth as difficult to reach through broadcast television, resulting in BBC Three moving solely online rather than taking issue with the existing television broadcasting strategies used to reach them. For example, The BBC Trust's final decision on BBC Three's online move noted that the Market Impact Assessment 'indicated that BBC Three was perceived primarily as a "flicking channel" where viewers stumbled across content' (BBC Trust, 2015b: 14) and was strongly associated with linear viewing. The assessment revealed that 'even the younger and more tech engaged were likely to have a preference for watching BBC Three on linear TV, despite their general inclination towards non-linear viewing' and that 'The majority of BBC Three viewers valued the channel's easy, effortless and light content, with viewing often satisfying "wind down", late evening needs' (Kantar Media, 2015: 9).

For youth audiences, BBC Three provided ontological security through the flow of late evening programmes that comforted their need to wind down. I'd argue that the structure of BBC Three's broadcasting hours of 7pm – 4am contributed to the perception of BBC Three as a 'wind down' brand as it became a place to stumble across content that helps to relax in the evening. The BBC decided to move BBC Three online rather than take issue with BBC Three's limited broadcasting hours, which reduced the BBC's ability to create higher engagement levels with this audience and thus cater to their needs. Neither did the BBC challenge its constructions of the youth as a niche and special audience, which contributed to them not being served by other spaces of the BBC. Moving BBC Three online compounded the issue of audience fragmentation. It meant that once BBC Three moved online, those youth audiences whom the BBC said still primarily watched linear broadcast TV had nowhere else on the BBC to go.

The research from Kantar Media within the Market Impact Assessment for moving BBC Three online also revealed that 'The vast majority of regular BBC Three viewers strongly associated the service with lighter content, with *Family Guy* and *American Dad* standouts in terms of specific programmes mentioned' (ibid: 28). Such perceptions of BBC Three, further emphasise how its ontological security is explicitly tied to its relationships with broadcast linear viewing, particularly in the way in which it caters to audience's late evening needs of wanting to wind down. This reflects the arguments made in Chapter 2 about how scheduling offers ontological security by mapping the routinisation of everyday life. This research showed how the value of BBC

Three as a linear TV channel was not just about the type of content it provided but the way it curated its content through the television schedule, providing an opportunity for an effortless televisual experience that helped its audience to wind down. Ofcom noted that in 2015, *Family Guy* (Fox, 1999-) and *American Dad!* (Fox, 2005-2014; TBS, 2014 - present) accounted for 27.3% of BBC Three viewing hours, significantly overperforming relative to other BBC Three programs on the channel (Ofcom, 2015: 27). The light content offered by BBC Three, in addition to its regular and familiar late evening schedule, portrayed a sense of comfort and reassurance to audiences. *Family Guy* and *American Dad* accounted for over a quarter of viewing hours as they were stapling programmes for the channel that were scheduled at the same time most days. This dailiness of these programmes contributed to their strong association with BBC Three.

As argued throughout this thesis, ontological security is sustained through routine and what is familiar and predictable. Whilst BBC Three may have produced award-winning content across various genres, the value of the channel came from its perceived effortlessness in catering to the audience's late evening wind-down needs. As argued by Roger Silverstone, 'It is the place of television in the visible and hidden ordering of everyday life; in its spatial and temporal significance; in its embeddedness in quotidian patterns and habits, as a contributor to our security' (1994: 20). Television broadcasting is a taken for granted aspect of everyday life. This 'taken for grantedness' is heightened when a channel like BBC Three is primarily perceived as a 'flicking channel'. As a flicking channel, the ontological security it provides

audiences is well embedded in the patterns and habits of its audiences' evening wind-down traditions, which are taken for granted due to their mundanity and everydayness. The online BBC Three disrupted these quotidian patterns as it lacked a curated television schedule that produced such everydayness. In deflecting away from the lack of BBC Three's everydayness, the BBC branded the new BBC Three's identity by elevating the value of the 'everywhereness' offered by being online.

Branding as a source of ontological security

The primary function of branding is relationship management. Branding is an integral part of the communicative ethos of television channels. The strength of a channel's identity is ever more important within the digital and online world that is characterised by the proliferation of channels and platforms that fight for audience attention, including the 16-34 demographic (Woods, 2016: 31). In 2008, Brett Christophers argued that the television industries are shifting from a 'distribution economy' (Goldhaber, 1997) to an 'attention economy' (Davenport and Beck, 2001) where 'the power of the analogue terrestrial channels is now located less in their ability to reach an audience (power based on distribution scarcity) than in their ability to originate and maintain an audience (power driven by attention scarcity)' (Christophers, 2008: 248). The BBC adopted branding as an audience management strategy in the late 1980s to respond to changes within the UK broadcasting landscape that saw the introduction of satellite/cable services and the need to communicate its value to audiences and the government.

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, in response to threats against public service broadcasting's role within the evolving media landscape, which causes ontological insecurity, the BBC developed adverts such as *What has the BBC ever given us?* (1986) and since the 80s has also made adverts like *Perfect Day* (1997), and *This Is Our BBC* (2022). Like with marketing, branding also serves as an opportunity to prevent ontological insecurity. In 2016, BBC Three turned to branding to manage its ontological insecurity, driven by a struggle to find its identity in the online television market. Whilst the BBC Three rebrand is not as explicit in response to current public service broadcasting threats as the abovementioned adverts, it illustrates BBC Three's struggle to secure itself in the online television landscape.

Branding attempts to shape, control and manage the values users or audiences attribute to products and services and is the means through which products communicate their use (Johnson, 2012). With the BBC Three rebrand, the BBC sought to shape the values that its audience may attribute to it in this new online environment. However, as Catherine Johnson argues, branding is an unequal interaction between the consumer and producer. For branding to be successful, the consumer must accept the symbolic dimensions of the product (2012: 4). As such, branding must be 'a close "fit" between the consumer's own physical and psychological needs and the brand's functional attributes and symbolic values' (Hankinson and Cowking, 1993: 10). These symbolic dimensions of the product are related to its 'sign value' (Baudrillard, 1981), which Göran Bolin summarises as the 'production of difference, for example, social difference' (Bolin, 2011: 43). He states that it is 'the value that produces

difference when realised in consumption. In the process of realisation, one and the same object can be consumed differently by different consumers' (ibid: 74). As such, branding is the industrial strategy used to differentiate a product or service from one another.

When branding and marketing are successful, and consumers buy, watch, listen to or participate in the product or service being marketed, this can contribute to a common social currency within everyday life. This common currency contributes to ontological security by enabling people to have a stable sense of belonging and connection to others who also bought, watched, and listened to the product or service. This points to Elizabeth Evans' argument, which borrows from Ellen Seiter's concept of *lingua franca* (1999), that television has the ability to 'create shared cultural codes whilst broadcasting institutions take a central social and cultural role in structuring those shared codes through the programmes they commission, produce and broadcast' (Evans, 2011: 170). This *lingua franca,* as termed by Seiter, refers to the common language television can create and its 'central role as common currency' (1999: 116). In this way, if successful, BBC Three's branding can help BBC Three programmes become social currency and thus provide ontological security to its audiences. It also shows the importance of BBC Three's role in communicating this social currency.

In the case of BBC Three's online move, the BBC re-branded the channel in 2016 to differentiate itself in the online landscape. For BBC Three, branding was vital in the online landscape, which, as mentioned earlier, was often

framed as providing audiences with unlimited choice. It has been argued that in markets with increased competition, the sign value which is communicated through branding seems to take over the use value, i.e., its functional attributes, to the point where the sign value itself becomes the most important part of audience consumption (Bolin, 2011: 122–123; Baudrillard, 1996: 229ff). I argue, however, that this takeover can only happen if an object or service, e.g., BBC Three, has confidence in its function. If it doesn't, then branding and marketing fail. This section of the chapter uses BBC Three's 2016 channel rebrand as a case study to explore how the BBC's emphasis on the use value of BBC Three rather than its sign value illustrates the BBC's lack of confidence in its position in the online-only world, thus, failing to produce social currency and provide ontological security to its audience. If the function of broadcast television, as argued in this thesis, is to sustain ontological security, then branding becomes a critical component of how ontological security is communicated to audiences.

The 2016 BBC Three Rebrand

On January 4th, 2016, the BBC unveiled BBC Three's new brand identity, ahead of the Channel's planned online move the following month. The new 'Tricon' logo and idents saw the number 3 envisioned in the Roman numerals style and boxed in a pink-filled square. The last numeral is presented as an exclamation point, and the letters of BBC are placed on top of each of the three numerals (see Figure 5). The logo launched alongside a host of idents and animations. At the time, Niki Carr, Head of Marketing for BBC Three, stated on the BBC blog that 'This visual identity will underpin what we do in the

future' and that the most striking element is that the logo does not say three (Carr, 2016). In the blog, Carr emphasised how easy it can be to belittle a logo's importance in supporting a brand and that the BBC wanted 'to be bold and create something that looks forward and will be around for years to come' (ibid). Ironically, one year later, BBC Three's brand identity was refreshed, as will be discussed later. This 2016 brand identity was the third rebrand in BBC Three's history and echoed the rebrand from BBC Choice to BBC Three in 2003.

Figure 5 – The 2016 BBC Three Logo

In 2003, BBC Three took over from BBC Choice (1998-2003), the first British TV channel to be broadcast in a digital format and was the BBC's dedicated entertainment channel. Previously, the BBC Choice idents often depicted three objects that had been brought to life through animation. These objects all had the same word but appeared in different forms. For example, in the *mouse* ident, we see a furry mouse, a computer mouse and a clockwork mouse (see Figure 6). In the *fan* ident, we see a hand fan, a football fan, and an electric fan (see Figure 7). These idents later developed into the *boxes i*dent, depicted by three orange boxes that move and jump around (see Figure 8). I take the BBC's repetition of the three objects across the channel's branding throughout its years to represent the three pillars of the BBC's mission (to inform, to educate,

to entertain). The animation of these objects is used to reinforce the entertainment aspect of the BBC. It illustrates how the BBC can offer audiences extended choices within the highly competitive multichannel market through BBC Choice. This was further emphasised in the opening sequence during the launch of the channel and the first programme for BBC Choice titled *Choose Choice* (BBC Choice, 1998), presented by Clive Anderson.

Figure 6 – The 1998 BBC Choice Mouses Ident

Figure 7 – The 1998 BBC Choice Fans Ident

Figure 8 – The 1998 BBC Choice Boxes Ident

In the context of BBC Choice and its entertainment remit, the BBC used branding to reinforce the BBC's changed attitude to entertainment, which the BBC, as it did in the 80s with its light entertainment programmes, 'had to come to terms with its popular audience' and growing commercial competition (Frith, 1993). These BBC choice indents reaffirm the importance of entertainment within the wider BBC's mission to inform, educate and entertain and signal the BBC's digital innovation within the television landscape and its ability to provide audience choice. In a television era 'characterised by deregulation, multimedia conglomeration, expansion and increased competition' (Johnson, 2007: 5), this focus on the functional aspect of BBC Choice as a place for entertainment and media choice illustrates the BBC's attempt to preserve its ontological security through its public service broadcasting mission to inform, educate and entertain.

The 2016 BBC Three rebrand echoes the assertion of the functional aspects of the brand in a similar way to the BBC Choice idents. The rebrand, which happened the month before the channel moved online, saw a return to the square logo like the one the channel launched with in 2003. The square shape of the logo enabled BBC Three to better equip itself to sit within the aesthetics of the user interface of a smart TV and app icon due to reflecting interface design box models that use boxes as visual cues to guide users across the platform with ease, thus signalling BBC Three's fitness for its move online.

One of the idents created featured a tablet and headphones (see Figure 9), again suggesting how audiences would now interact with BBC Three online. Not including the word 'three' in this new brand identity suggested confidence in the brand's existence online. Carr specifically calls out BBC Three needing 'a whole new system that fits the digital world, not something analogue just shoehorned into it' (Carr, 2016). Referring to social media platform Snapchat as an example to justify why the new BBC Three logo no longer needed to include 'three', she said, 'We needed to develop something that worked on a TV screen and as an app icon. Look at Snapchat. They're doing okay without having Snapchat in their logo'(ibid). This reference to Snapchat implies how BBC Three sought to position its brand identity alongside social media platforms and tie its value to the behaviours and habits of its target audience, who at the time, according to Ofcom, were spending 2hrs and 26 minutes a day on social media (Ofcom, 2016). This confidence echoes the BBC's initial arguments in its proposal to move BBC Three online, where it stated that BBC Three needed to be 'of the digital world' and not just in it (BBC, 2015: 23). The need for BBC Three to be 'of the digital world', extended to its multiplatform content strategy where it allocated 20% of its budget to new forms of digital content such as short-form videos and blog posts (Kavanagh, 2014). This content comprised most of the BBC Three website homepage content, initially under the 'Best of three' heading and 'Daily Drop' pages and focused on two elements of BBC Three's new content strategy: Make Me Laugh, Make Me Think and Give Me A Voice that lay at the heart of the design brief for the channel's new brand identity.

Figure 9 – The 2016 BBC Three idents

The creation of the new BBC Three icon logo was framed to represent BBC Three's new content strategy, make me think, laugh, and give me a voice (Carr, 2016). According to Red Bee Creative, the creative agency leading the rebrand, the BBC briefed them to bring this strategy to life in a way 'that would allow the brand to exist across a multitude of platforms and devices rather than simply on a television channel' (Red Bee Creative, 2016). Furthermore, by tapping into the psychological needs of the target audience through moods and emotions, the rebrand and content strategy suggested how audiences should approach BBC Three and how the channel intended to be the voice of young people in its new online incarnation.

Make Me Laugh and Make Me Think referred to comedy and factual content that the BBC perceived as BBC Three's core genres. This is illustrated in Tony Hall's announcement of BBC Three's closure in an email to staff:

> Let me just say to Zai and the BBC Three team: you produce, and will continue to produce, amazing programmes – bringing new ideas, new stories and new talent to our screens. BBC Three has an extraordinary

> track record – it's been home to *Gavin & Stacey*, *Little Britain*, *Bad Education* and, right now, *Bluestone 42*. I've also been seriously impressed by the current affairs I've seen – from *Blood, Sweat And T-Shirts* and *Our War*, to Reggie Yates's outstanding reports from South Africa, ending just this week.
>
> (Hall qt in BBC Media Centre, 2014a)

Hall specifically references comedy titles and factual content when describing the success of BBC Three prior to its online move, suggesting that these are the two genres that BBC Three feels more confident in and thus key for BBC Three's online transition. As such, the new BBC logo, which the BBC says specifically represents the new strategy and these genres, highlights the BBC's attempt to express its confidence in its transition to the online world. However, this strategic representation through the logo was made implicitly. This implicit representation suggests that the connection to the strengths of the BBC's content strategy served to communicate its confidence internally and industrially rather than explicitly to its intended audience.

The idents provided a more explicit representation of BBC Three's future; however, incorporating a tablet and headphones in the ident focused on the functional attributes of BBC Three, i.e., to be watched digitally online and not broadcasted via a channel on a TV set. As such, the branding of BBC Three through its idents and logo are stuck with communicating the functional difference of BBC Three rather than its social difference that makes audiences

laugh, think and gives them a voice. This suggests that the BBC is stuck within a distribution economy mindset focused on its ability to reach audiences rather than an attention economy mindset focused on retaining audiences. Todreas argues that 'well-liked brands can give consumers trust and confidence in products' (1999: 173) and that branding, in the digital, would play an important role 'as a means of helping viewers find content that they wanted to watch in a more crowded and fragmented media landscape' (Johnson, 2012: 45). Whilst the 2016 BBC Three idents served to communicate how audiences would be able to access BBC Three content, they did little to communicate how BBC Three wanted to make them feel when they got there.

In addition to the idents and new logo, before the channel's launch, BBC Three created brand films that also attempted to convey a new BBC Three identity that was confident despite entering a new unknown space. One of the films titled, 'Chabuddy G Explains BBC Three Moving to the Interwebs' acts similarly to the idents in helping its audience understand how to navigate the BBC Three brand in the online-only world. Utilising the popularity of its comedy mockumentary series *People Just Do Nothing*, and the show's Chabuddy G character, the 60-second film opens with Chabuddy G explicitly stating that BBC Three is not closing but moving online. Next, we see Chabuddy G doing a Q&A with familiar BBC Three talent Romesh Ranganathan and Stacey Dooley to answer BBC Three's audience's questions about the channel's move. They ask, 'How can I get BBC Three?' and 'Are BBC Three going to be doing some new stuff?'. Both questions relay how audiences can access the new BBC Three and emphasise the new

multiplatform content strategy, which sees both long-form and short-form content. Towards the film's end, we see Chabuddy G fixing an 'Open 24hrs' neon sign outside his Dial-up internet café where he conducted the Q&As. This scene nods to the BBC Three linear channel's restricted post 7 pm broadcast schedule and how, in its new iteration, it is available 24/7. The film further illustrates how the priority for the BBC Three rebrand was about communicating how to find BBC Three, with the final scene suggesting BBC Three's freedom in the online world that is not restricted to its limited broadcasting hours.

BBC Three also released a countdown trailer to the channel's move online, titled 'Let's Go There'. The film attempts to show that this new BBC Three had overcome earlier struggles in its brand history by balancing public service commitments with popular content that attracted youth audiences, as explored earlier. BBC Three explicitly calls this out in the opening sequence of the film by using an archive clip from a 2007 *Newsnight* (BBC Two, 1980-) interview, where Jeremy Paxman asks former BBC Chairman Michael Lyons about the quality of BBC Three's programming, 'Are these the sort of programmes that the BBC should be making?'[15] The 'Let's Go There' trailer rejects such claims. In the scene that follows the Paxman clip, the film uses Chabuddy G to respond to Paxman's question, to which he says, 'Yeah, course it is, Paxo'. Throughout the trailer, the phrases; Let's provoke, Let's Ask Questions, Let's

[15] In the 2007 interview, Paxman explicitly uses BBC Three factual entertainment programmes such as; *Help Me Anthea, I'm Infested (BBC Three, 2007); My Man Boobs and Me (BBC Three, 2007)*; *My Dog Is As Fat As Me (BBC Three, 2007)*; *Freaky Eaters (BBC Three, 2007-2009)* and *Fat Men Can't Hunt (BBC Three, 2007),* as examples to suggest the perceived lack of quality and public value of BBC Three programmes.

get a reaction and Let's Go all the way are interspersed between a variety of clips from BBC Three programmes with 'Let's Provoke' presented just before the Paxman and Chabuddy G clips and the 'Let's ask questions' following shortly after.

By using a character from one of its popular comedy titles, the BBC attempts to subvert old criticisms that were often aimed at the suitability of BBC Three comedy programmes. As explored earlier, during BBC Three's first few years, it was often criticised for being too reliant upon BBC1 hit programme repeats such as *EastEnders* and sensationalist 'celebrity, relationship, and lifestyle programming that 'veer[ed] into competitor territory' (Broadcast, 2004). Criticism came from politicians and legacy BBC broadcasting talents like John Humpherys and Jeremy Paxman (Rushton, 2010; Woods, 2016). In her book *British Youth Television*, Faye Woods maps the history of BBC Three and argues that the channel has always been engaged in a complicated dance between 'drawing the attention of youth audiences to public service broadcasting whilst negotiating the role of entertainment in its output' (2016: 48). As mentioned earlier, when BBC Three first launched, its approval was on the requirement that it offered 'the news, current affairs, arts, documentary and regional drama that were absent from its advertising-driven 16–34 competitor channels due to their expense and perceived low audience return' (ibid: 49). As such, BBC Three 'lacked audience-drawing content on which to build its schedules' (ibid), illustrating its 'struggle to balance its public service commitments with content attractive to youth audiences' (ibid: 50).

In the ‘Let’s Go There’ advert, Chabuddy G represents a new and bold BBC Three that does not cower down to old criticism about its identity, represented by Jeremy Paxman, or lets it limit its creativity. Here, BBC Three does not need to rely upon programme repeats like it once did but can succeed through its original characters rather than those created on BBC One programmes like *EastEnders*. The brand campaign attempts to show a new BBC Three identity that is not conflicted or no longer involved in a ‘complicated dance’ with the Reithian mission to inform, educate and entertain, as I alluded to earlier in the case of BBC Choice, but is firm and confident with its content strategy and programming.

The ‘Let’s Go There’ and ‘Chabuddy G Explains BBC Three Moving to the Interwebs’ brand films illustrate how BBC Three sought to manage its audience before its online launch. The new BBC Three brand identity not only functioned to showcase a reinvented, differentiated, and fresh BBC Three but had to function as a coping mechanism to manage and curtail audience uncertainties about its new position within the online digital world. As argued by Johnson, ‘brands don’t just function as forms of product differentiation; they also function as an interface to manage the interactions with products and services’ (2019: 49). The new logo, idents, and pre-launch brand films had to operate on two levels. First, they sought to communicate a sense of freedom from broadcasting tensions, notably between providing popular content that draws in youth audiences and adhering to the public service market ideology of providing content not offered by the commercial market, such as news, current

affairs, and documentaries. Second, the BBC Three brand needed to manage how its audience would now interact with the brand.

These two operations illustrate Celia Lury's argument that brands function as an interface of the dynamic set of communications between producers and consumers (2004: 40). Building on Herbert Simon's discussion that artefacts can be thought of as a meeting point 'between an "inner" environment, the substance and organisation of the artefact itself, and an "outer" environment, the surroundings in which it operates' (2019: 9), Lury suggests that brands can be thought of as an interface that organises 'inner environment of production, while consumption or everyday life is constituted in this process as the outer environment' (2004: 41). Brands then operate as the 'meeting point or interface for the communication of information between "producers" and "consumers"' (ibid). Taking Lury's understanding of the interface of brands being the communicative meeting point between inner and outer environments, the pre-launch brand films and re-branded logos and idents operated as BBC Three's audience's meeting point between the internal organisational and historical identity of the channel and the outer identity it wanted to frame itself in, in the new online digital surroundings that it was due to face. This frame worked to distance BBC Three from the perceived restrictions of broadcasting and Reithian ideologies that favoured information and education over entertainment while expressing confidence in managing youth audiences in its forthcoming re-imagination.

The idents, logo and marketing interfaces of the BBC Three brand sought to act as a coping mechanism and communicative boundary that mediated past and future identities. The above examples show how the BBC intended to frame BBC Three's new identity before its launch by pre-empting any notions of strife in its new environment and explicitly shutting them down in the brand's design and marketing messaging. This led BBC Three to prioritise communicating its function rather than communicating BBC Three's sign value, which, as outlined earlier, creates social currency. BBC Three's ontological security was prioritised over the channel's opportunity to create social currency through its Make Me Laugh, Make Me Think and Give Me A Voice content strategy. The 2016 BBC Three rebrand aimed to protect the brand from the ontological insecurities caused by its uncertain and unstable identity in the online media landscape it was about to join. Throughout its online existence, BBC Three struggled to find confidence in its identity as an online brand, eventually resulting in the channel returning as a broadcast channel in 2022. Next, I will explore how BBC Three's brand identity refreshments illustrate its continued struggle to find its online identity.

The 2017 BBC Three Brand Refresh

In 2017, just one year after the channel moved online and introduced its new logo, another creative agency, Studio Output, refreshed the brand identity by adding a bright secondary colour palette to BBC Three's existing pink and simplified the Tricon logo (the three roman numeral style bars). The creative agency's design director Johanna Drewe described the new logo brand refresh as '"freeing" it from its pink block background', allowing it to be used in a

‘fun, creative way’. Using breaking news as an example, Drewe stated that ‘you need to be able to make animated gifs and illustrations really quickly’ and that the new refresh enables the BBC Three identity to ‘constantly evolve and be fresh and exciting’ (Drewe qt in Dawood, 2017). As of 2016, BBC Three now had to compete with online digital brands even more strongly, such as Vice and Buzzfeed, in addition to digital British Youth TV channels E4 and ITV2. Drewe’s sentiments about animated gifs and illustrations suggest that the BBC brand needed to work in the spreadable media economy (Henry Jenkins et al., 2013), which uses shares, likes, retweets, and views as success metrics and where the social platforms of YouTube, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook and now TikTok ‘have ascended as powerful spaces for sharing news and media content’ (Woods, 2017: 143). Whereas social media formed a part of the channel’s marketing strategy and primarily operated as a promotional paratext pre-2016, when it moved online, it now worked as a medium for BBC Three to develop short-form original content. The BBC firmly situated social media in the channel’s content strategy with 20% of BBC Three’s commissioning budget.

The 2017 brand refresh portrayed BBC Three as freed from the confines of broadcasting and living across many platforms. Whilst the branding of consumer goods was used to construct social identities, relationships, and cultures, such as to ‘keep up with the Joneses’ in the 1950s and 60s (Johnson, 2012: 3), in 2017, BBC Three was framed as now needing to keep up with the Vices, BuzzFeed’s and Netflix’s and its audience now had to keep up and follow the brand across its multiple platforms. Studio Output created BBC

Three's new design framework (see Figure 10) and 'guidelines for the existing brand typeface, layout and framing to help BBC Three become distinctive in its content' (Fulleylove, 2017). They described the updated channel Tricon logo as liberating BBC Three from the BBC Blocks (ibid). This sense of liberation echoes the former BBC Director of TV's statement in December 2014 that BBC Three would 'have the freedom to break traditional shackles and allow the BBC to be a leader in digital change' (BBC Media Centre, 2014a). The notion of freedom reflects arguments made earlier in this chapter and in chapter 2 about how the BBC frames online media as a limitless space that enables agency. This framing of the new BBC Three logo as being liberated by the standard BBC Blocks suggests that BBC Three's new brand identity sought to distance itself from the confines of broadcasting, such as its restricted scheduling hours. The narrative created by Studio Output about the BBC Three brand refresh illustrates Catherine Johnson's argument that 'the interface of the brand is not simply constructed through the creative activities of brand managers, marketers, designers, and executives but also through other forms of communication' (2012: 20) such as how such managers, marketers and designers talk about the brand in the press.

Figure 10 – Studio Output's brand guidelines for BBC Three

This new online-only identity of BBC Three is framed as being distinct from its previous identity as a broadcast channel after years of being 'built on the back of audience-drawing repeats of, and companion programming for, its parent channel's hit programmes' (Woods, 2016: 28). This new liberated logo attempted to suggest a 'platform neutral' (Woods, 2017: 140) BBC Three. Unlike the 2016 rebrand that communicated the functional attributes of BBC Three and worked hard to fit itself in the online digital world both through its square design, which presented an 'app-like' aesthetic and the idents that specifically feature headphones and tablets, this 2017 rebrand did not explicitly showcase BBC Three's functional attributes, highlighting a new chapter in the brand's online identity. This freedom suggests that the BBC potentially began gaining a sense of ontological security about BBC Three.

Studio Output described the BBC Three logo's newfound freedom as the 'distinctive elements' that 'help BBC Three to gain attribution for its fantastic

content' (qt in McCarthy, 2017). The variation of colours and the removal of the pink block background allow the brand to fit into new environments and not be stuck as an icon on the edges of screens, which we often see in broadcasting. In this new form, the brand can be layered on top of content, as seen in the bottom right image in Figure 10, without blocking out the content it aims to connect to. This reference to distinctiveness and attribution implies a different struggle with the BBC Three brand concerned with how it stands out in its new environment and is recognisable to audiences. Previously, the challenge of the 2016 rebrand was about helping audiences navigate the transition to online. The 2017 rebrand, however, seems to highlight a core issue for BBC Three – brand attribution.

Several current and ex-BBC staff identified brand attribution as a key challenge for the BBC within the online media landscape and when connecting with young audiences. For example, an Ex-BBC Research Manager said:

> If you put your content out in third-party spaces, and people don't know what's from the BBC, that's really, really challenging for the BBC to then have to prove that the audience find it [the content] really valuable. So, I think that will always be a challenge for the BBC because, on the one hand, you know that the attribution is going to be higher on your own platforms. On the other hand, you know that given the choice of content that's out there, given the number of platforms that are available to consume content, and how young audiences particularly are consuming content, if you're not in the spaces that

> they're in, they may not ever find that content in the first place and know that it's available to them. So, I think that''s a kind of catch-22.
>
> (Ex-BBC Research Manager – Interview)

The issue of brand attribution in the online and social media landscape is not new, nor is it just a problem for BBC Three. Verspeek also speaks to this as being one of the BBC's most significant opportunities for the BBC to get right. He states that

> We [The BBC] still have to try to find a way to embrace those new ways of media consumption like iPlayer and use those platforms to still engage with the brand. But, make sure that people attribute it back to the BBC. Make sure that, however, you watch it like Is it on BBC One? Is it listening to Radio 3? Or is it via iPlayer? So make sure that people keep engaged with the fact that it is BBC, and by not focusing just on those big linear channels or stations, but also having the proper windows in place.
>
> (Jeroen Verspeek, Head of Audience Measurement, BBC – Interview)

He highlighted the BBC's current struggle with selling programmes to Netflix and how BBC content on Netflix 'doesn't get the recognition that the BBC needs'. In our interview, Jane Lingham, Director of BBC Brand, also discussed

this as ‘doing deals where we write out the need to have BBC branding on our crown jewels’. Using the example of how Netflix promoted *Peaky Blinders* (BBC Two, BBC One, 2013-2022) as a Netflix Original in the US, she speaks to the notion of the BBC being stuck between making decisions that maximise short-term benefits but are a hindrance in the long term. Talking about *Peaky Blinders*, she mentions the tensions between BBC Branding and the Consumer Rights and Business Affairs team that manages the licensing deals. From the perspective of the consumer rights team, she shared:

> We need to bring in money to be able to continue producing content. And the only way we can bring in more money is if we agree that we are going to take the BBC brand off when we sell it to Netflix. If we don’t sell it with the branding, they’ll give us more money.
>
> (Jane Lingham, Director of BBC Brand, BBC - Interview)

Referring to a branding perspective, she says

> But we say that they’ve got to include branding on it, which is the difference between a short-term and long-term view. Do you not understand that you are maximising short-term profits, but what are you doing to the brand over time?
>
> (Jane Lingham, Director of BBC Brand, BBC - Interview)

Lingham shared that whilst *Peaky Blinders* was not a recent example, for her, 'It's an ongoing process to sort out our strategy in terms of our licencing. So, for example, what level of exclusivity do we have on the BBC's own platforms versus selling content that we have commissioned to other platforms?'.

The Netflix example differs from BBC Three's new multi-platform content strategy as content is not being sold on social media. However, social media is being used as a medium to reach audiences. The Ex-BBC Research Manager also spoke about the BBC's inability to drive attribution to its content through social media while juggling its connection to youth audiences. They shared:

> I think the BBC does a good job of navigating how its content is distributed to ensure it still can measure attribution. However, if it were really about ensuring audiences get value from the BBC content, it would be more readily available across owned and third-party platforms. The issue is really about how you prove value. I think there should be a greater focus on '*all-time spent'* across all platforms as opposed to just owned platforms. To reach young audiences, the BBC needs to be in social spaces.
>
> (Ex-BBC Research Manager – Interview)

Lingham, Verspeek and the Ex-BBC research manager illustrate that the BBC has a broader 'complicated dance' with the new media ecosystem where it must demonstrate its 'crown jewels' but consider selling them or distributing

them at the expense of audiences not knowing that it belongs to the BBC. Lingham explicitly refers to the decisions being influenced by financial pressures, forcing the BBC to favour short-term profits over long-term benefits, echoing the corporation's decision to move BBC Three online. This complicated dance shows how branding is an audience management technique and ontological security coping mechanism for the entire BBC to maintain its identity in the current online media landscape. It shows how in attempting to reach a new and younger audience, the BBC sometimes has to compromise its branding to create and retain new audiences in the current online media landscape.

This notion that the BBC is good at distributing its content but lacks the ability to attribute value back to its content reflects the argument made earlier in the chapter and by Christophers (2008) that proposes the BBC as having a distribution economy mindset that is focused on reaching audiences, as that is where it dominated in the past. It cannot transition to an audience economy mindset focused on creating and keeping new audiences. An Ex-BBC Radio Manager reflected on the BBC's difficulty in reaching and retaining an audience within the new media space characterised by what they called 'greater plurality'. Speaking about the market challenges faced by BBC Radio 1Xtra, the BBC's digital radio station aimed at Black audiences, they mentioned that 'one of the key challenges was definitely around amplifying our content' and how the BBC and IXtra are 'in a marketplace where it's increasingly difficult to cut through, even with great pieces of content'. They went on to say that:

> We rely heavily on organic growth. And quite often, organic reach can get you there. But a lot of time, it doesn't. And we're up against significantly more focused platforms in the marketplace, who are constantly investing in digital marketing spend, significant digital market marketing spend, to cut through. And a greater plurality in the marketplace means that we probably need to work harder to make sure our content reaches the right eyes and ears. And I think that's, that's an ongoing challenge.
>
> (EX-BBC Radio Manager – Interview)

As argued earlier, due to increased competition within the marketplace, the BBC, which previously dominated in a landscape where power was based on distribution scarcity, now has to turn to other means to 'cut through' and 'work harder' to connect with audiences. Previously, the BBC, due to its dominance and historical industrial monopoly, could rely upon organic reach at a time when distribution was scarce. Within the attention economy, audience attention is scarce; thus, the BBC needs to expand its marketing and branding beyond its walls.

Lingham stated, however, that the BBC's organic growth over the years has caused issues for its marketing and branding.

> The BBC is a really big organisation. It's been developed organically, and it's grown organically over time. So when it comes to things like our marketing and our branding, the BBC's portfolio was never designed as a portfolio. If you think about the TV channels, the brands with our TV channels were designed independently of the radio channels, the radio stations, they were designed independently of iPlayer, then you've got all the kids to educate. So basically, within the BBC, it's kind of a bit like a federated organisation. You've got lots of different pockets within the BBC that have all been sort of fairly autonomous because of the way that the organisation and the infrastructure have developed. That means that from a marketing and branding point of view, we currently have a really young, cohesive system, and that shows.
>
> (Jane Lingham, Director of BBC Brand, BBC - Interview)

Lingham went on to add that although 'our strength is in the BBC portfolio' and 'how the connectedness of our content and the ability to consume around a topic on multiple platforms is the strength of the BBC'. However, how the BBC has built and designed its 'branding and navigation systems is not reflective of that'. Lingham states that this 'non-digitally native approach to marketing and branding' cannot navigate audiences across its brand and platforms, which affects audience perceptions of the BBC. Christophers (2008) argues that the number of digital channels like BBC Three and 1Xtra (in terms of digital radio) launched by the analogue terrestrial channel owners, like the

BBC, served as a way to compound the BBC's dominance in an unsettling landscape in the cable and satellite multichannel era. Christophers suggests that the most important factor in the success of these channels in their earlier years was 'extensive cross-promotion from the analogue terrestrial channels, sharing and clever cross-scheduling of marquee programming, and (perhaps most critically of all) privileged access to increasingly valuable Freeview real estate' (2008: 249). However, as identified in the interviews and by BBC Three's second rebrand, whilst the BBC may have the ability to cross-promote content, as will be shown later in the chapter, the value of the BBC's portfolio in the online media landscape can be hindered by its inability to digitally navigate its audiences across its real estate.

As an online-only channel, BBC Three no longer had the security and support of a broadcast channel to 'push' content to its audience. In the proposal for BBC Three's online move, the BBC positioned the new BBC Three 'as a test bed to help the BBC to prepare itself for the next wave of digital disruption, to learn how audiences react to new forms of content, to build a new relationship with younger audiences through the interplay of content and technology and to redefine public service broadcasting in the digital age' (BBC, 2015: 3). However, without the proper mechanisms that curate content and 'help viewers find the content they want to see' (Johnson, 2007: 45), the choice offered by the online digital media landscape is meaningless and speaks to the argument that 'there will be significant demand for mechanisms that "push" content to viewers, on the ground that, as media use is largely leisure time viewers do not want to work too hard or too long to find the content they want to watch'

(ibid). This illustrates that although young people may be free to 'pull' BBC Three content, BBC Three still needs to curate the content, guide audiences to that content, and make sure audiences attribute the value back to BBC Three.

In the 2017 iteration of the BBC Three brand, the BBC shifted away from the explicit communication of its functional use value towards a more subtle approach through design. This new design was framed as breaking free from the restraints of broadcasting and being flexible in its approach to capture the 'everywhereness' of the online world to connect with youth audiences. Catherine Johnson argues that the value of brands in the digital era 'is not just to be where the viewer is, but also where the viewer wants to be' (Johnson, 2012: 49) and the BBC Three brand refresh that sought to make BBC Three a 'platform neutral' brand highlights this attempt. However, a platform-neutral brand within the 'limitless' space of online media does not provide the same level of ontological security to audiences as broadcasting does. Even though audiences have the agency to watch what they want when they want, an online BBC Three does not offer audiences a sense of structure or stability to their media experiences as the broadcast channel did, neither does it enable BBC Three to secure its identity in this space, as the content it distributes may not be attributed back to the brand. This illustrates the problem of overshadowing broadcasting's 'everydayness' with online television's 'everywhereness'.

Unlimited choice does not equate to endless opportunities to provide ontological security. Instead, in the online media landscape, BBC Three requires mechanisms that filter content to help audiences digitally navigate the

freedom it offers. To prevent the risks of lost brand attribution and navigation, the BBC turned to the BBC Three website. In doing so, it leaned on a key broadcasting component, 'flow', to help mitigate these issues. However, as will be shown next, the various updates to the BBC Three website between 2016-2019 illustrate that the brand continued to struggle to communicate its content to its audience.

Remediating the broadcasting flow through the BBC Three Website

To mitigate against the ontological insecurity of moving into unknown and uncertain territory, the BBC Three brand drew on the established elements of broadcasting that its audience was already familiar with. Johnson argues that 'a strong brand militates against some of the financial risks of moving into such new areas by drawing on the values and consumer relations already established by the core brand' (2012: 95). As BBC Three moved into the online world, it now not only needed to continue reaching its audience but needed to retain them. In this new territory, BBC Three's power shifted from its ability to reach an audience to a struggle to keep its audience. It drew upon broadcasting techniques to retain its audience by reimagining the televisual linear flow through its 'daily drop' and 'best of' pages on the BBC Three website.

BBC Three needed new ways to 'package' the televisual experience to retain its audience during its online iteration. Within its previous broadcasting identity, BBC Three's televisual experience happened within the broadcasting flow. How BBC Three created and curated the broadcasting flow influenced how its audience experienced its programmes and valued the brand. As noted

earlier in this thesis and by Raymond Williams (2003 [1974]) and Paddy Scannell (1996), within broadcasting, people watch television and not programmes. Understanding the values of broadcast television means understanding the communicative ethos of the overall broadcasting televisual experience. Scannell (1996) argued that broadcasters learnt to align their behaviour to the time, place and viewing setting; however, this becomes much harder to do within the attention economy and for aspiring platform-neutral brands like BBC Three. In 2016, the then-controller of BBC Three, Damian Kavanagh, described the new BBC Three as 'the same award-winning programmes freed from the constraints of linear TV'. He stated that 'the shackles are off when it comes to creativity', with BBC Three being 'freed from the schedule [where] we can use whatever format and platform is most appropriate' (Kavanagh qt in Kamen, 2016).

Kavanagh echoes the earlier arguments about BBC Three's branding, which described the online world as offering freedom. He positions BBC Three as needing a new strategy for its 'freed identity' that aligned with its audience viewing behaviours within its new 'platform neutral' form. With no channel to curate the broadcast flow, BBC Three created a 'Best of' and 'Daily Drop' section on its website (see Figure 11). These pages sought to act as a remediated broadcast schedule. However, the attempted remediation of broadcasting flow through the BBC Three website exposes a contradiction with how the BBC frames BBC Three in the online world. The award-winning content is not freed from the constraints of linear TV schedules but longs for it as it is a necessary tool for structuring and curating this content.

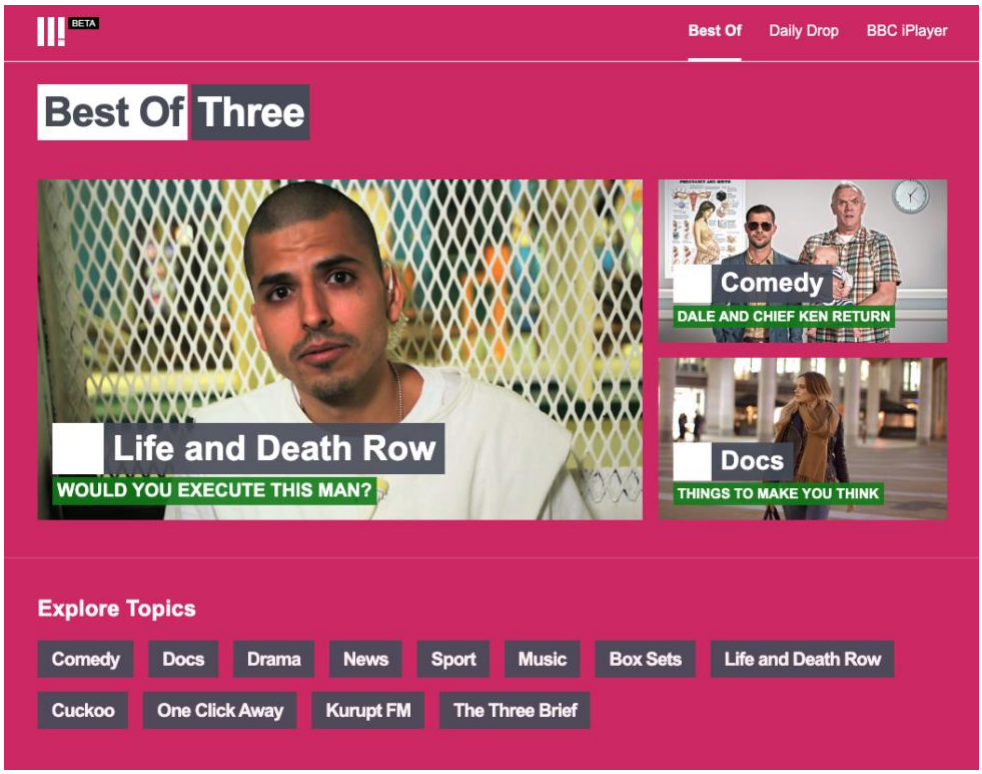


Figure 11 - The BBC Three website homepage in 2016

BBC Three understood the notion that 'the experience of watching television flows beyond the moment of initial broadcast' (Johnson, 2012: 116), stating in 2015 that 'it will be important to have a curated content offering that is refreshed frequently so that the new BBC Three is a dynamic and lively service rather than a static library of content' (BBC, 2015: 28). BBC Three sought to remediate the 'liveness' of the broadcasting flow through a daily stream of content updates on the 'Daily Drop' page of its website. The 'Daily Drop' and 'Best of' pages provided audiences with the channel's newly mixed programming of long and short-form content, including BBC news and BBC Sports articles, and was updated multiple times a day. The 'daily drop' and 'best of' webpages sought to recreate the serendipity and organisational flow

of broadcasting. BBC Three remediated its televisual experience from an organised temporal flow to a navigational database (Bennett, 2011). These pages attempted to shift BBC Three from being a push medium where the content was delivered to its viewers via its broadcast schedule to a pull medium where its intended audience needed to select the content they wished to watch from a range of its multi-platforms.

A lot of the content on the pages consisted of blogs that worked to 'attempt to retain the cheeky, comic, gossipy BBC Three 'voice' which had previously been constructed through the interstitial elements of continuity announcers, idents, and adverts.' (Woods, 2016: 246). However, this 'voice' soon disappeared. One year after launching, BBC Three opted for a more refined website with two pages: Home and 'Three on iPlayer'. This refined online space reflects the BBC's attempt to tidy up its online presence as outlined in its 2016 Online Creative Review, in which it said that 'while we must seek to offer a universal service to licence fee payers, the BBC cannot look to be all things to all people online. In a world of almost unlimited choice, we need to understand better how to focus our resources' (Tony Hall qt in BBC, 2016b: 3). The curated daily content stream disappeared from the website, with all long and short-form content now housed on the main homepage. Whilst websites are constantly updating and changing, the removal of the 'Daily Drop' page suggests that this remediation of the 'liveness' did not work in the intended way BBC Three hoped it would, likely because it failed to capture the social connectedness that liveness typically offers, as I explored in Chapter 2.

In the BBC's Creative Review, Tony Hall stated that

> This digital revolution has made us better informed, better able to communicate and more democratic. It is easy to find information but harder to know whether to trust it. It is easier to find small communities, but harder for the nation to speak to itself and to the world. It is easier to create, but it can be harder to find the financial support for high-quality creativity.
>
> (Tony Hall qt in BBC, 2016b: 3)

The removal of the two pages perhaps suggests how the remediation of liveness through these website pages doesn't allow the BBC to be at the centre of national conversations even though it may have served the small BBC Three audience. The BBC stated in its 2017/18 annual plan that if the trend of young people watching less television continues, then 'by the mid-2020s a significant minority of licence fee payers would no longer be a part of our shared national conversation, and might not be getting value to justify their licence fee either' (BBC Annual Plan, 2017: 5). This implies that one of the BBC's most important reasons for cleaning up its online presence, which impacted BBC Three, was about securing its role as the facilitator of a shared national conversation and thus its future ontological and financial security rather than catering to youth audiences. This illustrates how BBC Three gets caught in the middle of the broader BBC's more comprehensive attempt to secure itself in the evolving media landscape.

As a platform-neutral brand, BBC Three needed to 'manage the wide range of different service encounter[s] that [were] now available, ensuring in the "attention economy" that the value of the attention of the viewer to the corporation [was] not lost' (Johnson, 2012: 110). As such, when the channel moved to online only, whilst its short-form content could sit on social media and the BBC Three website, its longer-form content relied upon existing audience habits of turning to iPlayer to watch content, which at the time of BBC Three's online-only launch was receiving over 300 million requests[16] per month. However, as I will show next, the BBC Three brand struggled to negotiate its relationship with iPlayer throughout its online-only years. Whilst it drew upon the values and existing consumer relations already established by iPlayer, such values were built on the perception of iPlayer as a catch-up platform, which was already reliant upon broadcasting.

BBC iPlayer as a source of ontological security

When BBC iPlayer became the home of BBC Three in 2016, the discourse around its online reinvention was that this was the BBC's most significant strategic decision since the launch of iPlayer in 2007 (Woods, 2016: 54). The decision not only reinvented the channel from a strategic perspective but changed the whole BBC Three televisual experience for its audience. BBC Three content had already received millions of requests on BBC iPlayer before the channel moved online. According to BBC Audiences, BBC Three content

[16] Requests are one of the core metrics used by the BBC to measure how many times a show or episode of a show has been watched or listened to.

frequently featured in the top 20 most requested iPlayer episodes, particularly in 2013 and 2014 (BBC Audiences, 2013, 2014)[17]. For example, the drama *Murdered By My Boyfriend* was the most-watched show on iPlayer in June 2014, with 1.9m requests. Comedy - *Bad Education* Series 2 had over 2.1m requests, making it the top show on iPlayer in September 2013, and 5 out of 6 episodes of the comedy *Some Girls* featured in the top 20 iPlayer episodes in October 2013, with 4 of them receiving over 1.2m requests. Whilst these programmes were receiving millions of iPlayer requests, they also had the support of the BBC Three linear broadcasting channel, which organised and facilitated the BBC Three viewing experience through curating programming into an ordered temporal flow within the television schedule. In its new form, however, BBC Three on BBC iPlayer depended on its users knowing which specific content they wanted to watch. This new form emphasised BBC Three's shift from a push to pull medium, as mentioned above. Without the broadcast flow, which presented audiences with programmes and whose junctions between programmes served as a space for trailers to promote content, the BBC Three brand now had to work harder to reach its audiences whom it already framed as 'hard-to-reach' and make them aware of its content.

In its early days, as mentioned above, the BBC Three channel brand was built upon the foundation of its parent channel. BBC Three often utilised programme repeats, transmedia content, and spin-offs of BBC One hits to drive its audience to its original programming (Woods, 2016: 36), such as

[17] Prior to 2016, The BBC Audiences Team produced publicly available Monthly iPlayer Performance Packs, which showed how many requests the service received month on month in addition to a breakdown of the most requested programmes and episodes.

EastEnders (BBC One, 1985-) and spin-off series E20 (BBC Three, 2010-2011), and *Doctor Who*[18] (BBC One, 1963-1989/2005 - present), with *Torchwood* (BBC Three/BBC Two/BBC One, 2006-2011) and *Class* (BBC Three, 2016). With its position on BBC iPlayer, BBC Three also had to contend with BBC iPlayer's history, which for its first ten years was framed as a 'catch-up service'. In 2007, BBC iPlayer launched with the tagline 'Making the unmissable, unmissable', nodding to the on-demand service being the place where audiences could 'catch-up' on programmes they may have missed during its linear broadcast. However, in 2014, the BBC began to discursively construct a new identity for BBC iPlayer that sought to shift the iPlayer brand from being perceived as a catch-up service to an online streaming service.

Grainge and Johnson (2018) offer an insight into how the BBC discursively constructed an understanding of BBC iPlayer that aimed to shift the identity of iPlayer from a catch-up service to online TV in the 2010s. In March 2014, the same month that the BBC announced that the BBC Three broadcast channel was to close and be 'reinvented as a new and innovative online service' (BBC Media Centre, 2014a), the wider BBC also attempted to recalibrate its own identity with the launch of the 'new iPlayer' in 2014 (Grainge and Johnson, 2018). On 11th March 2014, a few days after announcing BBC Three's online-only move, the BBC launched an upgraded iPlayer (BBC Media Centre, 2014b), which Hall had previously positioned as the new 'front door' to the BBC (Hall qt in BBC Media Centre, 2013; Grainge, 2017), where people

[18] BBC also did something similar with CBBC with the creation of The Sarah Jane Adventures (CBBC, 2007-2011, BBC One, 2010-2011)

started their viewing journey rather than a place to catch up on missed broadcast content (Grainge and Johnson, 2018: 12). This positioning of iPlayer as the front door reflects the broader identity issues faced by the BBC at a time where it intended on shifting its identity from public service broadcaster to public service media. The problem for BBC Three was that such a shift took place simultaneously as the BBC as a whole was also about to embark on its own identity change, and shows how the ontological security of the BBC as a whole is privileged over that of BBC Three and the niche 16-34 audience it serves.

Grainge and Johnson argue that the BBC used iPlayer as a 'site for navigating what it means to be a public service broadcaster in a digital world.' (2018: 2). As the BBC was experiencing this identity crisis, it leaned into the 'successes' of iPlayer, which, at the time, had over 10 billion programme requests since launching in 2007 and in January 2014 had 315 million requests - averaging over 10 million requests a day (BBC YouTube Channel, 2014). The goal for BBC iPlayer, as was with its competitors' BVOD services like ITV Player and 4OD, which both at a similar time relaunched as ITV Hub and All 4, was to be an integrated hybrid destination that was 'characterized by the flow of programmes in a broadcast schedule, and digital technologies where programmes exist as discrete files that can be selected by the viewer' (Grainge and Johnson, 2018: 2). This enhanced iPlayer aimed to make it 'easier to find something to watch, helping you quickly and easily find the programmes you know you're looking for and, crucially, helping you discover something new' (BBC qt in ibid: 3), which is essential for providing ontological security to

audiences. Analysts also described the new iPlayer as ensuring that ‘the BBC's own offering stands out from the crowd’ and provides a simpler ‘user experience to discover and access its content’ (BBC News, 2014). This notion of a simpler user interface and ease of content discovery implies a previous sense of clunkiness. It conveys the complex nature of the online televisual experience, which I’ve argued requires helping to guide audiences through. It also reflects the BBC’s attempt to clean up how it digitally presents itself to audiences.

As Daniel Chamberlain argued, interfaces are scripted spaces designed and constructed to move us through specific paths that control and shape our interactions. In the digital world, he suggests that the television interface is the gateway to our individualised content desires and viewing behaviours that subtly create a sense of agency through customisation and control (2010: 85, 2011: 251). JP Kelly argues that as a scripted space, interfaces design a narrative that often encourages the achievement of specific economic goals through moving people in a way that maximises profit (2021: 267), for example, putting the content that organisations have spent a large proportion of their production budget or marketing spend on the first page of the streaming platform to encourage users to watch. Also, using Chamberlain's notion of a ‘scripted space’, Johnson understands VoD interfaces as a space ‘in which the logics of broadcasting meet the possibilities of programming, software and algorithms in ways that shape and construct the experience of TV online’ (2017: 123). Understanding the implications of these scripted spaces is essential; as argued by James Ash, they operate as the site of new economies

and forms of power (2015: 4). As a new form of power, they play a fundamental role in communicating ontological security within the online television landscape. For the BBC, positioning iPlayer as its 'front door' meant that 'scripting' the iPlayer interface became a more powerful aspect of its identity and for communicating its value within the online streaming landscape.

BBC Three, however, gets tangled in the process of BBC iPlayer becoming 'the BBC's testing ground for what it means to be a digital broadcaster in a hybrid world where linear legacies continued to be resilient but where the promise of online television had increasingly taken hold' (Grainge and Johnson, 2018: 12). BBC Three transitioned to an online only service just when the BBC attempted to rebrand the whole BBC as an online first destination, where iPlayer became the front door. The BBC mistakenly latched BBC Three's identity to BBC iPlayer as it moved online. The wider BBC's new online identity, such as positioning iPlayer as the BBC's front door, took priority over BBC Three's brand position as an online-only destination for British youth audiences. The iPlayer scripting prioritisation caused tension between the positioning of the BBC Three brand as an online-only destination for British youth and the iPlayer brand as the 'front door' to the BBC. How BBC Three communicated its brand on its website illustrates this tension. I now want to explore how the BBC expressed its relationship with BBC Three and iPlayer and the BBC's de-branding strategy on iPlayer, which also contributed to BBC Three's entanglement within the wider BBC organisational goals.

Communicating the BBC Three and iPlayer relationship

From 2016-2019, the BBC Three website tested various ways of communicating the relationship between BBC Three and the iPlayer brand, further highlighting its difficulties with finding its new online-only brand identity. BBC Three went through several iterations of communicating its relationship with iPlayer to its audience via its website. Launching in 2016 with a 'BBC iPlayer' page link on the website menu, this changed to 'Three on iPlayer' in 2017 (see Figure 12). BBC Three eventually removed this from the website, opting for a category-defined menu, categorising content under Genres, Styles or Topics (see Figure 13). Furthermore, the call-to-action copy, which it overlays on top of the thumbnail images of its content on the website, also changed from 'Watch now on iPlayer' to 'Watch now on BBC Three iPlayer' (see Figure 14).

When BBC Three launched as an online-only channel, it linked its content to BBC iPlayer with little effort to cast its own identity within the platform other than via its pre-existing page on iPlayer. It pointed audiences to watch BBC Three content on iPlayer rather than on the BBC Three space on iPlayer. This further illustrates the BBC's lack of confidence in this online landscape, which prioritised communicating the functional difference of BBC Three's online transition, i.e., that it is now available to watch on iPlayer, coinciding with the BBC Three 2016 rebrand explored earlier. The changes made to the website menu in 2017 with 'Three on iPlayer' and the 'Watch now on BBC Three iPlayer' call-to-action emphasise the newfound confidence of the brand in the

digital space, which aligns with the BBC Three 2017 brand refresh as explored earlier. However, as discussed earlier, audiences needed help discovering BBC Three content. Thus, its category-defined menu attempts to help audiences find the content they want. These brief examples (see figures 12, 13 and 14) illustrate BBC Three's challenges of negotiating and understanding its new online-only identity and its relationship with iPlayer.

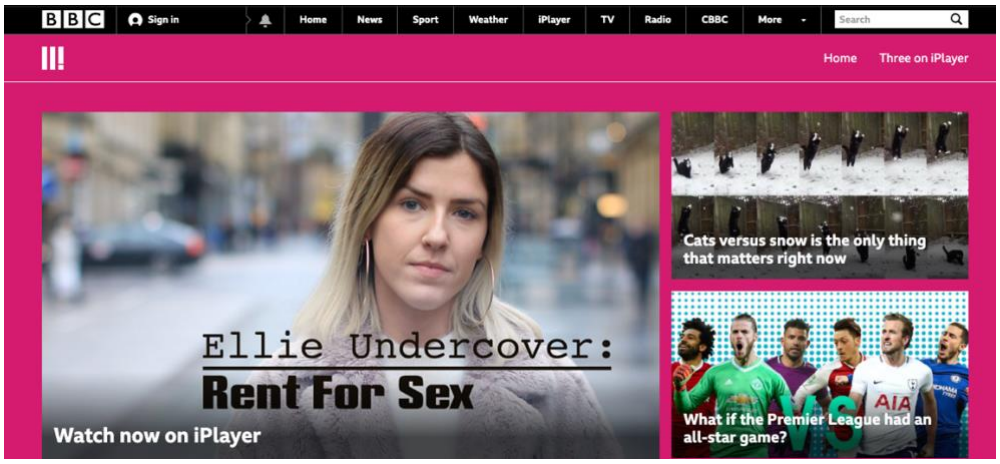


Figure 12 – The BBC Three Website in 2017 with the 'Three on iPlayer' menu label and 'Watch now on iPlayer' call to action

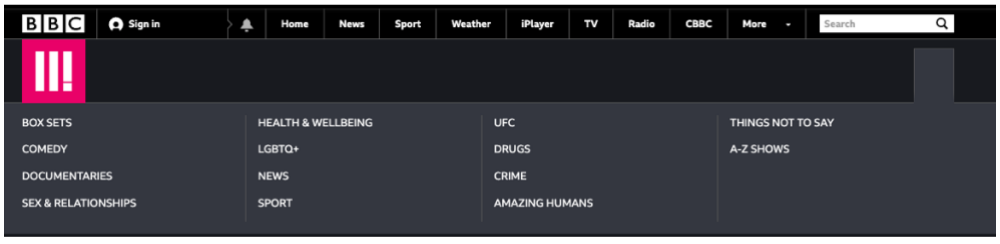


Figure 13 – The BBC Three Website in 2018 with the category-defined menu

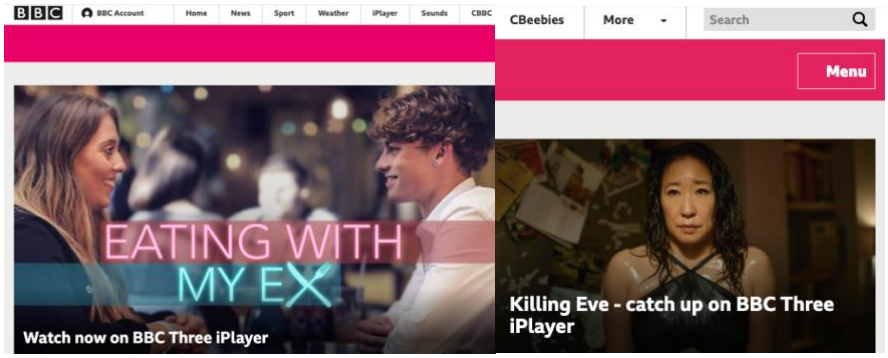


Figure 14 – Eating with My EX and Killing Eve thumbnails on the BBC Three website in 2018 with the 'BBC Three iPlayer' call to action.

Without broadcasting infrastructure, BBC Three had to rely on its website and iPlayer to communicate, market and distribute its content. However, it gets caught up in the BBC iPlayer's shift from 'Catch-up' to 'online destination'. From its launch, the BBC positioned BBC iPlayer as a place to catch up on a particular programme rather than a content discovery destination. For example, according to BBC audience research, in 2014, nearly 60% of BBC iPlayer visitors had a particular programme in mind (Grainge and Johnson, 2018), suggesting the important role broadcasting channels played in the audience's relationship with iPlayer. This is illustrated in Figure 14 with the Killing Eve thumbnail that calls BBC Three audiences to 'catch up'. In 2014, most people weren't turning to iPlayer to find something to watch in the same way they might have in the broadcasting environment. Instead, they used iPlayer to either watch something they missed the first broadcast for or something they had already seen advertised elsewhere. As BBC Three transitioned to online-only, it was forced to fix its identity to BBC iPlayer, which was already experiencing its own identity crisis as a catch-up destination.

The BBC used BBC iPlayer to shift the broader BBC identity from public service broadcaster to public service media. The proliferation of new online viewing destinations, such as YouTube, Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, etc., threatened the wider BBC's ontological security. By framing iPlayer as an online destination, the BBC attempts to move into the space in which it saw as being the winning side in the battle for audience attention. However, the BBC's identity and sense of belonging are entangled in its broadcasting identity as a dominant distributor and cross-promoter of content on BBC-owned platforms. As mentioned earlier, the BBC does not yet have the identity nor the appropriate infrastructure to be an online destination that digitally navigates its audience. The BBC Three brand used the strength of iPlayer's success to mitigate against the failure of transitioning its youth audience online, whilst the wider BBC leaned on iPlayer as a coping mechanism for the BBC's overall ontological insecurity. However, as BBC Three leaned on iPlayer, the BBC began to de-brand the platform, which was counter-intuitive to BBC Three's online-only move and its confidence as a standalone brand, thus impacting BBC Three's ontological security and its ability to provide ontological security to youth audiences.

De-branding BBC iPlayer

During the transitional period of shifting iPlayer from a catch-up service to an online television destination that served as a 'front door' to the BBC, the BBC began de-branding content on iPlayer by reducing the visibility of BBC channel brands in the way it tagged and labelled its content. The declining visibility of the BBC Channel brands was one of JP Kelly's key findings from

an extensive interrogation of the BBC iPlayer interface during primetime hours (8 pm-11 pm) between August 2018 and April 2021. Kelly scraped the iPlayer homepage interface every day during primetime hours between August 2018 and April 2021 and found that the visibility of channels on iPlayer significantly declined over time. For example, in August 2018, most titles were attributed to one of the BBC's many channels or brands; however, 'By early December 2019, more than half of titles were no longer being attributed to a channel or brand' (Kelly, 2021: 274), referring to this as a gradual de-branding of content most likely driven by editorial decisions.

This gradual de-branding began before the start of Kelly's study. Before 2017, content on iPlayer was clearly defined and labelled with a BBC channel or radio station (e.g., BBC Three or BBC Radio 1) or brand (BBC Sport) on the main programme page. Illustrated in a screenshot of the iPlayer interface in February 2016 (see Figure 15), we can see how each piece of content is clearly attributed to a BBC Brand, including under the list of 'Today's Most Popular' content. By October 2016, this changed, whereby channel brand attribution was no longer immediately visible for each content. Instead, the BBC shifted from 'channel brand labelling' to genre labelling, such as documentary, drama, and sports, as shown in Figure 16. Here, most of the programmes on the homepage were labelled by genre, with only the content displayed in the 'Today's Most Popular' section attributed to the channel brand. To see which channel brand a piece of content belonged to, users had to hover their cursor over that content (As shown with *Morgana Robinson's Agency* (BBC Two, 2016) in Figure 16) or click on a title and be taken to a page which displays

which channel it belonged to. By November 2017, even when hovering over the content on the homepage, channel brand labels were no longer displayed. As noted earlier in this chapter, channel brands function as a means through which to manage the values users attribute to products or services. Within our televisual experiences, they shape our content expectations. However, this transitional identity period for the BBC and iPlayer illustrates how genres began to 'play a more significant role in shaping the viewing experience' (Kelly, 2021: 275) than channels, suggesting a new form of power within the online and on-demand television era.

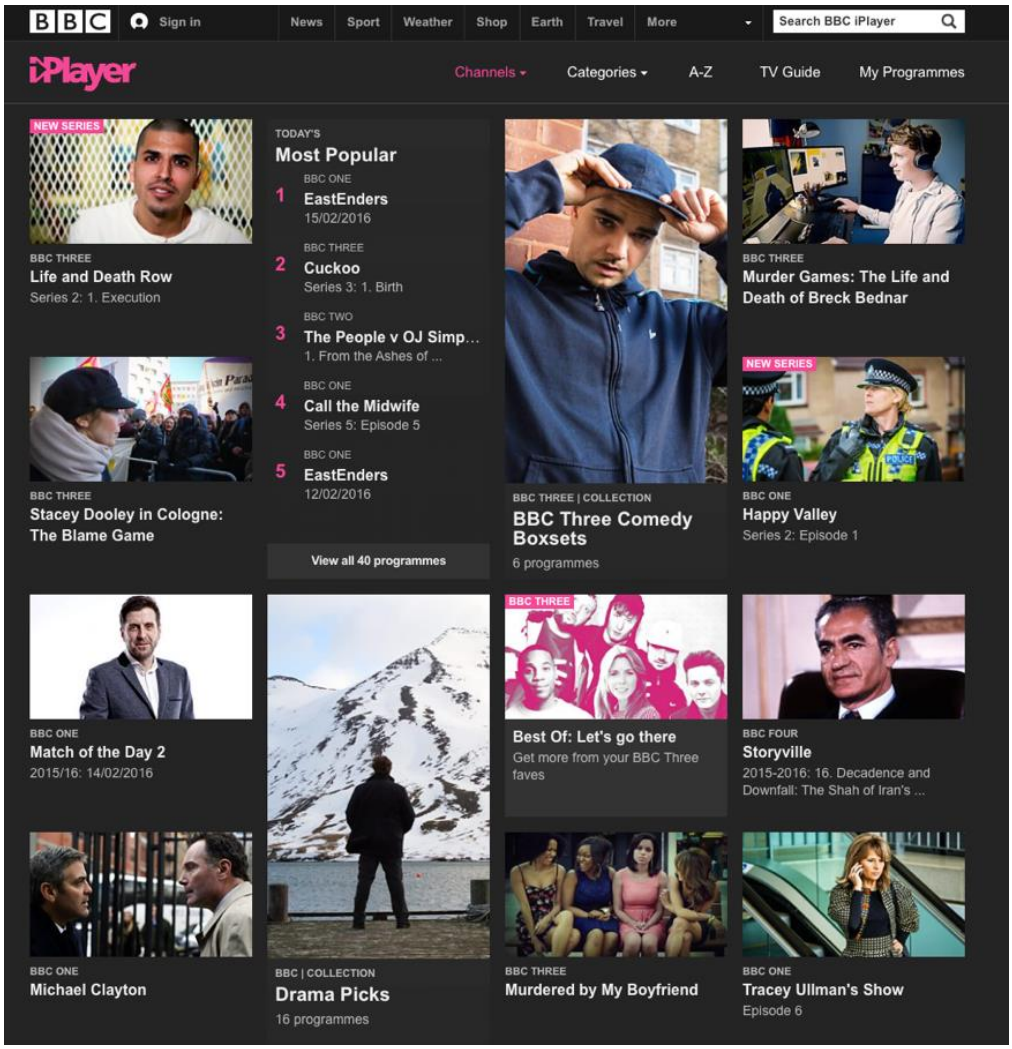


Figure 15 – The BBC iPlayer homepage in February 2016

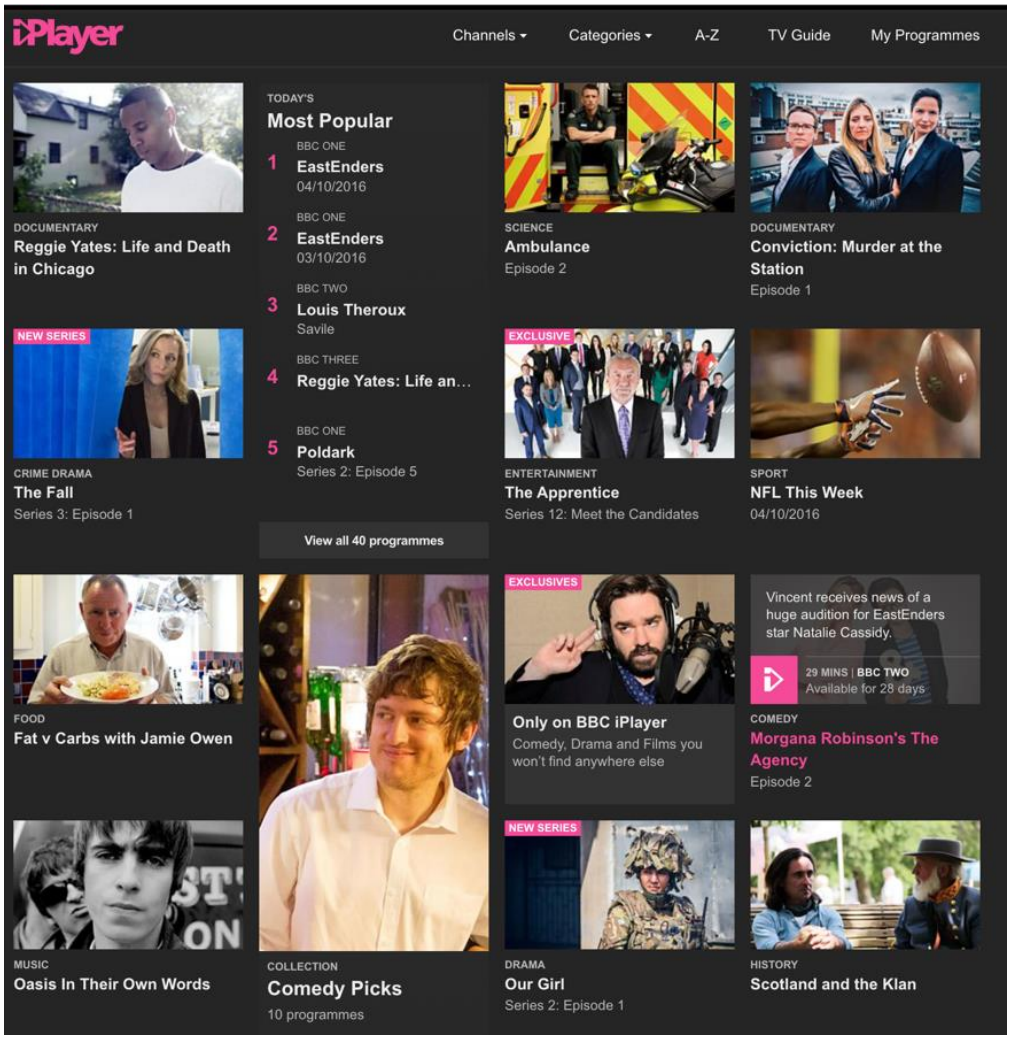


Figure 16 – The BBC iPlayer homepage in October 2016

Unlike BBC One, Two and Four, which have home broadcast channels, this shift away from channel brands to genres negatively impacted the ontological security of BBC Three. Its distinctive identity as the BBC's youth channel gradually got swallowed up by BBC iPlayer's identity shift as the front door to the BBC. This new de-branded iPlayer no longer encouraged audiences to pull content via its channel brands, like BBC Three. This further exacerbates BBC Three's existing issue of attribution, which I identified earlier. Even if audiences were able to attribute the content BBC Three distributed on third-

party platforms like YouTube, Twitter, Facebook or Instagram to the main BBC Masterbrand, once they were on the BBC iPlayer homepage, there was very little to immediately indicate that the content they enjoyed was a BBC Three programme, thus directly impacting how BBC Three's audience interacted with the BBC Three brand. As mentioned above, the BBC framed the BBC Three audience as 'hard-to-reach' and a problem to be solved, yet the de-branding of iPlayer made the BBC Three experience harder to reach. Although the option to browse iPlayer by channel was still available for users via a dropdown menu at the top of the interface, this would require audiences to know that the programme they already had in mind to watch belonged to BBC Three. This highlights the power of the iPlayer homepage in shaping the BBC Three televisual experience.

This de-branding of iPlayer reflects the BBC's intention to become a 'more focused and distinctive service' (BBC, 2016b: 4), as set out in the Online Creative Review. It indicates how the BBC thinks it understands what it means to be a public service broadcaster within the online and on-demand landscape and suggests the BBC no longer wants to shape the online and on-demand PSB viewing experience through its legacy channel brands. However, this was counter-productive to the reinvention of BBC Three as an online destination for the British youth, contributing to BBC Three's ontological insecurity in the online world and, thus, its eventual return to linear broadcasting in 2022.

The BBC has built the iPlayer televisual experience upon its direct relationship with broadcast television. As iPlayer has relied upon the BBC broadcasting

channels funnelling in audiences who want to catch up on the programmes they missed during its linear broadcast, BBC iPlayer's identity is tied to the BBC broadcasting channels. Until recently, the BBC framed iPlayer's structure as complementary to traditional broadcast television viewing. BBC iPlayer was positioned as a companion to linear broadcast television and was still framed as such when BBC Three moved online in 2016. Furthermore, whilst the BBC started to shift the iPlayer brand from being a 'catch-up' service to a streaming destination during BBC Three's online-only existence, BBC Three's online-only branding, which it had originally used to distance itself from the confines of broadcasting, began to contradict itself as it relied upon it broadcasting in order to serve its youth audience. BBC Three not only had its own brand identity issues to manage but was now navigating this on a platform (BBC iPlayer) that the BBC was also using to try to reinvent the wider BBC's brand identity within the broader online media landscape. As a result of the de-branding on BBC iPlayer, BBC Three turned back towards the structures of linear broadcasting, which it had initially framed at the beginning of BBC Three's online-only journey as being liberated from.

BBC One as a source of ontological security

When the BBC announced its plans to close the BBC Three linear broadcast channel, it framed such plans as being the only viable option to deal with its financially and industrially challenged circumstances, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The BBC proposed that the savings made from the closure would go towards supporting a new BBC One+1 channel, investment into drama on BBC One, further development of iPlayer and extended CBBC

hours. As a result, £30 million of BBC Three's £50 million budget was to go towards BBC One drama (Plunkett and Sweney, 2014). However, the pledged budget for supporting a new broadcast linear channel and drama content on BBC One simultaneously seemed to contradict the strategic rationale for the reinvented BBC Three, which the BBC framed as an opportunity to modernise.

The BBC wanted to move the corporation more in line with changing audience viewing habits and the television landscape, which shifted viewers away from broadcasting and towards on-demand content. If the argument made for moving BBC Three online was due to moving in line with the trajectory of the audience's online and on-demand viewing habits, and cuts to BBC Three would help the BBC to deal with its financial losses, then why was it allocating much of the £50 million budget to content that was going to support broadcasting? Faye Woods argues that such budget allocations 'continue the BBC's practice of diverting budgets for youth-focused content to support mainstream programming' (2016: 52), further marginalising an already marginalised audience. It echoes the argument made in Chapter 3, where the BBC privileges the ontological security of mainstream audiences over that of niche audiences.

The BBC's justification for an online-only BBC Three continued to present young adults' shifting viewing habits as a strategic opportunity 'to modernise the BBC's portfolio to ensure that it remains relevant to licence fee payers in a financially challenging climate' (BBC, 2015). They often referred to industry data, which showed that online and on-demand viewing accounted for over

one-quarter of 16-24-year-olds daily viewing and was growing. However, it also acknowledged that this viewing habit was a minority and that 'most of this audience still do their viewing on television' (Tony Hall qt in BBC Media Centre, 2014a). As such, they proposed that long-form BBC Three content would be shown on BBC One and BBC Two to ensure universality. This proposal for BBC One and BBC Two to continue showing BBC Three content, alongside the proposed budget allocation for a new broadcast channel, BBC One+1, and extended broadcasting hours on CBBC, implies that the BBC perceived that the value it provided to its audience remained in broadcasting and not online and on-demand.

To further justify its decision to move BBC Three online, it often, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, presented the online and on-demand landscape as allowing BBC Three 'to experiment with new forms of content which encourage a more personal relationship with younger audiences' and a need to have no longer 'stick to the standard AV formats that have traditionally characterised TV services' (BBC, 2015: 79). Elizabeth Evans argued that the announcements of BBC Three's transformation provided ironic and problematic constructions of broadcasting as 'beholden to regimented episode lengths and slow production schedules', even though 'nothing inherent in broadcasting technology requires regimented slots or a delay in production' (Evans, 2015). The BBC perceived the online and on-demand TV landscape as a place of freedom. It framed BBC Three as being freed from the constraints of a TV schedule whilst simultaneously devaluing some broadcasting structures

which I've explored throughout the thesis, such as flow, liveness and scheduling.

In framing the online move as an opportunity to develop new formats and programme lengths, which, as argued by Brett Mills, normalises assumptions of broadcasting as lacking, the BBC conveniently forgets that these restricted conventions of broadcast television are industrial decisions that can be as 'easily abandoned on television as it can be online' (Mills, 2015: 224). As shown earlier in the chapter, BBC Three's ability to provide ontological security to its audience is not only beholden to industrial structures but also restricted by how the BBC decides to structure and organise its identity, which, as shown through the minimisation of website pages and the de-branding of iPlayer - can quickly be abandoned at any moment. Furthermore, the hyper-ephemerality of new media texts heightens this, making it even more of a challenge in the online landscape.

As briefly mentioned above, as well as moving BBC Three online, the BBC also wanted to launch a BBC One +1 channel and extend CBBC's broadcasting hours from 7pm to 9pm. The proposed expansion of broadcasting across other BBC channels contradicts the strategic rationale for moving BBC Three online, particularly when two out of the three reasons were due to a changing television landscape that has shifted viewers away from linear television to online. This proposal of expanding broadcasting services alongside an online-only BBC Three reveals the difficulty the BBC had with balancing its

investments in online innovation whilst reinforcing the value of its linear broadcast channels, as set out by Tony Hall in 2013.

The contradictions in the BBC's rationale for moving BBC Three online highlight that although audiences were shifting towards online and on-demand TV viewing, the value of television broadcasting remained crucial to the relevance of the BBC within its attempts to modernise itself. However, as implied by the BBC and argued at the beginning of this chapter, such value only belongs to mainstream audiences, which do not include young people. Although the proposal to move BBC Three online states that it was to help 'drive digital innovation and enhance the BBC's reputation among younger audiences' (BBC, 2015: 2), a closer look into the wider context of the proposal to move BBC Three online reveals that the cost saving was to be used to strengthen BBC One. The BBC argued that the launch of a BBC One+1 channel would 'meet an important audience need, providing a form of catch up for those who do not use BBC iPlayer or have access to broadband' and that the channel would 'help to offset the loss of younger audiences to the BBC as a result of closing BBC Three as a broadcast channel, providing a more stable environment within which to innovate and take risks' (ibid: 4). This reference to broadcasting as a 'stable environment' suggests that the BBC perceived BBC One and broadcasting as providing a level of ontological security, something that online did not. This sense of ontological security, provided by broadcasting, led to the BBC Trust's requirement to show long-form BBC Three content on BBC One.

Time-shifted viewing channels like +1 channels provide audiences with the opportunity to curtail the fear of missing out (FoMO) by offering a second opportunity to watch the main channel's schedule one hour later. The fear of missing out, as defined by Przybylski et al., is the 'pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent' and is 'characterized by the desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing' (2013: 1841). FoMo, thus, contributes to ontological insecurity as you are unable to build that sense of connection to others. Conlin et al., (2016), argues that

> The experience of FoMO is perpetuated by the virtual explosion of real-time sharing that social media tools, smart phones, and tablets provide. These tools supply a constant opportunity to check on what else one might be missing out on—not just in a given moment, but also in a broader, overall context. While these technological conveniences enable more frequent social engagement, they simultaneously reinforce an increased reliance on mediated communication.
>
> (Conlin et al., 2016: 152)

Referring to Turkle (2011), Conlin et al. go on to say that 'As this technology becomes more socially pervasive, it becomes increasingly socially acceptable to allow this continually accessible connection to influence decisions, moods, and emotions' (ibid). In this way, the BBC's proposal of a BBC One +1 channel would have enabled the BBC to provide ontological security by

restricting audiences' feelings of FoMo but also reaffirm its position as a facilitator of shared national life, which, as argued in the previous chapter is how it positions its value in Britain. Ironically, this was part of the proposal that the BBC Trust did not pass due to its potential impact on the commercial market.

The strategic rationale for BBC Three's online move not only leant on the value of broadcasting but also proposed that the launch of a BBC One +1 channel and extension of CBBC's broadcasting hours from 7pm to 9pm were a strategic and financial fit package (BBC, 2015: 2). This rationale further emphasises the perceived importance of broadcasting for the success of BBC Three. If BBC One and broadcasting act as a source of ontological security and are integral to BBC's success in the changing TV landscape, then the assumptions and constructions of broadcasting as 'restricted', 'old-fashioned' or 'traditional' are used as operationalised myths to further neo-liberal ideologies that favour private and commercial business over public service.

Constructing broadcasting as an 'old' 'restrictive' medium and online as 'new' and 'freeing' works to position the idea that public service broadcasters like the BBC are no longer valuable within today's online and on-demand media landscape unless they follow market trends to transform or reinvent themselves. This normalisation of the assumptions of broadcasting as old positions the BBC as lagging behind the rest of the television landscape and conveniently forgets that it has often been a leader in innovation, such as launching BBC iPlayer in 2007. The BBC even proposed a one-stop-shop

‘Netflix style’ public service VOD platform called Project Kangaroo in 2009, which offered content from ITV, Channel 4 and BBC Worldwide (now BBC Studios). Project Kangaroo was, however, blocked by the Competition Commission for posing ‘too much of a threat to competition in the nascent UK video-on-demand market’ (Sweney, 2009), thus reminding us of the industrial decisions beyond the BBC, which limits how it develops. These decisions can, however, be abandoned. For example, the 2019 UK launch of BritBox, a subscription video-on-demand service for watching BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5 programmes, highlights how industrial decisions like market competition can change. Here, we can see that the constructions of broadcasting as ‘constrained’, ‘restricted’ and ‘old’ become operationalised myths that conceal that broadcasting conventions are industrially made and can be changed and adapted at any time.

The BBC Trust’s final decision for BBC Three’s online move further emphasises that whilst the BBC needed to position itself as embracing new technologies - politically and financially sacrificing BBC Three in the process - it also needed to continue showcasing the value of linear broadcasting and as argued by Evans, ‘reiterating the centrality of the relationship among content, audience and distribution to public service broadcasting’s future definitions’ (2015). The Trust identified several concerns and barriers to the online offer. These included the awareness of content, the acceptability of a different viewing experience and the accessibility of the online-only offer, which would now only be available via broadband and mobile data connections, thus raising issues of universality: a core public service value. For the BBC Trust, the loss

of a linear broadcast platform would result in 'the loss of a hard-to-reach audience' and thus a reduction in the awareness of content, detrimentally affecting the ability of the BBC 'to attract and nurture new talent' (BBC Trust, 2015b: 10, 17). The trust concluded that a well-managed transition from broadcast to online and continued access to BBC Three's programming on linear schedules might help reduce such barriers and mitigate the concerns about acceptability and accessibility. As such, they imposed several conditions, notably the need for BBC One and BBC Two to transmit all BBC Three long-form content at various times across the schedule and throughout the UK, beginning as soon as the closure of BBC Three as a linear channel took effect.

The Trust shared that as a mode of viewing, the essential characteristics of broadcasting, such as an effortless, familiar, and social experience, were lacking in on-demand services. In addition, they also required BBC One and BBC Two to commit to creative risk-taking and experiment with new talent and ideas (which was a key element of BBC Three's broadcast remit), and that both channels 'should offer some programmes with a distinctive approach that are designed for younger audiences' (ibid: 10). This condition for BBC One and BBC Two to show long-form BBC Three content, indicates that the Trust believed that there were values that broadcasting offered that online and on-demand did not, further contradicting the BBC's framing of online as space that offers unlimited opportunities. This illustrates the BBC's problematic positioning of broadcasting components 'everydayness' vs the 'everywhereness' of the online environment. The condition for BBC Three content to be shown on BBC One and BBC Two emphasised that there are

aspects and characteristics of broadcasting that remained vital to the potential success of BBC Three's reinvention and how it provides ontological security to youth audiences.

The BBC framed the closure of BBC Three as the only viable and justifiable option; however, it was one of many BBC services they could have chosen to help cut costs. The BBC itself recognised that other alternative options were available, stating that 'not closing BBC Three would have been the closure of another service (or other services)' (BBC, 2015: 3). BBC sources revealed the favouring of BBC Four over BBC Three, of which the audience was older upper-middle class and whom the BBC needed to keep onside for its upcoming charter renewal in 2017. As such, the BBC framed the alternative (BBC Four) as 'having a greater impact on overall audience performance' (ibid), thus making BBC Three the 'sacrificial lamb' or political sacrifice (Woods, 2016: 53) in its bid to modernise.

The wider context of the BBC's proposal to move BBC Three online reveals that 'traditional' broadcasting continues to offer value to the BBC, with BBC One acting as a security blanket for the new BBC Three. To mitigate against the predicted loss of audiences due to the lack of a broadcast schedule, the BBC Executive Committee agreed to show content after 10:30 pm. In March 2019, BBC Three launched the 'It's Three Time' campaign which aimed to signal a core time in the schedule for youth audiences, perhaps indicating an explicit attempt to re-include youth audiences into the mainstream and cater to

youth audiences wind down needs which were missing from its move to online.

It's Three Time

The BBC's decision to give in to operationalised myths about broadcasting and young people's non-linear and on-demand consumption needs arguably accelerated 'the direction of travel', not towards non-linear viewing as was suggested by BBC Three's then controller Damian Kavanagh, but away from the BBC. Neil Thurman's (2021) research into BBC's Three cessation estimates that the channel's audience shrank by 60-70%. Annual viewing minutes declined by -72%, including when watching BBC Three commissioned/acquired programmes on the BBC's remaining linear TV channels (e.g., original BBC Three shows like Killing Eve and Fleabag that were broadcast on BBC One). Thurman suggests, 'irrespective of media platform', online reinvention by 'ending offline distribution seems to cause a sudden and substantial fall in the time spent with a media brand by its audience' (2021: 291). In a bid to bring the audience back to BBC Three, the BBC turned towards broadcasting, evident in its decision to bring BBC Three back as a broadcast channel in 2021 and in utilising broadcasting during its online-only period.

In 2019, the BBC decided to bring back BBC Three's previous late evening linear broadcast wind-down slot by creating a dedicated slot time in BBC One's schedule for BBC Three programming. The idea of having a dedicated time for youth audiences in the BBC One or BBC Two schedule was not new.

This dedicated slot borrowed from the 6pm youth slot that began in the 50s and later developed in the 80s, giving space for youth dramas such as *Grange Hill* and the development of DEF II[19] on BBC Two "which gathered a range of programmes aimed at a 16–34-year-old demographic under a branded flow" (Woods, 2016: 32). DEF II included current affairs programmes such as *Reportage* (BBC Two, 1998–1994), which sat alongside North American programming like *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* (NBC, 1990-1996), *Degrassi Junior High* (CBC/PBS, 1987-1989) and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (WN/UPN, 1997-2003), of which the latter was edited to make it appropriate for pre-watershed viewing. In March 2019, the BBC launched 'It's Three Time', a marketing campaign and a blocked channel slot for BBC Three programming on BBC One at 10:35pm.

This branded flow of programmes seemed to aim to re-integrate BBC Three back into linear broadcast TV and create a space for youth audiences within the BBC's linear broadcasting. However, whilst 'It's Three Time' borrowed from the DEF II branded flow using a series of idents and end boards (see Figure 17) to signal the new BBC Three slot, unlike DEF II and BBC Three's previous late-night broadcast schedule that I explored at the beginning of this chapter, 'It's Three Time' did not include any US imports. It, instead, leant heavily into BBC Three factual entertainment and comedy. As mentioned earlier, these two genres of the branded flow were often critiqued and caused tension between BBC Three offering public value through content that draws

[19] DEF II was a BBC Two Youth programming strand that aired on the channel at 6pm on Mondays and Wednesdays from 1988 to 1994.

in youth audiences and other content, such as news and documentaries, which are deemed more legitimate public service content.

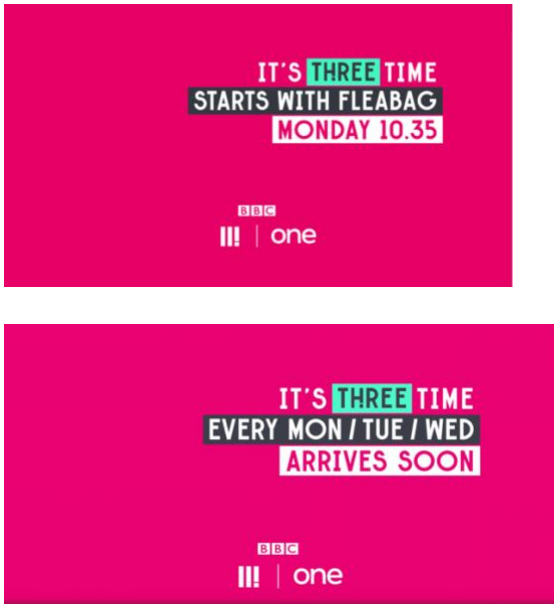


Figure 17 – The end boards for the 2019 'It's Three Time' TV advertisement

'It's Three Time' was an hour slot at 10:35 pm on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays on BBC One. This slot formed part of the BBC's 2019/20 plans to refresh its content across all genres and all platforms to appeal to younger audiences. However, with the prominence of BBC brands stripped from content labels on the BBC iPlayer homepage, the BBC turned back towards broadcasting as a solution for raising awareness of BBC Three content. This is evidenced in the BBC's Annual Plan, which states how they wanted to increase investment in young-skewing programmes and the prominence of their services. Here, we see how the prominence of BBC Three and its content online was a clear challenge. The solution was to improve this through 'a new BBC Three "entertain me" pillar, a dedicated zone on BBC One at 10.35pm

from March, and a BBC Three strip on the iPlayer homepage' (BBC Annual Plan, 2019: 6).

To entertain audiences in this slot, the BBC specifically chose comedy and factual entertainment to boost BBC Three's prominence. The OOH (Out of Home) advertisements and promo trailer for the new slot emphasised BBC Three's turn towards the populist pleasures of comedy and factual entertainment (Rushton, 2010) to draw youth audiences back to BBC Three. BBC Three specifically chose factual entertainment programmes *Glow Up* (BBC Three, 2019 - present) and *Eating with My EX* (BBC Three, 2017 - present), and comedy *Fleabag* (BBC Three, 2016-2019) as the standout programmes for the campaign (see Figure 18).

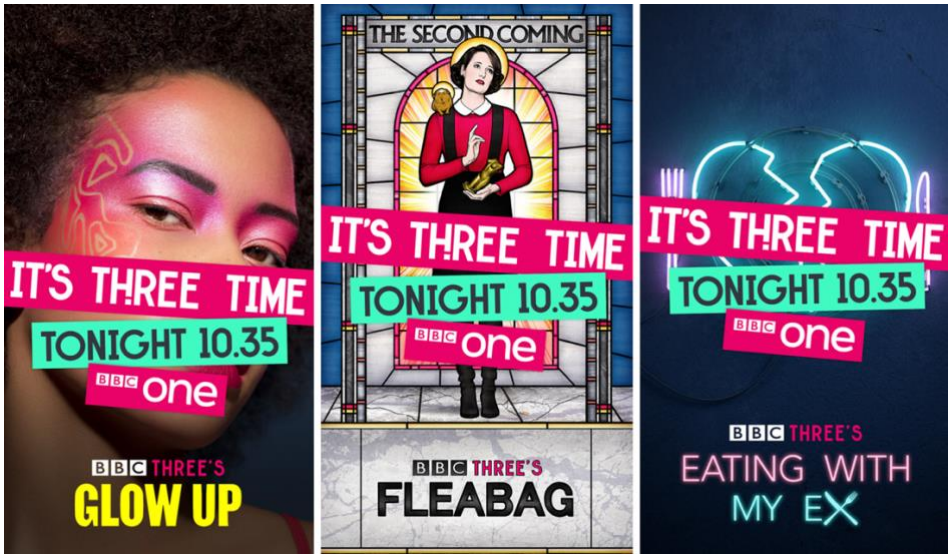


Figure 18 – The OOH advertisements for the 2019 'It's Three Time' campaign

The 30’ second TV trailer used to promo the new slot constructs an unapologetic BBC Three that is not going to atone for its populist factual entertainment and comedy programming that is at the heart of its brand. The advert uses the song *Over* by Drake (2010), purposefully using the lyrics from the section of the song that says:

> Oh yeah, that's right, I'm doin' me, I'm doin' me
> I'm living life right now, man, and this what I'mma do 'til it's over
>
> Til it's over
> But it's far from over.

The lyrics used in the trailer suggest two key points. The first is that BBC Three will be its authentic self on BBC One and not apologise for doing so regardless of any criticism it might face about its focus on comedy and factual entertainment. Second, it attempts to convey to the audience that whilst BBC Three has moved online, it still exists and continues to create relatable content. The clips used in the promo trailer further emphasise this. First, we hear ‘I’m looking for something bold’- a clip from Glow Up, followed by two clips from Fleabag: ‘Why would you believe in something awful when you could believe in something wonderful’ and ‘Do not under any circumstances apologise…I can do that’. These clips preface the voice-over announcement of ‘Three Time on BBC One, every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from the 4th of March’. The availability of Three Time, three days a week, illustrates the BBC’s attempt to reproduce the previous dailiness of BBC Three that had been lost

through the closure of its broadcast channel and was missing online. The scheduling of the branded slot on three consecutive days of the week acted as a tool for the audience to build a routinised viewing habit with BBC Three and, thus, a way to offer ontological security. However, this does not work due to two key reasons.

First, rather than creating a dedicated evening of BBC Three programming, replicating the previous BBC Three schedule, the BBC only allocated a one-hour slot. The one-hour allocation suggests that 'Three Time' was more of a marketing tool that used BBC One as a shop window for BBC Three content rather than genuinely providing a dedicated zone for youth audiences. This one-hour slot does not create a sense of flow for audiences. Flow, as argued in Chapter 1, offers ontological security by creating a sense of comfort in how we navigate space and time and contributes to how audiences make meanings of the programmes and channels. It is the gratification and comfort gained from the experience of being completely immersed in a routine. As mentioned earlier, BBC Three was primarily perceived as a flicking channel whose value was not just in the content it provided but also in its ability to allow audiences to effortlessly flow into a state of winding down. Whilst the Three Time slot had an element of regularity to help build routinised behaviours by being on three times a week, this one-hour slot lacked a proper BBC Three flow that audiences could immerse themselves in, as after the programme finished, BBC One returned to its usual programming. The factual entertainment and comedy content were stand-alone features within the BBC One schedule rather than incorporated into a branded flow of content that communicated BBC Three's

brand as being the space and place for BBC Three audiences to navigate their wind-down needs. This consequently impacts audiences' ability to make meaning about the BBC Three brand as a place that offers ontological security.

Second, the fact that 'Three Time' was shoved to the post-peak hours of the television schedule, where it could not interrupt BBC One's existing schedule, eventually getting pushed back further into the post-peak hours at 10:45 pm in 2021, reflect how the BBC sees youth audiences as a marginal audience (Lury, 2001; Mills, 2015) 'unable to ever fully be outside of the mainstream simply because of its massive reach' (Mills, 2015: 222), but never full in it either. Similar to the 'efnik graveyard' slots discussed in the previous chapter, the BBC shoved 'Three Time' to the outskirts of the main BBC One schedule, further framing young audiences as different to the mainstream, perpetuating the idea that they are harder to reach and thus a problem to be solved. The 10:35 slot marginalised an audience that had already been marginalised prior to the closure of BBC Three and because of it (ibid: 223). Furthermore, its unconventional 10:35pm start contradicts its prior framing of broadcasting as restricted by regimented episode lengths and time slots. Rather than starting at half past the hour or on the hour, which are the traditional broadcasting time slots, the 10:35 start highlights how broadcasting's perceived restrictiveness is controlled by industrial conventions that can be changed.[20] The 10:35 slot requires audiences to connect with BBC Three through a mainstream channel whose definition, as argued by Brett Mills and in Chapter 3, 'exclude them for

[20] It is worth noting that Three Time followed the 10 o'clock main news slot that ends at 10:30, followed by the local news at 10:30-10:35.

the majority of the time' (2015: 224). As such, it lacks the ability to provide a sense of belonging to youth audiences and, thus, ontological security.

However, the OOH artwork (see Figure 18) for 'Three Time' saw BBC Three return to establishing ownership of its content. As shown earlier in the chapter, this ownership was taken away on BBC iPlayer through the de-branding process, with all three programmes promoted in the artwork described as 'BBC Three's…'. This campaign was BBC Three's way of asserting itself and claiming its content, which can transition to the mainstream channel when 'successful' or deemed important enough for a BBC One transmission. BBC One often takes shows from its other channels once they have proven success or are deemed fit for mainstream audiences. For example, *Killing Eve* (BBC Three 2018; BBC One 2019-2022) first launched as a BBC Three show in 2018 and moved to BBC One for its second series the following year. The *Jesy Nelson Odd One Out* (BBC One - 2019) documentary was a BBC Three documentary that, as well as being on iPlayer, received a BBC One transmission on its launch day. Comedy drama *I May Destroy You* launched as a BBC One series, yet in BBC Three's Public Interest Test Submission to relaunch BBC Three as a broadcast channel, it is mentioned as one of BBC Three's outstanding quality of output and award-winning content. This transition from BBC Three to BBC One contributes to a misattribution of BBC Three content as belonging to BBC One, thus impacting, as argued earlier, how value is attributed to the BBC Three brand. The 'Three Time' OOH artwork attempts to reassert BBC Three's identity and the common social currency that its content provides audiences.

However, whilst the artwork positioned BBC Three as taking ownership of its unapologetic content during the launch of the campaign, BBC Three was also discursively positioned as being given the keys to BBC One, as can be seen in both the BBC One and BBC Three Facebook posts promoting the launch (see Figure 19). Whilst both posts mention keys being handed over, they are tonally different. BBC One uses 'LISTEN UP!' and BBC Three opts for 'OH SHIT', suggesting that BBC Three has been given the privilege of broadcasting on BBC One, as opposed to BBC One being given the privilege of BBC Three content. Here, BBC One entrusts BBC Three with the freedom and privilege of showcasing its content on BBC One. Furthermore, as the 'Three Time' slot consisted of factual entertainment and comedy programmes, it created a legitimised perception of these shows now having access to BBC One. In addition, the messaging constructs broadcasting as a privileged opportunity, thus, something to be valued, further contradicting the BBC's previous constructions of broadcasting through the notion of freedom. Yet, in this case, freedom is not attributed online but to BBC One and broadcast linear television.

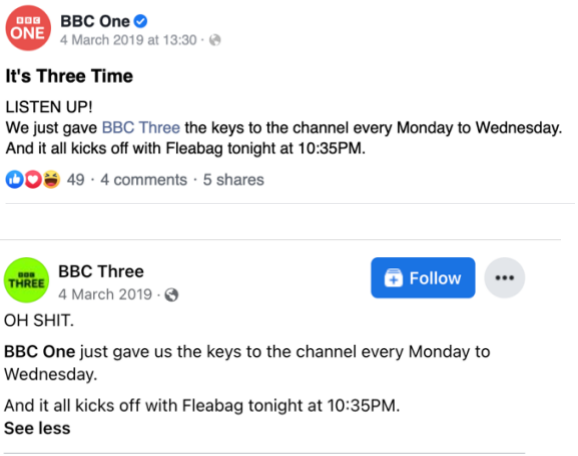


Figure 19 – The BBC One and BBC Three Facebook posts promoting the 'It's Three Time' campaign in March 2019

The return to broadcasting through the creation of 'Three Time', a dedicated 'entertain me' zone, reinforces the value of the broadcast television schedule as a critical industrial apparatus required for creating a sense of dailiness and ontological security. While BBC Three had the opportunity to be everywhere in its new online identity, it failed to create a sense of everydayness that provides ontological security. As a result, the BBC created 'Three Time', which illustrates how BBC Three turned to broadcasting to reproduce the everydayness missing from an online BBC Three. It reveals how broadcasting and BBC One try to offer BBC Three a source of ontological security. However, this contradicts the BBC's construction of broadcasting as restricted and something BBC Three needed to be freed from. Instead, the BBC needed broadcasting to promote and increase the awareness of BBC Three content.

Conclusion - Broadcasting as a fundamental ontological security tool

When BBC Three returned as a linear broadcast channel in 2022, the BBC titled the marketing campaign for the returning channel as 'BBC Three is back on TV' (see Figure 20). The campaign's reference to 'back on TV' represents an alternative framing of the difference in value between 'broadcast TV' and 'online TV', which equates TV as specifically meaning broadcasting and, as I identified in Chapter 2 and at the beginning of this chapter, often frames the online televisual experience as better than that offered through broadcasting. Here, the BBC positions BBC Three and broadcasting as something to be missed. BBC Three's return to broadcast television suggests that the online television landscape, characterised as having a sense of 'everywhereness' that provides freedom and liberation from the restrictiveness of broadcasting, did not allow BBC Three to provide ontological security to youth audiences in the same way as broadcast. It suggests that the freedom offered by an online media landscape limited the BBC's chances of enhancing its relationship with youth audiences. Initially, the BBC positioned broadcasting as having little chance of winning the battle for audience attention due to the fast trend of changing audience consumption habits. However, the 'Back on TV' phrase positions broadcast TV as superior to online TV. The 'Back on TV' phrase counters its initial statements made in 2015 about online TV providing the opportunity to connect with youth audiences' and cater to their televisual needs.

Figure 20 – The opening title sequence for the 'BBC Three is now on TV' promotional trailer

The 4-minute promotional brand video attempts to convey that audiences can trust this new BBC Three to cater to their needs by opening with the on-screen statement, 'From the people that brought you…Fleabag, Normal People, Killing Eve, This Country, People Just Do Nothing, Glow Up, Ru Paul's Drag Race UK…Comes a brand new channel'. This statement reconnects the BBC Three brand to being a producer of a shared common currency that I argued earlier contributes to a stable sense of belonging through social connection to others who have watched these programmes. By referencing its existing programmes, BBC Three attempts to reassert its brand identity as a well-liked brand, which Todreas (1999) argues can give consumers trust and confidence.

The decision to bring BBC Three back on TV is evidence of the failure to 'shove BBC Three' online (Plunkett, 2014; Mills, 2015). Whilst Tony Hall may have suggested that young people were the 'most ready to move to an online world' (Plunkett and Sweney, 2014), moving BBC Three online proved that for

the BBC, on-demand is not a substitute for broadcast TV. As I have shown in this chapter, the BBC does not have the current infrastructure to help audiences digitally navigate its linear and online brands. As such, the online world should be considered a companion to broadcast television rather than its replacement.

Whilst the BBC did recognise that the early closure of the channel would negatively impact its reach and share among younger audiences in the short term, the coping mechanism it employed to mitigate this failed in three ways. First, its 'platform neutral' branding failed to act as a source of ontological security to youth audiences as it lacked confidence in the online world, focusing on communicating the functional attributes of the online-only BBC, as shown through the 2016 BBC Three re-brand, rather than how BBC Three produces social currency that contributes to audiences' stable sense of belonging and connection. When it attempted to communicate its brand confidence, it framed its online identity in opposition to its previous broadcasting identity. However, its 2017 brand refresh highlighted a significant issue for BBC Three as an online-only brand – distinctiveness and attribution. This issue of attribution showed that the online BBC Three could not help audiences digitally navigate the 'everywhereness' of the brand and illustrates the BBC's problematic narrative of broadcasting as a medium with traditional shackles that BBC Three needed to be liberated from. It showed how the broadcasting flow was a key ingredient missing in BBC Three's provision of ontological security for a youth audience.

Second, it failed to remediate the broadcast flow via the BBC Three website and BBC iPlayer due to being stuck in the middle of the wider BBC's identity shift that positioned iPlayer as the front door to the BBC and the BBC's mission to clean up its online presence. This shift distanced iPlayer from its former identity as a catch-up destination and towards an online destination. However, as BBC Three no longer had the broadcasting infrastructure to call upon, it had to rely upon iPlayer and the website to communicate and distribute its content. I showed how, for the BBC, broadcasting flows do not easily translate online as the online televisual experience offered by the BBC through BBC iPlayer directly relies upon linear broadcasting structures. This caused BBC Three to struggle to negotiate its identity as an online-only brand that was now distanced from broadcasting, as broadcasting is fundamental to communicating its online presence.

Lastly, the BBC's creation of 'It's Three Time' attempted to reproduce the missing sense of broadcasting's everydayness offered by the stability and structure of the television schedule and its ability to create routines integral to ontological security. It fails as its one-hour slot does not restrict it from recreating a flow, which was vital to how audiences previously valued BBC Three. Furthermore, the late-night scheduling further marginalises an already marginalised audience by framing them as a hard-to-reach problem to solve and shoving them to the outskirts of a channel that excludes them most of the time. This contributes to a lack of belonging and, thus, ontological insecurity.

Interrogating BBC Three's channel branding, marketing and content distribution before and during its online-only period reveals that BBC Three was never indeed an online-only brand. It would never be as long as broadcasting remains the fundamental connective tissue between all the BBC's brands. The construction of youth as 'hard-to-reach' 16-34s led the BBC to cater to youth audiences from an ontological *in*security perspective. The heightened precarity in the temporal and spatial structures of youth audiences' media lives and the uncertainty about how they gain social and solitary satisfaction and gratification from their media experiences caused the BBC to lack confidence in providing for them via its broadcasting services. Broadcasting remains a crucial partner in how the BBC delivers ontological security. Constructing broadcasting as an 'old traditional' platform that limits how the BBC delivers value fails to consider the fundamental broadcasting elements required for creating ontological security and the industrial structures that form the perception of its restrictiveness. This chapter explored how the BBC contradicts itself by suppressing the value of broadcasting whilst simultaneously remediating its everydayness in an attempt to provide ontological security to youth audiences.

Conclusion – The answer is ontological security

> The last 12 months have been marked by significant global and national events with profound consequences. While not of a comparable scale or impact, the media sector has also been marked by significant change and uncertainty over the last year. There has been the debate over the future of Channel 4; Netflix has introduced adverts and Disney are rolling out the same globally. We saw the $43bn mega-merger of AT&T's WarnerMedia division and Discovery to create WarnerBrothersDiscovery, and Elon Musk's takeover of Twitter. There have been waves of job losses in the technology sector in the wake of sobering financial results and market uncertainty.
>
> Against this backdrop, the BBC focused on what it does best – providing the information and insight that helps us understand the issues that are daily shaping our world and lives.
>
> (BBC Annual Plan, 2023: 7)

The media landscape has significantly evolved since the formation of the BBC in 1922. Despite technological advancements, the proliferation of media services and the fragmentation of audiences, broadcasting, specifically public service broadcasting, continues to remain a core part of the UK's media

industries, which witnessed the BBC's centenary in 2022. Whilst broadcasting has not yet been replaced by the internet as was previously predicted, it continues to disrupt it. It challenges the broadcast sector to question its role within the new online media landscape, which the BBC states in its 2023 Annual Plan as being 'marked by significant change and uncertainty' (BBC Annual Plan, 2023: 7). Freedman and Goblot argue that television is 'characterised by its durability as well as an underlying volatility and uncertainty' and also by the critical continuity of the public service broadcasters (PSBs) like the BBC who 'continue to command our attention' (2018: 7). The role of the BBC within this new landscape, as I have shown throughout this thesis, can therefore be characterised by its resilience within a volatile and uncertain media industry – its ontological insecurity.

This thesis has argued that understanding the new media environment requires understanding the broadcasting components that have enabled the BBC to remain resilient throughout its 100 years. The BBC has used these components to frame and construct its value to audiences to ensure its financial and industrial continuity. The ontological security framework outlined in Chapter 1 is built on the theoretical work of Roger Silverstone (1994) and Anthony Giddens (1991). It comprises three pillars: *structure and stability*, *comfort and reassurance, belonging and identity*. This framework provided an alternative way of thinking about how the BBC communicates its value by considering the BBC's ontological function, i.e., how it constructs its meaningfulness within everyday life. The framework also considers broadcasting as a coping mechanism for helping us navigate our ontological security within everyday

life. Throughout the thesis, I used the framework as an analytical tool for interrogating how the BBC frames its significance within British everyday life.

This thesis was tasked with understanding how the BBC frames its value within everyday life and what this can tell us about its role in the ever-evolving media landscape. Using an ontological security framework to examine three critical challenges within the BBC's current charter period, e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic, diversity and BBC Three, this thesis has established how several broadcasting components have contributed to how the BBC frames its value and how these frames provide or fail to provide ontological security to its audiences. Chapter 2 identified scheduling, liveness and imagined communities as three key broadcasting components used by the BBC to provide ontological security to audiences. Chapter 3 identified mainstreaming, diversity, impartiality and objectivity as fundamental BBC organisational principles used to protect its ontological security within the uncertain online media landscape at the expense of diverse and niche audiences' ontological security, where it instead uses these principles to govern them. Chapter 4 builds on the arguments made in Chapter 2 about how the BBC frames the online televisual experience as offering more choice and agency to audiences than broadcasting and Chapter 3's arguments about how the BBC privileges the ontological security of mainstream audiences over that of niche audiences. It showed how the lack of online flow and the inability to hold youth audiences in the same regard as mainstream audiences inhibit the BBC from providing ontological security to them.

Throughout this thesis, I have shown the interconnectivity of the ontological security pillars and the BBC's broadcasting components to show how they do not operate independently but work together to help us identify how the BBC constructs its value within everyday life. For example, the structure and stability of the BBC's broadcasting schedules, which mirror the routines and cycles of everyday life, also provide comfort and reassurance through their televisual flow that creates expectations that the BBC will cater to our needs at the right time. As explored in Chapter 4 through BBC Three's 7pm – 4am broadcasting hours before it moved online, I highlighted how these limited hours contributed to a perception of BBC Three as a wind-down brand. Therefore, the lack of a schedule in its online iteration meant that it could not recreate this notion of winding down and, thus, was unable to provide ontological security to youth audiences. I also showed how the comfort and reassurance offered by the broadcasting flow can also influence our sense of belonging and identity. For example, Chapter 2 explored how the liveness and immediacy of soaps and sports bring people together in real-time, fostering social and national connections that shape our sense of identity and belonging. Liveness encourages ritualistic and participatory broadcasting experiences, which enable the BBC to produce imagined communities. These imagined communities aspire to provide ontological security through stable notions of a collective identity that people can use to anchor or attach themselves to. For example, Chapter 3 showed how the BBC uses ideas of the mainstream and diversity to homogenise collective identities to make them easier to govern and manage.

The interconnectivity of the three ontological security pillars, *structure and stability*, *comfort and reassurance, belonging and identity* and the four key broadcasting components, *scheduling*, *liveness*, *imagined communities* and *flow*, emphasises the complexity of trying to understand value in the context of the BBC. This conclusion will now summarise how the interrelation between the ontological security pillars and the broadcasting components has appeared throughout the thesis. In doing so, I will outline how the pillars and components have worked to show how the BBC frames its value in a way that provides ontological security, as shown in Chapter 2 or not, as shown in Chapters 3 and 4.

Chapter Overview

In Chapter 1, I outlined how everyday life is characterised by four components: cycles, flow, routines and ontology. These four components work together to sustain our confidence in being in the world, i.e., our ontological security. However, everyday life comes with uncertainties within foreseen and unforeseen circumstances. As such, I noted that we turn to media experiences such as television broadcasting to help us navigate this. As demonstrated throughout the thesis, the BBC uses broadcasting as a coping mechanism for helping us manage our ontological insecurities, whether that be national ontological insecurity, as shown in Chapter 2 through the COVID-19 pandemic or ontological insecurity about a collective group of people, as shown in Chapter 3 via diversity management. What enables broadcasting to act as a coping mechanism is the stability and structure of its schedules that mimic the cycles and routines of everyday life. These cycles are about the continuity of

the rhythms of everyday life, and the routines are about establishing trust in the past, present and future. As such, both provide a sense of *everydayness* within daily life and shape our relationship with others and our media experiences. However, this everydayness contributes to broadcasting's ordinariness and passivity, which sometimes causes the media industries to take broadcasting for granted and overlook how broadcasting provides ontological security.

Chapter 2 focused on the stability and structure pillar of the ontological security framework. At the start of the chapter, I problematised the dominant industrial narratives that frame the passivity of broadcasting as negative or a hindrance to audiences' media experiences to show how these narratives led to an industrial dismissal of understanding broadcasting's value before the pandemic. However, using the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic as a case study, the chapter showed how the BBC used broadcasting components such as scheduling, liveness, and imagined communities to provide ontological security to audiences during the first UK lockdown. The chapter illustrated that schedules and scheduling are an example of industrial broadcasting techniques that enable audiences to navigate their televisual experience as well as the routines of everyday life. Scheduling was identified as a crucial partner in how the BBC provides ontological security. It provides structure and stability to everyday life, offers comfort and reassurance in the expectation of dailiness and constructs notions of identity and belonging by managing audiences across it. Schedules also create a sense of trust in a channel brand through how it organises content within its televisual flow. Chapter 2 showed how broadcasting schedules provide ontological security by acting as a transitional

marker between cycles and routines of everyday life. Using the increase in BBC News viewing during the COVID-19 pandemic as an example, it showed how scheduling maps the rhythms of daily life, thus helping to maintain the routines of everyday life that were disrupted during the pandemic. Scheduling operates as a transition and boundary marker of daily life. It provided ontological security during the first UK lockdown by establishing routines and structuring the boundaries between work and leisure that had been disrupted and spatially blurred.

Chapter 2 also explored how producing a sense of 'liveness' is vital to how the BBC frames its value. This liveness creates social connections and can have a social currency. I argued that liveness is a critical component of how the BBC offers ontological security by scheduling soaps like *EastEnders* and live sports events that work to centre the BBC as a facilitator of a shared national life. However, as explored through the case study of the pandemic, when liveness was lost, the BBC recreated it through its archives that aimed to evoke nostalgia and notions of a 'safe return' (Holdsworth, 2011). The BBC used notions of nostalgia to comfort and reassure audiences by providing a sense of safety through pre-pandemic memories and reaffirming the BBC's capabilities in facilitating a shared national life. This notion of a shared national life was further emphasised through several brand films and the re-branding of the BBC One idents during the pandemic. I showed how the BBC used the 'Bringing Us Closer', 'Make A Difference' campaign and 'Oneness' idents to construct an imagined shared national life and reinforce the narrative of the BBC as being Britain's comfort blanket and social glue. In examining the

‘Oneness’ idents, I showed how this sense of ‘oneness’ has been integral to the channel’s branding, particularly since the early 2000s and has been used to emphasise how the BBC wants to be perceived as being the centre of a shared national life. I argued that this notion of ‘oneness’ is firmly rooted in problematic Reithian ideologies of ‘making the nation one man’ and works to bind people together into a collective identity that aspires to offer ontological security through a shared identity anchor. In the following chapter, I took issue with this notion of a shared national life.

Chapter 3 focused on the belonging and identity pillar of the ontological security framework to question why creating collective identities is important to the BBC and what happens when its constructed identity of Britain’s social glue is challenged. By interrogating two parts of the BBC’s fourth public purpose, one concerning representation and the second pertaining to shared experiences and social cohesion, the chapter revealed a tension between the two that prevents the BBC from providing ontological security to diverse communities. The chapter opened by looking at how the BBC defines diversity and what these definitions mean for the BBC’s diversity in practice. The chapter identified that the BBC uses ‘mainstreaming’ as a tool to govern diversity. The BBC positions diversity in opposition to the mainstream, creating tension internally for staff working inside the corporation and externally through how it distributes content to audiences. Chapter 3 showed how scheduling enables the BBC to bracket out the anxieties of difference by segregating mainstream audiences from niche audiences. I demonstrated how the BBC schedules diverse content away from the mainstream in several ways.

First, it allocates late-night ‘efnik graveyard’ slots. Second, it confines topics defined as diverse to its smaller services, such as 1Xtra, enabling the wider BBC to abdicate from tackling structural diversity issues. Third, by creating special seasons like its 2016 Black and British season, its 2017 Gay Britannia season and its 2018 The Big British Asian Summer, which are usually broadcast on BBC Two and BBC Four rather than its mainstream channel BBC One.

The chapter then explored how the BBC uses impartiality and objectivity to maintain the impression that it is a trustworthy organisation that is integral to the BBC’s ontological security within the evolving media landscape. Through examining how the BBC handled two key race-related issues during its current charter period, I argued that impartiality and objectivity are operationalised myths that the BBC uses to govern conversations about race and distance race-related topics from being seen as a systemic problem to being a representation problem that the BBC can address through increasing the number of diverse staff it has. Due to governing diversity through mainstreaming and operationalising the myths of impartiality and objectivity, I argued that for the BBC, diversity is about impression management rather than tackling structural inequalities.

Chapter 4 focused on the comfort and reassurance pillar of the ontological security framework by exploring BBC Three’s online move. In it, I argued that scheduling was integral to how the BBC delivered ontological security to youth audiences through BBC Three. In its strategic rationale for moving BBC

Three online, the BBC consistently framed BBC Three as being freed from the broadcast schedule, enabling it to become a platform-neutral brand. However, I demonstrated how this narrative contradicted the strategies used to cater to youth audiences during its online-only period. As an online-only brand, BBC Three could not provide ontological security to youth audiences due to a lack of a curated television broadcasting schedule. Before BBC Three moved online, its schedule produced a sense of dailiness that catered to youth audiences' evening wind-down traditions. The BBC attempted to recreate the curatorial dailiness of the schedule through its 'Best of' and 'Daily Drop' pages, contradicting its strategic rationale for moving BBC Three online. The chapter argued that BBC Three was not freed from the constraints of broadcast schedules but longed for it as it was a necessary broadcasting technique for helping youth audiences navigate the flow of everyday life.

The broadcast flow within the schedule enables the BBC to produce a sense of trust and confidence in its channel brands. Chapter 4 showed how industrial assumptions about audiences' routines are embedded within how schedules offer comfort and reassurance by catering to audience needs. Consistent content curation within a schedule produces a sense of confidence and trust in the channel brand to deliver anticipatory pleasures and cater to specific needs states. Using BBC Three as an example, I showed how, before BBC Three's online move, the channel's routine broadcasts of imported US animated comedies such as *American Dad!* and *Family Guy* offered audiences comfort and reassurance that BBC Three catered to their wind-down needs.

As noted earlier, BBC Three's limited evening broadcasting hours also helped to reinforce this sense of trust and reassurance, as the channel only began broadcasting at 7pm. When BBC Three moved online, the BBC attempted to remediate the broadcasting flow through the BBC website and iPlayer. Still, it failed as it was caught in the middle of the BBC's mission to reinvent iPlayer as an online destination. I demonstrated that reinventing iPlayer as the front door to the BBC does not work, as the BBC's digital platforms rely heavily on the televisual flow within its broadcasting channels. BBC iPlayer's televisual experience has been built upon its direct relationship with broadcast television by acting as its catch-up destination. I showed that this also doesn't work as the BBC lacks the infrastructure to allow audiences to flow between its platforms and services digitally. In the case of BBC Three, the BBC failed to use flow as a broadcasting technique for providing ontological security to youth audiences.

Lastly, in Chapter 4, I also identified the broadcast flow as essential to how audiences discover new content and attribute it back to BBC brands and how broadcast channel brands communicate how they'd like to be valued. For example, in the run-up to BBC Three's online move, the junctions within the BBC Three schedule enabled the BBC to express how it would like audiences to perceive the value of a new online BBC Three. As such, it used the creation of new idents to produce a new identity for BBC Three that distanced itself from its broadcast channel. However, these idents and new branding focused on communicating the functional aspects of BBC Three's online iteration rather than the ontological elements. As such, it failed to consider how

broadcasting contributed to audiences' core emotions and feelings towards the BBC Three linear channel that previously played a role in their everyday lives.

This thesis demonstrated how liveness, scheduling, imagined communities, diversity, mainstreaming, impartiality, objectivity and flow contribute to the significance of the BBC's everydayness and act as crucial partners in how the BBC provides or fails to provide ontological security to its audience. The broadcasting components and organising principles assist the BBC with how it constructs the value of the BBC within the online media landscape. It explored how the BBC sometimes fails to provide ontological security through these components and principles by prioritising some audiences over others and by privileging the ontological security of the entire BBC within the uncertain media landscape rather than challenging its historical Reithian ideologies and assumptions about its role and thus failing to truly 'redefine the BBC for a new generation' as it laid out in the first annual plan of its new charter period.

By taking a media industries research approach, I was able to take inspiration from different fields of study, such as uses and gratifications and cultural studies, and use multiple methodologies like practitioner interviews and paratextual analysis to deliver a holistic examination of the processes, practices and structures used by the BBC to construct its value. This construction of its value is how the BBC, as a public service broadcaster, has managed to remain resilient within the media industries.

Future Research

As the BBC attempts to manage the 'two horse race' of the broadcasting and online viewing experience (BBC Annual Plan, 2017: 4), this raises questions of whether the online TV viewing experience fundamentally offers ontological security in a different way to broadcasting or whether it is a remediation of traditional legacy media with new manifestations. Future research could apply the ontological security framework to online TV to answer such questions and identify the key elements contributing to an online viewing experience. This research could explore how the core elements of online TV may or may not construct a different valued experience than broadcasting. Such research could then help us to better understand the construction of value within a media environment currently composed of traditional broadcasting and online viewing.

Additionally, as the ontological security framework provides an innovative way to think about how the BBC as a public service broadcaster constructs its value beyond an economic or public value lens, there is also an opportunity to apply the framework to other public service broadcasters who are also experiencing similar questions to the BBC about their role within the online media landscape. For example, Channel 4, which the UK Government announced in April 2022 that it planned to privatise, though soon abandoning plans in January 2023. Applying the framework to Channel 4 or other public service broadcasters could help to better understand how the value of public service broadcasting is constructed and what the future of public service broadcasting may look like within this online landscape.

Further research into the relationship between ontological security and media experiences could also involve interrogating the commercial space and non-public service broadcasting to see whether the provision of ontological security is inherently tied to public service broadcasting or whether it could be applied elsewhere. Such research could explore how people use other media and communication technologies to provide stability, comfort and belonging within their everyday lives. For example, within the media industries, this research could explore how people use audiobooks, podcasts and music streaming to provide a more nuanced understanding of how audio content provides ontological security.

In addition, there has been an eruption of chatbots that use Generative AI (artificial intelligence capable of producing new content such as text, images, audio, and code) and Large Language Models (LLMs). For example, in January 2023, Chat GPT became the fastest-growing consumer application in history, estimated to have reached 100 million monthly active users just two months after it launched (Hu, 2023), though soon overtaken by the launch of Meta's social media platform Threads in July 2023, which amassed more than 100 million users in less than five days (Ray, 2023). This user growth highlights a new opportunity to interrogate the eruption of AI technologies, such as Open AI's Chat GPT and DALL-E, Midjourney Inc's AI image generator, Google's Bard and Microsoft's Copilot. Exploring how early adopters have started integrating these technologies into their everyday lives

could provide initial insight into the impact these technologies may have on the media industries' future provision of ontological security.

Another area of exploration that pertains specifically to the BBC could provide a deeper analysis of how each of the BBC's broadcasting channels and radio stations construct their values to audiences. As the BBC attempts to reinvent itself for the online media landscape, understanding how each service currently provides value to its audiences via broadcasting will be necessary to reimagine these channel brands online to avoid a similar fate to BBC Three. This thesis also highlighted the age gap within the BBC services dedicated to catering to younger audiences and the potential impact of people's childhood experiences with the BBC on how they may value the BBC in adulthood. Interrogating how each of the BBC services constructs their value might better provide insight into why there is an age gap between CBBC and BBC Three target audiences and how this might be addressed.

Lastly, there is also an opportunity to conduct audience research into how people talk about broadcasting and the BBC. An audience research perspective would enable us to understand how broadcasting and the BBC operate within people's everyday routines and offer a view of how audiences think the BBC provide or does not provide value to them. Speaking directly to audiences, this research would be able to identify each of the three pillars of the ontological security framework and how they appear in audiences' media experiences. An audience research project would also help illuminate differences in diverse audiences' media experiences vs mainstream audiences and why.

The thesis has shown that the uncertainty about the future of the BBC sits within the corporation's ontological insecurity of the role of broadcasting within an ever-evolving media landscape that is impacted by cultural, social, technological, political, and economic conditions that influence how the BBC constructs, organises and manages our media experiences. During the years of multichannel expansion and the emergence of digital distribution platforms, which are sometimes referred to as the TVII and TVIII eras in the context of US television (Pearson, 2011) or the era of availability and plenty (Ellis, 2000a), Born and Prosser observed that 'the BBC's senior management ha[d] been under pressure to redefine the role and purposes of the BBC' (2001: 667). However, instead of searching for a 'redefinition of the public service ethos', the BBC was 'preoccupied with responding to political and economic pressures' from the 'Thatcher governments and responded to the need to fend off governmental hostility and the threat of privatisation' (ibid), as shown through the 'What has the BBC ever given us?' television advertisement that this thesis opened with.

Similar political and economic conditions in terms of the threat of privatisation continue to exist today, and this thesis has also shown the BBC's preoccupation with responding to political and economic pressures. For example, how it moved BBC Three online, how it intends to make iPlayer the front door to the BBC, how it can sell its programmes to streaming services without proper branding due to short-term financial gains over long-term stability and privileging the mainstream BBC One audience over diverse youth

audiences forgetting that they are also future licence fee payers. If the BBC preoccupies itself with responding to these pressures instead of focusing on how it provides ontological security to ALL its audiences, then in another 25 years' time, we will still be asking - what has the BBC ever done for us?

Appendix

Interviewees

Name	Position	Date of Interview
Adam Baxter	Director of Broadcasting Standards (Ofcom)	09.04.2021
Alison Winter	Portfolio Head of Audiences for Radio and Music (BBC)	26.11.2020
Anon	Ex-BBC Audience Researcher	21.04.2022
Anon	Ex-BBC Radio Manager	19.04.2021
Anon	Ex-BBC Broadcaster and Producer	22.04.2022
Anon	Policy Advisor (BBC)	21.12.2020
Anon	Research Manager (BBC)	29.04.2022
Anon	Ex-BBC Strategist	08.10.2020
Anon	Freelance Audio Producer	27.04.2022
Anon	Strategy Manager (BBC)	11.12.2020
Anon	Project Manager (BBC)	10.12.2020
Anon	Marketing Manager (BBC)	21.04.2021
Anon	Audio Commissioner (BBC)	09.06.2022
Emma Theedom	Portfolio Head of Audiences for News, Sports, Nations and Regions (BBC)	26.04.2021
Jane Lingham	Director of Brand (BBC)	13.04.2021
Jeroen Verspeek	Head of Audience Measurement (BBC)	01.04.2021
Max Rumney	Deputy CEO of PACT	31.03.2021
Mik Scarlet	Ex-BBC Broadcaster and Producer	20.04.2022

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