BUILDING INCLUSIVE NETWORKS IN THE FILM & TELEVISION INDUSTRY

PROJECT LEAD & AUTHOR
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1844 STUDIOS

WIFTA ALBERTA

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Building Inclusive Networks in the Film & Television Industry was written while on traditional territories in Alberta of the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit whose footsteps have marked these lands for centuries.

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The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations that emerge from this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Telefilm Canada, The Canada Media Fund, Alberta Cultural Industries, 1844 Studios, Ontario Creates, The Newfoundland and Labrador Film Development Corporation, the National Screen Institute, the National Film Board of Canada, or Women in Film & Television – Alberta. The Governments of Canada and their agencies are in no way bound by the recommendations contained in this document.

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ABSTRACT

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The objective of this 13-month qualitative research initiative was to identify factors responsible for Black and Indigenous Women and Women of Colour (BIPOC women), as well as non-binary individuals, being excluded from or included in film and television industry networking events. The researchers employed in-depth, semi-structured interviews to gather unstructured data. Forty participants across Canada were identified in a combined purposive and snowball sampling process, via access to community gatekeepers in the film and television industry.

Strategies of respondent validation during interviews, as well as triangulation with other sources of literature, were utilized to enhance the quality of data and data analysis. Data analysis consisted of coding to establish a framework of thematic ideas, and a descriptive analysis to distill recurrent and unique themes. The themes, presented as a metanarrative, were supplemented with actual quotations from interviewees. Identifying information was removed from the report to preserve the anonymity of research participants.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

BIPOC women and non-binary individuals perceived the value in attending film and television industry networking events as being able to offer immediate and long-term career advancement outputs. These desired outputs were identified as: entry into the industry (for emerging professionals), education and professional development opportunities, gaining recognizability, vertical and horizontal networking opportunities, and positive psychosocial feedback.

Participants went beyond describing the potential immediate benefit to their careers of attending such events and tapping into social networks in the field of film and television. They framed the importance of attending events as influencing the content that will be produced under the umbrella of Canadian cinema, increasing representation behind and in front of camera, rebalancing social hierarchies in the industry, strengthening the BIPOC film community, and fostering new, safer dynamics in film and television production.

However, despite recognizing the value of networking events, most of our participants who are BIPOC women or non-binary individuals did not have a positive experience attending them and felt "unwelcome".

This negative experience dissuaded some individuals from attending future events or made them feel that participation would be at their own risk. In discussing elements of networking events that made them feel "unwelcome" or "excluded", participants identified 12 factors, namely:

1. lack of diversity in the room;

2. being subjected to microaggressions;

3. experiencing overt aggressions;

4. experiencing macro-level (systemic or environmental) aggressions;

5. an organization's failure to address its historical shortcomings and reputation in terms of diversity and inclusion;

6. lack of diversity among presenters, MCs, hosts and panellists at the events;

7. lack of concern for the needs of women in the logistical considerations of the event;

8. cliquishness in the industry;

9. a history of being excluded from social networks;

10. oversights in the invitation to, outreach to, and integration of BIPOC women;

11. experiencing a lack of career advancement or professional development outputs from attending events;

12. absence or paucity of demographic data gathered on events.

Several individual aggravating and mitigating factors, discussed in the appendices below, were identified as intersecting with effects described above, namely career status, introversion/extroversion, privilege, the tendency to justify or deny aggressions, age, "attractiveness", affiliation status, race, culture, religion, disability, sexual orientation, and language.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS, TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the data, it is fair to conclude that BIPOC women face substantial barriers to inclusion in film and television social networks as early on as the initial planning, outreach, and invitation stages of these events. Some of these barriers originate in the structure, systems and power dynamics of the film and television organizations themselves. If the Canadian industry wants to see significant progress in terms of changes further down the line in the film value chain, then identified exclusionary barriers should be eradicated as a matter of priority.

Takeaways and recommendations in the form of a checklist were drafted by the researchers as a tool that can be used iteratively by film and television organizations as they aim to increase their awareness of factors that contribute to the inclusion/exclusion of BIPOC women in the network events they organize or sponsor. The checklist may help them implement initiatives that can ensure that future events are more inclusive. In addition, the checklist will assist stakeholders to be more proactive in addressing internal structural and systemic factors that create an environment of exclusion and marginalization which deters BIPOC women from attending industry events.

For future studies in this area, it should be noted that while our research fills a gap, many issues remain unexplored. Further consultation, focus groups, deep dives and quantitative studies will need to be conducted to corroborate the findings emerging from the current study. This research is exploratory in nature; it will raise questions and assist with determining a direction for future research.


TRACEY
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BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

BACKGROUND

Over the past eight years, an increasing number of reports have shed light on the imbalance in gender and diversity in the screen industries (Canadian Media Producers Association, 2018; Fraticelli, 2015; Galt, 2020; Pires, 2017; Liddy, 2016; Welch, 2018; Women In Film, 2018; Goulet & Swanson, 2014; Hunt, Ramón & Tran 2019; Interactive Ontario, 2017; Women in View 2018; Women In View, 2019; Library of Parliament, 2020; Kraicer et al, 2018; Lauzen, 2020; Liddy, 2020). These reports have approached the subject differently. Much of the research has focused on employment of women and/or Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour, both on screen and behind the camera, with a particular focus on the lack of female directors. Others show that BIPOC women producers and showrunners are more effective in hiring for gender and diversity balance. Regardless, much of the research focus has been on the production chain. View Appendix A for a review of the literature in the spheres of media studies as well as insights extrapolated from other spheres as it pertains to questions we explore with respect to diversity and inclusion in networking events. Except for a few studies that touch on the topic (e.g., Reelworld, 2020), little research has examined informal networking opportunities (i.e., in industry events), and how these gatherings might contribute to including or excluding BIPOC women in the industry.

Rhetorically, it is often stressed how important one's network is for building and sustaining a career in film and television. A person's initial networks can change the trajectory of their career. Lack of opportunities for vertical or horizontal networking, especially in geographical centres with a smaller screen industry, restrict options for employment as well as prospects for creators to advance their own projects. On the other side of the coin, when BIPOC women are missing from these gatherings, their absence perpetuates practices of hiring from the "inner circle" (i.e., those who have already been hired and those who are most visible). Such systemic practices of exclusion can prove to be detrimental especially for emerging talent and aspiring producers who happen to be from the BIPOC community.

We initiated the design of this study when we observed the lack of representation of BIPOC women at industry events throughout Alberta. Initial pilot interviews suggested that this trend was also observed in other provinces. We have also recorded underrepresentation of BIPOC women in the membership of our industry organizations and their boards. Pilot interviews pointed to systemic factors that might perpetuate an environment of exclusion in vital industry events. Closely examining the reasons for the paucity of representation at those events is especially important because it may be one of the factors that contributes to the disparity and inequity witnessed further down the production chain; the disparity and inequity already revealed in much of the current literature. In other words, our study gets closer to the root cause of the problem.

RESEARCH QUESTION

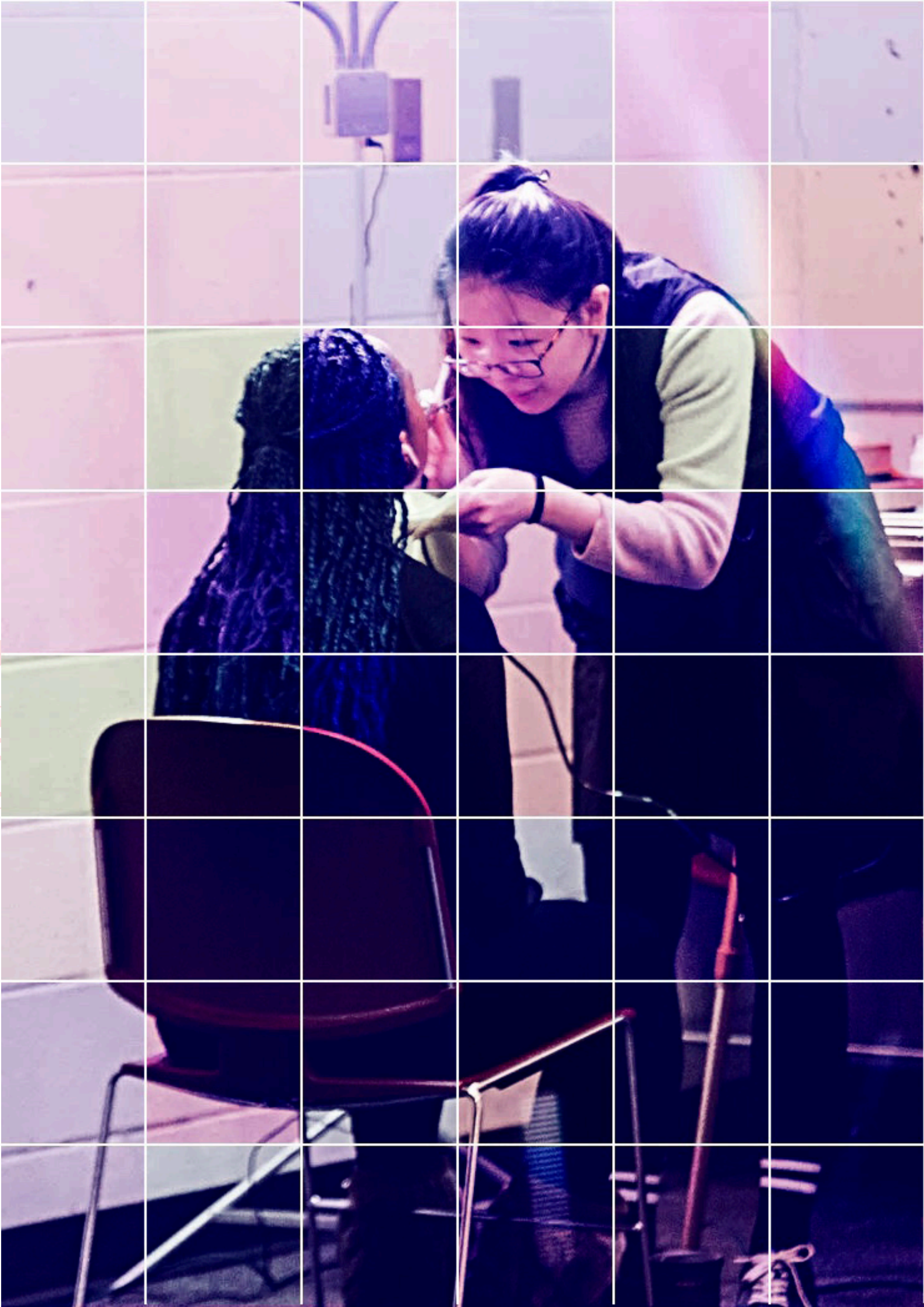
IN OUR INVESTIGATION WE EXPLORED THE FOLLOWING FOUR RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- What are the barriers to accessing industry events for BIPOC women?
- What is the value or perceived value of attending networking events?
- What are some of the ways in which industry events can be made more accessible and inclusive for BIPOC women?
- What are some of the initiatives, programs, or practices in Canada (or internationally) that have had a positive impact on representation at industry events? And what are the lessons learned from those initiatives?

BENEFITS OF THE STUDY FOR CANADA'S MEDIA INDUSTRY

Insights from the current project can be put to practical use for the benefit of the Canadian media industry; some of the benefits are as follows:

- The results and recommendations checklist below will assist in increasing stakeholders' awareness of factors that contribute to the inclusion/exclusion of BIPOC women in the networking events they organize or sponsor and help them implement initiatives that can ensure that their future events are more inclusive.
- The study can be used as a starting point for panel discussions and deep dives into issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion in social networks within the industry in different locales.
- The findings might nudge stakeholders to be more proactive in addressing internal structural and systemic shortfalls that create an environment of exclusion and marginalization and deter BIPOC women from attending industry events.



SCOPE & METHODOLOGY

SCOPE

The scope of this initiative exploring factors that contribute to the inclusion/ exclusion of BIPOC women in film and television networking events is as follows:

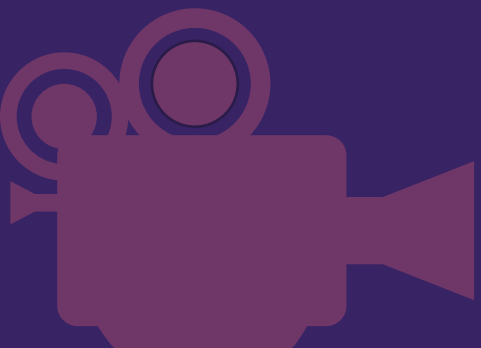
- The project timeline spanned 13 months from beginning to end, with a 10-month research and reporting period followed by a 3-month promotional campaign (including, deep dive virtual discussions with industry stakeholders across Canada).
- The research examines the experiences of 33 BIPOC women and two non-binary individuals who are part of various segments of the film value chain across Canada.
- In addition to conducting interviews from our population of interest, as described above, we interviewed five White women who are active in the Canadian film and television industry as a comparison group.
- To understand a wide slice of the experiences of BIPOC women in the industry, we selected participants who are diverse in terms of race, age, religion, career status, geographical location, language, role in the industry and sexual orientation.

METHODOLOGY

The following methodology guided our qualitative study.

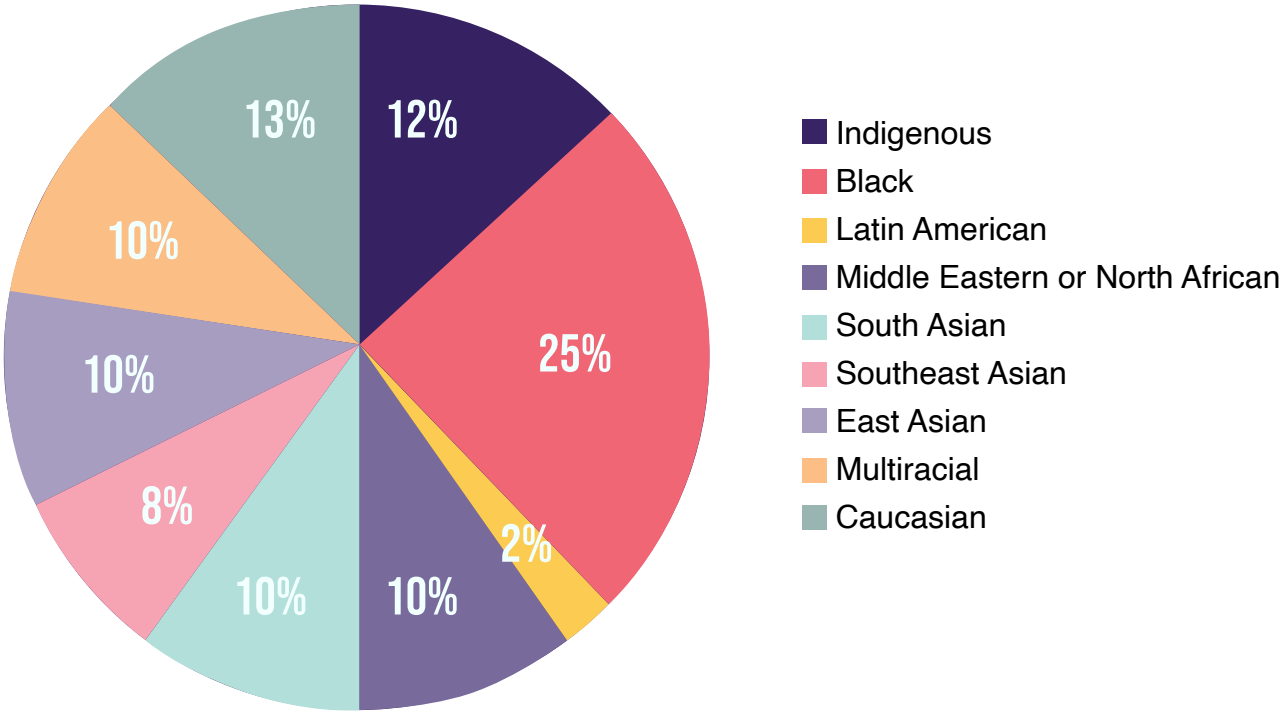
SAMPLING

- Research subjects were identified through a combination of purposive sampling.[1] and snowball sampling [2]. To ensure that we were accessing a wide range of participants, we contacted over 50 individuals, and enlisted community gatekeepers, including racialized organizations, coops and informal groups within the film and television industry across Canada.
- Our sampling process yielded a list of over 80 individuals from which we sampled.
- 35 BIPOC women or non-binary individuals and 5 White women (comparison group) were selected for an interview.



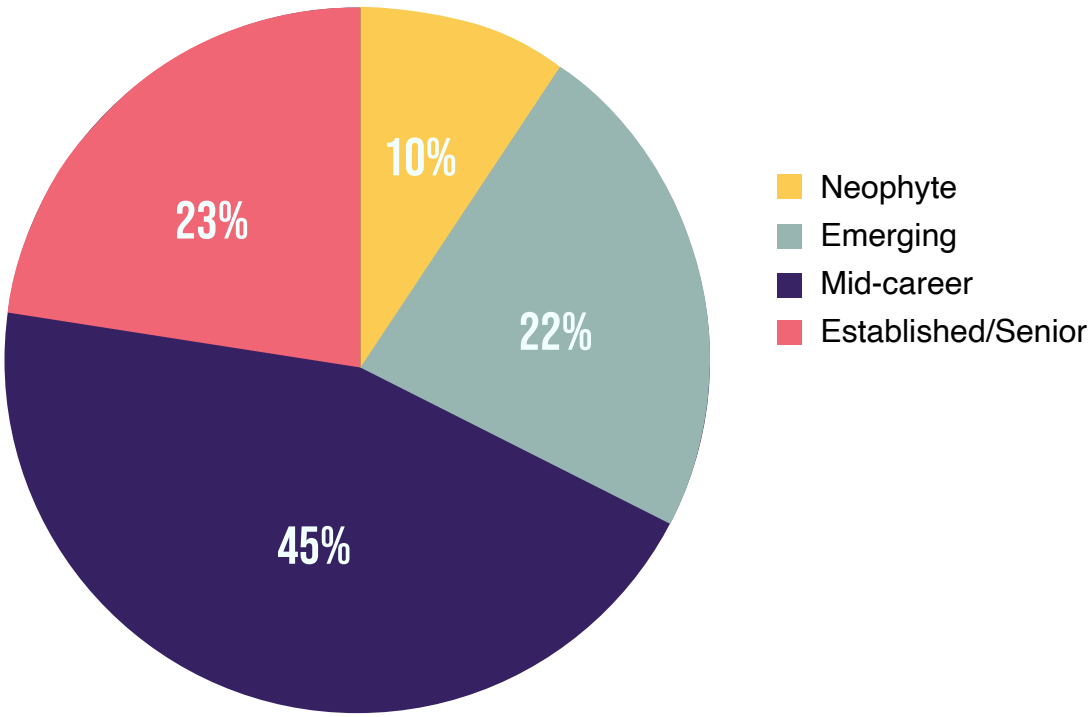
[1] Purposeful sampling is a non-probability sampling technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest, a sample of elements that represents a cross-section of the population of interest.
[2] Snowball sampling is a non-probability recruitment technique often utilized in qualitative research in which research participants assist researchers in identifying other potential interview subjects.

BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY INDIGENOUS AND RACIALIZED COMMUNITY

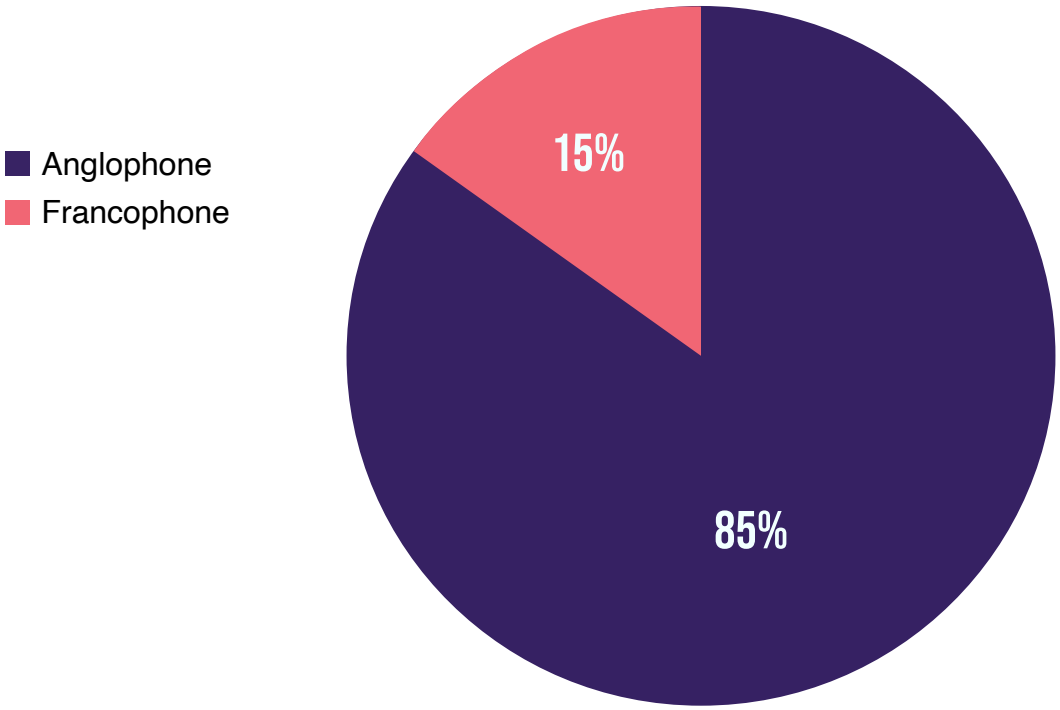


Note : the terminlogy for Indigenous and Racialized categories follows the industry guidance "Terminology Guide for Data Collection on Racialized and Indigenous Communities" prepared by the CMF-FMC

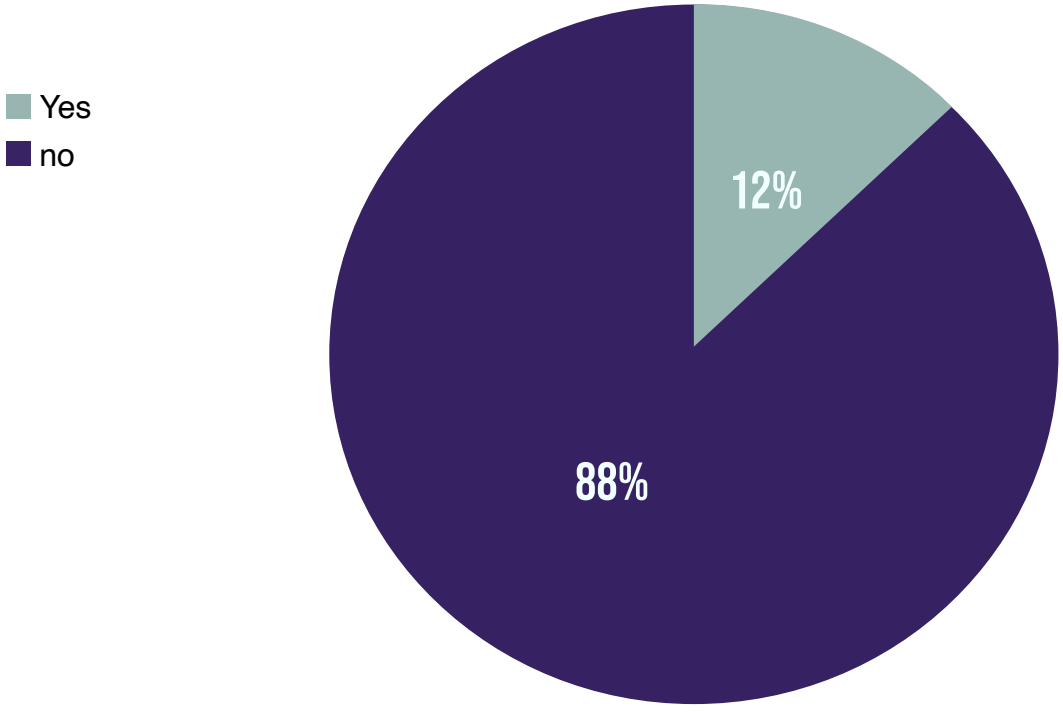
BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY CAREER STATUS



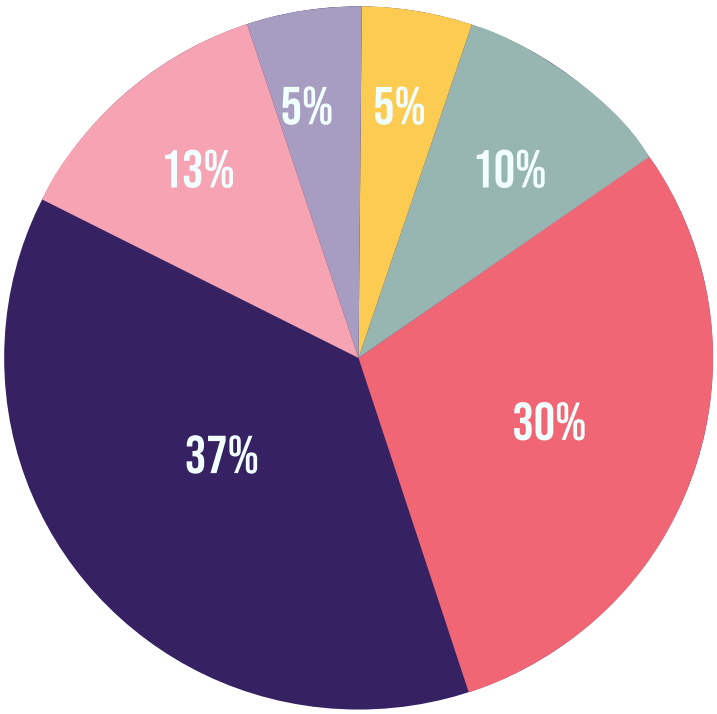
BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS' DOMINANT TONGUE



PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFYING AS NEURODIVERGENT OR LIVING WITH DISABILITY



BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS BY REGION



DATA COLLECTION AND STORAGE

- We employed in-depth semi-structured interviews via Zoom lasting between 35 minutes and 1 hour and 15 minutes each to collect our data (see Appendix B for Interview Schedules 1 and 2).
- Interviews were recorded and saved to an external hard drive.
- Audio recordings were then transcribed.
- The above activities resulted in the accumulation of unstructured data (transcripts and research notes).
- The data were protected and encrypted at every stage of the research process.

DATA ANALYSIS

- Our method of qualitative data analysis consisted of coding— that is, categorizing the text to establish a framework of thematic ideas.
- A computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (NVivo) was utilized to assist with the coding process.
- Once the data were organized into a framework, a descriptive analysis was undertaken in which recurrent and unique themes were identified and disaggregated.

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS:

Based on some of our pilot interviews, the researchers understood that participants were concerned that their stories may be identifiable to industry organizations and producers and could impact their careers. We acknowledge that there was also a certain level of mistrust for the umbrella organization under the auspices of which this study was undertaken. We took into account that some responses may have been impacted by social desirability bias. Furthermore, we were not able to interview all the individuals selected for our initial sample, for various reasons. Among those reasons was the mistrust or weariness that has resulted from such exercises in the past, because they felt that such data collection initiatives did not result in significant changes in the experiences of BIPOC women.

To mitigate these limitations, we kept our research team deliberately small and aimed to build a strong rapport with the gatekeepers whom we enlisted as well as with our interview subjects. Furthermore, we employed only BIPOC women to conduct interviews and maintained a neutral approach in the interview process. We were also careful to inform participants that identifying information would not be disclosed.

FINDINGS

WHY ATTENDING NETWORKING EVENTS IS SEEN AS IMPORTANT

Regardless of the quantity or quality of their experience as participants in industry networking events, Black and Indigenous Women and Women of Colour (BIPOC women) in our study viewed these events as valuable, even "vital". Only 5% of our sample did not perceive a value for them in attending these events, stating role-specific reasons why attending networking events did not pertain to them.

BIPOC women attended events for nine reasons.

1. ENTRY INTO INDUSTRY

Participants noted that the advantage of networking events was to gain access to the film and television industry. For emerging filmmakers, in particular, there was a sense that attending networking events could "turn the key of access" to a field that is perceived as "closed off" and insular. Some attended to find mentors who could facilitate entry into, and advancement in, the industry. It was also an opportunity for some to learn about the track to entering closed organizations, unions, and guilds, which are gatekeepers to further advancement.

For filmmakers from remote regions (e.g., the Northern Territories), attending networking events in film hubs was a chance to get connected to a film industry that was perceived as not being as established in their region.

2. EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Across all experience levels, BIPOC women cited opportunities for learning and professional development as prime reasons for attending networking events, whether this be through formal presentations or informal conversations.

There is an opportunity at these events, inter alia, to learn about the landscape of the Canadian film industry, to glean information about what executives are looking for and about their tastes, and to gain information about new funding opportunities. This knowledge, our participants felt, could be used to refine their project pitches, strengthen their slates, and ultimately advance their careers.

3. BEING SEEN

Participants noted the value of "showing their face" at events and gaining recognizability among their peers and, especially among decisionmakers and tastemakers in the industry. They described attending industry events as a way to "let people know who you are" and "amplify your voice"; to "take up space" and "represent", as well as to "build rapport" in your film community, all of which, they felt, could redound in career advancement outputs.

4. VERTICAL NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES AS A TRACK TO CAREER ADVANCEMENT

One of the most important reasons why content creators and producers among our sample attended networking events was because this was a space to gain access to funders and decisionmakers and leave the imprint of a personal connection with them, which increases the likelihood of repeat communications with those gatekeepers and ultimately an avenue to a greenlight for their projects. Other participants felt that networking events offered the opportunity to find more established producers with inroads to decisionmakers.

Several crew members and postproduction practitioners among our participants felt that networking events were places to potentially "find work", either by being hired directly or getting a referral to work on a show.

5. HORIZONTAL NETWORKING

Participants were also keen to point out the importance of horizontal networking opportunities. They tended to engage in horizontal networking to meet filmmakers, either on a purely social basis or to potentially attach collaborators to projects. Regarding this sort of networking, it was

repeatedly stated by participants that they wished to meet other BIPOC folks and other women in an industry that is so "white male dominated". This was especially so for women working in areas where they were particularly underrepresented (e.g., visual effects and camera).

Establishing a community around oneself was seen as a by-product of horizontal networking. Participants who have worked in the industry for a few years emphasized that it is "not possible to sustain a career in such a collaborative industry alone". Those who were mid-career and senior in the film industry would attend events to find potential coproduction partners, thus increasing the likelihood of advancing larger scale projects.

For women who were also a part of intersectional groups, such as the LGBTQ2S+ community, the disabled community, or the neurodivergent community, attending the events was a means of finding others to work with who were from their community. Forming these collaborative bonds helped them to feel less alone in their work and aims and to "collectively lift each other up and deal with the barriers [they face] together".

Ultimately this sort of networking opportunity allowed participants to feel connected and plugged into the film community in Canada.

6. POSITIVE PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECT

Our participants also drew attention to the unquantifiable positive psychosocial effects that come from attending networking events. Gaining confidence, growing one's character, and expanding one's perspective were all cited as reasons why attending networking events was considered important. Seeing others "doing the impossible", especially other BIPOC women, gave them impetus to continue engaging in "this difficult work".

7. TO EXECUTE ROLE-RELATED TASKS

For executives, or those embedded in an institution, attending such events was a way to represent that institution and to demonstrate their accessibility; to foster partnerships, to build relationships with new filmmakers, and to identify emerging talent.

8. SOCIAL JUSTICE

For BIPOC women, the ideals of social justice played a role in the importance they placed on attending networking events; something that did not appear in conversations with our comparison group of White women. A few participants noted that these events provided a space for them to amplify BIPOC voices or to help lift-up their community. This was especially the case with participants whose experience was intersectional in nature, such as folks who belonged to other underrepresented groups (e.g., the LGBTQ2S+ community, disabled community).

9. MUTUALISM/ALTRUISM

Finally, our participants, especially those who were at mid-career and senior levels, noted mutualistic and altruistic aims for attending networking events. They submitted that they took part in those events to "give back the help that others gave [them]" and engage in "net weaving" processes thereby building a "stronger, more diverse filmmaking community".

Regardless of whether networking events offered immediate career advancement opportunities or were perceived simply as pleasant experiences, most participants saw the potential that networking events offered to plant the seed of a catalytic or snowball effect that could ultimately advance one's career. There was a clear desire among participants in our study to find "likeminded" individuals and to see others from their communities attend in greater numbers.

FACTORS ABOUT NETWORKING EVENTS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO EXCLUSION

To begin this section, it is important first to view the overall picture. Only six out of the total 40 participants (15%) indicated that their networking experience was generally positive. Other participants indicated that their experience was either generally negative or "varied", for the most part, weighing the perceived benefits of attending events (as outlined in the previous section) with experiences which made them feel excluded, unwelcome, insulted, or unsafe or which led them to feel dejected about the potential for progress within the industry. This section discusses:

1. Lack of Diversity in the Room

2. Experiencing Microaggressions

3. Experiencing Overt Aggressions

4. Macro-level (Systemic or Environmental) Aggressions
   a. Tokenism
   b. Failure to address socio-economic barriers to entry
   c. Failure to address accessibility of event and venue

5. An organization's failure to address its historical shortcomings in terms of diversity and inclusion (lack of diversity in composition of membership/leadership, reputation of discrimination within the organization, etc.)

6. Lack of diversity among presenters, MCs, hosts (the outward face of the organization is not diverse).

7. Lack of concern about the needs of women (safety, childcare, etc.) in terms of logistical considerations of the event

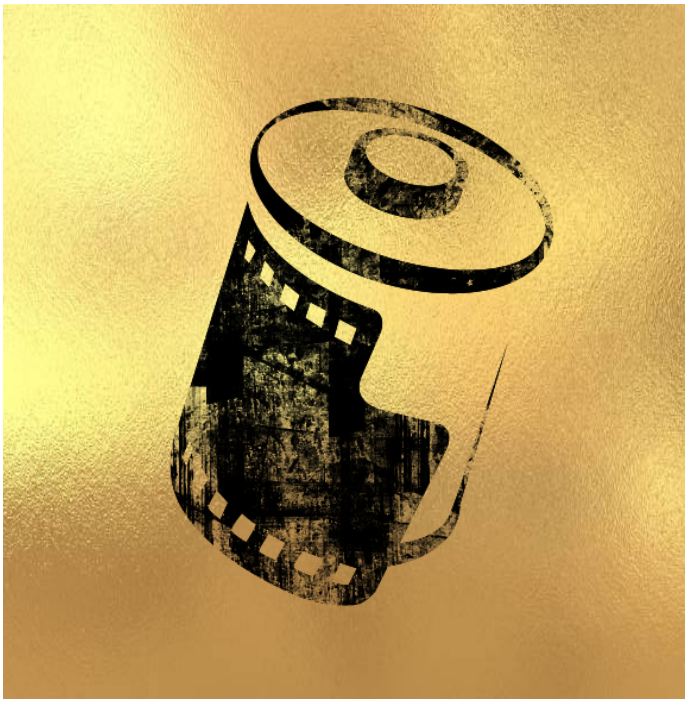
8. Cliquishness and failure to integrate newcomers who are BIPOC women

9. History of being excluded from networks
   a. Film Schools
   b. Unions

10. Oversights in the invitation and outreach process

11. Experience a lack of career advancement or professional development outputs from attending events

12. Lack of Demographic Data Gathered on Events



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The analysis of results presented in this section is a master narrative of the systemic and structural factors in film and television networking events which contribute to the exclusion of BIPOC women, as this is the primary focus of this paper. For a discussion of individual factors, aggravating and mitigating, which play a part in the experience of BIPOC women attending networking events, see Appendix C.

1. LACK OF DIVERSITY IN THE ROOM

This study was initiated because researchers noticed a lack of diversity in a range of film and television industry events held in their locale. One question that was posed to all participants was designed to ascertain the extent to which this phenomenon has been observed across other Canadian provinces and territories. Of those who responded to this question, 79% of our participants (including the comparison group of White participants) did not feel that BIPOC women were equally represented among attendees.

> *"I'll tell you what, every time I walk into a place, you are looking around a room, you just want to see the next person who is Black or close to Black... and then someone finally walks in and you break into a smile… every time I go to these things, I was like the only person [of colour] there, or just two of us, max three… I am like, where is everybody, where are we?"*

Some individuals (5%) reported not paying attention to the demographic composition. Of these, a handful hinted at feeling a subconscious awareness of the phenomenon.

> *"…when you think about it, when you actually think about it, I wonder how many times I felt something but couldn't put a name on it to address what I am feeling and seeing… it's actually attributed to, it's a room full of guys or a room full of white people."*

This very phenomenon, of the paucity of diversity in the room, was in and of itself a contributing factor to feelings of exclusion. It dissuaded some women in our sample from wanting to attend other industry events or motivated them to attend siloed events for BIPOC filmmakers (such as those organized by the Winnipeg Indigenous Filmmakers Collective, or Black Women Film! Canada, BIPOC Film & TV, ReelWorld Institute, etc.), where they felt represented, included, and supported by their peers, and knew that their stories would be heard and understood.

There was a sense amongst several participants that the BIPOC community is much friendlier and more welcoming, leading to an easier networking experience in which attendees were more open to their stories, would make a greater effort to understand each other's points of view and would quickly correct any misunderstandings or offensive interactions.

It should be noted that the lack of diversity in film and television events described above was noticed by participants in smaller film centers (such as in the prairies) as well as in major metropolitan centres and film hubs.

> *"Toronto is one of the most racially diverse cities in all of Canada if not, in the world, but you would still be surprised if you went to many of these networking functions here in Toronto; it is also predominantly white in its attendance… but it is… only now being looked at in a structural and systemic way whereas I think that previously because they were informal spaces it was not something that anyone really paid too much attention to."*

2. EXPERIENCING MICROAGGRESSIONS

The foremost factor leading participants to feel excluded while attending networking events, and deterred some of them from attending subsequent events, was the experience of being subjected to microaggressions [3].

> *"…I think small things have the most impact… I used to go to markets for a project with my producer and the producer was white and we would meet someone or go to meet the sales agent and they would just talk to her and act like I wasn't there, or I was the window dressing."*

More than half of our BIPOC participants who responded on this topic (51%) reported experiencing microaggressions from White attendees at networking events—at the hands of peers, event convenors, special guests (speakers/mentors) and decisionmakers. For many it was constant, a "maddening experience that happens all the time". Additionally, 10% of the BIPOC participants did not indicate that they experienced microaggressions, but they did describe encounters which were deemed by the research team as 'microaggressions'.

For participants, microaggressions took many forms. Some were quite covert, to the point where participants felt uncomfortable or unwelcomed while attending events, but it took additional reflection afterwards to understand what elicited those feelings. Other aggressions were much more blatant (note overt aggressions will be discussed in the next section).

Before describing these phenomenological experiences, the researchers felt it necessary to define a few key concepts (such as "Whiteness" and "White-dominant culture"), as they come into play later in this discussion (see the Textbox below for a discussion on "Whiteness").

https://www.pngegg.com/en/png-owrvk

[3] A microaggression is indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a particular group, typically an underrepresented or marginalized group.

"WHITENESS" AND NETWORKING IN THE FILM & TELEVISION INDUSTRY

"Whiteness "and "White racialized identity" refer to the way in which White people, their customs, culture, and belief structure operates as the dominant standard within an ecosystem (such as the film and television industry within a given locale). All other groups of people are compared to the standard.

Upon review of literature, such as that discussed in the introductory remarks of this paper, it is evident that Whiteness and the normalization of White racial identity has been the central feature within the culture of the film industry, not just in Canada, but throughout the world. This normalization has created a culture in which non-white persons have seen or treated as inferior or abnormal behind and in front of camera, as well as the networking events—the latter we discuss below.

This white-dominant culture tends to operate as a social mechanism by which White people have the advantage of navigating spaces feeling and being viewed as "normal" (National Museum of African-American History and Culture, 2020).

While those who identify as white rarely have to think about their racial identity in social events such as networking events (i.e., due to the normalization of their identity), BIPOC people are made to feel self-conscious about the racial identity, due to the systemic and interpersonal racism that continue to exist in our industry.

The normalization of whiteness often plays out in terms of microaggressions targeted at people of color; these include verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults. Microgressions may or may not be intentional but, regardless, they communicate exclusive hostile, derogatory, or harmful messages (Fitchburg State University, 2021).

NINE OF THE MOST REPORTED MICROAGGRESSIONS ARE DISCUSSED BELOW. QUOTATIONS FROM OUR PARTICIPANTS HAVE BEEN USED TO ILLUSTRATE EACH TYPE OF AGGRESSION.

1. Treated as if invisible ("they do not see your value", "lack of openness to cultural experiences", "they're talking to you and also scanning the room… always looking for a more important person to speak to", "I'm not what they [executives] are looking for", "I'm a number in a game of numbers", "you're treated like the tag along… people think you're someone's girlfriend", "no one cared about me until they found out I had a significant role", "they wouldn't open up the conversation to include me… it was like going to high school all over again").

This phenomenon is made worse by the impression (as discussed in the section above) that there are very few BIPOC women in the room to begin with, nor are they readily seen at the forefront of the event as presenters, chairs, or MCs, and when awards play a part of the event, they are not awarded equally to men or White women for comparable achievements.

2. Treated like an alien in their own land ("where are you from?", "you are so ethnic").

3. Comments which assert the myth of meritocracy ("it doesn't matter if you're Indigenous, if your work is good, that's what people care about").

4. Pathologizing cultural values, communication style, or storytelling style ("our stories are circular… but there is a heavy, heavy pressure to follow the Western linear story arc", "[the speed pitching style] is forceful, it's not a part of our culture; some of my friends are like, 'I'm not going down there to sell myself'", "why are you so angry", "they pulled me aside [before the workshop] and said, 'you have to be nice to people, [especially] commissioning editors; you can't be confrontational", "we'd be painted as the angry Black women when speaking out about issues").

5. Treated like a second-class citizen compared to White people and/or men in the room with comparable experience ("people still act like I don't have experience", ""we joke a little bit about it in the racialized community in Toronto where we say we've been emerging for three decades, we'll be emerging right into our retirement", "they told me… we are looking for high quality projects", "you get grouped into the diversity category… they [turned to me and said], 'our diversity program is full'"; "there is an expectation that White women are more serious about it [filmmaking] and they won't give up").

6. Patronization ("people would look at me like, 'who is this kid'?", "people assume that you're new and you don't know anything").

7. Gaslighting. [4]

8. Protectionism ("people don't want to share information, knowledge or opportunities… to avoid competition.").

9. Lack of cultural competency on the part of other attendees or erroneous assumptions about culture and racialized content ("people have their own preconceived narrative about you", "they view [your stories] as unrelatable", "people have a pop culture understanding of what people from another culture should be writing about… and then question your experiences… they're more comfortable with racialized tropes", "when you're pitching [racialized content] you have to start from before the 'once upon a time'… people are not curious about BIPOC stories", "culturally specific stories are not seen as universal stories", "so many non-evidence-based assumptions of who the Canadian audience is and what they are looking for").

[4] Gaslighting is the act of undermining another person's reality by denying facts, causing them to question their sanity, memories and/or perception of reality.

It should be noted that while most of our participants experienced microaggression based on sex and race, it was compounded by ageism — discrimination based on experience level in the industry. Ageism impacted women who were perceived as young (despite their actual age); participants emphasized that other attendees confounded their perceived age with their experience level. Those who were viewed as being younger tended to be more readily treated as unimportant, invisible, and inexperienced. Ageism also impacted older women and led to feelings of invisibility, linked to a lack of perceived attractiveness.

"When you are older, you set boundaries and say 'no' and then on top of that you're not good looking. … I think it's the same; there's invisibility, the incredible prejudice towards women of colour, 'you're not even a woman'… If you were a man, it would be one thing; if you were a White woman, it would be not as good, but you are not even a woman."

Established BIPOC women experienced microaggressions earlier on in their careers, but even those who were highly established in the industry reported that they still experienced microaggressions, especially when encountering attendees who did not recognize them.

Some participants who identified as being from the disabled community noted that they faced "three layers of challenge" and microaggressions "on three accounts". Experiences of microaggressions and overt aggressions persisted in the wider film community, causing them to "second guess" themselves.

"…will they welcome me; will I be ignored… I second guess myself based on past experiences…will they value my contribution; will I be respected?"

They reminded us that they did not just experience microaggressions from the wider community, but also from within the disabled community.

"…racism is rampant in the deaf community too… first they judge me by the color of my skin…"

Finally, the light skinned bias played a mitigating role for several of our BIPOC participants, who acknowledged that they could navigate White spaces with relative ease compared to darker skinned women. But this led to other issues, such as being questioned about their racial identity and the validity of their stories, being excluded from opportunities because they do not meet the "optics" of representing a particular racialized community and being privy to racist jokes and prejudicial comments "not intended for" them.

Furthermore, BIPOC women, in addition to experiencing microaggressions due to their racial identities, also experienced gender-based microaggressions which compounded the adverse impact of these encounters.

"…a lot of men would set up … meetings with me and it turns out they just wanted a date... they would try to get me drunk… he feels rejected and shut down and I'm on a blacklist…"

https://imgbin.com/png/AFa9Zs5J/photography-logo-camera-png#

These aggressions included: sexual objectification; subjection to sexist language, misogyny or assumption of inferiority due to gender; restriction of their role in the event due to gender; denial of the reality of sexism in the industry; backlash against gender equity programming within the industry ("there are no funding programs for people like me [white men]… funding will go to women or BIPOC people… poor guys are left out"); sexist jokes; invisibility.

Because of these experiences, participants felt they had to alter the way they dressed, their communication style and their travel arrangements. Some became increasingly conscious of other participants who were consuming alcohol and exhibiting risky behaviours. Others felt the need to dress in certain ways to be taken seriously.

While our comparison group of White women and our BIPOC participants both experienced gender microaggressions equally, there are certain kinds of aggressions, racial in undertone as outlined above, that impacted only BIPOC women and compounded the adverse impact of these negative encounters.

Even at events convened by organizations mandated to advance the work of femme-identifying filmmakers, microaggressions played a part of the experience of BIPOC women, who felt gaslighted when raising their concerns about diversity and inclusion.

> *"It almost feels like turning their minds to these issues [diversity and inclusion for BIPOC individuals] is taking away from the main issue of gender equity. Because it has always been white women first. And I think that there is a sense that the message [of equality for women] is being diluted by saying 'all women'. When all women present doesn't mean white women in certain settings."*

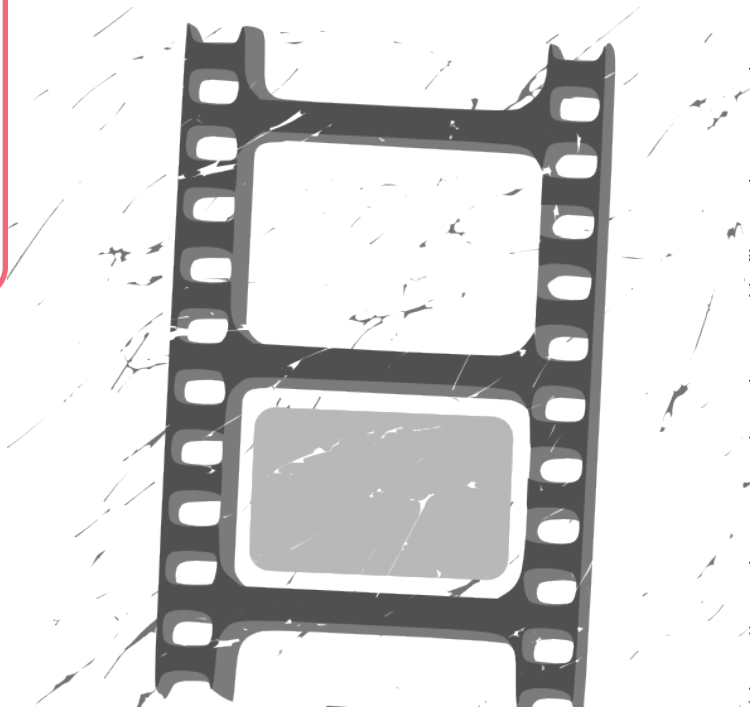
3. EXPERIENCING OVERT AGGRESSIONS

While overt racism, sexism, and sexual violence were less frequently reported than covert aggressions, they were nonetheless a significant factor in disinclining several women in our sample from returning to networking events.

These experiences ranged from being on the receiving end of racist comments, having one's cultural experience publicly invalidated, being discredited in a backlash against equity initiatives/mandates, being criticized in front of their peers, being sexually harassed by other attendees, and being subjected to unwanted sexual advances from other attendees who were in positions of power (decisionmakers).

> *"I got to a point in my career where all the interactions you have with people are so insulting and abrasive and not even micro aggression, just major aggressions, that I stopped networking completely for many years."*

Of those who responded to questions about experiencing overt aggressions, 29% either reported experiencing them and/or described such encounters.



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4. MACRO-LEVEL (SYSTEMIC OR ENVIRONMENTAL) AGGRESSIONS

TOKENISM

> *"I'm never invited unless they want something from me."*

Tokenism is the practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to give the appearance of sexual or racial equality within a space. It is also a phenomenon that takes many forms (Ho, 2018). According to our BIPOC participants, tokenism was a major factor which caused them to feel unwelcome at some industry networking events.

Thirty-four percent of our BIPOC participants spoke of observing tokenism at industry networking events. They especially noted tokenism during the recent racial reckoning (in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement), when film and television organizations went out of their way to show "what side of history they were on".

While our participants were encouraged by the fact that more BIPOC women were being invited to events, especially as presenters, moderators, and other front-facing attendees, they were concerned that these individuals were only invited for the "optics", so that organizations could appear inclusive. Participants were frustrated at seeing diversity for the sake of it, especially when it came to having BIPOC women on panels when they were not subject-matter experts in the area about which they were invited to speak. Others were put off by instances in which BIPOC performers were hired for an event, but BIPOC people were not honoured on stage and were sparse among attendees.

Participants were savvy at parsing tokenism, as they have "seen it before", in other periods when the industry was called to account for lack of inclusion (e.g., in the days of the "Me Too" movement) and were aware of its detrimental effects.

They could "tell which organizations are genuine" by the sort of programming and workshops they offer, and the voices they include in their communications, events, as well as their online presence, and they tended to avoid events held by organizations engaging in tokenism.

> *"I get frustrated, … who is being presented is just to show, 'oh, look we're diverse', [with] this token and token that. But actually, the people [making] the decisions or [making up the] structure of the organization are still all White. Those who benefit from the funds are all White… maybe it's because I'm around long enough but I see the faces and I'm like does that person have any decision-making powers or [are they] put there because this is something being asked for at this moment. Is this actually reflective of change in the industry, where the power is?"*

Most exasperating to our participants was that this front-facing work is being done "without being backed up by the work needed to ensure that the organization is actually inclusive". Organizations failed to change the structure, hierarchy, systems, and power dynamics to include BIPOC women. As such, our participants were concerned that the changes seen today, which are reactive and linked to the socio-political climate in which we operate, may not stand the test of time.

FAILURE TO ADDRESS SOCIO-ECONOMIC BARRIERS TO ENTRY

> *"…training and participating in the arts are a privilege…"*

There are systemic factors which not only inhibit BIPOC women from entering the field of film and television to begin with, but also "weed folks out". The difference between equality and equity rang clear in the data.

EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Equality has to do with giving everyone the exact same resources, whereas equity involves distributing resources based on the needs of the recipients.

Many film and television events do not have requirements for accreditation and are technically open to everyone, equally. However, the prohibitive costs of attending certain events make it difficult for individuals from marginalized groups to participate.

In Canada, Socioeconomic Status (SES), race and ethnicity are intimately intertwined. In terms of stratification, race and ethnicity often determine a person's socioeconomic status (Houle, 2020). Discrimination and marginalization can thwart upward mobility for ethnic and racial minorities in the film industry, which in turn limit their ability to attend events.

The pernicious nature of financial barriers hindering progress of BIPOC women was particularly well stated by a participant who said, "The more events you go to the more recognizable a face you become… but you have to be really tenacious and take on the longevity of being able to show up event after event, and that can be expensive and that can be exhausting."

Several of our participants have experienced living in poverty or identified as coming from a lower SES family. Often cited by our participants, were exorbitant costs related to:

- Membership fees for certain organizations, unions and guilds prohibiting attending events geared toward members (or offering financial incentives for members to attend)
- Ground travel and airfare (especially for filmmakers from remote regions)
- Purchasing clothing for events, particularly awards events and galas taking place in prestigious locations
- Childcare required to attend events
- For online events, the high cost of internet for individuals living in the Northern Territories
- Events passes

There is a certain level of privilege associated with being able to attend events that the organizations take for granted.

> *"It's already a sort of a middle-class business anyway, but if you want any variety in it you have to somehow recognize that not everyone is coming from an upper-middle-class suburban life… particularly if talking about immigrants, specifically so for refugees, but really anyone… [who doesn't] have generational wealth behind [them]; it's like three times harder to get in the door much less feel comfortable and then feel heard on top of that."*

Participants felt that organizations could be much more sensitive and equitable in terms of opening access to individuals coming from marginalized backgrounds. Even organizations that are meant to promote equity and inclusion, such as those geared toward promoting femme-identifying filmmakers could do a better job of ensuring that this inclusion extends to all women. Part of this means lifting barriers in terms of price point and taking into consideration what message the selection of venue sends to attendees and those considering attending.

> *"…there are a lot of barriers… the cost of these events [geared toward women] in the business seems to be really targeted toward women in c-suite level jobs that have hundred k plus salaries; so, they can afford these couple thousand-dollar memberships and all of these fancy lunches and cocktails. Right away the price point dictates who you are going to have in the room or who is going to be comfortable in the room … I think it's thinking about how to do it so that [you're not making people] feel excluded because of their status in the event."*

The reputation of the venue in which an event is held, the location of the venue with respect to the demographic composition of the area, and the accessibility of a venue by public transportation, were mentioned by a few participants as communicating a message as to who is invited and welcome to an event and who is not.


VIVE

FAILURE TO ADDRESS ACCESSIBILITY OF EVENT AND VENUE

Additional questions about accessibility were raised by participants from the disabled community, some of whom were unequivocal about the lack of industry concern or support for them to be able to participate in networking events. Something as simple as not ensuring that a venue is accessible for wheelchair access, or that audio-visual presentations include closed captioning, or that an ASL interpreter is present at events, made some festivals and events "completely inaccessible" to filmmakers from this community. This reflected, for participants, an industry-wide dismissive attitude toward folks from the disabled community.

5. AN ORGANIZATION'S FAILURE TO ADDRESS ITS HISTORICAL SHORTCOMINGS IN TERMS OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (LACK OF DIVERSITY IN COMPOSITION OF MEMBERSHIP/LEADERSHIP, REPUTATION OF DISCRIMINATION WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION, ETC.)

One of the predominant themes that came through in our interviews, especially from those who had considerable experience in the industry (defined as 10 or more years) and those who are decisionmakers, have served on organization boards, or have worked in policy, is that the lack of diversity seen at industry networking events is a symptom of systemic deficiencies within film and television organizations and their shortcomings in addressing diversity and inclusion. Over 50% of those who had significant experience (mid-career or senior) in the film industry, including the comparison group, raised this issue unprompted. They were especially keen to draw attention to the lack of diversity at the leadership level within organizations, which they argued trickles down to a lack of diversity in membership and event attendance. The composition of the leadership of an organization not only sends a message about who is welcome to attend its events, it also widens or narrows social networks that are organically connected to it.

Organizations have fallen short when it comes to doing the internal work of addressing issues of racism, sexism and representation and equality. They have not built-up institutional capacity to do this, nor have individuals serving in leadership positions had the opportunity to grow in their understanding of these issues.

Tokenism (discussed earlier) was also raised in this connection. As film and television organizations strove to cover lost ground and make up for these shortcomings in 2021, they rushed to implement new policies, initiatives, and measures to increase diversity within their ranks and event attendance. Naturally, they did outreach among racialized film and television organizations to expedite this effect. But our participants were wary of these hastily implemented strategies, as they could "tell who has done the work [in the past] and who has not". For our participants, this process could have been more organic: "true diversity and inclusion has to come from the philosophy and makeup of the organization".

> *"… it is such a forced conversation; it doesn't feel like it's coming out naturally and organically from the organization. It seems like it's taking a big shift in mindset… it seems imposed. And I think part of it is that [name of organization withheld] is a much easier place to change the leadership than … in a big institution. How hard is it to get women on your board who are women of colour, who would be qualified? How hard is it to give out awards to women of colour? … it doesn't feel like it's happening in an organic way."*

For them, the change in the demographic composition of event attendees and presenters, membership, award winners, etc. could all be addressed by structural change within the organization—by giving BIPOC women a seat at the table. BIPOC women in leadership positions will bring in racialized and Indigenous women attendees from their networks and they will advocate for proper representation among jurors and panellists. They would also ensure that decisionmakers who are BIPOC women are invited to events which include a pitching component, thus "making it easier for [BIPOC women] to connect and discuss their projects" and would "naturally bring up emerging BIPOC [filmmakers]". All of this would go a long way to addressing the macro-level inequalities that we see in the industry.

But participants also warned that it is not sufficient just to give BIPOC women a seat at the table; they also must be given the opportunity to have ownership of a space. This was the difference, as one participant articulated, between being invited somewhere as a house guest and owning the house. This will be discussed further in the **Recommendations Section.**

> *"I think they [need to] give us leadership and ownership of … organizations... It's one thing to be invited to a party and be received as a guest of honour and then at the end … they go back to a White world … it's another thing to say come be the Chair of our Board and … we'll listen to and take on board what you say… act like this is your house, your dinner party… there is a difference between being a guest and being part owner of the house. We need to own the house, you know. It's our house."*

Furthermore, there is an interpersonal psychological effect that trickles down to BIPOC women who see themselves reflected among the leadership of an organization, which encourages them to have trust in and support the organization and attend events they convene.

> *"…[seeing] people are in these positions; people are advocating for similar interests to my own … it shows me that the institution who is putting that [event] on is at least a bit 'woke'… that makes it more likely for me to support… what they are doing."*

6. LACK OF DIVERSITY AMONG PRESENTERS, MCS, HOSTS (THE OUTWARD FACE OF THE ORGANIZATION IS NOT DIVERSE)

Whereas our participants felt that gender parity and equity among presenters, MCs, panellists, and hosts has improved substantially in recent years, most did not feel that this increase in representation extended to BIPOC women.

Of our participants who responded to these issues (from both BIPOC and comparison groups), 64% said that they did not see representation of BIPOC women among presenters, MCs, panellists, and hosts of industry networking events.

Furthermore, of the 36% of participants who said that they did see representation, 19% caveated their response by saying that when they did see BIPOC women among those on stage at events, it felt tokenistic ("but they were tokens", "it felt forced", "performative", "to meet a quota", "only brought in to speak in events about diversity in film and television").

With recent events and calls for racial representation, institutions are making a greater effort to include diverse panelists and presentations. Much of this felt like a reaction to current events (to be "politically correct"), as opposed to coming from a deep relationship with the BIPOC community. This was especially apparent to our participants when they noticed that "the right" BIPOC women are not necessarily being called on as presenters. Instead, "convenient people" are being invited to present because they have an existing relationship with the organization.

An additional 12% of these 36% of participants responded that they saw BIPOC women on stage at events, but only recently ("in the last five years", "compared to zero, not too long ago… there's still a long way to go", "changing recently").

The effect that this lack of diversity in presenters, MCs, chairs, and hosts, has on BIPOC women who attend events was similar across many of our participants. They described it as "frustrating", that it made them feel "invisible", some going so far as to say that they eventually "tune out" ("why would I listen to this", "I become indifferent"), as the lack of diversity on stage "makes it seem like the event is not for [them]".

"It made me feel invisible … the industry thought we didn't have anything to contribute. We weren't a part of the club and part of their network of people who they would approach. I think we were seen as outsiders, and not a part of the inner circle. And therefore, they wouldn't even know how to find us if they wanted to. Because we're pretty much invisible to them."

Some, however, pointed out a difference between the type of content presented and their reaction to lack of representation. They did not mind listening to topics that are about the presentation of facts and statistical trends from experts who are not diverse but found it less acceptable when presentations about narrative and narrative sovereignty, the personal journey of the filmmakers, and especially experiences with diversity in front of and behind camera, were given only by White males.

"I mean if it's Joe Dingaling talking about how to finance your short film or your tax credits, those things are so boring anyways and it's about facts… I'm not thinking about the race of the person but when you are talking about … something creative… the culture of creativity or screenwriting … and you just have the same person … a carbon copy— certainly what my film school experience was like— if you wanted to talk about 'masters of the craft' it was all White men. That I think is just totally uncreative, incredibly boring. You can have a stack of heavy hitters, but you are willfully withholding access to other filmmakers that don't fit into that… gender, race, ability, sexuality mould… it's just lazy and it makes me not want to go to your panel."

Furthermore, there is an element of empowerment, a psychological effect that trickles down to BIPOC women who see themselves reflected among presenters at an event.

For instance, one of our participants described that she entered the film industry when she was "just dabbling in film" because she saw herself represented among one of the outstanding speakers at a film festival on stage. Another participant talked about her experience being the presenter at an event and the impact that had on other women of colour in attendance:

"… when I do panels … this has happened a few times already … it makes me excited … right after the panel you will see a bunch of young filmmakers who are all women, and they will line up to talk to me and … I know if I was in their position, I would do the same because I would gravitate to 'yeah that's me'. … it just makes me feel like, 'ok this is why representation is so important', … people in the crowd … need to see themselves. You can't be if you can't see… they didn't go to the two guys who were there [alongside me], they all came to me. We need women on panels so that other women can feel comfortable and excited to talk…"

7. LACK OF CONCERN ABOUT THE NEEDS OF WOMEN (SAFETY, CHILDCARE, ETC.) IN TERMS OF LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE EVENT

The industry has created a norm for a lifestyle that is not attuned to the safety of women or the needs of mothers. Although some of our discussions touched on the fact that work on sets contributes to these issues, industry networking events also posed major concerns for some women.

Several women raised these questions: at what time do events finish? Where are they taking place, and has alcohol been served (especially in the context of open bars, as many industry mixers have)? In this context, they listed examples of events that ended too late, were in venues that are not located in safe areas, and at which alcohol was served and attendees were drunk. Is it safe for women to leave the event venue by themselves? If the answer is no, then the convenors have not made the event equally accessible to women and men.

Another layer of complexity was introduced by women coming from certain cultural and religious communities. The industry lifestyle in general, but also certain events which end quite late, are not seen as "proper" for women in some contexts. This has been a barrier to participation for certain women.

Finally, a concern raised by some mothers in our sample was that the financial burden of arranging childcare to attend events on a regular basis was considerable. Some noted in this regard that time of day and whether events are family-friendly were factors that affected their attendance.

8. CLIQUISHNESS AND FAILURE TO INTEGRATE NEWCOMERS WHO ARE BIPOC WOMEN

A recurring theme in the interview responses of both BIPOC and White women is that the industry is generally "cliquish", and that this social dynamic is "intimidating" to newcomers, especially women and those coming from communities that have faced systemic and structural barriers to entry. The closed-off nature of social dynamics also makes it difficult for emerging filmmakers to break into networks that can help them to advance in their careers. The cliquishness of those social dynamics tends to limit these up-and-coming filmmakers' access to information, to possible collaborations, and to introductions to decisionmakers and film financiers who could advance their progress in the industry.

"… it's a cliquey industry … so people go to these things with a set agenda of who they want to meet and what they want to accomplish … they're not open to meeting … random people ... it's hard when you are starting out … you need to have some kind of connection beforehand, then you will have people who open the door to introduce you to others…"

"I think in general the industry is [comprised of] closed-off cliques. I don't know if it's because of ethnicity or your origins or just simply because it's folks that have known each other for a long time and don't want to invite or welcome others, but they're closed off. I think it's a mix of … these factors. It's not super inviting. For someone who is brand new, it's quite intimidating."

"I'd say [my experience networking is] pretty mediocre. I found that … in the past it felt more like a boy's club and now it just feels cliquey… The men's club [vibe] has dialed down but I think the cliqueness still exists and I think part of that is the inherent nature of events in a relatively small industry …"

In the same vein, participants spoke about the importance of professional development opportunities, such as mentorship programs tied to film and television events (e.g., festivals), through which warm introductions are made between attendees and potential collaborators and decisionmakers, and mentees are given access to seemingly inaccessible networks.

"…those professional development programs where you meet mentors and when you go to events, mentors introduce you then you meet other filmmakers … [because] they introduce you [to others] going to those events becomes easier, as you are part of 'the clique' [now] but when you first start out, yes, you can blindly approach people but people often have an agenda and if you can't help them (and usually when you are a new filmmaker, young, out of the gate you can't), they [go elsewhere] to get what they need..."

Some also drew attention to the fact that certain event formats and certain venues are more conducive to intermingling for individuals who do not have access to pre-existing networks.

"That said, I would say just going to a mixer at a festival that's a little bit easier. People from all over the world, fish out of the water like you there, so it's easier to connect with people seeing good films. I found, when I was younger, that attending film festivals was easier than say going to the WIFT Crystal Awards; where its all-Canadian industry and you're not part of the Canadian industry clique yet…"

Other factors that affected comfort level was who was invited to (or encouraged to) attend the event, the demographic composition of the attendees, the event's theme, and how introductions were facilitated. One participant addressed all these factors when speaking about an event that was particularly positive for her, compared to the negative experience she typically had attending networking events.

> *"There was just one networking event [that felt positive and more comfortable] … it was an Oscar in revolt, in revolt to the Oscar night [i.e., The Oscars so White movement]… it was really cool because it was an all-women event… open to anybody who was also BIPOC, and so it was really cool to see how many racialized filmmakers were there and I got to meet some significant people who have become really big champions in my career… it was a really cool event because it was a raffle, you are basically assigned a table and then there is a mentor that does the rounds. They had a bunch of mentors and they did the rounds and were like 'ask me anything' … the mentors they chose were incredible… varied in age, varied in racial background and educational background, … that was a really nice positive experience."*

We spoke about cliquishness as a factor affecting emerging filmmakers. However, it should be noted that even mid-career and senior filmmakers in our sample spoke about the film community as being an "exclusive club" and stressed that a key issue remains the fact that "all the gatekeepers are White", and that the format of networking events has not been conducive to removing barriers of exclusivity.

Unfortunately, for some of our participants, the format of networking events has not evolved significantly to benefit marginalized individuals or accommodate different cultural approaches to networking.

> *"…we have biases and ingrained ideas in terms of what networking events and spaces should feel like and look like culturally (what kinds of behaviours and what kinds of expectations we have in terms of networking, actual tone and style]."*

The format of events is not necessarily inviting or inclusive of BIPOC women. We could do well to analyze what these biases are and understand how events can be more inviting and inclusive.

A particular issue raised about format was that there was a lack of a sense of community values (of helping each other, collaborating) common in some BIPOC communities. Many networking events, especially those with certain kinds of pitching elements, instill a sense of competition, and some of our participants felt that they had to change their values to meet the mould.

> *"…you are … changing your own values to match someone who is not your own… and … praying to act like you're passing as one of them…"*

9. HISTORY OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NETWORKS

FILM SCHOOLS

A unique theme emerging from our data, which the researchers did not anticipate but investigated more closely as it recurred in multiple interviews, was the role of film schools in creating a social dynamic which excludes women and BIPOC individuals from industry networks.

Although our conversations were not specifically about film schools or film programmes (at a college/university), 35% of interviewees (not including the comparison group) raised the issue of film schools as being an initial barrier to establishing inclusive networks. BIPOC women are not well represented among film students, nor are course materials and studied works inclusive of BIPOC women, and masterclasses are not presented by women of colour often enough.

> *"I always wanted to be a filmmaker, I always worked in high school on video projects, always editing, but I never felt I could apply to film school and everyone I talked to at film school was a White man and there was just an arrogant way about them… [I thought,] I can't see myself here… film school felt really techy and bro-ey and I didn't feel comfortable going into that space. And then now I look back and I'm like I probably knew more about editing than most of the dudes who went to film school at that time … I know a big part of it was I didn't see women and I did not see women of colour at film school when I looked into it and … it still is mostly White people in the classes, and I think film school is a big center of that problem."*

The effects were several: those exploring the idea of attending film school did not feel that it was a place for them; BIPOC women who attended film school did not see themselves represented in the industry or feel part of the "all boys club", and some did not see film as viable career option, resulting in higher dropout rates.

> *"[Translated from French] You have to be extremely stubborn and persistent as a person of colour to go into the industry when you're not encouraged at all by your family or society. In high school people always told me that there's no future for you in cinema. You have no chance. The discouragement comes from there… you tell your theatre teacher or prof that you want to be an actor and they tell you there's no place for you. It can be extremely discouraging especially when it starts from a young age. And then when you go to university, they only talk about French cinema or Québec cinema or Canadian [Cinema] and there's no diversity even in what they teach and expose you to in your classes… It's certain that people of colour are discouraged from entering the industry. It's normalized in the academic journey … then after it is reflected in the industry."*

For some of our participants the exclusion from social networks started very early.

> *"[Regarding film school,] I remember thinking to myself, there is already a barrier... These are people who are getting trained for the future... There's this whole system that starts very early… especially vis-à-vis informal employment, internships, summer jobs or other opportunities... this makes me realize that there is this sort of bubble."*

BIPOC women who did not attend film schools felt that they were not "plugged into" industry networks and some were met by a paternalistic attitude from those who knew they did not receive a formal film education, especially through prestigious institutions.

> *"I couldn't go, the way to get into film in Canada is through the education system, through the [Canadian Film Centre] CFC or through various training programs that give you exposure to who you need to know in order to be connected, … everyone is always saying you have to have Canadian experience which means you literally have to go to some form of Canadian training … it's very paternalistic and cliquish in that way so if you don't fit in with this kind of start … as if you know anything … it's a really closed industry … a white institution."*

Beginning one's career outside of the "exclusive club", described above, could potentially lead to exclusion further down the line at professional development and networking events, and in hiring practices, which feeds back into not being able to sustain a career in the industry and attend networking events.

This exclusionary effect may be exacerbated by cultural barriers to entering film school for some BIPOC women from communities in which film may not be encouraged as a viable career option.

> *"I think the industry in general is kind of inaccessible to the regular outsider. How do you get in, do you go to film school, go to random sets, how do you find random sets, how do I get my first PA experience? These are a huge mystery unless you know someone in the field or actively seek out small workshops ... And that's already inaccessible for everybody but doubly, triply inaccessible to people who are not freely encouraged to go into the field."*

UNIONS

Much like film schools, unions were mentioned by some participants as contributing to a lack of inclusivity in social networks in the film and television industry. It should be noted that this theme was discussed more frequently by women who serve as crew members, especially by those in technical positions in the film industry (e.g., in the camera department).

Briefly, unions were held to account for a lack of inclusivity in their gatekeeping role. They were described as "family dynasties", getting access into which is an "uphill battle". Participants perceived unions as having failed to shepherd in BIPOC women and as contributing to the creation of a gendered, toxic environment within industry networks.

> *"…I mean for sure the camera department is largely a boy's club to begin with and a lot of folks must look at women and say they're not strong enough to carry a camera yada yada, so [there's] already that perception … [that] we're not strong enough literally to move the equipment … and especially in Canada … you literally have to know … a number of people already in the union in order to essentially be grandfathered into the union… It doesn't quite make sense in terms of inviting new people into these groups, so that's another barrier to entry, specifically in Canada."*

Regarding union-specific outreach work and events, some participants suggested that unions have not done enough to address the internal biases and structural and systemic issues that result in a lack of BIPOC and/or female membership in unions. As a result, these women emphasized that in their communities, "we don't know that these opportunities exist… we don't know where to get the information from."

Furthermore, they emphasized that outreach is not enough, that unions and guilds must do internal work to address the toxic, unsafe environment that has been engendered over the years within their organizations. Policies need to exist to remedy the ailment.

> *"it's not just about bringing people that look like us into the room, but it's also doing training and sensitization for their membership. And actually, having a policy of 'how do you hold [others] to account', like if you have a member who is making other members feel uncomfortable, what is the policy about how you deal with that and at what point do you revoke that person's membership? I think that those are things that guilds, unions, and associations should think about because if there is no way to penalize people who are not playing by the new rules, then I think that continues to make the spaces feel unsafe."*

10. OVERSIGHTS IN THE INVITATION AND OUTREACH PROCESS

We asked our participants whether they felt that film and television organizations tried to invite BIPOC women to industry networking events. The results were mixed. Over half (55%) of those who responded to this question (excluding the comparison group) said no, organizations did not make an adequate effort to invite BIPOC women. Although some of these women remarked that they noticed changes in recent years, they stressed that more outreach was needed. Exclusivity, some felt, was used as a reason not to invite people to events, to the detriment of those left out of industry networks.

Of the eight women who said that organizations were making an effort to invite BIPOC women, two suggested that this was only as of 2020 or after the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement. Some called to mind again the concept of tokenism as they discussed the recent efforts to be more inclusive in organisations' outreach and invitation processes.

> *"It never happened [i.e., I was never invited to events] until recently, post-COVID where I'm invited to everything all the time. All of a sudden, I'm the expert and I'm the person they want to talk to."*

Some noticed that they were much more likely to get invited to community-specific events or when diversity is a theme or topic of consultation at an event, and they were "needed" to be a part of that conversation or to improve the optics of an organization.

As mentioned above, it was suggested that organizations have not maximized their ability to outreach to BIPOC communities in an organic way, as most do not have pre-existing connections to them, and are just now learning about creating these relationships and expanding their networks to include a wider slice of the diversity of the Canadian populace.

> *"They don't even know how to do [outreach to BIPOC communities], because they've never done it before…"*

As a result, they have not built the trust with racialized and Indigenous communities that is needed for more invitations to be accepted by BIPOC women. This is a process that takes time and will not bear fruit overnight. For organizations to gain the trust and support of BIPOC women, that support and trust must be mutually offered to them.

> *"…if diversity is a real movement, the people who are not a part of a diversity community need to get to know the diverse community, in which case they need to headhunt and infiltrate and join and support the existing organizations. And invite [us]…"*

One interesting insight from a participant is that women in the industry may receive invitations and recruitment efforts differently and that persistent efforts are required to shepherd BIPOC women into organizations and events.

> *"I think there needs to be an active invitation [process]. I heard a stat from a political group, you need to ask a woman three times to run for office before she'll say yes -- three times more than a male [candidate], so I think we need to invite actively BIPOC members to [show], 'we do want you here'. And not just doing the same kind of recruitment for all people…"*

When prodded about invitations to industry events that they received positively, participants shared that, if the invitation to attend comes from a trusted person (someone with whom communities have a pre-existing relationship and trust) who will attend the event as well, this contributed to the likelihood of them attending the event. The women participating in our study suggested that organizations need to establish those relationships with racialized and Indigenous industry groups, co-ops and organizations that can then relay to their members information about events and vouch for the convening organization—thereby "promoting a sense of trust". Otherwise, it is not clear whether an event is a safe and welcoming space for BIPOC women, especially given the likelihood that they have had negative experiences at networking events in the past (e.g., experiences described in the microaggressions section above).

Tapping into the themes of exclusivity and cliquishness discussed above, some participants explained that the invitation process is often done informally, in closed circles. People tend to naturally invite those whom they "feel more comfortable with" into their networks, thus perpetuating a White-male-dominated industry. Many of the participants only learned about events online, via social media outlets, and by putting forth a considerable effort to keep abreast of industry happenings; they did not hear about the events through their existing networks and "don't expect" to be invited to events. Once at the event, as a person coming from a racialized or Indigenous community, they may not be part of an existing network or alliance coming into those spaces, leading them to feel out of place or unwelcomed.

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11. EXPERIENCE A LACK OF CAREER ADVANCEMENT OR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OUTPUTS FROM ATTENDING EVENTS

As discussed at the beginning of this report, networking activities were seen by BIPOC and White women alike as "vital", as a way to gain recognizability in the industry, to learn fundamental skills and business models, to increase the likelihood of advancing one's project, to get funding, to sell a project, to get hired, etc.

In other words, many of the reasons why film and television industry networking events were seen as important was the potential for career advancement or professional development outputs. Extrapolating from research in other spheres, labour market research shows that 70% of all jobs are not published publicly on jobs sites and as much as 80% of jobs are filled through personal and professional connections. This effect is dubbed the "network gap" (Fisher, 2019).

> *"…some ridiculously low number of people succeed in this career and industry long term and honestly most of that is due to networking. It's who you know much more than what you know because at a certain level everybody knows a similar amount to get the job done, it's about who wants to hire you."*

But did BIPOC women see career advancement or professional development outputs from attending networking events?

When asked whether they had a significant career advancement output because of attendance at networking events in the past, the majority (60%) said they did not. Regardless, based on their understanding of the importance of networks in having a successful career, several of our participants still maintained hope that attending them will result in positive outputs.

> *"No, never, sadly… I feel like I've met really interesting creatives from attending networking events but nothing that would advance my career in any way and if it did, it wasn't long term enough. It didn't actually have that much follow through…"*

"…not for me personally, [I didn't experience a career advancement], but that's the hope though."

Several of these women, including senior-level filmmakers, with over 20 years' experience in the industry, emphasized that when they did have a substantial advancement, it was as a result of their merit and hard work, not "who they know". When these women were hired, it was because of applying for positions or through people seeing their work.

"No, I have actually not [experienced career advancement from networking events] … jobs I've gotten have been because I've been in a job and people have seen the value of the work that I do and promoted aspects of it…"

"I started to attend networking events. It's possible that I would have [advanced my career through them], but up to now, no. I got my contracts because I applied. The people who hired me didn't know me; it wasn't because they knew me that I got hired."

And if they were not offered the opportunity to gain experience or for others to see the merit of their work, they did not have a track record to use as "social capital" by which to attract others at networking events.

"No [I didn't have a career advancement through networking events] because everybody always says it's because you have to have a certain amount of experience, Right? … well how can you get that amount of experience if you don't have the opportunity to do the work, right?"

Of those who said they did experience a significant career advancement output, some were quick to give a caveat, describing this advancement as taking a very long time through networking events.

"I think probably the first real successful professional development program that I was a part of, that was 6 years later too, that gives you kind of the span of time that it took to finally have something that really felt like an advancement in my career."

BIPOC women needed to demonstrate a certain level of persistence ("stubbornness" as some described it) to attain desired career advancement outputs through networking.

"… especially trying to prepare yourself to go in with thick skin when you know you have to go into these spaces to achieve certain business outputs, so I do make myself go to these events, but I tend to not enjoy myself."

One phenomenon described by participants was the experience of racialized and Indigenous women being tired of coming to events that "don't lead to anything", and some warned this may lead to a drop off in BIPOC women participating in events and, worse, dropping out of the industry, altogether.

This line of inquiry raised a question in the mind of the researchers: do BIPOC women experience the same benefits of personal assets as their White counterparts? It was not possible to distill this from the data in the current study, but there is enough exploratory evidence to warrant additional study in this area. The stakes are high, as some of our participants raised a concern that the lack of outputs for BIPOC women contributed to a precedent of racialized and Indigenous women being told "they don't sell".

Some described the format of the event as being a factor which affected the likelihood of achieving a career advancement output. More structured events, that are curated and bring together a BIPOC woman who is pitching with a decisionmaker, were seen as more beneficial by some participants.

Participants noticed that there is a significant difference in the sort of support and output they get from siloed events for BIPOC filmmakers, put on by racialized and Indigenous organizations, than from "mainstream" events. Some noted that these racialized organizations are still growing in capacity to offer meaningful outputs for BIPOC participants.

While they felt on the one hand that they were welcome, much "more supported" and able to get "strong creative feedback" at these siloed events, until more BIPOC women are in decision-making roles, "mainstream" events have a greater potential for more significant business outputs. They felt that these siloed events could be more results oriented. Yet, our participants saw value in the opportunity to network with and pitch to BIPOC filmmakers, as it was possible to more effectively convey their stories to a person who has had some of the same lived experience compared to a non-BIPOC decisionmaker.

When asked about mentorship, professional development and training programs running in concert with film and television industry events which are geared toward racialized and Indigenous women, our more senior participants noted that while there are several such programs for emerging filmmakers, there are few tailored to mid-career or more established BIPOC women filmmakers. Therefore, there is a lack of opportunity for mid-career and senior filmmakers to advance to the next level in their careers.

A unique theme that emerged from interviews with mid-career and senior BIPOC women from our participant pool was that they experienced greater reception and more significant advancements from their participation in events in other countries, namely, England, the United States, and France.

When asked why this might be the case, they mentioned that diversity and inclusion efforts were more advanced in other parts of the world than in the Canadian industry, and that there is also a certain amount of curation and hurdles overcome if a Canadian BIPOC woman has made it to these international events.

If you made it that far, "if your project passed a certain level" then you are more likely "to be given a seat at the table." Those who participated in prestigious international events also felt that they were then taken more seriously by the Canadian industry. This begs the question: why should the international market be the tastemaker when it comes to the discovery and advancement of Canadian talent?

> *"I think also the thing that a lot of Canadian filmmakers forget, is it's one thing to show up at Hot Docs or TIFF … but I think what's also helped me with these relationships is the fact that these same decisionmakers have seen me at IDFA and Berlinale, and in markets in the US, … and there are not that many Canadians that go to international markets. So, then they're like, 'oh', … as soon as they start to see you there as part of Canadian delegation … in those sorts of things I think it starts to add to your credibility and it helps you stand out more."*

12. LACK OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA GATHERED ON EVENTS

It was evident from our conversations as well as in our review of literature that there is a paucity of data, qualitative and quantitative, regarding the attendance and experiences of BIPOC women at film and television events relative to others in the industry. In some cases, demographics of organization membership (which relates to event attendance) have also not been tracked in the past by organizations. It was frustrating that this data has not been collected by organizations which have not prioritized diversity and inclusion at networking events in the past. Furthermore, since there is a lack of data, we do not have a standard by which to measure change and progress.

"…everything has to be done in not a kind of a 'slap a Band-Aid on it' type of way but in a way that is thoughtful… and research-based… to have an idea of where our shortcomings really are… I think there are limitations when you look internally, as an organization, at what the flaws of the organization actually are. So, … gathering that data as a starting point for creating meaningful inclusion, I think is imperative. … data tells a story better than your own narrative … you can think you are doing a great job but unless you have data to back it up or some way to measure how you are doing, it's all just subjective. … two people can look at the same thing and say well, 'I thought that was a giant failure'… or say, 'no I thought it was awesome', but unless you have some sort of measure or data [you don't know]."

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? POTENTIAL FOR NARRATIVE, INDUSTRY AND SOCIETAL CHANGE

One of the key themes that emerged from the interviews was that the opportunity to be involved in film and television events bore a great significance to BIPOC women; it was tied to their having a voice in Canadian content. They gave profound reasons to explain what engaging in these has meant to them: to find one's voice, identity and community; to represent one's community; to transform the next generation and ensure that children will grow up free of prejudice; to represent BIPOC women, and women generally, in spheres where there are few women from one's community; to enable others to see themselves represented on screen for the first time; to elevate Indigenous participants, to reclaim one's language and culture; and to communicate stories that have not been heard or represented properly.

When asked about what the future of the film and television industry in Canada will look like when networks become more inclusive, many participants anticipated macro-level changes.

Firstly, they felt this grassroots change will have direct implications for Canadian content — that, on the whole, it will result in better programming, which more accurately reflects our current reality. At the level of the narrative, they foresee greater authenticity in the stories that would be told on television and in the cinema. With the right people telling stories from their firsthand or lived experience, there will most likely be fewer stereotypical or sexualized portrayals of women in the media. On screen, they felt that there will emerge greater representation and that, for once, Canadians would be able to see themselves reflected.

Secondly, the question of a sharpening of focus on the identity of "Canadian cinema" was raised. Many participants felt that as diversity increased at this level, we will eventually develop more of a national identity in our cinema; something that is currently lacking, and that the voice of Canadian auteurs will be amplified. They also felt that regional stereotypes and tropes, which are redundant in our cinema, will be summarily dismantled. Certainly, participants saw immediate implications for variety in storytelling, which will involve more innovation in narrative style, structure, and type, and which in the long run will make Canadian cinema more interesting to the international market.

With respect to industry-level dynamics and power structure, many participants also felt that significant change will occur which will then trickle down to the sets. There will, for instance, be more compassion and empathy in the industry. This compassion and empathy will be accompanied by a broadening of perspectives. Dominant groups (especially individuals in decision-making roles) will have the opportunity to hear different perspectives and experience meaningful exchanges. The segregation that currently exists in the industry will diminish.

Furthermore, the industry will become a safer place for BIPOC women. With a greater number of racialized and Indigenous women in the industry, BIPOC women will be able to make the same mistakes as anyone else and be allowed to learn from their mistakes. Regarding networking spaces, at a qualitative level, participants felt that these spaces will become safer and eventually be restructured to function more effectively for BIPOC people by accommodating different cultural networking styles (e.g., those that are not informed by patriarchal, colonial, hierarchical modes of interaction).

In such safe spaces, people will not feel the need to change their culture or behaviour to accommodate and make others feel comfortable at their expense. Additionally, with more BIPOC women in the room, minority groups will no longer feel the "pressure of having to speak on behalf of their entire community".

In terms of hiring practices and the distribution of financial resources, any increase in the level of inclusion and diversity within social networks in the industry could have several positive effects. BIPOC women may, for instance, find more work, even if the practice of "hiring from the inner circle" persisted, because those "inner circles" will be widened. It was felt that BIPOC women may also have more access to individuals and sessions through which they can learn about funding opportunities and begin to tap into a funding structure that has been predominantly taken advantage of by a closed circle of individuals. This, they felt, could contribute to a "level[ing of] the playing field" in the industry.

As a result of all the above suggestions, we will certainly have a "stronger Canadian industry"; we will retain more Canadian talent instead of losing talented BIPOC individuals who feel the need to go elsewhere, where there is greater reception for their stories and more opportunities to sustain a career in film.

Based on the above suggestions, there will also be a "strengthening" and "growth" of the BIPOC film community in Canada. With increasing numbers of racialized and Indigenous women attending networking events, more collaborations will be fostered among them and a greater number of BIPOC crew members will be identified and empowered to take on new opportunities. BIPOC women will be given the chance to "get a foot in the door and build up portfolios". They will have more opportunities to gain the tools, knowledge, and industry savvy to bring their ideas to life. With strength in numbers, emerging filmmakers will be empowered by observing other BIPOC women succeeding in the industry and represented at events—this "gives [BIPOC women] permission to go and do what we want to do".

Participants were hopeful that the industry will also step up to duly celebrate BIPOC women in the industry. They felt that as social networks diversify, BIPOC women will be recognized and rewarded for their brilliance and achievements.

But at the heart of what our participants shared, was the need for diversity and inclusion at the level of social networks in the industry as a prerequisite for social change. The fresh stories that will result from greater diversity in points of view will "bridge cultural gaps". The projects that will come to light will contribute in a new way to changing societal conversations and inspiring action on pressing social issues.

When seen from this point of view, the stakes are high for our industry to ensure that our networks, beginning with industry networking events, are as inclusive of BIPOC women as possible.

TO BUILD INCLUSIVE NETWORKS— TAKEAWAYS, RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

To Build Inclusive Networks: Takeaways, Recommendations & Conclusion.

Takeaways and recommendations were drafted by drawing on and extrapolating from the insights of our participants. We have summarized them in the form of a "to do" check list which can be used by people in the industry to increase inclusivity and diversity of those attending networking events. This resource, if used properly and iteratively, can become a tool to design and implement strategies, evaluate progress, and consult on next steps.

BUILDING INCLUSIVE NETWORKS IN THE FILM & TELEVISION INDUSTRY CHECKLIST

✓ PRE-DEVELOPMENT

- ☐ Conduct internal equity audits and develop an internal equity strategy, to affect membership from the top down.
- ☐ Create spaces and mandates for anti-racism and anti-sexism education within your organization for your leaders.
- ☐ Start from the top — hire, appoint, and invite BIPOC women for leadership roles within your organization, as they will build bridges and bring with them their own networks
- ☐ Empower BIPOC women within your organization to own those spaces and challenge the organization when policies are not inclusive.
- ☐ Conduct sensitization training for all individuals in your membership.
- ☐ Hire an ombudsperson or impartial body from the BIPOC community, as they will be more sympathetic to racialized and Indigenous communities.
- ☐ Create mutually beneficial alliances with racialized and Indigenous organizations and/ or organizations mandated to advance the work of female filmmakers and get involved in the life of the community.
- ☐ Establish genuine connections with senior BIPOC women in the industry and consult about how you can work together.

- [ ] Create opportunities for sustainable change by offering networking spaces that will lend impetus to the advancement of mid-career BIPOC women to senior levels in the industry.
- [ ] Gather and identify baseline statistics on the demographics of your organization's leadership, membership, and subscribers, and identify areas of strength and weakness.
- [ ] Collaborate with the BIPOC community to identify ways in which you can improve upon areas of weakness, and consult widely, bearing in mind (a) intersectionality and (b) that different communities face different barriers to inclusion.
- [ ] Design initiatives, remembering that one size does not fit all — bear in mind that particular communities have faced particularly intense and historically rooted racisms and should be considered distinctly.
- [ ] Set measurable goals.
- [ ] Address socio-economic barriers that hinder BIPOC women from entering the organization — such as incentives, discounts, or free memberships.
- [ ] Draft policies and rules of respect in connection with anti-harassment and anti-racism (e.g., for your Eventbrite page), which must be agreed to when individuals book tickets for your event(s).
- [ ] Draft policies as to how to hold members to account if they violate the above policies.
- [ ] Re-examine your social media outreach (including, tagging, and sharing) processes to ensure that BIPOC and femme-centric organizations are receiving information about your events.
- [ ] Examine your web presence, making sure that the images you have online reflect diversity and inclusion.

✓ DEVELOPMENT

- [ ] Consult with BIPOC women in the early stages of the planning of events and bring them into the process.
- [ ] Plan time for icebreakers and matchmaking to disrupt social segregation.
- [ ] Create opportunities to honour and award BIPOC women for their work.
- [ ] Create opportunities to have meaningful discussions about diversity and inclusion.

✓ PRE-PRODUCTION

- [ ] Focus your outreach and invitations process on the community — involve the community and draw on alliances formed in pre-development, as community organizations can help you build trust and vouch for your organization.
- [ ] Identify a venue that is accessible and safe and evaluate whether that venue (or the area in which it is located) is welcoming to all people.
- [ ] If giving audio-visual presentations or screening films, ensure that they are closed captioned in advance.
- [ ] Budget for an ASL interpreter.
- [ ] When inviting guests of honour and people in decision-making and gatekeeping positions, ensure that a reasonable percentage of these are BIPOC women.
- [ ] Identify and invite BIPOC women who work in areas where women are not particularly well represented (e.g., camera department, visual effects).
- [ ] Budget time and create spaces for sharing from BIPOC women creators, especially about their personal journeys, thus empowering other racialized and Indigenous women in the audience to see possibilities for a career in film.
- [ ] Identify BIPOC women chairs/presenters and MCs and invite them to share personal experiences, reaching out to racialized and Indigenous organizations for their recommendations of appropriate individuals who have expertise in the area of presentation.
- [ ] Create opportunities for emerging BIPOC women filmmakers to attend events with a mentor who can accompany them in the networking event and make introductions.
- [ ] Market events, featuring BIPOC women, to film schools.
- [ ] Lend your space and your platform, create events, or open up free spaces for BIPOC women to gather, and promote these spaces, showing that you support grassroots movements.

✓ PRODUCTION

- [ ] Honour the land on which the event takes place.
- [ ] Look for opportunities to create introductions and mix people who do not normally socialize.
- [ ] Gather statistics about the demographics of attendees.

✓ POST-PRODUCTION

- [ ] Gather survey or interview data about the qualitative experience of attendees.
- [ ] Conduct debriefing sessions after events for BIPOC women.
- [ ] Hold members who violate your policies to account if they make others feel uncomfortable.
- [ ] Analyze quantitative and qualitative data and look at ways to improve your next events.

✓ DISTRIBUTION

- [ ] When posting pictures of your event, ensure that these pictures are inclusive.

APPENDIX A. LITERATURE REVIEW

A LITERARY EXPLORATION OF THE LACK OF DIVERSITY AT FILM INDUSTRY NETWORKING EVENTS

By Jostina Johannes, prepared as part of Nauzanin Knight's Building Inclusive Networks in the Film & Television Industry study.

BACKGROUND

This literature review is based on the observations of researchers and the Board of WIFT-A (Women in Film & Television Alberta), the executing agency of the study. It has been observed that there is a paucity of Black and Indigenous women and women of colour (BIPOC women) attending industry networking events. We wondered if this phenomenon could similarly be observed in other provinces, and conducted a handful of informal, unstructured pilot interviews. The result of these conversations was that they suggested that this phenomenon was present in other provinces. At that time, we designed the current study to explore, qualitatively, the factors that might contribute to the inclusion/exclusion of BIPOC women from industry events.

We expect that this study will benefit the industry as a whole, allowing stakeholders to consider factors that contribute to the inclusion/ exclusion of BIPOC women in the events they organize or sponsor, including/ accessing certain communities through "gate-keepers", including racialized and Indigenous women among those who will present/speak at events so that minority attendees can see themselves represented, and creating environments that are proactively more inclusive, etc.

In terms of this literature review, the general landscape of the literature on the subject is quite limited, with most of the literature focusing on the scarcity and struggles of women in the industry both on and off screen (Canadian Media Producers Association, 2017; Canadian Media Producers Association, 2018; Fraticelli, 2015; Galt, 2020; Jones & Pringle, 2015; Murphy, 2015; Pires, 2017; Liddy, 2016; Welch, 2018; Women In Film, 2018; Women in Film & Television Toronto, 2012), others addressing that of women and/or people of colour (Goulet & Swanson, 2014; Hunt, Ramón & Tran 2019; Interactive Ontario, 2017; Women in View 2018; Women In View, 2019) and some centred on women from specific communities (i.e. Black or Indigenous) (Library of Parliament, 2020; Kraicer et al, 2018; Lauzen, 2020; Liddy, 2020; Lind, 2016; Martin, 1995).

We found almost no literature specifically addressing the absence of BIPOC women from screen industry networking spaces either in Canada or elsewhere (Blair, 2000; Wreyford, 2015), albeit there were some on networking in other industries (Ibarra, 1993; McGuire, 2000; McGuire, 2002). While the current study attempts to begin to fill this gap, many issues remain unexplored and quantitative studies will need to be conducted to confirm our findings. Like the study, this review is exploratory in nature and draws insights about the background of the issue of the inclusion/exclusion of BIPOC women from industry networking events from our reading of the patchy literature base.

Networking is fundamental to succeeding in the film industry. Oftentimes, and sometimes even solely, through networking and word of mouth are individuals brought onto jobs in the industry (Blair, 2000) and these connections are affected by one's position in society (Wreyford, 2015). Women and people of colour are especially affected, due to the structural barriers limiting their access to important [industry] networks (Ibarra, 1993). The consequences of a limited network include restricted knowledge, decreased social alliances/support, and limited mobility (aka "the glass ceiling") (Ibarra, 1993). With this in mind, the observation that BIPOC women are lacking from industry networking events is troubling. This literature review will seek to understand why BIPOC women are missing at industry networking events. We focus on the television and film industry; although there is considerable overlap in the screen industries, the scope of this study will not include the AR/VR (Augmented Reality/Virtual Reality) or gaming fields.

CREATING THEIR OWN NETWORKING SPACES

One reason for not attending an event is feeling unwelcome; BIPOC women may not attend industry networking events because they do not feel welcome in these spaces. Echoes of this are discernible in social movements such as the #OscarsSoWhite movement of 2016, which was led by prominent actors and filmmakers like Jada Pinkett Smith and Spike Lee. The boycott, which trended across social media platforms, highlighted the prevalence of racism in the American television and film industry by pointing out that most of the 7,000 members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences that vote on the Oscars are older, white men. These factors contribute to the overlooking/ exclusion of Black creatives, not only at the Oscars but throughout the industry because this recognition affects which films/shows executive officers decide to make (Griggs, 2016). In other words, because Black American creatives did not feel welcome at the Oscars, they called for their community to not attend or support the Academy Awards.

Similar effects may be impacting the participation of BIPOC women at television and film industry networking events. In this regard, it is interesting to note that a growing number of networking groups/ events are being created across Canada in response to marginalization and lack of empowering spaces in the industry. BIPOC TV & Film (2020) exemplifies this type of group, stating on their website that "feeling isolated by the overall lack of representation of BIPOC in the industry" led them to start what they describe as "a grassroots movement" to ensure an increase of BIPOC in the field of television and film. Similarly, imagineNATIVE (n.d.), also known as The Centre for Aboriginal Media, actively works to create networking and employment opportunities for Indigenous creatives, and a safe space to share their art. BLACK WOMEN FILM! (n.d.) creates networking opportunities for Black women in the television and film industry and has a growing directory list of Black women in the industry. Although it is encouraging to see these groups creating opportunities for themselves, this at times relegates BIPOC women and other marginalized groups to only networking within their communities. When BIPOC women are not present at industry networking events but are prevalent at the events/spaces of organizations such as those listed above, it begs the question: why?

BIPOC WOMEN BRING IN BIPOC WOMEN

The "leaky pipeline" is a term used to describe the phenomenon of women being absent from senior positions in academic fields specifically in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields (Liu et al, 2019; Barr et al, 2008; Schroeder et al, 2013). These "leaks" occur throughout career stages, from initial undergraduate acceptance to employment, from promotion to appointment to senior positions, and only worsen as we move along the "pipeline," leaving a sense that women are "evaporating" from the STEM fields (Liu et al, 2019). We see a similar phenomenon in the film and television industry with women "evaporating" as they move along the career pipeline (in other words, as they move up the seniority ladder).

A Women in View (2019) report explored the effect of the presence of BIPOC women on the demographic of the creative team, finding the "producer effect" to have an especially significant impact. The producer's role involves the hiring of the director and screenwriting staff and in some cases even the rest of the staff (Zeke, 2015), and therefore the identity of the producer drastically impacts who is hired as staff. According to the report, male producers tend to work on teams comprised of more than 80% men, whereas female producers work on teams where key roles such as the directors and writers, are 41-48% female. Furthermore, when the producer is a Black or Indigenous woman or a woman of colour, 22.2% of the staff are BIPOC women, as opposed to 3.57% for White female producers or 3.01% for male producers (Women in View, 2019). Thus, it appears that when BIPOC women are in key/higher up positions, more BIPOC women make it to the creative teams. We would expect to see a similar effect in industry networking events; when racialized and Indigenous women are actively included, especially in key positions, they would then bring in more BIPOC women to these spaces and would diversify the make-up of these events and the industry in general.

CAN WE GENERALIZE THE EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRY?

Another possible contributor to the lack of BIPOC women at industry networking events is that progress made for women or people of colour often does not remove barriers for women of colour in particular. As intersectionality theory explains, systems of oppression multiply when intersected, as is the case for Black and Indigenous women and women of colour. Black women, for example, experience life differently than their White female and Black male counterparts, despite sharing a part of their identity with them (i.e., race, gender) (Crenshaw, 1989). In the television and film industry, although efforts have been made to be more inclusive towards women, these efforts have not had as much of an impact on BIPOC women.

According to a report by Dr. Martha M. Lauzen for Boxed In 2019-20 (2020), perhaps largely due to the emergence and prevalence of streaming platforms like Netflix and Disney+, more women than ever are employed on and off screen. On streaming services, women are just as likely to be the protagonist as their male counterparts (however it should be noted the traditional television industry has not made the same progress, with only 24-27% of television programs having a female protagonist). Behind the scenes, women have reached historic highs in key behind-the-scenes positions (however, they do still only comprise 30% of creators, directors, writers, etc.) (Lauzen, 2020). But we do not see similar gains for BIPOC women in the industry. According to the Women in View (2019) report, in 2017 while 28% of television contracts went to women, only 1.8% went to racialized women, and 0% went to Indigenous women.

When looking at the "producer effect" mentioned earlier, the gender of the producer impacted the number of women working on the creative teams, but it made almost no difference to the number of BIPOC women working (a rate of 3.01% with a male producer compared to 3.57% with a female producer). What did make a difference however was if the producer was a racialized or Indigenous woman; in those circumstances, 22.2% of the creative team were BIPOC women (Women in View, 2019). When considering progress in gender equality, bringing in a White woman or a BIPOC women is not the one comprehensive solution to resolving issues of exclusion, because not all women or even BIPOC women, experience the industry in the same way. Therefore, when considering industry networking events, efforts to be more inclusive at these networking events may have failed to consider intersectionality, just as seems to be the case in the industry as a whole.

AGAIN: ALL WOMEN ARE NOT THE SAME

As discussed in the previous section, women do not all experience the film and television industry in the same way. The term "BIPOC women" groups together a diversity of Black and Indigenous women and women of colour, and their experiences are likewise diverse.

In Canada's context, Indigenous creatives are especially excluded or absent, which the Indigenous Feature Film Production in Canada Report (2013) explains in depth. According to the report, after making it past historical systemic socioeconomic barriers, the work of Indigenous filmmakers is then often pigeonholed as belonging to an "Indigenous" film genre, which limits not only their job prospects but also their networking potential; their work becomes caricatured, forcing new projects to conform to this model. The industry underestimates Indigenous filmmakers, how integral they are to the general Canadian identity, the untapped potential of their stories, and how representational they are of the demographic of future Canadians. The report explains that although Indigenous people make up a small percentage of the population of Canada, they are the fastest-growing segment of the general population, growing at a rate of 20-45% in the span 5-10 years, compared to 5-8% of the non-Indigenous population. The report also states that Indigenous creatives are undervalued, making on average 30% less than others in the industry. Furthermore, due to their underrepresentation, Indigenous creatives consistently had to be multi-talented, writing, directing, and/or producing at various points in their career (Goulet & Swanson, 2014). When taking intersectionality into account, we know that all these factors impact Indigenous women to an even greater extent than their male Indigenous counterparts. These factors help to explain why Indigenous people, especially Indigenous women, may not feel welcome in the industry or in industry spaces such as networking events.

CONCLUSION

We explored the reasons why Black and Indigenous women and women of colour may be excluded from industry networking events, but in doing so, we also caught a glimpse of how this is reflective of their inclusion/exclusion in the industry in general. When BIPOC women are absent from the television and film industry, their stories, experiences, and unique perspectives are also missing. Although the literature review explored a few possible reasons why BIPOC women are absent from industry networking events, and the current Building Inclusive Networks in the Film & Television Industry study is working to analyze these deliberations, the lack of literature on the topic necessitates further research. As mentioned in the introduction, networking is vital to the trajectory of one's career, and with BIPOC women being absent from industry networking events, it is detrimental not only for their careers but for the industry as a whole. It is our hope by the end of the study to leave a positive impact for future generations of BIPOC women and to contribute to making the industry more inclusive and more accessible.

APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

SCHEDULE 1 – BIPOC WOMEN

1. What is your role in the film and television industry?
2. Before Covid-19, would you say that you attend networking events on a regular basis?
    a. If so, which events do you attend?
3. Why do you attend these networking events? Why are industry networking events important?
4. How would you describe your experience at networking events?
    a. Do you think that your experience at industry networking events might be different than others given the fact that you are a woman from the BIPOC community?
        i. If yes, how so?
        ii. If not, why not?
5. This study was designed because we noticed a lack of BIPOC women attending networking events in our locale.
    a. Does this surprise you?
        i. If no, why?
        ii. If yes, why not?
    b. Do you notice this in your locale as well?
        i. If yes, why do you think that is?
        ii. If not, what is it about the industry in your locale that encourages diverse attendance?
6. Have you ever experienced a career advancement / been hired as a direct result of attending an industry networking event?
    a. If no, why do you think that is?
7. When you attend networking events do you often see diverse representation among presenters, chairs or panellists?
    a. If not, how does that make you feel?
    b. When you do, how does that make you feel?
8. Would you say that film and television organizations are making an effort to circulate invitations for their events among BIPOC communities?
    a. If so, is this working to increase the participation of BIPOC filmmakers at industry networking events?
    b. If not, what impact does this have?
9. What do organizations and event convenors need to do to encourage the participation of BIPOC women in their events?
10. What do you think BIPOC communities need to do within their communities to encourage the participation of BIPOC women in industry events?
11. How do you think the industry might change, if at all, when we see increased representation of BIPOC Women attending industry networking events?
12. Is there anything else that we have not asked about that you would like to share?
13. For our records, would you be willing to self-identify?

SCHEDULE 2 – WHITE WOMEN (COMPARISON GROUP)

1. What is your role in the film and television industry?
2. Before Covid-19, would you say that you attend networking events on a regular basis?
    a. If so, which events do you attend?
3. Why are industry networking events important? Why do you attend these networking events?
4. How would you describe your experience at networking events?
    a. Do you think that your experience at industry networking events might be different than men attending the same events?
        i. If yes, how so?
        ii. If not, why not?
5. Have you ever experienced a career advancement/ been hired as a direct result of attending an industry networking event?
    a. If no, why do you think that is?
6. When you attend networking events do you often see female representation among presenters, chairs or panellists?
    a. If not, how does that make you feel?
7. Would you say that film and television organizations are making an effort to circulate invitations in a way that would encourage the participation of women?
8. This study was designed because we noticed a lack of BIPOC women attending networking events in our locale.
    a. Does this surprise you?
        i. Why?/ why not?
    b. Do you notice this in your locale as well?
        i. If yes, why do you think that is?
        ii. If not, what is it about the industry in your locale that encourages diverse attendance?
9. What can the film and television community in your locale (film organizations, in particular) do to increase the representation of BIPOC women at networking events?
10. What can film and television organizations in your locale do to make their events more welcoming for all attendees?
11. What can film and television organizations do to ensure that the networking events they convene result in career advancement outputs for women, especially BIPOC women?
12. How do you think the industry might change, if at all, when we see increased representation of BIPOC Women attending industry networking events?
13. Is there anything else that we have not asked about that you would like to share?
14. For our records would you be willing to self-identify your race/ethnicity, age? Are you a member of any other minority group that you would like to disclose?

APPENDIX C. INDIVIDUAL AGGRAVATING OR MITIGATING FACTORS VIS-À-VIS INCLUSION/ EXCLUSION

The data presented in the main body of this paper offers a master narrative of the factors of film and television networking events which contribute to the inclusion/exclusion of Black and Indigenous women and women of colour (BIPOC women). Our report focuses mostly on these factors as they are actionable for the industry—the industry can utilize this data to build more inclusive networks in film and television. Therefore, the data, for the most part, is presented in the aggregate above. However, we did not want to gloss over individual-level factors which played a part in the experience of BIPOC women attending networking events. This discussion should not detract from the conversation about systemic and structural factors which dissuade BIPOC women from attending networking events.

We identified several individual factors which impact inclusion/exclusion at networking events. These themes were raised by our participants themselves and were distilled from a significant number of interviews (as defined by three of more), to warrant further discussion and investigation.

1. Career status and recognizability
2. Extraversion/introversion
3. Privilege (light skin bias, experience navigating White spaces and financial means)
4. Tendency to deny or justify microaggressions
5. Age
6. Meeting North American standards of "attractiveness" (beauty bias/lookism)
7. Affiliation status (union/guild/agency/mentor)
8. Race
9. Culture, Religion, Sexuality and Language

We will discuss each of these themes briefly below.

1. CAREER STATUS AND RECOGNIZABILITY

Overall, senior level BIPOC women, particularly those in decision-making roles within institutions and organization, had a more welcoming experience at film and television networking events. They benefitted from recognizability and clout in the industry and were approached by others. They contrasted their experience networking now with how they were treated and perceived earlier in their careers and when they were just breaking into the industry. At the start of their careers, they experienced much of the exclusion, marginalization, and microaggressions described by other participants who were newer to the film and television industry.

2. EXTRAVERSION/INTROVERSION

Regardless of seniority and career status, race, or age, participants who described themselves as introverts, unsurprisingly, were less likely to have a positive experience networking than extroverts. They were also more sensitive to negative social cues and microaggressions than their extroverted counterparts.

"… I think being an introvert/extrovert does make a difference …I have a group of 5-6 [friends], of us all female documentary filmmakers and super supportive of each other's careers. And … I know that for some of the people in that group … [networking] is tiring.… they're more introverts whereas I'm an extrovert so I … like going to these events but that's just my personality and I will attribute that to the fact that I am an extrovert."

"I don't think I would say I attended many. I feel like I attended enough for my level of sociability, (laughs) I'm kind of an introvert. However, I do understand the importance of having your face out there and meeting new people. … Networking events have this illusion, it's a forced social situation. But I've been trying to look at it more as an opportunity to meet more likeminded people and so … I started to open up to that idea or approach it with that mentality … and I feel like it's been a lot better for me but I'm still shy, I would say (laughs)."

3. PRIVILEGE (LIGHT SKIN BIAS, EXPERIENCE NAVIGATING WHITE SPACES AND FINANCIAL MEANS)

In their interviews, some participants acknowledged that they had a certain level of "privilege" which made it easier for them to navigate industry networking events, and especially to establish connections with decisionmakers, which were for the most part White spaces.

Light skin bias, some felt, affected their interactions. They describe how colourism (i.e., how skin-tone bias affects racial equality) exists in the industry and how, as light skinned BIPOC women, they were able to navigate social spaces and events in the industry more easily.

"… there was this sense as a light skinned brown young woman there is a way in which young women you know … can be 'useful' or whatever at least before getting married."

"I think my perspective is also really different because I read White, so I have been privy to a lot of conversations I'm not sure dominant culture wanted the BIPOC community to know about. So, I know just how biased and racist this business is and how the expectation for talent is lower around the diverse community and the diverse community is also infantilized. So, anyone who is from specifically the BIPOC but also diverse community is expected to be emerging, and not established."

"…it's interesting because I look the way I do. I'm sort of ethnically ambiguous, especially considering what season it is (laughs)… so I feel like I can drift between White spaces and BIPOC spaces. So, I think [my experience] is different…"

Others described their experience in navigating White spaces as impacting the way in which they were received by White people at industry networking events. But this was coupled by the exhausting effects of needing to 'code switch' or play the part of someone they do not fully identify with to be accepted.

> *"First of all, a lot of filmmakers in the Black community are mixed. … I don't think that's a coincidence … we're the people who check the boxes, as proximity to Whiteness gives power. I see that at play and I'm hoping these discussions are subverting that more and more. … I think a lot of us are in this position. …to be a filmmaker requires a lot of privilege. You know there are a lot of hoops you have to get through; it's a really tough industry… first and foremost, it's education ... Most filmmakers are very, very well-educated. And so, if you don't have a certain level of education you're not getting through the door. If you do, you've been in a lot of White spaces. So, I think the filmmaking community isn't really diverse because of how many barriers there are to access."*

As the above participant mentioned, education level played a role in their experiences, along with financial means.

> *"…they [i.e., decisionmakers] want things to go through formal channels and I don't think they recognize a formal channel can be a barrier to entry. And, for a lot of people of colour, even getting an agent… to take them seriously is damn near impossible … you have to be really tenacious, dig your heels in, not go anywhere… a difficult thing to do because there are a bunch of other issues going on in the community, including lack of support from parents or not necessarily coming from an upper-middle-class, established family that allows pursuit of the arts as a reasonable form of making a living. And what upset me in that moment was that there was no curiosity and no sense of interest from these people [i.e., decisionmakers] who are supposed to be the ones that are the tastemakers in the industry."*

4. TENDENCY TO DENY OR JUSTIFY MICROAGGRESSIONS

We noticed in our interviews that some of the participants tended to deny that they experienced microaggressions, although they would describe incidents that could be viewed by external observers as microaggressions. Or they even tried to justify the actions of the person perpetrating the aggression and blamed themselves. We mention this briefly as the phenomenon skews the data, because we recorded the responses of the participants at face value.

Framing microaggressions as acts done "naïvely" or underplaying the phenomenon was something that recurred in a few interviews.

> *"No, I have to say, no [I haven't experienced microaggressions at industry events]. I have seen it … it's so micro that it is an undertone… I wouldn't call it a microaggression, but an undertone of the look, 'you don't belong here', you know what I'm saying. Unless it was … the ones who kind of have made it, I didn't feel that they valued any others … microaggression no, an undertone yes. And sometimes that's a little bit worse."*

What was concerning to the researchers and plays into conversations about internalized racism (the internalization of racial oppression by racialized individuals), was that some BIPOC individuals justified the actions of the person committing the microaggression, blamed themselves or thought that they could have done something differently to make the conversation with the aggressor "less dismissive".

> *"…for example, the wife of the man who touched my hair sitting at the table and saw him do it, like I wouldn't call that a microaggression it's kind of innocent; it's foolish. Like, why would you do that?… And it's naivety… microaggression in Canadian behaviour is one step more subtle because it's wrapped in so much politeness… And I often find myself having parallel conversations before and after and trying to figure out if you can change that narrative at all by something you can do. Like, is it possible? So, I always like to turn it back on myself. Is there something you can do to change the conversation from being dismissive?"*

5. AGE

Age was discussed extensively. Briefly, unless intersecting with the beauty bias above, younger filmmakers in our sample felt that they were not taken as seriously at networking events. They felt that age was often erroneously tied to career status, which resulted in sometimes dismissive interactions.

6. MEETING NORTH AMERICAN STANDARDS OF "ATTRACTIVENESS" (BEAUTY BIAS/LOOKISM)

The beauty bias (prosocial biases in favor of "attractive" people) plays a part in many contexts, how much more in the film industry.
Extensive research has been done on this bias in other spheres, demonstrating that physically attractive individuals are more likely to be considered for jobs and to be hired. They tend to earn higher wages and they are more likely to advance rapidly in their careers (Maestripieri et al., 2017).

A few of our participants suggested that this disproportionately affects women in the film industry, and especially BIPOC women who have not historically "fit the bill" of North American standards of attractiveness.

"The difference between social networking and business networking is really similar and that means all of the same qualifiers, … the girl who fits the most stereotypical attractiveness is going to get a lot of attention. You know, weirdos with great ideas aren't necessarily going to get to know other people… I have witnessed that, and I think that I definitely have felt the pretty privilege bias and I think that there is still also a really ingrained misogyny in the business that girls are there for you to look at and boys are there to pitch you their stories…"

7. AFFILIATION STATUS (UNION/ GUILD/AGENCY/MENTOR)

One of the challenges that some participants faced while networking was being unrepresented, un-agented or unaffiliated. There was a sense that having representation or affiliation lent credibility and weight to one's interactions at networking events, gave access to decisionmakers through "formal" introductions, and plugged them into conversations and networks which were generally unreachable. This was a significant barrier for some BIPOC women.

8. RACE

It came through from our interviews that certain communities, especially Indigenous and Black communities face particular kinds of racism within the industry and society which posed distinct and significant barriers to entry into social networks in the field of film and television. Raising this issue is not meant to undermine the experiences of women from other groups, it is simply mentioned here as a factor that ought to be considered by the industry as it devises new initiatives by which to increase diversity and inclusivity within social networks; it warns that a one size fits all approach will not be sufficient.

"I think anybody with their eyes open has been able to see the ways in which Indigenous … artists experience a particular kind of racism and Black people do too because of our history in this part of the world that isn't limited to the fact of the enslavement of some of our ancestors but is connected to it. And the different ways in which that history has just continued to play out in our lives over the centuries. The type of racism that we have faced manifests in all aspects of society including the film industry. We have faced particular types of stereotyping that we grow up seeing on screen and on television, that's one way that there is a specific type of racism. We experience a particular way that people judge our bodies. In a way that is specific and manifest in images we see in film and television. Assumptions about our intelligence, assumptions about our sameness."

As an example of the difference in the experience of Black and Indigenous women in the film industry, when asked if their experience at networking events had been different than others given the fact that they are BIPOC, 100% of Indigenous women and 100% of Black women (and biracial women of mixed African descent) among our participants responded yes. This is compared to 75% of the total sample. Another significant difference to which we will draw attention is that 90% of Black women (and biracial women of mixed African descent) experienced microaggressions—this compared to 51% of the overall sample. Only 10% of Black women (and biracial women of mixed African descent) and 25% of Indigenous women said that they had a generally positive experience at networking events.

There was a feeling that women coming from these communities, which have been particularly disenfranchised in society and have not been nurtured through the career pipeline, have to "start from scratch" and fight for themselves in a way that others do not have to.

Due to the methodology of our study, our sample size was quite small; this data needs to be expanded upon and further studies need to be done to decipher the extent to which these differences can be demonstrated with greater statistical power.

https://www.pngegg.com/en/png-fjzqj

9. CULTURE, RELIGION, DISABILITY, SEXUALITY AND LANGUAGE

> *"In our families, cinema and film isn't usually considered a viable career choice. When we're young and we watch movies, we don't see ourselves represented. In television we aren't represented, so there isn't any encouragement for us. You have to be extremely stubborn and persistent as a person of colour to go into the industry when you're not encouraged at all by your family or society."*

In our interviews we discussed barriers that exist within BIPOC communities.

The lifestyle of attending events on a regular basis or prioritizing this aspect of social life, especially events that serve alcohol, was not always deemed as "proper" in all cultural and religious contexts for women. Furthermore, it was mentioned by some participants (in particular, those from the Middle East and North Africa, as well as those from East Asian and Southeast Asian descent) that film was not always seen as a viable career choice for women and/or that the "status" of being a filmmaker is lower than other career choices in the eyes of their family and community. Some battled against the stereotypical views in their family that film is not a breadwinning profession ("starving artist") and noted that there was not enough education in their communities about all the potential occupations that exist within the film industry (especially crew positions or working in the production office).

Additional cultural barriers were mentioned. For instance, within Indigenous communities, it was noted by some participants that certain filmmakers feel dissonance around colonial practices and modes of pitching and networking that take place at events. Within the East Asian community, there were barriers in terms of deference in addressing older and more senior level filmmakers or decisionmakers, due to cultural scripts about the level of respect one should have when addressing someone of an older age.

"…I find that oftentimes I do not give myself enough space in rooms because I'm the youngest and I should, therefore, be listening and respecting others instead of speaking out and perhaps disagreeing."

Among the participants who identified as Muslim, some felt that they experienced another layer of microaggression at networking events, particularly Islamophobia and stereotyping on the basis of what others perceived "Muslim women ought to be like" and what a "Muslim is supposed to look" like. This also has an impact in terms of what narratives are accepted.

"Islamophobia is an interesting one. There's the expectation that it has to be a story about abuse, or you know things like that. I think there's a lot of questioning peoples' lived experiences because we don't necessarily want to hear them."

In smaller centres in particular, women and non-binary folks from the LGBTQ2S+ community faced additional barriers to inclusion at industry networking events and struggled to find others from the same community or who were interested in telling their stories.

"I think it's also recognizing where privilege that putting on a networking event is … marginalized and racialized folks … [are] feeling scared; they don't know anyone and how they will be perceived and not having other queer BIPOC folk there to understand [them]…"

This led one participant to leave their community to go to a larger centre.

"…there were… no events where you could meet people and sort of the 'film brothers' that were supporting each other weren't in any way receptive to like me coming in and introducing myself. …so it was not a welcoming environment there … like a lot of people left … it was not a welcoming environment for like a queer Indigenous person…"

Similarly, participants who identified as being from the BIPOC disabled community struggled to find others within networking circles with whom they could connect, and this had a disheartening effect.

"…Black women [from the deaf community], where are we? What have we been doing here in [name of province withheld], do we have a movement going on, what are we doing to raise concerns? When you're in your siloes, you second guess yourself."

Language barriers were mentioned in two contexts, one in relation to the immigrant community and in another context, which posed additional difficulty to integration within the network setting. It was discussed in terms of the difficulty of being francophone among an anglophone majority or anglophone among a francophone majority.


WINNER
16 HUDSON
Production Company: Big Bad Boo Studios
Distributor: Big Bad Boo Studios
Original Broadcaster: TVO
DIVERSIFY TV
2021

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