

Position Paper

Gender Equity Policy (GEP) Analysis Project

Policy analysis and expert interviews

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This position paper outlines the breadth of conceptual material that informed how the policy analysis and interview team undertook the design of research instruments as well as the collection and analysis of data. It is presented as a 'live document' meaning that it was written before, during and after research activities. Rather than adapt the document to tell a story of 'what we did', we have decided to share an unedited version to provide insight into the research process. However, as a result, the use of tenses varies in the document and some materials/approaches are referenced that were not implemented in our final execution of the research.

Introduction

This position paper provides the foundation for Task 4. It will guide the project team as they **design and undertake expert interviews and document analysis**, synthesise findings with other parts of the Gender Equity Policy (GEP) project, and share results in ways that bring about positive change in the film industry. The paper will serve as the basis for several public outputs throughout the project, such as a journal article on conceptual issues associated with the GEP project and information for sector organisations on the project's scope. However, in the first instance, the position paper is intended as an **internal document for those working on Task 4**, with relevance for those working on other parts of the GEP project. The position paper complements the GEP project values statement and the detailed Task 4 operational guide (which includes information on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, search methodology, interview protocol and policy analysis framework used in Task 4). The paper therefore enables us to critically reflect on the team's values and practices and how they might evolve during the project, learn from others on the project and outside of the project, and agree on a common approach before engaging with stakeholders and external partners.

The position paper consists of four sections that map to different elements of Task 4:

1. Foundational questions
2. Collection
3. Analysis
4. Use

Each section is divided into two parts that describe 'what we do' and 'why we do':

What we do? Relates to methods and practice. These sub-sections provide an operational guide as to how we will answer the research questions and objectives associated with Task 4.

Why we do? These sub-sections expand on the GEP project core values of accountability, interconnectedness, willingness to share power and responsibility and how they inform the delivery of Task 4 activities. Sources investigated under Task 4 include documents that pertain to gender equity policies and transcripts from interviews conducted with those involved in 'setting the agenda', as it relates to gender equity in the film industry, and the subsequent design, implementation, evaluation and contestation of associated policies. Investigating not only how policies were designed but also the genesis of how they came into being, offers the potential for rich insights into power relations within policy networks, the representation of problems and the development of policy ideation across different portfolios.

The paper uses multiple and overlapping lenses to discuss the GEP project, which includes an exploration of operational, methodological, political and ethical issues. It also explains how we understand the problem that Task 4 intends to investigate, the tools and approaches used to respond to the problem, and the relationship between the problem and the project's overall research questions and objectives. The position paper was initially drafted in August 2021 but exists as a live document that will continue to evolve during the life of the project.

The position paper also includes a list of the GEP project's research questions and objectives (Appendix).

1. Foundational questions

This section establishes foundational elements of Task 4: what we bring to Task 4 as researchers; how key concepts are understood; the relationship between key concepts and the problem being addressed; and the scope of the research.

1.1. What we do?

We will:

1.1.1. Reflect on our backgrounds and experiences: an ongoing examination of our biases and assumptions that will require mechanisms, designed into the project, that force us to regularly review and amend our approach (for example, six-monthly team workshops to check that our work aligns with the GEP project values). This reflexive review invites us to look inward and consider what we bring to the project, what we take, and what we leave behind. This review will require us to establish what perspectives are missing, devise ways to plug any gaps identified and/or mitigate the likely consequences of these gaps on the research. Self-policing of our biases and assumptions is not an easy process. Catherine D'Ignazio & Lauren F. Klein (2020) describe this challenge as a 'privilege hazard' as our social, political and economic interests can make it harder for us to see the existence of problems that do not directly impact us. In instances where we do not possess lived experience of the topic under investigation, team members must critically examine how our expertise of this topic is used in ways that make things better rather than worse.

1.1.2. Define the terms of our enquiry: how we define concepts, in turn, plays a role in what we bring into view during this project. To describe the landscape within which we imagine the GEP project to sit, we present brief project descriptions of the concepts of gender equity, policy and the film industry.

1.1.3. Define the problem: Task 4 involves longitudinal analysis of relevant policy indicators as a measurement of policy impact, discourse analysis of relevant policy documents, and in-depth qualitative interviews with key policy decision-makers and industry stakeholders in advocacy networks in Canada, Germany and the UK. To establish what is understood as the 'problem' related to the design, delivery and outcomes of existing gender equity policies (in other words, why are we interested in this issue), we adopt Carol Bacchi's (2012) 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' (WPR) policy analysis. As Bacchi (2012) notes:

It starts from the premise that what one proposes to do about something reveals what one thinks is problematic (needs to change). Following this thinking, policies and policy proposals contain implicit representations of what is considered to be the 'problem' ('problem representations'). For example, if forms of training are recommended to improve women's status and promotion opportunities, the implication is that their lack of training is the 'problem', responsible for 'holding them back'. The task in a 'WPR' analysis is to read policies with an eye to discerning how the 'problem' is represented within them and to subject this problem representation to critical scrutiny (p. 21).

The definition of the problem is as much about what is included as what is excluded from view. How the problem is defined shapes the policies made available in response and, in turn, the focus of Task 4. **The WPR approach challenges assumptions that problems are fixed concepts from where to develop solutions and instead underscores that both 'problems' and 'solutions' are value statements (Bacchi, 2012). The distribution of value, in turn, shapes what 'problems' are understood as worthy of being addressed.**

1.1.4. Establish boundaries for our research: the identification of inclusion and exclusion criteria for policy documents and interviewees, covering a range of measures from the seemingly mundane (start date and end date) to the politically contested (the agents and objects of policy). For Thomas A. Schwandt (2018), boundary setting is 'about what aspects of a situation are and ought to be part of the picture we create of what is being studied' (p. 131). As well as establishing the boundaries of our study, we will also consider how inequality manifests in different ways at multiple time points. In other words, changing one thing will not necessarily have a positive trickle-down effect across other parts of the industry. For example, several studies (Cobb, 2020; European Women's Audio Visual Network, 2016; Follows et al., 2016; Verhoeven et al., 2019) have noted that although around half of film school graduates in the UK are women, the gender balance is not reflected in the number of women who go on to direct films, receive public funding nor the proportion of films screened in cinemas. This problem is partly a pipeline issue but also highlights multiple moments of decision-making where gatekeepers maintain the industry's inequity.

1.2. Why we do?

Our rationale for the approaches adopted above is based on the following values/beliefs:

1.2.1. Reflexive: When we position these activities (establishing the terms of enquiry, defining the problem and setting boundaries) as foundational questions, it underlines the presence and influence of the research team on the phenomena under investigation. As Bacchi (2012) notes, adopting the WPR approach 'signals a commitment to include oneself and one's thinking as part of the "material" to be analysed' (p. 22). What we bring to the project, as individuals with life experiences and professional expertise/training, partly influences our approach to the collection, analysis and use of qualitative and quantitative data in the project. It is therefore vital that we ensure our ways of working are open, accessible and transparent. This disclosure includes an openness about the limitations of our tools, methodologies and data; accessibility standards for all project documents and outputs; and transparency about what is included and excluded from the project scope.

Our position, as researchers external to the film industry, means that we are one step removed from the design or management of policies, initiatives and interventions. While we face the task of analysing what has already happened, academic scholarship produced by researchers on the team has informed policy agendas in the UK and Canada and therefore contributed to the definition of the problem and the subsequent design of responses. GEP project team members are therefore actors in the policy ecosystem that we seek to investigate. This interconnectedness will require ongoing attention to any conflicts of interest as well as biases and assumptions about what policies are investigated.

1.2.2. Defining terms: To establish how the focus of the GEP project maps to existing studies of equality, diversity and inclusion in the film industry and ensure all project team members have a shared understanding of the topics under investigation, it is necessary to define the terms of enquiry. These definitions shape, and are shaped by, how we define the problem and what we establish as inclusion and exclusion criteria:

1) *What is gender equity?*

In Doris Ruth Eikhof et al.'s (2019) study of existing literature on gender inequality in the UK film industry, they note that gender was conceptualised as a binary (woman/man) and implicitly understood as related to cisgender, heterosexual women.

The collection, analysis and use of data about gender, sex and sexuality engage concepts that are constructed through discourse and are not empirically stable (Brim & Ghaziani, 2016). Although understood as constructed concepts, this view does not negate their impact on our everyday lives. As Judith Butler (1993) observes, 'What are we to make of constructions without which we would not be able to think, to live, to make sense at all, those which have acquired for us a kind of necessity?' (p. xi).

What is the relationship between gender equity and other concepts? For example, to what extent does improved gender equity in the film industry result in less gender segmentation across all occupations and levels of seniority, foster a more inclusive work environment or inform the content of the films produced? Although we might assume a causal and multi-directional relationship between these concepts, evidence to support this assumption remains sparse. Building on Kate Oakley's (2004) argument that the relationship between creative industries and social inclusion lacks a robust evidence base, Clive James Nwonka & Sarita Malik (2018) have questioned whether the participation of a greater range of people from diverse cultural and social backgrounds will change practices related to social inclusion. Herman Gray (2016) has also queried whether a more diverse workforce leads to the production of more diverse content and whether the 'exchange of bodies and experiences' (p. 246) can respond to structural inequalities in the sector. In this vein, our understanding of the problem does not see policies, programmes and interventions that only seek to empower individuals (for example, through skills development or leadership training) as a solution to systemic and structural inequity. Likewise, as an output of policies, programmes and interventions, any change to the headcount that makes the film industry numerically 'more diverse' does not necessarily reflect a fundamental shift in the status quo nor does it challenge systems and structures of white, patriarchal privilege.

2) What is policy?

On the interactive relationship between policies and problems, Bacchi (2012) notes:

Policy is not the government's best effort to solve 'problems'; rather, policies produce 'problems' with particular meanings that affect what gets done or not done, and how people live their lives (p. 22).

Policies can offer a window into how institutions understand themselves. Yet, as Sara Ahmed (2007) observes, in many institutions there exists a gap between how institutions imagine themselves in policies and the on-the-ground reality of the phenomena they describe:

If we consider the politics of documenting diversity, we can see that documents create fantasy images of the organizations they apparently describe. The document says 'we are diverse', as if saying it makes it so (p. 607).

When we bring gender equity policies into the foreground that conceptualise gender as monolithic and non-intersectional, we potentially push other ways of addressing social justice further into the shadows – particularly for those who do not identify as white, cis, heterosexual, non-disabled and middle class. As observed by Eikhof et al. (2019), while attempting to reveal more about gender inequality in the screen sector, the narrow focus of past studies also closed down avenues for further examination:

The putative reality of gender as cisgender, heterosexual and concerning women, motherhood and age inhibits the production of knowledge about a substantive share of other workers: working fathers, workers who identify as

men, workers with non-binary gender identities or workers who identify as women but not as heterosexual (p. 850).

In contributing to the production of 'problems', policies provide legitimacy for some things and not others. To address the circular relationship between policies and problems, Task 4's starting point and unit of analysis are policies.

1.2.3. Problem definition: Task 4 focuses on gender equity policies that were designed to respond to problems, as defined by individuals/organisations engaged in policy advocacy, design and implementation. However, it is vital that the GEP project team also explore and attempt to define the problems that initiated the need for this research project (in other words, self-problematization of our approach to gender inequity in the film industry). We define the problem in the following ways:

- An individual's characteristics (gender, age, race, sexual orientation etc.) are not a barrier to participation and advancement in the film industry.
- The problem is not new nor has it recently been exacerbated (Loist & Verhoeven, 2019).
- The problem goes beyond individual men doing bad things (Loist & Prommer, 2019).
- The film industry is a 'gendered production culture in which a pervasive bias runs through the whole industry and creates hierarchical differences and hurdles for women seeking work in creative positions' (Loist & Verhoeven, 2019, p. 69).
- There exists a gap between the problem and the data we use to represent it. For example, our methods represent the problem inconclusively (in other words, methods are contested and not comprehensive) and there exists a time lag between data collection and the current situation (exacerbated by the slow speed of academic publishing etc.).
- The problem is a product of history, as well as social, political and economic factors.

Problems brought into view illustrate what those in existing policy networks believe are 'problematic' or 'missing' from how things currently operate (SenGupta et al., 2004). This framing means that, even when exploring topics related to EDI, many problems remain off-limits as they do not match the terms and conditions under which the problem is being 'defined'. Critical Race Theorists have described this issue as 'interest convergence', with Derek Bell (1980) arguing that the 'interests of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interest of whites' (p. 523). More recently, scholars (Brown, 2008; Fernando, 2019) have also described the role of the state and/or normative majorities (such as white people or heterosexual people) in determining when difference is permitted to exist and when problems are understood as legible or worthy of being examined. Looking inward, the GEP project team must reflect upon how the 'problem' at the centre of our investigation came into being (for example, to what extent was it shaped by the requirements of research funders and/or the expectations of the host universities).

The landscape within which we define the problem also determines who we understand as 'worthy' of being helped by policies, programmes and initiatives to improve gender equity. In the context of LGBTQ rights, efforts to advance legal equality across a range of issues (most notably, marriage and adoption rights for same-sex couples) have resulted in situations where LGBTQ individuals position themselves as 'deserving', a benchmark of respectability established by the cis, heterosexual majority (Spade, 2015). However, the shoring-up of claims of 'deservingness' in turn creates a class of 'undeserving' LGBTQ individuals (most often, Black, disabled, migrant, queer and/or working class individuals) who find themselves further removed from the solution to the problem originally intended to resolve. When we apply this critique to the topic of policy development, those positioned as 'deserving' become problematised as the objects of policy. For example, a policy intended to improve access to

the industry for disabled women has, as its object, a certain idea as to who is understood as a 'disabled woman'. Those who fall outside the purview of policy frameworks constitute an unproblematized category, which includes both those who are advantaged (e.g. non-disabled, men as the reference point upon which policy is based) and disadvantaged (those who are unintelligible to the existing policy agenda e.g. non-binary people or those with certain impairments). The problematized/unproblematized division therefore simultaneously preserves systemic privilege *and* systemic marginalisation through the solidification of three distinct groups in policy development.

2. Collection

This section discusses our approach to the collection of quantitative and qualitative data from documents and expert interviews conducted with stakeholders.

Research questions and objectives addressed in this section include:

RQ1. What are the industry norms, structures and practices that constrain women's participation in the international screen industries?

OB1. Qualitative interviews contributed to a database to analyse women's participation rates in Canada, Germany, the UK and European film industries

OB2. Evaluate the design and relative impact of previous and current public policies and programs designed to promote gender equity in film industries in Canada, Germany, the UK, and across Europe using qualitative interviews

2.1. What we do?

We will:

2.1.1. Identify key policy documents and develop a policy database: Identify (i) key institutions engaged in the film industries of the UK, Germany and Canada (as well as relevant transnational and international institutions) (ii) policies developed by these institutions that relate to gender equity and (iii) individuals involved in the design and implementation of these policies (to be interviewed).

Data collection takes place against a landscape changed, and in the process of being changed, by the Covid-19 pandemic. We will therefore devise a search methodology (for example, agreement on search terms) that reflects the evolving landscape (for example, are EDI policies developed in response to Covid-19 an aberration from the norm or reflective of new ways of working?) The review will analyse publicly available documents.

2.1.2. Design an interview protocol: The interview protocol will determine the format(s) of interviews (structured, semi-structured etc.) and the questions asked of interviewees. We might design multiple discussion guides to reflect the diversity of interviewees. During the interviews, we will explore (i) how gender equity is understood within the contexts where individuals work and (ii) individuals' experiences of gender equity policies (both positive and negative). Among those involved in the design, execution and evaluation of policies, we might explore what interviewees understand these policies do? What problems are they intended to solve? What measure would indicate that the policy had succeeded in its intention?

2.1.3. Undertake interviews: Identify and recruit interviewees, agree on methods to conduct interviews (for example, on Zoom, by telephone and/or in-person) and the language(s) used to conduct interviews (i.e. English and German).

Policy documents identified during the review will inform the selection of interviewees. In other words, we intend to engage interviewees who can provide a deeper dive into the impetus, rationale, design and expectations for gender equity policies included in our policy database.

This approach will emphasise the voices of those who played a key role in the policy-setting agenda but is unlikely to provide insights into how policies were received and/or those opposed to approaches followed. To respond to these missing voices, we will also conduct interviews with representatives of membership organisations and advocacy groups. Interviewees will be invited to participate in the project in a professional capacity related to their current or former role in the industry. Although, as will likely emerge during interviews, it is not always possible (nor preferable) to differentiate professional and personal experiences of gender equity in the industry. Before commencing the interview, we will inform interviewees about their contribution to the GEP project and seek their consent to participate.

2.1.4. Undertake additional interviews and/or further review of documents: no single interviewee will present a comprehensive account of the policy ecosystem of which they have knowledge/experience. We may therefore wish to adapt our approach during the interviews to ensure we account for missing voices and present, as far as possible, a rounded account of the policies under investigation. Depending on the chronology of activities, this approach might provide an opportunity for methods to inform each other (for example, findings from the document review highlight the need for additional interviewees and/or insights from interviews inform the documents missed by the review).

2.2. Why we do?

Our rationale for the methods/practice adopted above is based on our following values/beliefs:

2.2.1. Data/evidence not distributed evenly: D'Ignazio & Klein (2020) identify the starting point for a 'data feminist' approach is that 'power is not distributed equally in the world. Those who wield power are disproportionately elite, straight, white, able-bodied, cisgender men from the Global North'. The US data justice group Data For Black Lives (2020) also argues that 'data does not exist in a vacuum isolated from social and political context' (p. 24) and that, in their work on racial justice, it is necessary to interpret data 'through the lens of structural racism' (p. 24). For example, in the UK education sector, David Gillborn et al. (2018) have described the mobilisation of quantitative data to 'obfuscate, camouflage, and even to further legitimate racist inequities' (p. 160). Among LGBTQ people, Jen Jack Giesking (2018) highlights that most historical data about these communities have 'only been used to stigmatize and pathologize' (p. 152), which has contributed to a lack of quality, extant data about LGBTQ people. Shaka McGlotten (2016) also notes that, among Black queer people, data has also operated as a tool of race and racism that 'reduce our lives to mere numbers: we appear as commodities, revenue streams, statistical deviations, or vectors of risk' (p. 3).

Available data, whether quantitative survey results or information shared by interviewees, is therefore likely to over-represent the views of those who have had some degree of success in the film industry. Shelley Cobb & Natalie Wreyford (2017) make this argument and note that 'hearing from members of the minority group' still fails to 'tell us about the women who are unable to be part of that profession, the scale or reasons for their exclusion' (p. 107).

2.2.2. More data? Eikhof et al.'s (2019) review of the knowledge produced about gender inequalities in the UK screen sector reported that 'a major share of both industry and academic knowledge production was dedicated to evidencing the existence of gender inequalities' (p. 864), with around 60 per cent of the 56 studies reviewed related to women's workforce participation. In these studies, 'gender inequality was articulated as something that needed to be evidenced and explained, rather than challenged and changed' (Eikhof et al., 2019, p. 848).

The project team does not assume the need for more data on the problem of gender inequity in the film industry. Writing about data on racial injustice, Ruha Benjamin (2019) argues that the problem is not ‘a lack of knowledge’ and that ‘demanding data on subjects that we already know much about is, in my estimation, a perversion of knowledge’ (p. 116). In addition, gathering more evidence of the problem, when enough evidence already exists, can contribute to the development of deficit narratives about the group under investigation. As observed by D’Ignazio & Klein (2020), data accumulated tends to focus on ‘problems’ as removed from a more rounded account of people’s strengths, creativity and agency. In addition, data collection, analysis and presentation are resource-intensive, in terms of researcher time and the emotional labour of research participants. For D’Ignazio & Klein (2020), ‘minoritized individuals and groups should not have to repeatedly prove that their experiences of oppression are real’.

Efforts to address a ‘lack of knowledge’ about diversity/gender equity in the film industry can divert energy from changing practices that are known to be exclusionary (Newsinger & Eikhof, 2020). The project therefore heeds the call of Deb Verhoeven et al. (2019) to ‘move beyond using data to describe the extent of a problem and instead work with data that can indicate where, when, and how to intervene’ (p. 137). The GEP project team need to assess how data produced by this research will intervene across a range of areas including academic scholarship, industry practices and the design of future policies.

Before undertaking primary research, it is vital to explore whether existing data sources (such as published interviews) can help answer the project’s research questions. For example, the project team might work closely with sector organisations that have already examined issues of gender equity to see if resources could support existing initiatives rather than create something afresh. This willingness to share power avoids the duplication of existing materials and reduces the burden on individuals to provide the same information multiple times. However, in the gender knowledge ecology of the UK screen sector, Eikhof (2019) has observed the relative absence of data about employment outcomes such as pay or promotion; sexual harassment; the interplay of characteristics such as gender, race or disability and social inequality; and interventions to improve gender equality. The GEP project specifically responds to this final gap.

2.2.3. How we work with others? The GEP project requires us to engage with individuals and organisations that are conditioned by the structures under which they work, in both positive and negative ways. Reflecting on how people are shaped by their environments, Dean Spade (2015) notes:

Power relations impact how we know ourselves as subjects through these systems of meaning and control – the ways we understand our own bodies, the things we believe about ourselves and our relationships with other people and with institutions, and the ways we imagine change and transformation (p. 6).

Within the film industry, how institutions choose to respond to inequity can also fashion how minoritised groups make sense of their experiences. This phenomenon is particularly apparent in institutions where the term ‘equity’ is operationalised as an interchangeable synonym for concepts such as ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’. Inversely, our interactions with existing structures, as researchers, can also affect their operation. In their article ‘Thank You for Coming Out Today: The Queer Discomfort of In-Depth Interviewing’, Catherine Connell (2018) asks, ‘Can an interview change a life?’ (p. 133). We believe that it can; for both the research participants and those conducting the interviews.

The GEP project requires us to engage with many participants in a diversity of ways. These engagements are shaped by how interviewees relate to the project and any reciprocal expectations that follow their participation. For example, the interviewee information sheet will explain that participation in the research does not determine how policies are discussed/promoted in project outputs or the subsequent showcasing of policies at dissemination events (for example, an invitation to the project summit).

The project will require us to engage with individuals, as representatives of institutions, who hold views about gender equity that differ or contradict the views of the GEP project team. In these instances, it is important to underscore a difference between how we engage individuals as research participants and how we engage those for whom we wish to provide a platform to showcase their work in the industry. This terrain is difficult to navigate so we must ensure that we regularly reflect and, if required, act upon our project values. In extreme cases, acting upon our project values might mean that we do not engage in dialogue with individuals who are known to hold views that deny the existence or legitimacy of other people's identities, which might wrongly suggest equivalence or expand the borders of 'acceptable debate' in a way that normalises their position. As Ahmed (2016) explains:

Dialogue is not possible when some people exercise arguments as weapons by treating others as evidence to be rebutted. When you are asked to provide evidence for your existence, or when you are treated as evidence, your existence is negated. Transphobia and antitrans statements should not be treated as just another viewpoint that we should be free to express at the happy table of diversity. There cannot be a dialogue when some at the table are in effect (or intent on) arguing for the elimination of others at the table. (p. 31)

Engagement is not the same as providing a platform. We therefore adopt an ambivalent approach to existing structures and institutions, working with and against them, to answer the project's research questions. It also remains important that we establish rules of reciprocity between the GEP project team and those we engage with during the project. Above all, we echo the approach of the authors of the Feminist Data Manifest-No (Cifor et al., 2019) when they note:

We refuse work about minoritized people. We commit to mobilizing data so that we are working with and for minoritized people in ways that are consensual, reciprocal, and that understand data as always co-constituted.

Decisions about gender equity need to meaningfully engage those who are disproportionately impacted by changes to practices or failures to change practices. The Feminist Data Manifest-No (2019) argues:

We refuse to accept that data and the systems that generate, collect, process, and store it are too complex or too technical to be understood by the people whose lives are implicated in them.

Although we agree with this principle, it is again important for us to consider how we can ensure it is implemented in our work. For example, we want to ensure that our examination of gender equity is intersectional but we cannot rely upon numerically small communities (e.g. Black, queer women in particular production roles) to provide regular input to the project as this demand brings the risks of overburdening. It is therefore necessary for us to consider when and where we can speak on topics that, although addressed in our research, transcend our lived experiences. When, if ever, can team members speak about or speak for minoritised communities that feature in our research? It is unlikely that a golden rule covers all situations but we can reflect upon measures to empower team members to engage in

conversations in a meaningful and ethical way, while also providing means to recuse themselves if conversations go beyond their competency.

There is no obligation for anyone to disclose information about how they identify or personal details of issues related to gender inequity in the film industry. The UK's Open Data Institute (Onerhime, 2020), in its account of people's access to digital services, describes how people 'must have a choice of whether to provide or withhold information, including opting out entirely or out of providing certain information' and that 'the absence of data, where people have opted out, should not be feared. It is valuable data in itself. Data collection is important, but it is not more important than rights and autonomy' (p. 21). Benjamin (2016) also describes flipping on its head our assumptions about individuals' participation in research projects and that the premise of 'informed refusal' (rather than 'informed consent') would place a greater onus 'on institutions to incorporate the concerns and insights of prospective research subjects' (p. 284).

2.2.4. Hard to reach and research fatigue: Research projects that explore topics related to EDI invite many risks. Those who potentially stand to gain the most from research into EDI, as project outputs and outcomes might improve the culture, often face the greatest risks from participation. For example, self-identifying as a particular identity characteristic (for example, 'outing' yourself as gay or lesbian) can bring risks for your career, wellbeing and - in some contexts – safety (Mishel, 2019; Raval, 2021). With these risks in mind, no individual or community is 'hard to reach'. Any difficulties encountered during the research are a result of the research team's approach and/or historical or social factors that have positioned the community 'outside' of normative research practices. In many cases, an assumption that communities are 'hard to reach' is used to excuse a research team's failure to engage a sizeable number of participants or to justify not undertaking research in the first place (Bates et al., 2019).

Similarly, minoritised communities and/or those perceived as 'hard to reach' often face research fatigue (Clark, 2008; Glick et al., 2018). Fatigue can follow a sense that nothing changes after participation in research projects, the repeated need to share the same information with different research teams and practical limitations such as time and money. It is therefore vital to meaningfully recognise the contributions of individuals and organisations to the GEP project. This recognition includes a consideration of the many ways in which data has value. Data is central to many forms of contemporary capitalism (Sadowski, 2019) and is increasingly used to model future events and shape business decisions. This use of data can therefore mean that data has a high economic value and is not something simply understood as a by-product of the research process. As a result, the GEP project needs to ensure that the individuals and/or organisations from which data is extracted are meaningfully compensated for their contribution and data is not understood as something 'out there' waiting to be captured.

2.2.5. Centre vs. margins While it remains vital for the GEP project to centre and uplift the voices of those previously excluded from full participation in the film industry, the project must also problematise the distinction between the centre and the margins so that the invisibility of normative or unmarked characteristics are also brought into focus and critically examined. The need to examine unmarked categories is a fundamental aspect of queer and critical race scholarship (Benjamin, 2019; Stein & Plummer, 1994; Walcott, 2019), as well as studies of gender equality in the US and UK film industries (Cobb, 2020; Eikhof et al., 2019). Cobb (2020) describes white, straight, non-disabled, middle-class men as a 'structuring absence' (p. 113) as they are a disproportionately dominant force in the film industry yet are generally absent – as a group and as an identity category – from discourse about how to address inequality. As a result, their dominance remains unchallenged and it falls upon individuals within minoritised groups to reflect change within the industry.

Paying attention to what happens at the centre and challenging the location of power can evoke feelings of discomfort among those more familiar with EDI work that only focuses on the (negative) experiences of marginalised or minoritised groups (Pascoe, 2018). This discomfort is particularly apparent when individuals with majority or normative characteristics do not perceive themselves as having an identity and are therefore blind to the privileges it affords (Ridolfo et al., 2012).

3. Analysis

This section examines our approach to the analysis of data collected and ongoing collaboration with project participants and stakeholders.

Research questions and objectives addressed in this section include:

OB2. Evaluate the design and relative impact of previous and current public policies and programs designed to promote gender equity in film industries in Canada, Germany, the UK, and across Europe using qualitative interviews

OB4. Model the impact of previous policy interventions and develop what-if policy scenarios

3.1. What we do?

We will:

3.1.1. Design an analysis framework: the framework will standardise the questions we ask of the sources (policies) collected, as discussed in the previous section. The framework will be detailed enough to discriminate between different policies in a variety of contexts while also flexible enough to ensure all policies, captured during data collection, are analysed (van Ewijk, 2011). We intend to use Bacchi's WPR approach as the foundation for the framework, with questions adapted, extended and modified as required. Questions cover the following seven themes:

- Information about the policy.
- What is the problem represented to be?
- How does the policy respond to the problem?
- Intended outcomes and rationale for action.
- Information about the organisation.
- The policy in context.
- Evaluation and responses to the policy (optional)

3.1.2. Analysis of framework data: after population of the framework, it will become possible to undertake analysis of the data. Our approach to the analysis of framework data and interview transcripts is discussed in more detail in the Task 4 operational guide.

3.1.3. Analyse interview transcripts: analysis of interview transcripts might involve discourse and/or thematic analysis.

3.1.4. Validate early findings with stakeholders: We adopt a feminist approach to research activities. Our collaboration with project participants therefore does not end after the collection of data but continues throughout the analysis and dissemination. Loksee Leung et al. (2019) describe the use of validation workshops as part of data analysis:

Validation workshops which bring together a variety of stakeholders provide valuable opportunities to present preliminary findings and receive frank and open feedback from local stakeholders as to whether the analysis sounds accurate, and whether any results are likely to be seen as controversial or spark backlash (and how all stakeholders can help mitigate that) (p. 441).

3.2. Why we do?

Our rationale for the methods/practice adopted above is based on our following values/beliefs:

3.2.1. Nuance and complexity: Rather than adopt methods that promise a tidy dataset, we recognise that data about gender equity in the film industry is leaky, pluralistic and can change over time. Methods used to measure inequity are often contentious with disagreement among stakeholders, such as funders and representatives of minoritised groups, about the accuracy of tools used and approaches adopted. As Sylvia Walby & Jo Armstrong (2010) observe, 'small details can make a significant difference to revealing or obscuring levels of inequality' (p. 246). We therefore must employ methods that strive to present an accurate representation of the phenomena under investigation and findings that empower policymakers, practitioners and other stakeholders to initiate change in the sector.

3.2.2. Academic rigour and integrity: Academic rigour and integrity underpin Task 4 and the wider GEP project. From fundamental rules, such as citing authorship of ideas/concepts and positioning our work within existing peer-reviewed scholarship, to our engagements with the industry as academics (for example, declining invites to provide academic input when the topic sits beyond the expertise of the project team). Building on the work of scholars and organisations with a track record for high-quality research has the potential to enhance the rigour of project outputs and their potential to reshape scholarly discourse. However, as previously noted, the repetition of past approaches also risks entrenching dominant and exclusionary ways of working. For example, publishing practices and the rules of some academic spaces will likely require us to strategically navigate when to work with and when to work against existing systems and structures. For example, the project team oppose the view that qualitative data, collected during the project, should have its value established by rules and benchmarks that have their basis in patriarchal, heteronormative and colonial ways of knowing. For example, D'Lane Compton (2018) labels the view among some social researchers that 30 interviewees represent an ideal sample as 'academic lore and best practices passed down by my mentors over time' (p. 196). Rather than identify a specific numerical target, the quality of data gathered from interviewees will depend on the heterogeneity of the sample and the diversity of questions asked during interviews (see *Gender & Society* and Cati Connell rebuttal).

3.2.3. Collaboration: Task 4 provides an opportunity for the GEP project to demonstrate how it will collaborate with project participants/partners beyond the collection of data. We recognise that research into the experiences of minoritised communities has historically adopted an extractive model (for example, see Lombardi, 2018), where those under investigation share information about their lives but are kept at a distance from other elements of the research project.

Collaboration also invites the potential for disagreement. Leung et al. (2019) detail tensions in their intersectional feminist research where local communities express resistance to ideas that depart from the status quo (for example, the inclusion of survey questions about same-sex relationships).

4. Use

This section discusses the use of findings produced by Task 4, synthesis with other parts of the GEP analysis project, dissemination activities and the sustainability of knowledge produced.

Research questions and objectives addressed in this section include:

RQ2. Which policy levers and interventions can most effectively deliver fundamental shifts in industry norms, structures and practices and improve women's participation in the global screen industries?

OB5. Further develop, validate and embed the outcomes of OB1-OB4 with academic and industry stakeholders. Engage in research-based knowledge mobilisation and translation with international industry decision-makers.

4.1. What we do?

We will:

4.1.1. Synthesise Task 4 findings with other parts of the GEP project: triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data across other project Tasks.

4.1.2. Produce useable findings: that will shape and inform practices and policies in multiple sectors, as well as influence and reorient scholarly work on EDI in the cultural sector.

4.1.3. Disseminate findings: produce a diverse range of accessible outputs with the view that data does not speak for itself, it needs to be curated. In addition, the translation, dissemination and mobilisation of knowledge occur within the context of power relations and systems that, in turn, determine how outputs are received, understood and used (or not used) to initiate and influence change.

4.1.4. Use findings to empower others: even at the commencement of the project, is it important for us to look towards the future and examine who or what we wish to be (further) empowered and held accountable through the project's outputs and outcomes. Those empowered and held accountable include individuals in the film industry and/or sector organisations.

4.2. Why we do?

Our rationale for the methods/practice adopted above is based on our following values/beliefs:

4.2.1. Useable data: Task 4 both examines existing knowledge about gender inequity (and how this knowledge informed policies/problems) and produces new knowledge about gender inequity in the film industry. Our intentions, however, are not to simply produce knowledge about the 'problem' but also to use findings to inform practice and challenge inequities.

The need to produce 'useable data', in terms of information that will empower action, can justify decisions made by the project team that go against our overarching values. For example, the requirement to aggregate identity groups (such as Black, Asian and Minority

Ethnic) to create numerically larger groups for quantitative analysis or discuss the combined qualitative experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual women (as the numbers were too small to disaggregate). These analytical decisions depart from our ideal and, in some instances, risk overwriting the experiences of minoritised groups and/or entrenching historically exclusionary approaches. Yet, they also highlight the need to make strategic decisions where some values are prioritised over others to advance our overall values and achieve desired outcomes.

4.2.2. Search for the ‘magic finding’: The collection and analysis of data about policies to address gender inequity in the film industry is not an objective in itself. The project’s outcomes relate to how this data is used to generate new knowledge and inform action in the sector. With this outcome in mind, are we looking for a ‘magic finding’ that will enable the GEP project to transcend barriers that have hampered past efforts to improve gender inequity in the film industry? Even if this ‘magic finding’ exists, reliance on powerful individuals and organisations to take action is problematic. Principle 21 of the Feminist Manifest-No (Cifor et al., 2019) highlights how projects intended to address inequity cannot rely on the goodwill of institutions, which are at least partly to blame for current inequities, to fix the problem:

We refuse to cede that convincing unjust institutions and disciplines to listen to us is the only way to make change.

As Gray (2016) observes, there exists a vast amount of documented evidence of the lack of racial and gender diversity in television and cinema in the US. Yet, regardless of the scale or quality of reports produced, findings have not so far resulted in lasting change. This gap suggests a missing step between the production of knowledge about the ‘problem’ and the rationale for responding to the findings presented. It also calls into question the influence of actors working in the space (whether academics or practitioners) and the causal relationship (if any) between evidence and action. The GEP project can play a key role in this paradigm shift. In calling for a radical rethink of the ‘problem’, the project can help initiate different ways of responding to the problem of gender inequity.

4.2.3. Speaking the language of those in existing positions of power: An understanding that modes of working in academia might differ from those in industry. Differences might include the timeframes for projects, the availability of resources and/or the agency of individuals/decision-makers to get things done. In some instances, playing by the ‘rules of the game’ that people work under (even when problematic) might offer the best means to achieve positive change.

Navigating these dilemmas will require strategic decisions as to when to work within and when to work against prevailing industry norms, structures and practices. The project team might choose to adopt approaches that make sense to (or speak the language of) those in existing positions of power such as funding agencies and government departments. In their account of the relationship between LGBT rights organisations and policymakers in the US, John Grundy & Miriam Smith (2007) have described how many organisations have embraced dominant social science methods to ‘gain entry as legitimate actors in policy deliberation, public debate and decision-making’ (p. 299). Although this adoption of methods may give these actors a seat at the table, it also invites the risk that boundaries of ‘legitimate’ political grievances are reduced to align with the language and ways of working of the dominant culture. As noted in the previous section, the problems that are named and addressed are therefore partly a product of the context within which they are defined.

4.2.4. Data narratives and risks: Project outputs involve the presentation of findings from the GEP project. With presentation comes decisions about what stories to tell and how to tell them, as well as narratives about absences that may encourage (or discourage) future

activities (Cobb & Wreyford, 2017). As a project team, our contribution to the project does not conclude after data analysis as we also play a key role in how data is presented and used to shape project outcomes. As noted by Amanda K. Baumle (2018), 'disclosing the weaknesses and limitations of one's data' (p. 281) can complement the generation of new knowledge that enables us to better understand 'hidden' aspects of the problem and support calls for better data collection practices. There is also a strength in being transparent when things go wrong. Jack Halberstam (2011) instructs us to embrace 'failing well, failing often and learning [...] how to fail better' (p. 24). This ethos has implications for the project team and sector organisations engaged during the project. For example, the publication of 'negative' findings (where a policy has failed to result in its desired outcome or arrive at a conclusive answer) can provide insights as to what does not work within particular contexts.

How do we build on findings that present an account of the problem that is 'more positive' than previously imagined and therefore risks diluting individuals'/organisations' willingness to take action? In the context of the GEP project, how might we respond to findings that suggest (as far as we can tell) a situation of gender equity, even if our knowledge and experience of the sector tell us otherwise? Several LGBTQ rights activists have explored this tension in quantitative surveys of the LGBTQ population and the risk that the research methods used, which are often flawed, might return an undercount. Most famously, LGBT activist Larry Kramer exclaimed 'God save us from statisticians' and highlighted how an undercount or underrepresentation of the LGBT population can undermine important political and social aspirations (Gates & Herman, 2018, pp. 82–83).

As an answer to the question 'Why is gender equity a good thing?', one narrative that the GEP project responds to is the view that diversity is good for business. Yet, as Newsinger & Eikhof (2020) warn, the business case for diversity can allow us to implicitly undermine arguments for equality based on social justice. An understanding of gender equity as good for business has the potential to justify activities that focus energy and resources exclusively towards initiatives that maximise returns for the business rather than the individuals involved (Newsinger & Eikhof, 2020). This rationale can excuse an approach that only addresses gender equity, for example, as the assumed business benefits exceed those that come from also addressing race equity. This consideration is particularly pronounced in light of how Covid-19 disrupts the business model of the cultural economy, one of the most immediate impacts of the pandemic (Eikhof, 2020).

4.2.5. Visibility and representation: The GEP project moves beyond the view that the increased visibility of women in the film industry or more positive representations of women in the film industry, on their own, respond to the wider issues of gender inequity. Changes to 'who is visible' can bring to the forefront those who are 'most privileged' within minoritised groups and wrongly give the impression that the problem is solved (Gossett et al., 2017). An illusion of progress can therefore stifle future efforts to change the structures that determine people's on-the-ground experiences of working in the film industry. Yet, as argued by Reina Gossett et al. (2017), 'if we do not attend to representation and work collectively to bring new visual grammars into existence (while remembering and unearthing suppressed ones), then we will remain caught in the traps of the past' (p. xviii).

Visibility can therefore operate as a double-edged sword and invite negative attention to the lives of those brought into view. This duality is particularly true in projects that require participants to disclose emotive or sensitive information about their experiences, such as histories of discrimination, bullying and harassment. Increased visibility, even with the safeguards of data security and ethical approval, can risk comprising the anonymity of research participants in ways that make their lives worse rather than better.

Likewise, on its own, efforts to locate more women in senior positions within the film industry will not resolve wider issues of gender inequity. In the UK, between 2011 and 2014, the four

major film organisations (BFI, Film4, BBC Films and Creative England) were led by women. While important, the presence of women in top roles does not necessarily alter the concentration of men's power within these institutions. Critical race scholars (Benjamin, 2019; Taylor, 2016) have lamented the promise of 'Black faces in high places' and note how this development can represent a feature of a society governed by white supremacy, rather than an indication that change is moving in the right direction.

4.2.6. Beneficiaries and problem fixers: The GEP project intends to identify policies and practices that undergird and obscure systemic, structural advantages for white men and pose alternatives based on our research and analysis. This ambition invites the question of who or what we foresee being empowered (i.e. in receipt of more resources, improved reputation or industry clout etc.) to address any challenges identified through our research. As with project beneficiaries, those tasked with 'fixing' problems might receive additional resources, funding or influence in the sector. It is therefore vital that this power is not distributed without a critical consideration as to whether it will make things better or worse. Anna Lauren Hoffman (2020) has discussed this risk in her account of efforts to fix biases in algorithms used by tech giants such as Google, Amazon and Facebook. By entrusting the tech companies to fix themselves, Hoffman describes a shoring-up and expansion of powers among those responsible for creating the mess in the first place. Our account of gender equity policies in the film industry also requires critical attention as to who is best placed to provide solutions to any issues identified.

If 'diverse' people are already 'doing diversity' (in terms of hiring a workforce that is more representative of society), should gender equity policies therefore focus on white men? Cobb (2020) describes data on UK film productions in 2015, presented in *Calling the Shots: Women Working with Women* (2016), and notes that the presence of women in senior roles was often replicated across the production rather than an isolated hire. A similar point is made for films that involve women of colour in senior roles (Cobb, 2020).

Those asked to fix the problem of gender inequity often propose the creation of new opportunities that offer more people more routes to participation and advancement within the film industry. This 'solution' relies on two underpinning assumptions: (i) the growth of the film industry, in terms of an expanded workforce and the volume of available opportunities (ii) gender equity is not a zero-sum game. Both assumptions face challenges in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and its disruptive effects on the industry's traditional business model and reconfiguration as to who can access available opportunities (for example, Covid-19 has changed individual/employer attitudes towards risk, limited international mobility and amplified many people's caring responsibilities). Any reduction in the size of the 'equity pie' will likely have a disproportionately negative impact on white men (due to their current over-representation in the industry). Cobb (2020) argues that discussion of gender inequality in the film industry currently refuses to countenance the possibility that an increase in the number of women might require a reduction in the number of men.

4.2.7. Assimilation and abolition: In reflecting upon our rationale for undertaking this work, the project team must consider the relationship between individuals and structures. If our research finds that existing norms, structures and practices within the film industry are exploitative and cause harm to those working in these spaces, how do we navigate the risk that research conducted might encourage more people to enter these toxic environments? To put it simply, do we want more women to engage with existing structures and gain access to institutions if our research finds that these structures and institutions cause harm to women? This dilemma is not necessarily a binary choice and has a long history within social justice movements and demands for equality throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. For example, regarding demands for equality and social justice among LGBTQ people in the US, Spade (2015) discusses this problem in his critical reading of legal equality approaches as a response to homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in the US. A legal

equality approach involves granting rights to LGBTQ people so that they align with the existing rights of cis, heterosexual people. Recent examples of this approach include the expansion of the definition of marriage to include same-sex couples and demands for LGBTQ people to serve openly in the armed forces. Rather than seek to change or abolish existing institutions, which have historically excluded LGBTQ people, legal equality campaigners fight for entry into these institutions. However, when successful, access only tends to favour those considered most 'deserving' - in other words, the interests of cis, white, affluent gay men and lesbians (Spade, 2015). Lisa Duggan (2014), among others, describes this approach as 'homonormativity' as it approaches gay and lesbian politics in a way that 'upholds, sustains, and seeks inclusion' within 'heterosexist institutions and values' (p. 50).

Interactions with existing norms, structures and practices have effects on different minoritised groups across the cultural industries. For example, among writers of colour in the publishing industry, Anamik Saha (2016) has documented how modes of production result in writers being pigeonholed, grouped with other minority authors and/or packaged in ways that 'overdetermines the ethnic or racial identity of the author' (p. 10). For Saha (2016), 'it is the very process of industrial cultural production [...] through which racist ideologies manifest and foster' (p. 2). Eikhof & Newsinger (2020) have also reported how participation in empowering interventions can facilitate access to the industry while also solidifying the ghettoisation of individuals from minoritised groups through the 'reaffirmation of negative assumptions and stereotypes' (p. 52).

The interplay between representation and modes of cultural production manifests in a variety of ways in the film industry, such as the reproduction of practices (for example, mentoring and networking) that expand the pool of gatekeepers and therefore continue to limit access to those with the right connections or social capital (Eikhof, 2017). The GEP project can learn much from these critiques of EDI practices to ensure that structures are changed rather than the people wishing to gain access to these structures. Leung et al. (2019) provide practical recommendations for how researchers, in their participation at conferences, can challenge these limitations by pushing organisers to provide financial support for researchers/practitioners from low-income countries.

There is also the question as to whether institutions are capable of reform and, if not, should project outputs focus on the abolition of certain norms, structures and practices. CRT scholars (Harris, 2006; Siegel, 1997) have argued that the promise of reform – as well as the use of the language of diversity and inclusion - can sustain institutions in ways that give the appearance of change but fail to meaningfully address structural problems. For Hoffmann (2020), these actions represent 'an ethics of social change that does not upset the social order' (p. 20-21). When reform fails or attempts at reform risk keeping a broken system afloat, those pushing for gender equity in the film industry must maintain the nuclear option to rip it up and start again. It is not always possible to use policies to repair broken systems or institutions from the inside out. We might therefore consider initiatives undertaken by organisations such as the Indigenous Screen Office in Canada to show how the redesign of norms, structures and practices from the ground up presents a means to ensure that those currently disadvantaged can engage equally, thrive and flourish in the film industry.

Appendix

Research questions

- What are the industry norms, structures and practices that constrain women's participation in the international screen industries?
- Which policy levers and interventions can most effectively deliver fundamental shifts in industry norms, structures and practices and improve women's participation in the global screen industries?

Research objectives

- OB1: Build a new database to analyse women's participation rates in Canada, Germany, the UK and European film industries (Canada, Germany, UK, 2005-2019; Europe: 2010-2019), using a range of different data sources, including qualitative interviews, historical data published but not yet digitised, film production data, financial data, demographic and employment data
- OB2: Evaluate the design and relative impact of previous and current public policies and programs designed to promote gender equity in film industries in Canada, Germany, the UK, and across Europe using qualitative interviews, aggregate statistical analysis and network analysis
- OB3: Model the data in the form of a "Complex Social Multinetwork" in order to understand the interactions and evolution of creative teams in the sample film industries on a gendered basis.
- OB4: Model the impact of previous policy interventions and develop what-if policy scenarios and then apply them to industry simulations to test innovative, evidence-based policy responses to inequality in the screen industries using a "Controlled Change of a Complex Social Multinetwork" approach.
- OB5: Further develop, validate and embed the outcomes of OB1-OB4 with academic and industry stakeholders. Engage in research-based knowledge mobilisation and translation with international industry decision-makers.

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