

# DECIDING ON DIVERSITY:

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## COVID-19, Risk and Intersectional Inequality in the Canadian Film and Television Industry

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Women in Film and Television Canada Coalition

WOMEN IN FILM  
AND TELEVISION  
CANADA COALITION

**WIFT**  **CC**


FEMMES DU CINÉMA  
DE LA TÉLÉVISION  
ET DES MÉDIAS NUMÉRIQUES

October 2021

 **Women in Film and Television Canada Coalition** acknowledges that we each live and work on ancestral Indigenous land. We respectfully acknowledge all Indigenous peoples who have stewarded this land throughout the generations and pay our respect to Elders both past and present.

**Amanda Coles** acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land throughout Australia and Canada, recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and culture, and pay my respect to Elders past and present. We also acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the various lands which Deakin University occupies: the Wadawurrung people of the Kulin Nation on whose land the Geelong campuses are located, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation on whose land the Burwood campus is located, and the Gunditjmarra people on whose land the Warrnambool campus is located.

**Deb Verhoeven** acknowledges the Boonwurrung/Bunurong peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nation as Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land she occupies, and pays respect to their Elders past and present. The University of Alberta, its buildings, labs, and research stations are primarily located on the traditional territory of Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, and Ojibway/Saulteaux/Anishinaabe nations; lands that are now known as part of Treaties 6, 7, and 8 and homeland of the Métis. The University of Alberta respects the sovereignty, lands, histories, languages, knowledge systems, and cultures of First Nations, Métis and Inuit nations.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Relationships matter. This is particularly true in the reputational world of the screen industries, where professional networks routinely make or break careers. Relationships that are unfairly uneven, or exclusive, or exploitative erode trust throughout the industry and perpetuate wider social harm.

COVID-19 has thrown into sharp relief the tremendous power and high cost of human collaboration by exposing the inherent risk at the heart of all social interactions. We are reminded daily that we are defined socially, and that our social relationships are simultaneously personal and communal. COVID-19 has also heightened public interest in information sharing, in particular the indicative use of counting to trace the effects of community interconnection.

This study examines the impact of COVID-19 on the headline aspiration for more equitable, diverse, and inclusive relationships in the Canadian screen industries. Will the pandemic stall progress, or does it present an opportunity for industry personnel to work differently and more openly?

To explore these questions, this report addresses one aspect of the working relationships that make up Canada's screen industries during the pandemic: **Risk**. How it is anticipated, irrespective of evidence ("**risk perception**"); how it is woven into stories about the organisation of workplaces and how decisions are made in them ("**risk narratives**"); how it is brandished to avoid or propose change ("**risk deployment**"); and how it is invoked to create the illusion of change ("**risk theatrics**"). There is often considerable contradiction between these different ways risk is understood in the industry, even within single organisations or productions. Our focus is to examine and disentangle these various approaches to risk to understand their impact on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) outcomes.

We observe that, in relation to EDI, the industry marshals risk as a placeholder for changes that never materialise. Risk is frequently used to side-step change – for example, "playing the risk card" to ensure no action is taken. Or it is invoked and then insincerely "managed" to give a false impression of concern – for example tokenistic appointments that "tick the diversity box". Industry commitments to EDI routinely fail to translate into meaningful action or substantive change, and the industry's language of innovation and risk is non-relational and does not scale beyond the descriptive rhetoric of head counting.

To understand risk as an inherent aspect of the way uneven screen industry relationships are cultivated and conserved, we devised an innovative approach for this study.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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We brought together an interdisciplinary, international team of academics and activists to collaboratively explore industry networks under the guiding principle that our research benefit equity-seeking groups. This required carefully thinking through how we work together and the kinds of evidence we might draw on for our analysis.

**This study combines deep computational and conversational methods to generate new multi-scaled (systemic and specific) perspectives on industry behaviours.**

Typically, screen industry research projects such as this one are survey-based, conducted by external consultancies that rely on abstracted, aggregate collections of industry-wide statistics and commentary with no recourse for independent validation of the data or methods. So much of this kind of screen industry research is descriptive in nature and not directed to pinpointing pivotal opportunities for change. We were also keenly aware of survey and consultation burnout – especially for members of equity-seeking groups.

Instead, we used a novel approach to refine our investigation and reduce encumbrances for participants. We concentrated our effort on the industry's most critical power-brokers and gatekeepers, the people in the best position to create systemic change, and invited them to share their experience of, and expertise for, managing risk in relation to EDI.

To identify members of the industry with the most influence (the **Key Players**) we created a dataset of film and television industry personnel in a three-year period (2018-2020) and used the high-performance computing infrastructure provided by Compute Canada to undertake a Social Network Analysis of producers and directors, primarily in English-language production. This analysis generated a list of 14 unique individuals with the most critical levels of inter-connection in the screen industries.

To these 14 industry Key Players, we identified other key stakeholders including 22 **Executive Decision-Makers**. We also conducted two focus groups with women producers and content creators. In total, we were able to interview 20 industry members in unprecedented detail about the impact of COVID-19 on their professional approaches to, and experiences of, risk.

We group their views into three key understandings for measuring industry productivity and innovation: **audiences** (who and where they are believed to be), **executive decision-making** (especially around hiring and networking), **content creation** (what gets made and what does not). Their insights enabled us to frame this study by elaborating the industry's **risk typology** and understanding the way industry decision makers rank risk of different kinds.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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We note however, that several of the pivotal individuals and organisations we approached to support this study were not willing to share their knowledge or data. The majority of Key Players either declined to be interviewed or simply did not respond to interview requests. We also note that the Executive Decision-Makers who consented to interviews are largely part of the executive content development and production workforce. These are industry professionals who have a role in the decision-making chain of command about screen content but are not at the top of the corporate structure. The views of executives such as C-suite Executives and Senior Vice Presidents whose decisions ultimately shape overall corporate strategies and set the tone for organisational risk cultures are not represented in this study.

Policy mandates and industry programs to advance equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are having an impact. There is an increasing sense of political risk for those who do not “do diversity.” However, we identify at the very top of Canadian screen industries an enduring operative form of closure. Executive and corporate leaders must urgently attend to how risk management frameworks and rationales impact or impede EDI progress. Corporate leadership and governance must commit to actively support and advance new forms of evidence and accountability.

For equity-seeking groups and industry advocates on the other hand, COVID-19 was call to action.

The lived experience and community-centred knowledges of equity-seeking groups are often obscured by the industry’s routine metrics of excellence and resulting employment practices. As companies and key creatives quickly adjusted to the significantly different working conditions created by COVID-19, workplaces and employment conditions were radically re-conceived. In particular, the social relationships that underpin screen industry networks were recalibrated as meetings moved online, workplaces moved out of the office, and production locations locked down.

In this new remote, quarantined working world, close creative relationships became physically distanced, opening-up the potential for new connections and innovative decision-making. Importantly, occupational health and safety risk management decisions under COVID-19 protocols opened the industry to viable, fairer production work models. On the other hand, remote ways of working carried higher costs for equity-seeking groups that have historically been isolated from the centre of the film and television industries, pushing them even further to the edges of industry networks.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In our own experience and woven throughout our interviews with members of equity-seeking groups, the familiar refrain of “my door is always open” did not translate into reality and the social-professional isolation imposed on equity-seeking groups by industry gatekeepers in the guise of risk mitigation has only become more acute during COVID-19. The root of the problem here is the industry’s reliance on narrowly defined “trusted networks.” What were once experienced as routinely closed (or at best partially ajar) doors have become impenetrable online “firewalls” during the pandemic.

*Deciding on Diversity* finds that despite the opportunities presented by COVID-19, uneven, closed, and defensive relationships continue to persist in the industry, to the detriment of equity-seeking groups.

To advance an innovative industry built on foundations of equity, diverse inclusion, and belonging, the screen industry’s longstanding and widely used risk management tools and practices need to be systematically undone.



*I think anytime something is very broken, when you put it back together you can choose to put it back together slightly differently.*

*What COVID has done is presented an opportunity. It has so shattered so many things that suddenly what was deemed or thought impossible, or unlikely, are just out the window.*

*It has also made inequality inescapable for so many that I think for some communities they actually experienced marginalization for the first time, or at least touched it. So that gave them some window on to what it might be like.*

*And I think for others it just exposed what for us we already knew. You can't pretend that there aren't deep divisions.*

**- Executive Decision-Maker interview, March 2021**

## KEY FINDINGS:

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- 1** In the locked-down world of COVID-19 the need for openness (data, networks, knowledge, people) is paramount. We find there is a profoundly gendered dimension to openness in the Canadian film and television industries. All senior male Key Players approached to participate in this study were unwilling to share their knowledge and expertise, raising serious concerns about who is invested in efforts that forward systemic change.
- 2** Risk perceptions and narratives are frequently deployed to avoid change, justify withholding data, and to normalize discriminatory practices that have negative consequences for equity-seeking groups.
- 3** There is a hierarchy of risk perception and deployment. Different risks are mobilised, ranked, evaluated, and acted upon differently by decision makers. COVID-19 and the racial reckoning have altered how EDI is conceptualised and ranked as a “risk” by key decision-makers. For example, changing viewing habits during COVID-19 repositioned EDI as a market opportunity. Policy shifts have produced perceptions of reputational and political risk for Executive Decision-Makers who do not “do diversity.” However, superficial approaches to meeting diversity mandates by studios and policy-makers has produced a form of “risk theatrics.”
- 4** COVID-19 and the racial reckoning have sharpened the need for access to disaggregated industry data and new analytic approaches in order to better understand market risk. Current data used by broadcasting and streaming decision-makers to inform investment decisions, based on perceived audience demand, reinforces straight white men as the core target audience. More nuanced data is required to challenge widely held risk perceptions about audiences that reinforce the systemic marginalisation of stories by and about equity-seeking groups.
- 5** While digital meeting spaces under COVID-19 present opportunities to open networks to new talent, it has not disrupted the risk perceptions and narratives about stories by and about equity-seeking groups that are deployed in decision-making. Risk deployment by those in decision-making roles operates to intensify risk for equity-seeking groups.
- 6** The whiteness of the corporate leadership and executive workforce in the Canadian film and television industry poses a systemic risk to advancing equity, diversity and inclusion.

KEY FINDINGS

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- 7 COVID-19 prompted risk-management experiments in the work model that offers a better work-life balance in an industry notorious for excessive and irregular hours. Occupational health and safety (OH&S) risk management practices have positively impacted the quality of work for some categories of workers. This includes reports of access to better quality contracts for directors, producers and actors in Canada, shorter hours, more shootable scripts, and a work culture that encourages workers to take sick days if they are unwell. Caring responsibilities outside of work impact women disproportionately. A better work-life balance model offers potential to positively drive efforts to redress systemic gender inequality.
- 8 At the same time, OH&S risk management practices under COVID-19 have introduced new categories of workers as particularly risky, such as those who are immunocompromised, of advanced age, and younger people. The impact of OH&S risk management practices may have consequences for the representation and inclusion for workers who are already marginalised in our screen stories, such as older women.
- 9 Current approaches to “diversity” remain widely tokenistic. “Diversity” efforts are focused on adding a minimal number of “diverse” people (i.e. those who are not straight white men) to meet EDI agendas set by policy-makers. Risk narratives about equity-seeking stories and storytellers persist to preserve the status quo. Opportunities to advance the kinds of structural changes that could result from the disruption of COVID-19 are not being realised.
- 10 Despite posing serious legal, reputational, and political risks to the screen industry, toxic individuals and workplaces were not identified as key threats to advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion. Meaningful change requires reconceptualising risk, as well as understanding how it is used specifically *and* systemically to perpetuate inequality and reinforce current systems of power and domination.



*The industry needs to change its relationship to the word risk. Because we have seen it pay off time and time again. Those who risk get the best reward.*

*And that is what is going to ultimately bring about change. It's taking risks in the way that you hire and the stories that you choose and what you put your money on.*

**- Key Player interview, May 2021**

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION ITEMS

The report authors and Women in Film and Television Canada Coalition propose the following set of recommendations and action items to advance meaningful progress on equity, diversity and inclusion in the Canadian screen sector. These were co-developed between the research team and WIFT Canada Coalition and are based on the barriers and roadblocks faced during the research process, as well as analysis of the key findings from the data.

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS
<b>ENHANCING INDUSTRY ANALYSIS AND ACCOUNTABILITY</b>	
<p>Prioritize disaggregated screen industry and audience data collection, management and access as a matter of the public interest for a publicly subsidized industry of social, economic, political and cultural significance.</p>	<p>– Establish a National Screen Industry Data Taskforce of industry stakeholders with a public reporting structure and mandate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene a 2022 National Screen Industry data summit of key decision-makers, national and provincial policy and regulatory bodies, unions and guilds, EDI advocacy organisations and data experts.</li> <li>• Undertake accessible data education for industry decision and policy-makers to ensure people, organisations, and data are more open.</li> <li>• Establish a national screen industry data platform incorporating granular EDI, audience and production data.</li> </ul>
<b>REMOVING BARRIERS TO EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION</b>	
<p>Undertake measures to disrupt existing approaches and refocus industry understandings of risk and EDI by emphasising their benefits in terms of innovation, transparency and openness to change.</p> <p>Ensure a zero-tolerance approach to EDI failures through the development and application of rigorous, consequential accountability systems.</p>	<p>Conduct organisational EDI audits to identify and correct corporate governance strategies and decision-making practices that deploy risk narratives to avoid equity, diversity and inclusion gains.</p> <p>Develop organisational measures and accountability mechanisms to redress organisational cultures that deploy risk narratives to avoid equity, diversity and inclusion gains.</p> <p>Introduce transparent, non-negotiable EDI accountabilities with clear consequences as a pre-requisite for government funding and support.</p> <p>Conduct specific research to expand analysis of the form and function of industry networks, and reluctance of industry power-brokers and gate-keepers to attend to questions of EDI.</p>

## SECTION 1

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# RISK AND DECISION-MAKING IN FILM AND TELEVISION PRODUCTION

### Why study risk and decision-making?

How risk is understood and acted upon in the film and television industry has a significant impact on screen content development, production, distribution, and exhibition. In a comprehensive study on risk in the film industry, Franklin (2018) found that risk assessment by screen industry decision-makers is largely ad-hoc. Rather than using empirical data and evidence, executives and investors largely rely on their professional experience, the idea that past practice indicates future performance, and use trusted partners to inform their decision-making. Notably, Franklin found that *"...risk management attitudes are often tacitly embedded in business practice. Some are prone to inertia and substantially influenced by individual, cultural or organisational mind-sets rather than driven by impartial best practice"*<sup>1</sup>. The consequence is that organisational risk cultures and practices often operate to inhibit, rather than accelerate, innovation.

Achieving a screen industry built on foundational principles of representation, inclusion, and belonging will require imaginative, innovative changes to the current film and television production system in Canada.

### Four dimensions of risk in decision-making

Our study interrogates four key dimensions of how risk operates in decision-making contexts to shape stories and the careers and lives of film and television industry professionals in Canada:

- 1 Risk perceptions:** What, or whom, is seen as a risk, irrespective of evidence? Is the risk perception understood as a threat or an opportunity? Risk perception analysis provides insight into how, or if, changing industry operating environments affect how the industry perceives change, and where opportunities and threats may lie.
- 2 Risk narratives:** How are risk perceptions connected with wider social norms and values? How is risk woven into stories about workplace culture, and organisational practices? Risk narrative analysis provides us with insight into social relationships and power structures which shape the decision-making environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Franklin, M. (2018). Examining the understanding and management of risk in the film industry: A Research Synopsis. p. 10. Available at: [http://research.gold.ac.uk/id/eprint/23476/1/20180016\\_research\\_take-away\\_independent\\_film\\_sector\\_DSGN\\_TL\\_v8.pdf](http://research.gold.ac.uk/id/eprint/23476/1/20180016_research_take-away_independent_film_sector_DSGN_TL_v8.pdf)

## SECTION 1 – RISK AND DECISION-MAKING IN FILM AND TELEVISION PRODUCTION

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- 3 Risk deployment:** How is risk mobilised within decision-making contexts to rationalise and justify decisions that facilitate or inhibit change? Risk deployment analysis provides us with insight into how risk perceptions and narratives are activated in decision-making contexts to shape what stories are told, and who gets to tell them.
- 4 Risk theatrics:** How are risk perceptions and narratives invoked to create the illusion of change or action – but in fact operate to preserve the status quo? Risk theatrics analysis provides us with a lens to examine the degree to which industry ideas, systems, and practices are open to piecemeal transformation.

### HOW RISK INTERACTS WITH INTERSECTIONAL INEQUALITY

Risk perceptions and narratives, and the decisions on which they are based, are manifestations of *values* and *beliefs* that operate within organisational, industrial, and socio-economic contexts. These values and beliefs are informed by broader social power relations that structure systemic inequality. For example, research demonstrates that gender plays a significant role in determining the supposed 'risk' level associated with hiring directors in Canadian television. Risk perceptions that executives hold about directors are shaped by wider social narratives around masculinised leadership qualities, as well as gendered industry risk narratives about which directors can be 'trusted' or are 'ready' to direct prime time programming. These values and beliefs result in risk deployment strategies that privilege white men in director roles.<sup>2</sup>



*I have always been fascinated by this idea that it's less risky to produce some really mediocre, status quo content than something really exciting and innovative from, you know, a new voice.*

- Executive Decision-Maker interview, March 2021

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<sup>2</sup> Coles, A., & Eikhof, D. R. (2021). On the basis of risk: how screen executives' risk perceptions and practices drive gender inequality in directing. *Gender, Work & Organization*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12701>

## SECTION 1 – RISK AND DECISION-MAKING IN FILM AND TELEVISION PRODUCTION

### RISK TYPOLOGY

Our team developed the following risk typology to facilitate the detection of risk perceptions and narratives that inform risk deployment decisions:

TYPE OF RISK	DESCRIPTION
<b>Financial Risk</b>	Perceived risks related to the screen-industry's financial models that depend on the access to liquidity, capital, credit, and funding that are often external to the production entity. Also includes factors that are taken into account by key investors in assessing investment opportunities, including key creative personnel, production location, and incentives.
<b>Market Risk</b>	Perceived risks related to market share in terms of audience (effective demand), or content (supply-side risk), market disruption due technological innovation (e.g. virtual production), or systemic disruption due to a distribution revolution (e.g. streaming platforms).
<b>Health and Safety Risk</b>	Perceived risks related to industry and/or occupational practices, the workplace environment, the external environment, and health profile of the screen industries workforce.
<b>Reputational / Career Risk</b>	Perceived risks related to a firm, a project, or a key individual's good standing among their peers or the public due to their competence, proficiency, ethics, or behavior.
<b>Labour Market Risk</b>	Perceived risks in relation to the quality and depth of the labour pool in terms of labour, training, expertise, or scarcity.
<b>Legal Risk</b>	The perception of the risk of litigation, liability, defamation, infringement, discrimination, non-compliance, internal whistleblowers, breaches of privacy and data confidentiality.
<b>Infrastructure Risk</b>	Perceived risks in relation to the technical and built infrastructure that supports screen content development, production, distribution, and exhibition. Includes cybersecurity risk.
<b>Environmental Risk</b>	Perceived risks of climate change on the production ecosystem in terms of location, energy use, supply chains, and industry practices in relation to environmental impact.
<b>Political Risk</b>	Perceived risks in relation to the wider political and policy context, and how decisions, events, or conditions in the operating environment impact the screen industry.

## SECTION 1 – RISK AND DECISION-MAKING IN FILM AND TELEVISION PRODUCTION

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### RISK UNDER PANDEMIC CONDITIONS

The unforeseen and rapid onset of COVID-19 created a new and rapidly changing risk environment for the screen sector in Canada and globally, including:

- Financial risks to both corporations and individuals as a consequence of widespread economic disruption and the reconfiguration of work during COVID-19
- Market risks produced by an unprecedented demand for content, combined with a lack of supply of new product
- Labour market risks to a highly mobile, project-based industry driven by the need for specialist skills and a large, flexible workforce under quarantine and lockdown conditions
- Elevated health and safety risk for on and off-screen workforce.

At the same time, two additional events profoundly impacted the socio-political operating environment. When Minneapolis police murdered George Floyd on May 25, 2020, the #BlackLivesMatter movement went global, with international protests, including in Canada, calling for social justice and an end to anti-black racism and police violence.<sup>3</sup> In the context of the film and television industry, Black Lives Matter drew sharp attention to the historical and systemic exclusion of Black stories and storytellers from Canadian screens.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the screen sector was forced to confront enduring colonial legacies of violence and cultural exploitation of First Nations communities, when *Trickster* and *An Inconvenient Indian* director Michelle Latimer's self-identified claims to Indigenous ancestry were contested.<sup>5</sup> These developments drew public and sustained attention to the continued social, economic, political and cultural dispossession of Indigenous and Black communities in Canada. This extraordinary political moment resulted in urgent and long-overdue discussions across the screen sector, producing:

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**3** Silverstein, Jason. (2021). The global impact of George Floyd: How Black Lives Matter protests shaped movements around the world. *CBS News*. June 4. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/george-floyd-black-lives-matter-impact/>

For a history of the Black Lives Matter movement and additional resources, see Howard University Law Library. (n.d.) <https://library.law.howard.edu/civilrightshistory/BLM>

**4** Younglai, Nathalie. (2020). 10 steps we can take toward a more equitable Canadian TV and film industry for BIPOC creatives. *CBC Arts*. <https://www.cbc.ca/arts/10-steps-we-can-take-toward-a-more-equitable-canadian-tv-and-film-industry-for-bipoc-creatives-1.5657630>

**5** Sterritt, Angela. (2021). Indigenous filmmaker wants fines, jail time for 'pretendians' who misrepresent their identity. *CBC News*. January 19. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/calls-for-pretendians-to-face-fines-jail-1.5878330>



## SECTION 1 – RISK AND DECISION-MAKING IN FILM AND TELEVISION PRODUCTION

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- Political risk for corporations seen not to be “doing diversity” during a period of extreme uncertainty
- Reputational/career risk for key decision-makers and content creators under increasingly contested industry conditions.

With the understanding of this general risk environment as important context, we undertook an innovative, mixed-methods approach to answering the core research question: How do risk assessments related to screen content development and production during COVID-19 interact with current efforts to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion in the Canadian screen production industry?

## SECTION 2

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### PROJECT DESIGN

This project adopted an innovative hybrid approach to procuring new evidence. We undertook Social Network Analysis to identify “Key Players”; conducted interviews and focus groups to provide insight into the function and content of the Key Players within the industry network; and conducted a broad overview of relevant policies and literature to inform the wider operating context for the study.

Both the quantitative and qualitative data used to produce this study is primarily drawn from the English-language sector.

### SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

Although some French-language film data was made available to the research team, there was insufficient data to perform a network analysis on French-language productions in Canada that would have been comparable to the one conducted for English-language productions. Consequently, it is important to note that the Key Player analysis does not include French-language production. Additional data collection and social network analysis of the French-language sector would add a welcome and important addition to knowledge.

### INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

We conducted one focus group with French-language producers in French. We would like to thank the National Film Board of Canada for providing French translation services for the focus group recruitment and consent materials. We would also like to thank Professor Tania Saba at the University of Montreal for conducting the French-language focus groups.

We also conducted an interview with an Executive Decision-Maker at a major French-language broadcaster. Project time and scheduling constraints during a generally tumultuous period for the broadcast industry in Canada prevented the research team from conducting additional interviews in French with French-language executives. Additional, focused French-language research would add considerable value to this emerging body of research. Additional, focused French-language qualitative data collection would add considerable value to this emerging body of research.

Nonetheless, we contend that the recommendations in this report would benefit the entire screen industries ecosystem generally across Canada.

## SECTION 2 – PROJECT DESIGN

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### HEAD COUNTING VERSUS SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

We created an industry dataset from information provided to us by different organisations (see the Technical Appendix for details). The merged information produced a dataset of 2,787 unique people who occupied 5,378 producer and director roles in productions in English-language production from 2018 – 2020.

The following two graphs show the most frequently found first names in our industry dataset. Figure 1 describes the unique individuals that were present in the industry. Figure 2 shows how many times a name appears in filling an industry role (i.e., a smaller number of unique people occupy a larger number of roles). The name “Shawn” for example does not make the top 20 names list for unique people, but this small number of “Shawns” fill a disproportionate number of industry roles, coming in at number 3.

Notably, the Canadian screen industries (like others) appear to have a “Daversity”<sup>6</sup> problem. Using name frequency analysis, we found 67 people called Dave (the most frequent first name) occupied 161 industry roles (the most industry roles for any name) during our sample period.

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<sup>6</sup> Verhoeven, Deb as cited in Bogle, A. (2017) Australian research 'has a Daversity problem': Analysis shows too many men work mostly with other men. Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2017-11-24/australian-research-has-a-daversity-problem/9178786>

SECTION 2 – PROJECT DESIGN

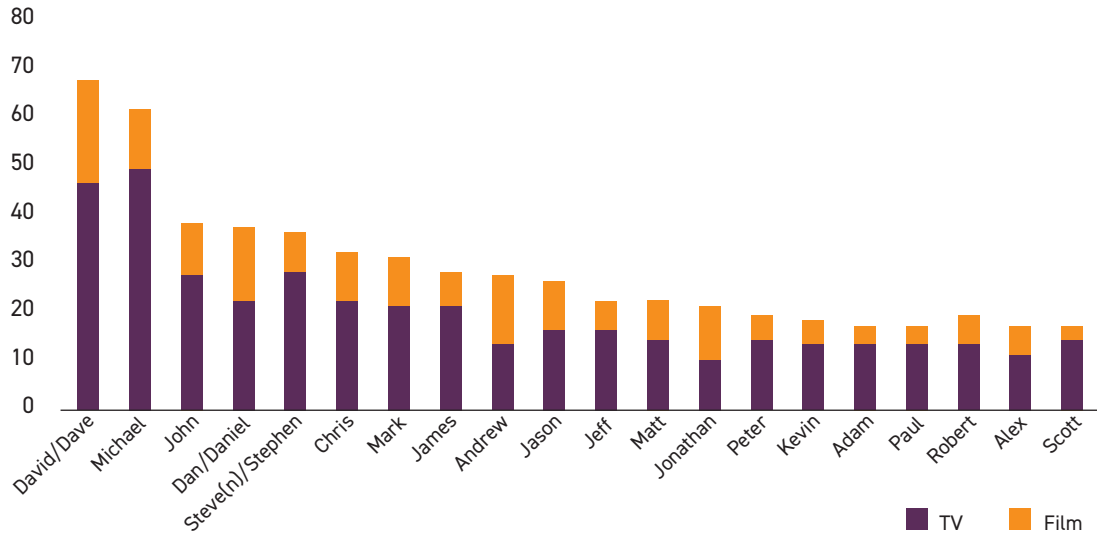


FIGURE 1 Frequency of top 20 first names (unique people)

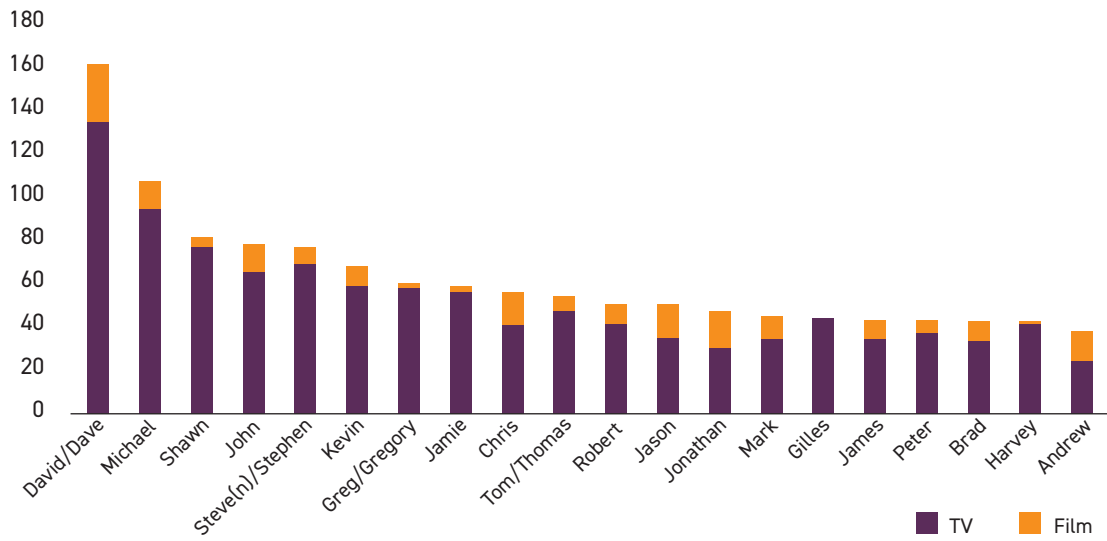


FIGURE 2 Frequency of top 20 first names (roles)

## SECTION 2 – PROJECT DESIGN

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We then used Social Network Analysis to find out if the Canadian screen industry's "Daves" were as influential as their prevalence suggests. Social Network Analysis investigates the relationships **between** people (in this case – who worked with who, how often and in what roles) rather than relying solely on comparative aggregated statistics ("headcounts") that describe the total number of different kinds of people in a network (the number of Daves for instance).

This computational method enabled us to identify the industry's "Key Players". The **Key Player** is the agent whose removal from the network reduces its overall activity level the most in equilibrium.<sup>7</sup>

By examining the interactions between key industry figures we can begin to understand how the system functions at different scales. We can see for example, how influence or power is distributed; or how gendered and racialized work associations produce inequality through a complex network of relationships. And we can see who is individually critical to the enterprise of a network.

Previous studies have found that inequality is exacerbated when screen industries are most closed in terms of certain quantitative measures of network relationships.<sup>8</sup> Building on this research, new studies have found that opening industry networks in order to ensure better EDI outcomes would require revising the relationships that underpin the formation of creative teams by producing stronger connections between Key Players and creatives from equity-seeking groups.<sup>9</sup>

In this study we used Key Player analysis to identify who to interview, instead of consulting ranked lists of the people considered most prominent in terms of number of industry roles, media reports, or the most funded or most prolific. This innovative method enabled the research team to pinpoint those individuals who are the most significant to the operations of the English-language screen network.

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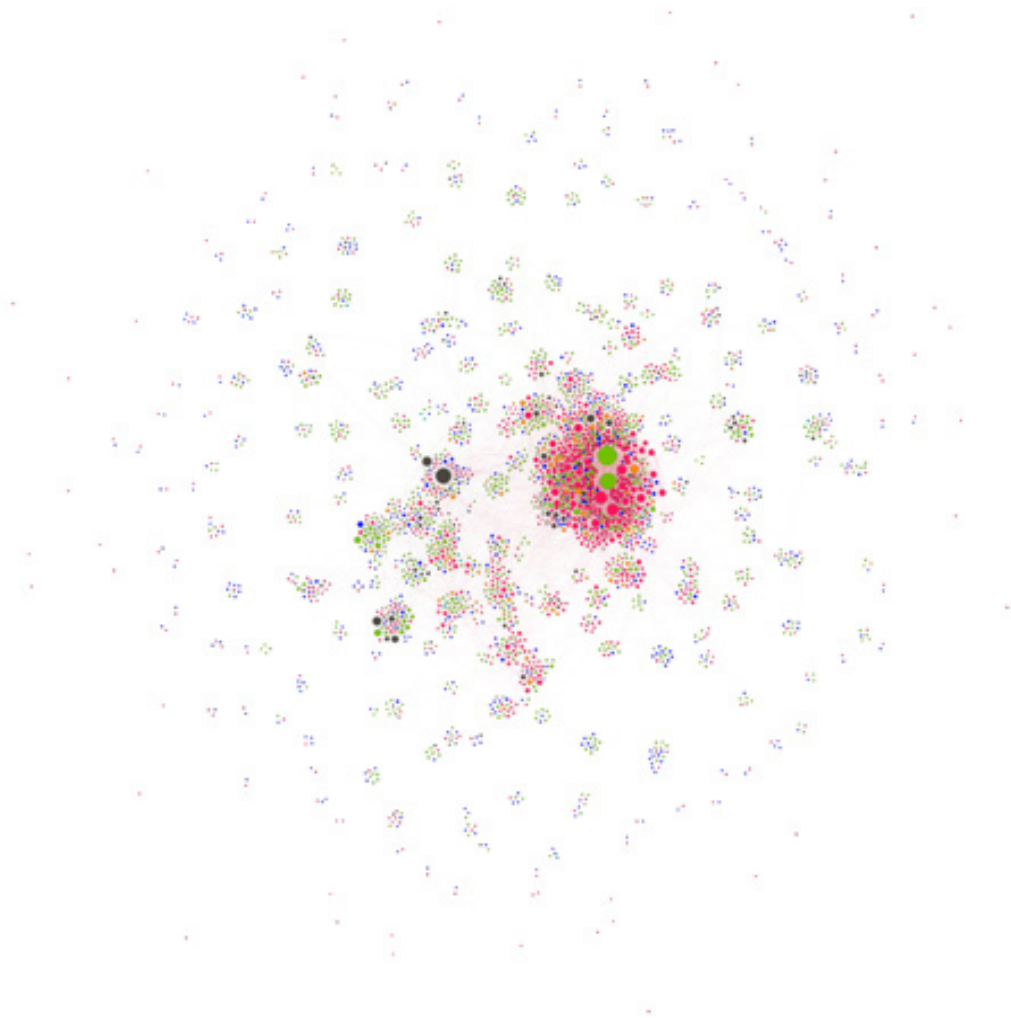
<sup>7</sup> Coralio Ballester, Antoni Calvó-Armengol and Yves Zenou 2006, Who's Who in Networks. Wanted: The Key Player, *Econometrica*, Vol. 74, No. 5, pp. 1403-1417.

<sup>8</sup> Lutter, M. (2015) Do Women Suffer from Network Closure? The Moderating Effect of Social Capital on Gender Inequality in a Project-Based Labor Market, 1929 to 2010 *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 80(2) 329-358.

<sup>9</sup> Verhoeven D, Musial K, Palmer S, Taylor S, Abidi S, Zemaityte V, et al. (2020). Controlling for openness in the male-dominated collaborative networks of the global film industry. *PLoS ONE* 15(6): e0234460. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0234460>

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**FIGURE 3** A visualisation of the data used in this study describing producers and directors working on English-language projects under development and production in Canada from 2018-2020. (Dark Pink: DIRECTOR, Green: EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, Blue: PRODUCER, Black: EXECUTIVE PRODUCER/PRODUCER, Orange: DIRECTOR/EXECUTIVE PRODUCER)

Key Player names cannot be shared under the terms of the research ethics protocols approved by the University of Alberta and Deakin University. These names are available to the research team only and informed the interview selection process.

## SECTION 2 – PROJECT DESIGN

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### QUALITATIVE DATA

In order to provide insight into the content and operation of the networks, and how risk is used in decision making contexts, we conducted in-depth interviews and focus groups with three groups of industry stakeholders: women producers and content creators; policy, broadcast, and studio/network Executive Decision-Makers in Canada and the US; and the Key Players identified in the Social Network Analysis.

### SAMPLE PROFILE AND METHOD

Women Producer / Content Creator focus groups: 6 participants

- 1 x focus group with 3 English-language women writers, directors, and showrunners from under-represented communities and regions (in English)
- 1 x French-language focus group with 3 women producers from under-represented communities and regions (in French, conducted by Professor Tania Saba, University of Montreal).

We distributed an invitation for women writers, directors, and producers from under-represented communities, particularly those who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC), and women from under-served film and television production regions across Canada, to participate in two focus groups. Both focus groups were conducted in March 2021. All participants were over 18 years of age and had at least two years of professional experience in film/tv project development and production in Canadian dramatic television, feature films, or foreign service production.

### EXECUTIVE DECISION-MAKERS: 10 INTERVIEWS

The research team identified film and television broadcast, studio, network, and corporate executives whose job titles indicate they are actively involved in film and television programming strategy, slate development, and production in Canada. This pool also included several executives working for, or based in, US studios whose activities focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion in Canada. We also sought interviews with select policy makers in Canada particularly active in the EDI portfolio, based on network recommendations. We collectively refer to this pool of interviewees as “Executive Decision-Makers.”

We were able to locate contact information and extend invitations for an interview to 20 individuals. Ten individuals accepted. Three declined, 1 agreed to an interview but the team was unable to accommodate a French-language interview within project timelines, and 6 individuals did not reply to our request.

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Women represent 75% (15 of 20) of the Executive Decision-Makers invited to participate, and 80% (8 of 10) of the interviews. Men represent 25% of the Executive Decision-Makers invited to participate (5 of 20), and 20% (2 of 10) of the interviews.

Five of the Executive Decision-Makers voluntarily identified as BIPOC during the interview. Three of those individuals are primarily responsible for equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) programs and strategies in their organisations.

All interviews were conducted in English, including one executive at a French-language broadcaster.<sup>10</sup>

### **KEY PLAYERS: 4 INTERVIEWS**

We ran two Key Player analyses. First, we used the available data to identify the top ten Key Players across the entire dataset incorporating both film and television production data to produce an overall network (see figure 3). The volume of roles in television series production resulted in a list of Key Players that was weighted heavily toward television. We then ran a second Key Player analysis to identify the top five Key Players in the feature film only data and the top five Key Players in the television only data. This analysis yielded four new individuals in addition to six individuals that were identified in the first analysis. Altogether then, we identified fourteen Key Players using this method. Due to project time-constraints it was not feasible to extend the pool of potential interviewees by identifying additional key players, since this method requires intensive, high performance computational resources with protracted running times.

We sought to contact all fourteen individuals identified in the Key Player analysis for interviews. We accessed contact information via corporate websites, publicly available email addresses, personal websites, social media accounts, and the researchers' industry networks. We were unable to locate any contact information for three Key Players, all men.

A personalised invitation to participate in an interview was extended to 11 of the 14 Key Players. Of the 11 invitations to participate in an interview sent to Key Players, 5 did not reply (3 men, 2 women). Those who did not respond were contacted multiple times by the research team, including phone calls and emails to corporate offices, agents, and/or assistants.

Two Key Players declined the request to be interviewed (both men), and 4 accepted (1 man, 3 women). However, less than an hour before the interview was to commence, the only man Key Player to accept the interview request replaced himself with a woman executive from his company.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> This executive willingly volunteered to conduct the interview in English.

<sup>11</sup> This person has been counted as a Key Player by proxy for analytical purposes.



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Men represent 64% (9 of 14) of the Key Players invited to participate in the study, but 0% of the Key Player interviews. Women represent 36% (5 of 14) of the Key Players and 100% (4 of 4) of the Key Player interviews.

### **ANALYTICAL METHOD**

Both focus groups and interviews lasted 90 minutes on average. This yielded over 24 hours of recorded interview material. The recordings were transcribed, and where appropriate, translated from French to English for analytical purposes. The transcripts were then coded by the research team, with attention to repeat risk-related ideas and concepts connected to the risk typology. The outcome of our thematic analysis is an examination of how operating conditions under COVID-19 are impacting risk assessments and decision-making about equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts, and what impact it is having – or may have in future – on the communities who are the objects of those decisions.

### **RESEARCH BARRIERS AND ROADBLOCKS**

#### **DATA AND SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS**

No comprehensive Quebec data was able to be procured for the Key Player analysis from public or industry agencies. However, the qualitative study does include qualitative data from Quebec industry members.

Notwithstanding the absence of data from Quebec, there is no disaggregated, national database of industry production information. There are severe limitations to the kinds of analysis that can be performed due to the format, inconsistency, and unavailability of existing administrative data. For example, only the Telefilm Canada dataset included information about writers – a key creative role which carries enormous significance and impact in understanding what stories are told and by whom. More critically, there is no comparable demographic information on industry participants, which makes intersectional EDI analysis effectively impossible.

#### **QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS**

Finding contact information for the men Key Players was much more time consuming than for the women. Women Key Players also responded to requests for interviews at much higher rates, and more quickly than men Key Players. These men exercise considerable power and influence over what stories get told and who gets to tell them. Their inaccessibility indicates structural barriers to accessing

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power within existing networks. The men's resistance or refusal to share their knowledge and expertise as Key Players suggests these men may not consider advancing meaningful progress on equity, diversity, and inclusion to be an urgent priority and/or their responsibility.

We did attempt to interview several senior C-suite executives in the Canadian media landscape with no success. Locating contact information for C-suite executives, either directly or via industry networks, was a barrier. Those we were able to successfully contact declined. We acknowledge that the research occurred during a highly disruptive period for the Canadian film and broadcast industry, including major corporate restructures and a demanding policy and regulatory environment. We would anticipate that a longer timeframe to conduct such research, and a less tumultuous operating environment, may yield higher participation rates in future.

The limited corporate power and influence of most of our Executive Decision-Maker interviews is reflected in analysis that follows. Many found their desire and efforts to advance equity, diversity and inclusion limited by the strategies and decisions taken by their superiors. Additional research with senior executives whose corporate strategy agendas and governance practices shape organisational risk cultures and appetites is urgently needed.

## SECTION 3

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### FINDINGS

#### AUDIENCES & MARKET RISK PERCEPTIONS

Recent targeted policy and funding programs for equity-seeking groups from organisations such as the Indigenous Screen Office, Canada Media Fund, and Telefilm Canada, have helped to foster a substantial amount of content from equity-seeking groups in a very full content development pipeline at present.<sup>12</sup>

The sharp rise in demand for content, combined with limited market supply of new product under COVID-19, produced an increased demand for existing Canadian content at home and abroad. It also prompted decision-makers to look for new sources of content for domestic audiences. The current moment therefore presents two important opportunities:

- 1 To fundamentally rethink tightly held ideas about the connections between market risk perceptions, programming decisions, and shifting audience behaviour.
- 2 To meaningfully advance the volume of stories that are available to domestic and international audiences from under-represented communities in Canada.

However, current narratives about mainstream and niche audiences are themselves a risk to capitalising on this opportunity. A US-based executive who has worked across both conventional and streaming platforms suggested that audiences are generally underestimated:

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<sup>12</sup> Indigenous Screen Office. (2021). ISO Funding Programs. <https://iso-bea.ca/resources/iso-funding/>

Canada Media Fund. (2021). Canada Media Fund announces measures to support racialized creators. November 5. <https://cmf-fmc.ca/news/canada-media-fund-announces-measures-to-support-racialized-creators/>

Kay, J. (2021). Telefilm in one-time funding redirect to support projects from minorities. *ScreenDaily*. May 20. <https://www.screendaily.com/news/telefilm-in-one-time-funding-redirect-to-support-projects-from-minorities/5159750.article>

SECTION 3 – FINDINGS

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*Sometimes we feel that the audience is not ready for something when they are. And if there's one thing that is true is that audiences do crave novelty, and new voices, and new ways of telling a story... audiences have become more and more accustomed to different voices.*

*And I think that's going to make a difference in the projects that are going to be commissioned and greenlit going forward because you have this audience that has been on social media, that is quite akin to the social conversations about diversity, about gender parity, and social issues that are really big.*

The 'core' target audience member is a straight, older, white man. Prime time audience bases that skew "very female" or "too young" are viewed as problematic by conventional broadcasters. Thus, the very market development opportunities the pandemic presents are viewed as threats.

Content by and for women and BIPOC communities is described by key decision-makers as 'niche' and thus a higher market risk. A highly experienced executive who specialises in programming for women describes the market risk rationale which leads to men as the generalised audience reference point:



*There's a very interesting saying out in our business that says women are going to watch women stuff. And men are not going to tag along as an audience, but if you direct a program for men you know the women are the company, they will watch the show. So it's as if when you target more male demographics, you will probably hit the female also.*

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One focus group participant spoke forcefully about how audiences are used as a justification for the exclusion of LGBTIQ2S+ experiences in scripted drama:



*People think oh we've done enough. You have two girls who like each other on TV, why do you also need to use the word lesbian, why do they need to kiss, that's gross... The defence is always 'Oh, but remember this is a broad audience show', and so in that of course is assumed default of who the audience is. It's ridiculous because that's the opposite of a broad audience show.*

The authors would like to further underscore that while two women kissing is argued to pose a market risk for 'broad audience appeal,' sexualized violence, rape, and murder of women then must be perceived to be "safe," given their prominence as routine plot elements in scripted drama.

The absence of high quality, sophisticated audience data leads to the deployment of risk narratives in decision-making that justify and normalise the systemic exclusion of stories by and about racialized groups. One Executive Decision-Maker describes this how this industry practice operates by *deduction*, rather than evidence:



*There are shows that are number one shows in the US. And they're helmed by you know, a certain racialized group. And that same show will not get traction and will not be number one in Canada. So, what the leaders will deduce is 'well it's because that person from that show is from that racialized groups, and so our audiences are not interested in seeing shows with that type of diversity'.*

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A BIPOC focus group participant spoke of her experiences with how market risk narratives about audience demand are used to obscure structural racial inequalities and power relations:



*I had once, people of colour characters referring to white people as white people and that alone was considered controversial. I had to go back and forth a million times and, eventually, it was stripped out of the scripts. The production company and the showrunner who have final say decided that that was gonna, you know, be the safest sell.*

One Key Player forcefully suggested that there is little appetite or motivation for a more sophisticated understanding of audiences. Her analysis draws upon her significant personal experience as a writer, director and producer to connect the perceived risk that high-quality audience data poses to those who currently enjoy disproportionate benefit from the existing system:



*I think that model of who the audience is, is tired, and I don't think they really care to find out, because if the audience looks like me, that means you might have to hire somebody that looks like me. If the audience looks like a 20 year-old black woman, that means you might have to hire somebody like that to create a story and typically, we all know, they don't look like that when they're hiring.*

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Risk narratives critically inform executive-level decisions that determine what and who is deemed a worthy investment. As one broadcast Executive Decision-Maker aptly observed:



*The question is, how are those decisions going to be made, who's going to be making those decisions, and what effect is it going to have. There's opportunity here to close the gap that was created by the pandemic or to further it even more.*

To probe this relationship further, we turn next to an analysis of the corporate culture in which executive decisions are taken, and the degree to which the current moment presents opportunities for change.

### FROM SCRIPT TO SCREEN: EXECUTIVE DECISION-MAKING

The normalisation of digital networking under COVID-19 may have, in some cases, challenged standard industry practices that underpin the formation and function of networks. In-person meetings and industry networking events frequently pose geographic, physical, social, economic and cultural barriers, and function to inhibit talent discovery within industry networks of power and influence. An entirely digital interface for meetings and conferences has presented opportunities to enhance, expand, and diversify networks. One Executive Decision-Maker spoke of the ease with which digital meetings enable them to widen their networks and meet new talent:



*The creative spirit is thriving, and people are creating and writing and engaging like never before. They have all these great ideas and projects that they want to present. And because I don't have to go meet them for coffee or be forced to drink with them I'm like 'yes, let's book a meeting!' I don't necessarily want to make time for the people that I already know exist. I want to make time for new voices that I haven't heard from before. So COVID has been really great that way.*

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What has *not* changed under COVID-19 are the risk perceptions and narratives that are deployed in decision-making. This is especially evident in risk deployment related to moving projects from development into production. One Executive Decision-Maker offered a story about a late-stage development project by a first-time filmmaker from an equity-seeking group. Despite working “so hard” on getting it ready, the project failed to go into production at the last minute.

The story exemplifies two core risk narratives that emerged from our interview data:

- Investing in content creators from under-represented communities is perceived as a financial risk.
- In-person meetings allow executives to assess ‘talent readiness,’ build trust, and mitigate project finance *and* personal reputational risk.



*I felt like if we had been able to meet in person, and if we had been able to connect in a different way, that those flags perhaps would have gone off sooner. You know, because it was being mitigated by this virtual connection those first-hand instincts or gut checks that you get when you meet people in person...*

*In terms of reputational risk...on some of these shows I really work to support and bring them access to new resources and funding, because my name is attached to the project...I worry now how that potentially may impact other shows where I'm positioning them as 'hey they're ready for this next step.' They may not be as quick to get that funding next time. This has now happened on a couple of shows where I'm really trying to prop people up and get them ready for that next stage, and they just weren't ready and maybe if I met them in person...*

This story suggests deployment of these risk narratives under COVID-19 may thus lead to *less* content from equity-seeking groups under a risk-aversion rationale.



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Executives' perceptions of what constitutes a 'good story' and who constitutes a 'worthy investment' is informed by their own social position, history and experiences. A number of interviewees suggested that the practice of universalizing the personal preferences of executives as defining what constitutes a good story is common practice. As one Executive Decision-Maker reflected, *"I always get frustrated by executives who are making television for themselves, and it has to appeal to them, first and foremost."*

Corporate leadership and governance strategies are central to advancing inclusion. In speaking forcefully about the need for a redistribution of systemic, structural and institutional power as a prerequisite for innovative storytelling, one Key Player noted:



*The way that you're going to see a real change is from an understanding that goes beyond intellectual or academic or even compassionate, if you will, to one that comes from experience. And so, to do that you need to bring in those folks who've had that lived experience.*

The whiteness of the Executive Decision-Making workforce in Canada is a longstanding barrier to systemic change. Neither historical nor current efforts to promote equity, diversity and inclusion in the Canadian screen industries have focused on the need for systemic change in corporate leadership structures. The following quote from an Executive Decision-Maker is a clear and unequivocal call for BIPOC representation and inclusion to be urgently addressed as a corporate leadership and governance priority:



*I am one of the only BIPOC executives and have been for a very long time...We've got a lot of female leadership which is great. But from BIPOC representation, those decisions have been made from a position of privilege for very, very, very, very long time, and so that's the system that needs to be broken... but it's another thing to put into action, and so you know to be quite honest, I haven't seen it happen.*

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The ability to take risks is unevenly distributed across the industry. Executive decisions happen in team-based environments, with their KPIs / performance assessed against their overall track record, as reflected in the quote below from an Executive Decision-Maker. None of the Executive Decision-Makers or Key Players we interviewed provided a concrete example of a negative career consequence stemming from a single 'bad' decision. This suggests that while perceptions of career risk are sharply felt within current corporate environments, the overall career or reputational risk for decision-makers is largely perception.



*We defend decisions as a team and, quite frankly, when we look at the track record it's not as if everything we do is a miss. A lot of things that we do are doing superbly well. But then again, we're in a corporate culture where you're only as good as your last mistake or your last success. I've been there for 18 years now and every day, you have to sort of start back. There's not a lot of margin for error there's not a lot of room to manoeuvre and to take those risks.*

Yet critically, risk deployment by those in decision-making roles operates to *intensify* risk for equity-seeking groups. A BIPOC Executive Decision-Maker eloquently articulates how risk-taking is experienced more sharply for entire communities of marginalised storytellers:



*You're never going to bat a thousand on development and that's fine – no one ever does. Part of the thing is to make room for our community to fail in this sector, because other communities get to fail all the time and make another show. Whereas the pressure for us has always been you make one and it doesn't yield whatever bizarre results for a company that probably didn't even know how to handle it. And you never get to make another one.*

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We now turn to an analysis of how decision-making practices shape the daily lived experiences of the storytelling workforce, and what, if any, opportunities COVID-19 presents for doing things differently.

### COVID-19 AND WORK: LABOUR MARKET RISKS

The rolling shutdowns beginning late March and early April 2020 presented serious, overlapping challenges to the health and productivity of the industry, including a sharp cessation of physical production. These shutdowns posed a widespread labour market risk for an industry reliant on a highly skilled, specialised freelance workforce. The following quote from a BC-based location manager in the local media provides a sharp insight into how the industry workforce experienced an intensification of employment precarity, and why the Canada Emergency Response Benefits program was instrumental in mitigating the labour market risk that the pandemic posed to an industry reliant on a highly skilled freelance workforce.<sup>13</sup>

*“It made it possible for people to stay in the industry and to wait for their jobs to come back instead of having to go and work somewhere else. Normally your back-up plan would be the service industry and all of those jobs have been decimated, as well.”<sup>14</sup>*

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**13** Government of Canada. (2021). Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). April 30. <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/cerb-application.html>

**14** Source: Szekeres, J. (2020). CERB extension welcomed by B.C. film industry. June 16. CityNews 1130. <https://www.citynews1130.com/2020/06/16/cerb-extension-welcomed-by-b-c-film-industry/>

## SECTION 3 – FINDINGS

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The resumption of production under COVID-19 protocols required a reconsideration of both OH&S and financial risk. A surprising finding of our interviews is that financial and OH&S risk deployment strategies produced better quality work in some ways. COVID-19 may present an opportunity to challenge perceptions about the quality of the talent pipeline. Restricted international travel has prompted US decision-makers to hire Canadian talent in both on- and off-screen roles which would 'normally' be sourced from the US, as demonstrated by the following quotes from two Key Players:



*On the network shows we did almost all our casting out of LA. And we had day players cast from Vancouver, but not a lot of opportunity for big roles. That's gone so we are only casting from Vancouver or Toronto. And guess what - they are stepping up to the plate, I am so thrilled with the quality of actors that I've had... fantastic, fantastic people.*



*In so much as COVID has kind of slowed travel to and from LA, we're also seeing a lot more ethnically diverse Canadians get the chance to step into roles of producing and directing. Because the realities of having to sequester, and people not wanting to be away from their families, etc., means we've seen a huge uptick in departments like producing and directing for local Canadians.*

One risk-management experiment by a US studio offers a rare example of how decisions taken under COVID-19 operating conditions produced comparatively secure work in a profession characterized by very short-term contracts. This studio offered several Canadian television directors from equity-seeking groups 12-month exclusive retainer contracts. The rationale was to geographically secure trusted directors who were familiar with the suite of series the studio produces in Canada. The directors would be available to undertake episodes without the need for quarantine, and were readily available to function as replacements in

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the event another director became ill or needed to quarantine themselves. Such experiments provide an opening for reconceptualizing the organization of work in the contemporary film and television production industry, and challenging chronic employment precarity as its foundation.

COVID-19 operating protocols also offer an opportunity for the industry to experiment with addressing work-life conflict. A focus on personal health and the wellbeing of the workforce is an historically absent dimension of work in the film and television production industry. COVID-19 protocols produced what one Key Player described as “*more room and compassion for being sick.*”

COVID-19 protocols also increased the costs of production, requiring new financial risk mitigation strategies. Interviews revealed that this included a sharp reduction in excessive hours, and in some cases, shorter, more shoot-able scripts. One Key Player describes the impact that shooting 10 or 11 hour days had in an industry with notoriously poor work-life balance: “*We went home and had dinner. Who’s ever done that?*” Caring responsibilities outside of work impact women disproportionately. A better work model and shorter hours offer potential to positively drive efforts to redress systemic gender inequality.

Risk deployment under COVID-19 protocols also negatively impacted the type and volume of work available for some screen professionals. The vulnerability of on-and-off screen older workers to illness under COVID-19 became a key risk consideration, as did the presence of children on set.

The consideration of the risk profile of age categories for on-screen performers has immediate and material impacts on those communities. If some categories of on-screen workers are deemed higher risk than others during key decision points, such as script writing and casting, the danger is that we see far fewer older and younger workers on our screens at all. This requires careful consideration in relation to questions of representation and inclusion for workers who are already marginalised in our screen stories, such as older women.

COVID-19 protocols also resulted in minimising the number of people attached to a project, both on- and off-screen. By limiting location shooting, or scenes with large crowds, or complex sets requiring large crews, COVID-19 protocols restricted the volume of work available for freelancers on any given project.

Several interviewees noted that COVID-19 work protocols produced a more closed working environment. Pod structures for work teams, social distancing protocols, and working from home are barriers to creating strong professional and social ties. These barriers will be particularly sharp for new industry entrants, posing

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challenges in forming meaningful relationships with teams in an industry where networks are key to career progression. This is going to even further sharpen an industry marked by high degrees of closure. One focus group participant spoke eloquently of the social isolation she experiences as a consequence of the current approaches to diversity:



*As a woman of colour, I feel very much on the outside when it comes to having a network. I can pitch content and I'll have multiple ideas and I'll notice that producers are only interested in my content that's centered around me being 'other.' In almost every room I've been in, I've been told that I'm a diversity hire or, you know, I'm supposed to represent women, juniors, and persons of colour. And I have yet to come across anybody who's anybody that I haven't felt has seen me as like a commodity, because of the trendiness of diversity.*

## SECTION 4

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### RISK ASSESSMENT

#### “DOING DIVERSITY” AND POLITICAL RISK

The shifting nature of relationships between broadcasters and producers under COVID-19 is building on years of diversity and inclusion advocacy to produce a sense of political risk for key decision-makers who do not embrace the urgently needed changes. We heard from a number of interviewees that, at least discursively, the corporate appetite for change is high, and that policy and advocacy efforts for inclusion are having an impact. Importantly, one interviewee suggested that this perceived political risk is producing new frameworks of accountability:



*It seems like there's a fear of being shamed if you don't go through and actually deliver those professional best efforts in terms of holding people accountable. Because of what's happened during COVID, I've been able to write the need for diversity and inclusion into our agreements. The producers have to employ professional best efforts to deliver on diversity and inclusion objectives. I don't think if we hadn't been going through this cycle shift like we're going through now, we would have been able to do what we're doing now.*

However, the core risk perceptions and narratives that support the status quo remain firmly intact. The following quote from an Executive Decision-Maker demonstrates that while policy frameworks in Canada and diversity mandates in US studios are changing who is considered for key creative roles, current efforts are frequently tokenistic.

SECTION 4 – RISK ASSESSMENT

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*I was specifically looking for someone with some action suspense chops. It's helpful if they've got an ethnicity currently, the way Telefilm is going and what have you. So I'm happy to go that route, as long as they can deliver. I'm not going to go to an unknown director, because I think it's too tricky. So, you know I'm not going to go and hire a Black trans woman who's never directed a movie before, which would tick off all the boxes, but probably you know, be too great a risk.*

The work required to advance meaningful progress is, at times, actively resisted. The following quote from a Key Player exemplifies the degree to which genuine efforts to advance representation and inclusion are framed both as an execution risk, and a threat to creativity:



*In the particular script we had, there was a role for a deaf boy. Casting a boy was difficult enough, because these are dangerous times and having a kid on set is just not optimal. After we had picked somebody the network got back to us and said, 'you cannot cast a non-deaf boy in a deaf boy role.' And I fear that now you can't cast someone who's not gay to play a gay, you can't cast someone who's not blind to be blind, you can't cast someone who's not deaf to play deaf. And I think that's going to make things very difficult. I think there's an upside to that and that these actors might get a chance, but if you'll forgive me, a deaf boy - that's a pretty steep ask....*

In order to address 'the problem' of casting a deaf boy, we are dismayed to report that the script was rewritten, and the character changed. It is important to understand that this story is indicative of a much larger problem. Our interviews and focus groups delivered story after story about the superficiality of diversity efforts. These accounts reveal the degree to which diversity is *only* viewed as a political risk, one to be managed by simply adding new elements to the existing system – and not about the structural, systemic redistribution of power.



## SECTION 4 – RISK ASSESSMENT

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The following quote from an LGBTIQ2S+ writer illustrates how dominant diversity narratives reproduce heterosexist norms, reductionist stereotypes, and operate as barriers to inclusion:



*I've gone up for jobs where people said sorry, I really wanted to hire you, but we only had one spot for women, and we really needed to have, you know, a mom in this role, because the lead character is a mom. And I'm like, six guys can write this woman who's a mom...What I'm saying it's we are not seen as necessary for telling our own stories.*

This same writer eloquently articulates the need to address the *intersectional* nature of systemic exclusion:



*Genderqueer and trans women can't be lumped in with queer men, because they have had quite a bit more success so far in this country. But there's also a thing that happens with producers, where they equate gay men and women, so if they wanted to hire women for this role, but they couldn't find someone fast enough, they'll hire a gay man. Or, they'll say we don't need a woman for this because we hired a gay man... there's so few of us that we don't have any allies, don't really have anyone to bring us up. I can think of like, three other women in the whole industry like me who don't have any proximity to male privilege or any of that. That's the thing that I think is really misunderstood and overlooked in this industry.*

Equity-seeking communities are routinely held responsible for effecting systemic change in a system in which they hold little power and influence. As one interviewee succinctly put it, “*the people that think they're making it better are not currently part of the solution.*” As the following comments from a focus group participant signal, one way that risk is deployed in the current diversity context is to devolve the perceived risk associated with ‘diversity hires’ to the excluded communities themselves:

## SECTION 4 – RISK ASSESSMENT

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*Most of the rooms I'm in I'm the only diverse person, and then I have to represent all everything, all the things. I've been in many situations where the cast is very, very diverse, but the writing room is not. And one time when trying to staff for a later season room the showrunner told me his ideas to staff the room, which included me, were just all these people that he knew, his trusted folk. But the problem is his trusted folk are predominantly white people that he's worked with before, right? So, I pointed out that how can our cast be three out of four diverse and our writer's room have only me. And then he said, 'well then, can you give me a list of names of people of colour?' So I have to be the keeper of the names of the people of colour, but the problem is I can't vouch for anybody because I've never gotten to work with anybody because we're always the only one.*

### RISK OMISSIONS AND CRISIS MIS-MANAGEMENT

We conclude by drawing attention to a risk that is notable largely for its absence. The absence of this risk deployment itself poses a systemic risk to capitalising on the opportunities the changing risk environment COVID-19 presents.

The participants in our study provided horrific accounts of physical abuse on set; deliberate, misogynistic attempts at career sabotage; sexual harassment; and racist and homophobic bullying throughout their careers. All of them feared career and reputational risk for reporting these incidents to those who had the power to act. For those who did report, none of them could identify any negative consequences for the perpetrators.

Toxic workplace cultures, and the decision not to foreground systemic sexism, racism, homophobia, harassment and abuse must be understood as an existential risk to the future of the film and television production industry. As one focus group participant notes, "We're talking about making rooms more diverse, but we haven't made it safe for the people that are coming into those rooms."

## SECTION 4 – RISK ASSESSMENT

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Participants spoke of the urgent need for leadership to focus on *the existing systems and power structures as the problem*. A focus group participant provides a searing example of how current approaches represent nothing more than risk theatrics:



*If it doesn't come from the top, then it's just lip service. Everybody wants to look like they're doing the right thing. We have zero tolerance sexual harassment policies, but it still worked for bosses who have sexually assaulted multiples of my colleagues.*

There is an important opportunity to create meaningful, foundational change right now. COVID-19 has brought an acute, industry-wide focus to risk assessments. An Executive Decision-Maker in charge of COVID-19 risk-assessments commented that the industry's shared concern was “*how can we proceed in a way that is safe and doesn't put people at undue risk?*” This offers possibilities to challenge and disrupt risk perceptions and narratives - and how, or if, they are deployed at key decision points. To take advantage of the current opportunities to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion in the Canadian screen industry presented by the rapidly shifting risk environment, the diversity discourse needs to be urgently translated into action and investment, driven by a reconceptualization of risk itself. The comments of another Executive Decision-Maker point to the need to capitalize on the current moment:



*With our company there's a lot of support to make a change and make an impact through our content and that we have a responsibility to do that. Will they put their money where their mouth is? We'll see. We're not there yet. But right now there's a lot of goodwill and support... we have to seize this momentum, otherwise it could fade away and just be like what's happened in the past.*

## SECTION 4 – RISK ASSESSMENT

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The response of the screen industries to the sudden impact of COVID-19 was imaginative, improvised, and often inspiring. But it begs an important question. If the industry can successfully protect its workers from a highly contagious virus during a global pandemic, it can ensure that women, BIPOC, LGBTIQ2S+, disabled and Indigenous communities are not put at “undue risk” simply by trying to get, or do, their jobs. To advance an innovative industry built on foundations of fair and open networks requires *decisive change*. From the smallest everyday work habits to the broadest industry policies, members of Canada’s screen industries need to decide to act on equity, diversity, and importantly, inclusion.

# TECHNICAL APPENDIX

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This Report is based on the unique combination of quantitative and qualitative research techniques which are described in further detail in this Appendix.

## DOCUMENTARY AND POLICY RESEARCH

In order to produce the report we:

- Conducted document collection comprised of industry policies, government press releases, industry reports, white papers and grey literature including *Playback*, *Variety*, *Screen*.
  - Search criteria included key words: EDI; COVID-19; film production; creative culture; cultural policy; and included risk identification, assessment and management in the creative sector.
  - Included Canada, US and Europe dating back to March 1 2020.
- Compiled all relevant academic literature on risk and risk management.
- Applied exclusion criteria to all documents that were not relevant to the core research problem (pre-COVID-19, not relevant to screen sector, no consideration of EDI).
- Conducted closer analysis of remaining documents: *Including* (18) Canadian Policy documents; (9) government reports; (42) creative industry journal articles; (11) industry reports Canada; (5) industry reports USA; (12) industry reports Europe; (7) articles related to risk assessment and mitigation strategies specific to creative sectors and film industries; (7) peer reviewed academic journal articles about creative industry responses.
- Devised an initial risk management typology for the screen industry.
- Applied the developed framework to representative sample of policy documents to perform an initial test of the framework against recent large public policy initiatives.

## SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

To prepare the Social Network that provided the basis for the Key Player analysis we undertook the following steps:

- **Data Collection.** Data requests were sent with five organizations providing data.
- **Data Cleaning.** We removed information pertaining to: Documentaries, Variety programs, Animations. We also backfilled missing data and removed duplicates.
- **Data Interoperation.** The five different datasets were merged and redundant records, outside the dates of study for example, were removed.
- **Data Management.** Data management planning, data safety protocols and data storage were established for the project.

## TECHNICAL APPENDIX

- **Data Applications and Programs used to determine Key Players:** STATA software was used to identify network nodes (unique people) and edges (the links between nodes) in the network and to calculate descriptive statistics for the network. R software was used to calculate some network measures and to identify Key Players in the network. The R package ‘keyplayer’ was used to find key players in the network. In keyplayer search a greedy search algorithm was employed, degree centrality measure was used and the method (group criterion) was ‘max’. To mitigate any degree bias to television players a separate report for film was also executed. Gephi software – to make visualisations and calculate some network measures. For visualisations the layout OpenOrd, no overlap and it was an undirected network.

## THE SOCIAL NETWORK DATA SOURCES

SOURCE	DATES	ATTRIBUTES	ROLES	FORMATS	DATA POINTS (AFTER CLEANING)
<b>Creative BC</b>	2016-2020	Titles shot in BC, date of production	Key creatives	Feature film, TV movies, new media, TV series	53,184
<b>Ontario Creates</b>	2018-2019	Titles shot in Ontario, date of production	Key creatives	TV series, pilots, TV movies, feature films, documentary/ reality TV, animation, variety specials	25,190
<b>Telefilm Canada</b>	2017-2020	Funded English and French language production titles, province, genre, language.	Key Creatives (prod, director, writer)	Films including Documentary	9,828 Note: only English-language titles used in the final dataset.
<b>Directors Guild of Canada</b>	2020	Nationwide titles serviced by DGC members	All roles except producer/ executive producer and DOP	All formats	106,524
<b>Canada Media Fund</b>	2018-2020	Funded titles	Nil	TV and new media	Not included in final dataset

Notes:

A data point is an individually specific unit of data that is used in calculating and measuring the size of a dataset.

While the CMF provided a list of project titles and associated funding amounts, genres, formats, languages and production companies, due to the contractual disclosure requirements set out in the Financing Agreement between the CMF and each CMF Applicant, the CMF was not authorized to provide further information on each project.

## TECHNICAL APPENDIX

## THE SOCIAL NETWORK STATISTICS

The five merged datasets produced a list of 2,737 unique key creatives (producers and directors) and 21,914 connections between them.

Those unique individuals occupied 5,607 roles if we count multiple roles on the same production separately (see Table 2). If we count only roles across different productions then these individual directors and producers occupied 5,378 roles (see Table 1).

NUMBER OF ROLES		
ROLE	FREQ	PERCENT
CPR	24	0.45
DIR	2,129	39.59
DIR_EXP	126	2.34
DIR_EXP_PRO	3	0.06
DIR_PRO	56	1.04
EXP	1,785	33.19
EXP_PRO	41	0.76
LPR	3	0.06
PRO	1,192	22.16
SUP	19	0.35
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,378</b>	<b>100</b>

**TABLE 1:** In this table if multiple roles in a given production (e.g. director and producer) are held by one person they have been counted once on the project as a separate combined role – DIR\_PRO.

## TECHNICAL APPENDIX

ROLE	FREQ	PERCENT
CPR	24	0.43
DIR	2,314	41.27
EXP	1,955	34.87
LPR	3	0.05
PRO	1,292	23.04
SUP	19	0.34
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,607</b>	<b>100</b>

**TABLE 2:** In this table we have preserved the full number of distinct roles even if they are occupied by the same person.

DIR	Director
PRO	Producer
EXP	Executive Producer
LPR	Line Producer
DOP	Director of Photography
PRM	Production Manager
SW	Screenwriter
ASP	Associate Producer
CPR	Co-Producer
SUP	Supervising Producer

## THE SOCIAL NETWORK VISUALISATION

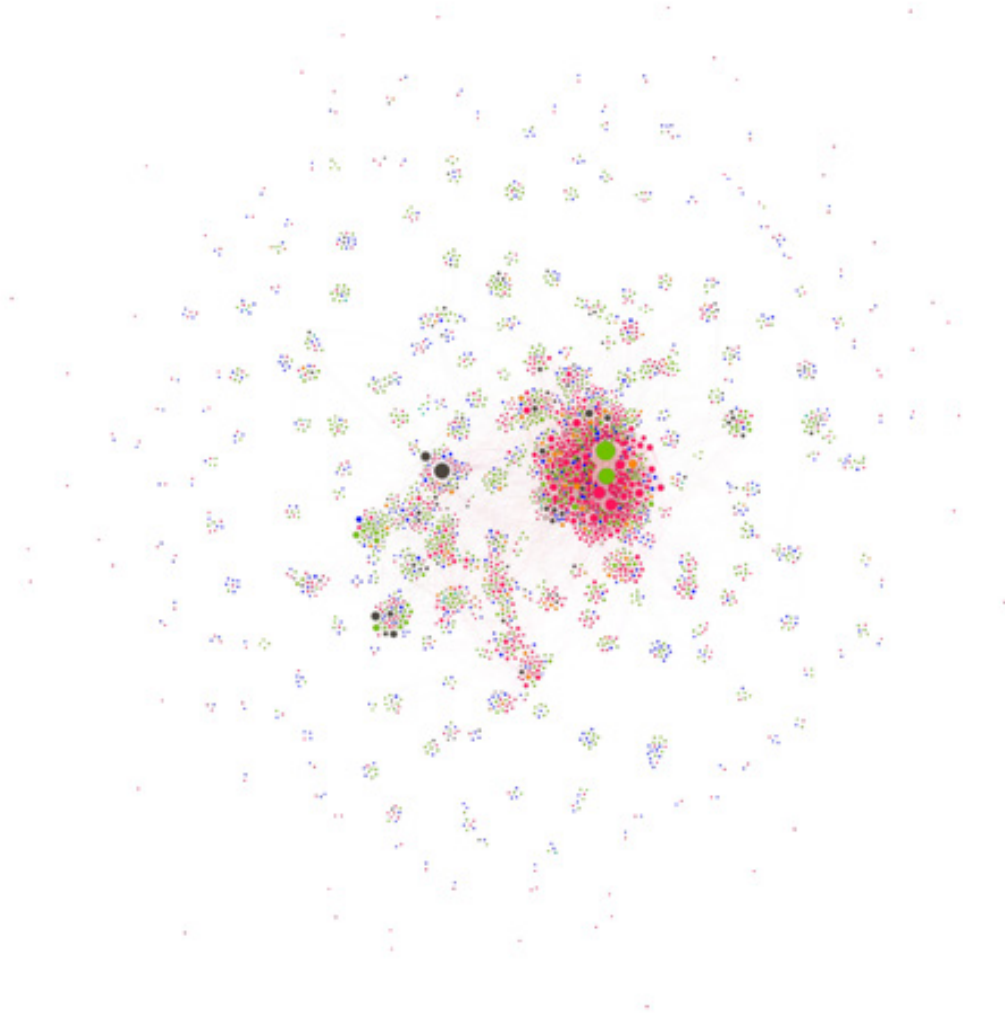
This is a visualisation of the key roles identified in the legend above and their interconnection with each other using social network analysis. This methodology enabled the research team to determine individuals who are the most significant to the operations of the network in the English-language projects under development and production in Canada from 2018-2020.

Key player names cannot be shared under the terms of the research ethics protocols approved by the University of Alberta and Deakin University. These names are available to the research team only and inform the interview selection.



TECHNICAL APPENDIX

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Dark Pink: DIRECTOR

Green: EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Blue: PRODUCER

Black: EXECUTIVE PRODUCER/PRODUCER

Orange: DIRECTOR/EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

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## THE SOCIAL NETWORK DATA MEASURES

This table describes the overall network features.

INDICATOR	VALUE
Average degree	16.013
Average path length	4.197
Edge density	0.006
Modularity	0.743
Average clustering coefficient	0.845
Assortativity	0.2475

TABLE 3