

Media futures and social injustice: Analyzing dominant discourses in Canadian film schools

by

Christine Ki Wight

M.F.A., Simon Fraser University, 2003

B.F.A., Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, 2000

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Declaration of Committee

Name: Christine Ki Wight

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy (Equity Studies Stream)

Thesis title: Media futures and social injustice: Analyzing dominant discourses in Canadian film schools

Committee:

Chair: Kumari Beck
Associate Professor, Education

Özlem Sensoy
Supervisor
Professor, Education

Suzanne Smythe
Committee Member
Associate Professor, Education

Michelle Stack
Committee Member
Associate Professor, Education
University of British Columbia

Stuart Poyntz
Examiner
Professor, Communication

Mary Lynn Young
External Examiner
Professor, Journalism, Writing and Media
University of British Columbia

Abstract

While media industry inequities are well established in popular media and scholarly research, there is a dearth of studies on how media production educational programs, also known as film schools, engage with these inequities, or with critical education and social justice movements. This gap in scholarship raises important questions about the role film schools play in confronting and/or transforming media industries work cultures that are documented as abusive, and that are well-known for producing representational harms in mass media. This dissertation aims to contribute to this gap by reporting research from a critical discourse analysis of post-secondary film production program websites in the context of industry inequities and scholarly and industry calls for more socially just curricula.

Keywords: Media production education, film school, film production, mass media, professional education, social justice, equity, critical discourse analysis, post-secondary education, higher education

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I am a settler of Ukrainian and English heritage, born and raised on Treaty 6 territory, but for the past twenty-five years I have been an uninvited resident on the stolen lands of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh peoples. Thus, my university education, career and adult life have all been realized on dispossessed Indigenous lands. I acknowledge the failure of this dissertation to engage literature and undertake analysis in the service of giving land back. I make this acknowledgement to assert both the material reality underlying this dissertation, and my intention to keep reckoning with the injustice of benefitting from a life of living and working on stolen land.

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List of Acronyms

Capilano	Capilano University
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
PDF	Portable Document Format
SFU	Simon Fraser University
Sheridan	Sheridan College
UBC	University of British Columbia
U of T	University of Toronto
York	York University
XU	X University/Ryerson University ¹

¹ An explanation of the naming of X University is in section 3.1.9.

Chapter 1.

Introduction

“A movement requires us to be moved” (Ahmed, 2017, p. 5).

Tensions coming to a head: “we don’t do social justice education”

I open this dissertation with a vignette summarizing tensions I have experienced as an educator in a Canadian public English-language post-secondary media production bachelor’s degree program, also commonly referred to as a “film school” or a “film production program.” These tensions arose from a feminist stance that has informed speaking up and speaking out against injustice that I have witnessed in my department, my university, and the professional media industry that my teaching is connected to. When I applied to undertake doctoral studies, I was becoming deeply curious about the ways that industry values embedded in professional education programs might come in conflict with academic critical inquiry. My curiosities were also informed by the silence, dismissal or dissent I experienced when I brought feminist concerns to faculty meetings as my questions were often deemed less important than teaching to a very instrumentalist notion of an “industry standard.” As I wrote my doctoral letter of intent in late 2016, there were social justice movements increasingly engaging in direct critique of the media industries, notably in how popular news media distorts racial injustice by often maintaining a sensibility of White² racial superiority and innocence (Callison & Young, 2020).³ For example, during this time in 2016, media industries funding bodies in Canada were finally listening to decades-old activism and data produced by organizations like Women in View and Women in Film in Canada, and were introducing

² This dissertation follows APA style that stipulates that words describing race should be capitalized, hence my capitalization of the White race here. I have followed APA style as this is the requirement of SFU’s dissertation formatting. However, it is important for me to note that my usual writing practice follows The Associated Press that establishes that racial justice is supported symbolically by writing the word “white” in lowercase when it is referring to racial or ethnic identity (Daniszewski, 2020), and capitalize other racial descriptions such as “Black.”

³ I am thinking, here, about media framing of Cree young adult Coulton Boushie’s murder by settler farmer Gerald Stanley and critiqued by Indigenous and abolitionist activists using the #IdleNoMore hashtag and movement; and about #BlackLivesMatter’s critique of media coverage of Colin Kapernick’s quiet and powerful protest during the US national anthem that brought on a wave of racist nationalistic news coverage and responses.

gender parity initiatives to support funding women's films, and the hiring of women in key production roles (Brinton and McGowan, 2020). In 2016, the media industries were also swiftly responding to the Gamergate controversy that saw women gamers, workers and critics violently targeted for daring to address problems in representation of women in games and the gaming industry (Busch, Chee & Harvey, 2016). The public activism, as well as the media industries initiatives aimed at addressing problems of inequity or violence, brought much friction and student questions to my film classes in a mid-sized public university. Despite the constant heat I felt from my students and my conscience to address these critiques of the media industries, and changes implemented by the media industries themselves, I often found that my workplace was unable or unwilling to address student questions and concerns about these issues. All of these elements nourished my proposed program of study at SFU.

In my first semester of doctoral studies in the fall of 2017, social media activism and popular news stories were amplified and directed firmly at media cultures following the #OscarsSoWhite campaign in early 2017 that critiqued the profound whiteness, and White supremacy, of the US Academy Awards, and the industry itself. I also saw the establishment of the Indigenous Screen Office in 2017, an organization dedicated to advocacy, skills development and targeted funding for Indigenous media voices. The #MeToo hashtag originally coined in 2006 by racial and sexual justice activist Tarana Burke, was also popularized in October 2017 following actor Alyssa Milano's use of #MeToo to draw attention to the widespread accounts of sexual assault and harassment that were finally being covered by major news outlets (Mendes et al., 2018).⁴ As the social movements gained volume, my doctoral studies intensified and focused on understanding issues of social injustice, particularly colonial and racial injustice within media cultures and broader institutional or educational contexts. Concurrently, my film students intensified their curiosities about the ethics of media work cultures, wondering aloud and with urgency if they would ever fit in. I brought my students' fervent questions to faculty meetings in Powerpoint presentations on #MeToo, and questions of our own complicities as educators in perpetuating these injustices by how we teach, or what we teach, or don't teach. The following vignette evokes and summarizes the response I

⁴ An example of mainstream news coverage includes Ashley Judd's account in an October 5, 2017 New York Times article that outlines movie mogul Harvey Weinstein's many decade-long practice of assault and silencing of victims (Kantor & Twohey, 2017).

received to these presentations that I made to my colleagues, notably the combined silence and dismissal that brought me to deeply consider the ways that film education might be complicit with systems and practices of gendered and racialized injustice:

As social media movements and popular discourse keep the spotlight on media industry sexism, racism, and other toxic workplace practices or assaults, students come to my classes with increasing concern about their future workplaces. Some students profess they will quit because they are already experiencing harm; young women, in particular, struggle to be seen as worthy in film production exercises; persistent racist remarks made by colleagues are unapologetic; offensive and discriminatory notes are left anonymously in classrooms and go unaddressed; and on the urging of their family, one student asks directly “is the film industry too racist to accept me?” I keep a list of the students’ questions and present them to my colleagues. I ask: “what do we need to do, and what do we need to learn to be able to respond to and engage our students’ concerns?” The room remains silent. No answers. No discussion. Later, a colleague comments in the hallway, “Well, we don’t do social justice education.”

This dissertation retorts, “*Why not?*” If workplace culture is learned or trained, do educators have a moral responsibility to challenge and work to transform harmful workplace cultural practices? Despite the willful apathy and bias in the vignette above, I do have many colleagues who care immensely and grapple continuously with problems of educational accessibility, and issues of colonialism and systemic sexism and racism in institutional processes. However committed, there remains dominating discourses of employability, career-readiness, and film craft competence that tend to overshadow other critical concerns in day-to-day film production education operations.

A flaw exists in my original conception of university as a necessary site of criticality, particularly in popular culture-oriented professional programs like film schools. Universities are colonial epistemic enterprises, and institutional structures are rife with layers of injustice that resist critical analysis. Furthermore, film production programs exist as a means to train students to work in production and produce media, not necessarily to critique modes of production or their products. Even the idea of film school has the tendency to be captivating like a good movie. Embedded in the lore of film schools are ideas about the potential for stardom, endless creative bounty, and significant financial reward. When I imagine potential film school students reading through film school

program websites, talking to friends, and reading film school forums, I envision an intense desire to participate in the decadent glory of commercial film and television's lush and excessive digital worlds, and take part in the approximately \$9 billion/year Canadian film economy (CMPA, 2020). Given the ever-increasing cost of living in Canada's English-language media production centres, Vancouver and Toronto, and the competitively bleak outlook for any post-secondary graduate in finding substantive employment, education that connects students to good jobs is understandably desirable. In fact, the sentiment "we don't do social justice" could even be perceived as comforting for students or parents who do not think it is worthwhile to waste time learning anything outside of career-ready job skillsets.

I also imagine students taking up the urgent calls of social movements and envisioning themselves at the centre of transformed media representations and work practices. When I think of these students, I imagine them making compelling films using their production craft skillsets, new digital technologies, and critically and socially informed aesthetic sensibilities. I also envision their commitment to care for each other through the process of bringing rich visual stories to life. While the perspectives of students are not necessarily as binary or oppositional as I have written here, the question that I am hoping this dissertation raises for educators in professional film programs is: what vision of media practice are we teaching to?

Questions about the vision of media practice we are preparing students to embrace, and the vision or purpose of higher education in general, has also arisen from the increased public and internal calls for more just and decolonized institutional practices and structures. Institutional initiatives, forums and policies abound regarding equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) as well as the "indigenizing"⁵ (Tuck & Yang, 2012) and decolonizing of teaching and learning and other educational structures. While EDI and decolonizing efforts and discourses on campus are different, they exist uneasily in higher education within a sphere of research, policy initiatives, and teaching and learning practices aimed at addressing social and historical injustices in education and culture. Decolonizing work is prominent as higher education has struggled to respond to the

⁵ While institutional discourses often use the word "indigenizing," I have avoided using it based on its paternalistic and disingenuously performative nature outlined by Tuck and Yang (2012). Instead, I use the word "decolonizing," which speaks more directly to the act of dismantling colonial structures.

2015 calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (“TRC”) that presented clear community-situated research and recommendations to address the historic, systemic and ongoing harms of the over century-long project of the residential school system in Canada (TRC, 2015). By forcibly separating children from their families, and subjecting Indigenous children to a sustained experience of extreme cultural and physical violence, with outcomes often as extreme as death, the TRC’s findings and recommendations clearly establish a path to reckon and address the legacies and ongoing harms of residential schools that are embedded in institutions like education. The TRC has remained one of the documents influencing higher education discourse and action partially because policy pressures, such as the annual government mandate letters to post-secondary institutions (BC Government, 2021) continually reference the recommendations as important core foci for our universities and colleges.

With research and clear calls for action from sources such as the TRC, the work of decolonizing, in particular, has clear resources to inform institutional change. However, at an operational level from the experience of being a university instructor, the tensions that I address in this dissertation between social contexts of film schools and media work culture injustices, also exist as barriers to doing meaningful and integrated decolonizing work. For example, as an instructor, I am called upon to “indigenize” my curricula, but most of my operational responsibilities in areas such as program review, enrollment management and retention focus on iterative practices to align and respond to government labour market reports. The focus on labour market targets exist due to post-secondary education government mandate letter requiring our universities to prioritize employment skills. So, while instructors at my institution work to “indigenize,” we are also supporting significant efforts to ensure that work-integrated learning opportunities occur throughout our program curricula. While I have witnessed colleagues successfully merging decolonizing and work-integrated practices within their courses, my experience is that decolonizing resources are often siloed and less resourced than efforts to relate our teaching directly to job skills and markets. In the literature review that follows, I address these tensions through literature that addresses performative and unjust equity initiatives spanning policy, teaching and hiring practices in higher education (Ahmed, 2012; 2017, Henry et al, 2017), as well as literature that puts these educational practices under a decolonizing lens (Cote-Meek, 2014).

The remainder of this introduction will summarize the core research problem, research questions, and the research process undertaken for this dissertation. As stated earlier, this research is informed by feminist perspectives, and the opportunity to study at a doctoral level in equity studies has offered me significant insights on how my White racial, settler, and queer identities frame my thought and action. So, while I have engaged in important learning, the results of this research project includes significant unlearning as I have aimed to confront White settler logics of educational paternalism as a means to embrace a feminist positioning that is able to contribute to social and racial justice in research and educational practice.

1.1. The research problem

At a broad level, the problem that this dissertation addresses is an uncertainty over the purpose and scope of professional education in post-secondary institutions. For example, what is the purpose of teaching trades, specifically addressed here as media industry trades, at degree-granting universities and colleges? And, secondly, how do professional programs reflect cultural and social changes in their professions?

The specific concern of this dissertation relates to post-secondary, public and English-language Canadian film production programs. These programs operate to train the next generation of media cultural talent, craft technicians, and business owners. It is well established in media, cultural and journalism studies that mass media culture reproduces dominating power structures through representations that normalize oppressive ideologies, social structures, and politics (Callison & Young, 2020; Hall 1981/2021; Harvey, 2020; hooks 1990, 1996). The scholars in these fields have shed light on the extensive social impacts of the media industries, and the ways that media influence and engage public discourse. In the past five years, much public attention has also focused on dominating, abusive, and oppressive work cultures in the media industries, with recent research, policy, and social action undertaken to address these issues by both media industry leaders and academic researchers (Ashton & Noonan, 2013; Brinton & McGowan, 2020; Mendes et al., 2019). The achievements of recent media activism stem from decades of activism, advocacy and solidarity initiatives from academic and industry corners (Brinton & McGowan, 2020; Goulet & Swanson, 2013; Parris, 2020). As a means to better understand film schools in relationship to social critique and changes in the media field, the aim of this dissertation is to discover what

film production programs say they do, and what the implications of this might be in relationship to scholarship and activism in this field of study.

The research aims of this dissertation align with the work of critical education scholars who have shown that education is never socially or politically neutral (Apple, 1990; Henry et al., 2017; hooks, 1994; Kincheloe, 2004). I believe my study contributes to this work by offering a better understanding of the dominant discourses in film production education in relationship to current cultural and social critiques within media studies scholarship and social change in media industries practices. It also, perhaps, offers fresh perspectives on this field of study as my analyses include reflexive consideration of my own praxis as a media industries professional and educator, and have integrated decolonizing efforts in media culture and scholarship. My hope is that the work I am doing in this dissertation will extend beyond the discursive realm as identifying dominating discourses in Canadian film production education can raise awareness and support film educators in developing more just pedagogical practices.

The media industries that I am discussing in this document are also referred to as mass media or the film, television, gaming, screen and entertainment industries. This notion of a media industry is comprised of companies that produce, distribute or provide services to commercial films, series, games and animations. In this dissertation, media production education refers to post-secondary institutions that offer degrees, diplomas or certificates connected to the multitudes of job skillsets of the media industries and will be referred to interchangeably as “film schools,” “film production programs” or “media production education.” Film production education programs commonly include theoretical, historical and/or critical courses, but their primary focus is to educate students in hands-on project-based learning for the purpose of gaining work in the digital entertainment fields. This dissertation is concerned with Canadian public institutions because it is in this intersection between the goals of public education and those of the media industry where discourses and practices conflict.

1.2. Existing media industries and education research

Following is a brief description of the literature informing this dissertation and that will be elaborated in later chapters. It outlines scholarly research on:

1. The cultural and creative industries, including research on the media industries and their critiques of work cultures and practices;
2. Contemporary media industry engagement with social change, social justice and social movements; and
3. Contemporary film production program engagement with social change, social justice and social movements in the media landscape.

1.2.1. The cultural and creative industries: hard work and good work

Literature outlining the dominant functions, processes and discourses of cultural and media industries work and industry-ready education notes a prevailing sensibility that media work is both hard work and good work. Work is hard because it is competitive, precarious and physically and emotionally laborious; it is good work because it allows for workers (and students) to follow their passions and exercise creativity in their careers (Ashton & Noonan, 2013; Banks, 2017; McRobbie, 2016). Scholars note that the aspects of good work, and in particular, discourses of natural talent (Banks, 2017) are used to normalize and neutralize the sting of the hard work, and mask prevalent abuses of power, systemic racism and sexism and other untenable working conditions (Campbell, 2018; de Castell & Skardzius, 2019; Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2013; Gill, 2002; Harvey, 2020; Levin et al., 2016; Saha, 2018) These industry-specific critiques extend to scholarship on higher education that evidence how neo-liberal marketplace logics in higher education normalize precarity, and decrease the critical functions of higher education (Coté & Allahar, 2011; Giroux, 2014; Spooner & McNinch, 2018; Stack & Mazawi, 2021).

1.2.2. Media industries and social justice movements: not going along to get along

In the past five years, social justice movements and digital social justice activism have amplified critiques of abusive media industries practices, and offered persistent public testimonials of systemic racism, sexism, assault and toxic workplace practices (Frechette, 2019, 2020; Harvey, 2020; Mendes et al., 2019). These movements have drawn from decades-old advocacy and research work of particularly feminist media non-profits and racialized collectives (Brannon Donoghue, 2020; Brinton & McGowan, 2020;

Parris, 2020), and created constant pressure that has required that media industries leaders respond and account for workplace safety and standards of representation (Ashton & Noonan, 2013; Callison & Young, 2020). In other words, the industry has started responding in some circles by creating strategies for considering how media representations and media workplace practices need to become more socially just. This dissertation provides several examples of changing practices such as the hirebipoc.ca initiative, and the Producer's Pledge: Reclaim/Reframe that seek to bring antiracist practices and policies to the Canadian media industries (Kay, 2020).

1.2.3. Media production education and social justice movements

The topic of how film production education takes up industry-based social change has not produced a sustained or succinct body of research. Similarly, I have not encountered examples of how film production education programs might be taking up the call of social justice movements, or social media justice movements such as #MeToo, #IdleNoMore, or #BlackLivesMatter. Research from scholar-practitioners note the need to build bridges between critical theory and production divides (Connolly, 2020; Nam, 2010); the need to better consider how filmmakers are taught to become filmmakers (Hjort, 2013); the need to research teacher-practitioners' comfort and fluency with critical and social topics (Ashton, 2009a,b, 2013); and from journalism studies, the need to produce widespread educational practices that address the historic and continuing harms of journalism in creating unjust public imaginations of Indigenous peoples (Callison & Young, 2020). With respect to both educational and media ethical practices involving Indigenous peoples in Canadian contexts, the 2015 recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) outline specific calls to action for educational institutions, teachers, and specifically for media and journalism programs. Research also notes how industry-ready agendas in applied film production reproduce social inequities through a lack of critical and social awareness in the work placement (practicum) process (Allen et al., 2012); this research indicates that workplace practicums signal limited identity categories of who fits into the industry, and who does not. Lastly, existing research identifies a need to increase students' sense of agency to both critique and determine their own workplace pathways (Ashton, 2009a,b) through and beyond media industry structures, making it clear that

social movements within or about media industries should form film students' awareness of the media industries work landscapes.

Critical media literacy, critical theory, and social theory are positioned in the last section of my literature review as having the potential to offer insight on more decolonizing or socially just ways of educating for media practice. Despite this potential, this section concludes by noting that theoretical paradigms of critical and social thought are not without problems as philosophy and critical theories have been constructed through colonial lenses. Moreover, these theories don't necessarily teach us how to act, or how to respond to difference of thought and belief (boyd, 2018). That said, they do offer language to understand and respond to social inequities no matter the educational context, and they are explored in the context of film production education in the next chapter. In explanations of my research design and methodology, I will outline how discursive analysis engaging such critical theory relates to material concern. It is important to specify in this introduction that when I use the word "decolonizing," I am referring to the process of deconstructing and addressing epistemic and material injustices stemming from colonial legacies and social structures. In this dissertation I also centre justice or social justice. When using these terms I am engaging Sensoy and DiAngelo's (2017) "critical social justice" (p. xx) that situates justice within critical theory frameworks that attend to how social power and domination produce material inequities that are "deeply embedded in the fabric of society" (p. xx).

1.3. Research design

This dissertation makes the assumption that words matter. Specifically, that it matters how film production programs describe themselves, particularly their core goals, visions, and curricular and non-curricular activities because words are also world-making. The words we use to describe what we do in university programs are important because they undoubtedly explain and describe the program values, and what students might expect to experience during their program education. For example, program and course learning outcomes are considered similar to contractual obligations, and as such, the words used in these documents shape student and instructors' perceptions of what the educational experiences will aspire to. From before students start classes, these words begin shaping student and faculty expectations of the academic year to come, and in turn, influence who recognizes themselves as aligned with an educational

community's core values. Ahmed's work in *Queer Phenomenology* (2006) explores the ways that spaces, such as institutional spaces, are oriented in ways that welcome or exclude people, notably queer and racialized people, based on social assumptions. She writes that a sense of belonging by being oriented within a space is "a question not only about how we "find our way" but how we come to "feel at home"" (p. 7). I am inspired by the applicability of Ahmed's writing to the problem of how we orient film education through program descriptions and curricula summaries, and the implications for equitable access and socially just experiences in these programs once students are there. Who fits in, and what offers students or faculty this sense of fitting in, is necessarily influenced by the orientations of dominant discourses within film schools.

Thus, in an effort to seek out and analyze the dominant discourses of the top film production programs in the Canadian media hub cities of Vancouver and Toronto, the research design of this study undertook a critical discourse analysis ("CDA") of website text from the top six English-language Canadian public higher education programs for film production education in the cities. The methodological steps did not follow traditional linguistic analysis, but an overall analysis of discursive themes as they dominate, interrelate or stand out in the film production program webpages, and interrelate to critical social theory and media industries social contexts. As outlined further in the methodology chapter, this dissertation follows the CDA processes of Jäger and Maier (2016) that review institutionalized language, power, and knowledge, and connects these to institutional practices and other social phenomena (pp. 110-118). The critical reflexivity and attentiveness to social hierarchies offered by Lazar's (2018) feminist critical discourse analysis was included in the methodology, as well as Jiwani's (2006) approach to map a "discursive field" (p. xii) of film production education by seeking dominant and dominating discourses within media education public framings. In alignment with Jiwani's CDA and Tuhiwai Smith's (2021) decolonizing methodologies, my analytic process also included consideration of discursive absences in the website text. This dissertation is also informed by a critical constructivist perspective as it takes the stance that knowledge and power are both socially constructed. As such, the analysis of website text offers only partial insight to possible meanings and experiences within film schools.

The research in this dissertation is guided by two questions that aim to describe and analyse the dominant discourses of film production education in Canada. The research questions are:

- What do public higher education film schools in Canada say that they do?; and
- What are the implications of what they say they do in relation to existing research on film industry-oriented education and media industry culture?

I focused on English-language public institutions in media industry hub cities as I am only an English-language speaker, and these institutions are well-known for providing professional film education and being well-connected to local and international industry. I only reviewed bachelor's degree programs, as opposed to lower-level certificate or diploma programs, as these were the largest programs with the most significant focus and reach on the institutions' websites for training for media production careers. I hope that the research in this dissertation can form a baseline understanding of dominant, and perhaps dominating, discourses of media production education and assist media educators to critically explore and transform their educational practices for more socially just outcomes. As Ashton and Noonan's (2013) research has indicated, more research is needed on media educators' ability and comfort with taking up matters of social justice or social change. My hope is that the research in this dissertation informs subsequent post-pandemic participatory research with film production instructors to explore how film education programs prioritize and integrate critical social concepts within professional film production courses. More specifically, I am curious about how instructors and students in film schools interpret, navigate, subvert, or transform dominant program and social discourses. What do they think they are supposed to do, how do they arrive at these opinions, and what do they actually do? Overall, I hope that the research in this dissertation informs future projects that engage film educators and students alike in critically examining, re-visioning, and transforming film production education practices for better social futures. As Marion Wright Edelman profoundly stated, "You can't be what you can't see." May this dissertation offer a chance for media educators to see who they are lighting the way for, and who and what, has been left out.

Chapter 2.

Literature Review

Specifically, the relationship between higher education and work in the [cultural industries] sector has not been critically interrogated in terms of how higher education may reproduce problematic aspects of various industry work practices, values and identities. (Ashton & Noonan, 2013, p. 3).

2.1. Introduction

The fields of media, cultural, production, and creative industries studies have established the ways that mass media culture produces, reproduces and/or normalizes oppressive ideologies and social structures through media representations. More recently, public attention has turned to the abusive working conditions and practices in the media industries, and academic research from media, cultural and creative industries fields have begun to explore these abuses. Social media movements such as #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter, #IdleNoMore, and #TimesUp have trained the public eye on how media professionals frame representations, who is represented in front of and behind cameras, and on the legacies of media workplace violence. Historically, critical media industries research has been undertaken by feminist and critical race media organizations who have utilized quantitative statistical analysis of media industries job categories to draw attention to major gaps in representation of women, racialized and Indigenous peoples, sexual and gender minorities, and disabled peoples in nearly all media job categories. In recent years, media industries research has become more detailed about inequities, with a notable focus on the exclusion and misrepresentation of racialized people in media workforces and as entertainment subjects. In response to social media movements and cultural industries activism, most funding agencies, trade unions, and production companies have undertaken research, training and/or policy work to address issues of inequities and workplace violence within the industry.

While much recent scholarship and activism has addressed representational imbalances and toxic media workplace cultures, less research has been done on the relationship between media industry cultures and media education. Ashton and

Noonan's 2013 anthology *Cultural Work and Higher Education*, stands as a lone comprehensive publication dedicated to a critical review of the connections between higher education and cultural industries practices, inclusive of the media industries. They indicate that there is a dearth of critical research on how attitudes about cultural work are formed by industry-oriented instructors and students, and the ways these attitudes impact teaching and learning including exclusionary or silencing practices within curriculum design, admissions requirements and other institutional practices (Ashton & Noonan, 2013, pp. 260-261). My dissertation aims to contribute to this noted gap in research by offering an analysis of prominent discourses in public website text of Canadian industry-oriented media production higher education programs, commonly referred to as "film schools," as a way to gauge their values and priorities.

This literature review explores core research relating to the study of media, cultural and creative industries, post-secondary education and film production programs, as well as contemporary movements for social change within media culture. The review of literature will be organized as follows:

1. Cultural and creative industries research on work practices, cultures, and higher education;
2. Social justice movements and activism within media culture and the media industries; and
3. Media production education research on program practices and cultures

While the terminology differs at times between cultural and creative industries studies and in media educational literature, I will briefly operationalize some of the terminology engaged in this review of literature and my research analyses. In a film school and industry context, "craft" is a term that is used to describe the work categories that undertake specific production tasks such as art direction, camera operation, editing, set decorating, costuming, et cetera. The notion that film professionals must work to master or perfect their chosen craft is a dominant idea in film schools and is pervasive in programs that train for both the emulation of specific industry technical standards, and for nurturing of independent creative talent (Petrie & Stoneman, 2014, p. 18). The phrase "industry standards" is called up frequently in this dissertation. Not only does this phrase arise in the film school website text analysed in this dissertation, it is a term that is engaged in the media industries and in film schools to indicate "industry norms and

industrial conceptions of skill” (Hjort, 2013, p. 9). In other words, an industry standard is both a sensibility of professional behaviour and about an ability to perform production tasks at a high level. As indicated in this literature review, the notion of an industry standard as a key educational learning outcome aligns with the corporatization of higher education, as well as the “market-led” (Petrie & Stoneman, 2014, p. 194) approach to film financing that prioritizes reliable film tropes over the investment in artistic risk or social benefit. Thus, all references to craft, craft skills and industry standards relate to the ability to perform specific media industries workplace tasks as well as demonstrate industry professional norms while undertaking these tasks.

Following an exploration of the core literature informing this dissertation, I will offer an explanation of the theoretical and analytical framing of the lines of inquiry in this dissertation. This study engages a critical constructivist, as well as an intersectional and decolonial feminist theoretical framing. Critical constructivism enables consideration of social systems of power and dominance in the analysis of website text, including the influence of the researcher and research subjects in the formation of the critical analysis. In other words, critical constructivism allows for a critical analysis that reviews both the data and the research design. An intersectional and decolonial feminist framework attunes this research to critical analysis of gender and race-based inequities, particularly how they have been constructed by objectifying settler media cultural framings . Intersectional and decolonial feminist critical frameworks are also engaged to resist homogenizing and essentializing research interpretations. Lastly, given this study’s engagement of critical discourse analysis as a research methodology, this literature review extends my theoretical framework to explore critical discourse studies as an area of study committed to understanding how power is constructed and exerted socially through language. Given the theoretical framing of the study, and the established literature on media culture inequities, this literature review will consider scholarship and theory through the lens of equity, ethics and social justice, as a means to explore connections between media production higher education and media cultural inequities.

2.2. Cultural and creative industries work practices and cultures

Studies in the cultural and creative industries span sectors such as: “advertising; architecture; art and antiques; computer games; crafts; design; design; designer fashion;

film and video; music; performing arts; software; and TV and radio” (Ashton & Noonan, 2013, p. 4). While this broad field of study includes craft-based and performance-based practices, much of the scholarship is focused on the media landscape of tv, film, broadcasting, gaming, and other digital entertainment forms. Colloquially, the word “film” is used to describe the field of the media industries, and as such, this dissertation will use film and media somewhat interchangeably to reference specific production practices and their industry domain. The research in this dissertation relies on a range of studies from the broader field of the cultural and creative industries, to the combined media industries, to specific research on gaming, film production, or other screen entertainment sectors.

Cultural and creative industries research commonly focuses on challenging aspects of working conditions such as long hours, toxic work cultures, normalized precarity, and hierarchical and meritocratic ranking and admission. This field of study also comments on the regulatory practices of cultural and creative work; while these industries feature some union-based workplace standards, there is only modest and siloed regulation of business practices, and there are no overarching ethical codes with the exception of national-level codes of conduct in journalism (Banks, 2017; Callison & Young, 2020). Thus, these concerns arising in the field of cultural and creative industries studies relates to the core problem identified in this dissertation: if the media industries do not follow any broad ethical codes, and if media production educators accept and/or acknowledge damaging aspects of industry work, then teaching in industry-oriented films schools has the potential to not only challenge, but to normalize harmful work practices. The following paragraphs explore research about unjust or dangerous workplace norms in the creative industries, and bridges this research to contemporary higher education practices. Themes exploring hard work, precarity, the myths of good work, gender and race-based industry barriers, and institutional inaction will be addressed.

2.2.1. Hard work and good work

The academic fields of the cultural and creative industries, including production studies, have researched the ways that difficult, discriminatory, untenable or unattainable working contexts are normalized, and played against moral discourses of perseverance, passion, merit and talent (Banks, 2017; Harvey, 2020; Saha, 2018). There is also a competing discourse to these dominant notions of hard work: that

studying media production offers students the chance to do *good work* by preparing them for dream jobs in the creative industries. Hesmondhalgh and Baker define good work as work with self-affirming qualities such as autonomy, meaning, intellectual appeal, and security (2011, pp. 31-38). These scholarly observations connect to post-secondary film production education that commonly markets the promise of a career with creative passion and fulfilment. The depiction of living a creative dream is in stark contrast to the evident realities of hard work that is both precarious and operates with technical and social duress, including the enforcement of gendered, racialized and ableist norms. While these challenging aspects of media work culture are well established in research, what is not as well known is how media production instructors understand their role as educators in relation to cultural or social critiques of the media sector. Following is an exploration of specific research on the conflicting elements of hard work and good work, and literature on media production educations' relationship to these discourses.

2.2.2. Long hours and difficult conditions

Hard work in the context of the media industries usually implies exceptionally long working hours in physically and psychologically harsh environments (Allen, 2013, pp. 232–241). Media production days typically span twelve to sixteen hour shifts with constantly changing physical working conditions including: in-flux day and night start times, a variety of outdoor and studio locations, quickly set-up offices with varying degrees of ergonomic function, windowless post-production suites, and intense timelines for work completion. For many job categories, the industry also enacts significant pressure to keep up with rapidly changing technologies, whether employed or not (Ashton, 2011). While many of these traits are certainly not limited to the media industries, they combine to toxic and dangerous effect with the industry's rigid hierarchies that tend to reward conformity and complicity (Banks, 2017; Campbell, 2018; Gill, 2002; McRobbie, 2016; Saha, 2018). For example, over-worked crew who did not question producers' dangerous failures in safety protocols are reasons attributed to two high profile deaths of film industry crew. In October 2021, cinematographer Halyna Hutchins was killed by a gun shot by actor Alec Baldwin in a gun that was supposed to be only a prop on the movie "Rust:", and in 2014, Sarah Jones was killed by a train that collided with the camera assistant while she was in the middle of a shot on the movie

“Midnight Rider” (Littleton, 2014). Deaths like these have fuelled job action in late 2021 by several California-based locals of one of the biggest film unions, IATSE. The main demands of the job action have been about bettering working conditions on productions (Littleton, 2014). Another example that will be explored further below, is the decades-long serial sexual assaults committed by imprisoned movie mogul, Harvey Weinstein. Weinstein’s long history of sexual violence was indeed enabled by the domineering industry presence established by Weinstein, and aided by an industry culture of never speaking truth to power (Kantor & Twohey, 2017).

Following these examples of film industry working conditions, there is an established value in the industry of dogged perseverance at all cost. The physical, emotional and psychological intensities of media work feeds a culture that uses hierarchical and ableist worker protocol and ranks under the guise of needing to get work done efficiently with clear top-down workflows and with great attention to detail. These working conditions alone likely pose barriers for those who cannot work the unpredictable and long hours due to family or cultural obligations, or bodily limitations. Mental health challenges, injuries, and substance abuse are all well-documented issues faced by the industry as workers struggle to keep up (Serebrin, 2020). Furthermore, the top-down hierarchies and precarious nature of contract-based work creates an environment where workers avoid complaining or expressing concern about dangerous or abusive working conditions. As noted later in this chapter, the prevailing sentiment in industry work is “go along to get along” (Frechette, 2019, p. 194). While the hierarchical craft department structure in the media industries allows for craft mentorship and on-the-job training, this structure also creates rigid dynamics of power, including self-regulation, that rewards people for keeping their heads down and staying focused on their assigned work tasks. In fact, there exists a fairly rigid line between those people who are defined as crew in craft technician roles, versus the producers and/or directors of the productions who are seen as the main production commanders, whose vision is always the main concern of everyone employed on the shows. The craft technicians, also known as the crew, are employed in very specific and hierarchical job categories, and are expect to do very specific work within the scope of their production craft. These pressures of film industry work are certainly in stark contrast to a free and happy pursuit of creative passions, and it is uncertain how film production educators accept or refute these working conditions. As explored in the next sections, the illusions of inspiring,

creative, and collaborative good work are often used to normalize precarity and hide practices of exclusion.

2.2.3. Precarity and the myth of good work

In McRobbie's book *Be Creative*, she discusses various contradictions in the notion of *good creative jobs*. She engages Foucault's concept of *dispositif*, as it explains how social systems enact power through human internalization and, then, self-regulated performance of social rules (McRobbie, 2016, p. 11). She calls creative workers *dispositifs* because of the way that they work tirelessly and often without financial or social reward under the guise of passion or creative fulfilment. As outlined below, this is mostly due to a naturalization of precarity within creative work cultures. This myth of creative fulfilment can create cultural workers who uncritically accept unforgiving standards of employment for others' economic or social benefit. McRobbie details how the myth of good work is a neoliberal economic tool that makes workers believe that they, individually, are making meaningful creative contributions, even when their conditions of employment, like pay, access to employment, and relentless work, are very poor.

Most creative work is based on contracts, and so, creative work is precarious, competitive and fleeting. Even unpaid work is normalized through discourses of building portfolios and gaining experience. Day jobs or side gigs, particularly in restaurant or other service industries, are seen as normal mechanisms for getting ahead in a creative career (McRobbie, 2016). The idea that one must constantly work, and always be productive and ready to upgrade current skillsets lends to the sense that being industry-ready is an all-encompassing lifestyle (Ashton, 2011; Ashton & Noonan, 2013; McRobbie, 2016). Scholars like Campbell (2018), dePeuter and Cohen (2015), and McRobbie (2016) research community-based cultural initiatives that challenge these discourses of normalized precarity and hardship through models of community support. The research on community-based cultural organization practices is likely a useful tool for media educators who want to teach media practice in a way that avoids the myths of good creative work, and also addresses unjust hard work.

The naturalization of contract and precarious work contains a class-based bias towards film students and professionals alike who have the financial means, or what

Bourdieu might call “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 3), to maintain social distinctiveness that asserts a dominance or entitlement to cultural work and stature. Lee’s (2013) study of the practice of networking in the pursuit of a career in British television production evidences a stark class divide wherein social capital is established starting with unpaid internships, and the requirement to constantly network as a way to access “socially exclusive labour” (p. 202). In other words, one must be in a privileged enough position to be able to invest their own time and social resources towards securing work. Lee’s study also notes that higher education’s neoliberal embrace of internship practices and marketplace discourses reinforces the naturalization of social capital and class privilege within cultural industries education programs. As outlined in the next paragraph, Lee’s work signals that gender and race might also be framed as barriers to gaining cultural capital necessary for career success.

2.2.4. Industry barriers: gender and race

Feminist and critical race scholars have noted that the pressures of mythical good creative work are more intensely experienced by women and racialized cultural workers. In studying the working conditions of women in gaming, De Castell and Skardius (2019) detail how production companies focus on employees’ personal love and passion for gaming in order to exploit workers’ skillsets and avoid addressing or changing hostile work conditions for women. Gill’s study (2002) of new digital media work spaces points to emerging gender-based inequities; the seemingly cool and informal nature of newer media work environments actually leads to misperceptions of egalitarian work practices. In fact, Gill notes that the freelance and unstructured nature of this work leads to an “individualization of risk” (p. 19) that hides greatly different rates of access to technology, pay and career advancement. Campbell’s (2018) work echoes these observations noting significant differences in opportunities based on the “old boy’s club” (p. 11) sensibility that leads to the disproportionate advancement of White male-identified artists, and a lack of opportunities for racialized artists and arts content in traditional venues. These researchers signal that gender and race discrimination is endemic to cultural work structures. And, if it is endemic, it is likely embedded in media education, too. Following is a closer look at how racism is embedded in cultural industry inequities and is enacted through various industry workflows.

It is necessary to look at common workplace practices in order to realize how racialized creative workers are constrained or denied access to media industries work. Saha (2018) explains that it is important to avoid addressing racial inequity by simply deconstructing racial representations such as critiquing racism or racial absences in popular media, or simply casting more racialized actors. Instead, he urges us to focus on how race and racism is produced in media workplace contexts (pp. 17-18). Through explorations of production practices, including common workplace myths he calls “industry lore” (p. 129), Saha looks at how core elements of production pipelines⁶ contribute to limiting, objectifying, and derisive treatment of racialized bodies (pp. 129-133). From the genre of a production, to the way content is marketed and ultimately packaged for consumption, Saha shows how the pipelines consistently and uncritically place White racial personnel and representations as the best options for business success. Saha’s work speaks directly to the core concerns of how industry standards might include normalized practices of exclusion or harm. In a related study of the commercial music industry, Balaji (2009) reveals how Black female musicians’ careers are limited by the music industry’s formulaic, hyper-sexualized and commodity-based conceptions of Black women’s music. Their careers are limited because the music industry will only produce artists that fit within their narrow stereotypes of Black women (Balaji, 2009). This is another example of how racism and sexism are entrenched in the process of making entertainment culture. Is film production education complicit?

It is important to follow Saha’s line of thought about the commercial context of the media industries, specifically. In alignment with Giroux’s (2014) critiques of the marketization of higher education, Saha (2013) notes that the commodification of creativity in media culture is responsible for educating film workers on the process of making race, or racializing media subjects in front or behind the camera. Feminist media scholars, in particular, have long-articulated the relationship between the representations of gendered or racialized *Others* and commercially-motivated objectification (Harvey, 2020, hooks, 1996). These examples are important as they highlight how commodified contexts of film work may naturalize unjust conceptions of gender, race, and disability, and are likely evident in higher educational practices.

⁶ *Pipeline* is a media industry term that summarizes the entire production process from start to finish.

In a study on diversity, equality and work placements in the creative industries, Kimberly Allen et al.'s research shows how discrimination arises in higher education practices (Allen et al., 2012). Despite evidence of barriers to obtaining work placements based on gender, race and disability, their study revealed that instructors managing the work placements have a belief that their educational process offers students equal access. One way to read this research is that there is a problem with how film production instructors understand equality and equity; formally granting people equality does not mean that all people can access opportunities equally. Therefore, instructors might not be able to see how their classroom practices are creating unjust and inequitable student outcomes. The concept of equity is so important as it takes into consideration the different pathways, deficiencies and barriers that might exist in being able to access common social systems. In wider discourses of diversity and equity, there is the critique that when formal processes, policies, and other workplace structures like committees are established, the inclusion of women and, in particular racialized workers, acts as a substitute for the actual act of creating equity (Ahmed, 2012, pp. 115–140). Saha's (2018) work on race in the media industries echoes this theory as it shows that simply hiring diverse workforces does not yield structural and functional changes in business activities (pp. 25-26). Thus, if we are concerned with making media critical and socially just, it is important to look closer at the ways our educational systems uncritically accept and sediment unjust social practices.

2.2.5. Discrimination, diversity initiatives and meritocracy

Many scholars have researched the overwhelming whiteness of the media industries. While the industry views itself as liberal, multicultural and welcoming, its hiring practices and diversity policies have not yielded sweeping changes (Ashton & Noonan, 2013; Callison & Young, 2020; Hesmondhalgh & Saha, 2013). Cultures of whiteness are deeply connected to beliefs in colorblindness and meritocracy that generally deny complicity in structural oppressions through the belief that a person's success is based solely on their own work ethic, effort, intelligence, or other exceptional individual traits (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017a, p. 91). Banks' (2017) research details how the belief in "natural talent" (p. 70) is a myth, and is not based on objective factors. His work explains that while the creative industries are supposedly open to anyone with the will or talent to participate, expensive higher education creative industry programs are

now positioned as gatekeepers to creative industries entrance. This brings into question admissions practices of higher education, as institutions have the potential to limit admission based on identity categories like race, gender and class (Banks, 2017). In a 2013 study, Gaztambide-Fernández et al. reviewed the admissions practices of a specialized public arts high school in Canada and determined that talent-based admissions criteria were synonymous with racial and class-based social advantage (Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2013). These examples show how industry discourses of talent and meritocracy can translate to inequitable educational practices. They call into question the greater purpose of media production education in the post-secondary landscape.

2.2.6. Critical thinking in media production training

Media content is generally produced through the cooperative labour of craft-based production crews. Historically, many of these positions have educated their ranks through on-the-job apprenticeship style training in specific film production crew categories such as set design, camera operation, lighting, editing or sound recording. Thus, film production as a field is different than media or communication studies that exist within universities and colleges as a means to critically study media representations and effects. In recent years, with the trend towards enhancing economic and professional functions of universities, film production programs have emerged and become popular on the premise that they feed trained students into hungry entertainment industry job categories (Ashton & Noonan, 2013; McRobbie, 2016). The tension in these newer industry-based production programs is between the critical practices associated with media and communication studies, and rote industry practices. In considering the tensions and primacy of instrumentalism in media education, Hesmondhalgh (2014) notes that media production education should centre “critical understandings of how media industries shape public knowledge” (p. 24), a critical point undertaken by Stack and Boler (2007) regarding critical media literacy for “Expanding the public sphere” and “civic participation” (p. 5). In other words, these scholars are concerned with how public discourse is shaped through agendas of vocational over critical education. In this dissertation, I will be using the concept of an “industry logic” to describe an epistemic bias that prioritizes practice-based vocational or craft skills, market-place or economic rationales, and discourses of usefulness and career-

readiness. If there is bias from media industry logics in university-based production programs, then it raises questions about why these programs exist in higher education when apprenticeship-style job training is also widely practiced. Ultimately, it begs the question, what are these industry programs educating for, and why are these programs in universities?

Over the past few decades, public post-secondary institutions have grappled with decreasing government funding, and increasing global and domestic competition for student admissions. In response to this, government and institutional policies have tended to mandate, develop and support programs that offer students more overtly career-ready education (Ashton & Noonan, 2013; Levin et al., 2016; McRobbie, 2016). While it is clearly important for students to graduate with job prospects, questions have been raised about the impacts of this career-ready framing of higher education. This market-readiness is usually critiqued as a manifestation of neoliberalism, an ideology based on the principles of fierce individualism and market-based decision-making. Scholars such as Giroux and Spooner have highlighted the impact of neoliberalism on higher education through the reduction of program focus on critical competencies. (Giroux, 2014; Spooner, 2020). According to Giroux, removing critical, social and political literacies from public education has the potential to reduce students' capacity for democratic participation due to its emphasis on individualism. Coté and Allahar (2011) describe this shift as one away from education, and its critical and democratic functions, to one of vocationalism and training. They recommend educators avoid seeing industrial versus critical education as a dichotomy, and instead find ways to embed values of criticality in technical and rote learning (Coté & Allahar, 2011). These theorists offer a warning to instructors: without critical function, normalized industry workplace harms will continue. The research of Stack and Mazawi (2021) on university rankings extends these critiques of neoliberal influence on post-secondary education. Not only do Stack and Mazawi emphasize a hollow mediatized and corporatized push in academia, their work evidences a global imperial agenda with a "logic of coloniality" (p. 228) that produces "material and symbolic geographies of power" (p. 228). In other words, Stack and Mazawi show that institutional emphasis on university rankings indicates a geopolitical economic drive to control the academic marketplace, and this control perpetuates and cements colonial cultural practices within universities. Such an emphasis on education marketplace domination can reinforce and naturalize neoliberal

logics in institutions, and shift focus away from socially-oriented critical research and teaching.

The tension between media industry logics and critical and social analysis of film production are evident in film production education research. Ashton (2009a,b) notes that media industry professionals are seen as legitimate sources of information, but that it is unknown to what extent media practitioner-instructors are focused on critical issues in media production (Ashton, 2013). Smeltzer (2020) researches the ethical dilemmas of for-credit media education practicums and work placements as they rely on taxed and often precariously employed media professionals to mentor students. Smeltzer emphasizes that media instructors managing the practicums must engage significant critical reflexivity to be able to navigate their own position of employment security in relationship to work precarity that underlies the students' engagement with community media partners. Ultimately, Smeltzer is questioning the pedagogical purpose of practicums, internships, and other community-based learning that are emphasized as core learning experiences in media production programs. An important question stemming from this concern is: *what are the critical skillsets of media production instructors who are both teachers and industry professionals?* It seems prudent for media production programs to consider deeply how to prioritize criticality throughout program engagement with students, and offer opportunities for instructor professional development. Professional growth in technical competencies are established as core traits of media industry work (Ashton, 2011), so it follows that media industries workers have some sense that other kinds of professional development might be expected of them by the industry. Following are considerations of how both the media industries and film schools are responding to current social change movements that are having significant impact in the media landscape. The following scholarship is intended to tease apart and challenge the ways that hard work and good work are engaged in film production education towards more socially just discourses and practices.

2.3. Media industries and social justice movements

Social movements are influencing discourse and material change in the media industries. Following is a brief survey of social movements like #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter, #TimesUp and #IdleNoMore, and examples of changing policies and practices in the media industries. This review includes a description of prevalent

quantitative research on representational inequities in the media industries. These points indicate various progress, tensions, and ongoing challenges to making the media industries more socially just.

2.3.1. Social media and social change

Social media has amplified various social change movements to the point of being ubiquitous in broader society (Mendes et al., 2019). As social media movements amplify critical voices, increase awareness of social injustice, and build communities that loudly resist injustice, media workplaces are increasingly called upon to take action where misrepresentations and abuses occur in their industry.

Frechette outlines the impact the #MeToo⁷ and #TimesUp movements have had on the media industries, particularly how they have shown that sexual assault, harassment, and abuse of power are endemic. Revelations and social pressures have occurred in a variety of ways: social media campaigns widely name offenses and the people committing them; public petitions circulate regularly; racial justice movements like #BlackLivesMatter and women's rights organizations keep researching and initiating campaigns of action; legal action for workplace offences loom large; and investigative journalists have publicized many wrongdoings (Frechette, 2019, pp.188-192). The media industries have responded, in many cases, by firing prominent abusers; changing workplace conduct and safety regulations; initiating gender and racial parity programs; and overhauling auditioning and other hiring practices where abuses are revealed (Frechette, 2019). High profile criminal cases, notably the conviction of US studio mogul Harvey Weinstein (Dwyer, 2020), and the prominent criminal case against Canadian broadcaster Jian Ghomeshi, have set the stage for change in media workplace practices. In the case of Ghomeshi, even though he was acquitted due to the burden of evidence required to take sexual assault charges to trial, his case launched the widespread social media campaign #beenRapedNeverReported (Mendes et al., 2019). This hashtag has helped raise public awareness about the reasons women often feel pressured to keep rape private, especially assault that occurs within consensual relationships. Frechette notes that it is important for social media movements and other

⁷ The influential hashtag coined by activist Tarana Burke to bring attention to the epidemic of rape and sexual harassment.

public forums to continue “collective resistance” (Frechette, 2020) to dominating patriarchal power structures as a means to bridge social justice initiatives to media cultures. Certainly, this research shows that social media movements, especially those connected to social movements, have spurred some changes within the media industries, leading me to believe that it is important to build awareness of social movements when educating for media industry work.

Journalism is a media practice within the creative industries that has grappled with social media and social movements in their business and education operations. Journalism studies scholars Callison and Young (2020) review some of the impacts of social media movements like #IdleNoMore, #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter, #TinaFontaine, #NotOkay, and #ColtenBoushie on journalism practice. They centre in their work the legacy of unjust journalism coverage of Indigenous people, including persistent framing of Indigenous victimhood or violence. Their work explores the resistant and reframing practices of feminist, decolonial and Indigenous journalism in order to challenge how traditional journalism relates to social orders, settler colonialism, and environmental justice (Callison & Young, 2020). Their study of social media activism describes these movements as a newer kind of journalistic action that observes and critically comments on real-time events, particularly how these events are misrepresented or omitted by conventional media outlets (pp. 51-56). A prominent and heartbreaking example of this might be Atikamekw woman Joyce Echaquan recording her experiences of violent racist neglect in a Quebec hospital that ultimately resulted in her death (Nerestant, 2021). This kind of social media reporting is surely calling journalism, and other social institutions, to account for its representations and representational harms. Following the public pressure of social media, the profession of journalism has begun to consider and change their practices in relation to its legacy of “representational harms” (Callison & Young, 2020, p. 36). Callison and Young’s research uncovers that change is slow due to journalism’s false claims to objectivity, or what they call its “view from nowhere” (p. 4) that does not value stories from specific positionalities or lived experiences (p. 11). They note that supposed objectivity, combined with a disciplinary self-conception of liberal open-mindedness, hides bias and dominating cultural framing of stories. They explain that the dominant insider discourses of industry crisis due to digital technologies and the decline of traditional news formats actually shelters the industry from considering its persistent problems of how media creates social inequities (p. 5). While journalism is a

somewhat separate field within the media industries, it has experienced similar critical calls for more socially just ways of doing business after many exposed stories of unjust and abusive industry practices. Callison and Young's review of resistant and reframing journalism practices are useful examples for how other media industries can change. Their work offers guidance for media educators to teach industry practices with overt understandings of histories of representational violence, and strategies for tangible change. A core part of this is teaching students the critical skill of accounting for their media practice choices. Callison and Young's recommendations to educators align with the calls to action issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015 (TRC). For example, the 86th call to action reads:

"We call upon Canadian journalism programs and media schools to require education for all students on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal– Crown relations" (TRC, 2015, p. 335).

Thus, Callison and Young's writing picks up the call of the TRC to centre accurate and consistent education on Indigenous peoples for the purpose of transforming legacies of representational harm. This has broad implications for media education as their work shows how necessary it is to centre awareness of both bias and just practices throughout media-making production processes. In other words, it is important to teach students to think deeply about the social implications and conditions of their content creation.

Social media campaigns for social justice are having influence in broader cultural contexts than these media industries examples in Canada and the United States. For example, Al-Rawi (2020) offers a rich overview of feminist activism in Arab nations and gives examples of social media campaigns that are forging paths to women's rights through the public conversations initiated and maintained by social media activism. Al-Rawi (2020) gives examples such as the hashtag "#Expose a Harasser" (p. 55) that became popular throughout the Arab world by offering a method of public shaming for sexual harassment; another example is Saudi social media activism with twitter campaigns such as "#Women2Drive" (p. 57) and "#Oct26driving" (p. 59) that were initially about activism for Saudi women to be given the right to drive, but offered sustained opportunities for women's rights to be discussed in the public sphere. By bringing issues of equality to public discourse, Al-Rawi (2020) notes that the Arab media

industries have seen an increase in channels such as “BBC Arabic, and CNN Arabia” (p. 11) that are in general “a positive turning point in diversifying opinions, enhancing democracy, and encouraging freedom of expression...” (p.11.). While these newer news channels are enhancing public discourse about notions of freedom and democracy, Al-Rawi (2020) cautions that “...the values that some of these new channels spread do not appear to be focused on gender equality” (p.11). In fact, Al-Rawi (2020) goes on to note, that some of these channels adopt Western trends of objectification and sexualization of women on-screen, thus enhancing prevalent “street harassment culture” (p. 11). Regardless, what Al-Rawi’s work showcases is that women’s agency and empowerment is enhanced through public discourse enabled by social media activism, and this has influence on the politics and media industries in the nations he has researched.

While the social media activism explored above has focused public attention on specific social issues, these movements have coincided with the rise of expressions and coordinated efforts of hate on social media platforms, as well. Examples range from internet trolling culture as a way of aggressively disciplining individuals, groups or prominent figures (Cook et al., 2018), to coordinated campaigns of alt-right disinformation and the engagement of algorithms to amplify echo chambers of hate (Mirrlees, 2021). In addition to studying the possibilities inherent to social media activism, critical media scholars are also analyzing the ways social media hate is disproportionately focused on gendered, racialized and other minoritized targets (Harvey, 2020; Mirrlees, 2021). This is coupled with the reality that the corporations owning social media companies are helmed by white men who may be ill-equipped to address racist or misogynistic violence on their platforms (Mirrlees, 2021, p. 94). Despite the serious problems arising from online hate, social media activism is prompting introspection within industries that are at the centre of activist campaigns (Mendes et al, 2018).

2.3.2. Industry introspection and responses

There are clear examples of efforts and constraints in realizing more just media cultures. These efforts have been making changes in both representation and workplace practices. One industry strategy to address equity has been to diversify actors and storylines beyond patriarchal and mostly White, male gazes. But, changing the race or gender of a character does not necessarily create more just representation. Saha (2018)

cautions that because cultural work is happening within commodified contexts, we should be aware that the social impacts of supposedly diversified content might be what Saha calls either “enabling” or “constraining” (p. 141). For Saha, media diversification that is enabling will be innovative in its approaches to racialized representation. Constraining functions, on the other hand, are when commodified diversity is exploitative of labour and/or when it reduces and trivializes racial representations. For example, the media industries might feature stories about “post-colonial melancholia” (Saha, 2018, p. 83) but never re-envision and ignite fire to stop or transform imperial and colonial legacies in representation; the industries also have the tendency to relegate racialized or non-normative representations as niche, and distribute this content on alternative sub-platforms or streams (Harvey, 2020). A closer analysis of these enabling or constraining functions of diversity endeavors suggests that racial inequities are often portrayed as isolated instances from the past. An example of this is the plethora of representations of North American Black culture in historical stories about slavery, but fewer stories like the blockbuster feature film *Black Panther* that engage Afrofuturism to inspire agency in beyond-colonial visions of Black lives (Strong & Chaplin, 2019).

In response to the constraining functions of media culture, Black feminist media scholars have developed many strategies for asserting Black subjectivities and counter-subjectivities, and engaging with media representations in counter-hegemonic ways (hooks, 1990, pp. 19-22; Patterson et al., 2016, pp. 40-47). In other words, Black feminist scholarship focuses on the agency of Black audiences to see beyond dominating representations. Queer television showrunner and media activist Joey Soloway’s concept of the “female gaze” (2016) follows Black feminist media scholars by asking audiences and filmmakers alike to play with the idea that characters on-screen are not objects, but in complex relationship to pressures of patriarchal culture. For media practice, Soloway’s female gaze can be considered a filmmaking tool to reframe representation away from dominating or objectifying manners of storytelling (2016). Furthermore, media scholars have connected what happens in front of the camera to workplace culture behind the camera; in other words, problems in representation are connected to workplace practice and culture (Liddy, 2020; Saha, 2018). Thus, if the media industries mantra “nothing about us without us” (Cizek et al., 2019) is embraced, then it not only refers to representation, but to the resourcing and requirements for equity in all industry work processes. For equity in the creative industries it is important for

industry leaders from private streaming services and broadcasters to content producers to government funding bodies to consider who is working, what they are working on, and the conditions of their work.

The activism that is fueling reframed media production and journalism practices, is gaining traction in the larger commercial entertainment industries. While gender and race-based activism and advocacy have been occurring for several decades in Canada, the tenor and awareness of social justice movements have ignited long overdue industry responses. For example, in Canada, the Racial Equity Media Collective launched the Producer's Pledge: Reclaim/Reframe in order to rectify the poor representation of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) in cultural institutions. This pledge has been widely supported by major production companies across the country, but it is notable that not all major producers have joined, nor are any broadcasters or streaming services signatory. The pledge asks Canadian producers to make "purposeful and substantive commitments to reclaim representation, reframe hiring practices, and ongoing learning as they pertain to anti-black racist, anti-indigenous racist and all anti-racist practices and policies" (Kay, 2020). Further to the producer's pledge, the BIPOC TV & FILM advocacy group recently launched an industry-supported online roster, hirebipoc.ca, as a means of resisting systemic racism in the Canadian media industries' hiring practices by providing a tool for production companies to easily connect to BIPOC media talent (Ramachandran, 2020). The roster features behind-the-camera job categories and is promoting their efforts with the hashtag #RepresentationMatters. These actions, in combination with the growing funding and research of government agencies such as the Indigenous Screen Office, or the Black Screen Office, are creating infrastructure to support substantial shifts in industry work practices. The Producer's Pledge and hirebipoc.ca, in particular provide resources for producers, media companies, and production crew to work in more equitable ways and with more public accountability. While these are initiatives that enable direct changes to media practice, another way media organizations have been active in diversifying the media field is through statistical analysis of who actually gets media work in front of, or behind the cameras.

The dominant streaming content platform, Netflix, has been actively working to transform its work cultures. In a 2021 report titled "Sowing the seeds: inclusion takes root at Netflix," (Myers) the company outlines tangible initiatives for increasing meaningful and substantial inclusion of Indigenous and racialized media workers, as well

as women. The report does a comparative statistical analysis of workforce representation by gender, race and ethnicity and compares 2017 to 2020, and it maintains a practice of “open compensation” (Myers, 2021) that allows employees at the management level to see all employee salaries in an effort to reduce wage disparities. This kind of salary transparency has not been practiced in the past across media job categories. The Netflix report also outlines significant changes to workplace practices including a focus on ongoing training at leadership levels about topics ranging from privilege to whiteness, and the building of “Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)” (Myers, 2021) as a means to sustain collegiality and community among different identity categories in the employee ranks. The picture this Netflix report paints is that the company is committed to changing workplace culture through cultivating the values of allyship, conscientiousness, and fluency with equity concepts from the leadership-levels down. It also indicates that the company operates with transparency and accountability by openly sharing company data, and maintaining training and community-building initiatives to sustain and grow equity, inclusiveness and/or diversity within their production and business activities (Myers, 2021). However, as this report is being released by Netflix, it is uncertain if these ethical standards and practices are actually occurring within Netflix corporate ranks or on their many funded shows being produced around the world.

2.3.3. Diversity and equity by the numbers

Many research, policy and workplace hiring initiatives in the media industries have focused on gender parity, and more recently, racial parity. The concept of parity is based on the principle of equality, and maintains that if gender and race are more equally represented or balanced in the media industries, then more socially just industry outcomes will occur. Equality has been challenged as a concept by social justice scholars as it does not account for people’s unequal social conditions that might prevent access to institutions like schools, work, and other places of power (Henry et al., 2017, Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017a). Gender parity, in particular, became popularized in 2018 after the actor Frances McDormand promoted Stacy L. Smith’s concept of an “inclusion rider” as a means for high-ranking actors to use their star power to require productions to obtain gender parity in production hiring practices, especially remuneration (Harvey, 2020). While parity measures do not account for the entire problem of equity and

constituting a more just workplace culture, numbers do matter because they evidence glaring and irrefutable problems of who gets access to media work and representation. The quantitative media research has shown the wide gender-based and racial gaps in the Canadian and US media systems, with comparable inequities existing outside of these two countries. (Brannon Donoghue, 2020; Brinton & McGowan, 2020; Liddy, 2020; Smith et al., 2016). Statistical media industry research has historically looked at gender disparities, but in recent years has become more intersectional, particularly noting that earlier feminist activism benefited mostly White women, and didn't include women of colour, and Indigenous women (Brinton and McGowan, 2020, p. 254). In fact, a groundbreaking report commissioned by the Canada's Black Screen Office (BSO, 2022) is being released in sections between April and June, 2022, and this report will include statistics on race, disability, and sexual or gender minority participation in Canada's media industries. Following the Black Screen Office's lead, more research is needed to gain a more complex look at industry gaps, especially given the glaring absences of race and disability in Canadian media industries work data. However, the research that exists clearly establishes that inequitable cultures still thrive in the media industries and contribute to an understanding of industry standards and common practices. Following is a look at Canadian-specific examples of this statistical research and industry responses.

2.3.4. Canadian contexts

Brinton and McGowan are long-time media industry professionals, scholars, educators and activists in Canada. Their experience and research notes the severe underrepresentation of women in most media industry job categories in Canada despite women graduating at nearly equal rates from public film and media production university programs (Brinton & McGowan, 2020, p. 256). Their work highlights that gender gaps are even more significant for women of colour and Indigenous women, noting a 2017 Women in View study that indicates that White women's tv series production roles increased to 28%, "but only 1.8% of those contracts went to women of colour and none to Indigenous women" (2020, p. 254). Brinton and McGowan (2020) detail recent incentives and requirements by major funding agencies and broadcasters for gender parity on productions (pp. 254-266). Their longstanding activism produced a significant change in 2019 wherein the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) implemented a requirement for all private broadcasters (who

collectively fund Canadian series and feature film content), to collect and publish data on gender in lead roles. A second requirement is that broadcasters must submit plans for addressing gender gaps in the year ahead. While initiatives like this are mandating industry change, the authors comment that there is consistent fear and push-back from companies and unions alike about the potential for gender parity measures to negatively impact business, particularly international business, that seeks the stability and benevolence of Canadian government financial support of their productions (2020, p. 265). These concerns are reminiscent of meritocracy discourses discussed earlier in this literature review, wherein, institutions believe that the best way forward is to simply seek the best talent, and in the process, mask bias and discrimination. Despite these concerns, it is clear that when tangible action is required and recorded, change is likely to follow. Looking beyond our borders, these kinds of industry actions are also taking place.

More broadly, a Canadian context needs to address the findings and calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015). As mentioned earlier, the commission's extensive work yielded significant recommendations for both educational organizations and media practices. Not only does this report call on journalism and media schools to ensure that all of their students are correctly educated about Indigenous peoples in a Canadian context (TRC, 2015, p. 335), they also call for more direct funding for the education of Indigenous filmmakers, the broadcast of more Indigenous content, and to "develop media initiatives that inform and educate the Canadian public, and connect Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians" (TRC, 2015, p. 335). These calls to action indicate clear actions for Canadian film schools to follow in their program and curricular priorities.

2.3.5. US media industries

It is important to consider how Canada's media industries are aligned with movements in the Hollywood system because our two media economies are interconnected. Researchers such as Brannon Donoghue and Smith, and organizations such as Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, echo similar data and industry changes as Canadian counter-parts. A notable difference between the media systems is that Canadian work is undertaken with much more regulation and funding from government organizations. In the United States, lobbying initiatives come from private

organizations, such as the Geena Davis Institute. Brannon Donoghue's (2020) work focuses on disjunctures between industry awareness and decisive action, for example, the difference between knowing about gender parity and the action of transformed hiring policies (pp. 238-239). She notes that the burden of change often falls back on feminist lobbying efforts to make significant and systemic change a priority over the tendency for companies to make false claims to heroic equality measures (2020, p. 247). While by-the-numbers approaches to social justice issues do not necessarily instigate change on their own, this work certainly connects to the core concerns of this chapter by seeking avenues where change can happen, such as in the space of media production education classrooms. Certainly, this work starts with ensuring that media professionals who teach in media education programs are aware of, and integrate, the critiques provided by statistical studies and organized social lobbying into their curriculum and pedagogy.

2.3.6. Media industry standards and social change

The examples of media industry engagement in this chapter evidence that social change is occurring within the media industries due to different kinds of media industry activism. The volume of voices in digital social movements and industry lobbying groups is influencing changes in government policy and private industry practice. This indicates that *industry standards* might be at the start of a shift to more equitable orientations. But, the question remains if media production education is working in tandem with changing industry cultures. Certainly, it has been the goal of critical media literacy education over the past two and a half decades to ensure that broad education from elementary school onwards develops core literacies to support critical engagements with media content as a means to support active media citizenship (Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2012; Kellner & Share, 2005; Luke, 1994). That said, it is uncertain if the principles of critical media literacy are core to media production education cultures and practices at the post-secondary level.

2.4. Media production education research on program practices and cultures

Following is an exploration of literature about the philosophical, social and political orientations of media production education programs, including dominant notions of industry standards. It will specifically explore how social justice and critical

thinking are framed within media production education and higher education, including contradictions in institutional practices.

2.4.1. Competing discourses in media production education

Media production education typically engages in competing discourses of technology, craft, aesthetics, and economics, and it is unclear how social justice might exist discursively amongst these. What might prevent social justice from entering prominent discourses in media production education is the relationship between technocracy and politics; media education that is focused on technical skillsets tends to frame the technical skillsets as socially and politically neutral (Ashton & Noonan, 2013, Callison & Young, 2020; Harvey, 2021; Petrie & Stoneman, 2014). If technical or craft-based skillsets are emphasized in stand-alone ways as core program learning outcomes in media education, then it is likely that social and critical content, including ethics, are treated as a specialized topic instead of being considered an underlying value in media practice. Following is an exploration of the tensions and interactions between principles of critical media literacy, critical studies, and craft skills instruction.

2.4.2. Media production instructors' knowledge of social justice

There is a dearth of research, particularly in Canada, on how media production education instructors or programs engage with social justice movements, media activism (Skinner, Hackett & Poyntz, 2015) and the concepts of equity and ethics. As established earlier in this review of literature, the exception to this might be in the field of journalism that addresses journalism's various codes of ethics, and to some extent, its representation harms (Callison & Young, 2020). What has been established is that production programs do indeed train for what Hjort (2013) calls "how filmmakers become filmmakers" (p. 1). In Hjort's research on smaller media economies and education, she notes that certain aesthetic, social or political values are presented and prioritised within film school curriculum, and this impacts students' sense of agency in how they navigate professional work. In other words, Hjort's research has established that media production education instills core values about filmmaking careers. In studying how industry professionals who teach in higher education impact students' learning, Ashton discovered that teacher-practitioners have "buy-in" from students to bridge to critical and social issues in the media industry, but that there isn't a clear sense of the teacher-

practitioners' confidence in doing so (Ashton, 2009a,b, 2013). Hjort and Ashton's research shares the concern of understanding how media educators engage social and critical concepts in curricula. Harvey's (2021) study of discourses of "feminine lack" (p. 1) in the video game industry highlights the disconnect between higher education games training for jobs, and the experiences of women gaming instructors, students and workers. Labeling women's work experiences within "leaky pipelines" (2021, p. 1), Harvey's study shows how pipelines from education through to work in the gaming industry, do not value or make work bearable for women in gaming. Harvey reveals that the structures inhibiting women in the games workforce include "visible problems of sexism, harassment, and exploitation as well as the valuation of technicity over other approaches and talents" (2021, p. 14). Thus, the problem of leaky pipelines is actually about how ideas of gaming work are formed in higher education and connect to exclusionary work environments. This exclusion extends to female gaming design instructors, too. One participant in Harvey's study, a female instructor in a higher education gaming program, stated that she left her teaching position due to the lack of ability to advance within the program and due to the "denigration of her work on inclusivity" (2021, p. 14). What Harvey and Ashton's work shows is the disconnect between the desire to promote or consider inclusion in industry education contexts, and decisive action to make this happen.

Problems also exist within the common practice of educational practicums or internships that connect students to meaningful early work experiences. In 2019, Lindsey Richardson, a journalist with the Aboriginal People's Television Network, broke a story about Inuk filmmaker Stephen Puskas' human rights complaint against the National Film Board of Canada (NFB). Puskas was hired in 2017 as an Associate Producer through a NFB training and mentorship production program. Puskas' claim is that he was given no training, not integrated into the workflow of the production, and culturally marginalized and demeaned in the process (Richardson, 2019). This story points to the ways Indigenous people might be marginalized in media industry production and industry training settings. It also indicates the inherent and disingenuous "performativity" of industry diversity and training programs (Ahmed, 2012). In other words, this indicates that industry may offer Indigenous training or funding opportunities in a performative manner that do not actually lead to meaningful or just inclusion. This example is important because it indicates that the educators responsible for Puskas'

mentorship did not bring critical or cultural awareness to their responsibilities, nor did they even value the educational opportunity of a production practicum for a racialized employee. While there are examples of mentorship programs that have had documented success, such as the Indigenous Screen Office and Netflix-funded production mentorship program undertaken on the set of Cree-Métis filmmaker Danis Goulet's recent science fiction success "Night Raiders" (Dove-Viebhan, 2021), or the Indigenous Digital Filmmaking diploma program helmed by Doreen Manuel (Secwepemc/Ktunaxa) and Gregory Coyes (Métis/Cree) (CMPA Indiescreen), research and prominent examples such as Stephen Puskas and the NFB evidence that internship programs are not inherently operating in equitable ways.

Allen et al.'s (2012) review of diversity and equity in higher education creative work placements reveals an attentiveness to discourses of diversity in industry education, but not to practices of making educational experiences more equitable. Their findings evidence that access to work placements are "unequally distributed" (2012, p. 181), particularly with respect to gender, race, class and disability. Furthermore, institutional conceptions of meritocracy and liberalism mask or outright deny inequities and leave many students feeling "out of place" (2012, p. 197) within their educational programs and work placements. While there is a gap in research on equity and social justice in discourse and practice in media production education, we can infer from these examples that this is an area that Canadian media educational institutions and educators need to address. Furthermore, critical media studies scholars such as Cordes and Sabzalian (2020) articulate an anticolonial media literacy framework for media educators to use as they decolonize media by deconstructing "dehumanizing colonial logics" (p. 184) and teach to construct media with anticolonial, or beyond-colonial expressions. Given the development of decolonial or anticolonial media literacy techniques such as these, along with the decolonizing Indigenous film practices noted above from artists such as Danis Goulet or by studying the long-time works of filmmaker-activists such as Alanis Obomsawin (Abenaki), the media studies landscape is rife with opportunities for film instructors to engage with decolonizing media practices and media practice theory.

2.4.3. Critical theory and social justice from a related field: communication studies

The broad academic field of communication includes studies in journalism, media, and film. Communications studies degrees tend to be focused on the pursuit of critical and theoretical understandings of media, with some programs featuring applied training across the communications industries. Research on communication studies programs relates to the media production education concerns of this dissertation, as both programs face pressure to educate students for work in the media industries (Connolly, 2020). In a pivotal article published in the *Canadian Journal of Communication*, Alhassan (2007) maps the othering and appropriation of postcolonial communication scholars in the establishment of a dominant communication studies curricular canon (p. 104-105). Alhassan describes this canon as “potentially imperial” (p. 103) through the establishment of a mostly American and Canadian field of study that excludes the fields’ involvement or expansion of “feminist or postcolonial theory” (p. 104). In the establishment of a field of study that has erased its imperial relationship to marginalized critical scholarship, Alhassan notes that the field of communication studies engages a “canonic economy” (p. 104) that translates to an “epistemic economy” (p. 105) of imperialistic knowledge dispossession. His article traces a genealogy of appropriation leading to the most prominent communication studies theorists taught in post-secondary programs such as Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, and he uses this genealogy to question why courses in topics such as “feminism, critical race theory, and queer and postcolonial theory” (p. 115) are often relegated to the margins as electives rather than core curricula. Hirji, Jiwani and McAllister (2020) take up Alhassan’s questions in a review of Canadian communication scholarship and educational programs. They are more specific in their analysis as they consider the ways that whiteness is dominant in the field of communication studies, and how race and racialization are marginalized in theory and in representation of faculty and publications (p. 174-177). With findings that include statistics such as “12.06% of articles by scholars of color” (p. 175) in the *Canadian Journal of Communication* during the past decade, and “39 scholars who could be classified as people of colour out of 291 tenure-track or tenured faculty” (p. 177), Hirji, Jiwani and McAllister easily establish a White hegemonic canon and scholarly landscape that places extra burden on Indigenous and racialized faculty. The authors note that through the paltry inclusion of scholars of colour, and the

marginalization of critical race or postcolonial communication theory curricula, that the field of communications is limiting the potential for Indigenous and racialized students and scholars to enter and thrive in the communication field of study. The reflexive critical research offered by Alhassan, Hirji, Jiwani and McAllister, evidences how colonialism and racism are embedded within communication research and education practices in Canada. Given the interconnectedness of media studies, media production education and the broad field of communication studies, this research shows the need for focused study on how colonialism, racialization, and racism, in particular, persist in discourses and practices of media production education. These scholars' work on communications studies canons have tremendous implications for how film studies, and in particular, film history canons portray dominant forms of cultural expression and participation. These dominant canons have the effect of acting as what Boler (1999) calls "popular history" (p. 178). Popular histories are those that decontextualize or distance historical framings for the purpose of reinforcing hegemonic dominant cultural framings. Popular history works against relational understandings of history wherein we explore and perhaps aim to reckon with legacies of social and cultural oppression and appropriation. As a whole, the work of the scholars in this section highlight the need to review the bias embedded in historical, critical and theoretical curricula on the media industries in an effort to decolonize and make media educational representations more just.

2.4.4. Equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives in U.S. media production education

South of the border, researcher educators at the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Teaching Media (Proctor & Banks, n.d.) initiative have undertaken research and development of inclusive media education practices since 2017. In their inquiry into best practices in media production education, they have identified four early findings that they are promoting as necessary best practices for equity, diversity and inclusion in media production programs: first, curriculum from readings to video clips need to represent diverse identities throughout the term and throughout the types of courses (Banks, 2019, p. 82). To further reflect diversity, programs need to focus on ongoing hiring and retention initiatives for diverse faculty, and for retaining and supporting diverse students (Banks, 2019, p. 82). EDIT Media also recommends designing curricula on collaboration skills in a way that intentionally requires students to navigate difference, and that avoids placing the most confident students in leading positions on projects (Banks, 2019, p. 82-

83). Lastly, EDIT Media's findings indicate that physical and psychological safety is essential in media education, and given the industry's reckoning with social media movements like #MeToo, it is essential to teach and develop education policies that align with industry-led antiracism or anti-sexual harassment training and procedures (Banks, 2019, p. 83). Banks is explicit that learning to teach to newer media industry standards about equity, diversity and inclusion is every faculty member's responsibility as this is the only way in which "pre-industry programs" can actually support change by resisting discrimination and prejudice in industry practices and attitudes (2019, p. 75). The US-based research of Kearney (2018) establishes that gender-based discrimination exists in the ways that female students are treated with paternalism or dismissiveness by male instructors, and the ways that educational programs lack the ability to retain female students through to graduation (p. 220-225). Kearney's work ultimately connects gender-based discrimination learned in media programs to the kinds of harassing behaviors Banks is working to address in media work culture. The work of EDIT Media, Banks and Kearney highlights that the principles of equity need to be integrated in both the theory and practice of media production. The frequent separation of critical, theoretical or historical analysis from production will be addressed later in this literature review as the theory and practice binary is a prominent feature of applied media programs.

2.4.5. Higher education, equity and antiracism

In broad higher education theory and research, there is significant data on the ways that inequities manifest and are perpetuated in higher educational structures. In particular, the work of Frances Henry, Enakshi Dua, Carl E. James, Audrey Kobayashi, Peter Li, Howard Ramos, and Malinda S. Smith have made comprehensive contributions to understanding how Canadian post-secondary institutions have avoided equitable institutional transformation in their publication *The Equity Myth: Racialization and Indigeneity at Canadian Universities*. Using comprehensive data from several national studies, the publications offers insight on the problems and barriers to equitable education or educational careers for racialized students and faculty, as well as many informed recommendations for institutional change. While the problems they note span institutional contexts, the researchers evidence barriers for racialized students to access to graduate school pipelines, poor representation of racialized scholars in journals, conferences and academic canons, cultures of whiteness that diminish social and

academic capital for racialized scholars, and many other racially biased career-limiting manoeuvres (Smith et. al, 2017, pp. 263-296). The recommendations following their research notes many suggestions that could be taken up at program levels across disciplinary spectrums. These include: review policies with an eye to how they might mask discrimination and allow inaction; include concepts of diversity throughout every institutional action (from hiring policies to teaching and learning support to curriculum design); enhance the potential for success of racialized and Indigenous faculty and students through specialized and resourced programs that enable the growth of this community of scholars; recognize and reward cultural and community-based research and action; track and report on equity data in detail; initiate mentorship programs for racialized faculty and students; require programs to evaluate and challenge everyday racism; and support institutional equity offices with significant resources and expertise to proactively address ongoing institutional barriers (Henry et al, 2017, 297-316). If these principles were applied to media education, they could yield more diverse and equitable representation in media practices. Such a transformation would impact who gets to participate in media education, and how students and workplace cultures are shaped through this education. An area of focus that might offer some insight on how to bridge ethics and equity in media education is the tension between theory and practice in these programs. *The Equity Myth* underscores that equity research has both theoretical and practical implications for how faculty and students function in higher education.

Within *The Equity Myth* (2017), Dua and Bhanji include a national study on the ineffectiveness of post-secondary approaches to remedying institutional inequities (pp. 206-238). They draw on Ahmed's (2012) theories of the inherent performativity of institutional diversity initiatives, and look specifically at how approaches to institutional equity – from workshops, to policy, to working groups to senior leadership campaigns – often fail to name and address the specific inequities occurring. They signal that this failure is often due to the specific unwillingness of institutional leaders, faculty or staff to discuss race, racial identities (including the White race) or racism (pp. 234-235). Thus, the act of choosing to frame institutional social justice work as equity-oriented can become performative when topics on race, racism or antiracism are eschewed. In other words, forums to discuss or manage equity are understood as *doing equity* rather than working to change specific aspects of inequitable cultures and practices such as racism. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017a) define antiracism as the active practice of seeking out

and attending to power differences between White and racialized people in an institution (pp. 215, 221). As antiracism requires deliberate and specific focus and action, it cannot be performative or what Sensoy and DiAngelon (2017a) call “passive” (p. 215). Thus, antiracism can be at odds with the performative aspect of working on matters of equity within post-secondary institutions, and this sense of performative equity initiatives aligns with research from the cultural and creative industries presented earlier in this literature review. I have included Dua and Bhanji’s chapter in this discussion as they directly address the problem of racism, and enacting antiracism within higher education, and this surely extends to film school contexts. In fact, media education research that has grappled with theory and practice divides, offers insight on disciplinary tensions that separate ethics and social concern from media practice, and this might indicate where performative equity sentiments live in film production curricula.

2.4.6. Separating or integrating theory and practice

The theory-practice divide stems from both public and educational discourses. Connolly’s 2019 study of vocational film schools within academic institutions finds that public discourses assign greater economic value to media production programs over theoretically-based media studies programs as the former supposedly offers greater access to work (Connolly, 2020). His study indicates that this bias in favour of hands-on training is unfounded as students from both types of programs travel post-graduate career opportunities in different, but successful ways. Connolly’s work seems particularly critical as a means to respond to broad neoliberal trends in education that place value on market-ready discourses, even if it is important for students to find meaningful work post-graduation. Petrie & Stoneman’s (2014) research in their monograph “Educating Filmmakers” aligns with Connolly as they find that film education programs designed to emphasize practiced-based research and industry skillsets assume that industry practices are necessarily “socially benevolent and neutral” (p. 235), but are clearly designed for market-based reasons, not social concern. Therefore, program emphasis on theory and practice does not necessarily mean that programs are adopting critical and socially-concerned ways of understanding industry practices.

Ashton’s study of an industry-focused videogame design program in the UK affirms Connolly’s findings as industry employers actually define well-educated students as those who have both technical and critical thinking skillsets. Ashton’s study is useful

for instructors who are looking for ways to embed critical thinking within production coursework through what he calls “everyday pedagogies”(Ashton, 2009b) that ask students to evaluate their own lives in relationship to industry demands. Ashton’s work connects to critical media literacy scholars’ recommendation that it is important to build students’ agency in relationship to their choices in consuming media. In considering how to structure critical traditions in media production education, Nam suggests that education beyond media effects is required in order for students to be able to see outside the status quo (Nam, 2010). Nam suggests media production program design and curricula should be reorganized using critical media literacy principles throughout. This includes: building agency, contesting cultural phenomena, and using media for social action (13-16). The critical media literacy of Luke (1994), Kelly and Currie (2020), Marshall and Sensoy (2011) emphasize within critical media literacy the notion that social analysis of power and inequity are core elements of pedagogical exercises for critical media literacy learning. The principles of critical media literacy offer a chance to bridge between theory and practice by offering a critical framework to deconstruct and reconstruct both industry representation and work practices, but requires instructor and institutional will and know-how to orient curricula in this manner.

Smeltzer’s (2020) research on the integration of theory and practice in work-integrated learning considers ethical dilemmas embedded in this work. Smeltzer notes the propensity for student internships to normalize discourses of post-graduate employment precarity by exploiting students through curricular requirements to do unpaid or low-paid contract-style labour (2020, p. 132). Smeltzer argues that a secondary ethical dilemma often arises in practicum courses: the instructors managing practicums are often in precarious untenured work contracts themselves, and thus are unable to properly address, or speak out against the realities of unprotected and tenuous contract work, or specific unethical practices that arise during the work placements (2020, pp. 145-147). While Smeltzer notes that practicums offer students a chance to integrate theoretical learning by considering how to apply theory in innovative and socially-caring ways, the experience of the work placements often reinforces ideas about contributing to society through fitting into a marketplace status quo. This status quo is about corporate task completion over critical consideration of the conditions or products of the students’ labour (Smeltzer, pp.135-142). Ultimately, Smeltzer argues for a practice of reflexivity for educators managing practicums, for faculty in media-oriented programs,

and for students. This reflexivity offers educators and students alike the chance to consider the ethical impacts of industry workplace discourses in relationship to media studies, or media production program values (p. 148). Ashton and Noonan's (2013) anthology also features scholarship that emphasizes critical and reflective approaches to cultural practice teaching as a means to manage or push back against hegemonic or precarious industry work practices and norms (pp. 256-257). What emerges in the literature on theory and practice is a sensibility of needing to embed curricular procedures and reflective practices to consciously situate courses in theory and practice within the scope of ethical and just working contexts. Without ethics and justice as core curricular anchors, experiences of praxis are left open to neoliberal sensibilities of individual competency and competition that may be divorced from greater concerns about workforce precarity and other media industry harm.

Institutional responsibilities and educational actions

There is, again, a dearth of research on how media education institutions relate to industry calls for social change. In light of this, this section will address critical commentary about media education's responsibilities for social justice. Callison and Young (2020) note that there is minimal journalism education in Canada on the impact of the field of journalism on public conceptions of Indigenous peoples (p. 174). This evidences that institutions need to better address legacies of representational harm in their curricula. As noted earlier in the chapter, the field of journalism studies has an overt contradiction between its supposed objectivity and their industry codes of ethics⁸, and the industry's significant barriers to equity and just representation (Callison and Young, 2020, pp. 31-31 and pp. 60-61). While many film, animation, and visual effects companies or broadcasters have their own workplace standards and practices, there are no centralizing ethical codes that inform practitioner conduct, or their relationship to publics, as in the field of journalism. What this means, then, is that there are no guiding principles on equity outside of the kinds of advocacy and social justice initiatives undertaken by industry activist groups, private companies, and government funding agencies. This might explain the tendency in media production education to avoid

⁸ The Society of Professional Journalists code of ethics is widely used, and some principle tenets are to avoid stereotyping and consider potential harm in media news framing (Society of Professional Journalists, n.d.).

prioritizing critical and socially conscious curricula; the lack of centralizing ethical codes might signal to media professionals that issues of equity are less important than other production elements. Petrie and Stoneman's (2014) account of film schools in Europe and the United States establishes critical theory and equity-oriented media practice as essential training for creative innovation. They highlight that innovation is essential given rising career precarity due to the expansion of smaller-scale production job opportunities in niche digital markets with lower budgets and cultural cache. This research is compelling as it shows how critical thinking and social awareness in education leads to innovation and social awareness. If media graduates are going to navigate precarious and competitive work environments, this certainly makes the case for critical and social education to be a core tenet of media production education.

Beyond looking at the kinds of workers produced by media education, there is also the issue of how media education responds to the prevalent revelations of sexual assault, harassment and other abuses. In their manuscript on digital feminist activism, Mendes et al. (2019) urge higher education programs to utilize the complexities of equity-oriented social justice movements as the more students can learn to engage social media discourses and technologies in critical ways, the more they will be able to address issues of gender, sexuality or racialized inequities throughout their production pursuits (p. 185). The authors also point out that both schools and work are geographies where sexual assault is endemic, and therefore, both institutions have the responsibility to take action to create physical safety (2019, pp. 55-56). Centring principles of equity in media education programs enables training on media responsibilities and reckoning, but also directly contributes to better protecting physical safety in the field. Recognizing that more research is needed on the specific relationships between social justice and media production education, I hope this chapter sparks critical investigations into how media industry and educational standards might centre community-mindedness, reciprocity and social good. As is evident in the contrast between creative industry research, industry initiatives, and media education, educational institutions need to better engage with social change as a means to bridge social justice to educational discourses and practices.

2.4.7. Conclusion: social responsibility in media education

“Because we believe our culture and society can be better, and we can play an active role in transforming them.” (Kearney cited in Harvey, 2020, p. 176)

The statement above from Mary Celeste Kearney’s *manifesta* for feminist media criticism is a compelling mantra for media students, educators, and industry professionals. This sentiment implicates the theories and practices that inform our educational and production choices, and squarely situates media culture within the realm of social change. The research presented in this literature review suggests that media production education is well-situated to grapple with public discourses and social movements that are pitting neoliberal economic concerns against those of social justice advocates and media industry activists. It is useful to consider how students envision the future of the media industries, and how media educators can teach to these transformations. As Viczko et al. (2019) note in relation to skills-gap discourses in higher education, these discourses emerge from neoliberal determinations of industrial needs and limit the ways students are educated for democratic agency by overly determining how students see the potential impacts of their education on society. In other words, how we frame industry discourses and industry-specific skillsets has the potential to limit how students understand the function and reach of their education in society. It seems prudent in this era of polarized political discourses, widespread social injustice that includes systems of state violence, and the fake news phenomena of media mistrust and disinformation, to equip students to see their education as a way to contribute to bettering social outcomes. As mass media culture is firmly part of our contemporary social lives, it is essential that teaching to media industry standards prioritizes social concerns throughout media production education. The aims of this study are to contribute scholarship that can help formulate specific pedagogies and institutional practices in support of articulating ethics, equity and social justice in media production education paradigms.

2.4.8. Theoretical framework: critical constructivism

A critical constructivist theoretical framework guides the discursive analysis in this dissertation. Within a critical constructivist framework, the social construction of knowledge and power are centred in analytic processes. As the aim of this dissertation is

to analyze dominant, and perhaps dominating, media production program discourses in program website text, a critical constructivist theoretical framework focuses the analysis on how power and dominant epistemologies are expressed by the programs.

Program website text is important as it is a primary place where students, faculty and staff seek information about the focus and scope of program actions (Academica Group, 2020). Thus, program websites are important as they offer an impression of the programs' core values and priorities. By nature of what the program websites include, and how they phrase their website content, the websites offer insight on how knowledge and power are coded and stratified in the programs.

Due to its focus on power in social contexts, a social constructivist approach also engages critical and social theory during data analysis. Thus, the application of critical and social theory provides supportive lines of thought for the investigation of how knowledge and power are expressed and regulated, uncovering who might benefit or be harmed by prominent discourses (Steinberg, 2014). As a humanist framework, this approach also centres interpretation of a subject through social and historical lenses. As such, critical constructivism is also an appropriate theoretical framework for researching media industries education during our current moment of widespread social justice movements within and directed to the media industries.

Education is also centred in a critical constructivist framework as it seeks connections and tensions between research, teaching, learning and knowledge construction (Steinberg, 2014). Critical constructivism is associated with the practice and theories of critical pedagogy, and as such, aims for research and pedagogies that yield pluralistic and emancipatory responses. The educational focus of critical constructivism aligns with the research goals of this dissertation in aiming to consider how power is discursively constructed within media production education framings, and with the hope that the insights gleaned from my research might contribute to more socially just media education practices.

Methodologically, a critical constructivist framework is often used in participatory research processes so as to engage, analyse and interpret manifold perspectives. Critical constructivism is also a post-structuralist research framework as it avoids homogenizing analysis, and instead focuses on tensions, contradictions and multiple

possibilities in analysis. As my research was limited to a critical discourse analysis of website text in order to obtain a baseline understanding of what media production programs say they do, there was no participatory element in my research design. In recognition of a critical constructivist orientation to research that is complex and multi-perspectival, I undertook a feminist and Foucauldian critical discourse analysis that sought complexity through reflexive and entanglement-seeking methodological steps outlined in the next chapter.

A critical constructivist approach requires documented reflexivity as it is important for researchers to clearly identify their positionality in relationship to analysis and interpretations. As there is a dearth of research on the relationship between media cultural inequities and the education of future media workers, it was important for me, during the research process, to reflexively consider my own position as a media educator in perpetuating or opposing media cultural oppressions.

A critical constructivist approach connects to a critical discourse analytic methodology as it asserts that representations of knowledge cannot be neutral, and hence, language is not neutral. Discourse analysis is a core element of a critical constructivist framework because language is core to knowledge construction, and how reality is shaped by discursive methods of social control.

As a post-structural theoretical framework, critical constructivism can also find alignment with decolonial and intersectional feminisms that, while disparate, have resisted essentialist or outside research gazes and claims, and emphasize cultural and social location, community-informed perspectives, participant agency, and cultural and material reclamation and/or resurgence (Bhattacharya, 2021; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016; Jiwani, 2016; Kermoal & Altamirano-Jiménez, 2016; Tuhiwai Smith, 2021). These feminisms find particular alignment with critical constructivism in their relational and non-homogenizing methodologies. As a White settler scholar, it is important for me to address that when I learn from and engage the work of Indigenous and racialized researchers in notions of decolonial feminisms, this engagement is not intended to reduce or make claim to these ideas. Intersectional and decolonial feminisms are important in my analyses and as they are guideposts or prompts for my own reflexive reckoning with critical issues of dismantling dominating power structures,

misrepresentation, omission or paternalism in research analyses, and avoiding doing harm (Tuck, 2009) in the research process.

I have used the terms decolonizing or decolonial in this dissertation to refer to a concern for dismantling or refuting the legacies of colonialism that are embedded throughout contemporary social systems, including educational structures. These terms align with the institutional discourses that I analyzed from my research findings, and with significant theoretical scholarship arising from Indigenous and post-colonial studies (Jiwani, 2016; Kermoal & Altamirano-Jiménez, 2016; Tuhiwai Smith, 2021). While I use the terms decolonizing or decolonial, I am doing so with the recognition of the “incommensurability” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 30) of these terms in relation to sovereign Indigenous and decolonized futures. Bhattacharya (2021) writes “de/colonizing” (p. 1) with a slash to conceptualize this incommensurability as a refusal of fixed and binary notions of colonizer/colonized. For Bhattacharya, this notion of de/colonizing can simultaneously conceive of contemporary and utopian or futuristic research agendas beyond colonization (2021, p. 1-3). Similarly, the term “anticolonial” refuses “colonial logics” (Cordes & Sabzalian, 2020, p. 184) by emphasizing the possibility of different material futures beyond coloniality. While I have not adopted the terms de/colonial or anticolonial, these concepts have assisted me in resisting essentializing analyses in this dissertation.

How this theoretical framework relates to my research problem:

In summary, a critical constructivist framework enables me to connect to my core concerns about how knowledge and power are established, maintained, and engaged in media production program discourses. The critical element of this framework allows me to engage critical social theories in my analysis, seeking discursive expressions that indicate core values, social orders and other indications of power or dominance. As explored in the next chapter on methodology, a critical constructivist theoretical framework connects to my emergent analytic framework, in its concern for understanding how power and knowledge are established, maintained or transformed through social life, and in particular, through written text.

Chapter 3.

Methodology

“Discourses exercise power because they institutionalize and regulate ways of talking, thinking and acting.” (Jäger and Maier, 2016, p. 117).

3.1. Introduction: from literature review to critical discourse methodology

As discussed in the previous chapters, it is well established in academic literature and media industry studies that workplace and representational inequities exist in front of and behind media industry cameras. Unyielding social media activism combined with industry lobbying, and high profile media industry criminal charges and convictions have created a situation wherein industry leaders and workers have a heightened focus on addressing longstanding issues of equity, social justice, and toxic workplace cultures. This work is being done through research and data dissemination, creation of more robust workplace policies, community-building, and other proactive initiatives within industry ranks (Brannon Donoghue, 2020; Brinton & McGowan, 2020; Frechette, 2020; Harvey, 2021).

What is less known in academic and industry research, is to what extent these media industry inequities and workplace culture issues exist in industry-focused public higher education programs dedicated to training future media culture workers, and how film school educators and students engage with these industrial discourses. Recent academic scholarship about cultural and creative industries higher education has undertaken qualitative studies connecting social issues in the media industries to educational practices (Ashton & Noonan, 2013; Banks, 2019; Harvey, 2021; Saha, 2021). Studies have reviewed topics such as social contexts and assumptions in media work practicums (Allen, 2013), gendered experiences of breaking into the industry from media education (Pollard, 2013), development of multicultural and race-based media production curriculum (Saha, 2013), and gendered coping strategies in media production programs (Harvey, 2021). What this relatively new body of research has not established are the dominant discourses of film school programs, and what the implications might be of these discourses in relationship to media culture inequities. Future research is also

needed on how instructors and students navigate, adopt, counter or transform dominant discourses, and the relationship between dominant program discourses and the shaping of media worker and educator subjectivities.

It is worth noting that media industries research over the past few decades has tended to focus on quantitative studies of exclusion or misrepresentation of gendered and racialized bodies in the media workforce and on screens (Brannon Donoghue, 2020; Brinton & McGowan, 2020; CMPA, 2017; Liddy, 2020; Netflix, 2021; Smith et al., 2016). This research has been extremely important as a means to evidence stark statistical gaps in access and participation in all media industries work categories. The challenge with this longstanding approach to media industries research is that it has tended to focus on diversity quantitatively without undertaking qualitative assessments of dominant workplace attitudes, practices and beliefs. Industry studies from the past two years have begun to look at these issues with more specificity by studying issues such as management practices and workforce training and community-building on equity and inclusion (BECTU, 2021; BSO, n.d.; Netflix, 2021). The expansion of this research to more detailed quantitative and qualitative study in the past five years has been in the wake of fervent and wide-reaching social justice movements within and outside of the media industries. Again, what remains as a gap in media industry research, is comprehensive analysis of connections between exclusionary discourses, attitudes and beliefs in media work cultures, and film school practices. This dissertation aims to contribute to the growing body of literature in higher education-focused cultural and creative industries studies by reporting my analytic discourse research process. This research intends to offer a baseline understanding of core discourses and themes within Canadian film school programs at the level of public program website text.

3.2. Research questions

To support my analysis of dominant discourses in film production education, the research questions guiding this study are:

- What do public higher education film schools in Canada say that they do?; and
- What are the implications of what they say they do in relation to existing research on film industry-oriented education and media industry culture?

I have taken up these research questions by undertaking a critical discourse analysis of the top six English-language Canadian public higher education programs for film school education in two industry hub cities: Vancouver and Toronto. Following is an overview of the key methodologists, methodologies and methodological theories I have drawn from, their relationship to my research questions and aims of this research, the procedures I have followed for data collection and analysis, and the validity of research findings.

3.3. Methodologists & methodology: critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis offers a wide array of theoretically-informed methodologies for empirical qualitative analysis of discourses in social and historical contexts. Critical discourse analysis was chosen as a methodology because of its rich tools for deconstructing text with an eye for how power is exerted in social and historical circumstances, and how discursive realms connect to material experiences of injustice. This dissertation follows the specific methodological steps of Jäger (2001) and Jäger and Maier (2016) in combination with elements of feminist critical discourse analysis of Lazar (2018), and decolonizing methodologies of Tuhiwai Smith (2021). The following paragraphs offer background on the broad research field of critical discourse analysis, and insight on the specific methodologies engaged in this study.

3.4. Overview of critical discourse analysis (CDA)

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) has been widely utilized for the past forty years across the social sciences, humanities, and other disciplines such as education and communication (Phillips, 2017). Critical discourse analysis developed from the linguistic tradition of discourse analysis. Sociolinguist Fairclough (2003) describes discourse analysis as the “linguistic analysis of text” (p. 3) within the context of social practices. He summarizes that CDA extends its analysis to dynamic socio-political structures (p. 3, 2003). While there are many different approaches to CDA, the common thread between them is the belief that communication, particularly language, is central to how meaning, knowledge and values are produced and controlled. (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, 2016; van Dijk, 1993). As an analytic methodology concerned with how power is exerted in

language, recent scholarship firmly focuses critical discourse analysis as a methodology for studying social inequality or injustice (Rogers, 2017; van Dijk, 1993; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Critical discourse analysis is widely considered a social constructionist interpretive framework due to its analyses of how meaning is derived from communication-based social phenomena (Phillips, 2017). As an eminent social constructionist, Foucault's theories of discursive power and control heavily influenced the development of critical discourse analysis. For example, in "Discipline and Punish" (1979) Foucault theorizes how power is exerted through internalized sensibilities of hierarchy and judgment towards societal "rituals of truth" (p. 194). These rituals relate to CDA through the study of dominant discursive ideologies and naturalized social norms (Lazar, 2007, p. 148). Engagement with Foucauldian theories prompted discourse analytic researchers to move away from structuralist methodologies that produced fixed and often binary analyses to post-structuralist research designs that could capture nuance, change, contradiction and entanglements within the discursive fields being studied (Rogers et al., 2005, p. 368). Foucauldian theory also firmly situates the study of discourse within particular social and historical contexts (Foucault, 1972, p. 117).

Foucault's notion of *apparatus or dispositif* (Foucault, 1980) contributes to CDA methodology as it outlines the explicit and implicit interplay between diverse social systems, discourses of power within the systems, and the material practices or functions of power within systems (Foucault, 1980, pp. 194-195). Engaging theories of apparatus or dispositif is a tool for analyzing matters of normalized power, especially with respect to ordinary and institutionalized concepts and practices. These theories are not about social performativity, but the process of maintaining social control through commonly accepted discourse and action, what Hall (2001) calls "language *and* practice" (p. 72).

Given the development of CDA to emphasize social practices and power structures, CDA is in alignment with critical social theories as they share concern for understanding how power, oppression, domination, hegemony and ideology manifest in society. Van Dijk (1993) emphasizes that it is important for critical discourse researchers to adopt critical social lines of thought, particularly regarding power and agency, and to reflect these as core concerns in the analytic work of deciphering patterns and connections in the texts under review. Contemporary discourse analytic scholarship has

engaged theories ranging from postcolonial, critical race, intersectional feminist, queer and disability studies to develop methods of analysis of discursive social phenomena evidencing various injustices or social resistance and transformation (Lazar, 2018).

An example of a CDA study consulted during the research design of this dissertation that centres social injustice and material impact is Gulliver's (2018) analysis of Canadian citizenship guides given to newcomers to Canada over the past four decades. Despite continual updating, Gulliver's CDA highlights how denials of racism (Jiwani, 2006) is a core discursive position that impacts recent immigrants' sense of self, others, and in particular, naturalizes Indigenous land and cultural dispossession (Gulliver, 2018). Drawing from this example, CDA can be summarized as a social constructionist and post-structuralist analytic method and theoretical approach that considers language as central to both social control and action (Phillips, 2017).

3.5. Feminist and decolonial critical discourse analysis

Lazar (2018) emphasizes that feminist critical discourse analysis explores how gender-based social inequities and ideologies become discursively and materially "common sense" (p. 372). She identifies five core traits of feminist CDA:

1. A perspective that gender is often subject to ideological pressures that are binary and stratified, especially in relation to race, sexuality, nationalism, and other identity markers;
2. Gendered hierarchies require analysis of power, privilege and dominance, especially in service of strategies of resistance;
3. Social practices and discourses are in a dialectical relationship, and this must be analyzed according to the "performative" (Butler, 1990) pressures and possibilities of gender;
4. "Critical reflexivity" (p. 374) is a core element of feminist CDA practice as a means to recognize and reckon with our research framings in service of social justice; and
5. A critical and activist stance with the goal of social justice and social change.

An example of Canadian scholarship using feminist CDA is Jiwani's (2006) monograph *Discourses of denial: mediations of race, gender and violence* wherein Jiwani draws on critical race and gender studies in a critical review of Canadian news

media's framing of Indigenous women and women of colour. Jiwani's layered exploration considers how media framing influences public discourse and connects to widespread systemic experiences of gender and race-based violence (Jiwani, 2006). Thus feminist CDA aligns with the core critical and social justice concerns of this dissertation about the potential connections between film school discourses and unjust media work cultures.

No specific decolonial critical discourse analytic theory or methodology was found during my research. However, the decolonizing methodologies of Tuhiwai Smith (2021) indicate that a central decolonial research concern is for Indigenous people to have control over their languages and discursive constructs (p. 187). According to Tuhiwai Smith (2021), a decolonizing approach to research involves breaking down research hierarchies and gazes that produce othering analyses that are dehumanizing, silencing, and absencing (pp 35; 158). These elements of Tuhiwai Smith's decolonizing methodologies align with feminist critical discourse analysis that centres analysis on matters of research dominance and framing. I remained focused on these decolonizing methodological approaches during my analysis, and also engaged the logic of Cordes and Sabzalian's (2020) anticolonial media literacy that specifies a need to oppose and re-imagine representation that has dehumanizing colonial logics (p. 184).

From an ethical standpoint, Tuhiwai Smith's challenge to dominating research frames reminds me of the limits or criticisms of reflexivity in research. While I will attempt reflexive analysis within this dissertation, I will consider Latour's (2004) criticism that closed systems of knowledge are produced when they do not exist within dialogic community contexts. Furthermore, Nagar (2003) critiques both feminist reflexive analysis and critical theory as neither address the incompatibility of seeking social justice from within colonial research structures. What I take from these two scholars, is a cautionary note about the limits of reflexive analysis within critical discourse analysis as it remains disconnected from the communities it is focused on. With this in mind, I have added methodological steps to bring the analysis in this dissertation to its communities of concern.

3.6. Criticisms of critical discourse analysis

Critiques of CDA have focused on matters of reflexivity, relationality and epistemology. Feminist, decolonial and critical social theorists have noted the need for

CDA to not only look at the relationship between discourse and society, but the positionality of the researcher in relationship to the discourse analysis. These critiques have noted, again, that CDA can unselfconsciously engage specific, colonial, and/or objectifying epistemological commitments, and that a lack of relationality between researcher and their analysis produces inequities in the research (Ahmed, 2021; Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2006; Lazar, 2018; McHugh, 2014; Ohito & Nyachae, 2019; Olesen, 2018; Rogers, 2017; Zarycki, 2017). Adding to these critiques, Jiwani (2009) has observed that CDA produces limiting analysis if it is not completed with a comparative methodology. For Jiwani, comparative analysis “affords a more dynamic perspective in that it begins with a point of departure rooted in the fluidity of subjectivities, their multiplicity, and their interpellation within structures and historical legacies of domination.” (Jiwani, 2009, p. 4) Jiwani’s comparative CDA echoes the strategies of feminist, postcolonial and queer social theories to undertake research that strives to avoid essentializing research subjects, simultaneously recognizing both oppression and agency (Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2006; Lather, 1991; McHugh, 2014; Rogers, 2017). From a feminist perspective, participatory analytic approaches should be considered to support more equitable and pluralistic research processes and findings (McHugh, 2014). Most of these critiques come from feminist researchers, and centre the need for relational, reflexive, political, historical, social and cultural questioning in an effort to locate multiple tensions, perspectives, questions and contradictions in the research.

As stated above, for this dissertation, I considered the feminist and decolonial critiques, in particular, as essential ethical guideposts for my CDA research design. This stance aligns with the commitments in the introduction and literature review to intersectional feminist and decolonizing media pedagogies and research practices.

3.7. Methodological steps

The analysis in my study was attentive to emergent and varied framings of discourses I was analyzing, and the aspirations for this research is to inform future community-based explorations in the development and articulation of socially just film school cultures. My CDA methodology follows Jäger and Maier’s (2016) discourse and dispositive analysis that methodically reviews institutionalized language, power, and knowledge, and connects these to institutional practices and other social phenomena

(pp. 110-118). This study also engages the critical reflexivity and attentiveness to hierarchical social discourses in the feminist CDA of Lazar (2018). Lastly, my methodology aligns with Jiwani (2006), in the pursuit to broadly map the “discursive field” (p. xii) of media production education by seeking dominant and dominating discourses, and reviewing these against systemic oppression and social movements embedded in media work cultures. In Jiwani (2006), she observes that reviewing dominant discourses in this manner is about identifying “tips of” icebergs (p. xii) that indicate significant and ever-changing social values and hierarchies below the surface of texts. This methodology avoided linguistic analytic approaches in favour of analyses of discursive themes arising in the website text. Following is the CDA process used in this dissertation research that combined the processes of Jäger (2001, p. 56), Jäger and Maier (2016, pp. 127-131), the critical reflexivity offered by Lazar’s (2018) feminist critical discourse analysis (p. 374), and the discursive absencing elucidated by Jiwani (2006, p. xv-41) and Tuhiwai Smith (2021, p. 35).

The critical discourse analytic process established and then followed by this study is as follows:

1. Identify research topic, problem, context and research questions.

Dominant discourses within film production education is the topic in the context of contemporary social justice movements and industry changes. The problem is that there is a dearth of research, particularly in Canada, about dominant media production education discourses and pedagogies, and to what extent media culture inequities manifest in these higher education programs. This dissertation has researched baseline questions: what do public higher education film schools in Canada say that they do, and what are the implications of what they say they do?

2. Define the data to be analyzed and explain why the sample is significant.

University websites are important locations of information as most students rely on internet searches for finding information about university programs (Academica Group, 2020). The analysis in this dissertation has looked at program website text for the top six (6) media production programs at public English-language post-

secondary institutions in Canada in the industry hub cities of Vancouver and Toronto. This is a representative sample of Canadian film production programs, commonly referred to as “film schools.” The process for determining the top six (6) programs is outlined below in a detailed descriptions of the data collection process.

3. **List all the documents to be analyzed, methodically collect the data, and read through the documents thoroughly to create familiarity with the data.** Following Jäger (2001, p. 56), the website text was read repeatedly. A list of documents collected is in the following section on data collection.
4. **Analyze the data by identifying themes in the text.** Themes can be identified through determining:
 - **Discourse strands:** these are specific and concrete terms or expressions in language, “concrete utterances” (Jäger and Maier, p. 121), that relate to a broader discourse and might be considered “typical vocabulary” (Jäger and Maier, p. 129). For example, expressions of job readiness is a common discourse strand within discourses of higher education, and film production education, in particular. Discourse strands that are identified must be analyzed with an eye to historical positioning.
 - When identifying discourse strands consider and note **phrase, tone, frequency, function and the contexts around their engagement.** Logic, approach, jargon, sayings, stereotypes, and ideological statements are all considered with respect to the overall messaging or discourses evident within the text.
 - **Entanglements of discourse strands:** identify entangled elements of discourse strands. For example, the discourse strand of job readiness is entangled with the discourse strand of meritocracy as they both relate critically to the discourse of education for employability. This can also be considered “intertextuality and interdiscursivity” (Meyer, 2001, p. 15). Scheurich’s (1997) CDA policy archeology methodology describes this as tracking “social regularities” (p. 97). Walton (2010) explains this as

“regularities that facilitate the conditions by which discourse proliferates” (p. 138). In other words, looking for repeated themes that appear standardized or regular within the context allows us to analyze underlying social contexts that cause or influence standardization.

- Following Jiwani (2006) and Tuhiwai Smith (2021), look for **absences, misrepresentations or erasures** in the data. Jiwani’s CDA locates “under representation” (p. 41) in Canadian news media coverage of racialized and Indigenous women, as well as media “denial,” “erasure,” “or dismissal of racism as a form of violence” (2006, p. xv). Critical themes of erasure are also central to much feminist and critical race media studies in the effort to critique, discover and/or envision just representations of race and gender in popular media (hooks, 1996). Absences can be found by relating the website data to academic, popular culture or industry literature in the literature review. During this process, I asked: based on the existing literature, what discourses are missing from the texts?
- **Discourse positions and positionality:** the analysis considers discourse positions and the researcher’s positionality in the analysis. In analyzing discourse position, the aim is to perceive dominant or hegemonic discourses and “counter-discourses” (Jäger & Maier, p. 125) that might be in the texts. Position is usually identified in expressions of ideology. In order to prevent a researcher’s “view from nowhere” (pp. 24-25, Callison & Young p.), and maintain a feminist ethic in support of social justice, Lazar asserts “critical reflexivity” (Lazar, 2018, p. 374) as a core element of the analysis. Thus, it is an ethical stance and important to situate the researcher reflexively within the discourses and knowledge systems being analyzed (Jäger & Maier, p. 119).
- **Discourse in historical context:** the analysis considers the historical contexts shaping discourses. For example, this study has occurred in the era of the #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter social movements, and these provide historical context for changes in discourse and action within the media industries. Following Arvast (2008), this historical context yields perspective on how certain discourses “conceal their own invention” (p.

112) by naturalizing certain discursive constructions beneath overarching institutional structures.

5. **Analyze the data repeatedly** using the categories and processes above until analytic saturation occurs; the thematic coding in this dissertation utilized NVivo software as a means of capturing particular words or phrases and attributing it to one or more themed categories. Capturing, charting and sorting the data using NVivo offered me a way to do focused re-reading of themed words and phrases, to run visual schematics showing relative hierarchies of themed data, and to more easily track entangled, repetitive and inter-textual text. My process for data validation and crystallization in this process are described below.
6. **Synthesize analysis** through a descriptive account of the findings and consider the implications and possible material impacts of these discourses; attention is paid to similarities and differences in the data, and limitations in the data. An overall assessment punctuates the analysis.
7. Following Nagar (2003) to avoid limiting reflexive analysis, upon completion of the critical discourse analysis process **bridge research findings to film production and education communities** in Canada as a means of building on the research conclusions in a community-oriented manner. This step is to be completed beyond the scope of this dissertation.

3.8. Data analysis in relationship to themes identified in the literature review

Core themes identified in the literature review include:

- Meritocracy
- Hard work that is inequitable and toxic is discursively constructed as good work

- Normalized work precarity
- Gender and race gaps in the creative and cultural industries
- Usefulness of education is job-readiness, vocational
- Theory and practice divides in education
- Performative social justice and diversity initiatives

The themes from the literature review were considered alongside emergent thematic topics in the website texts. The list of thematic topics identified in the website texts are, in alphabetical order: admissions, collaboration, competition, coursework, creativity & aesthetics, critical thinking, descriptive concepts, diversity & internationalization, ethics, facilities, hard work and good work, history, Indigeneity and decolonization, meritocracy, normalized precarity, race & culture, social justice & equity, teaching practices, theory and practice, use, skills & career-readiness. The skills & career-readiness theme includes sub-themes: experiential, impact & innovation, professionalism, and technical skill. The wording of these thematic topics arose in relationship to how the data was often worded in the website text. This list provided thematic cues for identifying concepts and analysing how film school subjects, such as students or faculty, were positioned in the texts.

3.9. Data collection and sources

Data collection was in alignment with Jäger and Maier’s (2016) “concrete corpus for analysis” (p. 128), which can be understood as an ample and representative sample of data in order to effectively align with the research questions. This section aims to follow Flick’s (2018b) guide for data collection by describing the step-by-step process for collecting the “naturally occurring” (p. 15) film school website text data.

As my primary research concern is film production education in Canada, data sources are from the top six (6) film schools in Canada from two major English language industry hub cities, Vancouver and Toronto. The documents collected were text from the publicly-available program websites. Website text is significant because program websites and web-based searches are a primary way future students seek information on education programs (Academica, 2020). The information provided on the websites portrays the core educational values, and as such, university website data potentially

contributes to the formation of ideas and attitudes about film school education and practice (Ashton & Noonan, 2013). Furthermore, program websites contain information on the overall program design of curriculum and approaches to teaching and learning ranging from theoretical to experiential. Thus, program website information represents a corpus of the values and priorities of the program itself, or what Apple calls the “commonsense consciousness” (Apple, 1990, p. 4) of the educational structures and systems in place. While websites are a primary source for information about university programs, it is important to note that they exist as a form of marketing communication. As a marketing tool, websites highlight key words and messages identified by marketing departments, program administrators and faculty as a means to promote the supposedly most marketable or desirable aspects of a program. The status of websites as a marketing tool is a point not taken up in my analyses but is identified as a topic requiring further study.

Prior to continuing this description of the data collection process, an explanation is required regarding the name of one of the institutions in this dissertation. When I began data collection, X University (XU) was known as Ryerson University, and the institution was in a formal process of having a presidential task force “develop principles to guide commemoration at the university and to respond to the legacy of Egerton Ryerson within the context of the university’s values” (XU, n.d.-a). The work of this task force can be summarized as an institutional reckoning with the violent colonial legacy of Egerton Ryerson, and his significant role in developing the residential school system in Canada. On May 11, 2021, the Yellowhead Institute, a First Nations critical policy research centre at XU, released a policy brief by Indigenous Students at XU critiquing the narrow and performative approach of the task force (pp. 1-2). In the policy brief, the Indigenous students request that a “X” be used as an interim institutional title as a means to “remove Ryerson’s name and the symbol of cultural genocide and intergenerational trauma” (Yellowhead Institute, 2021, p. 2). As a scholar wanting to contribute to more socially just and decolonized academic operations, I am writing in solidarity with Indigenous students at X University and have adopted the “X” in all references to the institution.

During my initial research on data collection processes, I attempted to find provincial statistics using the phrase “graduate employment rates” in web-based university and government website searches. I did this to determine the top media

production programs on the basis of graduate employment rates in the media industries. While the research in this dissertation is asking critical questions about the impact of market logics in higher education, graduate employment rates seemed applicable to film program success due to the emphasis of employability discourses in film school websites. Thus, I began with this search criteria as my position as a film school instructor makes me aware of a constant discursive framing that our instruction is effective, or not, based on student success in industry careers. What I discovered in this web-based search is that institutional reporting is not always done at the program-level, and there are vast discrepancies in how institutions report disciplinary categories. For example, on January 31, 2021, I searched for and reviewed the British Columbia government publication “Baccalaureate Graduates: Reports by Institution” (BC Government, n.d.). In this document, only Capilano University listed graduate statistics under the heading “Cinematography and film/video production,” (BC Government, n.d.) -- a phrase that represents the most specific aims of this study. The graduate reports for the University of British Columbia listed media programs within the broad umbrella category of “Fine/studio arts, general,” (BC Government, n.d.) and the media programs at Simon Fraser University were included in “Visual and performing arts, general” or “Communication and media studies, other” (BC Government, n.d.). The same differences in categories of data were found in Ontario reporting (Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities, n.d.), with graduate employment rates listed by institutional schools rather than programs for X University (XU, n.d.-b) and Sheridan College (Sheridan, n.d.-a). No specific program and graduate employment rates were reported by York University (York, n.d.-a), and only broad areas of study such as “Fine and Applied Arts” were included in reporting from the University of Toronto (U of T, n.d.). Given the inconsistencies in institutional data and reporting, I decided that it would be difficult to use available statistical data as a means to determine the top film schools based on post-graduation employment rates. This cemented the decision to proceed with the internet search process detailed below.

Following are the steps taken for data collection:

1. **A web-based, Google.ca, search on January 26, 2021 using the phrase: “best film schools in Canada.”** Variations of the keywords such as “top Canadian film schools” and “best Canadian film schools” received the same websites with minor variations in the order of

website search result. I avoided the phrase “media production program” as this is a term that is used more in academic literature than in common practice, and it yields film school websites directly, and not rankings or recommendations of media production programs. The phrase “film school” is commonly used to refer to media production programs despite the fact that filmmaking has evolved to a variety of digital media formats and platforms over the past two decades.

2. **Refinement of search process:** I saved the first page of Google search results and noted the websites that functioned as film school listings and ratings; I did not look further than the first page of results as the majority of web-based searches do not look further than the first page (Shelton, 2017).

The websites consulted and saved are:

- <https://worldscholarshipforum.com/film-schools-in-canada/>
- <https://www.coursecompare.ca/the-best-film-schools-in-canada/>
- <https://www.frontrowinsurance.com/articles/best-filmmaking-schools-in-canada>
- <https://www.careersinfilm.com/film-schools-canada/>
- <https://www.applyboard.com/blog/5-most-popular-film-schools-in-canada>
- <https://hnmag.ca/educational-opportunities/top-10-best-film-schools-in-canada-to-study-right-now/>
- <https://lovefunart.ca/blogs/insight/top-5-filmmaking-schools-in-canada>
- <https://tripodyssey.com/filmmaking-schools-canada/>

3. **Criteria for inclusion:** I compared the eight websites above looking for English-language public post-secondary film schools in the two media industry hub cities of “Hollywood North” (Tinic, 2005), greater Vancouver and greater Toronto. I chose English language institutions in these two regions as the programs in these regions predominantly educate in the English language, and these regions relate most

directly to the dominant English-language media industries market of Hollywood. This study was limited to public institutions due to the core concerns of educational inequities identified in my literature review, and the extensive literature relating public education to issues of educational access, equality, equity, and democracy (Giroux, 2014; Green, 2005).

4. Research subjects: English-language Film Schools in Hollywood

North. I compiled a list of the public programs noted in the websites above. This produced a list of sixteen (16) public higher education institutions in Canada. I reduced the number of institutions to use in this study by using the criteria that the schools had to: (i) be located in the industry hub cities of greater Vancouver and Toronto; (ii) offer a media production program at a bachelor degree level; and (iii) be mentioned on at least five out of the eight “best film school Canada” websites noted above. After this process, the six (6) resulting media production program websites⁹ used for this study were:

1. Capilano University: Bachelor of Motion Picture Arts (School of Motion Picture Arts in the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts)
2. X University: Bachelor of Fine Arts: Image Arts in Film studies (School of Image Arts in the Faculty of Communication and Design)
3. Sheridan College: Honours Bachelor of Film and Television (Faculty of Animation, Arts & Design)
4. Simon Fraser University: Bachelor of Fine Arts Film Major (School of Contemporary Arts)
5. University of British Columbia: Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film Production (Department of Theatre & Film)
6. York University: Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film Production (Department of Cinema & Media Arts in the School of Arts, Media, Performance & Design)

5. Data Collection: On February 1, 2021, I visited the program websites for the six institutions chosen for this study and saved

⁹ For research transparency, it is important to note that I am a full time instructor at Capilano University wherein I teach in the School of Communication, the Women’s and Gender Studies department, and in the Motion Picture Arts Program. My employment at Capilano University did not influence my data collection steps beyond my awareness of Vancouver as a media industries hub city with several media industry-oriented post-secondary programs. My employment status does, however, implicate me in the analysis.

the program content of every tab or page to PDF and web archive formats. The website pages saved were in these categories:

- The main page for the program's institutional school, faculty and/or department;
- Main program page including overview, vision, or mission;
- Learning outcomes and curricula (descriptions of curricula range from course descriptions to course outlines; detailed course syllabi were not included as these were not publicly available in the websites reviewed);
- Streams, minors or concentrations;
- Admissions requirements and process;
- Career, experiential learning, and/or technical skills profile;
- Faculty members overview (not the individual profiles);
- News, events, alumni profiles;
- University calendar program and course descriptions; and
- Faculty job postings (these were collected during the fall of 2020 from many institutions across Canada, including the ones in this study, in anticipation of needing them for the study, and due to the limited timeframe that job postings are posted).

3.10. Description of the data coding process

The data is comprised of the written text from one hundred and fifty-nine (159) webpages that were captured as web archived pages and PDF documents. The review of data began with reading through the PDF file copies of all of the webpages, noting emergent themes, and removing sections of pages that were blank, only contained images, or contained duplicate pages (for example, when two webpages are linked multiple times). Webpage sections were also removed if they contained standardized information about the greater university, or contained non-standardized program information, such as webpages with individual faculty bios, or pages with specific alumni profiles or news. The PDF webpage content was then imported into NVivo software, and all the data was read again in relation to discursive themes noted in the literature as well

as the results from the first readings of the data¹⁰. During this second reading, I identified twenty-four (24) thematic topics arising in the data. Then, with the assistance of NVivo software for organization, I read the webpage data again and key discourse strands (concrete phrases) were coded into one or more of the NVivo thematic topics.

The following list shows the thematic topics and the number of phrases coded in each:

1. Admissions: 72 coded phrases
2. Collaboration: 46 coded phrases
3. Competition: 20 coded phrases
4. Coursework: 235 coded phrases
5. Creativity & aesthetics: 106 coded phrases
6. Critical thinking: 7 coded phrases
7. Descriptive words: 47 coded phrases
8. Diversity & internationalization: 40 coded phrases
9. Ethics: 11 coded phrases
10. Facilities: 34 coded phrases
11. Hard work & good work: 3 coded phrases
12. History: 2 coded phrases
13. Indigeneity and decolonization: 10 coded phrases
14. Meritocracy: 3 coded phrases
15. Normalized precarity: 9 coded phrases
16. Race & culture: 7 coded phrases
17. Social justice & equity: 29 coded phrases
18. Teaching practices: 64 coded phrases

¹⁰ An extra step of typing out all of the text-based webpage content of the UBC webpages was undertaken as the UBC website did not encode the website text in a manner that could be read by NVivo or copied and pasted into another document.

19. Theory and practice: 47 coded phrases
20. Use, skills & career-readiness: 131 coded phrases
21. Experiential learning: 78 coded phrases
22. Impact & innovation: 23 coded phrases
23. Professionalism: 53 coded phrases
24. Technical skill: 59 coded phrases

3.11. Refining the coding

Once the webpage text was coded, I repeatedly reviewed the text captured in the twenty-four thematic topic codes, and referred back to the original webpage data to ensure that the full scope of phrases or sentences were coded. I noted discourse entanglements where codes were interrelating. I was also particularly conscious of the discourse analytic steps I outlined, and I read the coded text with the following questions in mind:

- Are there consistently validated concepts in media production program discourses?
- What concepts are pervasive, and what concepts are excluded or rare?
- How do media production education discourses discursively constitute media production education subjects: the students, faculty, and industry stakeholders?

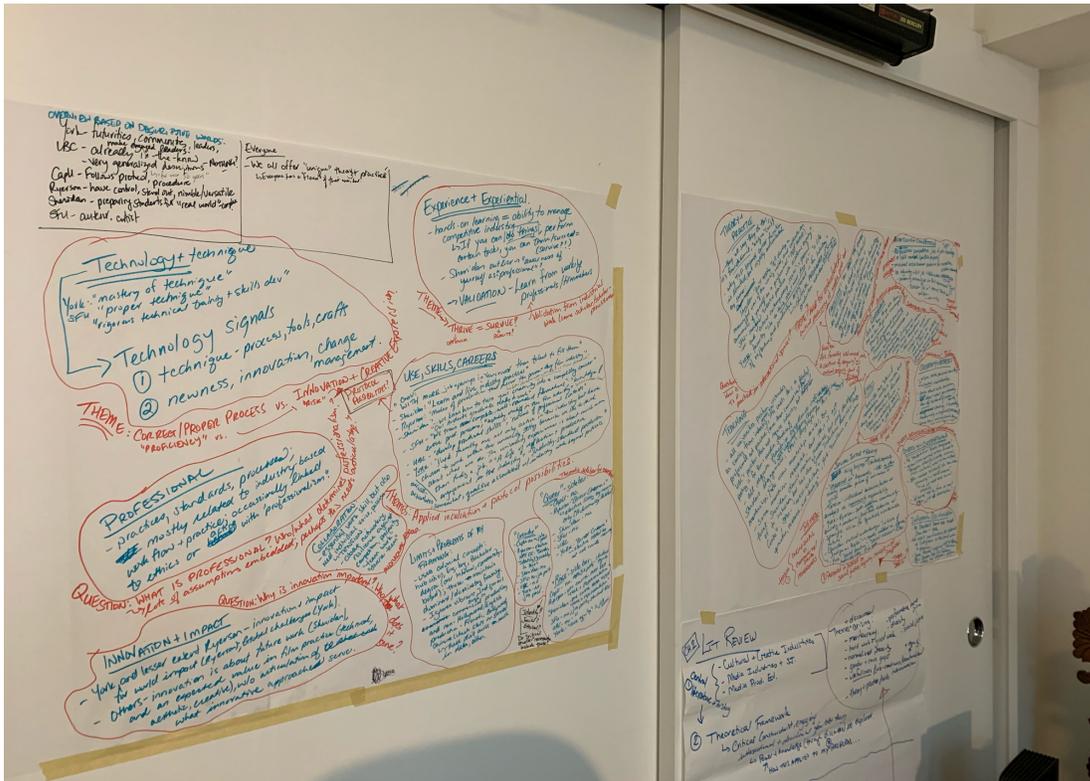
During this review of the data, I wrote notes that identified recurring or outlier discursive themes. I eventually deleted five thematic topics as they were producing minimal codes and were present in other thematic categories. The five removed themes are: critical thinking, hard work & good work, history, meritocracy, and race & culture. Themes like critical thinking or history were producing codes in the coursework theme, and race & culture was not needed as it was minimal and coded in the Indigeneity and decolonization, and social justice & equity themes. At the end of this process, I distilled the remaining nineteen (19) themes into more concrete interrelated findings.

3.12. Identifying findings

When I say findings in this dissertation, I am referring to information that I have organized from raw data on the website. Thus, findings relate to my first research question: what do film school say they do? When I say analysis in this writing, I am discussing what the potential meanings and interpretations of the findings. The analyses undertaken relate to my second research question: what are the implications of what film schools say they do?

I engaged a process of concept mapping to summarize and relate the many discursive themes arising in the notes created in my review of the data. The concept mapping was done on large sheets of paper that enabled me to post them to a wall and to literally draw lines between the themes, and make notes about how each theme was interrelating.

Figure 1: Concept mapping



Through an iterative process of reviewing the thematic topics on the concept maps, referring back to the original data, the coded data, and ongoing notes, the themes

arising were distilled into three summative discursive themes noted in the introduction to this section: discourses of bridging theory and practice; discourses of fitting in to film production programs; and discourses of prioritizing individualism over collectivism. With the three discursive themes identified, I went back to the NVivo notes, the notes from the concept mapping, and the coded webpages, and identified data relating to each discursive theme, answering the research question: what do film schools say they do? Thus, for clarity, the findings are derived from my review of the data, and the subsequent analyses explores the implications of the findings.

A snapshot of the units and volume of data reviewed and coded is as follows.

Table 3.1. Data themes, units and volume

Core themes	Discourses of bridging theory and practice	Discourses of fitting in	Discourses of prioritizing individualism over collectivism
Thematic topics coded in NVivo & # of phrases coded for each topic	Coursework (235) Facilities (34) Teaching practices (64) Theory & practice (47) Experiential (78) Technical (59)	Admissions (72) Competition (20) Creativity & aesthetics (106) Descriptive words (47) Normalized precarity (9) Teaching practices (64) Use, skills & career-readiness (131) Experiential (78) Professional (53)	Admissions (72) Collaboration (46) Diversity & internationalization (40) Indigeneity & decolonization (10) Social justice & equity (29) Teaching practices (64)
Total # of phrases coded	517	580	261

3.13. Validity, trustworthiness and crystallization

The research design and analytic process I followed was to support the validity and trustworthiness of this study. Following Tracy (2010), the high degree of detail in my methodological and analytic tracking and writing enhances validity of the emergent analyses and findings. Additionally, the critical discourse analytic (CDA) methodology followed aligns with my critical constructivist theoretical framework, and this builds validity through methodological rigor (Tracy, 2010; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As both CDA and critical constructivism seek to uncover the complexities and tensions within the

social construction of knowledge and power, the theoretical framework and methodology are aligned, thus enhancing the validity of the research design.

As CDA can be undertaken as a post-structural methodology, the goal of my research design was not to discover an objective reality within media production program discourses, but to significantly analyze and interpret the data in a way that produces “dependable” or “confirmable” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 239) descriptions of variable and entangled research insights. Using a post-structural analytic process, this research pursued a “transgressive validity” (Lather, 2007) that aimed to describe various ways that media production program discourses produce knowledge and project subjectivities. Transgressive validity is about “seeing what frames our seeing” (Lather, 2007, p. 119); the analytic process undertaken was not aimed to discover objective empirical observations, but to discern multiple entangled possibilities in how power lives in discourse and shapes what can be seen or experienced in film education.

Drawing from Tracy’s (2010) “big tent” (p.) criteria for qualitative research, she suggests that sincerity in the research aims is critical to building validity in the research process. As a media industry and media production education insider, I am positioned to engage self-reflexively in my research process and have included in my findings how my insider experience influenced my analytic steps and outcomes. I engaged the reflexive process of Gill’s “sceptical reading” (2011, p. 8) of data in order to acknowledge and probe my assumptions in the analysis, including the ways in which I, and my media sectors, “habitually make sense of things” (Gill, 2011, p. 8). Following Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2018), validity is enhanced by my commitment to sharing research findings in my industry and educational communities in the service of critically-informed community action. As an educator working in public higher education, I believe credibility can also be attributed to this study’s use of public institutional website text as this text is maintained with some form of public consistency and oversight.

Finally, research credibility is often said to be accomplished if a researcher practices theoretical, investigator, data, or methodological triangulation (Flick, 2018a,b) as a means to ensure reliability through significant and multiple research perspectives, data or methods. While triangulation was initially a methodological aim, the poststructuralist process of iterative and overlapping intersectional analyses undertaken was aligned with a crystallization approach for methodological legitimacy. Crystallization

has been expressed by Ellingson (2009) as a situated analytic process that produces nuanced findings, including contradictory or multiple perspectives. Given the complexity of analysis afforded by transgressive validity, this dissertation engages the principles of crystallization by iteratively analyzing naturally-occurring data from multiple Canadian institutions in an effort to gain a sense of various discursive trends nationally in media production education. Crystallization is enhanced through the layering of prevailing critical theory and media industries research in the analysis of the data.

Overall, validity and trustworthiness of the empirical analysis undertaken in this study has been considered in my theoretical positionings, research design, and detailed accounting of my critical analysis.

3.14. Summary

The critical discourse analytic methodology outlined in this chapter offered me the opportunity to undertake an empirical study of the social, critical and historical aspects of media production education program discourses in service of the core concerns of my research: what do film schools say they do, and what are the implications of what they say they do? In the description and interpretation of my findings that follow in the next chapters, I have aimed to gain a sense of how these programs are connecting their educational activities to contemporary social movements, creative industries research, and media industry initiatives in service of more just work processes and experiences.

3.15. Organization of findings and analyses

The findings and analyses in the next three chapters are organized and attentive to three main discursive themes:

1. Discourses of bridging theory and practice
2. Discourses of fitting in to media production programs
3. Discourses of prioritizing individualism over collectivism

Each discursive theme contains several findings, which I will describe by outlining what the data shows that film schools say they do. Each of the three discursive themes presented in this chapter will be concluded with an analysis of the

findings, per my second research question: what are the implications of what film schools say they do? For clarity, the institutions and programs studied will be discussed using the shortened version of their name as follows:

1. Capilano University: Bachelor of Motion Picture Arts (“Capilano”)
2. X University: Bachelor of Fine Arts: Image Arts in Film studies (“XU”)
3. Sheridan College: Honours Bachelor of Film and Television (“Sheridan”)
4. Simon Fraser University: Bachelor of Fine Arts Film Major (“SFU”)
5. University of British Columbia: Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film Production (“UBC”)
6. York University: Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film Production (“York”)

Chapter 4.

Discourses of bridging theory and practice

This chapter is organized by first presenting the language used in the film school websites that relates to the broad discursive theme of bridging theory and practice. I refer to this presentation of website text as my findings. The second half of this chapter is an analysis of the findings.

The discursive theme of bridging theory and practice produced three core findings in response to my first research question: what do film schools say they do?:

- **Finding 1:** programs define their model of education as a bridging of theory and practice.
- **Finding 2:** programs emphasize practice-based experiential learning for student employability, industry skills training and post-graduate career success.
- **Finding 3:** program descriptions centre industry-standard technology, production processes, and facilities.

This writing on the first theme of the discourses of bridging theory and practice will describe these findings in-detail and relate them in an analysis that follows.

4.1. Finding 1: Film production programs define their model of education as a bridging of theory and practice

The exact phrase “theory and practice” appears eleven (11) times in the data in the webpages of Capilano, XU, and York, but this phrase is also expressed with different wording by all of the institutions in this study. Theory and practice as an educational objective is engaged throughout the data, notably in the descriptions of the programs, coursework and other experiential learning such as in internships and practicums. Six thematic codes related to bridging theory and practice: coursework, facilities, teaching practices, theory and practice, experiential, and technical, produced 517 coded phrases. Through an iterative process of reviewing and relating the data, the coded phrases were reduced to the overarching theme of this chapter, bridging theory and practice.

All of the programs identify their core trait or program design as a bridging of theory and practice. For example:

Table 4.1. Theory and practice in program descriptions

Institution	Program description
Capilano	The third sentence in the introduction to Capilano’s Bachelor of Motion Picture Arts degree reads “Combine practice with theory to create magic” (n.d.-a).
XU	XU’s second sentence introducing the School of Image Arts’ Film + Integrated Bachelor of Fine Arts Program identifies that “The curriculum embraces a balance of theory and practice, fine art and commercial production...” (n.d.-c).
Sheridan	Sheridan’s Honours Bachelor in Film and Television forefronts practice-based and “real industry” (n.d.) experiential learning in the program description, but closes the program description with theory and practice: “Sheridan’s Honours Bachelor in Film and Television is the ideal combination of hands-on, real-world experience backed by theoretical learning in all aspects of the industry” (n.d.-b).
SFU	While SFU does not use the phrase theory and practice, it is indicated in the opening sentence of their Bachelor of Fine Arts Film Major program: “The SCA Film program combines rigorous technical training and skills development with extensive instruction in cinema studies and history” (n.d.-a).
York	York’s main program webpage introducing their Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film Production includes a description of theory and practice: they say that their program “...offers exceptional theoretical and hands-on training across the evolving spectrums of cinema and media” (n.d.-b). The program description in the academic calendar also explains that they have “...a curriculum rooted in the interrelationship of theory and practice” (n.d.-c).
UBC	UBC’s Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film Production program description opens with the statement: “Students will learn theory and techniques of motion picture production” (n.d.-b).

Beyond expressions of theory and practice in program descriptions, course titles and descriptions reiterate a bridging of these two educational objectives:

Table 4.2 Theory and practice in course descriptions

Institution	Course description
Capilano	A 400-level course titled “Visual Theory and Practice” that reviews “visual, cultural theory” and students’ research is “integrated with practical assignments and a research paper” (n.d.-b).

Institution	Course description
XU	A 400-level “Senior Project course” is written as an “opportunity to apply the theories, concepts, techniques, technologies, and practices of making films and videos learned in previous years” (n.d.-d).
Sheridan	The upper-level “Film Theory and Criticism” course at Sheridan asks students to “develop an advanced understanding of key theoretical and critical approaches and the ways in which these approaches explore the ethical, cultural and historical implications of specific film practices” (n.d.-c).
SFU	SFU’s 300-level “Theory and Cinema” course undertakes a critical approach to theory and practice: “Various theoretical positions will be assessed and compared in terms of cinematic practice and its ideological functions” (n.d.-b).
York	York’s upper-level “Editing Techniques III” (n.d.-d) and “Sound Techniques III” (n.d.-e) share the wording “Explores further the practice, aesthetics and theory of...” (n.d.-d,-e) sound design and editing techniques. ¹¹
UBC	UBC’s introductory film production course “Introduction to the History of Film Production” offers the least overt example of theory and practice in coursework: “The history of film and film production by decade with a strong emphasis on filmmakers and advances in production technology” (n.d.-c).

While these examples of theory and practice are combined in single courses, much of the theoretical and practical curricula are not integrated in the program design. The program structures tend to offer skills-based, or professional-practice-based courses in visual project design and execution, as well as craft skills. These hands-on or production-oriented courses are mostly separate from courses in media histories and theories, sometimes referred to as film studies in these programs. For example:

Table 4.3 Theory separated from practice in course descriptions

Institution	Course description
Capilano	In each year of Capilano’s degree there are craft-based courses such as “Screenwriting I,” and production project courses, “MOPA Project #1,” and separate courses in cinema history such as “American Cinema” (n.d.-b).

¹¹ York’s Film Production program draws from a significant list of eighty-seven (87) elective courses offered in their broad School of The Arts, Media, Performance & Design. The full course descriptions of these elective courses were not captured as data in this study as they were not readily available during data collection, but given the titles of some of the courses, it appears that courses such as “Digital Culture: History, Theory, Practice” (n.d.-f) would integrate theory and practice.

Institution	Course description
XU	XU has the separate “Film Theory,” “Film Production,” and “Film Technology” (n.d.-e) courses in each year, as well as “Visual Studies,” “Film History” or “Film Theory” (n.d.-e).
Sheridan	Sheridan has film studies courses such as “History of International Cinema,” and craft-based courses such as “Cinematography” or “Sound Recording,” and project based courses such as “Core Production 1” (n.d.-d).
SFU	SFU offers craft-based, project-based, interdisciplinary visual art studies, and film theory courses: “The Techniques of Film,” the project-based “Filmmaking 1,” visual art-oriented courses such as “Art and the Moving Image,” and cinema studies such as “The History and Aesthetics of Cinema 1” (n.d.-b).
York	York’s program offers the most options for pathways through the degree with a vast number of critical electives, but their core courses still follow a similar pattern to the other institutions. They require students to take craft-based courses such as “Introduction to Screenwriting,” project-based courses such as “Introduction to Filmmaking,” and cinema studies courses such as “Canadian Cinema” (n.d.-f).
UBC	UBC’s program follows a similar path as the others with craft-based courses: “Introduction to Motion Picture Directing,” project-based courses: “Film and Media Production 1,” and film studies courses such as “introduction to Canadian Cinema” (n.d.-c).

All six of the institutions in this study have required or optional work placements, internships or practicums, and bridging theory and practice is used overtly in one institutional description of internships. Sheridan’s mandatory internship occurs in the summer between students’ 3rd and 4th years of the program, and the program states that internships offer students the opportunity to “apply theory to practice, develop a meaningful view of the working world, and cultivate an awareness of [themselves] as a professional” (n.d.-e).

Two institutions convey a relationship between theory and practice in their optional internship programs:

- York highlights in a program description that students will have the chance to “Apply [their] learning with outreach into the film and television industry with field trips, internships and guest lectures, providing a doorway to a life of reflective and productive engagement in the industry” (n.d.-b).
- Regarding their optional internship program, SFU notes that “These internships provide diverse opportunities to creatively integrate what students have been studying in the classroom through fun and practical learning experiences” (n.d.-c).

Capilano, XU and UBC all offer practicums or internships, but they frame these around discourses of practical and career-based experience. For example, Capilano requires students to complete a practicum in their fourth year of the program with the goal to contribute to students' "critical path into the industry" (n.d.-b).

XU and UBC's internship programs are optional, and XU's is intended to build "practical experience and make valuable career contacts" (n.d.-f), while UBC's optional Arts Internship Program states that it is to "Become career ready while gaining community connections and better knowledge of your career path" (n.d.-d). While the discursive framing differs in practicums and internships, it is notable that they are offered consistently by all six programs.

There are only three instances wherein institutions indicate that practicums, internships or other experiential learning are completed as paid or unpaid work. For example, Sheridan notes that their internships "may be paid or unpaid" (n.d.-e) and UBC offers an "Arts Co-Op" with "three paid, full-time work terms" (n.d.-e) as well as an "Arts Internship Program" with "part-time, un-paid positions" (n.d.-e). SFU's internship specifies that it is unpaid work as the eligibility for the internships is based on the students' ability to "personally and financially commit to 8-12 hours/week for the length of the internship" (n.d.-c). While XU offers a "Work Placement" (n.d.-f), the experience is described as an "internship at a company" (n.d.-f), but does not indicate remuneration. York describes their internships as "on-the-job experience" that might indicate unpaid work, as this statement is followed by the statement that for many students the internships have "led directly to employment" (n.d.-b). Capilano's required "Practicum" (n.d.-b) course does not mention remuneration.

From theory to practice in program curricula, the next findings show how media production programs emphasize and express applied and industry-based elements of their program curricula and activities.

4.2. Finding 2: Film production programs emphasize practice-based experiential learning for student employability, industry skills training and post-graduate career success

All of the institutions in this study emphasize and prioritize practice-based experiential learning, often with emphasis on specific film production craft skills. This hands-on learning is consistently connected to student employability, industry skills training, and post-graduate career success. The six institutions vary in how they express their visions of experiential and practice-based learning, but the emphasis on practice is consistent throughout. For example, the word “practice” appears in the data in relation to program activities one hundred and one (101) times: fifteen times for Capilano, twenty-eight times for XU, eleven times for SFU, twelve times for Sheridan, nine times for UBC, and twenty-six times for York. Following is an overview of the findings on experiential and practice-based media production education per institution studied. The following institutional summaries illustrate how concepts of practice-based learning appear in program website text.

Capilano University

1. Program descriptions

In the main page for **Capilano’s** School of Motion Picture Arts that houses the Bachelor of Motion Picture Arts, the university begins by stating that “CapU’s School of Motion Picture Arts is dedicated to inspiring and training a new generation of Canadian talent in the film, TV, animation, gaming and motion picture industries” (n.d.-c). It goes on to describe its “professional” (n.d.-c) facilities and equipment, then states “With more job openings in Vancouver than talent to fill them, there are unparalleled opportunities for skilled people” (n.d.-c). The Bachelor of Motion Pictures Arts Degree is introduced with an industry phrase: “Lights. Camera. Action!” (n.d.-a), and then focuses on industry professional practice: “Come and learn from industry professionals at CapU’s state-of-the-art Bosa Centre for Film and Animation. Combine practice with theory to create magic” (n.d.-a).

The second paragraph in the program description talks about offering students the “tools to build [their] technical knowledge and creative confidence” (n.d.-a), and states that students will “gain skills in the different technical departments” (n.d.-a). This

program page includes one sentence specifically about theoretical or critical education, but it is unclear if these are in reference to any experiential learning: “You’ll learn the theory and history of cinema and develop your critical thinking skills” (n.d.-a).

2. Learning Outcomes

All of the program learning outcomes emphasize professionally-relevant skills, for example, students who complete the program are expected to: “Demonstrate levels of practical, critical, analytical and research skills, in terms of both the creative and producing components of filmmaking, that will broaden their range of applications of visual communication in order to expand their potential to realize and create meaningful career opportunities” (n.d.-a). One learning outcome combines “historical, philosophical, and theoretical” studies in relationship to “creative analysis and decision making” (n.d.-a).

3. Coursework

In coursework, the word “industry” is mentioned twelve (12) times in phrases such as “industry standards,” “industry protocol,” “industry software,” industry “workflow,” and “industry professionals” (n.d.-b). In three courses, the exact phrase is used: “Students will be evaluated on individual professionalism, technical competency, and control over aesthetics and content” (n.d.-b). When looking at the program profile of required courses each year, one or two courses are easily identified as theoretically or critically-based, such as “Canadian Cinema” (n.d.-b), while eight to ten of the annually required courses can be identified as practice-based such as “Technical Directing” or “MOPA Project 2” (n.d.-b).

4. Faculty job posting

The faculty job posting reviewed in this study, “Instructor – Motion Picture Production” also centres professional practice in the posting and contains no mention of theory. It asks for “15 years professional experience,” “Directing and/or assistant directing credits,” and “DGC¹² affiliation” (n.d.-d). From program description, to program

¹² DGC is an acronym for The Director’s Guild of Canada, the professional guild representing film & television directors and assistant directors, as well as accounting, art department, editing and locations crew.

learning outcomes to coursework and faculty job descriptions, practice-based and industry or career-affiliated education is prioritized.

X University

1. Program descriptions

XU's Faculty of Communication & Design program that houses its Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film Studies defines itself as an industry-relevant professional program. The first sentence on its website reads: "XU FCAD is an impactful education hub and innovation ecosystem at the heart of Canada's media, design and creative industries" (n.d.-g). The Faculty's programs are then introduced as "22 professional programs that are best in class in Canada" (n.d.-g), and programs that blend "a variety of fields, experiential learning, innovation and technology... empowering [students] to become the creative leaders of tomorrow" (n.d.-g). From here, the Film Program webpage introduces the program as offering "theory and practice of analogue and digital storytelling leading to career choices in the Canadian screen industries and to further study at the graduate level" (n.d.-f). It goes on to say that it "emphasizes experiential learning," that it "aims to create flexible, quick-thinking, highly adaptable film/video filmmakers capable of working effectively in a variety of circumstances and roles," and that its "Graduates are equipped to take advantage of many different artistic and commercial opportunities in the world of visual communication" (n.d.-f).

In a subsequent section of the program webpage, it asks, "Film Studies – Is It for You?" (n.d.-f). This section outlines many aspects of experiential craft-based learning: "...you will learn technical and storytelling skills that will lead you to be able to make short and long films... You will learn by doing, working with your classmates to produce professional-level work" (n.d.-f). At the end of this paragraph of technical and craft learning, it reads, "At the same time, you will learn film histories and theories that will help you watch films with more insight" (n.d.-f). This webpage also contains information about a variety of craft-based student post-graduate career opportunities such as "a freelancer in directing, producing, screenwriting, editing..." (n.d.-f), and notes that "graduates have played at major festivals around the world" (n.d.-f). This webpage ends with a section called "Experience" and it lists these elements on offer in the program: "Work Placement... Hands-on Training... Practical Project... Global Learning... Leading-edge Facilities... and Comprehensive Materials" (n.d.-f).

2. Coursework

XU's curricula contains "Film Production" courses for project-based learning, "Visual Studies" offering studio-based "hands-on workshop[s]," "Technology" courses in craft-based skills such as "lighting" or "editing," and Art or Film Studies courses such as "Art in the Modern World" or "Film History and Criticism since 1945" (n.d.-h). The upper-level Film Production course emphasizes "Modes of production that mirror the present-day film industry" (n.d.-i). In the first year of the program, students are required to take two Liberal Studies theoretical electives, and each following year of the program, they are required to take two of their elective "Professional" courses, one from the "Professional Table 1" that contains 45 craft-based specialized courses, and one from the "Professional Table 2" (n.d.-h) that contains 51 more theoretically-oriented courses.

3. Faculty job posting

The faculty job posting for an "Assistant or Associate Professor Position in Creative Producing for Film" highlights that the position will teach "Film Production and Business of Film" with the possibility of teaching in an upcoming "Scriptwriting and Story Design (MFA), and "Supervising graduate students" (n.d.-j). It goes on to state that the position is "tied to a commitment to expanded pedagogy that will embed students more directly in the Canadian film industry" (n.d.-j). The Professor job qualifications centre professional skillsets such as "deep connections with the Canadian and international film industries, with a record of active engagement with the film industry and professional organizations" (n.d.-j). Like Capilano, professional work processes combined with hands-on learning are the focus of XU's film program.

Sheridan College

1. Program descriptions

Sheridan's Faculty of Animation, Arts & Design that houses the Honours Bachelor of Film and Television highlights the industry and practice-based nature of its programs: "...we train performers, animators, filmmakers, designers and artists like you to realize the full potential of their talents. Our renowned faculty members come from the industry, which means you receive a professionally relevant education that also makes you highly employable in your field" (n.d.-f). The webpage headline for the Bachelor program reads "Prepare for a career in the motion picture/broadcast/multimedia industry"

(n.d.-b). It describes the program activities in relationship to craft technical skills: “In the first two years of this degree, you'll get a taste of everything this industry has to offer. Under the guidance of industry-experienced professors, you'll choose electives in direction, production, writing and editing to find where your talent lies. In your final semesters, you'll specialize — documentary or drama production, scriptwriting, directing, cinematography, editing or sound” (n.d.-b). Sheridan notes that students produce a capstone filmed project requiring student to “...go through the same process filmmakers do to prepare you for the real industry” (n.d.-b). Near the end of the program information page, the program is described within a theoretical context, too: “...the ideal combination of hands-on, real-world experience backed by theoretical learning in all aspects of the industry” (n.d.-b).

2. Learning Outcomes

Nine of the twelve program learning outcomes are related to industry or craft-based learning, for example, one culminating outcome reads: “Learn and live industry practices” (n.d.-g). The remaining three learning outcomes relate to critical thinking, social contexts and communication skills. For example: “Develop critical thinking and self-awareness by evaluating a variety of theories and approaches to film analysis” (n.d.-g).

3. Coursework

Sheridan’s curricula emphasizes craft-based and practice-based courses, and in each term students can choose from one of the program electives that are all craft specializations. In the first year of the program Sheridan requires three theoretically or historically-based courses such as “History of International Cinema” and six practice based courses such as “Introduction to Directing” (n.d.-d). In subsequent years of the program, one theory-based course is required per year plus one degree breadth elective course from other departments, and all semesters from second year onwards contain six to seven hands-on, craft or production-based courses.

4. Job posting

While Sheridan’s job posting is for an “Associate Dean, Film, Television and Journalism” (n.d.-h), and not a faculty position, they do highlight that their “...students graduate ready to work as film, TV, and documentary-makers, editors...in a variety of

the creative industries” (n.d.-h). Similar to Capilano and XU, professional practices and processes dominate course and program foci.

Simon Fraser University

1. Program descriptions

SFU’s School of Contemporary Arts that houses the Bachelor of Fine Arts Film Major offers degrees in “Dance, Film, Music & Sound, Theatre Performance, Theatre Production & Design, and Visual Art” (n.d.-d). It does not provide a comprehensive introduction to the School, but the Film program webpage introduces itself as offering “...rigorous technical training and skills development with extensive instruction in cinema studies and history” (n.d.-a). At the start of its description of program activities, it states that “BFA students learn by making their own films and videos in each year of their program starting in the first semester” (n.d.-a). They list film festival successes of their grads as a hallmark of the program success, and they end the program description with this note: “We maintain a close relationship with national and regional festivals, federal and provincial media agencies, broadcasters, labs, post-houses, sound houses, and industry professionals. Students develop expertise and contacts through visiting artists and sessional instructors who teach advanced professional skills” (n.d.-a).

2. Coursework

There are no program learning outcomes listed for SFU’s Film Program. The program’s course requirements are divided between lower level and upper level courses. The lower level course requirements include four history and theory based courses such as “The History and Aesthetics of Cinema I” (n.d.-b), and eight practice-based courses such as “Interdisciplinary Studio,” “Filmmaking I,” and “The Techniques of Film” (n.d.-b).

3. Job posting

The job posting for a “Tenure-Track Assistant Professor in Film” is seeking a “filmmaker or filmmaker/scholar” and notes that the School for Contemporary Arts programs offer “unique curriculum in which studio classes are integrated with the historical and theoretical study of the arts” (n.d.-e). The posting goes on to detail the requirement for an active creative practice “with a substantial record of creative distinction,” (n.d.-e) and noting that “As our film production curriculum is grounded in project-based instruction, candidates should demonstrate experience in a broad range of

technical and creative skills” (n.d.-e). Again, production or project-based competencies are the focus of SFU’s film program.

University of British Columbia

1. Program descriptions

The main statement on **UBC’s** Department of Theatre of Film’s webpage reads that they “engage each student’s creative, technical, and academic abilities through the various disciplines of theatre and film” (n.d.-f). UBC’s Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film Production introduces itself with the statement: “Since 1969, the BFA Film Production program at UBC has provided courses and workshops for students who have become industry leaders, screening their work at internationally-recognized film festivals” (n.d.-b). UBC describes its curriculum on this webpage as the “theory and techniques of motion picture production” (n.d.-b) with an “immersive and hands-on” (n.d.-b) program design. There are no listed program learning outcomes, but a separate department webpage notes that the “BFA Theatre and Film programs put more emphasis on blending artistic and professional practice, theory and research” (n.d.-f).

2. Coursework

The lower-level program course include two theoretically-based courses per year such as “Introduction to the History of Film Production” (n.d.-c), with a selection of eight practice and craft-based courses such as “Film and Media Production 1” (n.d.-c). In upper-level years, students are required to take a minimum of one theoretically-based film studies course from a selection of eighteen courses such as “Studies in Film Theory,” (n.d.-c) and a minimum of eight production and craft-based courses such as “Intermediate Motion Picture Directing” (n.d.-c).

3. Faculty job posting

The job posting captured for this study is for an Assistant Professor of Teaching in Film Studies, not in film production. The core competencies required in the posting are: “an exceptional teacher with a track record of employing innovative pedagogies, such as community-based learning, flexible and/or online learning, and curriculum/program design” (n.d.-g). Given UBC’s emphasis on production success post-graduation, and on hands-on learning, their approach aligns with other universities in this study.

York University

1. Program descriptions

York's School of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design that houses the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film Production, introduces itself in relationship to creativity and innovation stating at the outset that they will "...unleash [students'] creativity and prepare [them] to thrive in a world where the single most valuable asset is creativity" (n.d.-g). After highlighting some professionally successful graduates such as "Debra Brown (Cirque du Soleil choreographer)" (n.d.-g), they note that "Learning by doing is the hallmark of our programs. We offer intensive professional training and in-depth academic studies in dance, design, digital media, film, music, theatre and visual arts" (n.d.-g). To introduce their media and film programs, the webpage states: "From idea to screenplay, camera to screen, screen to critical inquiry, AMPD's Department of Cinema and Media Arts offers exceptional theoretical and hands-on training across the evolving spectrums of cinema and media" (n.d.-h). Three of the six "top reasons to apply" on their webpage highlight professional and experiential learning: "hands-on experience," "professional placement and internship opportunities in the film, television and media industries," and "guest lectures & workshops by industry insiders and leading film scholars" (n.d.-h). In a program question and answer section, the top three questions are about media practice: "Do all production students get to make films?" (n.d.-h), "How many film productions are made in the program in a given year?," and "How will studying Film at York prepare me for a job?" (n.d.-h). The program information webpage echoes previous comments about hands-on experience and connections to industry professionals and it states that it "prepares students for careers in all facets of filmmaking" (n.d.-b). After listing the variety of craft-based skills gleaned from the program, the program description ends with the note that "Courses in film history and theory empower students to develop their ability not only to make moving images but to think, talk, and write about them, and to understand the historical and theoretical framework in which they are produced" (n.d.-b).

2. Learning outcomes

The learning outcomes for the York Film Program note that in the first two years students will build “a solid foundation with...technical aspects of film and video production” (n.d.-b) and “Understand cinema history in a cultural and economic context” (n.d.-b). In the third and fourth year, the learning outcomes focus on specialized skills training to help students “Determine [their] specialization” (n.d.-b), and apply their learning to professional work contexts.

3. Coursework

The coursework is structured slightly differently than other programs as the first two years of the degree require three history or theory courses per year such as “Film Art: An Introduction” (n.d.-f), and only two studio or production-related courses such as “Introduction to Filmmaking” (n.d.-f). In the third and fourth year, this changes with the requirement for seven production and craft-related courses such as “Cinematography III” and four required history or theory courses such as “Canadian Cinema” (n.d.-f). Students at York have 97 production and theoretical courses to choose from in the Department of Cinema and Media Studies, so they have capacity to choose from a wide array of theoretical or production-based courses for electives in their degree, too.

4. Faculty job posting

The faculty job posting asks for “a substantial record of ongoing professional experience in Film or Digital Production,” “...with a demonstrated record of excellence or promise of excellence in creative practice/research and teaching,” and “have specialized technical knowledge” (n.d.-i). It goes on to stipulate that “A practical knowledge of sound recording...is desirable. The successful candidate should be prepared to lead in-class technical workshops” (n.d.-i). Again, York’s emphasis on experiential and professionally-informed education echoes the other institutions in this study.

Overall, the findings indicate that technical, industrial, craft, production and studio-based competencies are emphasized for both students and faculty in the media production education programs studied, and these connect consistently to program facilities and production processes. The implications of these findings will be explored in the second half of this chapter.

4.3. Finding 3: Film production programs centre industry-standard technology, production processes, and facilities

Many of the findings about industry-standard technology, production processes and facilities are embedded in program descriptions in the first two findings. However, the following will offer a brief descriptive overview of how facilities, equipment, and production technologies and processes are expressed and positioned in the media production program webpages. All six of the institutions include information about studio or production-oriented equipment and facilities, and these are situated in program descriptions that centre filmmaking practices and media industry standards. The programs also depict these elements of their programs as a point of pride or achievement.

Capilano describes itself as a “world-leading centre” (n.d.-c) with “state-of-the-art” (n.d.-c) and “studios...and equipment” (n.d.-c). They also describe the production equipment in detail: “Our facilities include virtual reality and motion capture-equipped studios, Cintiq drawing tablets, high-speed render farms, professional filmmaking equipment and 3D printers. It’s a great opportunity to learn the skills required to enter the creative industries” (Capilano, n.d.-c), and they reinforce that students will be “working with up-to-date professional equipment” (n.d.-a). The word “technical” is prominent in the data, and is particularly evident in their course titles and descriptions, as students are invited to build “technical knowledge and creative confidence” and “skills in the different technical departments (n.d.-a).

In a program webpage section titled “Why Image Arts at **XU?**,” a phrase underscores the professional resources used for technical training at XU: “Image Arts students have access to industry-grade production and post-production equipment and facilities, including a huge suite of cameras and lenses, photography studios, film editing rooms, non-linear digital editing suites, black-and-white darkrooms, sound stages, audio mixing facilities, mounting and mat-cutting areas, a carpentry workshop and a motion picture lab” (n.d.-c). The program webpage echoes this description calling their resources “Leading-edge Facilities” including “the high-tech Universal Studios¹³ Canada

¹³ Universal Studios is one of the most eminent film and television production studios in Hollywood.

Instructional Demonstration Facility” (n.d.-f). Following these descriptions of professional-grade technical and craft resources in the program webpage, the program website also notes that it holds a significant media collection: “With Canada’s largest teaching collection of film, photography and new media materials, the School of Image Arts lets you put classroom learning into context” (n.d.-f). XU’s webpages tend to use the word “technology” over “technical” in program descriptions and technology is centred in the yearly recurring course “Film Technology” (n.d.-e).

Sheridan’s Faculty of Animation, Arts & Design that oversees the Bachelor of Film & Television program addresses their professional resources in their viewbook: “FAAD gives you the chance to learn the latest technologies — such as virtual reality and visual effects — in our well-equipped studios and facilities. We complement these experiences with Sheridan’s leadership in industry-related technologies for the arts, such as our Research and Training Centre, which is a top research centre for screen-based digital technologies” (n.d.-i). The Faculty overview webpage also notes that its students graduate with “technical sophistication” (n.d.-f). One other note appears in the program description about equipment: students “must have a Sheridan-approved laptop to participate in [the] program” (n.d.-j). In other words, students are required to purchase an industry-oriented computing device in order to complete their coursework.

SFU’s main program webpage does not contain any information about facilities or the crafts associated with institutional production resources. However, in the SFU Film Program’s “frequently asked questions” (n.d.-f) document on their webpage, there are two sections devoted to answering questions about camera equipment specifically. First, they highlight: “**We still teach FILM.** In the first year or two you learn to shoot 16mm film on Bolex and Arriflex cameras...In the third and fourth years of the program, the option to shoot on film is still there, though the majority of students opt to work in digital video” (n.d.-f). The document goes on to explain the reasons for using analog film cameras: “We firmly believe in teaching students to use film in the early years of their program. Students learn the discipline that comes with working in the medium. They learn the importance of proper technique in a way that video does not encourage” (n.d.-f). A subsequent question and answer speaks to the cameras they use and why they are important: “**What kind of camera equipment do you have?** This is a very frequently asked question, and for good reason. Cameras are among the most important tools you will use in creating your work. Currently, our main cameras are Red Scarlet and Epic

Cameras, so you will have access to some of the highest-end video equipment available at any film school in Canada” (n.d.-f). The description of cameras ends with this note: “But what’s most important about this is that at SFU you get to *use* these cameras in your productions” (n.d.-f).

UBC’s description of their facilities outlines the scope and professional quality of their facilities and equipment. Under a program webpage regarding facilities, there is the statement: “The UBC Theatre and Film Department has a variety of facilities to accommodate multiple disciplines taught in our programs” (n.d.-h). It goes on to state that “Often, major local professional theatre and film companies will come to our Department to make use of our great resources” (n.d.-h). Under a section called “Curriculum” on the Film Program webpage, there is further discussion about equipment: “The department will have production equipment and post-production platforms, however, accepted students should have their own consumer-level camera and computer with an editing platform” (n.d.-b). Like Sheridan, UBC requires that students purchase the filmmaking equipment of a camera and laptop to attend the program.

York’s Department of Cinema and Media arts highlights their professional-grade resources in multiple places on their webpage. In program highlights, it reads “World-class facilities, including AMPD’s professional sound stage at Cinespace Film Studios” (n.d.). “World-class facilities” (n.d.-h) are mentioned a second time in the program webpage. The Film program question and answer section describes the facilities and scope of production in relation to graduates’ job preparedness: “The size of the department, its extensive facilities...the scale of student productions...all combine to create an accelerated learning experience like no other” (n.d.-h). Lastly, in another program description they note that students use “industry-standard production and post-production facilities, to produce work of fully professional calibre” (n.d.-j).

The thematic findings regarding discourses of bridging theory and practice, experiential and professional education, and of industry-standard professional facilities are considered in the following analysis.

4.4. Analysis of discourses of bridging theory and practice

This analysis is a direct response to my second research question: what are the implications of what film schools say they do? Given that it is unknown how film schools take up social change or social justice in media industries work cultures, the following analysis will consider where power and dominance is engaged in discourses of bridging theory and practice.

Broadly, the findings indicate that the theory and practice binary is a central concept expressed in film school webpages. The institutions in this study have a similar flow to their degree programs: each year contains mostly production and practice-based courses, with differences between the programs in terms of where they insert the theoretical and historical courses. Overall, the hands-on, practice, and production-based elements of curricula are emphasized as the core aspect of teaching and learning in all of the programs in this study. Further, the practice-based curricula is discursively supported or enhanced by theory-based courses. The binary framing of theory and practice in film schools points to the overwhelming contemporary requirement for university programs to articulate and connect their educational offerings to employability and post-graduate employment success (Coté & Alahar, 2011; Viczko et al, 2019). All the programs studied describe their students as future leaders or workers performing roles that are creative, technical, administrative or business-oriented in the film and television industries or broader cultural industries¹⁴. As a result of this, discourses of “career-readiness” or success through “hands-on,” “practice-based,” or “experiential learning” are prominent in my analysis and form a main through-line that is often interwoven with other themes. The analysis considers the critical and social implications of dominant framing of film production education through the discourses of job preparedness and industry skillsets.

4.4.1. Emphasizing practice, inculcating industry logics

Framing film production education as bridging theory and practice allows programs to claim practicality, industry relevance and applicability to real-world media

¹⁴ Minimal and inconsistent descriptions describe program career pathways to post-graduate or research work, or to careers outside of media industries.

processes. While these claims might be true in relationship to student post-graduation employment rates, the focus on industrial logics in media production education indicates that critical social analyses and applications are muted or secondary to training in industrial processes. The reliance in course descriptions on terms such as craft skills or industry standards highlights that the programs emphasize the ability to complete specific film job tasks. It is concerning that university Bachelor degree programs are potentially emphasizing professional practice training without critical and social revisioning or transforming of industry logics that have been evidenced to be exploitative and oppressive. The analysis that follows connects these concerns to the findings.

Crafting bias and exclusion

In the data, practice-based curricula is easily recognized as coursework in craft-based and technological skills, production projects, practicums and internships, and specialized creative or technical workshops. The programs are all structured to centre professional practice and craft-based experiential learning. The only exception to this in the data is the first two years of York's film program wherein three history or theory courses are required, as compared to only two required production courses. Despite this difference, York's extensive number of professionally-related and technical course offerings, and their discursive commitments to industry-ready education, indicates that students in their first two years are likely taking more than two practice-based courses, and, like other institutions, are focussed on professional applications of their education.

In the program descriptions, professional or industrial practices are a grounding concept in how students are guided to learn the steps of producing visual content. From introductory craft courses such as "Introduction to Post-Production" (Capilano, n.d.-b), to advanced and capstone project-based courses such as "Senior Project" (XU, n.d.-d), the website discourses suggest that programs emphasize technical competencies, particularly competencies that "mirror" (XU, n.d.-i) professional practices. What this means is that learning by doing, and learning professional processes are given emphasis and priority in film schools. While it is beyond the scope of this analysis to review how instructors and students interact with these dominant discourses of practice, the implication of this is that if professional practices are prioritized, then industrial logics likely follow. In other words, professional film production programs train students in production processes, and inculcate them into professional logics. In my review of

literature, I outline research about gender and race-based bias, colonial logics, and other exclusionary and abusive work practices in professional media industry practices (Banks, 2017; Brinton & McGowan, 2021; McRobbie, 2016; Saha, 2018). Thus, if unjust practices are endemic to the industry, then discourses and practices of bias and exclusion are likely normalized in film production education, too.

Absenting criticality

Thus, it is important to consider how professional practices being taught relate to courses on critical and social theory. The theoretical courses described on the websites are often fairly standard Western or Hollywood-based cinema histories, with select courses considering the social, political or economic contexts of film production, or engagement of critical theories. If the historical and/or theoretical courses are predominantly more hegemonic scholarly canons, with few punctuating courses engaging in critical theory, then a clear hierarchy in educational philosophy and values emerges. This hierarchy translates to an emphasis on the most commonplace industrial practices, as informed by professional work processes and hegemonic or classic media canons, with limited opportunities to engage with critical theory, social contexts, and non-dominant media epistemologies or practices. This curricular hierarchy, then, appears as discursively constructed to limit critical or social consciousness within film production education. XU's "mirror" (n.d.-i) of professional processes is a strong metaphor for media production education pedagogies. These *pedagogies of marketplace mirrors* signal industrial logics with limited critically or socially reflective media praxis. While the literature review includes examples of media strategies and Indigenous filmmakers, specifically, who are concerned with decolonizing film practices and representations, the reliance on Western and Hollywood-based cinema histories indicates that these film practices of reframing and refusal are not necessarily centred in critical and historical curricula in the film schools.

Disjunctures in praxis

The concept of praxis, which can be understood as theory-in-action, or what Kincheloe calls "informed action" (2004, p. 110), is important to consider as it is the combination of thinking and doing/making. In the literature review, praxis is defined as not only theory and practice in combination, but a reflexive process of considering the conditions and context of the doing/making (Ashton and Noonan, 2013; Smeltzer, 2020).

The word praxis does not appear in the data, so discourses of praxis as “informed action” are only implied in sentences that discuss theory and practice in combination in curricula and pedagogy in the institutions studied. While I am writing about this as an implication, the lack of overtly engaging praxis may signal an absence or disjuncture in the combination of theory and practice as praxis. For example, York’s editing and production sound courses describe that they explore “the practice, aesthetics, and theory of” (n.d.-d,-e) those production crafts. Of all the institutions in this study, York writes most overtly about how theory and practice relate: “Courses in film history and theory empower students to develop their ability not only to make moving images but to think, talk, and write about them, and to understand the historical and theoretical framework in which they are produced” (n.d.-j). While York clearly states how theory might be reflected in productions and craft skills, the program does not overtly relate theoretical skills to professional practice, which, again, signals a fissure between the program’s career-ready logics and the study of critical theories of media practice.

Another example of this discursive rift and a hierarchy of practice over theory can be seen in XU’s account of theory and practice, noting that while their students are learning technical skills, they will also “learn film histories and theories that will help [them] watch films with more insight” (n.d.-f). This wording is compelling as it indicates that the practice of making media projects is different than the act of critically *watching* media productions. In other words, there is a concerning sensibility that arises wherein the critical analysis of film is taught as an ability to critique that might be epistemologically and practically separated from the acts of producing media. Such an epistemological separation could even be understood as a distancing colonial logic that removes active relationship and responsibility between a viewer or filmmaker and their media subjects. This separation is further entrenched in program designs that centre production and craft skillsets, require more courses in production techniques, and relegate coursework in critical studies to electives or less prominent course requirements.

Praxis is also limited or absent in the discussion of film school instruction. It exists minimally, for example, in a program question and answer section at York wherein it states that “faculty are not only active in the industry but have chosen to work within the university setting because [they] like to think about what [they] do” (n.d.-h). This is echoed in a program description of 3rd and 4th year coursework wherein York students

“develop their ability not only to make moving images but to think, talk and write about them, and to understand the historical and theoretical framework in which they are produced” (n.d.-b). While the description of York faculty “thinking” about what they do (n.d.-h), is the most overt indication of media praxis instruction, it is notable that the descriptions of coursework do not make an overt connection between the making, thinking, and writing about films and the conditions of filmmaking.

In other program descriptions, there is an echo of contextualizing film production in historical or theoretical moments. While these discourses are reminiscent of praxis, they are placing theory outside of production processes, therefore not discursively integrating critical and social contexts within production processes. Again, practice is not necessarily informed by critical theory, and the critical elements applied to historical film analysis are separate from the film craft and production courses. If praxis is not occurring, then theory and practice is not bridged in the curricula, and praxis is not necessarily emphasized. This implies that critical functions of film theorizing are discursively constructed as separate from film practice, or as after-thoughts to it.

In my experience as a long-time media industries instructor, I have witnessed students navigate industry careers wherein this gap between critical theory and practice exists in their working lives. Often, they endure toxic working conditions in craft positions on mainstream Hollywood production, and enjoy more liberating and critically-informed work experiences on smaller independent projects in their spare time, and between commercial opportunities. This critically-informed and reflexive work is fleeting, and is often done on a voluntary or modestly-remunerated basis. Such poorly-paid contract work is not often questioned in industrial contexts, as the literature shows that contract work, multiple work projects, and unpaid passion projects are all naturalized elements of creative industries careers (McRobbie, 2016). It is troubling that toxic and/or precarious work cultures might be normalized, or even informed by media industries education through the neglect of a critical film praxis in favour of parsed theoretical and practical program design.

Theory at a distance from practice

Given the program and curricular emphasis on professional processes, it is uncertain how theory relates in media production programs in relationship to professional practices, in particular. The findings indicate that coursework in media

theory are predominantly about the reflective capacity of students to critically examine the historical and social contexts of representation, or to workshop theory and practice, but they do not indicate that theory is related to those mirrored professional or industrial processes. Again, this separation between critical theory and curriculum designed to train students in professional practices is concerning as it indicates that the dominant logics within film production likely prevail in curricula and pedagogy over critical or social concern about the conditions or means of professional production. This point raises important questions about how film school instructors critically consider, engage, or update their own critical knowledges of professional practices. There are no findings that indicate that programs require faculty to be critical of professional practices. Furthermore, given the well-documented issue of how university institutional discourses of merit and liberalism mask inequities embedded throughout academic life (Henry, et al., 2017), institutional culture will not likely yield critically reflective media pedagogy. These points will be developed further in my analysis of discursive constructions of fit and ethics within media production programs. What is clear in these findings is that critical theory and social contexts of film production are unevenly and less prioritized in curricula, thus giving the impression that critical and social considerations are less important or separate from media industries practice.

These findings align with Ashton and Noonan's (2013) summative call for researchers to explore how media industries social practices are navigated in media higher education and instructor's capacities for teaching socially-oriented curricula. Given Banks' (2019) assertion that film schools are "pre-industry" (p. 75) training grounds best situated to formulate pedagogies that will enable "more equitable pipelines into the media industries and change subsequent industry behaviors and expectations" (p. 85), media production education programs *should be the site for critical interventions and transformations of professional media practices*. In other words, instead of *pedagogies of marketplace mirrors* that limit critical theories of practice, program curricula could centre critical and social contexts of work as students train for professional practices. As these findings indicate, a barrier to teaching to more equitable media futures exists in the disproportionate emphasis on industry-oriented film industry practices, and due to a separation and devaluation of critical theory in the program curricula.

4.4.2. Missing instructional bridges from theory to practice

The findings indicate that film production programs say that they integrate, blend, and bridge theory and practice. However, as theory has a less focal placement in the film schools studied, the bridging of theory to practice comes into question. While the findings show that programs have at least one upper-level course that explicitly combines theory with visual projects, it is unclear what pedagogical methodologies exist to bridge theory and practice throughout program curricula. Given the programs' focus on hiring instructors with fairly specific technical competencies, scholar-practitioners who teach are not necessarily skilled at, or committed-to, integrating critical or social theory in their practice-based teaching.

The job postings analyzed indicate that theory and practice are separated, or that theory is omitted in the descriptions of faculty qualifications and responsibilities. For example, Capilano's job posting stands out as the only instructional posting that does not require applicants to submit evidence of critical or scholarly practice, but does require significant evidence of professional practice such as directing or assistant directing credits. XU, SFU and York's postings require applicants to submit profiles of their creative or research contributions, with theory and/or professional practice separated in their applications. As UBC's posting is for a film and media studies teaching instructor, it is assumed that applicants' curriculum vitae would only highlight scholarly research and output in this field. While the requirements for applying for faculty positions include documents relating to creative or scholarly contributions, these elements are not centered as much as technical and craft-based skillsets. Furthermore, no institution requires statements on pedagogies of media praxis to clarify applicants' educational philosophies of bridging theory to practice. This omission of media praxis in faculty job postings indicates that faculty are discursively positioned to prioritize craft and technical skills in their thinking about the teaching positions, and that research or creative activities are separate from teaching duties. It is concerning that programs that emphasize the bridging of theory to practice do not require instructors to articulate their position on critical media praxis as the job application stands as most instructors' first introduction to the priorities and values of media production programs. Without an emphasis on critical media praxis, instructors are not discursively cued to actually bridge theory to practice in their curricula or pedagogies.

Instructional legitimacy and competency

Ashton's (2013) research notes that creative industries teacher-practitioners are considered legitimate sources of information by students, particularly about critical and social issues. That said, Ashton's work underscores that it is unclear how confident instructors are in their understanding of these critical and social realms. Ashton's point can be applied to film production education as it is unclear if faculty who are hired have the confidence or skillsets to apply critical theory to practice as there is no requirement in the job posting for critical statements about media praxis. The absence of critical reflection on praxis or technological process is concerning given the role of critical theory and critical thinking in grappling with contested aspects of media production and representation. A question arises about the ability of programs to be critical of industries that they are feeding, especially if critical perspectives on media culture are not focal in media production pedagogies and curricula.

Critical media literacy

Despite the lack of clear instructor competencies or job requirements for critical approaches to media production education, there are well-established media education theories and practices that do emphasize critical praxis. For example, the concept of critical media literacy does not appear in any of the data, yet it is an important field of literacy education as it centres media praxis in social context, and clearly articulates connections between theory and practice. Following the review of literature, Nam (2010) suggests media production program design and curricula should be reorganized using critical media literacy principles throughout as a way to ensure practice is informed, challenged and transformed by critical theory and thinking. For Nam, this includes: building a sense of agency in students' media work, educating to contest hegemonic cultural phenomena, and using media for social action (2010, pp. 13-16). The principles of critical media literacy offer a chance to bridge theory and practice, but require instructor and institutional will and expertise to orient curricula in this manner. There is evidence that critical media literacy approaches might be occurring, but the lack of specificity on the critical framing of these courses, again, gives the impression that hegemonic media discourses might not be challenged. For example, courses such as SFU's 300-level "Theory and Cinema" undertakes a critical approach to theory and practice: "Various theoretical positions will be assessed and compared in terms of cinematic practice and its ideological functions" (n.d.-b). It is uncertain which ideological

functions might be considered in this course as it is framed in a broad and uncertain manner. More precise critical framings of courses such as this one, could offer a better cue to instructors and students alike about methodologies for critical media literacy informing production practices.

Beyond critical media literacy, there is a significant history of feminist media praxis including community-based participatory media research, training and literacy programs (hooks, 2014; Patterson et al., 2016) that offer critical interventions in the study and production of media from various feminist and intersectional perspectives. Feminism or feminist film theory only appear twice in the data, once in a modern art course at XU, and once in a film criticism course at Sheridan. As a result, feminist film critical theory traditions and praxis are also not discursively positioned as part of professional education offered by film production programs despite the importance and prominence of feminist media critique and stances in contemporary practice (Harvey, 2020, Kearney, 2018). It is deeply concerning that feminist contributions to media scholarship and practice, contributions that have significant theoretical and industrial influence, have nearly no discursive presence in the film schools studied.

4.4.3. Limitations of job preparedness

The data shows that film schools emphasize practice-based experiential curricula, and that their curricula continuously emphasize industry and job preparedness by engaging professional procedures, practices, and industry standards. Given the high degree of curricula that scaffold craft-based skills in the context of industry modes of production, and the frequency that film schools mention and centre graduates' employability and career successes, the discourses of theory and practice function as a promise of job and industry preparedness.

The strong focus in the data on job preparedness, professionalism, or employment networking, yields the analysis that "finding work" or "getting jobs" is discursively more important than challenging or transforming industry models of work that do representational, physical or psychological harm. Or, perhaps, that it is appropriate to sacrifice physical or psychological well-being in order to get a job. The findings indicate that practice-based courses are teaching students how to undertake professional practices, but these course descriptions do not indicate that learning about

profession practice includes contesting or transforming work practices or conditions of work. This emphasis on professional processes without critical attention implies that film production education has the potential to feed industry pipelines in uncritical ways and continue industry harms.

The findings echo higher education research that has indicated that vocationalism and neoliberal market-based logics have the potential to shift education toward market-based needs and away from educating for agency and democracy (Coté & Allahar, 2011; Giroux, 2014; Spooner & McNinch, 2018; Stack & Mazawi, 2021; Viczko et al., 2019). Again, critically-informed praxis in industry or vocational-related training is recommended in this broad literature so that students build the skills to critically prepare themselves to work while simultaneously working to transform industrial cultures (Viczko et al., 2019). It is worrying that discourses of job-readiness have the potential to limit students' awareness of the possibilities for their professional media futures. These limitations might also extend to how film school facilities operate.

4.4.4. Professional facilities, technology and access

The findings indicate that discourses of professional practice extend to film school spaces, facilities, equipment and technologies. Institutions consistently emphasize professional-grade equipment and facilities. For example, York promotes their "industry-standard production and post-production facilities, to produce work of fully professional calibre" (York, n.d.-j). All of the institutions studied include descriptions of their technical equipment or their facilities as a means to communicate the professional nature of the programs. Professionalism, then, is discursively constructed as a requirement for high level, implicitly expensive, and exceptional technical production resources. If professionalism is about an emphasis on exclusive production equipment, then a class-based privilege is signalled in the promotion of film school facilities and equipment. In fact, three of the six programs in this study require that students pay for some of their professional equipment: UBC requires that students buy a camera and computer, Sheridan requires an approved laptop purchase, and SFU notes that students pay for production costs. Simply, this implies that economic or class-based privilege is required to participate.

Given the dominance of technological industry standards in the websites, discourses of professional resources become a regulatory force that may delineate which bodies fit in to certain production spaces, technical processes and workflows. There are well-documented media industries inequities that evidence how women, particularly racialized women, have less access to high-paying directing work or technical work, and tend to work mostly in production support roles like producing, or in production office and accounting departments (Brinton & McGowan, 2020; Brannon Donoghue, 2020). This is due to barriers to accessing equipment and training during education (Harvey, 2021), and due to the exclusion and underrepresentation of women from most craft domains except for the feminized ones of make-up, hair, costuming, writing and producing (Liddy, 2020). With this research in mind, it is possible that professional film education space and technology resources become aligned with gender and race-based bias by naturalized underrepresentation and lack of access to film technologies and production opportunities. These biases surely connect to other professional career-limiting forces in the media industries such as normalized precarity, contract work, competitiveness, and continuous technological skills upgrading (Ashton, 2011; McRobbie, 2016). Therefore, notions of professional practice, spaces, and technologies carry with them a sensibility of exclusionary bias on the basis of identity, or economic status. This point becomes salient when considering that all of the institutions studied offer experiential learning opportunities in practicum courses or internships that are not often expressed as paid work. While the value of experiential learning is not in question, it is concerning that exclusionary economic bias might exist through the normalization of unpaid work experiences for students. To bring this discussion back to theory and practice, the lack of critical examination of the conditions of film work in film school praxis yields a concern about *how and where* exclusionary bias and precarity become normalized within film school spaces.

As Smeltzer (2020) aptly puts it, students in cultural industries programs are often “being conditioned to view themselves as precarious, unpaid, or underwaged workers” (p. 143). In situations of unpaid or under-paid practicum and internship work, students are paying twice: for tuition, and for their work time. Students who can afford this work time will likely be able to take full advantage of the experiential learning by increasing technical competencies and building industry connections. This practice indicates that class-based privilege offers some students the chance to better integrate

and engage with practicum and internship models of media production education, than others. Economic privilege, then, extends from student experience to professional experience, and government mandates for career-ready education are reinforcing these kinds of practice-based educational models (Smeltzer, 2020).

It is easy to understand why luscious and well-funded industrial media production education facilities have been invested in by Canadian governments when the media and screen economics in Canada produced \$9.32 billion in content in 2020 (CMPA, 2020). Of this \$9.32 billion in production in 2020, the provinces in this study, Ontario and British Columbia, account for the two highest provincial amounts of production at \$2.077 billion in Ontario, and \$1.729 billion in British Columbia (CMPA, 2020). Given these production amounts and generative impact to the Canadian economy, it is easy to understand why public education has welcomed industry-oriented film education as a means to contribute to this important economic sector, and manage the need for ongoing skills training. If media business is significant to the Canadian economy, then so are film production programs that supply workers to various media work sectors. Given the exclusionary practices indicated in this analysis, a question arises about the possibility to transform screen futures to more equitable orientations. If a pipeline exists to feed media production students into status quo industrial work environments, opportunities are left out to reimagine techniques of representation or the social experiences of media work. The emphasis on professional production spaces and resources, then, has the potential to impact the media education of students who are the next generation of media thinkers, creators, and innovators. While screen research happening within institutions such as Sheridan's "Screen Industries Research and Training Centre" (n.d.-i), would be appropriate places to test and expand notions of the social conditions of work with professional grade resources, it is unclear if this kind of research is occurring.

4.4.5. Thriving and surviving media work cultures

As I reviewed the data, I began to question if the blending of theory and practice was about something other than graduating technically and theoretically competent students. The discursive framings of theory and practice in this writing translate to a sensibility that media production education is concerning itself with either thriving or just surviving media work cultures. For example, in an introduction to XU's Faculty of

Communication & Design that includes the School of Image Arts Film degree, they write that their education offers theory and practice and “prepares students for the real world and empowers them to be nimble, innovative and resourceful” (n.d.-g). These descriptive words indicate qualities beyond innovation, and point to the requirement to be nimble or resourceful within the creative industries sectors. I was struck by how coded this language is given the amount of creative and media industries literature that has shown how precarity, gendered and racialized bias, and workplace harassment are naturalized elements of work cultures (Banks, 2017; Brinton & McGowan, 2020; McRobbie, 2016). As I reviewed the data for the six institutions about how technology and workplace practice will enable students to thrive in media workplaces, I was struck by how much these read as simply essential skillsets for surviving the technological requirements of media industries jobs. Thus notions of student or alumni professional success are, in fact discourses, or even lore, about how to survive the harsh realities of competitive, difficult, toxic and/or inequitable contract media employment.

Every institution in this study uses concepts of student success, or students’ ability to succeed due to the program’s experiential curricula and professional association. In addition to the idea of success, York engages the word “thrive” (n.d.-g,-h) twice in their descriptions, and this word stands out to me as it is used in the context of introducing the screen industries as highly competitive. I read this as implicating precarity, a naturalized concept for neoliberal times, but particularly present in cultural and creative industries research, as the expectation is that this work requires nimble workers who are always at the ready to take up precarious contract work under constantly changing working conditions (McRobbie, 2016, Petrie & Stoneman, 2014). In considering the theory and practice binary, then, the honing of both industrial and critical skillsets might be about building as many skills as possible for industry survival.

The descriptions of distanced theoretical coursework and fairly homogenous historical course canons, exhibited a tension between both theory and practice, and thriving and surviving. If the theory on offer gives a strong sense of dominant media histories and conceptions of practice, then the experiential learning might also be stifled, no matter how engaged and hands-on the pedagogical approaches. This leads me to consider that survival might be about fitting in amongst the most common stories and cinematic approaches. This sensibility of survival also places filmmaking practices from non-dominant perspectives as niche or sub-cultural genres. Thriving, then, might be

excelling at normative media practices and representations. Furthermore, there are no significant cues in curriculum to non-dominant forms of expression; electives do this as breadth, but there is no central coursework that seeks to test or expand status quo media practices. Therefore, homogenous canons and curricular hierarchies have the ability to silence or ignore non-dominant student contributions and visions of media practice, a point I will return to in chapter 6. This brings into question the supposed “well-roundedness” or comprehensiveness emphasized in the program websites. Simply, what is being signaled in discourses of bridging theory and practice is that media industries survival is best served through normative ways of working, and normative modes of representation.

The next chapter presents findings and analyses of discourses of “fitting in” to media production education. If theory and practice is engaged discursively to indicate mere survival of oppressive media work, then discourses of theory and practice are deeply connected to discourses of fit. Theory and practice, then, signals how bodies fit in, or do not fit in, to production spaces and technical workflows, and the challenge of fitting in becomes another survival skillset that must be taught in film production programs.

Chapter 5.

Discourses of “fitting in” to film production programs

The discursive theme of fitting in to media production education produced five findings in response to my first research question: what do media production education programs say they do? I found that media production programs say they:

- **Finding 1:** Have competitive admissions and highly subscribed programs.
- **Finding 2:** Require applicants and students to have media and arts experience, and/or industry connections to compete for entrance, student, and post-graduate success.
- **Finding 3:** Value creativity throughout program descriptions.
- **Finding 4:** Emphasize professionalism throughout program activities.
- **Finding 5:** Hire media production faculty who are productive, working professionals.

I will describe these findings and relate them in an analysis that follows. During the review of data eight thematic topics were identified as relating to discourses of “fitting in”: admissions, competition (including descriptions of building professional networks), coursework, creativity & aesthetics, teaching practices, use skills & career-readiness, experiential learning, and professionalism. Under these thematic headings, 716 phrases were coded. Through an iterative process of reviewing and relating the data, the thematic topics produced the overarching theme of this chapter, fitting in to film production programs. Prominent elements of the text reviewed for this chapter includes program and course descriptions, application criteria, student assessment criteria, and student learning outcomes. For the purpose of this dissertation, student assessments are formative or summative evaluations of student work.

5.1. Finding 1: Film production programs have competitive admissions and highly subscribed programs

In reviewing the data on admissions and program continuance, the word “competitive” appears directly 7 times, and is communicated indirectly throughout. The

theme of “competition” yielded twenty coded phrases in the data. Some uses of “competitive” are explicit and some are implicit. For example:

Table 5.1. “Competition” in program admissions text

Institution	Website text on admissions
Capilano	“Admission is competitive” (n.d.-e).
XU	Admission is “subject to competition” (n.d.-f).
SFU	SFU writes that they receive about “125 applications for 24 spots,” that they usually only “select about 50 people to interview,” and that they look for how applicants might “fit with our program” (n.d.-f).
Sheridan	It is “a highly competitive program for which the number of eligible applications exceeds the number of qualified applicants” (n.d.-k).
UBC	UBC’s website states that admission is “limited” and “strictly limited” (n.d.-e).
York	On York’s website, a Q&A section on admissions reads “What can I do to improve my chances of being accepted into Film” and it states that only “short-listed applicants will be invited for an...interview” (n.d.-h).

In programs such as SFU and York, it is communicated that the number of applicants far exceeds the number of seats available in the program. Collectively, the data indicates that all six programs are highly subscribed and admission is competitive and not guaranteed.

When reviewing the data on competitive admissions processed, I noted that lengthy lists of application requirements also indicated a complexity in choosing potential students. For example, Sheridan asks for applicants to indicate: “previous academic achievement...a Creative Project...and subsequent presentation to a faculty panel” (n.d.-l). Thus, my second finding is about how admissions requirements reflect the qualities, qualifications, academic standing, and pre-know-how that programs are seeking in their applicants.

In the data collected, three of the program webpages contain tuition fees. While tuition fees do not establish competitiveness, they are included here for the purpose of analysis of cost of tuition in relation to competition and access in the programs:

Table 5.2. Tuition fees on program webpages

Institution	Website text on admissions
Capilano (n.d-a)	Domestic fee range: \$14,416 - \$17,969 per year International fee range: \$28,560 - \$32,821 per year
XU (n.d.-k)	Domestic fee range: \$7,046 - 7,814 per year International fee range: \$28,638 - \$29,611 per year
Sheridan (n.d.-b)	Domestic fee: \$9,430 per year International fee: \$26,063 per year

5.2. Finding 2: Film production programs require applicants and students to have media or arts experience, and/or industry connections to compete for entrance, student, and post-graduate success

All of the programs reviewed require potential students to submit substantial application packages. These requirements are in addition to standard university documents such as academic transcripts and meeting basic grade point average (GPA) standards. Descriptions of application processes follow to help paint a picture of how programs are framing their admissions activities, including descriptions of core requirements such as interviews, portfolios, creative projects, written statements or questionnaires, and resumes. Portfolios are traditionally used by visual artists to arrange samples of their work in a simple format. In film production, portfolios are often referred to as a demo reel, and they feature the best excerpts of selected filmed content by a filmmaker, actor, or lead craft technician such as a cinematographer, production designer, or editor.

Interviews are used in four programs, mostly to pick final student candidates from shortlists. The institutions that use interviews are Capilano, SFU, York and Sheridan, however Sheridan calls their in-person process a “presentation to a faculty panel” (n.d.-l). There is little information about what is expected of applicants during the interviews with the exception of SFU’s note that applicants should be prepared to communicate how “interesting... and... dedicated... to film as an art” they are (n.d.-f).

Capilano University has the least requirements for entry. While they note that entry is “competitive” (n.d.-e), the program looks at an applicant’s GPA and a “letter of intent... and entrance questionnaire,” and states that “only the most qualified applicants will be invited for an interview” (n.d.-e). The entrance questionnaire is not posted on the website. Capilano is the only institution that does not require a specific visual or film art portfolio, or a combination of a portfolio and other visual creative assignments, but these might be requirements identified in the questionnaire.

Fairly in-depth portfolio and creative submissions are required by the other five institutions in this study. In addition to a written statement about films or literature of interest to the applicant, XU requires a hybrid portfolio that includes a sample of creative works and a visual assignment. It asks applicants to submit a themed project based on the word “transformation” that is either a visual art “slide show...of six examples” or a “short film/video...up to 90 seconds in length...along with three examples of any visual work” (n.d.-k). It is noteworthy that XU asks students to upload their work to the public video platform Vimeo.com, and states that if applicants want to engage privacy settings for their video upload, “there is a member subscription fee to do so” (n.d.-k). In other words, if applicants want their application video to remain private, they must pay for this privacy. While this is a relatively small detail within the application process, this matter of paying for privacy will be taken up in the analysis as it speaks to issues of media education access.

Other portfolio requirements are summarized as follows:

- Sheridan’s portfolio requirements follow XU by requesting a “trust” (n.d.-k) themed submission with students asked to submit a “2-minute film or video” (n.d.-k), also loaded to Vimeo.com.
- UBC’s portfolio requirement asks applicants to make a self-portrait video, and submit another complete video production made by the applicant. It also requires a “creative writing sample” as UBC’s goal is to find “fresh and upcoming storytellers” (n.d.-b), and for a reflexive statement about the strengths and weaknesses of the visual work submitted.
- York asks for a “5-minute video” but also a written “proposal for a short documentary or...film you would like to produce...without a budget” (n.d.-b).

- SFU has no visual portfolio requirement, but their questionnaire asks applicants to explain in-depth how they “think about film and cinema...and put ideas into *images*” with focused questions about filmmaking experience and future project ambitions (n.d.-g).

In reading through the descriptions of the requirements for portfolios, projects and written expressions, there is little discussion of how these are assessed. Instead, the institutions use the following phrases as writing prompts for applicants to express their merit:

- “UBC’s assessment criteria for the assigned creative project of a “self-portrait video” states that they are looking for “what’s important to you...in your own voice...be creative and have fun!” and they note that they “will not be judging the production value” of the video (n.d.-b).
- “The students who do best in our admissions process tend to be those who have tested their own interest and discovered that it is a passion.” (York, n.d.-h)
- “Impress us with your passion, your ability, your vision, and the degree to which you, too, will take being an artist and a university student seriously” (SFU, n.d.-f). They go on to state: “come excited and ready to let us know how interesting you are and how dedicated you are to film as an art” (n.d.-f).
- “Assessment will be made on the basis of academic performance, proficiency in communication skills, and creative potential, as demonstrated by the applicant’s history and submissions” (XU, n.d.-h)
- Capilano’s description of an applicant who is “most qualified” (n.d.-e) is similar to Sheridan’s sole description that the student should submit work that they believe makes them an “excellent candidate for the program” (Sheridan, n.d.-k). Both offer little descriptive insight as to what the program is looking for.

The portfolio and written assignments also require applicants to express the connections or experiences they already have with image-making, art-making and/or filmmaking. To support applicants’ visual and written submissions, UBC and York also require letters of recommendation for their programs, and XU, UBC and SFU all ask for resumes or descriptions of their existing experience in the film, media or the visual arts. These examples indicate a preference for applicants who are already-skilled, and might already have creative industries relationships.

Other application criteria that is notable is that Sheridan and UBC both require students to have their own computers to support editing, and UBC also requires students

to purchase their own editing software and filmmaking cameras for their student projects. It is worth noting that memory capacity of computers designed for editing can be expensive, as are digital cameras used for professional-level filmmaking.

While these descriptions do offer applicants modest insight on what program application adjudicators are looking for, the websites offer little other sense of the specific ways that applicant submissions will be reviewed and assessed. Questions of what it might mean to be “the most qualified” (Capilano, n.d.-e), the “most interesting” (Simon Fraser, n.d.-f), have the most “creative potential” (XU, n.d.-h), or be the most “passionate” (Simon Fraser, n.d.-f), are not described on the websites. This absence of clear assessment criteria will be discussed in the analysis of findings.

To punctuate the description of data relating to film production program applicants and the assessment of their applications, it is notable that two institutions in this study, Capilano and UBC, do not guarantee students seats in their undergraduate programs even after they have been admitted. Capilano’s website indicates that students are not guaranteed a seat into the third year of the program, and that seats for the third year towards the bachelor degree are “highly competitive” (n.d.-e) and are based on successful completion of diploma courses (from the first two years), and that only “Students with the highest GPA...will be offered continuance to third year” (n.d.-e). Capilano suggests that students who are not successful in being admitted to the third year of the program may be eligible for the 2-year program diploma. UBC has a less formal process for assessing students for continuance. They note that students “will be reviewed annually to determine whether they should continue in their course of study” (UBC, n.d.-i). This outlying data has been included in this description of student admittance practices as they have serious repercussions for student success in the programs, and they indicate what film production programs say they do in relationship to student assessment.

5.3. Finding 3: Film production programs value creativity

This finding indicates that creativity and aesthetics are mentioned frequently, have sparse assessment descriptions, and have many different functions within the programs. The thematic topic of “creativity and aesthetics” yielded one hundred and six coded phrases which are expressed and positioned in many different ways.

All institutions reviewed expect that they are nurturing creative “practice” (UBC, n.d.-g), creative “skills” (XU, n.d.-k; Sheridan, n.d.-g; and York, n.d.-b), and even creative “control” (Capilano, XU, n.d.-b). Creativity is also positioned as a core element of “innovation” (Capilano, n.d.-b), and the sentiment of innovation is echoed in other institutions as creative “potential” via risk-taking (XU, n.d.-g), “a force for change” (Sheridan, n.d.-f), and for “vitality” (York, n.d.-c). Creativity is sometimes instrumental by helping students be “contributor[s] to society” (XU, n.d.-l); Sheridan states: “make your creativity matter” (n.d.-i); and York promotes their program as “new avenues for your creativity” (n.d.-g). Notions of a creative voice are also repeated concepts with respect to creative development. For example: “individual voice will be encouraged” (Capilano, n.d.-b), and “voice and authorship” are explored in a documentary workshop at York (n.d.-b). Criteria defining successful development of creative skills, voice, or risk, are, however, not well defined.

The thematic topics of theory and practice, and coursework were also reviewed in relation to creativity & aesthetics as descriptions of these thematic topics often include reference to creativity, artistry, visual expression and aesthetics. Theory and practice contained forty-seven coded phrases, and coursework contained two hundred and one coded phrases, so there was a significant amount of data to review for this finding. This finding was also primarily informed by descriptions of the media practices engaged in courses. Following is an overview of the findings related specifically to coursework, creativity and aesthetics for each institution:

- In three Capilano courses, students are evaluated on “control over aesthetics and content” (n.d.-b), and in screenwriting courses they explore “practical and creative aspects of writing” (n.d.-b).
- XU offers an introduction to film studies course that “emphasizes critical approaches to film aesthetics” (n.d.-m). Sound courses at XU explore “a variety of creative methods” (n.d.-n), and an upper-level production course “focuses on the practical considerations and creative strategies employed in the researching, planning, production, directing, and final execution of stories for the screen” (n.d.-o).

- Sheridan asks students to study “film and the context in which it is produced” (n.d.-m), and focusses on creativity in workplace contexts such as: “professional standards of creative work and logistical planning” (n.d.-n), and “Studies focus on planning for creative and efficient post-production” (n.d.-o).
- SFU students take an introductory production course that emphasizes “creative use of the medium” (n.d.), and a screenwriting course has “an emphasis on structure and the creative expression of visual ideas” (n.d.).
- UBC has a course that explores “representational strategies and ethics of the form” (n.d.-c), an introductory film studies course that explores “basic aesthetic... aspects of film” (n.d.-c), and an upper level producing course on “The creative and business aspects of producing for film and television” (n.d.-c).
- York has a cinematography course that “builds further on creative and technical skills” (n.d.-k), and sound and editing craft courses that further the “practice, aesthetics, and theory” of these crafts (n.d.-d).

Most of the production courses require students to apply creative craft-based skills, and the programs frequently note that students should perform these skills with a high degree of professionally-based competencies. For example, Capilano frequently uses the phrase “industry standard procedures and protocols” (n.d.-b), and XU notes that courses help students “mirror professional practice” (n.d.-o). SFU differs as they integrate notions of creative practice alongside technical and procedural competencies; student learning outcomes are expressed as “techniques of artistic composition... creative use of the medium, and... creative expression supported by technical skills” (n.d.-b).

These findings indicate that creativity and aesthetics are engaged discursively in a variety of ways. Creativity and aesthetics are about:

- professional creative standards
- creative, aesthetic or artistic voice
- creative control or mastery

These findings relate to the previous chapter on theory and practice as they evidence that creative skillset and aesthetic sensibilities are part of the inculcation of professional media practice. Thus, a closer look at discourses of professionalism follows in the next finding.

5.4. Finding 4: Film production programs emphasize professionalism

53 phrases were coded in NVivo under the thematic topic of *professional* and *professionalism*, and all six institutions engage concepts of professionals and professionalism in their program websites to describe faculty, students, curricula and other program activities. “Professional” is used to describe faculty status and competency in relationship to formal industrial or artistic practices. For example:

- SFU’s faculty are called “industry professionals” (SFU, n.d.-a)
- Sheridan notes that “[their] renowned faculty come from industry, which means you receive a professionally relevant education” (Sheridan, n.d.-f).

Students are assessed on skills based on professional technical or craft processes as well as on behaviors and ways of working that are deemed professional. For example:

- Capilano’s courses repeat this student assessment statement three times: “Students are evaluated on individual professionalism, technical competency, and control over aesthetics and content” (n.d.-b).
- XU’s curriculum is described as a “professionally focused curriculum” (n.d.-j), and students are expected to “produce professional level work” (n.d.-f) with emphasis on “professional ethics and practices” (n.d.-p).
- York notes that they provide “professional training” (n.d.-g) alongside “in-depth academic studies” (n.d.-g) intended to qualify students for “pre-professional and professional work in the arts” through professional work placements or internships (n.d.-c).
- UBC engages concepts of professionalism the least, but it does have curriculum that includes production education in “professional practices” (n.d.-

c) and it also highlights internship opportunities for “professional workplace experience” (n.d.-d) to help students build a “professional network” (n.d.-d).

Overall, the data indicate that the concepts of being professional and engaging professionalism relate to the content of curriculum, how student assignments are completed, the behaviors of students while doing their production coursework, particularly with respect to ethical considerations, and the technical and creative standards by which students are evaluated. Professional work is also used as an educational goal that students are directed to aspire to.

All six programs emphasize some kind of self-promotion and/or opportunities to learn how to gain industry connections:

Table 5.3 Self-promotion and industry connections in program websites

Institution	Website text on self-promotion and industry connections
Capilano	Capilano’s curriculum includes “networking skills” (n.d.-b) and they advertise “networking events” (n.d.-c).
XU	XU offers “networking opportunities” (n.d.-q) and note in their faculty job posting that “professional networks” (n.d.-j) are needed for faculty to connect students to industry-based work post-graduation.
SFU	SFU’s “Professional Practice Series” (n.d.-h) offers opportunities for networking with invited panel speakers. SFU also emphasizes the importance of a peer network through small class sizes: “this leads to long-term peer support and partnership after school, a strategy that has produced a large number of prize-winning films by our grads” (n.d.-a).
Sheridan	Sheridan is the only institution to not use the word networking, but they have curricula that focuses on the topic of personal marketing that requires students to create “self-promotional material” (n.d.-p).
UBC	UBC’s website simply places emphasis on the need for students to build their “professional network” (n.d.-d).
York	York highlights “Extensive opportunities for collaboration and networking” (n.d.-b) and these opportunities include working with visiting professional artists and in “field placement[s]” (n.d.-f).

Clearly, media production programs place emphasis on the skill of networking, and the professional requirement for networking and industrial networks, and they say

that they provide opportunities for students to learn how to network and gain connections.

Professionalism and constraining visions of student futures

What is presented repeatedly on program websites are descriptions of students' behavior, capabilities and futures, particularly how employable, well-rounded, and professionally capable they are. For example:

Table 5.4 Description of student professional behaviors in program websites

Institution	Website text on student behavioral traits
Capilano	Capilano notes that their program is “inspiring and training a new generation of Canadian talent in the film, TV, animation, gaming and motion picture industries” (n.d.-c).
XU	XU aims to help students “develop a deep knowledge and working expertise of fine arts and hone skills that are transferable across a wide variety of industries” (n.d.-l), and they note that their “Graduates are capable of performing responsibly in the relevant industries as professionals” (n.d.-h).
SFU	SFU’s program states that they “...train complete, well-rounded filmmakers...capable in all aspects of the art and craft of filmmaking” (n.d.-f).
Sheridan	Sheridan has the most website language dedicated to real-work experience and employability of their graduates, which is underscored by the program web-page heading: “Real world, practical experience” (n.d.-b). Sheridan describes this educational experience as “...a professionally relevant education that also makes you highly employable in your field,” (n.d.-f), and they address students by saying that they will “...go through the same process filmmakers do to prepare [them] for the real industry” (n.d.-b).
UBC	Not much is written on UBC’s site about their conceptions or expectations of their students except that the main program header reads that since 1969, their program has offered courses and workshops for “students who have become industry leaders, screening their work at internationally-recognized film festivals” (n.d.-b). Therefore, while UBC is an outlier by not overtly emphasizing professional competencies and stature, this is implied in the way that they speak about the professional profile and legacies of their graduates.
York	York also focuses on student employability: “...we believe the all-around experience York offers makes our graduates employable in a wider range of positions...utilizing industry-standard production and post-production facilities, to produce work of fully professional calibre” (n.d.-h).

Alongside industrial functions and career readiness, a final set of concepts emerge in the data: programs say that they are training students to be conscientious, critical, innovative, and/or socially productive with their creative work. For example:

- Capilano’s website offers that students will “Achieve the necessary level of inter-personal skills and confidence through self-analysis, learning, mentorship, responsibility and hands-on experience, and that this might “...allow graduates to be active contributing members of the industry, society and community” (n.d.-a).
- XU focuses on a possibly expansive neoliberal potential of their students by stating that their program “prepares students for the real world and empowers them to be nimble, innovative and resourceful,” and that students “develop a deep knowledge and working expertise of fine arts and hone skills that are transferable across a wide variety of industries” (n.d.-g).
- While Sheridan is focused on the career success of their graduates, they do refer to their students as industry “leaders” and that they “...challenge [students] to be different – and to make a difference – through [their] creative explorations” (n.d.-i).
- York’s focus is on expansiveness and possibility: “You have a dream. This is your time and this is the place to transform that dream into new ways of thinking, new avenues for your creativity and new paths to success after graduation” (n.d.-g), and they continue to say that the “all-around experience” (n.d.-j) of their program offers students “...a life of reflective and productive engagement in the industry” (n.d.-b).

An expansive, critical or conscientious vision of student futures is not offered by SFU or UBC even though critical studies are part of their curricula, and critical thinking about visual media is a core requirement for admission to their programs.

5.5. Finding 5: Film production programs hire media production faculty who are productive, working professionals

The concepts I read consistently described film production program faculty as teacher-practitioners with requirements for, and emphasis on active professional engagement in professional media industry or artistic practice. Only three of the institutions, XU, SFU and York, include research in their qualifications for teaching faculty or for the role of Dean at Sheridan. Following are summaries of how each institution describes core faculty competencies:

- Capilano requires “15 years of professional experience” (n.d.) and a “proven record of teaching or training” (n.d.-d).
- XU describes their faculty as “scholar-practitioner(s)” with “solid educational, professional and teaching” experience (n.d.-j), but expands to include the criteria that they must have “deep connections with the Canadian and international film industries” (n.d.-j).
- Sheridan states “our renowned faculty members come from the industry” (n.d.-f) and they value “a high quality of teaching” (n.d.-h). While Sheridan does not describe their faculty as researchers, the program is home to a Screen Industries Research and Training Centre, but it is unclear about who undertakes research work.
- Both SFU and York depict faculty as practitioner-scholars with a focus on strong mentorship models of teaching. SFU states that faculty are required to “maintain a professional art practice and/or scholarly activity” (n.d.-e), and York requires faculty exhibit excellence in “creative practice, research and teaching” (n.d.-i).
- As the UBC job posting captured for this study was for film studies, and not film production, the descriptions did not include reference to professional practices, but did require “innovative pedagogies, such as community-based learning” (n.d.-g), which implies some experiential or work-integrated learning. The UBC posting did not require the applicants to share scholarship, and

limited the application requirements to statements on pedagogy and program administration.

While scholarship is evident in three of the institutions, research is not emphasized or explained as a core aspect of faculty profiles in the institutions. Rather, emphasis is on professional experience, current industry connections, and teaching experience. The findings in this chapter on how film production programs depict faculty profiles, professionalism, creativity, and student admissions requirements all paint a picture about the qualities of fitting in within the programs. These findings support the following analysis of “fitting in” to film production programs.

5.6. Analysis of discourses of “fitting in” to film production programs

The data in this second theme demonstrates that film production programs are highly subscribed and competitive programs based on student demand, and, as expressed by Capilano, due to industry demand for skilled media workers. Within the operations of these programs, notions of professional standards and professionalism are engaged to determine student or faculty “fit” in these specialized professional education spaces. What emerges in the analysis is that discourses of fit translate to discursive bias, exclusion, coercion and neoliberal inculcation, and that fit is a sensibility of class and other social privilege. The following analyses begin with discourses established during admissions processes, then explores program discourses of creativity, professionalism and fit, and concludes with commentary about faculty and their professional competencies and commitments.

5.6.1. Groomed and ready: Social privilege aids program admittance

All six institutions in this study describe their admissions processes as competitive. The competitive nature of these programs might be a first signal to applicants about the supposed prestige of a film career, and, perhaps, a signal about the challenges of breaking in or fitting in to the media industry landscape. It is understandable that potential students want to apply to programs that are associated with career demand, particularly careers that are advertised as creative, glamorous and

well-paying. The competitive nature of film schools has likely resulted in programs adopting fairly in-depth requirements for entry, and this analysis begins with a concern about these admissions requirements, such as portfolios and extensive written statements. As these programs begin at the level of first year university, my concern is with the significant amount of experience, refinement or training in creative fields required for applicants to complete an application to these programs.

Embedded in the competitive and extensive program application requirements are discourses of bias and exclusion because most of these admission requirements ask for students to already have experience, confidence, and possibly even industry connections. These requirements, combined with fairly non-specific application assessment criteria, and application language that speaks to applicants' "fit" (SFU, n.d.-f), or "creative potential" (XU, n.d.-h), means that applicants do not have access to an understanding of concepts like "fit" or "creative potential" unless they are already inculcated into some kind of professional practice or professionally-informed training. As Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) established at the specialized creative high school level, programs that admit students based on talent are doing so inequitably as they are predisposed to offer entry to those with social advantage based on race and class (p. 124-133). Thus, notions of competitiveness within meritocratic talent-based admissions processes have the potential to mask social inequities. This raises important questions about how film production programs, particularly at public institutions, can make programs accessible when stringent meritocratic principles are applied to admissions processes. Accessibility is also in question given fairly substantial tuition fees evidenced in table 5.2 with domestic fees ranging from \$7,046 to \$17,969 per year, and international fees ranging from \$26,063 to \$32, 821 per year.

In reviewing webpages on admissions processes, I considered that wording such as "fit" (SFU, n.d.-f) or "potential" (XU, n.d.-h) might also impact the decision for a prospective applicant to apply, especially if they do not have reference points for understanding what it might mean to have creative potential, or fit into media spheres. Thus, words like "fit" and "potential" are sensibilities of privilege and exclusivity: if an applicant already has experience that offers them the self-perception of fitting in, they might feel competent and compelled to apply. And, the opposite might be true: if a student has not had previous access to, and engagement with media communities, they might not envision film schools as learning spaces that they fit into. This aligns with the

exclusive nature of cultural capital articulated by Bourdieu (1984), and the self-regulatory impact of such social and cultural norms as developed by Foucault (1979).

For the students that do apply, four of the six institutions require interviews, but do not share interview questions openly. So, applicants must guess at the criteria they are being evaluated on. SFU does give students some indication that they are looking for applicants to communicate how “interesting [they are]...and...dedicated...to film” (n.d.-f), but even these explanations are coded language for some kind of experiential insight. As neither the interview questions, nor the criteria of assessment are public knowledge, it comes across that the application process is based on fairly unknowable, uncertain, and subjective criteria. As the literature on arts-based education and meritocracy indicate, bias lives in these spaces where the criteria seeks to vaguely find the best fit, or the most talented (Banks, 2017). An example from the data is Capilano’s admissions statement that “only the most qualified” (n.d.-e) students gain a seat in the program. While the research of this dissertation cannot verify specific biases in the admissions processes of the institutions studied, the discourses of exclusion noted in these findings indicate that inequities likely exist.

Other barriers to access are indicated in the findings. The development of creative skills leading to a body of creative work requires specific training and equipment that might be expensive to own, rent, and learn how to use. Submission requirements such as a film proposal “without a budget” (York, n.d.-b), also indicate that institutions are looking for students who already have enough training that they are familiar with the relationship between production costs and the types of stories that can be cheaply produced. Furthermore, two institutions, XU and Sheridan, require students to upload their portfolios to public media-sharing websites, but XU notes that the only way to make a submission private is to pay for an account. This kind of a “pay to play”¹⁵ expense for an application, on top of university admissions fees, might be difficult for some applicants to cover. While it is likely nominal, the idea that one only gets privacy if they pay for it, is in opposition to the supposed accessibility of public education, and against provincial privacy laws that require students’ work be hosted on platforms within Canada. Another financial access issue is present in Sheridan and UBC’s requirement

¹⁵ *Pay to play* is a pun of the media industry term “pay or play” which is a media industry legal contract for high profile actors or crew. The agreement is made before the production starts, and requires that the talent be paid out their contract whether a media project is produced, or not.

for students to purchase potentially expensive editing software on their own computer systems, and UBC's requirement of the purchase of an appropriate camera. Cameras and editing equipment are presumably included in the cost of tuition at the other institutions.

There are three instances of application procedures that are outliers to this pattern and may potentially aid accessibility:

- Capilano only requires GPA and written submissions.
- UBC's video submission notes that they are not looking at "production value," (n.d.-b), in other words, they disregard the technical competency of the video and focus only on the video's ideas.
- SFU simply asks students to write about their story and film ideas in their applications.

Writing, over filmmaking, is likely a more accessible art form, but it remains unknown how confident and prepared applicants might be to frame their experiences and ideas in media-related ways artistically or professionally. The written portions of the applications, including York's requirement for some kind of budget-consciousness, likely implies the need for previous training or focused educational experience to be able to express oneself clearly for the application.

Adding to this sense that previous experience and knowledge are essential prior to applying, the requirements for letters of recommendation and resumes, emphasize that students need to be groomed and ready for media work culture even if they are only coming from high school. What is unnerving about these entry requirements is that the combination of meritocratic, and other coded status-based discourses of insider information and ability, are not supported by clear and transparent applicant assessment criteria. Outside of UBC noting that they will review applicant videos looking for ideas over "production value" (n.d.-b), the institutions all describe their desire to find the most creative, talented, interesting, or qualified candidates without expressing what that means to the program, specifically. The lack of assessment criteria suggests that there is insider information that must be sought prior to applying, and the extensive application processes for first year undergraduate admittance points to an expectation that applicants are already quite capable, and involved in media production processes or other creative fields. These findings align with literature on meritocracy in the creative

industries that posits that it is a myth that creatives with the best skills or most passion, get the jobs, when in fact, jobs are usually offered to those you know, inequitably, and with large gender, race and class based gaps in industry employment and employment payment rates (Brinton & McGowan, 2020; McRobbie, 2016; Saha, 2018). Thus, descriptions of admissions processes offer the impression that insider status might be necessary to apply, or to envision oneself as having the potential to fit in and thrive in film school.

One outlier requires commentary before looking at discourses of fit surrounding existing students and teaching. Two institutions, Capilano and UBC, do not guarantee students degree completion and undertake processes to weed out or remove students along the way. UBC's process is presented as an organic process that lacks clarity as they simply explain that students will be "reviewed annually" for continuance. Capilano decreases the number of available seats in the third and fourth year of the degree program, forcing some students to exit and graduate with a 2-year diploma, even if they applied for a bachelor degree program in the first year. These practices heighten the sense of a squarely competitive and precarious, rather than a community-oriented environment, for the students. The strict sensibility of program "years" indicates that film school can only be completed on the institution's timeline, so students with differing disabilities, or with family, cultural or work commitments, might not find room for themselves in this kind of a competitive environment. This raises important questions about the relationship between film production program admittance practices and unjust or inequitable film representations and industry work practices. If programs limit admission to those who can complete the degrees on their rigid timelines, there are significant gaps in who can access or reasonably succeed in completing these programs. This, in turn, becomes a limiting factor in the shaping of a more just media workforce of the future.

The institutions do use descriptive words for communicating who are optimal applicant candidates. Applicants should be passionate, ambitious, driven, dedicated, interested, interesting, creative, academic, skilled, artistic, serious, original, have a vision and voice, and also be collaborative. This last point, collaboration, is explored in the third and final theme of this chapter, but it should be recognized as the lone application criteria that relates individual applicants to more community-minded activities within the program. As a result, individualistic merit is again prioritized over other critical or social

traits. What this review of admissions practices in media production programs highlights is that in these public institutions, discourses of exclusion seem justifiable in the face of competition and demand for industry-oriented creative training. This aligns with Harvey's notion of "leaky pipelines" (2021, p. 1) that naturalize the weeding out and exiting of women from the gaming industry, or Saha's (2018) "constraining" (p. 141) aspect of racialized inclusion initiatives that actually trivialize and disregard racial injustice in commodified media industry contexts. My analyses aligns with this research as it indicates that discourses of exclusion extend to student experience in the programs.

5.6.2. Codified creativity

Similar to program admissions, a notable absence in the program webpages are in-depth descriptions of how students are assessed or conceived of in program activities. This analysis will comment on assessment language that is inferred, along with other depictions of students. The lack of precision in program explanations of student assessment gives an impression that media production programs regulate fitting in according to taken-for-granted dominant school cultures of creative pursuit, over more student-centred and pluralistic community-building approaches. This sensibility does vary slightly from institution to institution, and will be explored in relationship to descriptions of students as creative, professional, or in terms of critical thinking.

Courses and program descriptions position the students' creativity in many different ways: sometimes it is based on their "skills" (XU, n.d.-g; Sheridan, n.d.-g; York, n.d.-b,-k), sometimes based on their execution of skills that they describe as creative "control" (Capilano, n.d.-b; XU, n.d.-k), and sometimes it is engaged with respect to "innovation" (Capilano, n.d.-b), "potential" (XU, n.d.-h), or ways that students might make "creativity matter" (Sheridan, n.d.-i). Creativity is simultaneously an individualistic trait, a core skillset, and based on film craft ability. Creativity is mentioned throughout program courses and descriptions, yet, it is not clearly defined by any institution, so this implies that the ways students are assessed on creativity has the potential to be subjective and biased. The fluid and instrumental engagement of discourses of creativity raises the question about whether culturally-specific, or non-dominant creative sensibilities or practices are supported. For example, a specifically antiracist film production pedagogy might seeks to articulate how creativity masks or communicates racist media messaging, or how certain film production creative processes or student assignments embed racist

logics or actions. However, this kind of specific pedagogical focus is not represented in the findings. If creativity is framed according to both control and industrial skillsets, a hegemonic sensibility of creativity emerges. Within this framing, creativity is siloed and framed within capitalistic use or function, and likely in relationship to populist, elitist, prejudiced or even discriminatory conceptions of media aesthetics. Literature on the commodification of creativity within the cultural industries establishes that discourses of good or fulfilling creative work can be used to mask exploitative, precarious, and market-centred over human-centred work conditions (McRobbie, 2016; Saha, 2013).

Once again, the lack of specific communication about assessments of creativity, along with the variety of ways creativity and aesthetics are employed on the websites, yields an awareness that creativity may be judged arbitrarily. This is concerning, then, as creativity and aesthetics may function discursively to indiscriminately exert affinity bias, allow for unaccountable personal preference, or demand only dominant and derivative film expression from student projects. If this is the case, then creativity and aesthetics have the potential to regulate “fit” by codifying and masking bias in program operations.

5.6.3. Professional prejudice

The programs in this study consistently refer to their faculty as teacher-practitioners, and reinforce that faculty come from industry ranks and experience, or from related professional creative media and arts fields. The hands-on, practice and industry-based experiences of the instructors indicates that the teaching faculty are expected to centre their professional experiences in their teaching and curriculum development. As there are no overarching professional standards or ethics in the media industries outside of journalism’s code of ethics (Callison & Young, 2020), the sensibility of what it means to be professional, and act professionally, is likely very subjective and varies by faculty member. I believe this is an important point to remember, as the attitudes of instructors in hands-on and industry-oriented programs are influenced by industry norms, perhaps more so than the culture of the university itself (Banks, 2019, Hjort, 2013, Hesmondhalgh, 2014). As referenced in the literature review, both the academic and entertainment industries suffer from workplace inequities and toxicities (Ashton & Noonan, 2013), leaving me to believe that instructors in media production programs bring with them a workplace sensibility that their role is to teach students to survive the hardships of industry work, and perhaps to “go along to get along”

(Frechette, 2019, p. 2019) no matter the workplace or educational abuse. The emphasis placed on professionalism and professional practice is dominating in the program websites, leading me to believe that program and instructor sensibilities of professionalism have the capacity to drive educational culture and practices.

Student learning outcomes and assessments in relationship to professionalism or professional practices are used in all of the institutions in this study, and students are clearly assessed on technical and creative processes, and on behaviors deemed to be professional. For example, Capilano's wording summarizes these assessment practices succinctly: "Students are evaluated on individual professionalism, technical competency, and control over aesthetics and content" (n.d.-b). XU's program text shares that students will learn to "mirror professional practice" (n.d.-o). Both of these descriptions indicate that professionalism and professional practice are all-encompassing sensibilities that guide, control, and possibly limit students' actions and influence how they are being assessed. While professionalism is surely about topics like ethics and self-awareness, as evidenced in some of the professionalism curricula, the sensibility of "applied inculcation" emerges again as a prioritization of dominant social and procedural norms within industry practices to be learned, controlled and endured. In other words, film production education is educating students to have industry skills, but to also find ways to fit in to industry work cultures and social structures. Researchers have established that meritocratic professionalism discourses are dominant in cultural industries work (Banks, 2017), and that these discourses perpetuate class, gender and race-based biases and exclusionary practices (Allen et al, 2012, Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013, Saha, 2013 & 2018). Fitting in by being professional, then, is a code for participating in status quo operations and not challenging hierarchies, or harmful and exclusionary work procedures.

It is, again, concerning that no overarching values or principles overtly guide this inculcation, bringing into question the social responsibilities of post-secondary institutions to delineate clear relationships between cultures of work in private industries and guiding principles for equitable and just education. Surely, it is not appropriate or possible for professional practices to be entirely mirrored in educational environments as educational structures, including curriculum design, student-instructor relationships, and educational assessment are different than the experience of practitioners and employees in working life. In public institutions, students have the right to learn in a

manner that is free of discrimination, and that ensures student safety. These are not necessarily rights that are extended or actively protected by private industry employers. If professionalism discourses inculcate abusive industry work cultures, then, it comes into question if media production education can aid in the just transformation of the media industries, or if it perpetuates its biases and harm by teaching professional education according to the ways industry practices have always been done. Again, my concerns raised about the potential for professional prejudices to thrive in film production programs do not negate the value of experiential learning for student employability, or agency and transformation of media practices (Ashton & Noonan, 2013; Nam, 2010). These concerns simply evidence the need for media production programs to better articulate core values associated with just professional education, and have more oversight on the ways professionalism discourses exclude certain bodies, or produce social control or harm in film practice education.

In considering the weight of professionalism discourses in film school cultures, this program description by Sheridan stands out. They state that their purpose is to realize the “full potential” (n.d.-f) of students’ talents in art and design. While “full potential” can be read as an empty laudatory buzzword, it raises questions about the kinds of potentials the institution envisions for students. Immediately after the sentence about potential, the paragraph centres industry-informed instructors who are active working media professionals. In this context, “full potential” can be interpreted as “working professionals.” In the context of the programs’ emphases on industry protocols and processes, educating future professionals is not about training innovative and just storytellers, but about producing productive film workers at-the-ready for industry work. Again, the instrumental language of media education programs seems primed for applied inculcation over, perhaps, contesting and transforming media work futures. If this is how public film production programs are operating, then students who do not fit industry methods of working might not find success in the programs outside of their actual technical or aesthetic capabilities.

In broader equity and human rights literature on workplace culture, professionalism standards are widely seen as “coded language” for “White supremacy culture” and discriminatory workplace practices (Gray, 2019). This coding of professionalism discourses is likely mirrored in film production education with the emphasis on performing professional practices, and building professional profiles and

networks within media production education environments. Professionalism, then, is a discursive control mechanism that starts delineating who fits into media education spaces, and the behaviors expected of students in those contexts. Again, while this dissertation is written with the understanding that it is of utmost importance for students to be able to find jobs and careers post-graduation, the drive to inculcate students in professional media work cultures signals a media production educational culture of social control that surely influences core program activities such as admissions and student evaluation. The logic of professionalism discourses also has the potential to limit how students perceive their own fit within industry culture, and what they think might be possible for themselves in media careers.

As mentioned above, professionalism discourses in the findings never signalled the possibility of equitable transformations of media work cultures. Thus, professionalism within film production education can be understood as a limiting influence on students' perceptions of media work futures. In making the case for more racially just media practices through media education, Saha suggests that a "critical multicultural pedagogy" is needed in media education to develop racialized students' agency towards "developing and staging their own cultural and political interventions" (2013, p. 227). Perhaps, more importantly, Saha also notes that this pedagogical approach should focus on oppressive "conditions of cultural production" (2013, p. 228). Saha's work highlights how discourses of professionalism in film industries education might work against the goals of training students to be agentic, and to oppose and transform workplace practices that exclude or do other forms of harm. The analysis in this dissertation aligns with Saha in the promotion of a critical media production pedagogy that can address dominating notions of professionalism and offer structured curricula in resisting and transforming unjust media conditions of employment. One aspect of professionalism discourses needing reconsideration is likely how we frame networking in film education.

5.6.4. It's about who you know

The emphasis in media production programs on building students' networks, training them in networking skills, and offering them opportunities to network, highlights the naturalization of nepotistic industry practices of hiring "who you know." This pressure to hire who we know is often used in meritocratic systems that insist that we hire the best people for the jobs, but in reality we are hiring people we know and who are similar to us

(Henry et al., 2017; Hesmondhalgh & Saha, 2013). This usually works to the detriment of, in particular, women and racialized workers, who are often overlooked under the guise of not being the right fit or having the right experience for the job (Allen, 2013; Saha, 2013). While networking skills are clearly established as important in the media industries due to the contract nature of work, the film programs studied did not offer any insight on how instructors are engaging these concepts in relation to specific definitions of ethics or professionalism. In the literature review, I mention the HireBipoc.ca initiative in the Canadian media industries as a way to make large networks of skilled racialized workers visible and connected to media industry work; this is an example of how social activism and academic research on media industries inequities are fueling industry change and transforming how networking might be used for more just media futures. What is not indicated in the findings is how industry social change initiatives might influence discourses of professional practices, like networking, in media production education curricula. Once again, it is uncertain if networking is simply about individualistic success and survival of industry gig culture, or if it includes notions of responsible relationships with media communities and peers. If the former is true, being part of a network, and doing networking, then, is not about finding a place within a community, but about fitting oneself in to a professional practice of marketing. The implications of this approach to networking is that class privilege and bias goes unchallenged as film workers go about their business of networking to connect from job to job. This is the engine of Bourdieu's "cultural capital" (1984, p. 3) that cements and reproduces social inequalities.

5.6.5. Uneasy relations: criticality and professional practice

As discussed in chapter four, beyond discourses of professionalism, all of the programs studied offer a sense that critical theory is important in film production education. The programs write about their education being "well-rounded" (SFU, n.d.-f), and that they "nourish critical thinking" (XU, n.d.-c). York suggests that this blend will offer students "a life of reflective and productive engagement in the industry" (n.d.-b). The tension that arises in the depictions of balanced and well-rounded theory and practice is where criticality is placed and how it is engaged by the programs. Given that practice supersedes theory in terms of discursive weight, the tension that arises is an uncertainty about the role or importance of criticality in professional media contexts. A

question lingers about where critical theory and critical thinking actually fit within the programs, and especially in relationship to the development of student film work sensibilities. If critical theory is indeed separated from conceptions of professional practice, then theory becomes window dressing and critical voices within practice-based courses will cease to fit.

The notion that film production education inadvertently separates professional practice from critical considerations, thus, has the potential to create a rift between bodies that fit in to industry production pipelines, and others with critical voices outside of those industry workflows or work spaces. I am reminded of boyd's (2018) critique of critical media literacy programs and agendas, as she underscores their potential for criticality to do social harm if it is not taught with an understanding of navigating difference. She notes that critical thinking about media messages must connect to an awareness of different epistemological frameworks – literally how students receive messages differently, due to different social locations, positionalities, and experiences that shape their thinking. Boyd notes that critical media literacy programs may have contributed to the contemporary phenomena of fake news and disinformation as people engaged in public discourse can find or build strong social networks to support their own epistemological preferences over more pluralistic dialogue about media bias, framing, or misrepresentations. While boyd is not researching film production education, but rather, the ways that critical media literacies are taught, her logic is applicable to the questions raised in this dissertation. If critique or critical thought is separated from communities of difference, or the process of navigating difference, then an echo chamber of bias may occur in the resulting epistemological homogeneity. Applied to film production education and matters of fit, the separation of criticality may signal that professional practice is structured in curricula to remain unchallenged by critical thought. What might result is that creative work produced by students or faculty that is deemed “challenging” might lose the status of fitting in to industry inculcated programs.

Another possibility exists with respect to the role of professionalism discourses in “balanced” film production education programs. If criticality is framed in the context of doing “good industry work,” then it is possible that critical media consciousness becomes co-opted into capitalistic, or instrumentalist discourses of career-readiness (Hesmondhalgh, 2014), rather than locating criticality with greater sensibilities of social justice or equity. As indicated in Allen et al.'s (2012) research on media education

practicums, practitioner-scholars' self-perceptions of unbiased progressiveness yields substantially inequitable access to media practicums. This evidences a lack of critical awareness at the program and instructor level about the social impacts of their pedagogical assumptions. Given the dominant job-readiness discourses in the film schools in this analysis, it is likely that bias exists in film production professors' assessments of their students' progress within professional programs. If this is the case, then student fit is likely determined by their progression on rote media competencies over critical expression.

When I was reading the data about the practice-based acumen of film production instructors, and the significant requirement for connections and working relationships with various media industry sectors, I was aware that the messaging to potential or current students is about the significant competency of faculty with respect to technical craft-based curricula. While some institutions, like York, SFU and UBC make reference to the scholarly or research expertise of their faculty, I am uncertain of the prevalence of cultures of inquiry in the programs. York is the only institution to write overtly that "faculty are not only active in the industry but have chosen to work within the university setting because [they] like to think about what [they] do" (n.d.-h). Beyond this example, the lack of description of how criticality functions in film schools makes me question the general competency or interest by faculty in critical approaches to film practice, particularly in relationship to critical social issues or contemporary social movements. While some institutions have a range of critical topics in the study of cinema histories, and while ethics and social function of media representation are a topic embedded in select courses, the overall messaging is unclear about why critical thinking might be important to a media career. I hope that York's vision of a life of "reflective and productive engagement" (n.d.-b) is a sensibility that is focused on by instructors with an eye to more just media futures. Given the relative stature of professional skillsets over critical capacities in the program websites, I suspect more status quo and hegemonic social formations exist in film production programs. These status quo social formations are mirrored in the curricular canons discussed in chapter four and six. If the practices of media production education emphasize the reproduction of status quo social formations, then a clear sense emerges that inequitable sensibilities regulate which bodies fit, or don't fit, in film production education programs.

Chapter 6.

Discourses of prioritizing individualism over collectivism

The discursive theme of individualism and collectivism in media production education produced four findings in response to my first research question: what do film productions programs say they do? I found that film schools say they:

- **Finding 1:** Nurture individual vision and voice as well as collaborative skills.
- **Finding 2:** Offer well-rounded education in theory, practice, history, ethics and media cultures.
- **Finding 3:** Offer courses in the social contexts of media production and representation.
- **Finding 4:** Hire faculty with active creative and/or industrial professional practices.

During the review of data seven thematic topics were identified as relating to discourses of prioritizing individualism over collectivism: admissions, collaboration, coursework, diversity & internationalization, Indigeneity & decolonization, social justice & equity, and teaching practices. Under these code themes, 455 phrases were coded. Through an iterative process of reviewing and relating the data, the thematic topics produced the overarching theme of this chapter, prioritization of individualism over collectivism.

6.1. Finding 1: Film production programs nurture individual vision and voice as well as collaborative skills

These findings indicate that both the qualities of individualism and skills of collaboration are inherent to media production, and film production education. Individualism appears throughout as nurturing individual students' "vision," (XU, n.d.-h; SFU, n.d.-f; York, n.d.), "voice," (Capilano, n.d.-b; UBC, n.d.-b; York, n.d.-b), "passion" (Sheridan, n.d.-b; SFU, n.d.-f; York, n.d.-h), or "ambition" (SFU, n.d.-f). Collaboration is often in contrast to individualism, and is framed as a necessary media work skillset, and

occasionally as a means to building community. Following is an overview of the findings on how discourses of individualism and collaboration are related in the data.

In reading the data on the theme of collaboration, it is often framed as a necessary work skillset or core media production skillset. For example:

- Capilano states that “collaboration skills” (n.d.-f) are a core learning outcome that requires students to “work collaboratively, effectively, and to a disciplined deadline” (n.d.-b).
- Sheridan discusses collaboration in the most work-integrated manner: “students work in teams,” (n.d.-n), and in a “team environment” (n.d.-q), and they develop “interpersonal skills in the collaborative arena of filmmaking” (n.d.-r).
- York and UBC both describe their programs as an opportunity to “collaborate creatively” (York, n.d.-b), and “work collaboratively” (UBC, n.d.-b).
- XU and SFU share in these descriptions of the core learning outcome of working collaboratively, with SFU mentioning that this comes from their program being “collaborative and cohort-based” (n.d.-a).

Four of the institutions, XU, SFU, York and UBC, all connect collaboration to the ability to network and “gain industry contacts” (XU, n.d.-q). SFU, XU, and UBC expand this networking to the formation of significant relationships amongst both the students and industry contacts, so the sensibility is that the student relationships might “last a lifetime” (XU, n.d.-q).

A tension between the necessary collaborative skills of filmmaking, and the virtues of individualist creative drive arose in the data, but these instances are emphasized in praise of collectivity. For example:

- SFU describes students as “ambitious and driven but who are also ready and excited to work with other people” (n.d.-f).
- XU discusses collaboration as a means to “inspire creativity in one another” towards building a “community of inclusivity and conversation” (n.d.-q).
- York also has a vision statement on their main page that connects the individual to the community by stating that students will be “building equitable and sustainable futures for themselves and their communities” (n.d.-l).

The tension in these statements is not necessarily in their visions of equitable or inclusive working processes, but in their contrast with programs' emphasis on guiding students to build the individualistic traits of vision, voice or ambition.

While students only ever apply to post-secondary education individually, it is worth noting that applicants to media production programs apply alone and the portfolio requirements are a showcase of individualistic creative and technical ability, vision, writing and ideas. The applications do not necessarily ask for examples community-based work, but there are exceptions: UBC asks for a resume and states that it can include "Social and/or community work" (n.d.-b), and SFU mentions the importance of addressing "collaborative experiences" (n.d.-g) students have had recently and states that "Film is a collective and collaborative art, so we need people who want to really join others in learning and in creating great films" (n.d.-f). Outside of this, the messaging is consistently about the quality, previous experience, and individual capabilities of applicants. XU is the most overt in requiring students to submit a written statement about their critical thoughts on film or literature and they state "This statement should reflect only the effort of the applicant" (n.d.-k). While XU's wording might be about plagiarism, it also underscores the primacy of individuality that exists in the program descriptions.

6.2. Finding 2: Film production programs offer well-rounded education in theory, practice, history, ethics and media cultures

As explored in chapter 4, all the programs offer a "balanced education" (Sheridan, n.d.-f), through the combination of courses on the histories and theories of media arts and culture, and the practice of media processes. All of the institutions follow a similar flow to their degree programs: each year contains mostly production and practice-based courses, with differences between the programs in terms of where they insert the theoretical and historical courses. An outlier in the data is Capilano as they do not introduce a history or theory course until the second year of the program; all of the other institutions have history and theory courses situated throughout the four years. While a theory and practice binary was analyzed in the first set of analyses in chapter 4, the following findings integrate concepts of diversity, equity, social justice, decoloniality, or ethics. These concepts relate to the theme of this chapter, individualism and

collectivism, as they all centre a concern for others and, thus, a sense of self in relation to community or society.

The production and practice-based courses are described according to the job function or production skillset they are focusing on. For example:

Table 6.1. Production and practice-based course examples

Institution	Production and practice-based course examples
Capilano	“Technical Directing” (Capilano, n.d.-b)
XU	“Film Technology” (XU, n.d.-h) or “Film Production: Silent Film” (XU, n.d.-h).
Sheridan	“Cinematography...Sound Recording” (Sheridan, n.d.-d)
SFU	“Film Sound” (SFU, n.d.-b)
UBC	“Post-Production Techniques” (UBC, n.d.-c)
York	“Introduction to Screenwriting” (York, n.d.-f)

These production courses consistently scaffold throughout the four years of the programs. In addition to the craft skills courses, the programs all have “production” (XU, n.d.-h; SFU, n.d.-b; Sheridan, n.d.-d, UBC, n.d.-c, York, n.d.-f) or “projects” (Capilano, n.d.-b) courses that are designed for students to go through the various managerial and craft steps to produce filmed content. These production and project-based courses are a focal point of all the programs reviewed. Aside from craft skill and production courses, programs designate required history and theory courses and identify a number of courses or credits that students must take from electives, some of which are required within the department, and some from other academic disciplines. An outlier course is Capilano’s industry practice course “Professional Development” (n.d.-b) that addresses “set etiquette, crew protocol, problem solving, and communication techniques required in the film and television industry” (Capilano, n.d.-b).

In reviewing required courses in theory or history, collectively referred to in this dissertation as “film studies,” a sense of a canon of film history courses emerged. Core courses in all institutions focus on the study of North American, Canadian, American or Hollywood cinemas, along with very few courses summarizing non-Western, non-dominant, and independent or experimental cinemas, a point that will be explored further below. Following is a snapshot summary of the film studies curricula, by institution.

Table 6.2. Capilano film studies

Required/elective course	Course title/topic
Required	"American Cinema" (n.d.-b)
Required	"Canadian Cinema" (n.d.-b)
Required	"World Cinema" (n.d.-b)
Required	"Visual Theory and Practice" (n.d.-b)

Table 6.3. XU film studies

Required/elective course	Course title/topic
Required	"Film History and Criticism to 1945" (n.d.-h)
Required	"Film History and Criticism since 1945" (n.d.-h)
Required	"Art and the Classical Tradition" (n.d.-h)
Required	"Art in the Modern World" (n.d.-h)

XU's core cinema history courses do not identify cinematic traditions, but they differentiate these as pre-and-post-World War 2 contexts, lending to the sense that they focus on Western histories. These courses are taken at the same time as two introductory art history courses noted above, with one echoing a canonical "classical" tradition. In the second, third and fourth years of the degree program, XU requires students to take 3 courses from a list of fifty-one that include media-oriented film studies, humanities and social sciences topics. There are broad ranging topics offered in this list from "Marketing for Creatives" to "Ethics in Media" to "Queer Cinema," "Design Thinking," "Contemporary Art Theory," and "Aboriginal Visual Culture in Canada" (XU, n.d.-h). This last course is important to note as it is the only Indigenous film studies course appearing in any of the programs reviewed. This point will be taken up with more detail below.

Table 6.4. Sheridan film studies

Required/elective course	Course title/topic
Required	"History of International Cinema" (n.d.-d)
Required	"History of Non-fiction Film" (n.d.-d)
Required	"Canadian Culture: Film and Television" (n.d.-d)
Elective	"Experimental Practice" (n.d.-d)
Elective	"Rebel Hollywood" (n.d.-d)
Elective	"Contemporary International Cinema" (n.d.-d)

Table 6.5. SFU film studies

Required/elective course	Course title/topic
Required	"Art and the Moving Image" (n.d.-b)
Required	"The History and Aesthetics of Cinema I" (n.d.-b); pre-World War 2
Required	"The History and Aesthetics of Cinema II" (n.d.-b); post-World War 2
Required	Selected Topics in Cinema Studies" (n.d.-b)
Required	"Theory and Cinema" (n.d.-b)
Required	"Advanced Seminar in Cinema Studies" (n.d.-b)
Elective*	"Experimental Film and Video" (n.d.-b)
Elective	"Cinema in Canada" (n.d.-b)
Elective	Selected Topics in Cinema Studies" (n.d.-b)

*Note: Students are required to take varying numbers of film studies electives each year

Table 6.6. UBC film studies

Required/elective course	Course title/topic
Required	"Introduction to the History of Film Production" (n.d.-c)
Required	"Introduction to Film Studies" (n.d.-c)

Beyond the two required courses above, UBC requires that students choose from fourteen other film studies courses in second year onwards. Examples of film studies electives are: "Introduction to Canadian Cinema," "Hollywood Cinema 1930-1960," "Introduction to Asian Cinema," "Cult Cinema," "Studies in Film Theory," "Seminar in Documentary," "Seminar in European Cinema," "Asian and Australasian Cinema," and "American Cinema since 1960" (n.d.-c).

Table 6.7. York film studies

Required/elective course	Course title/topic
Required	"Film Art: An Introduction" (n.d.-f)
Required	"Canadian Cinema" (n.d.-f)
Elective	"Early Cinema to the Coming of Sound" (n.d.-f)
Elective	"Cinema, Modernity and Technology" (n.d.-f)
Elective	"Film and Television as Mass Culture, 1920s-1960s" (n.d.-f)
Elective	"Film and Television as Social Practice" (n.d.-f)
Elective	"New Waves" (n.d.-f)
Elective	"Contemporary Directions in Cinema and Media Studies" (n.d.-f)

*Note: Second year students are required to take two of the above electives.

Similar to XU, students can choose from a long list of fifty-two program electives to meet their upper-level (300-400-level) credit requirements. These upper-level courses relate to both craft-based instruction, and theory and histories, including courses in topics like “Women and Film,” “Queer Cinema,” “Magic Realist Cinema in the Transnational Context,” “Studies in Genre: Horror,” “Chinese Film,” “Japanese Cinema,” and “Film Criticism: History, Theory and Practice” (York, n.d.-f).

As noted above, XU appears to be the only program to run a program elective on Indigenous film studies with its course “Aboriginal Visual Culture in Canada” (n.d.-h). No programs require coursework in Indigenous media production, theories or histories. Capilano mentions that it “offers one of the only Indigenous filmmaking programs in North America” (n.d.-c), but this program offers students a certificate or diploma, and the coursework does not appear to be required for, or accessible to, students in Capilano’s Bachelor of Motion Picture Arts degree program.

Indigenous or Aboriginal topics are included in two Canadian cinema courses. Sheridan’s “Film History and Theory” course reviews “the ethical, cultural and historical implications of specific film practices, with a special emphasis on the Canadian context, inclusive of Indigenous Peoples” (n.d.-c). The only other course reviewed that features Indigenous content is from York’s “Canadian Cinema” course that “Provides a study of work by selected contemporary Canadian filmmakers working in a variety of areas: Anglophone, Francophone, multi-cultural and aboriginal fiction film traditions” (n.d.-m). It is notable that “Anglophone” and “Francophone” are capitalized, but “Aboriginal” is not. Other than coursework, Indigenous identity and culture are only present in two other ways on the program webpages. First, SFU’s School of Contemporary Arts hosts the “Skoden Indigenous Film Festival,” (n.d.-i) but it is unclear if the festival is integrated in the film program’s curricula. Secondly, Capilano, XU, SFU and UBC offer standard land acknowledgements on their websites.

Beyond Indigenous course representation, it is noteworthy that the critical subject of race only appears twice in the course descriptions. The phrase “race and representation” (Sheridan, n.d.-c; XU, n.d.-r) is one of the topics in Sheridan’s required course “Film Theory and Criticism,” (n.d.-c) and XU’s required course “Film History and Criticism to 1945” (n.d.-r).

Five of the programs studied engage the concept of ethics in specific courses. Courses with ethics content either emphasize the practice of ethics in media industries contexts, or consider ethics of representation. All of the institutions, with the exception of SFU, have ethics in their program learning outcomes or curricula. SFU does, however, have an “Ethics Policy” (n.d.-j) that requires faculty and students to comply with “professional and disciplinary standards” (n.d.-j). Three institutions, Capilano, XU, and Sheridan focus on work-based ethics. For example:

- Capilano has a course titled “The Ethical Producer” (n.d.-b) and a core program learning outcome is that students will be able to “Identify and assess the ethical and legal obligations embedded within content creation” (n.d.-b).
- XU has an elective titled “Ethics in Media” (n.d.-s) and two of their upper-level courses contain ethical considerations. A production course emphasizes “collaboration, authorship and professional ethics and practices” (XU, n.d.-p), and a final “Capstone” (n.d.-t) seminar covers “a variety of aesthetic and ethical choices facing directors, producers and designers” (n.d.-t).
- Sheridan has a core learning outcome for students to be able to comply “with legal and ethical standards related to the film and broadcast industries” (n.d.-g).

Sheridan, UBC and York address representational ethics in specific program courses; representational ethics consider the functions and impacts of the ways that specific identities are portrayed or framed in media constructions. For example, in an upper level required film theory and criticism course at Sheridan, students “explore the ethical, cultural and historical implications of specific film practices” (n.d.-c). UBC and York have similar curriculum, but it is important to note that these are only in the context of electives or workshops about the documentary genre. Documentaries tell factual rather than fictional stories, so it is important to consider why ethics of representation might only apply to factual content. In a documentary workshop, the film program at York has students explore “a range of issues in documentary theory and practice, including ethics of representation...and the social implications” (n.d.-b). Similarly, in an elective seminar on the documentary genre at UBC, students study “the representational strategies and ethics of the form” (n.d.-c). Ethics of representation is a term that applies to all media constructions, so this will be taken up in the analysis section of these findings.

6.3. Finding 3: Film production programs say they offer courses in the social contexts of media production and representation

These findings indicate how social contexts of film production education are expressed in program webpages. In reading the data, I considered how concepts such as diversity, equity, social justice, social movements, and other critical or social contexts appear in course or program descriptions. Concepts engaging social contexts of film and media are the most prominent. For example:

- Capilano has an upper-level course that requires students to consider their production “in the context of social responsibility, community awareness, and audience impact” (n.d.-b).
- In a required second-year course at XU on early film history and criticism, the course description states that students will review “links between the film text and social, economic and technological developments” (n.d.-r).
- XU also has an upper level elective course titled “Diversity: Creative Industries” (n.d.-s). It is also one of the 51 program electives that students can choose from for three course credits needed for the degree. The course is about the “lack of equity and diversity in creative fields” (n.d.-u), and is the only course to mention the topic of diversity in my review of the six institutions.
- SFU does not have any courses that are overtly about diversity, equity, social justice, or social contexts, but their courses might include these topics given there are several upper-level classes with the broad heading of “selected topics” (n.d.-b). In a description of a selected topics course description at SFU, students study a specific theme that might be “for example, postcolonial theory and the arts...art activism and resistance” (n.d.-b). Postcolonial or art activism studies would entail reviews of social contexts and social justice issues in film studies.
- One of Sheridan’s program learning outcomes is that students will be able to “Contextualize the social, political, cultural, technological and/or artistic

influences upon film and television stories” (n.d.-g). This learning outcome appears in two of Sheridan’s course descriptions.

- A required course at Sheridan, “Canadian Culture: Film and Television” (n.d.-s) considers “Canada’s regional and cultural diversities” (n.d.-s).
- UBC has one course, “Introduction to Film Studies” that considers the “sociological...aspects of film” (n.d.-c), and they promote a campus-wide international learning program titled “Go Global” (n.d.-e) that promotes “global awareness, meaningful engagement, and cross-cultural understanding” (n.d.-e).
- Lastly, York has an elective course titled “Film and Television as Social Practice,” an elective course that considers “cinema as a...social practice” (n.d.-n), and “social and power relations” (n.d.-n).

Other examples of social contexts in course descriptions are:

Table 6.8 Social contexts in program course descriptions

Institution	Social context from the course descriptions
Capilano	“the historical, social and political contexts” (n.d.-b)
Sheridan	“Contextualize the social...influences” (n.d.-g)
UBC	“sociological...aspects of film” (n.d.-c)
York	“cinema...as social practice” (n.d.-f)

Concepts such as, or related to, diversity, equity, social justice, and social context appear in all program descriptions or learning outcomes except for UBC. For example:

- Capilano focuses on student responsibilities. A program description states that the program will “allow graduates to be active, contributing members of the industry, society and community” (n.d.-b), and a program learning outcome states that students will “Develop and model respectful cross-cultural collaborations” (n.d.-a).
- XU states that their program is “grounded in Canadian values but with a truly international perspective and scope” (n.d.-g). It does not specify what

“Canadian values” (n.d.-g) are. The program description echoes this sentiment by stating that the program is “designed to nurture personal visions that will contribute to the growth and diversity of Canadian culture, as well as enhancing Canada’s presence in international film and video” (n.d.-f). Outside of program descriptions, XU promotes their homegrown “XU Art + Design Magazine” (n.d.) as an “outlet to collaborate and inspire creativity in one another and the world at larger...and foster a community of inclusivity and conversation” (n.d.-q).

- Sheridan states that it will prepare students to make “creativity a force for change” (n.d.-f), and a core learning outcome requires that students “Contextualize the social, political, cultural, technological and/or artistic influences upon film and television stories” (n.d.-g).
- SFU notes that their courses “familiarize students with the aesthetic and social issues surrounding contemporary film and video practice” (n.d.-b), and the program website has a COVID-19 specific message that connects to non-profit organizations operating nearby their campus: “The most marginalized and in need are especially vulnerable right now. Here are just some of the organizations that work in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside that could use your help” (n.d.-d). This is the only instance that the programs connect overtly to outside activism or community support work. SFU also uses the word “diverse” in fairly non-descriptive subsequent program descriptions: “campus feels like a small town...it is knowable but very diverse” (n.d.-f) and “The fourth year films have been remarkably diverse over the past ten years” (n.d.-f).
- York is another program that uses discourses of global citizenship to signal some kind of diversity. A core learning outcome reads that students will “Recognize cinema as an education in global citizenship” (York, n.d.-b), and a program description echoes this in stating that cinema is “an education in global citizenship, while we relish Canada’s cultural diversity” (n.d.-c). Other program descriptions discuss social contexts and diversity. For example, film is described as “a medium of storytelling, social engagement, and self-expression” (York, n.d.-j), and faculty are described as “a diverse group of

filmmakers and scholars who are actively engaged in research and production” (York, n.d.-c).

These examples show the ways that concepts of diversity or social context are taken up by media production programs. The complexities of how these are engaged, including how diversity or social context is framed, as well as what is left out, will be explored in-depth in my analysis.

6.4. Finding 4: Film production programs hire faculty with active creative and/or industrial professional practices

These findings indicate that film production programs focus on hiring faculty with active creative, scholarly and/or professional industry practice, and do not generally focus on social and/or critical competencies alongside professional practice. In job postings for faculty positions, there are standard institutional equity statements in the postings at all six of the institutions. How notions of diversity or equity are expressed in the job postings is divergent. Most programs do not emphasize diversity, the SFU posting uses indirect and coded words to specify that they are interested in diverse candidates, and the posting from York is a targeted hiring posting for “Black peoples of African Descent” (n.d.-i). Descriptions of faculty competencies with respect to equity, social justice, social awareness, activism, lived experience, and/or critical engagement also vary and are minimal. As job postings are small windows into institutional culture (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017b.), following are examples of how each institution engages critical or social concepts such as diversity or equity in their job postings.

Capilano University

Capilano’s post for an “Instructor – Motion Picture Production” (n.d.-d) begins with a fairly long and standard human resources equity statement: “Diversity and inclusivity are an integral part of Capilano University’s campus community. Our multicultural student body, faculty and employees enrich our learning environment...We are proud to be an equity employer” (n.d.-d). A list of specific job duties engages the concept of diversity in a vague manner: “Previous experience working and collaborating within a large and diverse team” (n.d.-d). The opening equity statement is separated from the description of the job duties and qualifications for a “project lead...overseeing the course from release to delivery” (n.d.-d). The specific job duties are technical and

administrative, only, with emphasis on media industry experience of “Minimum 15 years of professional experience... Directing and/or assistant directing credits” (n.d.-d).

X University

In XU’s posting for an “Assistant or Associate Professor...Creative Producing for Film,” (n.d.-j) the second sentence after an introductory land acknowledgement finishes the summary of the job duties by stating that the professor will be responsible for “maintaining an inclusive, equitable, and collegial work environment across all activities” (n.d.-j). The specific job qualifications start with “extensive experience managing complex productions in fiction film and/or television series” (n.d.-j) and goes on to indicate screenwriting craft skills and “deep connections with the Canadian and international film industries” (n.d.-j). Later in the job qualifications it is mentioned that applicants should have “experience working with students from diverse backgrounds” (n.d.-j), and “upholding the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion as it pertains to service, teaching, and scholarly research, including a demonstrated ability to make learning accessible and inclusive for a diverse student population” (n.d.-j). Following this specific communication of job duties, is a description of XU University as “Serving a highly diverse student population” (n.d.-j), and a statement from the program’s School of Image Arts “[we are] committed to the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion, and to the development of an increasingly diversified faculty” (n.d.-j) with an encouragement for applications from racialized candidates. The posting goes on to include three more paragraphs with standard equity language including a marketing-like statement, “XU is proud to have been selected as one of Canada’s Best Diversity Employers” (n.d.-j). The posting ends with contact information for potential applicants, with three contacts: the Chair of The School of Image Arts, a contact from Human Resources for Indigenous applicants, and a contact from a “Black Faculty & Staff Community Network” (n.d.-j).

Sheridan College

The job posting from Sheridan is not for a faculty position, but for “Associate Dean, Film, Television and Journalism” (n.d.-h). The posting begins with a standard message about the institution, and the third and fourth sentences state institutionally “We are committed to demonstrably advancing equity, diversity and inclusivity. Diversity is our strength and fuels our commitment to excellence. Across our campuses, we’re making meaningful strides towards developing and equitable and inclusive community”

(n.d.-h). After a paragraph description of the “Faculty of Animation, Arts and Design” (n.d.-h), the posting summarizes the main aspects of the job: “Building (with faculty) a strong identity, positive reputation...,” “Strategic planning...,” and “Providing leadership in ensuring a high quality of teaching and faculty commitment to professional development and currency in their discipline, profession and industry” (n.d.-h). The posting is punctuated with a note that the “Associate Dean position will cultivate a workplace of inclusivity and diversity” (n.d.-h). No other equity language exists in the job description, and the posting is concluded by reiterating Sheridan’s commitment to “promoting diversity, advancing equity and fostering a culture of inclusion” (n.d.-h) along with an offer of accommodations for applicants with disabilities.

Simon Fraser University

SFU’s job posting for a “Tenure Track Assistant Professor in Film” (n.d.-e) begins the posting with a territorial land acknowledgement ending with a note that they are “building a diverse and inclusive community” (n.d.-e). The next paragraph introduces The School of Contemporary Arts by saying that they are “situated in “downtown Vancouver’s most dynamic and diverse neighborhood” (n.d.-e), and this is followed by a lengthy description of the types of programs, scholars and practitioners in the School, and is summarized as a “meeting of creative practice with academic enquiry” (n.d.-e) as a core value of the School. The students are then described as a “diverse student body” (n.d.-e). The description of the job begins with “We seek a collaborative colleague working in non-fiction, narrative, experimental, animation, expanded and/or hybrid cinema with a substantial record of creative distinction or promise of exceptional creative output in an international context” (n.d.-e). This paragraph ends with “We especially encourage applications from film artists interested in collaborating in the development of pedagogies appropriate to the plurality of cinema arts that exist today as we work to transform our curriculum in the coming years” (n.d.-e). This is directly followed by “The successful candidate will demonstrate a strong knowledge of world cinema” (n.d.-e). A third paragraph includes a more standardized statement that “We acknowledge that within higher education in Canada, traditional or conventional academic pathways can reinforce biases in the filling of faculty posts. We encourage applications that may not fit this mold and challenge traditional notions of scholarship and research” (n.d.-e). After information about how to apply, another significant standard equity paragraph is included

regarding SFU's "commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion, and the pursuit of decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation" (n.d.-e).

York University

York's job posting is for a "Assistant/Associate/Full Professor...Film Production" (n.d.). After a brief introduction to the posting, a second paragraph reads:

"This opportunity is open to qualified individuals who self-identify as Black peoples of African Descent (for example Africans and African heritage people from the Caribbean, Americas, Europe). Recognizing the underrepresentation of Black faculty, this opportunity is to support the University's Affirmative Action program and has been developed based on the special program provisions of the Ontario Human Rights Code. The position is part of a cohort hire of fourteen new colleagues at York University, including hires across a number of faculties and a wide range of areas and fields. The successful candidate will be joining a vibrant scholarly community at York, where we aspire to achieve equity and diversity in all areas, including race equity" (York, n.d.-i).

This unique targeted cluster hire is followed by a detailed description of the job expectations, which is followed by a similar statement as SFU's posting: "We acknowledge that within higher education in Canada, traditional or conventional academic pathways can reinforce biases in the filling of faculty posts. We encourage applications that may not fit this mold and challenge traditional notions of scholarship and research" (n.d.-i). The bulk of the posting then describes more specific qualifications of the posting and paints a picture of the Department of Cinema and Media Arts. For example:

"An MA or MFA in Film with a substantial record of ongoing professional experience in Film or Digital Production and/or Filmmaking or a related field is required, with a demonstrated record of excellence or promise of excellence in creative practice/research and teaching. Applicants should have a clearly articulated program of creative or research practice and have specialized technical knowledge and experience from among the following areas: cinematography, lighting, digital workflow, editing, digital effects, and compositing, with significant experience in teaching or potential to teach visual storytelling, and pre-visualization. A practical knowledge of sound recording, sound editing, mixing and colour correction/grading is desirable" (York, n.d.-i).

The posting ends with two paragraphs that read as if they are standard language from the Human Resources department: “York University has a policy on Accommodation in Employment for Persons with Disabilities” and “This selection will be limited to individuals who identify as Black. York University is an Affirmative Action (AA) employer and strongly values diversity, including gender and sexual diversity, within its community” (n.d.-i).

University of British Columbia

UBC’s posting for a “Full-time appointment in the field of Film Studies at the rank of Assistant Professor of Teaching” (n.d.-g) begins with a general description of the posting and noting that the work is “Situated on the beautiful Point Grey campus on the traditional ancestral territory of the Musqueam people in the culturally diverse city of Vancouver” (n.d.-g). The next paragraph specifies they are looking for “an exceptional teacher with a track record of employing innovative pedagogies, such as community-based learning” (n.d.-g). Other skillsets required include: “exceptional organizational and leadership skills;...evidence of or potential for teaching excellence, and experience in Film Studies at the undergraduate level” (n.d.-g). Four subsequent paragraphs describe the position in detail, which are followed by the application submission list that requests a one-page statement about the applicant’s “experience working with a diverse student body and your contributions or potential contributions to creating/advancing a culture of equity and inclusion” (n.d.-g). The posting is concluded with a paragraph of fairly standard institutional language: “Equity and diversity are essential to academic excellence. An open and diverse community fosters the inclusion of voices that have been underrepresented or discouraged...” (n.d.-g). The differences between the job postings collected for this study are explored in the upcoming analysis.

6.5. Analysis of discourses of individualism and collectivism

This analysis will consider the ways that discourses of individualism and collectivism are engaged in film production program website text. Collectivism is being used as an umbrella concept that includes social areas of concern and study on diversity, equity, social justice, antiracism and decolonization. Given the significant weight of critical social movements to media industries discourses and practices in the

present moment, it is relevant and important to consider how notions of individualism and collectivism are discursively engaged in media production programs, particularly with respect to discursive constructions of power and control. This analysis is a response to my second research question: what are the implications of what film schools say they do?

6.5.1. Dominant individualism within collaborations

In the previous two chapters, it is established that notions of fit, competition, and creative merit all nurture and value individualism and individual creative success in media production education. A pressure to fit in comes from both a sense of creative virtuosity, but also from the rigours of mirroring and performing industry processes. The task of fitting in creatively and fitting in to industry hierarchies and protocols yields tensions between notions of individualism and collectivism, notably in explanations of collaborative working processes in the media production programs. Following is an exploration of these tensions in the findings.

From the first interactions applicants have with film production program website descriptions, collaboration is not an overtly valued trait in the published admissions processes. Only two of the institutions in this study, UBC and SFU, contain a small admission requirement for applicants to express their collaborative or community-oriented work experiences. Vision, voice, passion and ambition overshadow sharing, participating, learning and creating in creative community.

XU, SFU, and York present the opportunity to collaborate as important community-building work, but this feature of collaboration is not repeated or underscored. Instead, the most prominent messaging about core program features is the practical and hands-on experience of learning professional practices. SFU, XU and UBC also express learning to network as essential for building work relationships for the future; in other words, it is taught that breaking in to the business is about who you know. Lastly, Capilano, Sheridan and UBC, have instrumental discourses of collaboration, so collaborative work is being taught as a necessary skillset for media industries work. Considered together, these examples offer a vision of collaboration relating only to industry workflows. This vision is about skills training and self-serving

career competencies rather than collaboration being about building communities of collegial care, support or solidarity.

It is telling that notions of individualistic capabilities and experiences are more prominent and valued in program discourses than community-oriented traits. In fact, the emphasis in program discourses always comes back to that fierce notion of students gaining the abilities to fit into industry work practices, workflows and cultures. Even networking is discursively constructed to contain an individualistic career-based threat, building uncertainties about what might happen post-graduation if a student doesn't learn this skill, and hence, learn to fit in. Given the imbalance of individualism over collectivism, then, the discursive virtues of collaboration can be understood as mythical industry lore. The mythical lore is revealed by contemporary revelations and awareness of the abuses of power embedded in fiercely hierarchical and structured work categories, and in the midst of industry recognition of structural violence within these work regimes. If instructor notions of collaboration have instrumentalist functions containing structural violence, then it can act as a regulatory power within the film production programs. Discourses of collaboration in this light can contain a threat against speaking up or speaking out about unjust filmmaking practices within and beyond educational contexts. Thus, in teaching collaboration in media production education contexts, it becomes important for instructors to take a critical stance on media industries conceptualizations of collaboration so that collaborative workflows have the potential to be taught as care for collectivity and dialogic ways of working over more self-centred industrial functions.

It is understandable that threatening notions of collaboration exist within media industries discourses. As an industry that relies on skilled craft or technical crew to work together under tight timelines, film production processes require crew to be compliant with production workflows so that the projects can proceed with precise order and timeliness. If media futures, including the future of media workplace culture, are to be conceived in a more just manner, then it is likely necessary to reconsider how collaboration and industry community is developed for more just social outcomes. The Indigenous production mentorship structure that occurred on Goulet's feature "Night Raiders" (Dove-Viebahn, 2021) is an example of a community-oriented approach to filmmaking and film training. Callison and Young (2020) discuss how journalism start-ups like *The Discourse* are challenging the dominating and individualistic gaze of journalistic reporting by developing new ways of approaching factual storytelling through

“community collaboration” (p. 158). They track how community-based news stories are challenging “traditional epistemological areas of journalism” (p. 158) by situating the journalist’s identity and history within the story. This reframing of journalist-in-context of news stories is an attempt at reconciliation with Indigenous communities through evidencing the social relations engaged within the news reporting. Callison and Young’s work offers insight for media production education that has largely positioned collaboration as a necessary skillset, or even a necessary evil, for getting ahead. Taking the cue from Callison and Young, collaboration could be reconceived to grapple with critical issues of representational harm, and situate filmmakers within the social contexts of their productions. Such a community and identity-based approach would align with the visions of institutions such as York’s collaboration for “equitable and sustainable futures” (n.d.-l) or XU’s “community of inclusivity and communication” (n.d.-q). If a relational and non-dominating production workflow could be established, it could be a decolonial way of undertaking production workflows. Similarly, building in sustained grappling with representational harm into production workflows, could create a specifically antiracist approach to film representation. If film school educators adopted these kinds of strategies, it would be possible to reframe the fundamental purpose of media production education towards social justice and more equitable media futures. Collaboration in a reframed context would not be about individual work-based interpersonal skills, but about relationality, community responsibility, and a concern for the social impacts of the entire production and exhibition process.

6.5.2. Colonizing silences in status quo curricular canons

If collaboration is seen as an industrial concern over a social concern of media production education, then notions of equity, ethics, or social contexts of media production and representation will likely be for individualistic or instrumental purposes, too. The findings indicate that concepts of equity, diversity, social justice, ethics or decoloniality are profoundly limited in film school curricula and profiles. As established in chapter four, the program websites repeatedly emphasize their ability to blend theory and practice, and the practical, craft-based elements of the curricula are the focal points of the programs. Theory in the curricula reviewed, circulates around the production offerings as either required coursework or program electives.

The required coursework in history and theories of media read fairly bluntly as a canon of Canadian, U.S., and Western film and art history, with non-Western or non-dominant media histories included within broader survey courses, or in a few upper-level program requirements such as Capilano's "World Cinema," or UBC's "Introduction to Asian Cinema." While it is unclear who is teaching these courses, and what their relationship is to cinema histories and traditions beyond the US-led Hollywood system, or cinema cultures in Canada or Europe, these examples evidence that core cinema histories and theories are generally introducing media topics with dominant White, Western and/or Eurocentric cultural sensibilities. While many contemporary media producers and activists have been aiming to redefine and challenge dominant media cultures (Crey, 2021; Patterson et al, 2016; Soloway, 2016), dominant media culture can be understood as being framed by White, settler, patriarchal, ableist and heteronormative gazes. Within this kind of dominant framing, courses in Canadian, US, or European cinema traditions are likely structured to centre dominant voices, while possibly including a patronizing sprinkling in of non-dominant cultural producers or ideas.

It is likely that the instances where institutions offer open course topics such as SFU's "Selected Topics in Cinema Studies," that non-dominant methods or producers of media culture are explored. York's elective course "Film and Television as Social Practice" (n.d.-n) is an example of a course that also has the potential to see beyond dominant expression, or to read dominant forms of expression critically using a sociological lens as this course is about the relationship of cinema "to social relations, social practice and social meaning" (n.d.-n). While these selected topics courses offer opportunities for non-dominant media expression to be explored, special topics are also exclusively elective-based, so they do not bring with them curricular focus or weight, and so, their messaging might elide greater integration into the production practices or messaging of other courses in the film production programs.

The data also shows that there is a stark difference in the types of courses offered as foundational and required versus elective courses that students pick and choose from. The elective courses are where topics in non-Western, experimental, independent, and non-dominant forms of cultural expression reside. For example, the electives are courses such as:

- "Queer Cinema" (York, n.d.-f);

- “Gender, Identity and Sexuality in Art” (XU, n.d.-s);
- “Asian and Australasian Cinema” (UBC, n.d.-c); and
- “Studies in National Cinema: Japanese Cinema” (York, n.d.-f)

As I noted in the description of the findings, XU is the only program with an Indigenous cinema studies course, and it is an elective titled “Aboriginal Visual Culture in Canada” (n.d.-h). As I indicated in earlier analysis on coursework, the subject of race only appears twice in the course descriptions. The film studies canon that emerges, then, is one that is whitewashed, and contains very little required course content on the vital issues of identity, social justice, or colonial legacies that are inherent to understanding the hegemonic functions of mass media culture. While XU, UBC, and York offer a wealth of electives on critical topics, there is a possibility that students choose electives that offer them more craft training or status quo historical canons, and might not be about critical theory or media sociology. It is concerning that the whitewashed cinematic histories of status quo curricular canons likely miss the opportunity to re-imagine media futures with more just and pluralistic representations.

A core element of my assessment that film canons are whitewashed and status quo is the fact that there is almost no presence of Indigenous media culture in any of the six programs reviewed in this study. This absence translates to a settler colonial ambivalence and lack of commitment in film production education to recognizing, integrating, and celebrating Indigenous histories, contributions to media culture, and contemporary calls for action. Specifically, Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) eighty-sixth Call to Action is for journalism and media education programs to require education in Indigenous history and contemporary citizenship. The Commission’s Calls to Action were released in 2015, but film production programs, like most, have been slow to take action on these calls. While the institutional website descriptions of courses and program values reviewed for this study cannot fully capture what Indigenous content, teaching or learning might actually be happening in the programs, the lack of visibility of Indigenous peoples and their contributions to media culture is concerning. One institution in the study, SFU, hosts The Skoden Indigenous Film Festival, but it is unclear how the festival might be integrated or supported by faculty and students from the film program. Beyond Indigenous land acknowledgements on SFU and UBC’s websites, and land acknowledgements on Capilano and XU’s job

postings, there is no other mention of Indigenous peoples and media cultures outside of three courses at three institutions. In these course descriptions, the manner in which Indigenous peoples are included are written with outdated terminology or as after-thoughts. For example:

- XU's elective course "Aboriginal Visual Culture in Canada" (n.d.-h), uses the colonial governmental term "Aboriginal" for Indigenous peoples.
- Sheridan's "Film Theory and Criticism" course reviews "the ethical, cultural and historical implications of specific film practices, with a special emphasis on the Canadian context, inclusive of Indigenous Peoples" (n.d.-c).

This Sheridan course has added Indigenous Peoples at the end of a sentence, including them incorrectly as subjects within Canadian cultural contexts, and this has the effect of removing a sense that they are deeply meaningful to film theory and criticism, and losing the cultural autonomy of Indigenous Peoples in the unjustly settled state of Canada. One final example:

- York's "Canadian Cinema" (n.d.-m) echoes the problems noted in XU and Sheridan's course descriptions by stating that their course offers an overview of: "contemporary Canadian filmmakers working in a variety of areas: Anglophone, Francophone, multi-cultural and aboriginal film traditions" (n.d.-m).

York's course similarly puts Indigenous media at the end as an afterthought, and incorrectly identifies Indigenous peoples as Canadian. It also does additional disservice by using a lower-case "a" for the identity title of "aboriginal." This lower-case "a" stands out as solidifying a disrespectful disregard for the Indigenous professionals being added into this course curriculum. Aside from the absenting of Indigenous media cultures, there is also a glaring example of white settler racism in this course description: by separating Anglophone and Francophone from multi-cultural, the first two capitalized identity groups are written as presumably white and dominant, and multi-cultural stands out uncapitalized as a non-white and niche media group off to the side. More analysis on notions of diversity in relationship to multi-culturalism or global citizenship will follow later in this chapter as there are other signals of racist logics present in the data.

The lack of representation of Indigenous media in these programs is in stark contrast to contemporary industry conversations about Indigenous representation, and evidence of Indigenous media successes. From Hollywood director Taiki Waititi of "Jojo Rabbit," "Reservation Dogs," and "Thor Ragnarok" and more, to horror breakout Jeff

Barnaby of “Blood Quantum,” to the critically acclaimed feature film “The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open” by Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers, and to the much anticipated mainstream hit sitcom “Rutherford Falls” co-created by Sierre Teller Ornelas, Indigenous representation and production is thriving even within colonial commercial contexts. The lack of Indigenous film representation in media production programs also does not respect the legacies of significant media content creators such as Abenaki filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin, who continues to have a prolific career that has spanned over fifty years and fifty critically-important films¹⁶. Obomsawin’s work has contributed a specifically decolonial media gaze that has offered Indigenous people and settlers in Canada critical perspectives on the autonomy and resilience of Indigenous peoples in the face of settler-state politics, culture and violence (CBC Unreserved, 2019). Given the significant legacy and contemporary achievements of Indigenous media producers, it is significant that the public-facing website text of the top six media production programs in Canada present Indigenous people and media cultures as a side-bar or after thought at best, and, at worst, non-existent.

This notion of including Indigenous curriculum, or any curriculum that might be described as diverse or non-dominant, is a prominent issue in academia as institutions face calls for more accountability for “racial and cultural bias” (Henry & Kobayashi, 2017, p. 129) embedded in university programs. These biases indeed live in curriculum, but extend throughout university activities, particularly in hiring practices that will be discussed in the following paragraphs. Programs that aim to address bias in curriculum likely spend time on by adding “diverse” content to curricula. As delineated by Kumashiro (2000), by simply adding in diverse content about “the Other” (p. 34), there is the possibility for “marginalization, denigration, and harm of the Other” (p. 35) by reifying otherness as non-normative. Instead, Kumashiro points to the need for diversity and difference to be clearly integrated into curriculum as a means to produce “disruptive knowledge” (p. 34) which is knowledge that teaches students to question the framing and contexts of inclusion in certain subjects, and to essentially disrupt and reconceive assumptions made in curricular canons being presented. This approach of disrupting knowledge aligns with decolonial educational frameworks that call educators to learn

¹⁶ Obomsawin’s films include critical documentary coverage of the 1990 “armed standoff between the Mohawk, the Quebec police and the Canadian army” (CBC Unreserved, 2019) in her film “Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance.”

how to responsibly account for and resist legacies of colonial violence embedded in educational curricula, teaching, and other institutional processes. Cote-Meek (2014) builds on Kumashiro's work by offering a holistic and transformational pedagogy that combines critical, theoretical, and historical analysis alongside the impacts of colonial violence on the body and spirit (p. 148).

Drawing from Cote-Meek and Kumashiro, a decolonial and socially just media production pedagogy might consider material issues of violence inside media work and representational contexts alongside critical and historical media studies. Thus, by simply including Indigenous content or diversified content without critical or material framings, there is the potential to inflict colonial and racist logics, and to contribute to the ongoing marginalization of Indigenous or diverse representations in the curricula. Tuck (2009) bridges these ideas to scholarship in her challenge to educators and researchers to stop "damage-centred" (p. 409) conceptions of Indigenous educational subjects. Her work notes that it is important to focus on what we do with our criticality in scholarly contexts and move away from seeing otherness framed under colonial damage towards Indigenous community "desire and complexity" (p. 422). In other words, Tuck's call is for scholarly criticality to envision Indigenous futures based on the visions, goals and priorities of communities rather than through narrowly-focused research that only looks at a specific issues or damages. The implications of Kumashiro, Cote-Meek and Tuck's work in this analysis is a call for film production education practices to shift to centralizing Indigenous knowledge and media culture through community-mindedness, and critical sensibilities about how Indigenous media intersects with other dominating canons of media industry practice and products. This call is for the development of a "decolonial media production education pedagogy" that centralizes a critical review of dominating settler media cultural framing in the context of Indigenous histories, contemporary successes, and community-minded media futures. A decolonial media production pedagogy aligns with other critical pedagogies offered in this dissertation in its pursuit to infuse critical social logics towards a more just transformation of media work cultures.

It is important to note that there is a thriving and growing Indigenous filmmaking community on the lands occupied by the nation of Canada. Some filmmakers have attended film schools, some focused Indigenous film training programs, and some have learned on-the-job, such as revered Abenaki filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin whom

became a filmmaker in 1967 at the National Film Board of Canada after being hired as a cultural consultant (NFB, n.d.). There are two well-established Indigenous media training programs in Canada: the Indigenous Digital Filmmaking (IDF) Diploma Program at Capilano University (CMPA Indiescreen, n.d.), and the many professional training mentorships supported by national broadcasters and funding agencies at the National Screen Institute in Winnipeg, MB. Capilano's IDF, for example, is recognized for launching many media careers including director and executive Doreen Manuel (Secwepemc/Ktunaxa), and writer/director Jessie Anthony (Haudenosaunee) of the recent festival hit, "Brother I Cry." IDF, in particular, has embraced a community-focused decolonial media pedagogy that empowers students "to tell their own stories their own way, unfiltered through a settler lens" (CMPA Indiescreen, n.d.). Indigenous filmmakers working independently, doing side-projects outside of commercial production roles, and exiting programs like IDF or NSI, have the support of other cultural infrastructure within Canadian borders such as the ImagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts festival that has been celebrating Indigenous film and media art talent since 2000 (ImagineNATIVE, n.d.), and, the Indigenous Screen Office formed in 2017 to fund and advocate for Indigenous filmmakers (ISO, n.d.). Goulet and Swanson note in their 2013 report, "Indigenous Feature Film Production in Canada" that targeted funding for the creation of feature films is a core requirement for the significant growth and commercial success of Indigenous films. Nearly a decade after this report, Goulet's own film, "Night Raiders" not only experienced critical success, but was recognized for its Indigenous production mentorship program in film craft skillsets. While there is clearly a decolonial Indigenous film movement occurring in both Indigenous filmmaking and training landscapes, it remains unclear how Canada's film schools are connected to or engage this flourishing Indigenous production landscape.

6.5.3. Instrumental ethics

This analysis also considers the webpage content relating to social contexts of media education, particularly in how ethics, diversity, and social theory exist in the programs. Two programs, York and UBC, have the phrase "ethics of representation" (York, n.d.-b) or "ethics of the form" (UBC, n.d.-c) in website course descriptions. Ethics of representation is a term that considers how socially just a representation or a practice of representing might be by studying the ways power and identity intersect with media

framing. Unfortunately, both of York and UBC limit the ethics of representation to one course each on the documentary genre, giving the sense that representational ethics only matter if a filmmaker is recording a non-fiction story. This omission, alongside the previous paragraphs about a dearth of Indigenous presence in the curricula, presents an ethical question about how media education programs teach for ethical or socially just narrative representation. Only one institution, SFU, has an ethics policy, and this policy includes representational ethics, but the policy is only linked to on the website and is not included in any discussions of core program learning outcomes. The three remaining institutions, Capilano, Sheridan and XU, have a limited focus on ethics in the context of their industrial functions of producing and other legal or business processes. As a result of the industry-specific framing of ethics, ethics has less stature and focus in the programs than on the making of student productions. In fact, XU's course on ethics is only an elective, and not a core required course. Sheridan has one upper-level required course that explores "the ethical, cultural and historical implications of specific film practices" (n.d.-c), and this stands out as a sole required course that integrates representational ethics with other critical analysis. Given that ethics is not represented fulsomely in the programs, ethics are likely perceived by students or faculty as a minor aspect of media production and education. As follows, other depictions of social contexts in curricula and institutional practices provides more insight on media education practices.

6.5.4. The others: a lack of social context and diversity

In reviewing course titles and descriptions, it is clear that the social contexts of media production are not centered in any of the institutions studied. Social contexts, critical social theories, and other topics relating to diversity are minimally present in each of the institutions. Technologies, creativity and aesthetics are dominant concepts expressed in media history courses leading to an emphasis on formal visual aspects of content creation over social context and critique. This formalist approach to media studies is reminiscent of Callison and Young's (2020) "view from nowhere" (p. 4) in journalism that promotes the idea of journalistic objectivity despite journalism's legacy of representational harm and cultural and racial bias. If media programs are able to teach formal analysis of media production without a critical lens on the social impacts of media content, then it might assume a sort of formal objectivity and marginalize social critique.

Furthermore, an emphasis on technology or aesthetics might allow for formalistic media concerns to obfuscate critical media analysis.

While all of the programs in this study have one or two courses that describe a social context of media studies, the wording of these social contexts is soft and is not the emphasis of the courses. For example, courses consider “social...developments Capilano, n.d.-b), or “cinema...as social practice” (York, n.d.-f). The softness in language stems from these phrases not including specific examples of critical social contexts or an understanding of the types of social contexts being explored. In fact, SFU’s approach to many of their media studies courses is to offer them as selected topics that might be “for example, postcolonial theory and the arts; perception and embodiment; art activism and resistance; or urban art and culture” (n.d.-b). While selected topics courses allow institutions to plug in interesting and timely course topics, they do not offer, from the outside, a view of the institutional priorities in critical studies. Thus, selected topics, even though they might address very contemporary critical concerns, have the potential to marginalize critical studies.

The marginalization of critical theory in media production programs is evident in the data as there are few instances wherein program descriptions or coursework directly indicate that they integrate critical, social, or racial logics in the program. Only three course descriptions in this study directly address either diversity, equity, or social power. Capilano has a 4th year course that is required, but it is a lower-credit and partial-term course. One of the topics in this course is to consider “social responsibility” (n.d.-b) in the context of the students’ productions. This stands out as the only course overtly connecting any practice-based elements of the programs to social responsibility. XU is the only institution to offer a full course dedicated to the “lack of equity and diversity in creative fields” (n.d.-u), but this course is an elective, so it would be easy for production students to ignore its critical message. York also has three elective courses that consider “social practice” (n.d.-n) and “social and power relations” (n.d.-n) within media culture. It is concerning that media production programs are not overtly and consistently addressing the social anxieties and justice movements of the current moment within media work and popular culture. This translates to a potential for film production education to deny and work in opposition to more just cultural shifts occurring in media work cultures. If this happens, social contexts of media studies can, themselves, become marginalized topics within media production programs. As Kumashiro (2000) contends,

curriculum on diversity and otherness needs to be centralized; if this kind of content is only added in periodically, or as in the case of electives, as non-required, then it only reinforces marginalization of critical themes, theories, and representations.

Related to the marginalization of critical theory in curricula, program descriptions engage themes of diversity in non-specific, unclear and non-focal ways. These “murky diversities” are words and phrases associated with diversity discourses, vaguely indicating racial diversity, but generally lacking any specific sentiments. Murky diversity might be best associated with Ahmed’s “performativity” (2012, p. 54-56) of diversity work in institutional contexts wherein certain equity or diversity sentiments are promoted but without any tangible change to institutional practices. For example, Capilano’s learning outcome for students to “model respectful cross-cultural collaborations” (n.d.-a) comes with no cross-cultural commitments in course descriptions. Both XU and York engage globalization and diversity as concepts but without specifying how global perspective or globalization might be more diverse, or what that diversity signals. In fact, both institutions place global perspective alongside non-specific commentary about Canadian values and diversity: XU notes that they offer a program with “Canadian values but with a truly international perspective” (n.d.-g), and York states that their program, offers “an education in global citizenship, while [they] relish Canada’s cultural diversity” (n.d.-c). Given neither institution explains what constitutes Canadian values, global citizenship or international perspective, these institutions create a murky sensibility about both national and international identifications. UBC does not contain any overt program statement concerned with diversities, but their website features a campus-wide international education program called “Go Global” (n.d.-e) that offers similarly murky sentiments that international learning will offer students “global awareness...and cross-cultural understanding” (n.d.-e). These murky sensibilities about diversity also stand in stark contrast to the deliberate, sustained and articulate work of antiracism education pedagogies.

The word “diverse” is used in program descriptions only three times in this study: XU states that they “nurture personal visions that will contribute to the growth and diversity of Canadian culture” (n.d.-f), and SFU describes its campus as “knowable but very diverse” and that student films “have been remarkably diverse” (n.d.-f). Diversity in these situations signals some kind of difference, but does not actually say what kinds of diversities might be nurtured or valued. The engagement of diversity as a concept, then,

comes across as an arbitrary qualifier that is reminiscent of SFU's admissions statement that they are looking for students who "fit" (n.d.-f). Discourses of diversity or global citizenship, then, are performative signals of murky progressiveness, but without any specific qualifiers that can make an institution or program accountable for any particular efforts. The hollow and performative discursive constructions of diversity in the program descriptions indicates that media production education programs might avoid or eschew responsibility for addressing tangible problems or questions related to diversity.

Again, while it is unclear how film production instructors are taking up notions of diversity within their curricula, their pedagogies, or production projects, the murky diversities in program websites do not provide instructors with core program definitions of diversity, nor any tangible visions or goals. Therefore, it reasons that clear notions of diversity are not discursively supported by programs, leaving diversity to the realm of individual instructors. If diversity is situated within the realm of an individual instructor, and not part of over-arching program goals, there is the potential for the marginalization or alienation of both the instructor and the aspects of diversity that the instructor aims to address. Individualistic diversity initiatives are also easily heralded or cast aside based on their perceived relevance to core program goals, particularly goals in relationship to media industries stakeholders who interact with the programs. Despite the risks, this research indicates a need for instructors to adopt the stance of critical media production pedagogy as a means to bridge critical social theories and contemporary social justice movement discourses to media production training. It is relevant here to bring back Saha's (2013) "critical multicultural pedagogy" that aims to make diversities and diversification matter by training students to critically examine contexts and modes of production beyond commodified representation in front of or behind the camera (p. 229). Saha's work highlights the importance of critiquing a neoliberal ethos that gets infused into diversity discourses by relegating diversity to an economically productive skillset over an ethical or equitable practice. "Critical multicultural pedagogy," then, is an example of a more specific critical media production pedagogy that aims to tackle problems within White racial and capitalistic logics in dominant media culture.

Given the emphasis on practice over theory in the programs, tackling neoliberal logics in media production education is crucial. An example of a neoliberal discourse of diversity is in Capilano's expectations of students' individual behaviors such as focusing on students becoming "contributing members of the industry [and] society" (n.d.-b) and

their ability to “model respectful cross-cultural collaborations” (n.d.-a). Thus, through the lens of critical multicultural pedagogy, Capilano’s social conscientiousness is tied to neoliberal notions of productively contributing to a society through paid labour. Given the programs studied do not overtly include curricula on topics like cross-cultural production or global citizenship, their words fall flat. As Allen (2013) notes, the creative industries have a “deep attachment to an image of the industry as liberal, egalitarian and inclusive” (p. 245), so perhaps instructors and curriculum developers in media industries programs assume that their statements like “creativity [as] a force for change” (Sheridan, n.d.-f) are clear learning outcomes even though no specific kinds of social change is indicated.

In contrast to webpage text with program and course descriptions, the faculty hiring postings also present discourses of murky or performative diversity and equity. The one exception to this is York as their job posting is a targeted hire for a professor who self-identifies as a “Black [person] of African Descent” (n.d.-i), and is part of an institution-wide “cohort-hire of fourteen new colleagues” (n.d.-i). This cohort hiring is part of York’s stated commitment to “equity and diversity in all areas, including race equity” (n.d.-i), so this job posting stands alone in taking tangible action on matters of racial representation within their faculty ranks. While this posting evidences significant awareness of racial inequity in academia, it is noteworthy that this job posting does not include any requirement for the applicant to submit a statement on their commitments and experiences to equity, diversity or social justice within their teaching dossiers. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017b) emphasize the importance of including critical social competencies and experiences in job posting requirements as a means to ensure faculty value equity, social justice or diversity in their academic practices. In York’s case, the decision to exclude a critical social requirement may have been to avoid ascribing this position with the extra burden of doing race equity work on campus as it is a well-documented problem that racialized faculty are expected to do disproportionate amounts of equity work on campuses (Frances et al., 2017). I will return to this point below about the disproportionate responsibilities placed upon racialized faculty. While York’s posting is a tangible and important step towards racial justice in the academy, I am reminded of Saha’s (2018) warning that changing the people in institutions by making them more racially diverse, will not necessarily make institutional practices more equitable. While it is not the responsibility of individual faculty who may be hired to take on the majority of institutional equity work, it is important for institutions to be specific about the actual

responsibilities of jobs, as well as institutions' responsibility to create socially just workplace cultures. Unsurprisingly, the findings on institutional responsibility also evidenced weak commitments to tangible actions. XU states that they are committed to "the development of an increasingly diversified faculty" (n.d.-j) and SFU's posting notes that they are "building a diverse and inclusive community" (n.d.-e). While these are clear statements, they do not include any specific targets or initiatives.

Indigenous land acknowledgements and standardized equity statements, likely supplied by human resources departments, exist in the jobs postings as window dressings that punctuate the beginning and ends of the job notices. For example, Capilano's statement explains that they "encourage applications" from those identities specifically specified in the "BC Human Rights Code" and that they are "an equity employer," (n.d.-d). Before this standard note, though, they have the sentence: "CapU is committed to attracting and retaining a respectful and diverse workforce" (n.d.-d). The responsibility for respect in this sentence is discursively placed on the employee and not the employer, and thus puts into question relative responsibilities for making workplaces equitable. Other examples of standard language is Sheridan's note that they are "committed to demonstrably advancing equity, diversity and inclusion" (n.d.-h). As these equity sentences are in a separate section above or below the core job descriptions, they appear separate and inconsequential to the job application process. Sensoy and DiAngelo's (2017b) critical work on faculty hiring is again important to consider as only one institution, UBC, requires that faculty candidates submit a statement on their commitments and actions with respect to equity and diversity. Overall, as the equity statements of institutions are separated from the core requirements of the job, it minimizes the importance of equity or diversity to the work expected of future faculty members. XU has their own School of Image Arts standard statement on equity, and while it repeats similar commitments to "equity, diversity and inclusion" (n.d.-j), this might be a signal that equity topics are being considered at a departmental level. Four of the institutions in this study, Capilano, XU, UBC and Simon Fraser, include a land acknowledgement in the job posting, and these all appear at the beginning of the postings. Given that no postings connect to matters of decolonization or commitments to Indigenous film education, the land acknowledgements also read as performative window dressings without tangible commitment or action.

In the job postings reviewed, diversity is used in non-specific ways to refer to differences amongst student populations, faculty populations, or the existence of differences in people within one geographic location. Generally, diversity refers to the number of people who might be visibly racially or culturally diverse in programs or on campus, and this is reinforced by descriptions of the campus as “multicultural” (Capilano, n.d.-d). Again, as Saha notes, replacing bodies that are coded as diverse, does not translate to a transformed or equitable institution (2018). Thus, diversity discourses in the job postings read as non-committal institutional statements. An outlier is SFU wherein diversity discourses are coded as extra diversity work duties for a racialized faculty member. SFU’s job posting uses very coded and indirect language to both describe professional competencies, but also identify competencies that might be expected to perform diversity work. The posting asks for a “collaborative colleague” (n.d.-e) with a “strong knowledge of world cinema” (n.d.-e) and who will be asked to collaborate in the “development of pedagogies appropriate to the plurality of cinema arts that exist today” (n.d.-e). In combination, this posting positions collaboration as discursively coercive by asking the candidate to do the disproportionately heavy work developing “plurality” and “world” elements in the curricula. In other words, this department is likely looking for a racialized instructor from a non-dominant cultural position to take on the work of “pluralizing” or “worlding” their curriculum. The sense that there might be extra work for this faculty member to do is heightened because of the posting’s encouragement for applications from faculty who “may not fit” (n.d.-f) the traditional molds of academic pathways and culture. This example highlights a tension or mixed messaging in job postings about departmental commitments to equity or diversity that might be due to institutional limitations placed on departments by having to work with standardized human resources language or templates. Thus, programs must find ways of communicating job duties with institutional constraints that may be at odds with departmental intent. However, despite evident institutional constraints placed on job postings, a problem identified at length in Frances et al.’s *The Equity Myth* (2017), is that Indigenous faculty and faculty of colour are often expected to work above and beyond other professors by taking on formal and informal equity and diversity work across campus activities. Thus, it is important for both programs and human resource departments to work on faculty recruitment practices, such as the drafting of job posting templates, to ensure that equity and diversity messages are fully indicating both job expectations and support for faculty’s work. To conclude this analysis of faculty postings,

it is also noteworthy that while some postings ask for a colleague who can collaborate, the job posting requirements do not ask for evidence of collaborative models of working. This, again, highlights the issues noted by Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017b), that institutions actually do not place value on community-minded manners of working, including collaborative or socially-just pedagogies.

6.5.5. Concluding the analysis

Program webpages that contain visions of expansive, innovative, creative and diverse educational experiences appear as window dressing to a neoliberal status quo that reduces academic and creative pursuit to individual units of economic value. No mention of contemporary social justice movements exists in the data, and limited diversity, decolonizing, antiracist or ethics content exist in program activities. In addition, notions of working together through media industry forms of collaboration are taught as a means to an economic end: fierce hierarchies are needed to meet tight production timelines, so workers must individually fall into line and put their heads down and get the work done together. The absolute emphasis in program webpages on employability and industry process makes it clear that film production education is not in the business of educating for social justice or decolonization. If film schools fail to centre or prioritize social and community-based futures and ways of doing media industry work, then the social impacts of media representation and toxic work cultures are unlikely to change when they are led by the next generation of film school graduates.

6.5.6. Reflexive final thoughts

As I undertook this analysis, I aimed to remain aware of my own complicities in the non-performative window dressing of institutional diversity framings of media education, and how my sensibilities about unjust media cultures were influencing my analytic process. As a White non-disabled queer settler, I cannot fully understand the real pressure or alienation experienced by colleagues and students who are othered by our institutional and industry gazes. As a long-time instructor with a permanent contract, I also no longer know the precarity and toxicity of contract media work, so I am not faced with the reality of my student graduates, or some junior colleagues, who continuously need to find work while navigating media work cultures. Situating my positionality within this analysis makes the boundaries of my own critical abilities transparent, and is also an

acknowledgement of my positional responsibilities for unsettling the hegemonic and neoliberal aspects of film production education that are indicated in my discursive analyses.

The recommendations that follow offer strategies for centring social contexts of media production within media production education through critical pedagogical approaches to addressing power in pedagogies, curricula, and program structures. My hope is that these recommendations can be developed to enact more just educational structures in media production programs.

There are also limits to this reflexive and corrective framing of my positionality in relationship to the critical research aims of this dissertation. Broadly, Latour's (2004) suggestion that critical research only produces closed systems of knowledge indicates the need to bridge this critical discourse analysis to other community-centred work on the critical issues raised. Furthermore, as Nagar (2003) asserts, critical theory and feminist reflexive analysis cannot easily reconcile the aims of equity-seeking communities within the colonial institutional structures of academic research. In other words, reflexive analysis has the potential to centre its own voice and concern, thus reifying the colonial and oppressive social structures that were the focus of study in the first place. This scholarship, then, makes me aware of the limits of both my own reflexive analysis and the critical theoretical work as I have not bridged this work to film education communities to navigate the concerns of this dissertation. Thus, bringing this research to the communities I have been studying, and working through how they see themselves in relation to problems of social injustice in media work is an essential next step. I am aware that research paradigms engaging community-based knowledge (Patterson et al, 2016) and care collectives (Chatzidakis et al., 2021) are better situated to undertake research in relational and responsible ways. I am reminded of Rogowska-Stangret's (2017) call to centre feminist research and pedagogy in the spaces of "unruly edges" (p. 17) that refuse neoliberal institutional pressures that centre individualism by calling out these pressures, and refusing to do work alone and divorced from communal care and concern. Thus, relational practice is a core ethic of feminist pedagogy and research, and one that is needed to take the research in this dissertation to the realm of community action.

Chapter 7.

Conclusion

This chapter summarizes my key research findings, analytic insights and recommendations in relation to the research problem that I took up in this dissertation. I identified that media, journalism and creative industries scholarship has shown how mass media or popular culture reproduces harmful and dominating power structures through the normalization of oppressive ideologies in both popular representations and work practices. Behind the cameras, the 2017 spark of revelations of rampant sexual assault in the media industries (Dwyer, 2020) has yielded broad attention on media industries work cultures. This attention has brought focus to media industries activism and research that exposes myriad social injustices within mass media and creative industries work cultures. The research problem I identified is that it is not very well known how film production educators and programs address issues of ethics or justice in representation, nor how they are working to address or change the documented matters of injustice, harm or toxicity in media workplace practices. The questions raised in my research problem align with media and creative industries research in asserting that media representations are never politically or socially neutral, nor are media production workplace conditions or educational framings.

In order to begin to better understand how film production educational programs approach social contexts and critiques of media representation, work cultures and work practices, this research engaged a critical discourse analytic approach in the textual review of six top Canadian English-language public film production bachelor degree programs. The two guiding research questions in this program of study were:

1. What do public higher education film schools in Canada say that they do?
2. What are the implications of what they say they do in relation to existing research on film industry-oriented education and media industry culture?

This research has aimed to contribute a baseline understanding of what dominant discourses and approaches to film production education in Canada are, as no similar analysis of the current discursive landscape exists. The critical discourse analysis followed specific methodological procedures that guided a review of the data in

considering emergent themes, and existing themes from relevant academic, media and creative industries scholarship, and in relation to notable absences in the data. The review of data identified three summative discursive themes to which the findings and analyses relate. Overall, the analysis identified a significant tension in film production education between educating for status quo contemporary media practices and employment-readiness, and the establishment of more just media futures. Following is a summary of the findings and implications of the analyses for media educators, institutions, faculty, students and industry members.

7.1. Discourses of theory, practice and making socially just media cultures

A core finding about the discursive relationship between theory and practice is that film schools say they offer balanced or well-rounded education. The programs attribute this balance to a combination of courses, workshops, guest lectures, work-placements, and instructor competencies that combine theory and practice in film production learning. Despite claims to balanced education, my analysis indicates that film programs place greater emphasis on their practice-based curricula. The consistent emphasis on film practice and experiential learning in industry contexts is discursively constructed as crucial for student employability, post-graduate career success, and student preparedness for work in professional craft trades and technologies.

The research problem identified in this dissertation is that it is unknown how film production programs and educators address unjust media representations and work practices. Given the findings indicate that attention to practice is more prominent than to theory, and that industry discourses dominate in program descriptions, my analysis determined that it is important to recognize the existing literature on media industry inequities as it is likely that the same inequities are embedded in industry-centred film production education. The review of literature shows that professional media industries logics, particularly notions of professionalism, entail significant gender and race-based biases, as well as exclusionary and abusive workplace practices (Banks, 2017; Brinton & McGowan, 2021; Mendes et al, 2019; Saha, 2018,). The programs' focus on industrial processes, facilities, craft skills and technologies underscore that film school education is about fitting in to professional work cultures under the auspices of gaining real world experience. In other words, media technologies in practice become the legitimizing

factor in film education over critical or social competencies of how and under what social conditions the work is being done. The inculcated industry logics indicated in my analyses represent a slippery slope wherein industry biases and harmful practices might be driving film production education pedagogies.

Given the potential social harms stemming from a discursive imbalance between theory and practice in film production education, it is important for film school educators and administrators to commit to better communicating emancipatory modes of teaching and curricula in the programs. The development and clear expression of critical media production pedagogies, or critical pedagogies of industry-informed film practice are necessary to bridge theory to practice through conscious development of students' agency and understandings of social context. Such a critical pedagogy would offer students and educators the chance to co-develop just principles of media work cultures through envisioning, researching, and practicing transformed media production processes. Critical theory in this scenario would instigate "informed action" (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 110). Such a pedagogy would enable film production education to move away from commodified and oppressive notions of experiential and industry modes of learning. Without a critical pedagogy of industry-informed film practice, program discourses of thriving mask the realities media graduates face to survive or fit in to industry cultures. A critically transformed film production pedagogy could address the real-world problems of getting work in a hierarchical industry with severe practices of exclusion. It could do this by providing educational opportunities for instructors, industry partners and students alike to undertake experiential learning with the explicit emphasis on justice-oriented community-based effort and awareness. This kind of reframing of practice-based learning could move away from narratives of precarity and competition as baseline emphases towards building agency and skills in emancipatory ways of doing professional film production.

A critical film production pedagogy could also broaden and enrich the applications of critical theory towards a transformative epistemology of media praxis that would account for how media content creators make or shape knowledge through the act of doing media practice. This approach would entail drawing attention to: the social situatedness of media-making, media as a form of knowledge production, and ethical and community-based responsibilities as a guideline for praxis. These approaches could align directly with antiracism education that emphasizes sustained focus on dismantling

racism in representation and industry practices (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). It could also align with decolonial efforts to centre community knowledges and well-being (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021), or anticolonial efforts to dismantle domineering colonial logics in representation and practice (Cordes & Sabzalian, 2020). Pragmatically, what is required to build stronger discursive bridges between theory and practice is conscious attention to the social contexts and ethics of media production in craft and production-based courses, not just in theory and history courses. This manner of teaching future content creators and skilled craft technicians has implications not just for post-secondary film production programs, but for training programs throughout the ranks of the media industries. Transformed critical production pedagogies are timely and urgent as the media industries are actively grappling with issues of workplace harassment, and lack of representation in key and craft production roles. As discussed in the literature review, such work is occurring, like the development of culturally-informed Indigenous film production mentorship programs (Dove-Viebhan, 2021), but needs to be continually refined and expanded throughout media industry circles.

7.2. Discourses of fitting in, and making socially just media cultures

The findings from the second theme indicate that media production education subjects, notably future students, current students, and faculty are discursively constructed as fitting in if they have practice-based creative and professional art or media experience. The findings also indicate that media production programs have highly competitive and sought-after programs, and fairly extensive admissions requirements that ask applicants to identify their existing experiences and skillsets in media production. Discourses of professionalism, or acting professionally, exist in the data throughout, and connect to the theme of fitting in to curricula that regulates and enforces assumptions about the qualities and behaviors of professionalism.

As the research problem identified in this dissertation is that it is not well known how film production education teaches about unjust media representations and work practices, my analysis indicates that film production education discourses align with industry inequities through discursive bias, exclusion, coercion and neoliberal inculcation. These discourses are embedded in notions of fitting in professionally and mask class and other social privileges. Competition factors greatly as a discursive

framing of notions of fit by indicating that talent, experience, dedication, connections, and existing creative ability are factors for assessing film production program applicants. As the assessment criteria for applications remains largely unarticulated, competition as a discursive construct likely impacts who sees themselves fitting in before applications even go in. Competition also contributes to the normalization of precarity in media work cultures, and this is particularly evident in two institutions, Capilano and UBC, that do not guarantee that admitted students will receive a degree due to limiting culling processes during the progression of the degree program. Given the lack of clear articulation about assessment criteria of applicants, a sensibility is established early on in media production education that subjective and likely dominant notions of industrial merit are pervasive and strictly regulate admission based on various social privileges, notably class, race, gender or ability.

The focus on professionalism as a discursive category of fit is also prevalent throughout descriptions of courses and instructor competencies. If faculty, in particular, are constructed as coming from media industries, then professionalism is likely about dominant industry logics. This relates back to the first theme wherein practice-based education seems poised to instruct students on how to survive media industries conditions of work, and an element of this would be instructing professionalism as applied inculcation so that students are positioned as compliant workers-at-the-ready. As the data indicates that professionalism discourses sparsely and inconsistently contain ethics or social considerations, then professionalism is likely more about producing workforces ready to “go along to get along” (Frechette, 2019), than about supportive, innovative or transformative visions of media work. In this context of applied inculcation, even critical theory courses can be co-opted to thinking critically about being a good worker and doing good work through internalizing and normalizing industrial logics that centre work over individual health or social good. This analysis is aided by research that has established that media educators have the self-conception of social and political neutrality (Allen et al, 2012), even when data shows that students experience bias and exclusion. Thus it is possible that bias and exclusion are also embedded in critical theory courses. While my analysis is making this critique about professionalism masking inequity, Ashton’s (2013) research suggests that media instructors have legitimacy and persuasive capacity to influence students’ critical thinking about social understandings of media. While Ashton’s study indicates that critical pedagogical commitments of

instructors is unknown, his work indicates that film schools are an appropriate place to begin forming critical capacities to challenge harmful and oppressive media work practices, including representational harm. Certainly, those embedded within the media industries have the capacity to influence cultural shifts, but infrastructure, cultural capital, and support networks need to be established in order for transformation to be realized. If film schools are one place where such transformations begin, then overt program foci must shift discursively and practically to addressing social injustice within the media industries.

My analysis concludes that fitting in to media production education is discursively constructed to mask and reproduce practices of bias and exclusion under the guise of professionally-relevant education. Given film production programs' conscious engagement of critical thinking within their offerings of theory and practice, it again becomes important for programs to openly consider how to turn the lens of critical theory on their own constructions of the perfectly-fitting students or colleagues. Critical attention is needed not only on curricula and program design, but on teaching practices, as well as on institutional processes such as admissions, academic continuance and faculty hiring practices. Scholars such as hooks (2010) or Cote-Meek (2014) who advocate for decolonial transformations of education systems, have emphasized ways that fulsome reconsideration of institutional practices and structures may benefit from antiracist and trauma-informed analysis and action. Such a transformation includes a "holistic" (Cote-Meek, 2014, p. 164) consideration of students' access, experiences, and well-being. The next step could be to take the significant offerings of decolonial education scholars and apply them to media production education, as well as media industries work practices, as a means to open the door for social transformation within educational and industrial institutions. In this context, instead of teaching that enacts, ignores or wilfully absents the structural violence inherent to the threat of fitting in, film production coursework can be re-built to emphasize collaboration and care within theoretical and practical film education.

7.3. Discourses of individualism, collectivism and making socially just media cultures

The third theme in the findings is titled individualism and collectivism as a tension exists in the findings between conceptions of individuals and their ability or merit, and

more socially or community-oriented considerations of film production and education. The findings indicate that film schools say that they nurture individual creative vision and voice as well as collaborative skills. Similar to the findings in the theme of theory and practice, the programs also say that they offer well-rounded education in theory, practice, ethics and media cultures, including in the social contexts of media representation and cultures. Lastly, these findings also show that a priority in faculty hiring is an active creative and/or industry professional practice. In my analysis, these findings indicate how unjust media logics thrive discursively in film production education structures.

This final chapter draws from earlier themes in summarizing and building upon tensions between theory, practice, and industry inculcation in the programs. While the findings indicate that programs say they offer balanced or well-rounded curricula, my analysis concludes that sharp disjunctures exist between industry modes of training and social and critically relevant curricula. In other words, while program profiles discuss a balance, there is not discursive evidence of balance: the critical and social concerns of the curricula are downplayed and sometimes even absent in course descriptions in contrast to the omnipresent focus on professional practice. This, too, is reflected in faculty job postings that engage mostly standardized and performative notions of equity or diversity in job requirements, with most of the focus on individual professional connections, practice, and technical or craft competencies. In relation to the research problem that it is unknown how film production programs engage with social or ethical themes in media culture and work, my analysis suggests that at the level of discursive presence in film production programs, work craft industry logics and individualistic professional practices overshadow or eclipse social considerations. Thus, a recommendation stemming from this dissertation is for faculty to be hired, assessed and provided support to develop sensibilities and skills for critical praxis, and epistemologies of praxis, especially in relationship to contemporary social contexts.

There is much room in this theme for direct and meaningful action to better integrate critical and social considerations into educating for media work and practice. The skill and process of collaboration has a significant discursive presence in the programs studied and it constructs collaboration as a necessary industry skillset in order to fit in to professional workflows and structures. Thus, collaboration is not about solidarity or communities of care in film circles, but a skillset focused on fitting in to

production pipelines. Following Callison and Young's (2020) suggestion that Indigenous journalism startups are grappling with ethics of representation and legacies of representational harm through collaborative community-based news reporting, it is possible for film production education to focus more on community-based stories and care that centre relationality and social responsibility while continuing to get the job done with technical proficiency. Thus, in teaching collaboration in films schools, it becomes important for instructors to take a critical stance on media industries conceptions of collaboration so that collaborative workflows have the potential to be taught as care for collectivity and dialogic ways of working over more self-centred industry functions.

Like collaboration, ethics are also very instrumentalized in the curricula, again giving the sense of a rift between the critical aspect of the curricula and the practice-based or production based elements. The theoretical and historical coursework is also described in my analysis as "status quo curricular canons" as there is clearly a dominant canon of media and film histories centring White settler Canadian, U.S. and European cinema traditions, and de-centring histories and media contributions of racialized, Indigenous and other non-dominant media producers. These status quo canons reify the otherness of diverse representations that are thinly described as "multi-cultural" (York, n.d.-m), and nearly absent Indigenous media histories or theories in the curricula. Again, the findings show that only one upper-level course has an expressly "Aboriginal" focus (XU, n.d.-m), and two other Canadian cinema courses mention that they have included, almost as a discursive afterthought, the media histories of Indigenous people. It is concerning that the whitewashed cinematic histories of status quo curricular canons likely miss the opportunity to realize media futures through more just and pluralistic representations.

Thus, the status quo curricular canons come to represent a settler colonial political, social and cultural ambivalence to Indigenous sovereignty and impact in media cultures, working against the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and against other contemporary educational movements for decolonized, antiracist, or accessible higher education practices. It is important to challenge this ambivalence by interweaving social justice logics and the methodologies of Indigenous media praxis at this moment in time wherein significant institutional focus is on decolonizing or "Indigenizing" the academy (Henry et. al., 2017). The focus on these socially critical efforts is coming from many different sources including: Indigenous

communities, other communities with disproportionate barriers to educational access, government mandate letters, and public pressure. Internal university conversations are also prompting this change due to the well-documented ways that educational systems act in dominating, exclusive, biased and dehumanizing ways (Henry et al, 2017). This research emphasizes significant injustices faced by Indigenous and racialized students and staff (Henry et al., 2017), on colonial epistemic “domination” embedded in post-secondary educational operations (Stack & Mazawi, 2021, p. 228), as well as research on injustices based on disability status (Janz & Stack, 2017; Opini, 2015), and gender identities (Revelles-Benavente & Ramos, 2017). It is thus important to follow the work of scholars like hooks (2010), Kumashiro (2000), Cordes & Sabzalian (2020), and Cote-Meek (2014) in the development of a decolonial film production pedagogy that works against “damage-centred” (Tuck, 2009) media representations and work cultures, and towards decolonial and just media education futures.

It is also important to note that these academic discussions of decolonial or antiracist media and pedagogy are aligned with growing media industry infrastructure intended to fund, research and advocate for more equitable media practices. Two organizations have emerged in the past five years adding significant structural support for equity in the Canadian media industries: the Indigenous Screen Office in 2017 (ISO, n.d.), and the Black Screen Office in 2020 (BSO, n.d.). In fact, the Black Screen Office is in the process of completing a multi-step and ground-breaking research report that includes the establishment of industry best practices. Titled “Being seen: Directives for creating authentic and inclusive content,” (BSO, n.d.), the reports will be offering research and suggestions for best practices for media by and for: children, Black people, people of colour, 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, and for people with disabilities. Their work echoes and builds upon the work of the Indigenous Screen Office, and is the first comprehensive industry report directly addressing media justice across industry craft practices (BSO, n.d.). I am hopeful that such industry initiatives will be taken up by film schools through their commitments to mirror industry practices.

A decolonial film production pedagogy might also align with aspects of participatory visual methodologists who have developed ways of researching that navigate data production as community-based and dialogic efforts to make sense of experiences and inform social change (Mitchell et al., 2017). While participatory research methodologies are certainly not inherently decolonial given the colonial

legacies of academic institutions and dominating research gazes, their emphasis on working to prioritize the voices of community members as co-researchers, is a practice supported by decolonizing methodologies. In fact, Tuhiwai Smith (2021) includes different ways of doing community-oriented research as decolonizing methodology. She includes “community action research” (p. 148) as situated collaborative research within Indigenous community contexts and with Indigenous community member researchers. Also, research done collaboratively within “communities of interest” (Tuhiwai Smith, p. 148) wherein the research is shared by Indigenous peoples with specific research questions or concerns. Tuhiwai Smith (2021) gives the example of Indigenous women as a community of interest that may share a common research interest despite living in different places. Much participatory, decolonizing and community-situated work is similar in that its aims are to break down dominant social stereotypes in the process of research and cultural production, and actively resists hierarchical relationships and work cultures. Similarly, Cerecer et al. (2019) offer participatory cultural praxis as it “recognizes not only the connectedness of knowing, doing, and being but also *how* we know, do, and are in the world” (p. 219). I include this work as such a praxis could inform a critical decolonial media pedagogy by centring the questions of what we do with our criticality, creativity and technical capacities. These questions form what could be the core concerns of ethics in film production curricula. Such an approach may help us shift from “damage-centred” (Tuck, 2009, p. 409) representational harm towards a sensibility of professional responsibility for the impacts of our representational choices, and our choices in how we relate to one another while doing the work of cultural production.

In order to achieve such critical and decolonial pedagogies, it will be necessary for film production programs to contend with their notions of diversity, too, as the ways that the phrase diversity is engaged in the data points to a performative ambivalence about difference and otherness. Diversity, thus, needs to be well defined and situated within film production education as way of reckoning not only representational inequities, but inequities stemming from commodified industry practices. My hope is that film production educators, with their significant technical, creative and critical skills, are poised to undertake this reckoning with humility, and with the rigours of cultural work that they are accustomed to. In closing this analysis, reckoning with notions of diversity also centres collective, pluralistic, or community-centred ways of navigating film education, and working against individualistic and hierarchical media production workflows.

7.4. Limitations of the research and reflections on methodology

The research design produced limitations in the findings. In focusing on bachelor degree programs, this study did not consider certificate, diploma, or other non-degree citations in media production. Thus, I missed reviewing programs such as Capilano's two-year "Indigenous Digital Filmmaking Diploma" that "offers high quality creative and technical training for Indigenous students interested in film and television production" (IDF, n.d.). In choosing bachelor degrees as the only level of education studied, I also omitted other forms of educational achievements, and perhaps missed programs that have specific cultural, technical, or critical aims. An analysis that takes up other types of programs could offer a fruitful comparative understanding of contrasting and more nuanced research results. In the case of the Indigenous filmmaking program, a rich comparative analysis could emerge in a comparison of Indigenous-focused curricula and the status quo curricular canons identified in my analysis.

As stated previously, the research in this dissertation could benefit from further investigation into how instructors and students take up, navigate, subvert or resist dominant discourses in film production education. There are certainly instructors researching and practicing critical and decolonial models of film production and pedagogy, and others who centre equity and/or accessibility in their curricula. Thus, as this study was not able to explore the interactions of faculty or students with dominant discourses, further qualitative research could elucidate more challenges or possibilities for resisting dominant discourses. Furthermore, in limiting my analysis to website text, I was unable to determine website text authorship, and if website text was up-to-date and fully aligned with program activities. As a form of marketing communication, websites are managed by marketing departments, often with the support of program faculty and administrators. Given the scale of university websites, and the volume of other work faculty and programs attend to in teaching, research and creative output, I was unable to determine the processes undertaken by programs to update and maintain website text. Further qualitative analysis of how programs make decisions about what they deem as marketable descriptions for websites would also offer more insight on how they navigate both dominant and changing discourses in the field. Lastly, a participatory qualitative methodology might yield agentic insights in a community-based grappling or working through the tensions created by dominant discourses. Such a participatory methodology

would be epistemically aligned with the emancipatory aims of critical, feminist and decolonial pedagogies and research methodologies.

The critical discourse analytic (CDA) methodology that I established adequately mapped a discursive terrain that connects to material social tensions and injustices noted in the literature review. As this social situatedness is a core aspect of CDA traditions, as well as applicable to feminist approaches and decolonizing methodologies, I am hopeful that my analyses can be used as a reference point in understanding the dominant and dominating discourses that are shaping film education experiences. However, a concern arises in reflexive consideration of my methodological approach. The transgressive validity of Lather (2007), and crystallization process of Ellingson (2009) emphasize an analytic process of reviewing data repeatedly to discover multiple entangled possibilities of how power is exerted in discourse. This approach was difficult to pursue in reviewing the data on my own. While my analysis attempted Gill's "sceptical reading" (2011, p.8) to trouble my analytic predispositions, my own experiences of harassment and silencing within film industry and film school contexts heightened my sensibilities about discursive dominance. I was also aware, at times, of my disproportionate sensitivities to gender and sexuality-based injustices, and I believe these yield the potential to overlook or diminish oppressive discourses relating to identity categories that are not my own. Thus, despite situating the CDA within specific literatures concerned with specific injustices in media industry and educational contexts, it was challenging to see beyond my White racial, non-disabled and securely employed identity categories. Also, as I am employed by one of the institutions studied, Capilano University, I am implicated as both a cultural worker and instructor in the analyses herein. In hindsight, and for future consideration, an analytic strategy using transgressive validity and crystallization should de-centre a singular researcher analysis and be undertaken collaboratively with several people and attentive to difference, identity and relational complexities within the collaboration. Such an approach could also be designed with a more overtly decolonial ethic of "community-action" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021, p. 148) centring community concern and vision.

Beyond text-based analysis, more could have been gleaned by looking at the images that universities choose to represent their ideas on their websites, and, perhaps, more importantly, looking at who is teaching at the institutions. Consideration of website usability would also offer more insight on how potential students or instructors engage

with the website context. For example, determining how many clicks it takes to obtain information could offer insight on program accessibility and transparency of program processes and values. Given the well-established problem of whiteness in academia (Henry et al, 2017), it is important to examine who is teaching and what they are tasked with teaching. A visual analysis could yield insight on visible disparities of race, gender or disability. For example, being able to see who is teaching “World Cinema” (Capilano, XU, n.d.) or “Aboriginal Visual Culture in Canada” (XU, n.d.-h), and how their syllabi and pedagogies signal concepts of otherness inherent to the course curricula, might offer insight on identity in relationship to oppressive or unjust curriculum design and pedagogy.

Reviewing full syllabi, instructor slides, student projects, and readings in syllabi, along with workshopping pedagogies with instructors and students or observing and engaging with classroom practices, would also extend this research by digging deeper into dominant and dominating discourses within film production education. Full syllabi, in particular, would have offered a more detailed understanding of curricular focus and how dominant discourses are framed and/or critiqued. As program websites only contained course descriptions or limited course outlines, there was inconsistent publicly available data pertaining to the detailed approaches undertaken by instructors in the courses. If syllabi had been reviewed, a more fulsome understanding could have been achieved about how instructors take up or challenge film canons and engage critical theories. That said, I believe what has been established in this research study is a baseline understanding of dominant themes and priorities in film production education, and this contributes to future research on film schools specifically, and professional education in general. I look forward to future research that can connect to more community-based inquiry in classrooms, meeting rooms, production spaces, and in media industry forums as a way to bring to life further research and planning to address the tensions within professional film production education.

Lastly, it is important for me to acknowledge the possible elitism in undertaking critiques of employability discourses in film production programs when employment is necessary for survival. In a capitalistic economic system, it is surely crucial for students to be prepared for careers and be able to find work post-graduation. Furthermore, in a neoliberal context wherein social and economic survival is made even more difficult for people who are newcomer settlers, refugees, and otherwise racialized or othered, the

opportunity to learn creative skillsets that will allow them to plug directly into a media career is potentially invaluable. As the literature review indicates that systemic bias and exclusion exists in media work cultures, particularly with respect to race and gender, it is important to clarify that this critique is intended to question the systemic inequities in accessing media work and determining the futures of media work, not in the existence of the work, nor in the existence of film production education programs.

7.5. Outliers as exemplars for future consideration

There are two noteworthy thematic topics that relate to outlier findings in this study: social justice in media production education, and the role of research in media production education. I use the term “outlier” to describe findings that had significant emphasis in the film school websites, but was not echoed consistently in the other school websites. I chose to analyze these outlier findings in this conclusion as they are examples that bridge to my final recommendations for practice.

Three outlier findings draw attention to a question of what socially just media education might look like. SFU’s faculty job posting for a “Tenure Track Assistant Professor in Film” stands out because of its engagement of coded words intended to indicate indirectly that the department is likely looking for a racialized faculty member who can teach curricula on “world cinema” as well as contribute to a transformation of SFU’s curricula “appropriate to the plurality of cinema arts today” (n.d.-e). Combined with the emphasis on someone who is “collaborative” (n.d.-e), a coercive sensibility is read into this posting wherein this new faculty member would clearly be responsible for regular teaching, supervision and research duties, but with exceptional duties to transform the program curricula to better include a “plurality” of cinema cultures. This is a lonely and difficult posting to read as it signals two jobs: one of an active faculty member, and one as a diversity worker in the department. I’ve included this as an outlier as it is clearly indicated in academic literature that cultural workers and scholars alike, are disproportionately White and steeped in White North American or European media histories (Saha, 2018). If institutions want more racially just faculty representation in their departments, they need to adopt clear strategies and methods for making this happen (Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2017b). Surely coded words signaling the extra diversity work is not the best way forward, but rather a direct address of the racial inequities the department is aiming to address. York’s faculty job posting is an example of a direct

address of racial inequities, particularly as it was part of a cohort hire of Black faculty, thus recognizing the importance of building racial communities of solidarity and support on campuses. While my analysis noted that there are often institutional constraints such as limiting human resource templates that are used for job postings, future study on wording and structuring of faculty hires in the service of social justice is warranted for film production education. Such a study could consider methods to directly address inequities, and build faculty positions that include vital support, mentorship, and workloads that properly account for the extra burden of diversity work on campuses.

Another outlier related to social justice in film production education is that two institutions, Capilano and UBC, do not necessarily allow students to complete their degrees in the program once they are admitted. Both programs describe processes to remove students year-by-year. The practice of culling students works against core principles of educational access to these public education programs, and further embeds exclusion and precarity as core traits of media production in the pipeline from education to professional work. Given the institutions studied are not formally connected to accreditation bodies that grant students access to a profession with specifically required skills and training, this practice is deeply discriminatory, particularly in light of the evident biases and subjective assessment of students in the media education landscape.

One last outlier may not be directly related to social justice in film production education, but it potentially relates to the matter of free expression in Canada in relationship to social justice. In a program introduction to their curriculum, XU makes the claim that they offer “a balance of theory and practice, fine art and commercial production, while nourishing critical thinking and freedom of expression” (n.d.-c). The last pairing, “critical thinking and freedom of expression” is uneasy following the binaries of theory/practice and fine art/commercial production. While this could just be a website buzzword, it raises the question if critical thinking is somehow opposite to the rights and limits of freedom of expression in Canadian contexts. I read this phrase “critical thinking and freedom of expression” as a cautionary note about the potential for expressive freedom to be devoid of social responsibility or social justice. If film production programs engage in separating expression from social and critical consideration, then supposedly apolitical and formalistic media production may be expressed without responsibility to representational ethics or harm. Given my analysis evidenced a disconnect between ethical, critical and socially-oriented curricula, and production courses, more research is

indeed needed on how film education constitutes and frames free expression. Given the ubiquity of disinformation on commercial media platforms, it is surely important to understand the social practices and contexts of notions of freedom expression in film education programs.

The second theme in the outliers is a question of research culture and praxis in film schools. Research is unevenly represented in the programs, and is not a core aspect of production education in the curricula, or necessarily in the core skillsets required of instructors. Further research could develop an understanding of how research cultures exist, or not, in film production programs and the extent, impact, and social framing of the research. While there is literature on media praxis as research (Poyntz et al., 2021), I am unaware of research existing on the role of scholarly inquiry in film production education curricula and pedagogy. Again, the research presented in this dissertation is an overview of dominant discourses in film production education according to what they say about themselves in public websites. The implications of what they say leaves doors open for further and much-needed investigation in order to educate for more socially just media futures.

7.6. In closing: implications for film production education programs

In closing, the research presented in this dissertation evidences that film production programs say they offer a balance of critical theory and media practice education. However, in the analytic process, it is evident that practice-based discourses and curricula overshadow or take precedent over critical, ethical and socially-situated learning. At the end of this dissertation, my central concern remains the incommensurability of film production education critical of media industries processes while also feeding graduates to these industries. My research offers the insight that film schools have a self-conception of critical understandings of media themes, practices and histories that are not necessarily reflected in program practices. Without direct, precise, and well-articulated plans for engagement of critical theory and media sociology in media teaching and learning, criticality is unlikely to be taken up by graduates in their work lives. What is needed is the development of critical and/or critical decolonial media production pedagogies that require critical and more-than-critical approaches to media action that consider futurity, ethics, and more socially just ways forward in business and

cultural expression. Such a pedagogy builds on critical pedagogical notions of theory and media practice (praxis) as “informed action” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 110). This pedagogy would navigate considerations of difference, particularly epistemological difference (boyd, 2018), alongside ethics of representation and conditions of production. A critical, or critical decolonial pedagogy of media production education, then, would be about how theory and practice are engaged for just social relations and futures. As Kincheloe (2004) argued, practice-based “professional education” should relate itself to “previously excluded knowledge” (p. 113), so the combination of theory, practice and relational more-than-critical pedagogies would contribute to community-driven evolutions of media work and popular cultures.

Lastly, a critical decolonial media production pedagogy would build on critical media literacy strategies of enhancing agency and building counter-narratives by engaging students in counter-visions of industrial work processes and industrial social orders, and undertaking relationally responsible media work actions (Cordes & Sabzalian, 2020; hooks, 2014; Nam, 2010; Patterson et al., 2016). Such a vision of transforming film production teaching and learning would require a relational and responsible approach to educational change. This approach would require time for listening to students, colleagues, scholars, social activists, and other community members, in the processes of co-developing program plans, curricula, assignments, grading criteria, and more. This work, if done in community, could do the work to transform according to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (2015) clear path in their Calls to Action. It could also transform according to the desires and visions of those on the frontlines of social justice movements within and outside media industries. Such a revision to the theory and practice of film production education likely has the potential to realize more just media futures.

With hope, I close this dissertation with some degree of haste so that I can dive back into this research by engaging with film school instructors and students on how the many recent commercial successes, and changed policies and practices are making their way into learning environments. With the many successes noted within this dissertation by filmmakers such as Waititi, Tailfeathers, Goulet, Anthony, and many others, there is a sense that our media cultural landscapes are transforming and producing more just representations.

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