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Dominant Discourses in Canadian Film School Program Websites

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Abstract

While media industry inequities are well established in popular media and scholarly research, there is less of an understanding of 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 paper 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 media production praxis.

Keywords: film school, social justice, critical discourse analysis, praxis, professional education
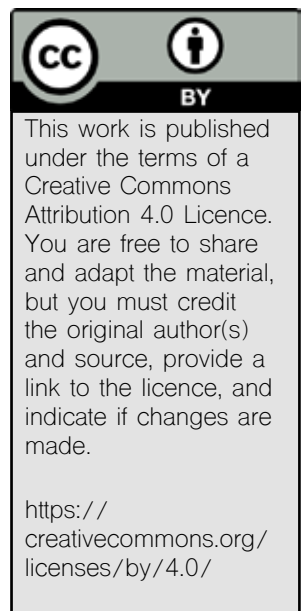
Introduction

The academic fields of media, journalism and cultural studies have established the ways that mass media culture produces, reproduces and/or normalizes oppressive ideologies and social structures through media representations (Callison & Young, 2020; Hall 1981/2021; Harvey, 2020; hooks 1990, 1996). Since 2017, social media movements such as #MeToo have squarely focused public and industry attention on abusive working conditions and practices in the media industries (Brannon Donoghue, 2020; Frechette, 2019). Media industries researchers have taken up questions arising from recent social movements as a continuation of scholarship on how media professions produce unjust representations, the social contexts of media industries work, and on legacies of media workplace violence (Callison & Young, 2020; Frechette, 2019; Giltin, 1983/2005; Harvey, 2021; Mendes et al., 2019; Saha, 2018; Schatz, 2014). In response to media industries activism and research many media funding agencies, film trade unions, ad-

vocacy organizations and production companies have undertaken research, training and/or policy work to address issues of inequities and workplace violence (Brinton & McGowan, 2020; BSO, n.d.; ISO, n.d.; Kay, 2020).

While scholarship, social activism, and industry initiatives have been addressing representational harms and unjust media workplace cultures, less research has been done on the relationship between media industry cultures and media or film production education. In particular, there is a dearth of research offering insight on how attitudes about media 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; Pettinger et al, 2016, p. 480). The research reported in this paper aims to contribute to this gap by summarizing the findings of a critical discourse analysis of the publicly available website text from six top English-language Canadian public film schools. This research considered what film schools say they do on their websites, and the implications of what they say they do in relationship to contemporary social contexts of media representations and work cultures. In the review of literature and analysis that follows, the term film school is used to describe higher education programs that train the next generation of media content creators, craft technicians and business owners on industry processes and standards. Given the emphasis on media job skillsets in film schools, program instructors are often referred to as media professionals in relation to specific media industry job categories such as director, cinematographer, producer, sound designer, et cetera.

Research context: Canadian film school program websites

Academic program websites summarize programs' core values, educational content, teaching and learning approaches, faculty profiles, notable activities, and resources. While these websites cannot fully describe the educational experiences of students, instructors, staff or administrators, they are indications of the main discursive foci of programs. In other words, academic program websites are not just a marketing tool, but a public account of the educational values and content of programs. Program websites are also the primary source of program information for students (Academica Group, 2020), and as a result, they form the basis of students' expectations. The findings of this critical discourse analysis ultimately contribute to existing research aimed at discovering how faculty, students, staff and administrators in film schools prioritize certain knowledges and social values within media production programs (Hesmondhalgh, 2014; Pettinger et al, 2020; Schatz, 2014).

Within a Canadian context specifically, media industries and education research integrates both national and transnational concerns due to the prevalence of Hollywood productions produced in Canada (Brinton & McGowan, 2020; Harvey & Shepherd, 2017; Tinic, 2005). As such, U.S.-led social media movements such as #MeToo relate to professional media industries work in Canada, and are taken up by Canadian researchers and industry organizations. Alongside this work, Canadian research and media industries initiatives have contributed to a nation-

al reckoning with historic and continued violence against Indigenous populations in Canada, as well as other gender and race-based inequities in Canadian media institutions (Brinton & McGowan, 2020; Callison & Young, 2020; ISO, n.d.; Kay, 2020). Thus, the long term goal of the analysis in this article is to contribute to future research that connects the task of making media futures more socially just by researching how students, faculty and other employees in films schools take-up, transform or resist dominating and/or oppressive program discourses.

In this article I outline the primary steps and findings of a critical discourse analysis of the six top Canadian film school website texts. I begin by summarizing literatures that establish existing research on cultural industries, popular culture, and media work and education. I will then summarize the methodological steps taken to complete the critical discourses analysis, and finally, share the analysis. The findings of this analysis indicate that film school discourses prioritize craft-based career-readiness and contain limited amounts of ethics, critical and social contexts of media culture and practices, such as racism, sexism or other structural violence in the media industries. As outlined below, these findings align with media industries research that has sought to discover the impacts of instrumentalism and neoliberalism within cultural industries higher education alongside nuanced investigations of agency, transformation and social change within media industries education and work (Ashton & Noonan, 2013; Hesmondhalgh, 2014; Schatz, 2014).

The cultural and creative industries: hard work and good work

Literature outlining dominant media and cultural industries discourses note a prevalent story that media work is both hard work and good work. Work is hard because it is competitive, precarious and physically and emotionally taxing; it is good work because it allows for the expression of creativity and passion (Ashton & Noonan, 2013; Banks, 2017; McRobbie, 2016). Scholars note that the aspects of good work, 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; Saha, 2018). These critical summations of industry discourses extend to scholarship on higher education that evidence how neoliberal 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). Like many other nations, prominent educational critiques of Canadian higher education point to increasingly corporatized educational practices that emphasize accountancy and managerialism over critical and social functions (Spooner & McNinch, 2018). For example, Canadian media

scholarship has grappled with the common practice of unpaid media work placements. While scholars have noted the potential for transformative community-oriented experiential learning in work placements, work placements have increasingly been critiqued for normalizing media work precarity and limiting media education to rudimentary labour market demands (Smeltzer, 2020). Cultural and creative industries literature in Canada and abroad ultimately highlights the potential for higher education to normalize unjust social values and workplace practices, particularly within professional education curricula.

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

In the past five years, digital social justice activism has amplified critiques of abusive media industries practices and offered persistent public testimonials of systemic racism, sexism, assault and toxic workplace practices (Al-Rawi, 2020; 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 to 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. For example, in Canada, the Black Screen Office and Indigenous Screen Office have both researched and published best practices for equitable representations, culturally-aware practices within media work, and other justice-oriented workplace procedures (BSO, n.d.; ISO, n.d.). The country has also seen new industry resources established such as the hirebipoc.ca initiative, and the Producer's Pledge: Reclaim/Reframe that seek to bring antiracist hiring and human resource practices to the Canadian media industries (Kay, 2020).

Film schools and social justice movements

A succinct body of research does not exist on the relationship between social justice movements specifically and film school curricula. 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 establish 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 ethics 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 educational work placements and practicums (Allen et al., 2012; Smeltzer, 2020); this research indicates that workplace practicums are limiting based on identity categories that delineate unjust hierarchies of who fits into the industry, and who does not. Lastly, research identifies a need to increase students' sense of agency to both critique and determine their own workplace pathways (Ashton, 2009a,b; Schatz, 2014) through and beyond media industry structures. Thus, existing research leaves much room for establishing film school administrative and teaching and learning practices that centre and support ethical and just media representations and work practices. The critical discourse analysis reported in this paper is intended to offer preliminary insights to support the development of future qualitative inquiry on how film praxis, education, ethics and social justice interrelate in film schools.

Methodology

The critical discourse analysis started with the assumption that words matter. Specifically, that it matters how film schools describe themselves, particularly their core goals, values, 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 describe what students and staff might experience in the schools, and how they might come to fit within the school programming and visions (Ahmed, 2006). Given the importance of the words used to delineate film school curricula and marketed experiences, following is a description of the discourse analytic process undertaken to establish dominant discourses in Canadian film school program website texts.

As no consistent institutional or government metrics exist to establish what constitutes a top film program, such as enrollment numbers or post-graduate employment rates, the top programs were determined based on variations of web searches on Google.ca for "best film school in Canada." As it is well established that most people conducting web searches do not look beyond the first page of search results (Shelton, 2017), I collated the results of film school recommendations on the first pages of my Google.ca search as the first page of results exclusively contained post-secondary ranking websites. I chose English-language institutions in Vancouver and Toronto as these two regions predominantly educate in the English language, and these regions are the most connected to the dominant English-language media industries market of Hollywood North (Tinic, 2005). This study was limited to public institutions due to the extensive literature relating public education to issues of educational access, equality, equity, and democracy

(Giroux, 2014). The collated web search rankings yielded six public film schools, three in city of Vancouver and three in the city of Toronto. The publicly available webpage content for the six film schools was archived and yielded one hundred and fifty-nine (159) webpages of text for analysis. The content analyzed spanned core program objectives, student learning outcomes, program course requirements, course descriptions and syllabi, faculty job postings, practicum and experiential learning opportunities and other program highlights.

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 (van Dijk, 1993; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Avoiding a traditional linguistic approach, an iterative and overall analysis of discursive themes was undertaken with attention paid to conspicuous, dominating or interrelating themes in the film production program webpage text. The analysis also considered how prevalent themes and absences interrelate to critical theory and media industries social contexts. Specifically, the analysis followed Jäger and Maier's (2016) process of reviewing institutionalized language for how power and knowledge exist in descriptions of practice, Lazar's (2018) critical reflexivity and attention to social hierarchy, Jiwani's (2006) critical mapping of a "discursive field" (p. xii), and identification of discursive absences in alignment with Jiwani (2006) and Tuhiwai Smith's (2021) decolonizing methodologies. As a feminist media and communication studies professor with a professional background in commercial film producing, this research methodology was inevitably attuned to experiences of industry and educational injustices and a commitment to discovering and supporting strategies for just media futures.

The themes from the literature review were considered alongside persistent emergent thematic topics in website text from one hundred and fifty-nine (159) webpages that were captured as web archived pages and PDF documents. Initial readings of the text produced twenty-four (24) thematic topics, which were amalgamated into three discursive themes based on pervasive, rare, and absent descriptions in the text. The three discursive themes that emerged from this analysis of the film school webpages are that:

1. Career-readiness is emphasized as a main element of film school education through creative, technological and media job skills training;
2. Faculty and student fit are contained within notions of professionalism, talent and creative experience;
3. Individualism is prioritized over collectivism despite many descriptions of team-based film production professional learning contexts.

In addition to the three discursive themes, consistent absences were the ethical, racial and cultural contexts of media production. It is important to note the small scale of this study, and the limitations of a discursive analysis of website text as this approach cannot account for how instructors, students and film school staff engage or resist dominant discourses. However, my findings that follow indicate that film schools, at the level of discursive priorities, are not necessarily engaging the justice-oriented protocols and pathways being developed by industry organizations advocating for social change in the media industries.

Jobs! Jobs! Jobs!: missing critiques of film work pipelines

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 industries. For example, discourses of "career-readiness" or success through "hands-on," "practice-based," or "experiential learning" were prominent in my analysis.

The strong focus in the data on job preparedness, professionalism, or employment networking, gives the sense that "finding work" or "getting jobs" is discursively more important than challenging or transforming industry models of work that are known for doing representational, physical or psychological harm. Framing film production education as bridging theory and practice allows programs to claim practicality, industry relevance and might be reflected in student post-graduation employment rates but indicates that critical social analyses and applications may be secondary to training in industrial processes.

The reliance in course descriptions on professional-oriented 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 of industry logics that have been evidenced to be exploitative and oppressive. In alignment with the review of literature, professionalism and

professional practice discourses also have the potential to normalize precarity through valorized descriptions of things like unpaid work experiences. Ultimately, as I reviewed the data about how technology and professional practice will enable students to thrive in media workplaces, I was struck by how much these read as simply essential skillsets for the technological or craft requirements of media industries jobs. While the program website text is surely edited for brevity, clarity and appeal, there was a missing discursive link between descriptions of alumni success, and the reality that alumni may need to navigate competitive, difficult, toxic and/or inequitable contract media employment.

Codified creativity & social privilege: sensibilities of fit dominate film school activities

In program websites, notions of professional standards and professionalism are engaged to describe student or faculty "fit" in these specialized professional education spaces. The sensibility of fit comes from mandates to mirror and perform industry processes and creative virtuosity. What emerged in my analysis is that discourses of fit translate to discursive bias, exclusion, coercion and neoliberal inculcation, and that fit is often a sensibility of class and other social privilege. As described below, fit is a concept that appears throughout film school processes from admissions to curricula and faculty hiring.

All six institutions in this study underscored competitive admissions processes which might be a first signal to applicants about the supposed prestige of a film career and challenges of breaking in or fitting in to the media industries. 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. However, embedded in the competitive and extensive program application requirements are discourses of bias and exclusion because most of these requirements ask for students to already have experience, confidence, and even industry connections or equipment.

Admissions requirements, combined with non-specific application assessment criteria that is limited to descriptions asking for students to express traits such as "fit" or "creative potential," means that applicants do not have access to an understanding of concepts like "fit" or "creative potential" unless they are already involved in some kind of professional practice or professionally-informed training. This is echoed in program and course descriptions, too. The lack of precision in explanations of student assessment gives an impression that film schools regulate fitting in according to perhaps taken-for-granted social or cultural assumptions about "fit" and who fits.

The programs consistently refer to their faculty as teacher-practitioners, and reinforce that faculty come from industry ranks. The hands-on, practice and industry-based experiences of the instructors indicates

that the faculty are expected to centre their professional experiences in their teaching and curricula. A point made by Candis Callison and Mary Lynn Young in their book Reckoning: Journalism's Limits and Possibilities (2020) is that there are no overarching professional standards or ethics in the media industries outside of journalism's code of ethics. So, the sensibility of what it means to be professional, and act professionally, is likely very subjective in both professional and educational contexts. Given that both the academic and entertainment industries suffer from workplace inequities and toxicities, it is possible, then, that film school instructors bring with them a workplace sensibility that their role is to teach students to survive or endure the hardships of industry work, what Julie Frechette calls "go along to get along" (2019, p. 194). In the website text, the emphasis placed on professionalism and professional practice leads me to believe that program and instructor sensibilities of professionalism have the capacity to drive educational culture and practices. In broader equity and human rights literature on workplace culture, professionalism standards are widely seen as "coded language" for what Aysa Gray calls "White supremacy culture" and discriminatory workplace practices (Gray, 2019). Thus, the emphasis on professionalism in films schools has the potential to be a prejudiced discursive code that delineates who fits in and the behaviors and identities expected of students and faculty in those contexts.

Lastly, given that film school practice supersedes theory in discursive weight, the tension that arises is an uncertainty about the placement of criticality in professional film education. If critical theory is indeed separated from conceptions of professional practice, then theory might become window dressing and limit truly critical voices within practice-based courses. Also, if criticality is framed in the context of doing what Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) call "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. Examples from the website text that support this analysis include: the separation of media production courses from theory courses, an emphasis on professional filmmaking procedures, and the lack of obvious critical approaches to professional practices. Again, given the well-established phenomena of both representational harm and professional media cultures of workplace violence, the reduction or separation of critical praxis from professional media procedure has the potential to reify rather than transform the status quo.

Doing what it takes: individualism prevails over community and social concern

The task of fitting in to film school and industry protocols yields tensions between what I summarized in my analysis as individualism and collectivism, notably in explanations of collaborative working processes in the film programs. I use the term collectivism 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 sentiments of power and control.

My findings indicate that the individualistic traits of vision, voice, passion and ambition overshadow sharing, participating, learning and creating in collaborative creative community. Most descriptions of collaboration exist in relationship to learning to perform media industry workflows and building networking "skills" and "networks." This vision is about skills training and self-serving career competencies rather than collaboration for building communities of collegial care, support and/or solidarity. It is telling that notions of individualistic capabilities and experiences are more prominent in program discourses than community-oriented traits. How I have interpreted this is that the discursive virtues of collaboration may be understood as mythical industry lore in the midst of industry recognition of structural violence within these fiercely hierarchical work regimes. Thus, in teaching collaboration, it becomes important for instructors to take a critical stance on media industries conceptualizations of collaboration so that it can have the potential to be taught as care for collectivity and dialogue.

The required coursework in history and theories of media read fairly bluntly as a canon of settler Canadian, U.S., and Euro-centric 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. While it was unclear who is teaching these courses, and what their relationship is to cinema histories and traditions beyond the US-led Hollywood system or related cinema cultures in Canada or Europe, I found that core cinema histories and theories are generally introducing media topics with dominant white, Western and/or Eurocentric cultural sensibilities. A core element of my assessment that film canons are 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 – a point I return to below in a discussion of absences. While the institutional website descriptions of courses and program values 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 in an era of Canadian settler state reckoning with histories and contemporary legacies of colonial violence and supposed reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

My analysis also considered webpage content relating to social contexts of media education, particularly in how ethics, diversity, race,

culture, and social theory exist in the programs. Two programs featured the phrase "ethics of representation," but these were limited to documentary genre contexts, thus giving the impression that representational ethics and harm only relate to factual storytelling. Other course descriptions limit ethics to craft procedure rather than an overarching social concern during media project development or in relationship to conditions of media work. Social contexts, critical social theories, and other topics relating to diversity were minimally present in each of the institutions in this study. While critical social curricula is certainly present in practice in the courses, this content is not widely identified in the public presentation of curricula and other program values and experiences. Overall, program descriptions engage themes of diversity in non-specific and unclear ways and can be conceived of as murky diversities, which are words and phrases associated with diversity discourses, vaguely indicating racial or cultural difference, but generally lacking any specific sentiments. Murky diversity might be best associated with Sara Ahmed's critique of "performativity" (2012, p. 54-56) of diversity work wherein certain equity or diversity sentiments are promoted but without any tangible change to institutional practice. In light of the status quo curricular canons, the sprinkling in of non-dominant cultural production concepts may be received as a patronizing or non-committal murky diversity. While some of my findings align with this murkiness, other findings note outride absences.

Ethical chasms

My analysis of film school website text yields questions about the vision of media practice we are preparing students to embrace and the vision or purpose of higher education in general. Institutional initiatives, forums and policies have proliferated in higher education regarding equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) as well as the decolonizing of educational structures and practices (Henry et al, 2017). While EDI and decolonizing efforts 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. As the literature review indicates, and due to the limitations of this analysis of film school website text, the relationship between such EDI and decolonizing efforts in film school practices begs future research.

The lack of emphasis on decolonizing work is a prominent gap as Canadian higher education has struggled to respond to the 2015 calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada ("TRC") that presented clear community-based 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). The residential school system is known for forcibly separating Indigenous children from their families, and subjecting children to sustained experiences of extreme cultural and physical vi-

olence, with outcomes often as severe as death. The TRC's findings and recommendations clearly establish a path to address the legacies and ongoing harms of residential schools that are embedded in Canadian institutions, including education. The TRC has remained one of the documents influencing higher education discourse and action in Canada partially because government mandate letters to post-secondary institutions (BC Government, 2021) continually reference the recommendations as important core foci for universities and colleges.

In stark contrast to the calls to action specifically outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report, specific absences in my findings include:

- only one of the six programs have a designated program elective on Indigenous film;
- no programs require coursework in Indigenous media production, theories or histories;
- one program offers a diploma program in Indigenous filmmaking, but the program and its courses do not appear to be required or accessible to Bachelor program students;
- Indigenous topics are included in two Canadian cinema courses with wording that discursively constructs the inclusion as an after-thought or with minimized importance;
- one program's website features an Indigenous film festival, but there is no mention of how the festival relates to the film school curricula and program activities;
- beyond specifically Indigenous representation in the websites, it is notable that the critical subject of race only appears twice in course descriptions.

Similar absences were also noted in the composition of most faculty job postings reviewed for this study. The job postings analyzed indicate that critical theory and practice are separated, or that critical theory is absent in the descriptions of faculty technical acumen, craft ability and industry connections. No institution required statements on pedagogies of media praxis to clarify applicants' educational philosophies of bridging theory to practice, and no postings required written statements of how equity, diversity or social justice are integrated in their teaching, research and craft practices. The absence of this kind of critical reflection and commitment in the hiring process is concerning given the role of critical theory and critical thinking in grappling with contested aspects of media production and representation. While these absences exist, one faculty job posting was a targeted hire for an instructor with a Black racial identity, and another one was seeking world cinema history expertise for the purpose of adding pluralistic awareness to the program curricula. These two examples offer the insight that critical praxis might be desired by the programs even if the requirement of critical praxis is never clearly articulated. This analysis

points to: Saha's (2018) warning that making media workforces more racially diverse will not necessarily make institutional practices more equitable, and to the work of Frances et al (2017) who have established the extra work burdens places on racialized faculty in Canadian higher education by expecting them to both represent their own diversities as well as carry out their specific research and teaching responsibilities. Furthermore, Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) emphasize the importance of including critical social competencies and experiences in job posting requirements as a means to ensure faculty value and centre equity, social justice or diversity in their academic practices. Overall, the notable absences in critical and social concern within all of the website texts analyzed evidences an excluding dominance of technological, creative and craft skillsets, as well as a missing link between critical media praxis and industry-oriented film school education.

Conclusion: implications for future research and media education practice

In closing, the research presented in this paper signals that film production programs say they offer a balance of critical theory and media practice education; however, the analytic process undertaken indicates that practice-based discourses and curricula may overshadow or take precedent over critical, ethical and socially-situated learning. A question arising from my analysis is about the ability of film production programs to be critical of media industries while also feeding graduates to them. As this research is limited in scope to discursive themes from website text, it will be important for future research to shed light on the experiences of students and instructors in taking up, resisting and/or transforming harmful media industries discourses and practices. Surely this kind of reframing is occurring in media education spaces, with much to be learned by analyzing critical approaches to applied media education. Thus, next research steps can support direct, precise, and well-articulated plans for engagement of critical theory and media sociology in media teaching and learning so that criticality can be prioritized by graduates in their work lives.

What this research paper is thus advocating for is the development of critical and/or critical decolonial media production pedagogies that centre futurity, ethics, and more socially just ways forward in business and cultural expression. Such pedagogies could build on critical pedagogical notions of theory and media practice (praxis) as "informed action" (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 110). They would navigate considerations of difference, particularly epistemological difference (boyd, 2018), alongside ethics of representation and conditions of production. Critical decolonial media production pedagogies would also 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; Cote-Meek, 2014; hooks,

2014; Nam, 2010; Patterson et al., 2016). Critical or critical decolonial pedagogies of media production education, then, would be about how theory and practice are engaged for just social relations and futures.

As Kincheloe (2004) argues, practice-based "professional education" should relate itself to "previously excluded knowledge" (p. 113), so the combination of theory, practice and relational critical pedagogies contribute to community-driven evolutions of media work and popular cultures. Such a vision of transforming film production teaching and learning requires a relational and responsible approach to change in media education practices. While this article has shared critical concern, it is necessary to assert the utter importance for students to get jobs after completing their film education. The critiques herein are intended to simply draw attention to the fact that we do not fully understand what film programs think are important job skillsets or what social values are embedded in those skillsets. Given what media and cultural industries research has shown about the inequities and injustices embedded within media work cultures, it is unethical to avoid preparing students to have a critical vocabulary that includes care, and critical analysis and praxis. This research agenda is important because it evidences the space between newer social competencies that might be required by media industries employers and what standards film schools are teaching to, on one hand, and the stories educators are telling about the media industries, on the other. Alignment is needed to ensure that future media workers are ready to do media work that fully integrates technical, critical, social and ethical standards.

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