Institutional racism in the film industry: a multilevel perspective

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Abstract

Purpose – While the notion of institutional racism typically focuses on racial discrimination in institutions such as governmental organisations, academic institutions and courts of law, there is a need to complement this organisational (meso) focus with the investigation of relevant factors at the societal (macro) and individual (micro) levels. The purpose of this paper is to examine the multilevel factors influencing institutional racism in the film industry.

Design/methodology/approach – Drawing on 16 in-depth interviews with individuals working in the film industry, this paper develops a conceptual perspective of multilevel racism.

Findings – The findings highlight how power structures, network-based recruitment practices, as well as formal and informal learning lead to and sustain racism in the film industry. However, agency on an individual level is observed as a way to break those patterns.

Originality/value – The findings highlight how individual agency pushes for more equality and diversity in the film industry, despite the barriers encountered on macro- and meso-levels. In addition, the important role of informal and formal learning through observation is stressed as a means to sustain the discriminatory practices in this industry.

Keywords Gender, Multilevel perspective, Racism, Film industry, Agency

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Recent research has highlighted strong inequalities in the film industry (Jones and Pringle, 2015; Randle and Hardy, 2017; Wing-Fai *et al.*, 2015). The existence of racism in society and organisations alike cannot be denied and the film industry is no exception (Bhavnani, 2007). The film industry comprises the technological and commercial institutions of filmmaking, such as film production, screenwriting, acting, distribution; and actors, film directors and other film crew personnel. Focusing on the film industry, a recent study reveals that only 28.3 per cent of all speaking characters in films and TV series are from under-represented racial/ethnic groups (Smith *et al.*, 2016), which is about 10 per cent below the proportion in the US population (37.9 per cent) (USCB, 2015).

While studies on institutional racism have typically focused on racial discrimination in social institutions such as governmental organisations, schools, police and judiciary (e.g. Lopez, 2000), this organisational (meso) focus needs to be complemented with the study of relevant factors at the societal (macro) and individual (micro) levels in order to provide a more complete picture. This paper addresses this gap by developing a multilevel perspective of institutional racism in the film industry. By adopting a multilevel approach, we are able to shed light on how inequalities are produced and sustained thereby developing an integrated understanding of institutional racism (Nkomo, 1992; Phillips, 2011).

We make two inter-related contributions. First, we draw on multilevel insights to develop a holistic picture of institutional racism in the film industry. We argue that unless racism is understood and tackled at multiple levels in an integrated manner, instances and challenges of racial discrimination and under-representation are likely to persist. Second, our study is also a response to calls for more research on intersectionality (Chow *et al.*, 2013;

Hancock, 2016). We treat intersectionality as an important analytic tool to theorise issues of diversity and oppression (Nash, 2008), which are evident in the mutual reproduction of racial, gender and class relations (Acker, 2006). "Race" refers to socially defined differences based on physical characteristics, culture and historical domination and oppression, justified by entrenched beliefs (Acker, 2006, p. 444). We examine issues of intersectionality of race and gender facing women of colour in the film industry.

Multilevel perspective of institutional racism

Institutional racism refers to particular and general instances of racial discrimination, inequality and domination in organisational or institutional contexts, such as the labour market, industry or wider society (Ahmed, 2012; Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967). It may be observed in processes, attitudes and behaviours which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage ethnic minority people. White individuals are greatly over-represented in the film industry, disadvantaging non-white individuals (Quinn, 2011). There is also a phenomenon of whitewashing (Fox, 2013) – a casting practice in which white actors are cast in historically non-white character roles–which occurs in drama schools, casting offices and mainstream media.

We use Syed and Özbilgin's (2009) relational framework of diversity to theorise institutional racism at multiple levels. Syed and Özbilgin (2009) argued that issues of diversity and discrimination need to be understood and addressed at the macro-societal level in terms of legislative and socio-cultural contexts, meso-organisational level in terms of organisational structures and routines and micro-individual level in terms of identity, intersectionality and agency.

We use the above framework to construct a holistic, multilevel perspective of institutional racism. While racism is often treated as an organisational phenomenon, we argue that academics and policymakers also needs to consider macro- and micro-level dimensions of racism.

Macro-level

The macro-level factors of racism are related to provisions for racial equality (or lack thereof) within national legislation, social customs and cultural traditions. For example, in the absence of legal provisions for racial equality and their active enforcement in education, employment and wider society, racial/ethnic minorities are likely to remain disadvantaged and discriminated against (Geddes, 2004), although discrimination and therefore disadvantages can also remain despite existing legislation, albeit in subtler ways (Bennington and Wein, 2000). Similarly, issues of social stereotyping and xenophobia are known for their adverse impact on racial minorities (Yakushko, 2009). In white majority societies, for example, whiteness may be seen as a marker that guarantees different levels of access in terms of economic, social and cultural capital (Garner, 2006). As a result, these factors serve to construct and sustain power hierarchies in organisations and societies.

Regarding the power structures, there is evidence that power in the film industry is unequally distributed such that few individuals, mainly white men, hold much of the decision-making power (Blair, 2003), giving way to personal biases and preferences. Such biases are also evident in acting schools and drama workshops. For example, Pagan (2015) explained how a superficial commitment to diversity and racially biased structures and attitudes characterise the Fine Arts degree programmes of a top school of dramatic arts in the USA. Amongst other things, Pagan noted, "the way in which these plays are selected, structured and presented reveals the systemic racism […]" (para. 2), showing that progress is slow or inexistent.

Meso-level
At the meso-level, institutional racism operates through organisational structures, processes, norms and outcomes. These factors also affect the relationships among individuals working in an organisation or industry, which in turn lead to formal and informal hierarchies (Blair *et al.*, 2003). In this paper, we focus on network-based recruitment practices and formal and informal learning.

First, network-based recruitment practices are commonplace within the film industry and are central to initiating, developing and maintaining work as they provide exposure to people in positional power, increase market visibility and enable workers to leverage a place within the network of decision makers (Lee, 2011). Such networks or "cliques" (Manning and Sydow, 2007) are known for their potential to be both discriminatory and exclusionary in terms of race and gender (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; Handy and Rowlands, 2014; Hennekam and Bennett, 2017), age (Hennekam, 2015) and disability (Randle and Hardy, 2017). Workers outside these networks and who lack the required social capital have difficulties obtaining work and advancing their careers (Antcliff *et al.*, 2007; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012).

Second, formal and informal learning constitutes a means through which newcomers learn the norms and rules of the industry. In line with social learning theory (Bandura, 1977a) that posits that behaviour is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning and socialisation, we argue that individuals learn the rules of the game in the film industry both during formal and informal learning opportunities. Informal learning opportunities are common in the film industry as most individuals start as "runner" which usually implies no pay but offers the opportunity to learn the ropes.

Micro-level
The micro-level consists of individual identities, interactions and strategies. First, intersectionality may influence the experiences of individuals. Intersectionality refers to overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination or discrimination (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality is the idea that multiple identities such as race, gender and social class are not unitary or mutually exclusive entities, but reciprocally constructing phenomena (Collins, 2015). While the disadvantaged position of women in the film industry has been well documented (Conor *et al.*, 2015; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; Handy and Rowlands, 2014; Wing-Fai *et al.*, 2015), less is known about women who simultaneously belong to an ethnic minority group. In the film industry, the literature suggests that women of colour remain more disadvantaged than their white cohorts (Brah and Phoenix, 2013). For example, in their recent analysis of women and power in film, Sutherland and Feltey (2017) showed that films depicting women's empowerment are predominantly tales of white, middle class women. In contrast, women of colour are most likely to be featured in dominated and subordinate roles, such as maids and nurses.

Second, individuals can also express agency by going against prevailing practices. The expression of agency can be related to the notion of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy concerns the belief in one's ability to complete a specific task or reach a goal successfully (Bandura, 1997b). The presence of role models in the form of successful females of ethnic minority origins in the film industry has a signalling function in that it shows that career success is possible, positively affecting their self-efficacy beliefs. Role models are described as "individuals whose behaviours, personal styles, and specific attributes are emulated by others" (Shapiro *et al.,* 1978, p. 52). Role models are important as they can provide a source of information, encouragement and support (BarNir *et al.*, 2011).

Methods
This study seeks to develop in-depth insights into institutional racism in the film industry using a multilevel framework that links the micro-, meso- and macro-level factors that shape

this phenomenon. Our approach followed the guidelines for qualitative methodology outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Strauss and Corbin (1990), using an inductive interpretivist approach. We draw on 16 in-depth interviews with individuals working in the film industry in the Netherlands. Hereunder the characteristics of the sample, the followed procedures and the analysis are outlined.

Study's context
This study took place in the Netherlands. While this country is self-defined as a liberal and tolerant country, it has been argued that a backlash has occurred in public discourses about ethnic minorities both in organisations and in the society as a whole (Entzinger, 2014). In addition, ethnic minorities are often in a disadvantaged position which cannot be explained by low human capital attributes, meaning that there is institutional discrimination and racism (Vasta, 2007).

Sample
This study reports on 16 in-depth interviews with individuals in the film industry in the Netherlands. The interviews focused on different aspects of diversity and identity in the film industry. The interview guide included questions about the interviewees' career path, different activities, their identity and how they entered the film industry. Of the 16 interviewees, 9 were women and 7 were non-white individuals. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were chosen since they provide an opportunity for detailed investigation of personal views and experiences of each interviewee. All interviews were held in 2015 and lasted, on average, for about one to one-and-a-half hours. The demographic characteristics of the sample can be found in Table I.

Procedures
The interviewees were contacted by the researcher and an individual interview was scheduled. Interviewees were recruited through a combination of chain referral and convenience sampling techniques (Miles and Huberman, 1994). All interviews were conducted by Skype and were audio recorded. Anonymity was guaranteed and the interviewees were told they could stop the interview at any time. The interviews were conducted in Dutch and lasted for about one-and-a-half hour. The number of interviews was

Arts practice	Gender	Race/ethnicity	Age
Actress	Female	Creole	29
Producer	Female	White	29
Script writer/producer	Female	Asian	39
Actress/producer/writer	Female	Asian	38
Producer	Female	White	30
Actress	Female	White	29
Actress	Female	Creole	36
Actress/script writer/producer	Female	Black	36
Actress	Female	White	27
Actress	Female	White	29
Producer/playwright	Male	White	43
Writer	Male	White	41
Agent	Male	Black	38
Art director	Male	Asian	45
Assistant producer	Female	White	26
Make-up artist	Male	White	33

Table I.
Demographic characteristics of sample

not determined beforehand, however, we stopped conducting more interviews when saturation point was reached. An interview guide was used (see the Appendix), but in line with the semi-structured design, the researcher was open to discuss other issues brought up by the interviewees. As a consequence, the interview guide was dynamic and evolved as more interviews were conducted.

We acknowledge that studies on sensitive topics that employ qualitative interviews may elicit socially desirable responses from the interviewees. We adopted four conscious strategies from the research design to the data collection to minimise social desirability bias. Ananthram and Chan (2016) recommended a multi-strategy approach that has been reported to be most effective. We first ensured that interviewees voluntarily participated in the study. This was clearly communicated at the outset and allowed interviewees to be comfortable with the interview process as well as the data analysis and reporting processes. Second, we assured interviewees anonymity at every stage of the research to minimise pressure to respond in a socially desirable manner. Our third strategy included conducting one-on-one interviews in familiar and comfortable surroundings. Moreover, the interviews were conducted at a time convenient to the interviewee to maximise their comfort level. As part of our final strategy, it was explained to the interviewees that there were no right or wrong answers, thereby encouraging them to elaborate on the responses using anecdotal evidence.
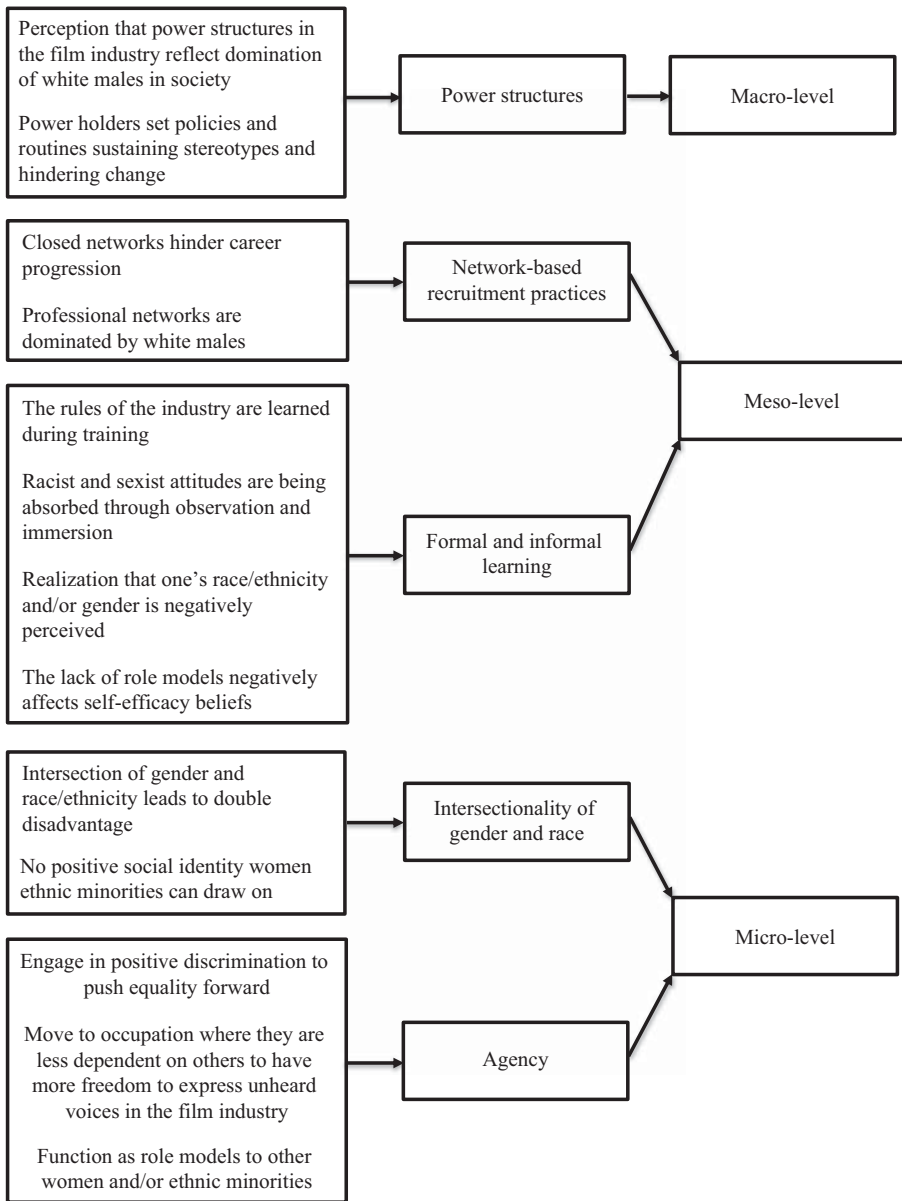
Analysis
The interviews were audio recorded and fully transcribed. The analysis was conducted in three inter-related steps based on the Gioia method (Gioia *et al.*, 2013). This is displayed in Figure 1.

It is important to mention that the analysis was iterative in nature and that we had to go back and forth between the transcriptions, coding book and additional observational notes that were taken right after each interview was conducted in order not to lose sight of the context in which things were said.

The analysis evolved from the first-order themes to broader categories and dimensions in the last and third step. During the first step of the analysis, the researcher read the entire transcripts to get a feel for the data. Then, one researcher started the coding process by using an initial list of codes based on the literature. Although some codes were based on the literature, such as the importance of intersectionality and network-based recruitment practices, others emerged organically from the data, such as formal and informal learning. There was mindful openness to new themes not previously identified in the literature (Locke, 2001). The codebook was constantly modified by adding new codes, creating sub-codes or merging some codes, as the existing codes were tested against each new transcript. Figure 1 shows the data analysis structure. The first-order themes can be found on the left in Figure 1.

In the second step of the analysis and after the coding on the data, the researcher focused on the connections between the codes and the identification of second-order conceptual codes. There was a deliberate departure from the rather descriptive formulation of first-order codes, where the words of the interviewees themselves were used, to a higher level of abstraction where meaningful themes were created based on the first-order themes (Locke, 2001; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). These themes can be found in the middle in Figure 1. The main themes that were identified in the data were "power structures," "network-based recruitment practices," "formal and informal learning," "intersectionality of gender and race/ethnicity" and "agency". At this stage, we regrouped the different themes under the different levels: micro (intersectionality and agency), meso (network-based recruitment practices and formal and informal learning) and macro (power structures). In addition, connections between the different themes and concepts that were conceptually

Figure 1.
Data analysis
structure

meaningful were explored in order to provide a conceptual perspective of institutional racism in the film industry. The different themes were perceived to be inter-related such as the reflection of power structures in both the society as a whole (macro-level) and within the film industry (meso-level).

In the third and final step of the analysis, the literature was consulted to examine the conceptualisation related to previous research and read more about themes that had emerged from the data in order to determine whether any key constructs were missed.

For example, the importance of formal and informal learning was something we had not anticipated and it was necessary to become familiar with this body of literature in order to be able to put the findings in perspective.

Findings

The analysis of interviews and personal stories reveals a range of aspects that contribute to and sustain a process of institutional racism. The different macro-, meso- and micro- factors as part of the multilevel perspective are used to provide explanations for the findings obtained. The key themes that emerged from our analyses are depicted in Table II and the resulting conceptual perspective is presented in Figure 2.

The findings are discussed in more detail below. Quotes are provided to illustrate our main points.

Macro-level: power structures

On macro-level, the interviewees stressed that the inequalities they experienced were strongly embedded in the power structures they observed in society as a whole, as a young assistant producer explains:

> What do you want me to do about it? It's the same everywhere, in other organisations, in schools, in the government, in society. It just reflects what we see everywhere around us: that some people dominate others and that those people are in positions of power (Female, 26 years, assistant producer, white).

Theme	Level/s	Description
Power structures	Macro and meso	Domination by males and white individuals as power holders and decision makers
Network-based recruitment practices	Meso	Closed networks dominated by white males, resulting in on-going stereotypes and hindering equality and diversity
Formal and informal learning	Meso	Individuals learn the "rules" and "norms" of the industry during their training and through observation
Intersectionality of gender and race/ethnicity	Micro	Non-white females are in a particular precarious situation because of intersectionality of their race and gender
Agency	Micro	Express of agency to push equality forward by moving to positions where they are no longer dependent on others, function as role models and engage in positive discrimination whenever possible

Table II.
Multilevel themes of institutional racism in the film industry
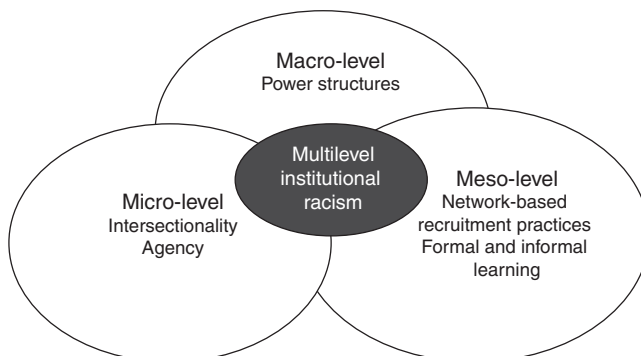
Figure 2.
Conceptual model based on the findings

As the power holders in the industry are white males, these are also the ones who set policies and routines. The agent below has some decision-making power but as those decisions can be overruled by others with more power, he feels it is difficult to make any progress:

> It isn't easy to challenge the status quo as I'm not the one who takes decisions. Only the ones who are in such positions can implement the changes needed to improve the under-representation of ethnic minorities in film (Male, 38 years, agent, non-white).

This was considered problematic as this often reinforces stereotypes that prevail in wider society. Non-white individuals, females in particular, explained that they were often recruited and depicted in a stereotypical way, thereby reinforcing social stereotypes. Often they were depicted in a submissive, sexual or caring role and black people as sportive for men and inferior for women, as the following non-white actress explains:

> I always get offered the same kind of role: nurse, maid […] This is confirming the existing stereotypes and preconceived ideas. It puts me in this outdated stigmatised identity. I feel this is important, as we are also full persons, with our own character with a complex identity. It's always the same angle that is taken, reducing us to the stereotype we represent. If we want social progress, this needs to be tackled (Female, 29 years, actress, non-white).

Meso-level: network-based recruitment practices
At the meso-level, the study indicates how opportunities for employment are shaped by the interviewees' micro-individual identity (race and its intersection with gender) and social networks. The interviewees refer to hiring and promotion practices where "who you know" and "who you are" seem to be more important than "what you can". They suggest that the existing networks are closed to people of colour and women and that it hinders their career progression:

> Discrimination is part of the culture of the film- and theatre industry. It's ingrained somehow, it's because there is this existing network and people are systematically excluded (Female, 39 years, script writer/producer, non-white).

> Roles are fulfilled based on a network of friends who have known each other for a long time. It's impossible to get a foot in the door if you're not "one of them". I don't know if this is because I'm a woman and the main power-holders are men or because I'm not white. Maybe a combination of both (Female, 36 years, actress, non-white).

Meso-level: formal and informal learning
In terms of racial gaps in the film industry, the study points towards where it all starts: during one's training. Interviewees explained that they learned the "rules of the industry" during their training. Bandura (1977a) suggested that behaviour is learned from the environment through a process of observational learning and socialisation. People observe the behaviour of others in given situations and note the outcomes of these behaviours. During training, new actors absorb stereotypical behaviours as well as racist and/or sexist attitudes from others. The following art director explains how he thinks that people probably do not even notice how they get used to racist comments:

> You learn the rules of the game well before you get into the real world of the film industry. You somehow get used to comments that are actually quite racist. As it's a gradual process you probably do not even notice unless it affects you directly (Male, 45 years, art director, non-white).

The interviewees explained that people were treated differently during their training, based on race and gender. Moreover, they reported incidents where people who made their racial identity too salient were "punished":

> I remember a teacher who said something like: "don't be too Creole in the way you move. Try to minimise it, we don't want people to be different" to someone from the Dutch Caribbean. I found it so insulting (Female, 29 years, actress, white).

The participants then use this knowledge to shape their own behaviour in similar contexts and expect to obtain similar outcomes. This reflects social learning that occurs within a context in which people learn from one another and, as such, is a cognitive process in which people make sense of what they observe. This also leads some individuals to hide or reduce their stigmatised identity, such as the following African actress:

> I quickly understood what it takes to be successful. You should be male and white, pretty and social. You need to be affluent and have the right connections. I'm now downplaying my African origin, as it seems that this can only work to my disadvantage (Female, 36 years, actress/script writer/producer, non-white).

The absence of role models emerged as an indicator that breaking into and moving on in the film industry was not without barriers. In addition, it made them wonder whether they could be successful as there seemed to be so few successful examples:

> How many black women actresses are there? Very very few. The day I realised that it was kind of discouraging. Why would I succeed if others before me didn't? (Female, 29 years, actress, non-white).

Micro-level: intersectionality
The study highlights the importance of the intersection of race and gender. It highlights unique experiences of racial minority women and shows that their experiences indeed differ from individuals with only one stigmatised identity. Racial minority women were aware of this particular situation, as the following extracts indicate:

> I want to speak about the fact that I'm black and I'm a woman. While this seems unimportant to some, it does make a difference. Let me explain. We all want an identity that is valued and recognised by others. However, as a woman I'm in a disadvantaged position compared to men. Being black gives me a second disadvantage. In other words, while white women can stress their whiteness to bond with other white people and black men can stress their male-identity, I have no positive identity I can draw on (Female, 39 years, script writer/producer, non-white).

> The lack of interesting roles for women in which we are depicted as respected and multifaceted individuals (not as nurses, mothers etc.) shows that the industry or maybe the society as a whole fails to recognise our stories (Female, 36 years, actress/script writer/producer, non-white).

Micro-level: agency
The data show that individuals express agency despite the perceived barriers of macro- and meso-levels. For example, they engage in positive discrimination whenever there is an opportunity to do so. However, it is important to note that they do not consider this to be desirable, but rather see it as a necessity or a "first step" that could lead to more equality in the long run:

> As a white playwright, I noticed that there are very few plays written that involve black people. I'm now deliberately writing plays that involve people of colour, because if I don't do it they won't have work and this under-representation will continue (Male, 43 years, playwright, white).

In addition, they mentioned that they could only act on their personal level, which is what they did. This was mentioned by four interviewees:

> We cannot change what others are doing, so the only thing you can accomplish is on your own, personal level. What I'm trying to do is to challenge the stereotypes in my writing. I think that continuous exposure to other ideas will help people change their mind and finally the general mentality and stereotypes people have (Female, 39 years, script writer/producer, non-white).

Some of these women moved to an occupation where they were less dependent on others. Especially a shift from acting to writing/producing emerged from the data. Three interviewees

explained that this gave them more freedom to express the voices of under-represented groups in the industry:

> I started as an actress, but there are very few roles for non-white women. I felt I couldn't show my capabilities and develop my career. However, what made me switch to writing after all those years was the urge to tell my story, my shared story about how it is to be a non-white female actress. Instead of feeling frustrated, I now feel I'm making a contribution (Female, 38 years, actress/producer/writer, non-white).

Finally, four interviewees adopt a long-term perspective and highlight that they want to function as role models for future generations as they feel the road to equality in the film industry will be a long one:

> It's important to me to be seen, to be present. For me, being visible is a way of showing that women of colour exist. By getting as much exposure as possible, no matter what role, I hope to encourage young women of colour to pursue a career in theatre, TV or film (Female, 36 years, actress, non-white).

Discussion

Drawing on in-depth interviews with individuals working in the film industry, we enhance our understanding of the multilevel nature of institutional racism in the film industry.

At the macro-level, the existing power holders in decision-making positions were perceived to maintain or even reinforce stereotypes by placing individuals in roles that would confirm the stereotypes about them. They explained that they were often chosen for a role to fulfil a token strategy, instead of being chosen for their skills.

At the meso-level, the findings showed that the process starts during the period in which individuals are trained for the film industry. At this early stage, individuals learn the "rules" of the industry through social learning and observation (Bandura, 1977a). By observing others, they learn what behaviour is considered appropriate. They quickly realise that not everyone is equal in the film industry and that being "different" from the mainstream is an obstacle for their career advancement. Moreover, the absence of role models in the form of successful ethnic minority women signals that non-white women might be unwelcome in the film industry or are less likely to succeed (Buunk *et al.*, 2007). Once being active in the industry and trying to establish oneself, the interviewees mentioned the white-male dominated networks that were difficult to break into, hindering their opportunities to show what they were worth.

At the micro-level, the study highlighted how ethnic minority women's experiences were unique as they faced multiple disadvantages due to stigmatisation and stereotyping of their race and gender. However, the study also highlighted how some of these women (and also men) used their individual agency and resilience to address such challenges. The above-mentioned factors hindered the progression of non-white individuals. As a consequence of those power structures, they stressed the need for positive action in order to initiate a meaningful change in the industry. While they are waiting for this to happen, a natural selection is taking place in which some individuals with a multiple disadvantage may be moving to occupations where they are less dependent on others and thus have the freedom and space to tell their stories. Individuals who have to deal with the intersection of several stigmatised social identities are an overlooked group and encounter multiple disadvantages. They explained being unable to draw on a socially validated or privileged identity and faced challenges of intersectionality and adverse stereotypes. Finally, they highlighted the importance of becoming a role model themselves to show what is possible for future generations.

Theoretical implications

This paper has developed and used a multilevel perspective on institutional racism. It has highlighted the need to depart from single-level conceptualisations—which limit racism to

institutional and organisational rules, norms and biases alone—to an integrated, holistic understanding of racism at three interconnected and overlapping levels. In particular, it has highlighted the need to consider how power hierarchies and differences at the macro-societal level overlap with racial and gender hierarchies and differences at the meso-organisational level which are evident in the shape of network-based staffing as well as opportunities for formal and informal learning. At the micro-level, it has highlighted the need to consider intersections of race with gender and also individual strategies used in response to racial and gender hierarchies and discrimination.

For the sake of comparison and evaluation, future scholars may examine institutional racism at multiple levels in the film industry in other countries such as the USA, UK, Canada and Australia as well as in other creative industries such as television and theatres. Scholars may also look at other dimensions of the multilevel framework such as laws and ethnic or social norms, and diversity agendas and policies of organisations, and how they affect racism and sexism in the film and other industries.

Practical implications
The findings have some important practical implications. First of all, change is clearly needed. However, organisational change may also inherently disrupt the culture, common practices and ways of working of an institution (Blitz and Kohl, 2012). Still, the call for change in the way the film industry operates is getting louder and the existing power holders probably have to engage in a debate that will imply some meaningful changes. It has been argued that open two-way communication is critical in such as process in that individuals feel valued and heard (Devine, 2010). One possibility is to use racial affinity groups. Racial affinity groups are processes where people of the same racial group meet on a regular basis to discuss the dynamics of institutional racism, oppression and privilege within their institution (Blitz and Kohl, 2012). Such groups can provide forums for communication and group members can offer insights to help move the changes forward.

Second and related to the formal and informal training, the study points towards the need to design and implement training programmes—for actors, directors, producers, writers and technical and auxiliary personnel—in a manner that is not only inclusive in terms of race and ethnicity but also in terms of gender and other forms of identity. This could be enacted through monitoring enrolments as well as positive action to attract members of the under-represented groups with an attention to their internal heterogeneity. Established academies as well as government organisations may offer scholarships and other incentives to eligible and deserving members of black, Asian and Hispanic communities including women to bridge the current racial and gender gaps in this profession.

The Scandinavian model of increasing diversity through affirmative action (Seierstad and Opsahl, 2011) may be seen as a way forward. If the aim is to correct an injustice of the past and to put an end to perpetual whiteness, this seems to be a reasonable solution. Change in the film sector towards greater equality, diversity and inclusion, as Tatli and Özbilgin (2012) argued, requires increasing the class, gender and racial diversity of the leadership as well raising existing leaders' awareness of systematic bias in this sector.

Finally, role models could provide women from ethnic minorities with the support and encouragement they need to initiate and sustain their career in the film industry (BarNir *et al.*, 2011). Previous research has shown that women are more inspired by other women as they can more easily relate to them (Hennekam, 2016). In addition, role models need to be perceived as similar (Sealy and Singh, 2010) as well as realistic and attainable (Lockwood and Kunda, 1997). As a consequence, more visible women of colour in the film industry could help to increase equality, diversity and inclusion in the film industry.

Limitations and suggestions for future research
While this study provided some insights into the process of institutional racism in the film industry, it is not without shortcomings.

First, the starting point of intersectional research has been the recognition that gender intersects with other social identities (Crenshaw, 1991) and we chose to focus on race. We agree with Jones (2009) that intersectionality is a useful heuristic for illuminating the complexities of the lived experience and for exploring the relationships between identity categories, individual differences, social structures and systems of inequality. However, in line with Warner and Shields (2013), we argue that intersectionality applies to all identities. Indeed, the study showed that the intersection with other dimensions such sexual orientation also revealed interesting findings. While this was considered to be beyond the scope of this paper, we strongly recommend future studies to study the intersectionality of other diversity dimensions especially under-studied ones such as disability (Randle and Hardy, 2017).

Second, we cannot exclude that national or industry culture may have influenced the findings. We suggest that future studies take the national, regional and/or industry variances into account.

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Appendix. Interview guide

(1) Could you please tell me what kind of work you do in the film industry?

(2) Could you please tell me about how you got into the film industry?

(3) How has your career evolved? How do you feel about that?

(4) Could you describe the culture and ambiance of the film industry for me please?

(5) How do people treat each other? What is important?

(6) How do people get ahead?

(7) How are you being perceived in the industry by others? Why is that?

(8) Have you ever felt marginalised/discriminated against? If so, could you please explain this in detail?

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