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"I Felt More Difficulty Because of My Class than I Have Because of My Gender": Intersectional Analysis of Professional Lives of British Women Documentarians

Ania Ostrowska

Abstract: *Through the exploration of gender's intersections with age, social class and race/ethnicity, this article introduces an intersectional lens to studies of female workers in the British creative and cultural industries (CCI). It presents intersectional analysis of data gathered in twenty-six qualitative interviews with contemporary British women documentarians who talk about their early career aspirations and perceived barriers to entry to the industry. Intersectionality, introduced to critical theory by African American scholars, holds that multiple axes of oppression mutually constitute different social positions and identities. The intersectional approach discussed in this article produces a nuanced picture of the small group of respondents, foregrounding a complex interplay between gender, race and ethnicity, class and region and thus demonstrating the limitations of the category "woman filmmaker" for researching professional disadvantage. However, rather than seeing their experiences as intersectional, the respondents tend to focus on one most salient social marker. Congruously with a large body of literature on systemic inequalities in British CCI, social class is the single most important factor shaping the beginnings of the respondents' careers. By bridging the gap between intersectionality as a theory and research practice, this article seeks to make a contribution to the broader debate about the employment of intersectional approaches in media studies.*

Introduction

The intersectional analysis of qualitative interview data discussed in this article was devised for a research project about the creative labour of British women documentarians, conducted between 2016 and 2019 (Ostrowska, *Not*). Women who make documentaries and their work are underrepresented subjects in British film and media studies. Systematic exploration of notable nonfiction creators of the past has just started, boosted in 2018 by the AHRC-funded project at the University of Sussex focusing on documentary filmmaker and screenwriter Jill Craigie (1911–1999). There is currently no monograph dedicated to a living British woman documentarian. Even a filmmaker of the stature of Kim Longinotto, whose career spans forty years and features numerous international award-winning films, is only mentioned in journal articles or book chapters (White; Tay). While full-length studies of documentaries directed by women, including auteurist studies, are much needed, my project is situated in the field of feminist production studies (van Zoonen; Mayer, Banks, and Caldwell). Using practitioner interviews with women filmmakers, I seek to make a contribution to the growing body of work researching "the significance of gender for an understanding of creative labour in the neoliberal economy" (Conor, Gill, and Taylor 1).[1] In this article I consider the way in which high profile "above-the-line" workers articulate and manage their identities. Through the exploration of gender as it intersections with age, social class and race/ethnicity, I introduce an intersectional lens to studies of female workers in the British creative and cultural industries.

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Research into inequalities in cultural and creative industries (CCI) encompasses both large scale quantitative studies, including surveys (Savage at al.), concerned with the macro-level and small-scale qualitative projects exploring in detail a segment of the workforce, of which the project discussed here is an example. Feminist researchers in the field emphasise the horizontal segregation of jobs in CCI and often focus on the "below-the-line" jobs, especially those traditionally coded feminine like costume designers, make-up artists or wardrobe managers (Banks; Jones and Pringle). Conversely, my research is akin to previous work on women screenwriters, such as that of Natalie Wreyford, as it involves what Jones and Pringle call "high-profile female creatives" (41), the group within the remit of the AHRC-funded project *Calling the Shots* at the University of Southampton (2014–2018) of which I was part. By foregrounding the barriers and obstacles women documentarians face, I am careful not to give the false impression of strong progress for women in the field. Documentary is often presented as more welcoming to female directors than fiction features production. This is often explained in sober material terms: women directors are more easily trusted by broadcasters or production companies with relatively small documentary budgets. However, the relevant statistics show that, although women indeed direct or codirect more documentaries than fiction features (and more authored documentaries than drama for television), their numbers are still low.[2] Therefore, although the sample comprises mostly established filmmakers, my study acknowledges a backdrop of marginalisation as well as perseverance and emotional labour necessary for women to have sustained careers in the industry.

To generate intersectional narratives, I used a novel interview and coding practice, distinct from the format adopted by some feminist media historians who present case studies of inspiring women creators (Juhasz; Welbon and Juhasz). To further preserve the media makers' voices, those editors tend to keep the barely edited interview transcripts separate from their own critical introduction and commentary. On the other hand, I anonymised my data after transcription so the names appearing in this article are pseudonyms. Instead of individual, named studies I describe patterns across all interviews, following the rules of thematic analysis of qualitative data described by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (86–93). Technically, I do not let the respondents speak for themselves, but I incorporate the excerpts from their accounts into my final narrative, using their insights to support my argument. I interviewed twenty-six women documentary filmmakers (twenty-four directors, one producer and one animated documentary maker) working predominantly for British TV channels, with several relying more on non-broadcast work. Twenty-three respondents were white, two Black and one of Middle Eastern origin; seven out of twenty-six self-identify or hint at being from a working-class background; at the time of the interview, the respondents were between twenty-nine and sixty-seven years of age. I initially adopted intersectionality as an "intracategorical" approach to complexity (McCall), to help me navigate the differences within the sample. As I was proceeding to answer my main research question, whether "gender" is a useful category for investigating the respondents' creative labour, respondents spontaneously mentioned other social markers that I subsequently added to my analytical framework.

Intersectional analysis of research data presented in this article shows how gender, social class, age and race/ethnicity were articulated by the interviewees in the context of their earliest professional aspirations and were seen as barriers to embarking on a filmmaking career. While parts of my narrative present complex experiences and the nuanced positions occupied by respondents, social class emerges throughout the interviews as the single most important factor shaping the beginnings of careers in British film and television. My findings are congruous with substantial literature on inequalities in British cultural and creative industries (Friedman, O'Brien, and Laurison; Banks and Oakley; Friedman, Laurison, and Miles; O'Brien

et al.; Savage et al.). But there is potential for future research exploring in detail class intersections with gender, race, sexuality and other social categories. Taking as its starting point analysis of qualitative interviews with women filmmakers, this article also seeks to make a theoretical contribution to the broader debate about the effective employment of intersectional approaches in film and media studies.

Intersectionality: Theory and Practice

Intersectional analysis of social phenomena recognises the complexity of social interactions and identities, investigating power as a relationship operating along numerous axes and having different effects on social actors, depending on their positioning. As a named strategy, intersectionality evolved in the late 1980s from critical race studies in the US, especially in the work of legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, which focused on the intersection of gender and race and its legal consequences for African American women. There is some consensus now that Crenshaw "provided a name to a pre-existing theoretical and political commitment" (Nash 3), and that insisting on her "'coining' of the term as a foundational moment for intersectionality" erases its complicated history (Collins and Bilge 64). Understood as a "travelling concept" (Knapp), applied differently in different contexts, intersectionality was taken up by UK scholars in both humanities and social sciences (Yuval-Davis; Squires).

The enduring conviction that the multiple axes of oppression and privilege should not be analytically isolated distinguishes intersectionality from the additive model of oppression, in which different characteristics are analysed separately. When the feminist movement was gaining momentum in Anglo-Saxon countries from the 1970s onwards, some activists were pointing out that gender, race, sexuality, class and disability were mutually constitutive in the creation of identities and in the lived experiences of thousands of women. Challenging the mainstream women's liberation movement's assumption that "the white (heterosexual, middle-class) experience *is* the female experience", these activists emphasised internal complexity within the categories "women" and "gender" (Juhasz 4). Early intersectional researchers focused on marginalised groups located at "neglected points of intersection" of gender and race (McCall 1780). However, my study is informed by the majority-inclusive perspective (Staunæs), considering both intersectionally marginalised and intersectionally advantaged women. Although all my respondents are relatively disadvantaged as compared to men, the majority of them occupy positions of multiple social privilege in the categories of gender reassignment, race/ethnicity, social class and sexual orientation. This approach produces a fuller picture of how power operates in the respondents' professional lives and allows me to map discrimination in British film and media industries more accurately.

One of the tensions in intersectionality literature is the question of whether intersectionality is a theory or a practice. Because of its roots in social justice activism, for some authors it is not "simply a method for doing research but is also a tool for empowering people", a critical praxis in which theory leads to concrete actions empowering individuals and communities (Collins and Bilge 37). In social sciences, intersectionality is seen as a theory notoriously difficult to apply in research practice, with a gap between "scholarship that theorizes" and "methodologically-driven research which deploys the construct in practice" (Rice, Harrison, and Friedman 4). This article seeks to make a contribution to the body of work that demonstrates how concrete intersectional methods are employed to analyse qualitative research data (Christensen and Jensen; Simien; Valentine).

My intersectional analysis follows the approach of "intercategorical complexity" (McCall 1773), as I accept preconstituted categories like "gender", "social class", "maternity", etc., using them "strategically in the service of displaying the linkages between categories and inequality" (Nash 6). Choosing which categories to focus on I customised the list of "protected characteristics" from the Equality Act (2010), the central piece of workplace discrimination legislation in the UK. The first category I explore is gender, replacing the Equality Act's biological category "sex" as I am interested in social and professional consequences of the fact that all my respondents are perceived as women. While large volume of talk about gender is a direct result of one of my interview questions (I ask each respondent about the perceived influence of gender on her career), the respondents mention the other categories unprompted, including social class, notoriously difficult to define in contemporary sociology and not listed as a protected characteristic by the Act. Driven by the interviewees' use of the term, in this article "social class" is understood primarily in its socio-cultural dimension, exploring how the milieu a person grows up in shapes their cultural horizons and professional expectations. Although I don't ask my respondents to define their class status, seven of them (27%) spontaneously identify as or hint at being working-class and nineteen identify or hint at being middle-class. "Hinting" at social origin includes referencing grammar or public school (*not* attended), talking about being "not from a posh background" or describing oneself as an "overachieving brat". Thirdly, the category of pregnancy and maternity is important for my analysis as sixteen respondents (61%) declare having children, with fourteen saying they kept directing documentaries when having young children. When it comes to race and ethnicity**,** whiteness is an unmarked category of privilege as almost 90% respondents are intersectionally advantaged as white women. Accidentally, the percentage of women from BAME backgrounds in my study (three out of twenty-six, or around 11%) is close to that of BAME women in key production roles in British qualifying films 2003–2015 (Cobb, Williams, and Wreyford, "Black"). The respondents were between twenty-nine and sixty-seven years of age at the time of the interview and started their directing careers at different points in their lives; age was the final category on my list. Because my analysis is thematic and interview-driven, I do not consider the categories of disability, sexual orientation, religion and gender reassignment.[3] I recognise the distinctive nature of each inequality strand and ontological differences between the categories (e.g., that gender operates differently to race), as well as the porousness and flexibility of some social categories (for example, my respondents describe the strategies of "passing" as middle-class and/or British).

Intersectional Analysis of the Factors Influencing Entry to Documentary Filmmaking

In this section, I apply an intersectional framework to the respondents' accounts of their earliest aspirations and the beginnings of their careers. Not all aforementioned analytical categories are relevant for this segment of data; the respondents talk about gender, social class and age, both separately and as intersecting with one another. Additionally, I discuss race in the context of its privileged intersection with gender which renders whiteness an invisible norm.

Women Role Models: Unmarked Gender

Intersectional thinking was introduced to mainstream feminism by women of colour, lesbians, bisexual and disabled women who opposed the white feminist movement's discursive use of "*women* and *gender* as unitary and homogeneous categories reflecting the common essence of all women" (McCall, 1776). However, some of my respondents use gender as such

a universal, unmarked category when talking about the importance of "women role models" when growing up and in the beginnings of their careers. Echoing Geena Davis's trademarked adage, "If she can see it, she can be it", "seeing" powerful women works as a necessary corrective to traditional socialisation of girls for auxiliary and caring roles rather than creative and leadership roles. Nine respondents mention such women in their lives. Talking about her childhood, Tina credits her "1970s feminist" mother for instilling in her the belief that she was "as good as men", referencing the traditional gendering of upbringing. Other respondents speak highly of women who inspired them as they were embarking on their creative path. Lucy, who is an observational self-shooting documentarian, was profoundly influenced by one of her film schoolteachers, American camerawoman Joan Churchill: "She gave me confidence. I was lucky she was there because I think when I was there, she was one of the few female camera operators that I knew of". Tina considers herself "lucky" to have made her first short in the mid-1990s, in what she calls the "Golden Age of Channel 4 commissioning", when half of TV directors were women. "It didn't occur to me that being a director wasn't something that women did", she says. That comment suggests the existence at the time of a community of women filmmakers one could aspire to be part of. On the other hand, other respondents describe the lack of visible women role models as detrimental to their professional trajectory. When Tamsin enrolled on a fine art photography course in the 1970s, she didn't know "any women who have ever done this", which made her feel unsure of herself. She adds that "there were no women television documentary directors, for instance, and definitely not any fiction ones". Gina, working as a producer in the 1980s, describes the industry as "incredibly sexist", which resulted in women performing "more minion roles". Eventually, she found her mentor in a confident woman director she worked with on several films who "was very kind of bold"; that woman made her believe she could try her hand at directing documentaries, which she subsequently did.

The seemingly homogenous category "women" is dominant in talk about the deep-seated gender bias in the film and TV industries. Theresa, in her early sixties at the time of the interview, mentions blatant institutional sexism from the early 1980s when, applying for a job in a regional TV station, she was told to "go and get secretarial skills" during a job interview. On the other hand, Kelly's experience in another regional TV branch from roughly the same time period was very different. She recounts the story of getting her first TV gig because, and not despite of, her involvement with the Women's Liberation Movement because a male commissioning editor appreciated her previous work for iconic British feminist magazine *Spare Rib*. Felicity, twenty-nine at the time of the interview and the youngest of the respondents, describes freelancing for the BBC from 2009 onwards as "gender neutral", recalling working with roughly the same number of men and women up to a series producer level (when the ratio started getting skewed towards men).

Intersectional analysis of what Felicity, white and middle-class, says about positive action in employment offers a possibility, unintended by the speaker, for investigating the intersection of gender and race. Talking about her career progression, she asserts: "like with anybody, whether it's women or ethnic minorities, you wanna feel that you got there because they [*sic*] feel they [*sic*] won. You want to feel you got there because you're the best." As a white woman, she names "ethnic minorities" as an underprivileged social group separate from "women". Being white is a hegemonic discursive position which often remains invisible, seemingly not leaving its mark on other aspects of identity in the same way that being Black, brown or mixed-race does. And yet, being a woman and being a member of ethnic minority intersect in the lives of BAME women working in British film and television. The two Black respondents say they never benefitted from a positive action targeting either women in general

or BAME film and media professionals/women specifically. Neither of them mentions inspiring "women", but one of them talks about a Black male director as a mentor and role model. However, with only three BAME respondents in the sample (two Black and one of Middle Eastern origin) it is impossible for me to make a strong case for race as an isolated factor contributing to BAME women's professional disadvantage.

"Working-Class Women" or "Unprivileged People"?

While the white respondents are privileged at the intersection of gender and race, some of them are intersectionally marginalised at the intersection of gender and class. It is clear from the interviews that people from less affluent backgrounds may be simply unaware of certain career prospects. Bettina, reflecting not only on her own experience but also on that of her mentees from underprivileged backgrounds, asks rhetorically: "If you don't even know where the doors are, how do you even know where to knock?" Danielle, in her mid-fifties at the time of our interview, says that when growing up, she didn't realise she could go to university: "I didn't know what university was [...] Well, my parents had never gone to university, so I didn't even know it really existed." Evelyn hadn't gone to university either, but worked in a pub until she was twenty and then went to art school "a bit", without finishing the course, and recalls being "slightly lost" before getting her first filmmaking job in what she describes as a stroke of luck. It is much easier to acquire the knowledge both about "where the doors are" and how to knock on them when growing up in a middle-class family. Even when women and men from less privileged backgrounds do find out about these opportunities, the route from aspirations to a career is seldom an easy one, more like "trying to do things despite things, always", as Danielle puts it. Bettina says that, despite always being interested in filmmaking, she felt "there was no opportunity" and that she has "a lot of damage" because of growing up in a European country as "a sub-working-class woman who had no parents." Lisa, who grew up in the North of England in the 1980s,[4] says of her background: "I really came from the world where [you are told]: 'Don't dream too big [...] Maybe just get a nice job in the office in wherever'." While she does not explicitly address the issue of gendering of such attitudes (were teenage boys she grew up with told the same thing?), they made it hard for her to believe that she was capable of directing an independent feature documentary, which she did later in her career.

As evidenced in the interviews, in class underprivileged environments access to arts and culture is limited and television is often the main source of cultural education. Bettina praises radical TV programming in her home country which included Andrei Tarkovsky's films as well as Viennese Actionists' transgressive work ("blood everywhere, carcasses", she enthuses), seeing her exposure to this work as the reason why she wanted to become a filmmaker. Similarly, white English working-class Evelyn shares: "TV was the only access I had really to culture. I grew up in a block of flats and we didn't go to the cinema. There wasn't really a lot of access to film unless it was discovering Mike Leigh on the telly, which I absolutely gobbled up." Evelyn and Sam (also working-class) both talk about Brian Hill's 1990s TV documentaries about working-class people as a strong influence on their choice of documentary filmmaking as a job. There is a shift here from gender-based identification with women role models to the content of male directors' work as inspiration.

On the other hand, talk by the interviewees from class privileged backgrounds supports the claim that growing up in an environment with access to different forms of culture and normalised presence of creative workers makes it easier to develop creative career aspirations. Middle-class Dot says: "From quite a young age, I knew I want to be a journalist." This statement is followed by an account of working in print journalism before becoming a

filmmaker. Similarly, Felicity, who "knew from a really young age [...] probably from about eleven or twelve" that she wanted "to get into some kind of journalism", summarises a tour of the BBC she went on at the time thus: "It's all really exciting to realise that's really where you want to go." Thanks to the cultural capital she had acquired from her middle-class upbringing, she could easily imagine herself working in that BBC office. Some middle-class respondents exhibit striking awareness of their class privilege. Toni, when talking about being accepted to the prestigious and ultra-competitive two-year BBC Production Scheme for postgraduates in the early 1980s, describes herself as "one of those overachieving brats" who got in because they "went to the right university and jumped through the right kind of hoops." She describes in detail how the "unconscious bias" of the recruitment process meant that almost everyone on the course was an Oxbridge graduate.

Talk of social background as an isolated factor not intersecting with gender or race, prevalent among the respondents, belongs in the "additive" model of oppression. Toni uses the gender-neutral word "brat" to signal class privilege and four respondents who identify as working-class name social origin as a sole factor negatively impacting their aspirations and career prospects. Bettina says: "It's not even the woman [thing], it's the life experience that was the real issue", describing contemporary society as "the system which is so cutthroat and demands a certain type of articulation" that results from privileged socialisation and education. In the same vein, Danielle frames some of her negative experiences as class-related, admitting she is not sure if they were "a gender thing". On the other hand, Evelyn, white and working-class, calls for intersectional analysis that would include class: "'Intersectional' is always thought of as being gender and race", she says, "but I think class is huge." Lisa, Evelyn and Tamsin explicitly identify as "working-class women", but they do not provide examples of difficulties unique for that identity.

The majority of respondents, regardless of their social background, notice the middle-class bias in British broadcasting. Working-class Lisa describes how difficult it is to navigate this environment for less privileged people: "In television, most people are from a certain kind of background that often involves being public school educated, and I wasn't. I'm not at all like that and I think I felt slightly on the back foot always as a result." Additionally, the intersection of class, gender and regional origin is embodied in her Northern accent, still often seen as an obstacle to getting media jobs in London and the South East. She felt at times that her colleagues may question her "worthiness to be in the room" by asking: "Who was this Northern woman who doesn't speak properly?" At the intersection of class and race, all respondents who declare working-class background are white; three BAME respondents do not disclose their class origins nor mention social class (I know that one of them is middle-class based on her autobiographical works). In the interviews, white working-class respondents do not subscribe to the racialised concept of the "white working class" (Bhambra), which would pit them against BAME people in terms of access to resources and opportunities.

"The Older Woman Thing"

Finally, age is mentioned as a barrier to entry to documentary filmmaking by four respondents, mostly those who turned to directing documentaries later in life, after having other careers in CCI. Gina mentions age as an obstacle intersecting with both early motherhood and gender. Before she started authoring documentaries at the age of forty, she had been producing independent features and TV documentaries for years, waiting, she says, for her children to grow up before she could pursue her dream. "Only in the last ten years I've really been doing the sort of things that I want to do", she admits. In her fifties at the time of the interview, she

dreads “the older woman thing” that she expects to affect her life soon: “I think that that's going to be difficult. That how older women are looked at.” When asked explicitly about it, she denies having experienced any age-based discrimination so far. She admits she might have internalised circulating stereotypes about “the older women”, pre-empting unfavourable treatment she expects because of ageism that can be especially cruel when paired with sexism.

Considered non-intersectionally, mature age is presented as an obstacle because of the expectations normally held of a person who wants to helm a documentary project. As evidenced by my interviews, because certain routes into filmmaking (most notably, film school) are seen as established and respected, those who followed less straightforward paths often feel snubbed when trying to claim creative authority. Ethel is Black and didn’t grow up in the UK, but she feels that being a mature director with an unconventional CV holds her back more than her gender, race or country of origin, none of which she mentions. She describes her experience as follows: “Certainly in the UK, there's a sense of, well, but have you actually been doing it? Do you have a track record of X short films? Why? Do you have a portfolio which you tend to develop from film school or something?” According to her, a person in their late thirties who did not follow the clearly defined route may be disqualified from some projects from the outset. Danielle, who graduated from the prestigious Editing MA at National Film and Television School, says that despite her long career as an editor, being an “emerging” director in her mid-fifties affects her self-esteem. When applying for funding or mentoring schemes, she experiences failure more acutely knowing she lost to younger people. But Jacqui, only thirty-six at the time of the interview, says she is already excluded from many first-time feature funding schemes as they have an age limit of thirty-five.

While three respondents consider age separately, it is Gina’s example, with its emphasis on intersections of age with gender and motherhood, that can help explain why some creative people in a mature age cannot quite satisfy standard career requirements. Those with caring responsibilities, the majority of whom are women, are not the only ones who follow unconventional routes to British film- and media-making. Working class-people (like Danielle), people of colour and those not born in the UK (like Ethel) often learn on the job or gain professional qualifications later in life. They need to juggle creative projects, caring responsibilities and paid employment which makes them older first-time directors than those whose careers develop undisturbed. Therefore, lifting of age restrictions on first time feature funding can contribute to diversity of documentary voices beyond gender equality (Ostrowska, “Opening”).

Conclusion

To conclude, I want to summarise theoretical and methodological contributions this article makes to the use of intersectionality in film and media studies, emphasising how it bridges the gap between intersectionality as a theory and as an applied method of data analysis. The intersectional framework discussed in this article demonstrates a “commitment to decolonizing, anti-racist, feminist, and other liberatory scholarships and movements” (Rice, Harrison, and Friedman 2). Although I employ the majority-inclusive perspective, I am committed to advancement of intersectionally marginalised women and therefore the bulk of my analysis is devoted to working-class women, often by contrasting their experiences with those of middle-class respondents. Further, I include two levels of analysis, moving between thematic analysis of my respondents’ accounts and both quantitative and qualitative data about the institutional framework constituting the British film and TV industry. Combining these two

strategies helps me fill in the gaps in my transcripts resulting from a rather homogenous and intersectionally privileged make-up of my sample and sketch the bigger picture of inequality. This is especially effective in theorising the importance of the intersection of gender and race.

Applying intersectional analysis to the respondents' accounts also means emphasising the mutual constitution of inequalities even when the filmmakers themselves subscribe to the additive rather than transversal model of oppression (Squires 161–3). The fact that white, and overwhelmingly middle-class, respondents discuss gender as an unmarked, universal category, can be explained by their intersectional privilege along the axes of race and class. On the other hand, working-class women mention their class background as the biggest barrier to embarking on filmmaking career and one of my Black respondents sees her race as a bigger obstacle than gender to getting new commissions. Consequently, while white women talk about the need to see "other women" (presumably also white) in the roles they aspire to, Black and working-class women talk about being inspired by Black and working-class people of any gender. Intersectional analysis also reveals that age, mentioned by the respondents most often as an isolated factor, intersects with other social markers, most notably early motherhood. Therefore, discrimination ostensibly based on age only, like age limits set for applications for first-time feature funding, effectively excludes women and men with caring responsibilities as well as BAME and working-class people from entry to the industry.

Intersectional approach presented in this article aided answering the main research question posed in the wider project on creative labour of women documentarians, about the usefulness of gender as an analytical category. I argue that gender remains relevant and the designation "women filmmakers" is used both as an industry shortcut and by practitioners themselves. However, the individual stories of gendered experiences were compared within the sample, revealing the differences among women filmmakers. I demonstrated that the respondents' analysis of their professional lives is seldom intersectional, focusing rather on one social marker that they perceive as most relevant. Social class is mentioned as the single largest barrier to entry to film and TV industry, both by self-identified working-class respondents (almost a third of my sample) who experienced it and by self-identified middle-class respondents who realise their privilege. The persistence of classist gatekeeping mechanisms in British film and television can to a certain degree explain lack of intersectional thinking about gender, class and race among the interviewees. Put crudely, to be able to compete with men (of any class and race), working-class women (of any race) first need to get in, which is extremely difficult.

While a typical result of qualitative interviewing is a nuanced perspective on each respondent, intersectional analyses strive to capture "the interplay between structures and institutions at the macro-level, and identities and lived lives at the micro-level" (Christensen and Jensen 110). On the individual level, it is interesting to compare how gender and class, seen as separate categories, are differently articulated by the respondents. Congruously with research on postfeminist attitudes in neo-liberal economy (Gill), respondents do not readily admit that gender impeded their entry into film industry. As they have "made it", the filmmakers I interviewed take it for granted that their chosen career path is more difficult for women than for men. They often shrug off the instances of blatant sexism and champion the attitude of "getting on with it". On the other hand, strong articulation of class is in stark contrast with Bev Skeggs's pioneering longitudinal study of white working-class women from the North West of England in which Skeggs found that, although "[c]lass was completely central to the lives of the women" (149), they refused to inhabit that category (154). It is possible that my respondents embrace the category because working in a classist environment dominated by

privileged colleagues makes it conspicuous. Race and ethnicity are mentioned rarely in the context of getting into the industry and because only two of my respondents are Black (and one of Middle Eastern origin), I cannot fully explore the intersectionally marginalised position of a BAME woman filmmaker (of any class) based on the interviews only. However, it is crucial to remember that intersectionality emerged from the writings of African American scholars in a context where "woman" was already constructed as white, resulting from "a long trail of colonial practice in which 'black' and 'woman' were mutually exclusive terms under conditions of Atlantic enslavement" (Lewis 4). I have demonstrated how some white respondents do not see their race as a salient marker of their identity and further distinguish between "BAME people" and "women" as two separate categories.

At the institutional macro-level, British media workforce is still not very diverse. In a parliamentary report from the BBC Charter review, the Corporation is described as "'hideously white' [in the words of Greg Dyke, broadcaster and ex-director general], male and middle class in both personnel and output" (39). The report offers statistics on low retention levels of BAME employees, explained by lack of BAME role models in higher positions, and adds that "[t]he BBC has also been accused of a lack of understanding of working class communities and a failure to represent them in terms of both hours devoted to them and of giving a rounded picture of them" (39). A rich body of scholarship about systemic class bias in British CCI (Friedman, O'Brien, and Laurison; Banks and Oakley; Friedman, Laurison, and Miles; O'Brien et al., Savage et al.) challenges the myth of meritocracy, also targeted by my interviewees. Discussing approaches to race and ethnicity in cultural production studies, Hesmondhalgh and Saha argue that small qualitative studies exposing institutional racism of media organisations are not sufficient (184), and call for "sustained consideration of power, social justice and inequality" in the field, informed by intersectional principles (182).

The project discussed in this article is an exploratory qualitative study with twenty-six respondents recruited informally, through personal networks and snowballing, and as such it is not representative of British documentary filmmaking community. Because of a scarcity of research about contemporary British women documentarians, the study makes a valuable contribution to the interdisciplinary field of knowledge about cultural and creative industries, complementing large-scale projects on patterns of gender-based discrimination. Intersectional thematic analysis discussed in this article produced a nuanced picture of the small sample of women documentarians, drawing attention to a complex interplay between gender, race and ethnicity, class and region and thus demonstrating the limitations of the category "woman filmmaker" for researching professional disadvantage. While my sample does not centre intersectionally marginalised women, I believe that further studies of British media workforce utilising intersectional analysis should focus on exploring marginalised intersections of gender, class, race and sexuality. A notable example of such research in the American context is a recent anthology edited by Yvonne Welbon and Alexandra Juhasz focusing on out African American lesbian media makers.

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Notes

[1] On the introduction of the interview to film and television studies, see Christine Cornea.

[2] Between 2003 and 2015 women directed only 14% of British-qualifying films across all genres (Cobb, Williams, and Natalie Wreyford, "Women"). The percentage of feature documentaries directed by women was roughly twice as high, estimated at between 20% and 25% (Presence et al. 20), but in this area 25% can mean as few as six women directing or codirecting every year. While there are many more women making documentaries for British television, despite the anecdotal evidence that they are the majority in broadcasting, the numbers for single or "authored" TV documentaries directed by at least one woman are similar to feature documentaries. They hover around 26%, and actually dropped from 29.4% of all broadcast episodes in 2013 to 23.9% in 2016 (Directors UK).

[3] Based on the interviews and information in public domain, rather than self-declaration, I identify all my respondents as cis women (assigned female at birth). Further, only one woman identifies as "queer" in the interview, and nobody mentions any form of disability or religion/set of beliefs to which they adhere as either aiding or impeding their professional trajectory.

[4] While some regional film and screen media industries, most notably York and The Humber, have grown significantly since 2010, London and the South East still lead the tables in terms of investment as well as the number and turnover of media companies generating new jobs.

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