

WHICH WOMEN?

Gender Equality Report 2019/2020

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Production: The Swedish Film Institute

Interviews: Anna Adeniji

Analysis: Ylva Habel

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It's time for gender equality efforts to apply to all women



Anna Serner
is the CEO of the
Swedish Film Institute

WELCOME TO THE 2019–2020 gender equality report *Which Women?* which constitutes just one step in the Swedish Film Institute's continuous efforts to deepen our understanding of film and gender equality.

THESE REPORTS are a result of our own action plan to ensure that the film industry achieves greater equality. We are convinced that more knowledge is needed across the industry if we are to meet the objectives of the Swedish Government's film bill, among them that "gender equality and diversity characterise the field of film". Another objective of the film bill is that "Swedish film should be of high quality", and it is our equally strong belief that we can only achieve the highest possible quality if we take advantage of all our expertise and talent, excluding no one because of their gender or other grounds of discrimination.

WHEN WE WORK to promote gender equality, which women are included? This report shows that not all women suffer the same level of discrimination. There are layers of discriminatory factors, one which is gender, but discrimination on the basis of gender often interacts with other grounds of discrimination. In this year's report, we delve deeply into two further reasons why women are passed over: age and racialisation.

DURING THE WRITING OF THE REPORT, the Black Lives Matter movement has clearly highlighted the structural racism to which people who are racialised as Black are particularly exposed. This happens everywhere and all the time – even in Sweden. This has long been a relevant issue, and it is high time that we examined the state of things in the world of Swedish film and drama series, so that we might then begin to work together to change the structures.

Photo: Marie-Therese Karlberg



"... diversity and representation have an as-yet-untapped potential in Swedish film, both commercially and qualitatively."

OF COURSE, THIS IS PRIMARILY about human rights, but it also has to do with the enormous potential of incorporating more perspectives in filmic storytelling. To work for greater inclusion is to work for higher quality. The audience is out there – they're just waiting to be touched. It's time for more people to want to see Swedish film and drama. It's time we started to create the conditions for them to get the chance. And that means starting with ourselves.

OUR REPORT clearly shows that diversity and representation have an as-yet-untapped potential in Swedish film, both commercially and qualitatively. There exists in the film industry a distinct, prevailing obsession with appearance and age, as well as an unequal power structure that affects older women and women who are racialised. As a result, these groups are often made invisible, both in front of the camera and behind it. This, in turn, means that the film industry risks missing out on narratives and talent with the potential to attract new and larger film audiences.

HOPEFULLY, THIS REPORT can be a tool for change. More women are needed – let's find them together.

Introduction

In 2017, the Film Institute's first gender equality report was published. Gender equality and diversity are one of seven film policy objectives that govern the Film Institute's mission and activities. In our gender equality reports, we highlight areas that require special attention.

This year's report *Which Women?* is an interview study that examines the conditions of racialised and older women in the Swedish film and television industry.

THE SWEDISH FILM INSTITUTE WORKS to strengthen Swedish film by supporting everything from the development and production of new films to the preservation and accessibility of film to the public. The Film Institute's activities are based on the national film policy, established by the Swedish Government, and are formulated in the vision and the seven film policy objectives of the government bill "Mer film till fler – en sammanhållen filmpolitik" ("More Film for More People – A Cohesive Film Policy") (2015/16:132).

ACCORDING TO THE VISION, Swedish film should be of high quality, should demonstrate such breadth and diversity of narratives that it concerns everyone, and be an obvious and accessible choice for audiences throughout the country. One of the starting points for this work is that the film field should be characterised by gender equality and diversity (film policy objective 6) and that film should contribute to strengthening freedom of expression and public discourse (film policy objective # 7). These objectives permeate all aspects of the Film Institute's activities, from support and communication to film heritage-related efforts and public activities.

IN ADDITION TO SPECIFIC INITIATIVES and projects aimed at promoting gender equality and diversity, since 2017 the Film Institute has also published reports, the purpose of which is to highlight the importance of gender equality issues, as well as to point out areas that require special attention. *This Far and Even Further (Hit och ännu längre)* (2017) was a historical retrospective of the role of women in the Swedish film industry, as well as of the Film Institute's past gender equality work – in terms of both efforts and results. The following year, the second report *Him, Her and the Money (Han, hon och pengarna)* (2018) was published. It examined the financial conditions for men and women in the film industry.

THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE'S investigation *Vägval för filmen (Choosing a Path for Film)* (SOU 2009:73) states that the underrepresentation of female filmmakers in film production is a problem, and that neither commercial nor artistic conformity is good for the development of film in the industry. "Film audiences are made up of women and men who have the right to expect a greater diversity of narratives and perspectives." By working to ensure that more women take on the key positions of director, producer and screenwriter, it is hoped that the Swedish

Government's film policy will contribute to both an increase in the diversity of narratives and better working conditions for women in the industry as a whole.

The objectives of the national film policy:

1

The development and production of valuable Swedish film occurs continuously and in different parts of the country.

2

More and more people see valuable films that are disseminated and presented in various viewing forms throughout the country.

3

Swedish film heritage is preserved, used and developed.

4

Swedish film is increasingly disseminated abroad, and qualified international exchange and collaboration takes place in the film field.

5

Gender equality and diversity characterise the field of film.

6

Children and young people have good knowledge of film and moving images and are given opportunities to create their own.

7

Film helps to strengthen freedom of expression and public discourse.



An intersectional look at film and norms

TO UNDERSTAND the mechanisms behind discrimination and unfair treatment, one must first understand that the norms that dominate society also affect everyday life. For example, for most of the 20th century the unspoken norm for a manager has been a White man, which made matters difficult for groups that do not belong to that norm.

SIMILARLY, the film industry is filled with norms, both in front of and behind the camera. For example, the report *Him, Her and the Money* showed that it is the norm for female protagonists to be under 40 years old, and that big-budget films are far more likely to be directed by men than by women.

IF DISCRIMINATION IS TO BE COMBATED, all grounds of discrimination must be taken into account, because they interact and can reinforce each other. Women are not a homogeneous group. In all social groups, we must consider aspects such as gender, age, skin colour, body norms, socio-economic factors, functional variation or sexual orientation. This relates to a concept known as intersectionality. As the black, lesbian feminist Audre Lorde wrote: *“There is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.”* This report examines how these mechanisms interact with each other in the Swedish film industry, and how they intervene in women’s work. An intersectional look at power, influence and status makes visible the various conditions and social positions of women in a hierarchical order of power where whiteness, youth, normative beauty and narrowness take precedence – especially in work in front of the camera.

“Well, the film industry is not a self-isolated bubble, but rather just a part of society. And society is not equal. There is still a very strong cultural hierarchy in our society, where the White man is the leader.”



THE IMAGES WE SEE on our screens affect how we view the world. Like other media, film has the potential both to reproduce normative images and to violate them. Here we can provide an initial example. During the Film Institute’s panel discussion “Creating the New Normal: Intersectionality in the Film Industry” at the 2020 Cannes Film Festival, Franklin Leonard, CEO of The Black List, noted:

“In American film, 60 percent of all criminal gang members are portrayed as Black, while according to the FBI, only 30 percent of all gang members are Black. This contributes to the myth of Black crime and violence – a myth disseminated not just in the United States but throughout the world. So, when a cop puts his knee on George Floyd’s neck and murders him by suffocation, he looks at George Floyd as a criminal not because he was a criminal, but because of all the images he’s seen of people who look like George Floyd on his TV.”

ALTHOUGH THE SWEDISH social debate in recent decades has been able to highlight harmful beauty ideals, there has been much less talk of structural racism in Sweden. Ylva Habel has analysed the interviews in this report on behalf of the Film Institute. In the article “Challenging Swedish Exceptionalism?” (2012), she writes that one of the reasons why racism is a difficult topic to discuss in Sweden is related to what she calls “Swedish exceptionalism” – that is, that in this country there is a perception that Sweden has no colonial heritage, and that we therefore do not face the same problems with structural racism as other countries in the world. Habel elaborates on her reasoning in an in-depth research commentary at the end of this report: “Making racialisation mechanisms and racism visible: a conceptual discussion”.

ACCORDING to statistics from the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brottsförebyggande rådet, BRÅ) (2017), Afro-Swedes are subjected to violence more often than the rest of the population and face more discrimination than other vulnerable groups in both the housing and labour markets. For example, in Sweden Afro-Swedes must have a postgraduate education in order to achieve the same income as a person in the rest of the population who has completed a three year-education after high school. This is according to Part 1 of the CEMFOR research centre’s report *Anti-Black Racism and Discrimination in the Labour Market*, commissioned by the County Administrative Board of Stockholm (2018:21).

How was the report produced?

Racialisation and age discrimination in focus

IN AUTUMN 2017, the #metoo movement started in the United States. In Sweden in 2017, female actors joined forces in the united call to action #Tystnadtagning, which testified to sexual harassment, violations, vulnerability and systematic silencing. The proclamation had a major impact, and other industries followed suit. However, it soon received harsh criticism from many racialised women in the film and television industry, whose experiences had been excluded. This is one of the two main themes of this report: the work environment and conditions in the Swedish film industry for women who are being racialised. The second theme, age discrimination, is based on observations from the 2018 gender equality report *Him, Her and the Money*, which revealed, among other things, major inequalities between female and male actors in terms of career length.

Method and selection

WITH A FOCUS ON racialisation and age as a starting point, a selection of people active in the film and television industry were invited to discuss how an interview study of this kind could be realised. These individuals then recommended new people who would be suitable for inclusion in the study. In this way, to some extent the selection method came to resemble a snowball sampling (Denscombe, 2014).

THROUGH CONVERSATIONS WITH racialised directors and actors, the names of the two researchers who were then hired to conduct the study were also generated. Anna Adeniji holds a PhD in gender studies and currently works as a consultant and educator on issues of power, intersectionality, racialisation and equality. She has professional experience from the cultural sector, anti-discrimination work, organisational analysis, qualitative research methods and interviews. Ylva Habel is a researcher and lecturer in media and communication studies with a background in film studies, and her research experience encompasses Black Studies and postcolonial and anti-racist perspectives. From 2017-2019 she worked at the Centre for Multidisciplinary Studies on Racism (Centrum för Mångvetenskaplig Forskning om Rasism, CEMFOR) on issues related to anti-Black discrimination.

THROUGH ADENIJI'S AND HABEL'S participation, we have gained access to a solid knowledge base in gender and representation issues, as well as media and film studies. Adeniji created the study's interview template, conducted the interviews and identified the main findings. Habel was responsible for the analysis work and wrote a supporting text included in parts of the report. The part of the content concerning age discrimination and budget allocation is taken from the Film Institute's report *Him, Her and the Money* (2018).

THE REPORT IS BASED ON 19 in-depth interviews conducted in the autumn of 2019 with actors and directors who are active and well-established in the Swedish film and television industry. Some of the respondents are both directors and actors. Some also have experience as screenwriters and producers, but it is primarily as directors or actors that they are included in the study. The respondents identify themselves as women and are

“I believe that quality in Sweden runs parallel to Sweden’s own history. The colonially racist, sexist and structurally unequal aspects have not been processed. Our history hasn’t really sunk in yet, and so we’ll never have a firm foundation for this. I’m talking about the real stuff, the raw stuff, that we don’t deal with.”

between 27 and 66 years old. Just over half of them are more than 40 years old. Eleven of the interviewees have experience with being racialised as Black or Brown¹ due to their skin colour, their national origin, their surname, even though all of them are Swedish. The other eight women fall within the norm of whiteness.

IN PREPARATION FOR THE WORK of producing this report, the choice was made to focus on accounts from women who have experienced discrimination based on age, skin colour or other racializing structures; these voices are rarely heard, and in this way, we wish to give them space. The interviews make it clear that it is rarely possible to separate different grounds of discrimination; rather, they often interact and reinforce each other.

THE INTERVIEWS LASTED BETWEEN 50 and 75 minutes. All respondents were asked a number of basic questions about the prevailing view of women both in front of and behind the camera. They recounted their experiences from working in the industry, as well as the ways in which their gender, age or skin colour has affected their professional roles. From these foundational questions, discussions then developed based on the respective respondents’ professional role and experiences. This is extremely rich material, and a selection that highlights the breadth of these women’s experiences is reflected in the report. Out of concern for the privacy of the participants, all interview quotes are anonymised.

THE TRANSCRIPTION, i.e., the conversion of the interviews from audio to text, was carried out by an external third party. The interviews were transcribed without summaries or any other reformulation of the raw material. The analysis work is based on these transcriptions. The recurring themes identified constitute the basis of the analysis chapter, which addresses funding, everyday negotiations in work environments, and decision-making power structures in the industry. The analytical supporting text has been edited to make the report easier for the average reader to understand.

¹ The phrase “racialised as” is used to mark the terms coined by European colonists to describe the difference between Europeans (racialised as “White”) and the colonised peoples (racialised as “Brown”, “Yellow”, “Red”, or “Black”). These conceptual creations of colonialism still persist in our culture. This means that people are associated with a range of characteristics, mentalities and behaviours depending on their skin colour and provenance. The term “Black and Brown” is used as a description of people who are racialised as “non-White”.

Part of the industry

An industry is the sum of the people who work in it, and like many others, the film industry is also struggling with challenges related to topics such as gender equality, diversity, work environment and funding. In this section, we examine specific factors for the film industry that can affect the people who work in it. These factors relate to representation, diversity and work environment.

THE FILM INDUSTRY HAS COMMONALITIES with other commercial industries, but it is also unique in several ways. It consists of ideas and raw materials that people refine into products that are sold and distributed to customers. However, something unique in the film industry is that the funding structure is more dependent on and influenced by specific individuals who hold positions of power – for better or worse. In this section, we look at how factors such as funding, networking and potential career paths affect the industry and the people who work in it.

Where does the money go?

THE FUNDING STRUCTURE OF THE FILM INDUSTRY has already been highlighted in the 2018 gender equality report *Him, Her and the Money*. It included an in-depth analysis of how the money in the Swedish film industry is distributed, what the sums are, and the conditions for men and women. The report showed that women (even those in key positions) have access to significantly lower budget levels than men, and that the proportion of women in key positions declines as budgets increase. This trend continued in 2019.

A DEEPER ANALYSIS ALSO SHOWS that both production and launch budgets, which are affected by audience estimates for a film, are strongly linked to the number of cinema visits. On average, films with higher budgets also attract a higher number of moviegoers, which means that films created by women (who on average have lower budgets) are thus also seen by a smaller audience. Discriminatory structures thus result in more discriminatory structures.

ALTHOUGH GENDER EQUALITY in documentary film is slightly better than in feature films, women also generally get smaller budgets, narrower distribution, and fewer screening days than men. It should be added that for full-length feature films,

the proportion of women in the key positions of director and screenwriter is also significantly smaller than the proportion of men. This affects not only job opportunities but also the stories that get the chance to reach an audience.

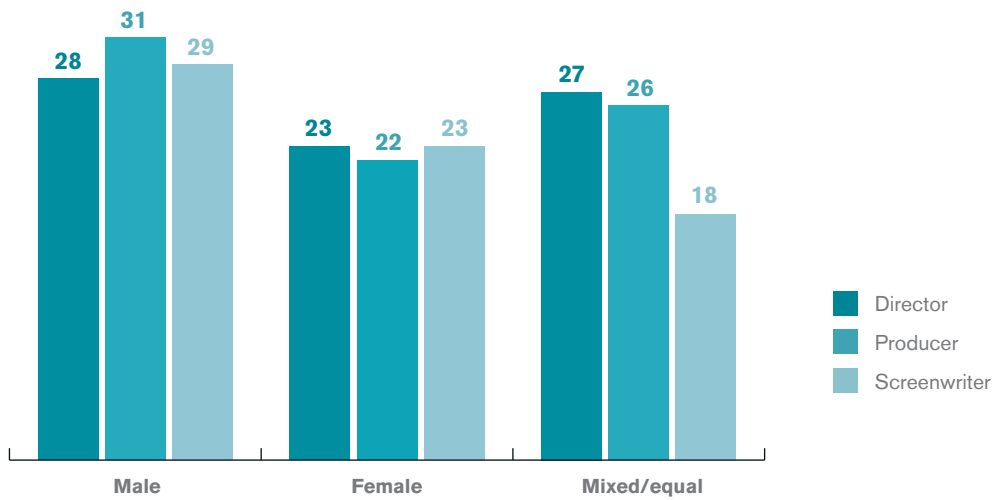
SEVERAL RESPONDENTS testify that one consequence of women historically having access to smaller budgets is that it has become normal for women to start adapting and creating cheaper productions – often in the drama genre – as early as the script stage.

“It becomes a vicious cycle, where the consultants say that women often apply for funding for projects that are relationship dramas. It becomes a chicken-and-egg situation, and I don’t know how to get out of it.”

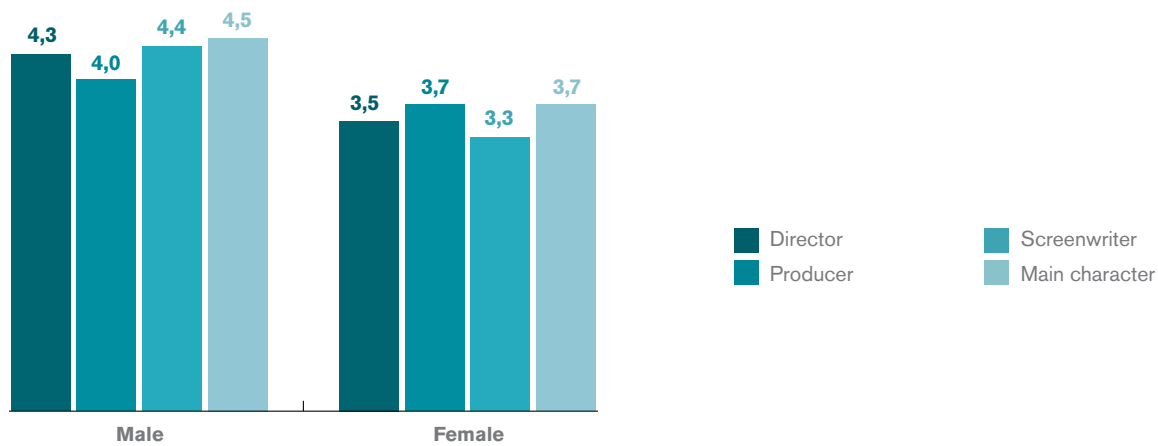
A DIRECTOR IN HER LATE 50s recounts how women were previously expected to engage in smaller film projects, with a more modest budget than those of men.

“Women were supposed to make children’s movies. That’s how it was for many years. That sure was convenient for the guys, because then they got to make all the other movies.”

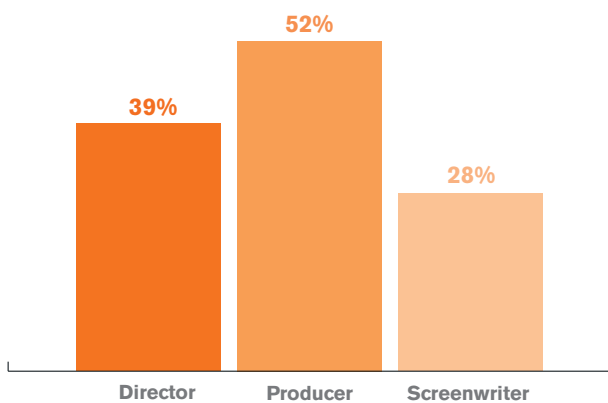
**Budget per key function in SEK million,
full-length feature film, average 2015–2019**



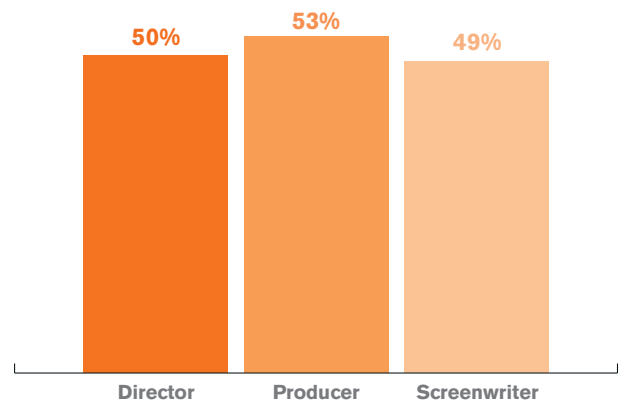
**Budget per key function in SEK million,
documentary, average 2015–2019**



**Proportion of women in key positions,
full-length feature film, 2015–2019**



**Proportion of women in key positions,
documentary, 2015–2019**



“The producers of course want to choose stories that they think will be approved by the distributors. It’s an intricate chain and there are no easy answers. But everyone does the best they can to make it a good film.”

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Although things have changed since then, she says that women rarely get big budgets for their film projects, and that it can be difficult to ask for them. She talks about the positive reaction of a film consultant when she herself received money for a high-budget project:

“I came up with a big project that was expensive, which had also received European funding, and the film consultant said ‘Finally! A woman with an expensive project. Thank you.’ It was so good to hear that.”

HOWEVER, THIS EXAMPLE is an exception to the rule. The proportion of long-distance feature films in the high-budget segment (budgets over SEK 35 million) directed by women amounts to approximately one quarter of all films in that budget segment. Several respondents argue that part of the problem is due to the fact that projects created by women are generally seen as a greater financial risk, and that there is thus less willingness by financiers to fund projects with higher budgets.

“Even if they’ll invest a ton initially, no one wants to take risks when it comes to the actual production.”

ACCORDING TO THE INTERVIEWEES, there is also a conflict between the stories and investments financiers are interested in at the beginning of a project and the stories that distributors subsequently believe are commercially viable and in which they want to invest.

“The producers of course want to choose stories that they think will be approved by the distributors. It’s an intricate chain and there are no easy answers. But everyone does the best they can to make it a good film.”

Equal pay for equal work

THE RESPONDENTS ARGUE that the inequality in the film industry in terms of film budgets transfers to the pay gap between male and female actors with equal experience, where, on average, men earn more than women – sometimes even in the same production. Here, they offer examples of how racialisation mechanisms and age interact:

“I have a lot more experience for my age than I get credited and paid for. Male colleagues with significantly less experience than me have received twice or more than twice as much than me in salary for similar projects. I think it has to do with my gender, the fact that I’m racialised, and that I’m perceived as young and fresh out of college. But I’ve worked long and hard and graduated from one of the top programmes. That’s a fact, but you can see from my billing that I’m undervalued.”

MANY OF THE RESPONDENTS talk about how they are often faced with a choice between fighting for a raise, and the risk of losing the job altogether, or being grateful to have gotten a job at all.

“My experience tells me that there’s a lot of talk and little action. There’s a fear of complying with policies. There’s a lot of talk, the good will is there if you like, but there’s an inability to make good on what’s been promised.”

“I’ve always worked with White producers. I could never imagine proposing a non-White producer. If I did I would never get any money.”

”

How racialisation creates artistic limitation

MANY OF THE FINANCIAL gender equality problems in the film industry apply to women in general. However, some of the problems are specific to women who are racialised as Black or Brown. These issues are addressed in future chapters on issues such as typecasting. These women also face many obstacles in terms of job opportunities and the ability to make a living practicing their art.

“Well, the film industry is not a self-isolated bubble, but rather just a part of society. And society is not equal. There is still a very strong cultural hierarchy in our society, where the White man is the leader. People have a need for hierarchical structures, and it is very difficult to topple them even though there is enormous awareness these days. There really is – but people don’t hire out of goodwill – they follow the money.”

THE FILM INSTITUTE HAS NO statistics on the budgetary conditions of film workers who are being racialised as Black or Brown, but in autumn 2019 the institute launched an investigation in dialogue with industry representatives, and it plans to start collecting statistics in 2021. Thus, at present personal testimony is crucial to getting a picture of the industry’s prevailing lack of diversity.

ALL OF THE STUDY’S respondents who are being racialised as Black or Brown have already established themselves in the industry, but they attest to how the path to their current positions has been paved with implicit, racist expectations – for example, that they should represent their marginalised group and give voice to it.

“When I’ve been to film consultants and submitted my scripts, my experience has been that they were expecting something completely different – that it would be a story about refugees. That it should be a certain way.”

THIS PROBLEM IS REMINISCENT of the criticisms made by Kobena Mercer and Isaac Julien in the article “De Margin and De Centre” (1989). They write that the special attention paid to racialised minorities – via the allocation of funds or expected themes – locks them into the position of constantly being representatives of their group. They are encapsulated and limited by the “specialness” attributed to them by the White majority. Understood in this way, representation becomes an artistic trap. While a White filmmaker can make films on any theme, a minority representative is expected to address her group’s problems, “her aesthetic”, to be authentically “ethnic”, and to remain to her allotted location. The representative of the minority is thus assigned a kind of constant mission to inform the White majority about her culture and its “mystery”.

AS FILM ARTIST AND theorist Trinh T Minh-ha shows in her text “Difference: A Special Third World Women Issue” (first translated to Swedish in 1999), there is a deceptive reward for the intellectual and creative creation of the female representative, who within the Western world is kindly called upon to affirm her “differentness” and make it the fundamental aspect of her work. In other more pronounced cultural-political contexts, the exhortation of imagined authenticity is articulated almost as a responsibility for these women. As a result, filmmakers who are not primarily interested in what are considered to be “their problem areas” appear downright superficial and politically irresponsible.

THE RACIALISED DIRECTORS in the study say that they impose tougher demands on themselves than White – especially male – directors. They consider themselves less free to create. One of the directors says she needs to ally herself with White producers in order to succeed in funding a film – because whiteness is implicitly seen as the guarantee of solidity and competence.

“I’ve always worked with White producers. I could never imagine proposing a non-White producer. If I did I would never get any money.”

IN A NEW DOCTORAL THESIS, Tess Skadegaard points out that in the Danish film industry there is an unexamined view that Brown and Black faces on screen “don’t sell” (Skadegaard, 2020). This type of problem is also addressed by actors, who recount that they are often passed over for roles because they do not meet the stereotypical expectations of casting directors, directors and producers (something into which we delve more deeply in future chapters). They also say that it is seen as a risk to cast an actor who gets racialised as Brown or Black in a leading role. Several of the respondents argue that this thought pattern can be traced all the way back to the drama school admissions process.

“During the last interview with the jury they said, ‘We think you’re really talented, but we don’t know if we can bring you in because we’re worried that you might not get roles because you’re so dark.’”

RESPONDENTS SAY that there is a lack of roles for actors who are being racialised as Black or Brown. To a great extent, they are called to casting only for stereotypical roles where they are expected to represent a stereotypical minority. Since opportunities to play “normal”, unmarked roles are rare, the competition becomes fierce. Several of the respondents take up the classic “Fatima role”, a term that took hold in the early 2000s to describe the process of “throwing a Middle Eastern girl named Fatima” into the script, in order to increase the diversity of a production. But even these roles don’t always go to actors who are being racialised as Black or Brown.

“We all really audition for the same role, regardless of whether it’s just a little non-Swedish. Three times in my life, a Swede has gotten the role and had to dye her hair and wear contact lenses. No, four times in my life I’ve been through that, in the course of my career.”

SEVERAL OF THE INTERVIEWEES believe that part of the problem is a narrow perception of what “authenticity” means, and that this contributes to professional actors who are being racialised as Black or Brown sometimes being completely excluded from the cast.

RESPONDENTS SAY DIRECTORS and casting directors set conditions that reduce the number of roles that Black and other actors who are being racialised can get. This may include normative notions of how family constellations can look in film

and television fiction. Among the Black actors in the group of respondents, several have heard questions such as: “*But she can’t have a White mom/a White dad?*” White co-stars, casting directors or directors may question whether this is really credible or realistic. The Black women point out that they themselves have a White parent, or a White sibling, and that this is hardly unusual. Several of the actors observe that in many cases, ideas about what constitutes realism seem to be limited and do not represent what society actually looks like.

SEVERAL OF THE ACTORS who are being racialised as Black or Brown and are in their 30s to late 60s state they have never had a leading role in their entire career. With the exception of children’s and youth films and children’s television programmes, their roles in film and television are often markedly small. While there is a general heightened awareness in the industry about the importance of diversity, the prospect of actually doing something concrete is met with ambivalence.

A Black actor in her late 40s talks about how insulting it can be, after nearly twenty years in the profession, to receive hastily made enquiries about very small roles, such as “cashier”. She says that such requests often come at a late stage in a production. She also explains that regardless of the ambition to create diverse roles that are not relegated to the side lines, in many cases those roles remain both small and undeveloped compared to the unmarked main and supporting roles that actors who are being racialised as White can get.

THERE IS A GOOD DEAL OF FRUSTRATION about the fact that there are so few roles for women who are not white, and that the actors are forced to compete with each other for the relatively few minority roles. Many women recount that there is often no room for more than one racialised woman in a film or TV series, which not only reduces the number of jobs, but also results in a distorted picture of the composition of Sweden’s population.

“A few years ago, I overheard someone say ‘Well, now the n-ggers are taking over.’ Because there were more than two of us.”

A SIMILAR STRUCTURE can also be seen in the distribution of roles between men and women, where several respondents believe that equal representation is perceived as an over-representation of women.

“If you have many women in driving roles, it becomes so visible that men are forced to step aside. And I think they feel like they’re stepping to the side a whole lot. Just because it’s been evened out.”



“We’re like navvies from back in the olden days. We go where the money is, we get thrown together in temporary families, we live intensively – sometimes around the clock – and see each other’s best and worst sides when we work so terribly hard.”



To be oneself = to be excluded?

THE FILM INDUSTRY is largely a freelance industry, wherein producers and production companies put together temporary teams to work before, during and after filming. While this gives each production a chance for renewal, it also creates precarious working conditions and the risk of a culture of silence; it is difficult to stand up against the people who have the power to influence one's future job opportunities.

REGARDLESS OF HOW they are racialised, several respondents attest to the creation of a working climate in which they shy away from denouncing unpleasant working conditions or problems such as sexual harassment, racist comments or other offensive behaviour from colleagues; they do not wish to be regarded as difficult or unwilling to cooperate. They fear a reducing of their future job options, and the consequence is that the discrimination continues.

"It's not just about abuse, it's about your whole career."


SOME RESPONDENTS believe that the freelance culture of film production contributes to a lack of continuity in the work environment that hampers the development that could have taken place.

"When I started working, there were maybe three film companies in Sweden; today there are several hundred. At the time, people were employed and could at least go to the union with issues like this. But then when everyone became a freelancer in the 80s and 90s, the development stopped."

AN OLDER DIRECTOR points out that certain economic aspects of production must also be taken into account. Stopping in the middle of a production day to raise an issue or resolve a potential conflict leads to lost working hours, which can ultimately affect quality.

"In the film business, every second costs money. Say there's a conflict and we need to discuss it for half an hour. That half hour – who's going to pay for it? I'll never get it back, which means I have to cut something or work twice as fast to catch up, and that's not possible because then both the actors and the quality will suffer. So, this is a difficult dilemma. It becomes very concrete and you have to weigh the issue quickly. Should I swallow this violation or just tell him to go to hell and keep working, because in the long run my career is more important, the next job is more important, I want to do well – or should I take one for my fellow sisters? Who bears the costs of starting to speak up?"

THE LACK OF CLEAR and functioning processes for whistleblowing has previously been indicated as part of the problem. In the aftermath of #metoo and #tystnadtagning, several respondents claim that most productions have more established guidelines and contact persons, and that the industry has generally increased its awareness.



“Should I swallow this violation or just tell him to go to hell and keep working, because in the long run my career is more important, the next job is more important, I want to do well – or should I take one for my fellow sisters? Who bears the costs of starting to speak up?”

“I can’t sit around waiting for the phone to ring; I have to create the jobs and the work opportunities myself, by writing scripts, producing and acting.”

I did it my way

ALTHOUGH EFFORTS to promote gender equality and diversity have been made, most respondents believe that when it comes to women’s representation in the industry, many problems persist. And although inclusion and increased representation are a good first step that has been noted by many, they point to the fact that injustice prevails at a structural level and that existing social power structures are therefore something that needs to be addressed. It is impossible to affirm diversity without active efforts to dismantle structures that maintain stereotypical, racist and/or patriarchal norms.

RESPONDENTS ALSO POINT OUT that efforts can sometimes stumble at the finish line, if the working groups responsible for creating greater diversity do not themselves represent the diversity they aim to achieve.

SEVERAL ACTOR INTERVIEWEES say that the older they have become, the more they have transitioned to working behind the camera (as a director, screenwriter or producer). They have done so both to remedy job losses and a lack of offers for acting roles, but also out of a desire to tackle greater artistic challenges. They want to create and portray narratives that they don’t see on the silver screen, and to create work environments that they haven’t had the opportunity to experience for themselves.



“Despite #metoo, there is a difference between how we get sexualised and how White women get sexualised. We can’t get a word in edgewise. We’re told, ‘Can’t we tackle racism some other time?’ But it’s all connected. This is connected.”

”



A culture of silence and no structure for whistleblowing

“We don’t talk about this with anyone.”

#METOO PUNCHED A HOLE in the culture of silence that has long protected perpetrators and normalised sexism and racism. One of the middle-aged White directors’ recounts that #metoo allowed her to put everything she’d been through into a single context.

“Then came the whole #metoo movement and I began to understand that everything I’ve been through is part of a structure. And that it’s actually possible to talk about it. For me, it’s just been accidents at work or things that you’re just supposed to accept. I’ve simply had to bite the bullet and move on. So, for me, it never even crossed my mind that I should talk to anyone. I’ve just absorbed the shame and moved on. And tried to repress it.”

The Swedish version of the #metoo movement was predominantly White, and in interviews it was White, established women who shared the most positive impressions. Several of the interviewees in this study express relief that the culture of silence that has concealed patriarchal sexism and sexual violence has finally been exposed. From now on, working conditions for women must surely improve, they say.

“Despite #metoo, there is a difference between how we get sexualised and how White women get sexualised. We can’t get a word in edgewise. We’re told, ‘Can’t we tackle racism some other time?’ But it’s all connected. This is connected.”

YET FOR THE ACTORS who are being racialised as Black or Brown, in the wake of #metoo it became clear that women who are being racialised were neither heard nor seen in connection with the call to action. The report’s interview material reveals that far from all women felt confident in the movement, because they could not see themselves represented in it. For these women, it is also more difficult to address violations and discrimination because, in parallel with dealing with the difficulties of navigating a White, male-dominated industry as a Black or Brown woman, they also find it difficult to get others to accept that the problems to which they are exposed should be conceptualised and addressed. Some of the respondents believe that there is a lack of knowledge about these types of racism and racialisation issues. One respondent says that Swedes must come to terms with our history in order to move forward.

“I notice that they stop themselves sometimes, that they don’t finish a sentence because I’m in the room, or that they get uncomfortable and catch themselves.”

“I believe that quality in Sweden runs parallel to Sweden’s own history. The colonially racist, sexist and structurally unequal aspects have not been processed. Our history hasn’t really sunk in yet, and so we’ll never have a firm foundation for this. I’m talking about the real stuff, the raw stuff, that we don’t deal with. But without the first step, we can’t take the second – and the first part is about Sweden’s own history. The Swedish cultural sector is ruled by older White women who have very short-sighted perspectives on their own role in the history of diversity, ethnicity and inclusion in this country. There’s a misconception that their struggle is the same as ours. It’s not the same thing – it never has been, and it’s a mistake to believe that it is.”

IGNORANCE AND THE LACK of conceptualisation complicate the problems in work environments and can foster silence rather than a climate of conversation where the issues are highlighted and kept alive. There are concrete examples of how silence is used as a means of power in the everyday work of the respondents. One example might be that producers and others in positions of power withhold information or fall silent when the person enters the room.

“I notice that they stop themselves sometimes, that they don’t finish a sentence because I’m in the room, or that they get uncomfortable and catch themselves.”

THE ACCOUNTS OF MANY interviewees of vulnerability in the workplace and a lack of contact persons and well-functioning processes for whistleblowing indicate that the protections provided by labour law (e.g., safety representatives, which are a statutory requirement in all workplaces) sometimes fall short.

A YOUNGER BLACK actor talks about an incident at her workplace during the “mid-way party” that is customary during film shoots. While they were filming that day, she got into a discussion with a White male colleague, and it continued into the

evening. The discussion degenerated when he claimed that he had the right to use the n-word:

“It made me furious and extremely sad. I left, and after that I didn’t talk to him, the male actor, for the rest of the shoot. But I felt so fucking exposed. And there was no producer or anyone else that I could go to, either.”



Deprofessionalisation

THE RESPONDENTS WHO WORK as directors and/or with scripts and productions agree that there is stubborn inertia in the industry, and that they encounter obstacles at numerous stages of their work. Most of the directors interviewed stress that they are not afforded the same respect as male directors. They are forced to economise more, or negotiate – especially with men, but also with women – in order to implement their visions and decisions. In other, more consistent ways, directors who are being racialised as Black or Brown are scrutinised, underestimated, symbolically overrated, or mistrusted. Both here and in later chapters, some talk about how they are informed by White co-workers that they are favoured by “quotas”, even though their working conditions are clearly worse and more difficult than for White people in a similar position.

A BLACK OLDER actor and producer recounts how during her time in leadership roles she worked purposefully to promote anti-racist casting. She also hired more female directors and appointed more women to decision-making positions. Men, who were still in the majority, complained at the time that the matriarchy had taken over. She also reflects on the fact that men in various productions have regularly felt vulnerable and complained about female domination, although women constituted only a small part of the ensemble.

IN 2015, MOIRA BAILEY coined the term *misogynoir* (from the word *misogyny*, meaning “a hatred of women”, combined with the French word *noir*, meaning “black”) as a moniker for the misogyny and racism against Black women – a term by which to describe how they are opposed and harassed. The fact that Black women have a voice in society, and some form of power in their work, is met with great resistance. Black women are expected to help and support others and should not have their own demands, aspirations, careers or even living space (Bailey & Trudy 2018). Their voices are not respected; rather, they are erased, underestimated and silenced through idea theft and plagiarism. Although this has been a well-researched

problem for decades, in recent years the concept of misogynoir has helped to shed light on how Black women’s intellectual contributions and creative and artistic output are stolen, appropriated, and exploited by the artistic community – while the women themselves are demonised if they speak up and assert their copyright to what they themselves have created.

THIS TYPE OF power struggle is significantly linked to the deprofessionalisation that several of the Black respondents describe having experienced in their work environments. In various ways, racism and patriarchal structures impact work to such an extent that they hinder collective efforts; Black women offer numerous examples of how their predominantly White colleagues project their doubts and underestimations onto them. Deprofessionalisation can be understood on several levels: the everyday work of the environment may be halted and deprofessionalised, or the work of the Black woman may be deprofessionalised and erased. At the same time, the colleagues who expose her to this form of misogynoir deprofessionalise themselves, and instead seek out errors, disparage, misunderstand and misinterpret the work of the Black woman.

ONE OF THE BLACK ACTORS talks about how she was phased out of a production she was in when filming was already underway, and she was on the set.

“First of all, I was the only woman in it. And I got a ton of hair and make-up. While I was in make-up, the guys – the other actors – went out and had the director cut my lines. So, when I came back, they’d remade the scene. Over ten episodes, my role was reduced piece by piece. Plus, I got into a fuss where I took a stand for another Black actor, whom they decided to kill off in the middle of the season, in favour of a White middle-aged character who, according to the script, was actually the one who was supposed to die in the series. I said, ‘It’s so goddamn stereotypical that you’re going to kill the only Black man.’”

The reluctant diversity expert – double work and burnout

“I can never relax.”

YET ANOTHER DIMENSION can be added to the deprofessionalisation of the work environment addressed in the previous section. Several of the respondents who are racialised as Black or Brown give accounts of involuntary – and unpaid – double work. They are not permitted to merely be actors; they are also expected to shoulder great responsibility for the work environment. For example, they are tasked with raising issues of racism to which they themselves or others are exposed in the workplace, or to brief their colleagues about structural racism at important meetings. This also applies to the responsibility they are expected to take on with regard to the audience. A black actress describes the extra questions and tasks she often takes on:

“What kind of pictures should we send out, ‘How can I make this stereotypical role more human?’ even though the director refuses to listen to my objections, buying my own make-up because the make-up artist hasn’t thought about different skin tones, having uncomfortable conversations with costume designers about maybe not always dressing Black women in animal prints, and so on and so forth.”

SEVERAL OF THESE interviewees have experienced burnout as a result of prolonged stress, and a number of them say that this is due to the problem of hidden, unpaid work.

“Who could I have turned to? No one. What happens is so damn subtle. It’s taken me a long time to understand why I’ve had trouble sleeping. Why I’m losing hair. I thought to myself, ‘Well, but I’m a mother of young children who works a lot.’ But it’s the inner stress of not being seen. The injustice of not being listened to. Of having to prove yourself all the time. Never knowing if someone will slip in a racist comment. Never knowing if something might come up that I have to react to. Never knowing when I’m giving an interview if the headline’s going to be ‘The Refugee who Succeeded’. So, you see, never really knowing how I’m going to be portrayed. It’s really taken a toll on me.”

AN ACTOR in her thirties also attests to doing double work. She explains that in addition to being an actor, she is expected to be a kind of anti-racist diversity resource during filming, and that, being considered as such a resource, her efforts are often demanded, without being valued as work.

“I’m assigned the function of the diplomatic, kind person who can inform people about representation and diversity exactly the right way, without getting into a conflict. I work full-time as an actor, so it’s really strange that they ask me to do it. Because just like the other actors, I also have a lot of other things to think about.”

SEVERAL OF THE WOMEN who are being racialised as Black or Brown say that their work is made more difficult and slowed down by the fact that they must constantly grapple with racism; that they are forced to explain that a role or a costume choice reproduces stereotypical notions of how Brown and Black people behave, speak or look. They become stressed and ultimately exhausted by this constant vigilance. One problem often mentioned in the interviews is the term “immigrants”, and the normative, stereotypical notions that circulate about “immigranhood”. These women recount that they often find it difficult to convince White directors and other leaders that Swedes actually come in all sorts of skin tones.

A BLACK ACTRESS talks about how her anxiety rises in the face of almost every read-through.

“I get anxious in all my projects. Because I read the script with a completely different point of view. During one read-through, I pointed out: ‘Everyone here is White and I’m worried about that. What will the story be like?’ Then I read the script, which was totally okay and conscious. But it was still White head writers, who write for other Whites.”

“I’m assigned the function of the diplomatic, kind person who can inform people about representation and diversity exactly the right way, without getting into a conflict. I work full-time as an actor, so it’s really strange that they ask me to do it. Because just like the other actors, I also have a lot of other things to think about.”

For example, ‘Now let’s show a brothel with women from East Africa.’ Right away, I get really worried. Should Black women’s bodies be exploited? Then they say that they’re aware of the problem. Then they think it’s enough to show a family from a Swedish suburb in the next scene, where everyone is White and where a White guy rapes his wife. Just to show that it happens everywhere. Then they think they’re home free.”

THE NEED TO DEBATE what reality looks like with a White majority leaves her exhausted. Another actress, who is being racialised as Brown, recounts how she is forced to get involved and point out things in the script for the production – what’s correct and incorrect – a pattern that is repeated time and time again.

“Why should I do double work in every production? Reading the script and explaining to them what’s right and what’s wrong. I can never relax. I think a lot of mental illness and racism go together.”

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Being “relevant” – on the importance of appearance

There is a distinct fixation on appearance and age in the film industry, along with a strong whiteness norm. Anything or anyone that does not follow the norm must often be “explained” or adapted to it. This is particularly visible in so-called “typecasting”.

IN THE FILM INSTITUTE’S PREVIOUS gender equality reports, it became clear that age is of great importance to an actor, both in terms of entrance into the profession and the length of one’s entire career span, from debut to retirement. The average age of men in leading roles is significantly higher compared to the average age of women in leading roles. These statistics only highlight the categories of “women” and “men”. As a result, the statistics do not show how racialisation plays into the issue.

THE INTERVIEW MATERIAL SHOWS HOW difficult it can be to penetrate the power structures. The power of female directors is whittled down or completely circumvented, depending on how they are positioned in terms of their skin colour, age and ethnified stereotypes. Normal work processes grind to a halt without any apparent reasonable explanation. There is also a big difference in the age distribution among men and women in leading roles. Men generally move within a much wider age spectrum than their female counterparts.

CAREER SPANS ALSO DIFFER BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN.

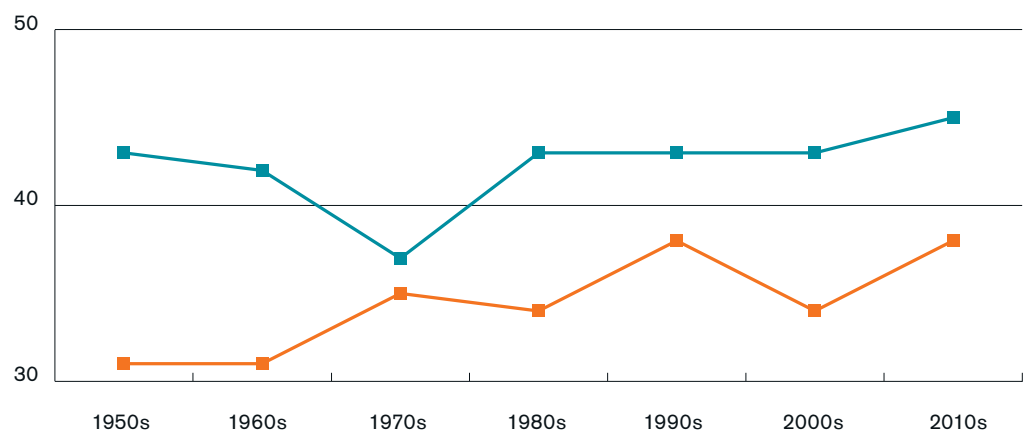
Generally, men have longer career spans than women. In the 2010s, the average career span of male leading actors was 23 years, while that of female leading actors was 17 years. Men are offered large roles even after the age of 50 and are still considered to be relevant and have a place, while women are essentially considered to be “used up” after the age of 40 – i.e., by then they are considered to be too old.

THE INDUSTRY’S FIXATION on age and appearance is palpable, and all respondents touched on this issue in some way. For both the actors and the directors, it is clear that age plays a role in their professional lives and in how they are treated. There are also differences in how White and respondents being racialised as Black or Brown talk about age. While actors being racialised as White talk about the demand for youth and about their forties as the potential end point for attractive roles, those being racialised as Black or Brown talk about how their careers stabilise only when they are well into their thirties.

Average age for leading roles

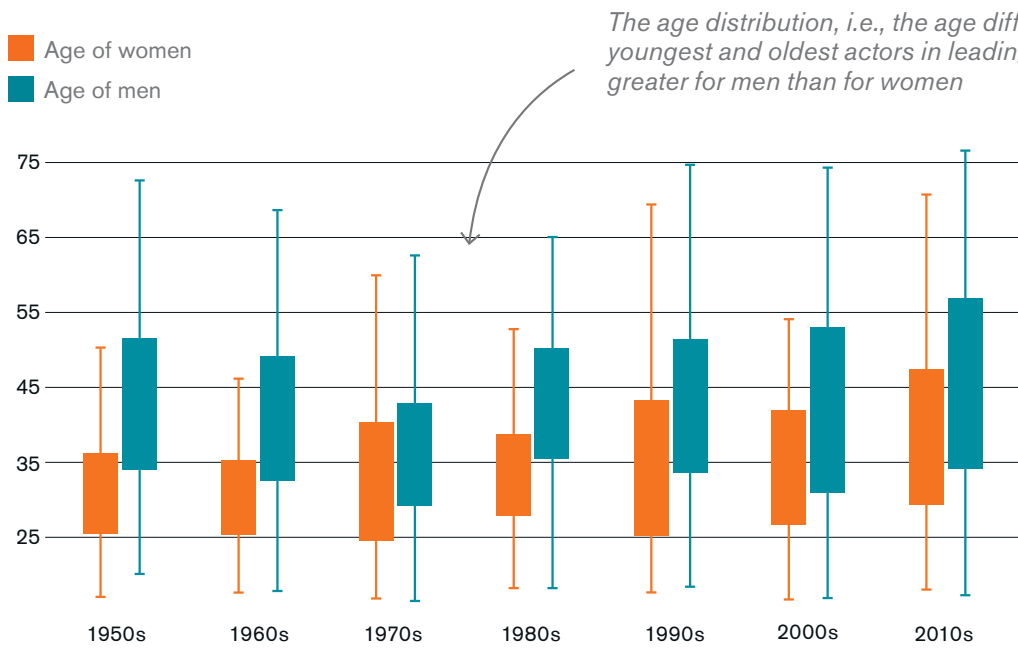
(from *Him, Her and the Money* 2018)

■ Women
■ Men



Age distribution for leading roles in Swedish films

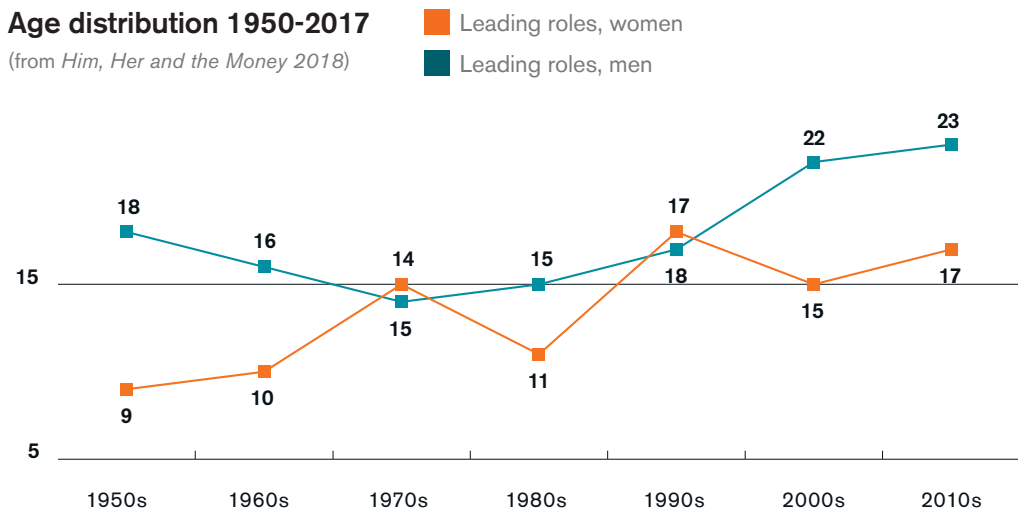
(from *Him, Her and the Money* 2018)



The graph shows the distribution of the ages of men and women in leading roles during the different periods of time. The lowest bar marks the lowest age in the sample (which only includes roles from 17 years of age and above). The box shows the values that make up half of the values for each gender, i.e., the vast majority of all leading roles during the period. The top line represents the highest value in each sample.

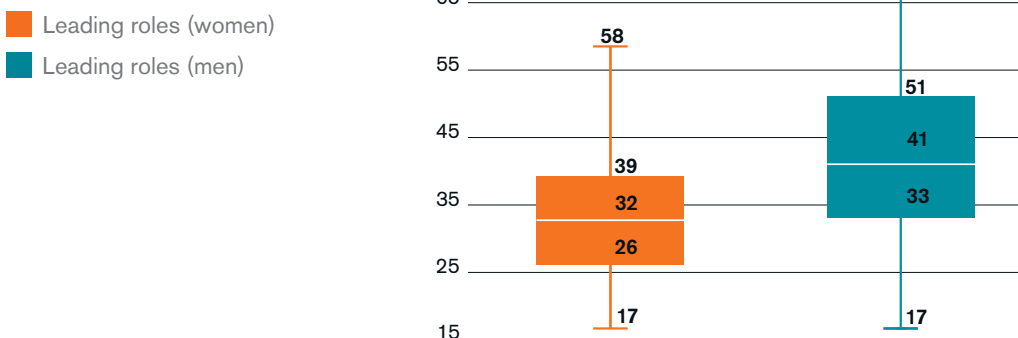
Age distribution 1950-2017

(from *Him, Her and the Money* 2018)



Age distribution 1950-2017

(from *Him, Her and the Money* 2018)



“I can’t wait to see just one person who looks like me who is simply a human being, who doesn’t have to be an angel or a villain.”

Typecasting – what roles are created and who gets them?

“I can never just be a woman – not in theatre productions, either. Because I’ll always be a Black woman.”

MOST OF THE actors attest that they have been typecast on one or numerous occasions, and the vast majority of such accounts come from the women being racialised as Black or Brown. They are also the ones who get the fewest big roles; very few of them have ever had a leading role. They recount the countless times they have been stereotyped and encountered preconceived notions about which clothes or roles are appropriate for them. This is largely manifested in the casting process, where sexism, racism, stereotyping, discrimination, exoticization and violations have been reported in the material.

SOONER OR LATER IN THE INTERVIEW PROCESS, all the women talk about how the limitations of casting are tied to what narratives and dramaturgical ideals are rewarded in Swedish film and television production. In suspense fiction that thematises murder, violence and criminal investigations, stereotypes are favoured over character work. Although most actors have been cast in this manner at some point in their careers, it is mainly those being racialised as Black or Brown who fit into such a profile.

BROWN AND BLACK people were present in Sweden and Europe before the rise of European colonialism, yet there is implicit resistance to seeing their part in the everyday diversity of

society portrayed on film. One problem that has previously been mentioned is that whiteness, regarded as a silent but tacit norm, is seen as transparent, while those being racialised as Black and Brown must be punctuated and questioned (Habel 2008, 2012; Alejandro Martina, 2013; Wekker 2016; Skadegaard, 2020).

A YOUNGER ACTRESS points out that her presence often elicits questions, and that explanations are considered to be needed as to why she looks the way she does.

“I’ve fought hard, because if there’s a Black role, I want it. But I want the other roles, too. And to just be a human being. Sometimes when I’ve gone into some TV show and worked for a couple of days, someone has said ‘But how do we explain why you look the way you do?’ I say, ‘But you don’t have to do that – I’m here.’”

Several of the Black actors say that they are rarely allowed to simply be actors on set – and to just be a human being in the context of the production.

“I can’t wait to see just one person who looks like me who is simply a human being, who doesn’t have to be an angel or a villain.”



“Every time I’ve done a role in a TV or film context, the costume designer wants me to put on something in an animal print. I like the style, but it’s so incredibly clear that it’s also associated with my skin colour.”



ONE OF THE BIGGEST problems with typecasting is that actors are selected or passed over depending on how well they are assumed to be able to represent the mostly White casting directors and directors' ideas about what a supposedly non-European woman should look like. An actor in her early forties, being racialised as Brown, has rarely gotten roles in Sweden and talks about how her background, and casting directors' views about her features and hair colour, seemed to stand in the way of being cast in a role. It is thus in the actor that the casting director (and by extension the producer and director, who decide who gets the role) sees a limitation – not in her/his own powers of imagination. Notions of marginalised, racialised groups are not a given; rather, they are created and highlighted – especially through cultural production. The British cultural and social theorist Sara Ahmed has written about how Western emotional politics are central to the ability of White majorities to deal with racialised differences. People being racialised as anything other than White are considered as if they cannot belong in the Western world, and White people's concerns about their presence are expressed through emotions such as fear, rejection or disgust. The feelings of White people, Ahmed argues, help to reinforce their own identities, while making marginalised groups the objects of those feelings (Ahmed, 2000, 2007, 2014). These feelings are “attached” to the marginalised groups via cultural stereotypes.

THERE ARE MANY variations in how Black actors are encapsulated in stereotypes and exoticism. One actress says that she has started to get tired of being dressed in workout clothes, and that she is not an “Adidas type”. Another actress talks about how costume designers have repeatedly clothed her in animal prints, precisely because she is Black.

“Every time I’ve done a role in a TV or film context, the costume designer wants me to put on something in an animal print. I like the style, but it’s so incredibly clear that it’s also associated with my skin colour.”

OF ALL THE experiences revealed in the interviews, typecasting is among the most common; virtually all actors reflect critically on how they are positioned based on class, racialised/ethnified femininity norms, and skin tone. They are regarded as coded types. Several of the women believe that this tendency has gone so far that the actual character work and narrative potential were overshadowed.


ONE OF THE DIRECTORS being racialised recounts how she can often see in scripts how racialised people are described far more exotically than other characters. She also says that there is an agreement that the appearance of White women can be transformed to play racialised characters – in her example to Bosnians or Arabs – while one would never use blue contact lenses and bleach the hair of a woman being racialised as Brown or Black and have her play a Scandinavian.

TYPECASTING CAN ALSO have a compensatory side, where actors being racialised as Black or Brown are given prestigious roles. These casting strategies can also be seen in North American productions, where Black actors are often chosen to play judges, doctors, or police chiefs. One actor says:

“But now there’s also that faction where they’ve come up with the idea – I think I’ve played a lawyer three times – where they think that now you get to be a lawyer and not a maid. But they’re still small roles, and the role is called ‘the Lawyer’ or ‘the Doctor’. So, I’m still going to be a worthy character. Let’s not make her a stereotype, they’ve thought to themselves. At the same time, it’s not a significant role where the character has a name.”

THIS KIND OF status-emphasised, compensatory diversity can be added to a given production, which is nevertheless oriented towards whiteness. Black actors say that their own concerns about not helping to reproduce stereotypes often fall on deaf ears, and that it is exhausting to have to discuss the question about what does or does not constitute a racist stereotype with casting directors and/or directors.

ONE ACTOR RECOUNTS the many circuitous conversations in which she ended up when she was offered a role as a maid. She cites this as an example of how *colour-blind* casting can be misinterpreted and abused. Colour-blind casting is based on a colour-blind ideal wherein the best actor for the role is chosen, regardless of how the person is being racialised. Her story is an illustrative example of what the author Robin DiAngelo calls *White fragility*. White fragility can be seen in situations where White people are criticised for racism or hear critical trains of thought about racism on which they themselves have not reflected. White people can see themselves as cornered, singled out or unjustly accused when the topic of racism comes up



– whether it pertains specifically to their own actions or to some general problem of whiteness that has been raised for discussion. Because positions of whiteness are based on a tacit justification for defining, valuing and claiming knowledge, difficulties arise when marginalised groups convey their own knowledge of racism. The White person sees her/himself as the oppressed party in the discussion and reacts with counter-accusing or outrage.

THE CASTING SITUATION for the role of maid exemplifies how difficult it can be to convey criticism. The actor felt a responsibility to point out to the casting director that she risked creating a classic racist Black stereotype, a stereotype that has been criticized in the United States for over a hundred years. It turned out that no White actor had been called to audition for the role, which exposed the racism in the structures behind the production. The casting director felt personally attacked and accused. There was a notion in the production that the actor had made unfair accusations and she was finally defined as the racist in the context of the debate, i.e., a *reverse racist*.

POST-COLONIAL AND ANTI-RACIST scholars have observed that European colonialism invented and idealised its whiteness through a racist system based on non-reciprocity. The sociologist Stuart Hall opines that the colonised, dehumanised peoples were made to act as the constituent “outside” of Europeans, i.e., that which lay beyond the scope of what Europeans identified as human, beautiful, cultural, intelligent, and civilised (Hall, 1999). Here it is relevant to recall the meaning-building of colonialism, because it persists in the racism of today. According to its logic, reverse racism cannot exist, because by definition, racism presupposes that a minority is systematically marginalised.

Today, many White people are unaccustomed to grappling with a dialogue about racism, and ignorance is often seen as an excuse. DiAngelo (whose concept of White fragility was explained earlier) believes that this inexperience stems partly from the fact that most White people primarily live and socialise with other Whites, but that it is also due to the general acceptance

of a White-dominated world, which is seen as something normal. Claiming to be ignorant of global racial power orders or claiming that one is not a part of them, is part of a cognitive dissonance, a psychological stress that occurs when multiple contradictory thoughts must be processed simultaneously. According to DiAngelo, White fragility also comprises escaping responsibility by crying, screaming, or falling silent, pulling away, or simply leaving the room (DiAngelo 2011).

THE MORE THAT vulnerable and umbrageous White people feel that racism is being discussed, the less likely they are to listen to and process criticism. They see themselves as constrained by anti-racist criticism, especially if it relates to racism that they themselves have just expressed. One of the most difficult problems to deal with in these situations is that White people then believe that they are being accused of being racists and that they are judged as such. However, criticism of racist expressions, arguments or actions is directed precisely at those expressions, arguments or actions. (Habel 2018).

THIS MEANS THAT PEOPLE being racialised as White can end up feeling cornered. Thus, the first priority becomes not to listen, but to defend oneself, so that one’s self-image can be maintained. The researchers Philomena Essed and Gloria Wekker have both demonstrated that White people are often so used to dominating on issues relating to how meaning relationships are created in social relationships that they become furious when they are challenged by marginalised groups. They simply cannot understand that their tacit justification can be questioned and criticised (Essed, 2014; Wekker, 2016).

HERE ONE MIGHT ALSO ADD that various forms of cultural and social justification slow efforts to achieve change. Although critical discussions about stereotypes have been conducted for many decades, they continue to be reproduced. One example is the “Fatima role”, which has become something of an internal byword among female actors being racialised as Black or Brown. Several of them mention it as a role for which they have auditioned, whether or not they have links to the Middle East.

“Many people have this picture of how an immigrant girl talks and behaves, as if she grew up in Rinkeby. But I know tons of people from Rinkeby or Skärholmen who speak perfect Swedish. Who work at the fucking Social Insurance Office. It’s so clear what kind of image they want for this Fatima role.”

“I often end up in situations like this: ‘We’re looking for a girl from the Middle East’, it says in the script. ‘Well, let’s throw her in, because we need diversity in that role.’ Then I’ve been called in to those auditions for the Middle Eastern girl named Fatima. I’ve been thinking that I should do something about this, about this Fatima role that I think we’ve all portrayed. She’s an immigrant girl who’s quite sassy and good, with an attitude. That’s kind of what the Fatima role is. I think everyone’s auditioned for that one, and she’s in every TV show. ‘Have you gone and ...?’ ‘Yep, I auditioned for Fatima, too. But this White girl got the role instead.’ Many people have this picture of how an immigrant girl talks and behaves, as if she grew up in Rinkeby. But I know tons of people from Rinkeby or Skärholmen who speak perfect Swedish. Who work at the fucking Social Insurance Office. It’s so clear what kind of image they want for this Fatima role.”

RARELY DO THESE actors recount playing unmarked roles, where their skin colour or other racializing markers are set aside – and thus not commented on in the film. One actor describes how important it was for her to get to play a role as a member of a mixed family. She hadn’t reflected on it before and realises the absurdity of being so moved and happy about what is a generally accepted part of everyday life for White actors. She says that no comment was ever made about the fact that the family consisted of parents and children of different skin colours, and that she didn’t think the director understood how important this was to her. The character work suddenly became much easier.

“Imagine how many families like this there are, of all different kinds. It’s a really important thing, how you cast families. You have to understand how crucial it is.”

“We’re cast based on our size, according to the man who is cast first.”

“It’s when you’re young that you have a chance to get a foot in the door. Later on, you’re just seen as used up. Our entire society is that way. Just take a look at the magazine rack. The girls who get to be on the covers are young, White women. You can see from the Guldbagge nominations that young women are used and then thrown away. Whereas older male actors remain.”

Age, whiteness and thinness norms

FOR THE WHITE actors interviewed, their forties appear to be a deadline – one that applies to all women. It’s also something of which they are constantly reminded by the people around them. Some of the women say that they started feeling stressed as soon as they graduated from acting school. One of the White actors, who has passed 40, says she now has more roles than before, because she also has an international career. Nonetheless, she has had to live with the worry that the roles will dry up. She recounts a story about a director who, when she was 35 years old, said that she had to hurry, that she only had five years – and she believes that youth and whiteness still play a central role in success.

“It’s when you’re young that you have a chance to get a foot in the door. Later on, you’re just seen as used up. Our entire society is that way. Just take a look at the magazine rack. The girls who get to be on the covers are young, White women. You can see from the Guldbagge nominations that young women are used and then thrown away. Whereas older male actors remain.”

“I’m constantly thinking about my skin colour when I work as an actor. And I think about how other people see me all the time. It’s so stressful and exhausting. And yet I’ve been lucky, because I’m young and got into the business at the right time. I speak the ‘right’ kind of Swedish, and I’m mixed, which means my skin tone is also lighter. There’s also a huge difference between skin colours. There are none – I don’t know of an all-black woman who appears on TV.”

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ONE ACTOR BELIEVES that although the 40-year deadline for casting seems to persist, the boundaries are still being pushed forward – including through influences from American film and television productions, where there are more roles for older actors. Her strategy is to create these roles herself through screenwriting.

SEVERAL BLACK ACTORS have other experiences of how age limits for casting are established. They have generally had fewer roles in their early careers, but then received more in recent years. They say that they are often perceived by those around them as much younger than they are, and that the industry has gradually opened up more roles to them. An actor who had a leading role early in her career later went through a long period during which she had quite few offers for roles in Sweden. When she looks at her work situation today, she says:

“For me as a Black woman, it’s better to get older. Because I look young. In my case, I also think it might be easier to get a job the older I actually look. But I know that it can also be completely the opposite, that it can be really difficult for women who are pushing forty.”

ONE OF THE Black actors also addresses the problem of colourism, i.e., the hierarchy created between dark Black and fair-skinned Black actors. Colourism, also known as shadeism, is a legacy of the colonial system that clearly ranked Black people according to skin tone (Hunter, 2007). Whiteness has continued to be maintained as a standard of beauty for Black people, especially women. The same standard prevails in Sweden, but it has yet to be subjected to more comprehensive examination in the film and television industry.

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She adds that the USA and England have come further on this issue. She misses playing roles that have depth, and where her blackness does not need to be highlighted or explained.

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ANOTHER BLACK actor also talks about how difficult it is to get unmarked roles:

“I’ve never really auditioned for a lead role. It’s kind of totally... Or yeah, there was one a while back, but then it was supposed to be that she came to Sweden when she was little. And so that was going to be quite a big part of the story. I have such an immense longing for stories with people who are another skin colour than white, where that isn’t commented on at all.”

A WHITE ACTRESS in her late 40s is asked how she is positioned according to whiteness standards:

“It’s a nonissue because I just glide along on my whiteness, so to speak. It affects me even though I don’t notice it. It affects me by opening the doors to me that they don’t open for others.”

AN ACTOR TAKES UP THE FACT that people who work in children’s entertainment are better at breaking with whiteness norms and putting diversity into practice.

“The only ones who are touchingly good at this are SVT’s children’s channel. Everyone must have the right to be able to recognise themselves on the screen. There’s such power in that. With children, it feels like the channel can do more educational productions and create a world that looks the way they want it to look.”

She gives another example of how so-called “diversity goals” are still pushed back by the imaginative capacity of White supervisors:

“Once I had a role, and they were going to re-write it. My dad was supposed to be White, just like my real dad is. Whereupon this person said, ‘But that’s unrealistic, because he’s White.’ And I said, ‘Sure, but maybe a kid can be adopted.’ But he didn’t buy it. In his reality, that didn’t work. This was a young director, a student. It just makes things worse, because he’s supposed to represent the future. I mean, this is a university student who’s saying this to me!”

“In the beginning, my character was a cleaner and a mute. But, of course, it got really complicated, because the rest of the people in the production were White. Later they tried to make my role more inclusive, and then they said I could sell juice. Are

“There are a ton of Botox girls. That actually didn’t exist before. Those of us who had roles in the 90s and are still acting haven’t gone down that road. What’s going on with our industry? Are we being forced into this? It’s weird; I don’t understand it. At the same time as we’re fighting for women’s rights, we can’t accept our age. Because we also can’t say that we should be allowed to be the age we are when we simultaneously show through our appearance that we don’t want to be our age. Is it society itself that puts that on us, or are we being forced into it by the film industry?”



you kidding me? I might as well have had a bunch of bananas on my head. Can't you see how fucking stupid that is? What ideas do you get when you see me and my body?"

AN ACTOR TALKS about how she sees whiteness as a virtual requirement for a leading role. She recounts that she needed to conform to White beauty and size standards early on, when she was training to become an actor:

“The women who get the bigger roles are extremely visually and symmetrically beautiful. And small and thin. It becomes so clear at drama school; you understand it pretty quickly. So, the majority of women start exercising and eat less. I did that, too. My whole class at drama school was eating disordered, in many different ways. There was one girl who had bulimia, another who always ate small portions, someone who only ate crispbread. I exercised loads and ate nothing but mackerel.”

IN NUMEROUS INTERVIEWS, reflections on size, whiteness, thinness and beauty norms coincide. A White actor talks about how men in leading roles are chosen first, so that the size of the women can then be adapted to them:

“We’re cast based on our size, according to the man who is cast first. Most male actors are very thin – unless they’re Hollywood hunks who just get pushed by their agents to train all day in order to be marketable in the US. So, the women are cast to be even thinner, so you end up with these little girl-women. The man has to look big and strong in relation to the woman. I can’t watch TV anymore; I just hate this.”

She also points out how these demands, along with the requirement for youthfulness, create impossible, fat-phobic body ideals. If casting directors say they are looking for someone of normal size, that means one must be “stick-thin”, and if they’re going to cast an overweight person, then she or he has to be “funny”. She goes on to say that the ideals for mothers, for

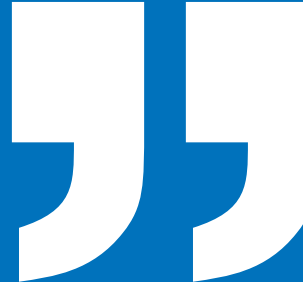
example, are completely unreasonable. On film and TV, mothers of two or three children are expected to be around 30 years old, and it should not be apparent that they have ever been pregnant. She points out that this kind of casting is unrealistic. It also imposes unreasonable demands on the actor.

“Six months before we were due to start, the director sent me a picture that’s like, ten years old and asked me to look a lot like that picture. He wanted me to lose weight so that I was about as thin as I was in the picture. They were going to help me get down to that weight. Look, I’m in my late forties. My body wants to be the way it is, not like it was ten years ago. It’s harsh, but he says it’s because he thinks I’ll look more like my character if I do it. Because she’s a real person. He says, ‘I want you to be unhealthily skinny.’ During a nine-month shoot. So, I said, ‘No, I can’t do that because my health won’t be able to handle it.’ Then he sent me that picture again, months after we signed a contract. ‘I want you to look like this.’ Dealing with this has been super strenuous.”

SEVERAL of the interviewees mention that it has become increasingly common for female actors to feel obliged to use Botox and surgical procedures to comply with the thinness and youth requirements.

“I notice that it’s crept into our industry as well. Especially the generation after me has started to go under the knife. There are a ton of Botox girls. That actually didn’t exist before. Those of us who had roles in the 90s and are still acting haven’t gone down that road. What’s going on with our industry? Are we being forced into this? It’s weird; I don’t understand it. At the same time as we’re fighting for women’s rights, we can’t accept our age. Because we also can’t say that we should be allowed to be the age we are when we simultaneously show through our appearance that we don’t want to be our age. Is it society itself that puts that on us, or are we being forced into it by the film industry?”

“I don’t want to say that there are no roles for women. What I want to say is that there are certainly roles, but no one offers them. There’s this genre that has dominated for some time. In it, the majority are men – an active, 70-year-old policeman. Just imagine an active, 70-year-old a policewoman. It’s completely unthinkable.”



ANOTHER WHITE actor points out that the women who undergo Botox treatments are doubly punished; they are made to bear the guilt and responsibility for patriarchal norms that the industry expects them to do everything possible to meet.

“Powerful people in the industry have come to me and said ‘Well, but this and that actor, your colleague, she’s gotten so much Botox. She’s done one thing or another. Don’t do that. It’s so horrible.’ Upon which I’ve said, ‘Stop saying that. When the statistics look different, you can start complaining about girls Botoxing themselves. Because they’re doing it so they can get a job.’ Maybe there are women who do it out of sheer vanity or who feel good about it. But in our industry, that’s unlikely. People talk a lot of shit about the girls where you can see they’ve gotten Botox. That’s also really awful, I think. That they get doubly punished.”

The women interviewed have a common awareness that advancing age limits their chances of getting roles. While men are permitted to continue to play leading roles even after official retirement age, women start to get fewer roles, and even fewer leading roles, as early as forty. A White actress who is a bit over sixty says she lacks female older roles where women are allowed to be the protagonists of the story.

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A BLACK ACTOR in the same age group says she would also like to see more meaningful older roles.

“A funny thing I did for TV was a little series about democracy, and there I was a revolutionary grandmother. Democracy had been abolished and there was dictatorship. In it, I trained my grandchild. We snuck around and cut cables and sabotaged the dictator. It was great fun, a production for middle schoolers. This was a person, a grandmother, who wanted to reinstate democracy and who trained her grandchild. I long to get to do roles like that.”

THE INTERVIEWS SHOW THAT the demands imposed on female actors in particular are enormous. Their bodies are regarded as a raw material that can be processed to meet industry demands that are difficult to dislodge, instead of the industry affirming what women can look like, regardless of body size and age.

THE WHITE ACTORS recount sexualisation, extreme age segregation and how roles drastically diminish as they age. At the same time, those who are older and established occupy a position of power. They are not exposed to sexism in the same way, they have more say, and it is easier for them to speak up. However, this is clearly linked to being “bankable”, that is, being so established and income-generating that producers and directors dare to invest in them despite their age. For directors, screenwriters and producers, the age norm is reversed. There it is a bigger problem to be young and not be taken seriously.



”Criminal. Prostitute. Incredibly sensual, horny. There’s always got to be something sexual. If we’re talking about a different ethnic background, it’s usually someone who’s supposed to be a criminal, have a tough attitude and breaks the rules. ‘Your brother has beaten you and you’re being followed. And you’re playing a Kurd, a vulnerable girl, an immigrant girl.’”

Stereotypes

NOT ONLY ARE racialised and older women largely invisible in Swedish film, but when they do appear it is common for them to be portrayed in stereotypical ways. Respondents call for more narratives with older women who have depth and their own lives, and who are not simply functions of the male characters. Similar desires are voiced by younger women being racialised as non-White, but in their case, they do not want to be mere functions of White characters. Expressions of female sexuality in Swedish film are also perceived as stereotyped and few. Respondents describe the vast difference between the sexualised overexposure of young women and the complete invisibility of older ones.

“That’s really annoying, in a way. Now I’m stuck playing moms and grandmothers. That’ll be my category.”

RESPONDENTS POINT OUT that there is rarely more than one woman being racialised as Brown or Black in a film or series. While men being racialised are often portrayed as criminals, common female stereotypes include the prostitute, the victim of crime or oppression – or the role of cleaners.

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“This year is the first time I’ve had a female director as a role model. And I’ve been working for, like, ten years.”

“There’s so little representation in film that as a result there’s so much in the real world that doesn’t feel believable, because we haven’t seen it on film. We mimic a lot of what we see on film. Life imitating art. And if there’s no representation and you live in Nytorget or Vasastan, then the Black people you see on film, and the way they are portrayed, will become your picture of reality.”

Film affects society and society affects film

THE CONCLUSIONS OF A STUDY carried out by the British and Danish film institutes together with the German organisation Vision Kino show that films can improve the self-understanding of minorities and contribute to reflection on overall societal values. The participants in this report also point out that the lack of representation of diversity in Swedish film contributes not only to poorer quality, but also to a whitewashed, body-corrected, age-discriminatory representation of society. Several of the interviewees feel responsible for their audience and for the representations disseminated by Swedish film.

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ONE PARTICIPANT EXPRESSES that over the years she has become gender blind, as she has learned to accept the stories that exist and to identify with the male narrative. It has gone so far that she doesn’t even think about it, whereas if a female-centric narrative is presented, she thinks of it as a “women’s story”.

SINCE THE FILM INDUSTRY IS part of society, and consists of people who also watch films, the professional life of respondents is also affected by the lack of diversity among the offerings.

“I don’t think women have as much opportunity to dream about making movies. There are fewer role models for them. The men

have a head start in that respect. This year is the first time I’ve had a female director as a role model. And I’ve been working for, like, ten years. It’s the first time I can identify with a woman and be inspired.”

ONE OF THE INTERVIEWEES was told by someone who had read her script that it is not possible to make a film about a mentally ill woman. She recounts that this happened just a few years ago. The same respondent talks about a racialised woman she met:


“She’s in her 20s and said she also wanted to be an actor. When she was in high school, her teacher had said ‘There are no roles for you, so there’s no point in you continuing.’”

OTHER RESPONDENTS GIVE more examples of how the lack of representation and stereotypes are manifested:

“No, but wait, we have that Kurdish singer. One Kurd per programme is enough.’ That’s how they think. Imagine if it were the same with Swedes: ‘No but wait, she’s Swedish. One Swede per programme is enough. She can’t be in it.’”

“So, I said to these young guys who had made the films we just watched ‘These were great films, but there wasn’t a single woman in any of the leading roles.’ And then this young director looked at me, in all seriousness, and said ‘But honey, a woman can’t carry a leading role.’”

SEVERAL RESPONDENTS BELIEVE that Swedish society has not sufficiently processed racist and sexist structures, and that



this contributes to the difficulty of implementing changes. One interviewee believes that the problem is that the whiteness that has long characterised Sweden gives an incomplete picture of the diversity that actually exists. As an example, she points out that White Swedish feminists, who have fought for their positions, try to translate their struggle to the issue of diversity, without losing the power they themselves have been given. Once they have actually achieved a position of power, they are eager to claim that they understand subordination because they themselves have fought their way up through the ranks. However, this respondent opines that this is not the same fight, nor the same disadvantage.

“Without the first step, we can’t take the second – and the first part is about Sweden’s own history. Older White women have a very short-sighted perspective on their role in the history of diversity and race, about inclusion in this country. There’s a misconception that their battle is somehow the same. It’s not the same – it never has been, and it’s a mistake to believe that it is.”

In interview after interview, it appears that there is a significant gap between white, patriarchal notions about which films can be expected to be safe successes and which are considered to be risky projects. This gap is one of the stumbling blocks in the tug-of-war over what realism can and may be in Swedish film.

Through examples from their own work several of the women illustrate the various ways in which they have defied the stop signals they have received, or the negative expectations that have been projected onto them, and still completed their film projects.



However, women who have one or more successful film behind them still get only a small fraction of the chances and funding that men get to finance a new film in Sweden. A common theme in numerous interviews is that racist and patriarchal structures help to make the Swedish film industry blind and deaf to what these women actually deliver, and that what is required in order to achieve public and international recognition is very different from the demands of the Swedish industry.

***“It’s all about
money, really.
About who has
the money.”***



Suggestions from the respondents



“It’s so incredibly important to show everyone who’s gone before us. How did they do it? What did they do? And the Film Institute can help support such material. Because if you’re not documented, then you don’t exist.”

HOW CAN THE knowledge and experience that has been crystallised in these 19 interviews contribute to action? Numerous respondents came up with ideas about what can be done to achieve change in different ways. For example, one suggestion raised in the interviews is that the Film Institute and the distributors collaborate on a training course.

“I think the distributors and the Film Institute could collaborate on a joint training course and discuss how to find a larger target group through greater diversity in the narratives. The greater the diversity of the narratives, the greater the diversity among creators, both in front of the camera and behind it.”

IN ADDITION TO training for those who have the most power, participants also point to the need for training for people who are not yet established in the industry. According to one respondent, this has the potential to increase the possibilities for new narratives and create a system for ensuring that they reach an audience.

SEVERAL WOMEN POINT TO the necessity that the Film Institute continue to produce and disseminate knowledge. Inter alia, such information includes the budgetary statistics produced by the Finnish Film Institute. Several of the respondents also mention the importance of making visible all aspects of film history, including the work of people who are not established or well-known. For example, Fatima Ekman, who was one of the first Black women to participate in a programme on Swedish television, is mentioned. Diversity has existed in the past, and it needs to be accommodated in our media and filmic memory.

“It’s so incredibly important to show everyone who’s gone before us. How did they do it? What did they do? And the Film Institute can help support such material. Because if you’re not documented, then you don’t exist.”

INCREDING THE DIVERSITY of the Film Institute’s consultants is another suggestion put forward by the participants, who also recommend that the Film Institute invest more time and resources in those who seek support.



“It’s all about money, really. Who has the money – and everyone adapts accordingly, with varying degrees of discretion.”

TARGETED SUPPORT FOR women with a foreign background is another contribution proposed by the participants. They also emphasise that it is crucial to also follow up on such ventures or efforts, otherwise there is a risk that these stories will disappear.

“It’s a shame; Baker Karim developed the Fusion venture. At the time, eight women from various ethnic backgrounds received support. But where did they go? What happened to those stories? I haven’t seen any of their productions. We launch a venture and then it’s over. It’s a shame; I want to see them on the big screen.”

SOME RESPONDENTS SUGGEST that financiers should assess the films and scripts without taking the author’s identity into account, or that the applications should be anonymised so that the script – rather than its creator – is assessed. It is seen as problematic that a single person gets to make the assessment and decide who should receive the money. Several interviewees believe that assessments are very much based on taste. A number of the participants also call upon the Swedish State to set clearer equality and diversity objectives.

“We would never have gotten so many women on boards if we hadn’t said: we’re going to get more women on boards. The hand of the state should be warm, but sometimes it must be firm as well.”

ACCORDING TO RESPONDENTS, it is also necessary to make efforts to reduce hierarchies and increase security in the industry; several of them believe that people need to recognise that some of them will have to give up a portion of their power and privileges. They argue that their professional insecurity stems from the fact that so many of these women are considered to be interchangeable.

SEVERAL WOMEN SAY that they want to see more concrete efforts to promote diversity and gender equality in the industry, and that a more international outlook is necessary. According to a number of the interviewees, self-examination is also important, as is an anti-racist power critique within the category of women.

ONE RESPONDENT also suggests having a clearly appointed workplace representative for whistleblowing – a “#metoo person” who can be contacted if something happens. The freelance structure of the industry is the crux of the problem, she says, as it creates great uncertainty for those who work in it. At large workplaces employees can often turn not only to their union, but to the HR department as well; freelancers in the Swedish film industry do not have access to such support.

SEVERAL OF THE RESPONDENTS think that directors, screenwriters and casting directors need to become more aware of their own work processes and actively work to create narratives that better represent the complexity that can be seen in our society.

Some also believe that in order for change to take place and new and more multifaceted stories to emerge, the money must more clearly follow the diversity objectives of the film policy.

“It’s all about money, really. Who has the money – and everyone adapts accordingly, with varying degrees of discretion.”

Summary

This year's gender equality report is an interview study with an intersectional perspective on gender, age and racialisation mechanisms. In-depth interviews with 19 directors and actors were conducted and analysed thematically. The overall themes that were crystallised related to funding and pay, everyday negotiations in work environments, and how we can change structures. Below is a summary of this analysis.

Smaller budgets result in smaller film projects

Women generally receive lower budgets than men, as female stories are seen as “narrower” films entailing a greater financial risk. This in turn guides financial expectations, where statistics indicate a correlation between larger film budgets and larger audiences.

Deprofessionalisation – the great time thief

Work environments in which violations and discrimination occur risk becoming deprofessionalised, in the sense that energy goes to addressing various forms of violations, and this steals the focus from the work that is to be carried out. In real terms, it also steals time, and therefore money, from the production.

Unsafe working conditions lead to silence

As the film industry is largely a freelance industry, personal networks are an important factor in the creation of potential jobs. Several of the respondents attest that this also leads to a culture of silence in which one is afraid to stand up against colleagues and decision-makers, because doing so may affect the possibility of future work. This fear can be expressed in decisions to refrain from pointing out or commenting on discriminatory behaviour, because the victim does not want to be seen as “difficult”. Many also note that despite legislation, there is often no well-functioning process for whistleblowing, and that it may be unclear who has employer responsibility.

Lack of knowledge and the reluctant diversity expert

Women being racialised as Black or Brown are often expected to embrace the role of a diversity expert whose task it is to educate and inform White employees and leaders. These women are also expected to be responsible for any problems linked to structural racism that may surface during a production. This leads to double work and ultimately entails a risk of exhaustion and burnout.

The norms that result in invisibility

The film industry's distinctive fixation on appearance and age, together with a strong whiteness norm, risks creating unreasonable ideals, and can also cause older women and women being racialised as Black or Brown to become invisible in Swedish film.

Typecasting creates a warped worldview

Typecasting is a recurring problem that exists in all parts of the filmmaking process, from the script stage to the finished film. Typecasting can occur in different ways – from stereotypical characters to exoticization and invisibility.

The power to change – and the opportunity

Those with financial power are also considered to be the ones with the greatest opportunity to create change, as the narratives created are guided by the expectations of financiers, production companies, broadcasters and distributors. Among other things, the women interviewed in this report call for an increase in competence regarding representation and diversity among those in power, and within the film industry as a whole.

Making racialisation mechanisms and racism visible: a conceptual discussion

An in-depth research commentary by Ylva Habel

This report provides an overall picture of the many experiences of discrimination, sexism, racism and violations that are part of women's everyday work in the Swedish film industry. This commentary provides a brief introduction to the key concepts used in the report's analysis discussions. The purpose of the concept review is to help put into words the experiences to which Swedish cultural institutions still often fail to refer, although racism itself has begun to be discussed more widely in recent years.

It has already been mentioned that an intersectional focus on racism, gender and age discrimination can prove elucidating and provide a deeper understanding of how different power structures interact (Crenshaw 1994). It is important to be aware that intersectional thinking does not primarily show how various categories "intersect" or build upon each other. The discrimination grounds of gender, age, disability, sexuality and colour are addressed separately in the Discrimination Act, but in reality, a person never belongs to just one of these categories.

A person to whom multiple grounds of discrimination may be applied is more likely to face discrimination. Since the specific forms of discrimination suffered by Brown and Black women have tended to be overshadowed when focusing on discrimination against women in general, it is important to focus here on how racism and racializing mechanisms in the film and TV industry make these women invisible as women and position them as exotic or "deviant". Therefore, a brief orientation is provided here regarding concepts that highlight the often silent but tangible structures of racism.

Something needs to be said at the outset about the concept *racialisation* and *racialised*, as well as about the marginalised groups being racialised as Black or Brown within the framework of a White majority culture. The English "catch-all" term for Brown and Black people, *people of colour*, has no equivalent in the Swedish language. Instead, the word ethnicity is often used incorrectly, transforming all racialised differences, born out of our global colonial history, into "ethnic" differences. In everyday terms, for example, a person being racialised as Brown or Black is described as not being "ethnically Swedish". But there is no such thing as a nationally defined ethnicity; "Swedishness" and citizenship are inherent in neither skin colour, hair colour nor surname.

In order to make visible how racialisation mechanisms are expressed in everyday work, we should instead focus on concepts that remind us of how racialisation has been created. Here, the term is "racialised" is used to describe women who are racialised as Black or Brown (Coleman 2015), because we are talking about racializing identification processes that are not self-selected by the people being racialised as Black and Brown in the world. The phrase "racialised as" is intended to underscore the fact that the names that European colonists, and later Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778) once coined to describe Europeans (racialised as "White") and the colonised peoples (racialised as "Brown", "Yellow", "Red", or "Black" according to his categorisation), are neither obvious nor normal. Nor have these conceptual creations of colonialism vanished from our culture. This means that depending on their skin colour, people are associated with a range of characteristics, mentalities and behaviours that can be dehumanising.

As many anti-colonial and postcolonial thinkers have demonstrated, European whiteness is regarded as colourless – as something neutral and universally human, against which other skin colours are measured or contrasted. This measurement and normalisation occur in everyday life and can be seen in the questions asked of or about Brown and Black people in a White majority context. Some of the racism that often seems invisible in the eyes of members of the White majority can be termed *microaggressions*. Microaggressions in the work environment may entail White colleagues who pose unjustified questions that may be intrusive or intimate to people being racialised as Black or Brown. White people who, in the workplace or in public, ask racialised people "What are you doing here?", "Do you really have training to do this work?", or "Where do you come from – really?" are different variants of microaggressions. The unspoken premise thinly veiled in the White person's question is that the Brown or Black person does not belong there, and must explain her/his presence, or prove her/his professional competence to White colleagues.

It would be a mistake to regard microaggressions as conscious or literal aggressiveness on the part of individual white people against these and other marginalised groups. Rather, the aggressive aspect of the concept is part of the colonial heritage that encompasses our entire planet, even after decolonisation,

White majority or minority populations in the Western world retained their justification to regard themselves as the given norm against which all knowledge, norms and culture can be compared and judged (Tefahoney 2015). What were once pronounced, statutory elements of a colonial world order for colonists and the peoples they oppressed, are now transformed into a social marker that appears to be transparent and frictionless.

Thus, what we might call the aggressive aspect of the concept of microaggressions points rather to the result of inherited, normalised behaviour in the white majority. Microaggressions can manifest themselves as questioning, microassaults, microinsults, and finally as delegitimising and belittling and delegitimising comments or practices (microinvalidations) (Bucceri et al 2007). None of these are generally perceived as aggressive by the sender – but rather by the recipient, who is questioned, devalued and reviewed for no reason. Both inside and outside the field of research, other types of microaggressions are also conceptualised. These include limitlessness and intimidation, i.e., that Whites take liberties by touching Black people's hair and skin without their consent. The report's interview material provides a number of examples of how such microaggressions are expressed in everyday work.

Another problem that makes racism so difficult to discuss – especially in Sweden – is linked to what can be called *Swedish exceptionalism*; in Sweden there are still perceptions that Sweden has no colonial heritage, and that we therefore do not face the same problems with racism as other countries in the world. This is of course not true, as several Swedish and Nordic researchers have shown (see overview in Habel, 2008; 2012).

One of the reasons why such beliefs are still viable is that whiteness positions are underpinned by something known as *bad faith*. In the book *Bad Faith and Anti-Black Racism* (1995), the Black philosopher Lewis Gordon describes this idea. He uses the term to show how White dominance of Black and other racialised groups is maintained by denying racism and causing it to become/ remain invisible. The true inequality of power is hidden, and through various forms of denial it is pushed away from what could be a common knowledge of people's living conditions. According to Gordon, bad faith thus involves self-deception. But it is not definitive and can be reversed by a willingness to see and know.

The difference between a common lie and bad faith is that the person who lies to others has knowledge of the truth—whereas the person who lives in bad faith lies to himself, and knowingly or unconsciously tells himself that the false description of reality believed by the person and large parts of the White majority is actually true. In terms of racism, anyone who lives in bad faith can thus absolve themselves of the responsibility of contributing to change. Lewis Gordon writes: "*Lying to ourselves must be a case of bad faith since we must, in fact, give up control over that of which we have control. With such an effort we attempt to give up choice in our condition. We attempt to evade the human confrontation with choice.*" (my italicisation, Gordon 1995: 9).

In various ways, the self-deception of bad faith helps to establish protective walls against criticism – and for those White people

who do not open themselves to criticism, these walls become thicker over time. For them, bad faith becomes an important tool by which to continue to maintain their image of themselves as "unprejudiced" and right-minded. "Unprejudiced" is written here in quotes to indicate that the word is misplaced; as has so often been pointed out in society, racism is structurally and historically rooted. It cannot be boiled down to the opinions and attitudes of individuals in the here and now. In such a discussion, locking oneself into the present is a *presentistic* impulse: presentism is to lock oneself into the present, burying one's head in the sand with regard to how history – global colonial history – also permeates today's power relationships.

Why is the concept of bad faith so relevant to consider in Sweden today? Because it is an important component of Swedish exceptionalism and what is known as *colour-blind racism*. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva has described how late-modern racism carefully sidesteps issues of historically established racial power regimes built on skin colour and creates a power-avoidance stance: racism without race or racists ("racism without racists", Bonilla-Silva 2006). The interview material shows that this becomes a recurring problem in casting processes.

Bad faith is also related to the better-known concept of *cognitive dissonance*, which is also based on denial and contradictory assumptions about what racism is and what it stems from. For example, White people who express bad faith can move freely between positions where they either claim complete ignorance of racism or claim to already possess all the necessary knowledge of it (Essed 2014; Wekker 2016,).

White fragility is yet another facet of the problem of bad faith and can be seen in situations where White people are criticised for racism or hear critical trains of thought about racism on which they themselves have not reflected. White people can see themselves as cornered, singled out or unjustly accused when the topic of racism comes up – whether it pertains specifically to their own actions or to some general problem of whiteness that has been raised for discussion. Because positions of whiteness are based on a tacit justification for defining, valuing and claiming knowledge, difficulties arise when marginalised groups convey their own knowledge of racism. The White person may react with outrage, tears or counter-accusation, and sees her/himself as the oppressed party in the discussion.

The problems of everyday racism described in this concept review give rise to what has recently begun to be termed *minority stress* (Medlock et al 2018). People who are racialised as Brown and Black are scrutinised and questioned in a way that means that they never get a break from racism. Having one's professional skills dismissed or reduced, being made invisible and having to explain one's own presence in the workplace, or having to explain in detail why and in what ways something in the work environment is racist – all of these situations lead to repeated stress. In the long run, minority stress causes physical and mental ill-health, such as difficulty sleeping, high blood pressure and depression.

One burden that affects Black women in particular is *the strong black woman stereotype* (see, e.g., Giscombe), i.e., an expectation that Black women can handle limitless amounts of work and can overcome any difficulties. It is assumed that they have no need of the rest and security that other people require, and they are instead expected to spend time discussing or explaining racist incidents. Black women's time is used for unforeseen tasks – a type of hidden work – which are subsequently neither rewarded nor recognised by others. This is part of what Orlando Patterson has called social death (Patterson 1982), which in everyday terms can be described as being completely dehumanised and excluded from mutual social interaction. There are numerous examples of this in the interview material.

Colourism, also known as *shadeism*, is a legacy of the colonial system that clearly ranked Black people according to skin tone (Hunter, 2007). In the American film and entertainment industry, what was commonly called the *brown paper bag test* (i.e., the light brown colour of unbleached brown paper) was used to select Black women who were permitted to participate in a production. Those whose skin tone was not light enough in comparison to the light brown shade of the bag were passed over, regardless of talent. In this way, whiteness was maintained as a beauty standard for Black people, and fair-skinned Black women with straightened hair or large, unnatural curls were highlighted as ideal. Even today, colourism remains a global problem, and one that is highly pertinent in Sweden.

The artistic community's diversity problem and the diversity alibi Like other artistic forms of expression, film is conditional on Eurocentric preferences and hierarchies of taste. As you have read in the report, it is repeatedly assumed that films created by, and/or depicting racialised minorities "don't sell" in a large film market. This starting point is of course not unique to Sweden; for example, it has remained part of a Nordic, often unconsidered exceptionalism. In her thesis *Racialized Representation in Danish Film: Navigating Erasure and Presence* (2020), Tess Skadegård highlighted how until recently, both the Danish film industry and the Danish Film Institute (DFI) have expressed such perspectives.

Another problem that severely limits the room for manoeuvring and artistic freedom of film workers, filmmakers and artists being racialised as Brown or Black is that they are encapsulated in *differentness*. Unlike White people, they are usually not allowed to represent anything universally human. Instead, they are expected to portray and represent the more or less stereotyped beliefs that circulate in society. Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer described this problem back in the 1980s in the article "De margin and de centre" (1988), about how artists, filmmakers and cultural workers with diasporic connections to the former colonies were trapped in their own marginalisation. They point to the problem that an individual filmmaker, cultural worker or artist from a marginalised group is called upon to represent or represent the group in her/his cultural acts, as if it were a unified category. They argue that only one, or at best a few voices, is admitted to the White majority culture, and is then considered "representative". They then also need to muster a recognisable representation – one which does not challenge or go beyond the expectations of the people passing judgment.

The few opportunities given to racialised minorities through special funding and cultural arenas lock them into this position of constantly being representatives of "their group". They are encapsulated by the limiting *differentness* projected on to them by the White majority. Understood in this way, "representation" becomes a trap. For example, while a White filmmaker can make films on any theme, a minority representative is expected to address her group's problems, "her" supposedly recognisable aesthetic – and to be "authentic".

As the film artist and theorist Trinh T Minh-ha shows in her postcolonial critique "Difference: A Special Third World Women Issue" (first translated to Swedish in 1998) the call to "represent" dominant notions of authenticity can also be a deceptive reward. She writes specifically about the Brown woman from the global South who, within the Western framework, is kindly called upon to affirm her *differentness* and to make it the fundamental attribute of her intellectual and creative work. She is indirectly asked to remain in her assigned position as a representative, and to inform the White majority about her culture and her mystery. This demand for authenticity is articulated as a virtual responsibility. As a result, artists, thinkers and filmmakers who are not primarily interested in "their" assigned problem areas appear downright superficial and politically irresponsible in the eyes of the West (1998). In these ways, Brown and Black members of the cultural community may find themselves in a hostage-like situation, wherein they are made into mouthpieces or even ventriloquist dolls for an entire marginalised social group.

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The Swedish Film Institute
PO Box 271 26
SE-102 52 Stockholm , Sweden
Phone +46-8-665 11 00

filminstitutet.se