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Diversity in post-production sound roles in UK television production

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Foreword

This research, conducted throughout August and September 2020, examined the highest rated TV shows across the Autumn period of 2019 on BBC1, BBC2, ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5 and Sky One and the breakdown of diversity across the key post-production sound team roles. The data is drawn from *Broadcast* magazine's quarterly reports on highest rated shows (published online 15/9/2019), on screen credits and IMDB. This research also involved interviews with a diverse range of professionals working in post-production sound to identify barriers to career progression in this area. This research evidences a worrying absence of diversity in post-production sound teams specifically in drama, entertainment and factual.

Executive Summary

The following data relates to 36 top rated shows across 6 broadcasters (BBC1, BBC2, ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5, Sky One) from the Autumn period of 2019. In total there were 60 available sound roles across these shows, these were undertaken by a total of 55 people:

- There is a lack of racial diversity in male post-production sound crew – in this sample only 1 man identified as mixed-race, the other 46 identifying as white.

- There is lack of gender diversity in the general post-production sound industry – in this sample 6 out of 55 people identified as women. There was only 1 Re-Recording mixer who identified as a woman, they worked only in factual TV. No women were working as Re-Recording mixers in Drama.

- There are issues with intersectional aspects of identity – in this sample there were no women of colour working in the 60 available sound roles.

- In the sample of 55 people only 3 people self-identified as having a disability (none of the identified disabilities required physical adjustments to a workplace).

- As with the findings of the Directors UK research into the directorial professions, decisions on hiring are influenced by the opinions (or perceived opinions) of people in project management roles. In a risk-averse culture this results in the hiring of the same sound teams without opportunities for new entrants, or later on in mid-careers professionals moving between genres.

- As a result of the in-flexibility of existing hiring practices, people from BAME backgrounds have felt the need to create their own companies in order to progress within the industry.

- There are no opportunities or schemes currently available for training or progression for post-production sound freelancers, especially for those moving between short form or factual into drama.

Introduction

In 2020 there has been a significant amount of discussion about the lack of racial and gender diversity in the film and TV industry. This has mostly been focused on directors, actors and producers with BAFTA and AMPAS re-evaluating their awards process (across all genres of film and TV) and introducing new submission requirements to help address the issue. Conversations

have also begun about diversity behind the camera in craft and technical roles, with new schemes and initiatives being set up to help establish a more diverse workforce on set. However, to date this has not included post-production sound.

Post-production sound has two key problem areas in relation to career progression; Mid-career level and the period when people are initially embarking on their careers. Sound professionals at mid-career level, especially freelancers, face some of the same issues that film and TV directors from diverse backgrounds have experienced. They are stuck either working on short form content, independent productions, or in the factual and entertainment world. Very few break through to drama (both recurring and high-end). In addition, whilst this research is focused on television production, feature film production in the UK is also severely lacking in relation to racial diversity (Nwonka, 2020), and has even fewer Head of Department roles. As with TV and film directors, sound professionals find it hard to get drama or feature film work without existing credits in this genre, but to get the credits they need someone to take a chance on them. Very few people are prepared to take chances with their hiring practices due to financial risk. For any sound professionals working as a freelancer, these issues become even more difficult to navigate. Progression within a company can be supported by senior members of staff, training provided, and clients (producers, directors and production companies) made to feel less of a risk is being taken in the appointment of staff. However, currently no schemes or training exist to provide freelancers with the same structure and support that some companies offer, leaving them pigeon-holed in their current professional roles or within specific genres.

At entry level to post-production sound careers, people face the same issues as everyone else trying to break into a creative profession - trying to get a foot in the door of an already very difficult industry. However, as this research uncovered, people attempting to break into post-production sound may also face racism (through name-based discrimination), sexism and ageism. In addition to this they face ill-articulated job descriptions which require much more skills and experience than is necessary to fulfil an assistant level role.

When undertaking any research it is important to acknowledge one's own position in relation to the area of study. As a mixed race woman who has worked in the industry for over 13 years, I am continually faced with being one of the only women on most sound teams (as a result I have faced sexism and bullying), and I have struggled to progress into high end drama as a Re-Recording mixer. As my ethnic identity is not visually evident, I have not personally faced racism in the workplace (although I have experienced racism in my lifetime). As such this research

explores the barriers to career progression that relate to women, Black and ethnic minority sound professionals, and whether there are commonalities in experiences. Additionally, this research considers exactly what actions can be taken to remove these barriers to ensure wider inclusion in the post-production sound profession.

Highest Rated Shows

As a starting point for this research the highest rated UK TV shows across the Autumn period of 2019 were identified. The industry magazine, *Broadcast,* publishes a quarterly list of the highest rated shows across BBC1, BBC2, ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5 and Sky One, the date each show aired and the viewing figures.

For the purposes of this research from this list any live sporting events, shows which do not require post-production sound work (e.g. BBC1's *Strictly Come Dancing* [2004-]), broadcasts of feature films (e.g. *Bridget Jones Diary* [2001]) and American made shows were omitted from the data. In addition, any shows where the information could not be found for the sound teams involved were also removed from the sample (only 4 shows fell into this category).

Using the information about the highest rated shows I found the names of the sound teams involved on the specific episodes. This was achieved through a combination of searching on IMDB and reviewing the end screen credits. As the highest rated shows were from a variety of genres (e.g. drama, entertainment, factual) and the make-up of sound teams vary across each genre, I decided to focus on the key common sound roles found in each one. These are as follows; Re-Recording Mixer, Dialogue Editor and Sound Effects editor.

With drama and feature films production, the roles of Re-Recording Mixer, Dialogue Editor and Sound Effects Editor are covered by different people. In some cases, for example on productions with higher budgets, these roles may be undertaken by multiple people due to the scale of the production. When producing factual and entertainment work, all three roles can be covered by one individual. In order for the importance of these roles to be fully understood I will briefly set out the key components of each role and the contribution these make to the finished production.

Firstly, the Dialogue Editor, in drama and features, is there to make the dialogue intelligible to the audience. They replace words, sentences and sometimes even syllables which may have been distorted due to background noise. This is achieved through deploying techniques to

remove the background noise to make the audio usable, or by editing in audio from alternative takes of the scene. They compose the Automated Dialogue Replacement (ADR) list for both cast and crowd group actors, attend all recording sessions and then integrate the ADR to make it sound seamless, as if that audio was also recorded on set. When Dialogue Editors attend crowd group ADR sessions, they have to direct the actors in what will be needed for the sound from background extras. This process often involves writing lines of dialogue for the supporting actors within the session, and as such involves ensuing both that the language they use will be appropriate for the piece and the accents are accurate. This role is both technical and creative as the Dialogue Editor has a direct impact on who is being heard and what is being said.

Channel 4 drama *Chimerica* (2019) can be used as a recent example of why the identity of the Dialogue Editors can be very important. One of the main characters in this production speaks Mandarin and as such the show required an experienced dialogue editor fluent in Mandarin. An English-speaking dialogue editor, despite perhaps a familiarity with Mandarin as an additional language, would not have been able to replace problematic lines, fit ADR accurately or direct the crowd ADR sessions efficiently.

Secondly, the Sound Effects Editor (who can also be referred to as the Sound Designer) creates the sound scape for the production. All atmospheric noises that help establish the world of the drama's story such as cars, dogs, doors opening and closing, anything you hear on screen has been placed in by the person in this role. In addition to adding and editing existing sound effects, they also work with a Foley artist to create a list of any additional sounds that need to be created such as footsteps (on specific surfaces), clothing movement, skin contact sounds etc. Accuracy of the sounds used is hugely important and as such the role of Sound Effects Editor is vital to the success of a drama production as sound is a significant part of creating and maintaining a believable world for the action to take place.

An obvious example of the significance of the work of Sound Effects Editors is to consider nature documentaries, where the majority of the footage is shot without any sound. In these kinds of productions the Sound Editor is responsible for finding out not only what the location where footage was shot actually sounds like, but also to edit sounds into footage for any animals featured. Across all forms of production their role has a significant impact on the believability and accuracy of what audiences hear on a finished production.

Lastly the Re-Recording Mixer balances all the elements together, combining the dialogue, sound effects, ADR and musical score. They add editing effects like reverberation and delay to ensure the separate elements are heard as coming from the same physical space as the action. For example if a scene is shot which includes two people talking in a large echoey room, that echo would be placed on by the Re-Recording mixer to mimic the way the sound would act in that specific space. They are responsible for making sure ADR also plays seamlessly and sounds identical to dialogue shot on set. The Re-Recording Mixer works with the director and producers to make the show come to life, in line with their creative vision for how the production should sound. The person in this role is also responsible for the technical aspects of delivering a show, making sure it fulfils delivery requirements from different broadcasters and distributors. This brief overview of the key roles (of relevance to this study) demonstrates clearly the contribution made by sound teams both in terms of their technical expertise and their influence on the creative aspects of the shows.

Once all names of those in the key sound roles covered in the sample had been confirmed, I contacted every person directly to request their age, gender, career level, ethnicity and to ask whether they identified as having a disability, impairment or learning difference. Out of 60 people working across a total of 36 shows, 55 people responded providing information on their gender identity and ethnicity. Some people chose not to confirm any other details.

Of the 36 shows there were 60 roles that fell into the categories of dialogue editor, sound effects editor or Re-Recording mixer. In terms of racial diversity this research found that across all channels, only one mixed-race person was involved in the post-production sound teams for the highest rated shows in the sample and they identified as male. In this instance this person made 1 show for Channel 4. No other sound team from within the sample included someone from a Black or ethnic minority background of any gender.

In terms of gender diversity, the highest rated shows produced for BBC1 and BBC2 included only 3 white women. For ITV shows included in the sample, the same individual white woman worked across 2 separate productions. Channel 4 had no women in their post-production sound teams across any productions. For Channel 5’s shows included in the sample there was 1 white woman who worked on 1 production. This particular show also represented the only instances where a woman held the role of Re-Recording mixer. Sky One’s shows included in the sample evidence the inclusion of only 1 white woman on a team which worked on 2 separate productions.

In total 6 women were included out of the 60 available roles. All other members of the teams identified as white men.

Interviews

To better understand the barriers people of ethnic or minority backgrounds and women are facing in progressing in their careers, I interviewed 5 participants. 2 white women and 3 men from ethnic minority backgrounds. Each participant was at a different stage in their career and faced different challenges. In the table below (Fig. 1) the ethnic background of participants is intentionally kept general, as to be more specific in an industry where there are so few people from BAME backgrounds would make them identifiable.

Fig.1:

Participant	Gender (self-identified)	Ethnicity (self-identified)
1	Woman	White
2	Man	Ethnic minority
3	Woman	White
4	Man	Ethnic minority
5	Man	Ethnic minority

Participant 1 was a woman still at the early stage of her career, even after 8 years working continuously in the television industry. She faced barriers trying to progress from assistant roles to becoming a mixer (progressing to different roles) and then from short form to longform content (progressing between genres of content). Having started out as a runner and working within 4 different facilities in either runner, machine room or assistant roles over a 3.5 year period, she finally started working as a Re-Recording Mixer. After working as a Re-Recording Mixer on short form content for 2 years, she wanted to progress into longform content. However, she found her lack of experience in that genre meant people in hiring positions were unwilling to give her a chance, even though she had a proven track record of working successfully with clients in the same technical role. In order to make that progression into longform she had to go back a step in her career to assistant level where she remains after almost 2 years.

She found that during her early career stages, she was not encouraged or given the opportunity to learn and train while working as a runner. She notes that “there was a hierarchy where you had to know your place, keep your head down and if you were allowed into a studio you were lucky”. She also notes that these studios lacked diversity across all aspects of identity. It wasn’t until she worked for her fourth facility, a working environment where the staff were diverse rather than uniformly white, where she was actively encouraged to enter the studios and learn, which helped her progress.

When asked if she met anyone who looked like her at any point starting out in her career, or whether she had any female role models in the industry, she noted that she met one other woman mixer at the first facility she worked at. Having left that first facility, it was a long time before she worked with any other women. This was an observation also made by Participants 2, 4 and 5. Starting out they encountered no one who looked like them with Participant 2 noting that post-production sound was overwhelmingly a field that employed white men. Since entering the industry here in the UK he could only think of 4 or 5 people from Black or ethnic minority backgrounds working in post-production sound, who he had met socially (not worked directly with).

Participant 1 noted that in many other companies she worked at “the women were in bookings roles”, organising the scheduling for the creative departments, answering client emails, very much administrative roles and not technical ones.

When she made the decision to progress to longform, she noted the biggest barriers were that:

> Short form and longform feel like two separate industries and the worlds never collide, so knowing who the people are was difficult, but also technically you lack some of the skills the longform people have because they’re experiencing something different to you and there's not any training programmes out there to learn that and learn from people.

In order for her to overcome these barriers she had to take a step back in her career and decided to become a runner or assistant again (which involved taking a pay cut) so she could learn from someone in longform specifically. I asked Participant 1 whether they felt that if a scheme had existed where they could shadow a Re-Recording Mixer on a project for a certain amount of time, before taking on a project with their supervision and support, that would have progress quicker? She said:

> Yes it would be a really good way of getting to understand their workflow and not second guessing the way they might want things. You learn on the job, you learn from practically

doing it not reading it from a book.

Participant 2 was a male in his 40s from an ethnic minority background and had to take a similar approach in taking a career step back in order to progress. This participant had achieved a successful career in his home country in the film and TV industry (in a non-sound role) he successfully transitioned into the same role in the UK film and TV industry. They then decided to retrain in sound at University and try to develop a career in post-production sound. Finding himself in debt after paying the university fees, he tried to find a staff position to give himself some financial stability, rather than working freelance. He started applying for jobs, emailing people and meeting people, but found he was turned down or not responded too.

When asked if he felt his name, which is not one that would be considered 'traditionally white British', may have played a part in not getting responses he replied "yes, the short answer is yes". Participant 2 did acknowledge that this could only be an assumption on his part, as this bias is something that's hard to prove. He had considered changing his name on his CV but felt he "wasn't prepared to do it" as "that is my identity". However, it is important to note that numerous studies have evidenced that name based racial discrimination is prevalent in the UK. A summary of the *Growth, Equal Opportunities, Migrations and Markets Report*, produced by Nuffield College, University of Oxford in 2019, highlighted that recruitment practices still discriminate against ethnic minorities. Researchers sent 3,200 applications to employers, these applications were identical in terms of skills and experience, but researchers varied the ethnic background of these fictional candidates. The report concluded that:

> On average, nearly one in four applicants from the majority group (24%) received a positive response (i.e. callback) from employers. The job search effort was less successful for ethnic minorities who, despite having identical resumes and cover letters, needed to send 60% more applications in order to receive as many callbacks as the majority group. The discrimination encountered by minorities does not vary by gender. (Di Stasio and Heath, 2019:1)

So, while Participant 2 may not be able to categorically say this was an issue for him in his career, there is certainly sufficient evidence to suggest that he may well be right.

One of the main barriers Participant 2 had experienced as a freelancer was "finding the work and getting people to trust you who don't know you" as "they want to work with people they are comfortable with, and that comfort comes from trust and that trust comes from familiarity and

similarity". This was a challenge also faced by Participant 3 with her noting "There's set people that people like to work with and if it's not broke, don't fix it, so they have their circle of people and the boys they go to the pub with and it's hard to break into that". She comments that this circle of hiring (a who-you-know approach) is preventing more diversity within post-production sound. She concluded by saying that "People need to try to hire people who don't look like them a bit more, and go a little further and reach a little farther then their circle of friends".

Ageism was another barrier that Participant 2 identified. Having decided to change career to try and enter post-production sound at a later stage in his life, he was fully prepared to start as a runner and work his way up in order to work on high-end drama. However, what he found was that "there was certain resentment towards older people". People working in the industry told him he shouldn't have to start from entry level positions (due to his age), but took the decision out of his hands by not considering him for these entry level roles, even though he was prepared to work his way up. He has felt his experiences over the last few years have made him reconsider working in this industry, evidencing that some of these barriers to progression can lead to people leaving the field entirely. This participants experience highlights the importance of ensuring that 'new entrant' schemes are also inclusive of people from a range of age groups.

Participant 2's reason for taking part in this research was because he was tired of his experiences in the industry and wanted to help create change. It is important to highlight however, that he was also aware that speaking out about topics such as this can have negative consequences for freelancers, stating that "I thought if I'm seen to be promoting this [research into diversity], I'm going to get less work, that was my fear but then I thought, what have I got to lose". Freelancers often have precarious roles in the industry, and are officially 'outside' of big production organisations. This means that highlighting issues freelancers face, and advocating for change as an individual, may be difficult.

Participant 3 was a white woman who has worked in sound post-production for over 20 years. She took a traditional route into her career, starting as a runner and progressing through the ranks by working in various companies. This was a successful strategy until redundancies had to be made from an organisations she worked for, and she was forced to go freelance 13 years ago. She identified this move from staff member in a company to freelancer as one of her key career barriers. While working in her last facility she was starting to supervise high-end dramas and was building up her CV in a management role. However, once she became a freelancer the building up of experience in drama became harder to do, and she ended up back working in the

factual side of the industry on more independent productions. High-end drama work, although she had some credits, became harder to get as a freelancer. She notes that contacts are a vital part of maintaining a career:

> Part of me knows that if I had of been there a couple of years longer and carried on working on those TV projects, that when I went freelance I would've had more TV contacts and it would have been easier to carry on working in TV.

She believes her gender also played a part. She remembers a sound supervisor, with whom she was trying to get freelance work, saying to her:

> Well I like you, we get on but the problem is what if you join our crew and what if two of you started dating and it ended badly, that would disrupt the entire balance of the crew and I'm not sure about taking on that kind of risk.

Following this exchange she did not receive any offers of work from this man, arguably due to his sexist (and heteronormative) assumptions about the role women play in a workplace (i.e. potential sexual partners rather than professionals with skills to offer). She recognizes, as with many male dominated professions, that it is difficult to tell most times if her gender prevents her getting work.

Participants 4 and 5 were both men from an ethnic minority background who, after careers in similar industries, decided to try working in post-production sound. Participant 4 started out by offering to work for little or no pay in order to learn from people and progressed from there. He said "It's so hard for anyone to get a break in sound, to get some diversity in [the industry] is going to be a challenge". He felt this was because 'They set the wall so high to become a sound editor and even when you make it over the wall, it doesn't become much better, to survive in it is a nightmare". He remembers when he started out, he had to work 3 simultaneous jobs outside the creative industries whilst trying to get into sound work. He could not get an opportunity or a foot in the door. In order to get any work he had to set up his own company, something Participant 5 also had to do. The issue of having to undertake unpaid work in order to access a creative career has been identified in many studies as one of the key ways that the creative industries maintain class, racial and gendered barriers (Brook, O'Brien, Taylor, 2018 and 2020). Not everyone is in a position to work for free or has the social capital in order to know who to approach for work experience. This is of particular concern when we consider how in the UK

Black and minority ethic people's identities may intersect with barriers related to class status too (Khan and Shaheen, 2017).

As a company owner, Participant 4 said he is drawn to hiring people from different backgrounds. Their work tends to be for European clients and having staff from different backgrounds and views works better for them and makes things more interesting. Participant 4 noted that "Diverse people are more interesting" and "It doesn't matter what kind of story you're trying to tell, there's some aspect of human struggle, most drama has a human story behind it and to tell a human story you need some kind of interesting background".

This participant in their role as a company owner, has set up and run an internal intern scheme, as they recognised that people need to leave the organisation with actual credits in order to progress. Not only does this organisation train people up in a particular skill, whether it's dialogue or foley sound, but they make sure that each intern leaves having worked on a show. He observed that if broadcasters or funding bodies encouraged positive discrimination when funding a show or film, it would help. He argued that if broadcasters or funders said:

> Your dialogue editor, sound supervisor, mixer, whatever, have to be a woman, black or ethnic minority, that would be money well spent. […] If the public funding bodies did some positive discrimination then the private funding bodies would be encouraged to do that too.

Participant 5, after working his way up in various facilities, he too decided to set up his own company after experiencing stereotyping from employers where he found himself being given only specific projects based on black or ethnic themes. He was tasked to work on a drama portraying Africa in an inaccurate way, which he felt was soul-destroying and ignorant and as such he decided he couldn't continue working at a facility. After over 20 years working in the industry he said he can recognise now when some conversations take place with clients about an upcoming project, that "they're trying something out, they're trying to prove something to themselves and they recognise a diversity issue and it can be a diversity hire". In this way a greater awareness of the need for a diverse workforce has impacted on hiring decisions (without the structural issues being addressed).

When hiring for his own teams, Participant 5 chooses to hire people not based on their ethnicity but who he considers 'like-minded people'. He has noticed that most of these people tend to be women, who are trying to break into an all-male industry (because he appreciates the difficulties

they face). However, he also acknowledged that there have been occasions when, while meeting with new clients about upcoming projects, he has felt it best to bring a white male colleague with him to meetings. He felt that this was necessary just for a white colleague to be present to reassure them, as he knows he will encounter suspicion and resistance, as he is "entering the lion's den […] they're going to look at me and think is this person fine, look me up and down 3 or 4 times and I know it's not a conscious decision on their part, it's just part of their programming". What was particularly notable about this participants response was the resignation they had to having to make these adjustments to their working practices to reassure industry figures about their ability to do the job. This participant felt their skills would be in doubt due to their ethnicity and the fact they were working as an independent organisation. This is unacceptable and needs to be challenged. It certainly should not be accepted as a norm.

Overall from the interview stage of this research it was clear that participants felt that gender and racial stereotyping has impacted negatively on their careers. In order to avoid working in organisations that are resistant to their inclusion several had founded their own organisations to gain more control over their careers. The necessity to work outside of big companies, whilst achieving more control for an individual may also present new barriers too. Working in a freelance capacity within the post-production sound industry can be additionally challenging without a significant amount of industry connections, or without an existing reputation for work in a specific genre. The opportunities to make new connections or transition into different genres will be hampered unless those connections and credits have already been achieved before starting out as a freelancer.

Analysis of the Continuing Drama Directors Scheme and sound scheme proposal

In May 2014 Directors UK, the professional association of over 7,000 director members working with the moving image in the UK, released a report entitled *Who's Calling the Shots* (2014). This report was widely reported in the media at the time, especially in industry circles (see The European Women's Audiovisual network website [2014] as an example). The report showed a worrying decrease in the number of women employed over a two-year period specifically in drama, entertainment and comedy. They found women directors were being gender stereotyped with the programmes they were offered to direct, no women had ever worked on many popular

dramas and entertainment shows and “fast track credits” which allow progression to high end productions were also, at the time, largely only available to men

The problems women directors were encountering in 2014 (evidenced in the Directors UK report), are frustratingly similar to the problems uncovered in this research relating to the careers of sound professionals. The 2014 reports concluded that:

1) “Decisions on hiring were influenced by the opinions (or perceived opinions) of commissioners, resulting in the hiring of the same directors.”

2) “There is no uniform or consistent monitoring of the freelance workforce throughout the industry. Beyond a trusted few, there is a lack of awareness of a large number of highly qualified and experienced women drama directors.”

3) “Gender stereotyping is prevalent when hiring in specific genres in drama, factual and comedy.”

As a result of the report BBC, Screen Skills and Directors UK setup the BBC Continuing Dramas Directors Scheme. The scheme involves shadowing opportunities that result in tangible credits in drama programming. The scheme is described on the Directors UK website works in the following way:

> As part of their training, each director will observe and participate in the entire production process of an episode of a show, from pre to post-production, and will ultimately take the helm for one full episode to gain a directing credit. The scheme also offers the possibility of employment after training, as there is an ambition for the series to hire directors within nine months for a full directorial commission if the director has shown that they can meet the standards required.

The scheme has been a proven success with Directors UK latest *Who’s Calling the Shots report* (2018), showing that the shows involved (e.g. *Casualty*, *Holby City* and *Doctors*), a notable increase in the number of episodes directed by women was evident (in the case of the examples mentioned a 14.8%, 14.4% and 16.2% increase respectively over a 3 year period). The report concluded that “running equality interventions on particular shows does produce positive results” but that “this intervention activity needs to be implemented across other programmes in other genres, to replicate progress towards greater gender equality.” (Directors UK, 2018).

As many of the barriers identified in the directing profession have also come to light in this study, I believe this model could work if replicated (in a particular way) across sound teams on high-end drama. As one of the interviewees of this research noted, credits are everything. In order to progress in high-end drama and more high-end work generally, you need to show you are capable of the job through having relevant credits on your CV. The only way to get the credits is by someone giving you an opportunity, but as this research has already outlined, there is often a reluctance from people in hiring positions to give new or 'unknown' people a chance. When budgets are tight and people are working under pressure, questions such as 'What if they don't understand the workflow?' or 'What if training them eats into already tight deadlines and budgets?' often become relevant to hiring decisions.

The risk needs to be eliminated for both the people in the hiring positions and those participating in the scheme. By following the example of the BBC Continuing Drama scheme I believe this could also work to diversify the post-production sound industry. Let's firstly consider how this scheme could work for those at mid-career stage. If someone has already been actively working in the post-production sound industry for a certain amount of time, but in another genre (e.g. factual) they would already have most of the transferable knowledge and skills relevant to high-end drama production. The main knowledge they would be lacking is an understanding of the workflow. If a post-production sound scheme followed the BBC director example, and enabled someone to shadow the specific role they are interested in for several episodes of a recurring drama (in the role of a dialogue editor for example) they would gain an understanding of the workflow. This new knowledge would be developed whilst they have someone there as a support system, someone to whom they can ask questions or request guidance from. Having completed this phase, and with their new understanding of the workflow, they would then be able to cut a full episode alone which they would receive a full credit for. I believe this approach would help in starting to address the issue of lack of diversity in post-production sound roles across the industry.

Part of eliminating the risk for both sides, the person hiring and the person participating, would be to make sure the role of the participant was funded through an independent source. That way the participant is not risking financial hardship whilst trying to progress their career (especially when the ability to participate in training without being paid immediately presents barriers to those without economic resources to fall back on). Also, the person hiring does not feel as if their budget is being negatively impacted in any way (which may put some off offering this opportunity). The participant would be supported by their allocated industry mentor who

would be showing them for the workflow. This would allow the production team to feel confident that the participant can achieve the standards required and expected of the show before they take control of an episode.

The same scheme could also be implemented for entry level positions ensuring that the industry has a more diverse workforce progressing for years to come. Currently on bigger budget feature films, the role of assistant still exists. It is where a lot of dialogue and sound effect editors learn their skills when starting out. This scheme could enable new entrants to watch and help more experienced editors, in a supported way, to build up their skills and experience. Currently the only way to learn at entry level is to start as a runner, if you can get one of the few positions, hope there are opportunities to progress within the company you are working for, and eventually become an assistant. The other way is to try and get one of the very limited amount of sound assistant roles on feature films which often still require you to have some experience. We need to create more opportunities at entry level.

Concluding thoughts:

Having undertaken this research it feels clear that the same barriers are being faced across the board in the creative industries. More training opportunities need to be provided to people at both entry and mid-career levels in order to ensure a more diverse workforce (and that the industry retains the skills of people who enter). The responsibility now needs to be placed on broadcasters too, to introduce diversity requirements on all commissions, not just for talent in front of the camera, but in relation to post-production as well.

We have to ask why emphasis in recent years has been put on diversity in front of the camera but post-production sound, which accounts for 50% of a TV show or film, and is an integral part of the storytelling process, is forgotten about? Recently AMPS (Association of Motion Picture Sound Engineers) here in the UK and MPSE (Motion Picture Sound Engineers) and CAS (Cinema Audio Society) in the US wrote an open letter to Hollywood seeking screen credit changes to reflect parity with other key creative professionals. Currently sound teams face being placed low down on the end credit roller while roles in picture related departments feature much higher. Productions such as *Killing Eve* (2018-) and documentary *100 Vaginas* (2019) are regularly lauded as having diverse teams in terms of gender and ethnicity, but on closer

inspection, that diversity is not achieved with post-production sound teams. Until vital steps are taken, and hiring practices move beyond simply 'who you know', it is unlikely the statistics about the participation of women, Black and minority ethnic sound professionals, or indeed the stories about barriers encountered highlighted in this report, will change anytime soon.

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