

The systems psychodynamics of gendered hiring: Personal anxieties and defensive organizational practices within the New Zealand film industry

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Abstract

This article uses systems psychodynamic concepts to explore the creation and reproduction of gendered inequality within the New Zealand film industry. The article focuses on the ways in which senior film production workers' anxieties about hiring, or working with, women influence the process of assembling project teams. It suggests that the process of choosing team members creates considerable anxiety for both senior film production workers with responsibility for hiring and lower-status team members who need to rely on them to create high-functioning teams. The industry ideal of the autonomous creative worker is implicitly gendered, conforming more closely to traditional concepts of the unencumbered male worker than traditional ideals of femininity and motherhood. The antithesis between these representations creates anxiety, raising unconscious fears that women as a category are less trustworthy workers. Consequently, discriminatory hiring practices that diminish these anxieties become collectively accepted as rational responses to organizational problems and embedded within the social system as collectively endorsed defences against anxiety. Given that project-based employment is temporary, this pattern of discrimination against women is regularly repeated and contributes to entrenched gender inequality.

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within the film industry. Qualitative data from interviews with 12 male and 13 female film production workers is presented to illustrate this analysis.

Keywords

film industry, gendered inequality regimes, hiring practices, powerholder anxieties, systems psychoanalysis

Introduction

Gender disparities within the film industry have been highlighted in a plethora of recent media articles and a growing body of academic research (Ellis-Petersen, 2014; Follows, 2014; Lauzen, 2014; Lutter, 2015; Pulver, 2014; Wreyford, 2015). Within the media, most attention has focused on female actors, highlighting the lower pay rates, rampant age discrimination and limited roles available (Williams, 2015). Academic research has focused on film crew as well as on actors, documenting female film production workers' generally subordinate position within the industry and providing clear evidence that female crew members are disadvantaged in most western film industries (French, 2014; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; Jones and Pringle, 2015; Wing-Fai et al., 2015). Nearly all of these articles, populist or academic, tend, either explicitly or implicitly, to frame male power-holders as the villains of the piece, suggesting that they are at best uninterested in women's disadvantage and at worst they intentionally perpetrate inequality in order to protect their own economic dominance within a highly competitive and precarious industry.

This article uses the theoretical framework supplied by the systems psychodynamic approach to organizational analysis to develop a more nuanced interpretation of the reasons for gender inequality within the film industry, emphasizing the role of emotion in the creation and maintenance of inequality regimes. It suggests that gender inequality within film crews results, in some part, from the actions that senior crew members, male or female, take to try to protect themselves from the anxieties created by precarious labour market conditions within the industry. This argument is illustrated with empirical data from a small-scale, qualitative study of gendered hiring practices among freelance film production workers in the New Zealand film industry. The research findings highlight the ways in which senior film production workers' attempts to defend against their own feelings of powerless and insecurity become enacted in their reluctance to hire women, thereby contributing to the creation and maintenance of gender inequality within the industry.

Emotions have long been studied as individual-level psychological phenomena affecting the subjective experiences of specific organizational members. However, researchers within the mainstream quantitative traditions of organizational psychology or organizational behaviour tend to separate the study of workers' emotional experiences from the analysis of organizational or institutional reproduction. Within mainstream organizational behaviour research, emotional experiences are generally conceptualized as an individual reaction to external organizational circumstances rather than as a means of

creating, maintaining or disrupting those conditions (Zeitsma and Toubiana, 2015). In contrast to this perspective, a growing number of organizational researchers argue for the central role of emotions in creating and maintaining organizational routines and structures (Ashkanasy et al., 2014; Creed et al., 2014; Fineman, 2003; Kenny and Fotaki, 2014; Voronov and Vince, 2012). This resurgent interest in emotion is often referred to as the 'affective turn' in social science theorizing (Clough and Halley, 2007). Organizational research using this perspective moves beyond simply analysing emotions as the individual's subjective response to external conditions, and conceptualizes emotions as intersubjective, collective phenomena that are shaped by, and recursively shape, the social context in which people are located. From this standpoint, the collective emotional experiences of organizational members can generate behaviours that help to reproduce organizational-level inequalities without people deliberately seeking to create specific organizational outcomes.

Psychoanalytic concepts are gaining increasing recognition within organizational research and have been used by a small, but growing, group of researchers as a theoretical framework for studying the role of emotions in institutional life (Arnaud, 2012; Diamond and Allcorn, 2003; Fotaki and Harding, 2013; Fraher, 2004; Petriglieri and Stein, 2012; Vachhani, 2012). Although the specifics of discrete schools of psychoanalytic thought differ considerably, all writers studying organizations from a psychoanalytic perspective suggest that organizations develop various collective mechanisms for dealing with the anxieties that the organizational system creates for its members. These collective mechanisms operate unconsciously as well as consciously and create a form of shared social unconscious that eventually becomes embedded in organizational norms, practices and structures (Armstrong, 2005; Armstrong and Rustin, 2014; Gabriel, 1999; Long, 2008).

Previous research into gender disparities within the film industry has neglected the role of emotion in the creation of inequality, despite considerable evidence suggesting that workers in the creative industries are strongly invested in their work (Lindgren et al., 2014; Rowlands and Handy, 2012). Where the relationship between emotions and discrimination has been explored, researchers have generally focused on documenting women's experiences of discrimination, rather than on understanding the ways other workers experience working with them (e.g. Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; Jones and Pringle, 2015). Other workers' feelings about working with women deserve greater investigation as they will influence the ways in which gendered inequality is enacted. This article draws on the systems psychodynamic approach developed at the Tavistock Institute, using it to interpret the ways in which senior film production workers' personal anxieties contributed to the creation and maintenance of gendered hiring practices within the New Zealand film industry.

Background literature

The background literature informing this research is organized into three sections. The first section presents statistical data on gender inequalities within the film industry and introduces Acker's (1992, 2006) concept of gendered inequality regimes. The second section outlines the systems psychodynamic ideas developed at the Tavistock Institute.

The third section discusses hiring practices within the film industry and introduces Mayer et al.'s (1995) model of trust and risk-taking to explain why the process of creating workgroups is highly anxiety-provoking for film production workers with hiring responsibilities. The literature review concludes by bringing the key ideas from the three different literatures together to show how a systems psychodynamic interpretation of the anxieties created by the requirement to trust can enrich our understanding of the organizational practices that create and maintain gendered hiring.

Gender inequalities within film production

Statistical data from a large number of surveys expose well-established gender inequalities within the film industry. Follows (2014) investigated the gender distribution of crew on the 2000 highest-grossing Hollywood films produced between 1994 and 2013. His statistics revealed that less than 23% of crew are female and that women tend to work in the conventionally female areas of costume, wardrobe, make-up and casting. Technical domains remain largely male, with 95% of camera crew and electricians being male. Senior creative functions are also male-dominated, with women making up fewer than 5% of directors, 11% of writers and 20% of producers. Comparable findings are regularly described in the annual Celluloid Ceiling report published by the Centre for the Study of Women in Television and Film (Lauzen, 2014) and by surveys of the Australian film industry (French, 2014). Census data from Skillset, the British sector skills council for the creative industries, reveals similar patterns and also highlights the greater problems women have combining film work with family life. Their research shows that women working in film and television are both less likely than men to have children and more likely to give up film work if they have family (Skillset, 2008, 2010).

Many academic writers argue that structural conditions within the film industry are a key cause of women's inequality as the highly competitive, project-based labour markets that dominate the industry disadvantage women (Bielby, 2009; Eikhof and Warhurst, 2013; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2015; Holgate and McKay, 2009; Perrons, 2003). Structuralist explanations usually draw, either explicitly or implicitly, on Acker's (1992, 2006) concept of 'inequality regimes'. Acker's conceptual framework has become one of the foremost ways of analysing gender discrimination within the workplace and has been used to investigate an extensive array of organizations (Proctor-Thomson, 2010). Acker (2006: 443) characterizes inequality regimes as 'loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender and racial inequalities within particular organisations'.

Acker contends that many organizational practices that are rationalized as ways of enabling efficient organizational functioning also have the less perceptible effect of favouring some organizational members and discriminating against others. She uses the concept of 'intersectionality' to highlight the ways in which different axes of inequality may interact to create distinct inequality regimes. For example, gender may intersect with other key characteristics such as age or parental status to create an organizational context in which diverse sets of women experience subtly different forms of discrimination within the same organizational context. Acker's approach to gender inequality

entails consideration of the structural features of organizations and institutions and also the various ideologies and practices that produce, justify and conceal inequalities.

Several writers using this theoretical approach suggest that the intensely individualistic ethos of the various creative industries also contributes to gendered inequality by directing people's attention towards the personal choices that they, and others, make and minimizing their appreciation of the ways in which structural conditions and collective practices influence choices (Banks and Milestone, 2011; Lee, 2012; Özbilgin and Tatli, 2011). A growing body of empirical research into the film industry suggests that individualistic discourses of self-actualization, egalitarianism and flexibility camouflage structural conditions, cultural norms and organizational practices that replicate conventional patterns of gender discrimination and disadvantage (Conor et al., 2015; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; McRobbie, 2009).

The fact that women find working conditions within the film industry problematic does not mean that men find the working environment easy. Many studies have highlighted film production workers' intensely ambivalent relationship with work, often contrasting the anxieties created by insecure, highly competitive labour market conditions with the emotional and intellectual rewards of collaborative creative work (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; McKinlay and Smith, 2009; Svenjenova, 2005; Townley et al., 2009). Labour market conditions within the film industry create a challenging and anxiety-provoking work environment for all freelance film production workers, whatever their gender or level within the industry. This article argues that collective psychosocial defences against these anxieties contribute to the creation and reproduction of gendered inequality within the film industry.

The systems psychodynamic approach to understanding anxiety in organizations

The systems psychodynamic approach to organizational analysis is strongly linked to the work of the Tavistock Consultancy Service and its predecessor organization the Tavistock Institute. A series of highly influential papers by the early Tavistock researchers Elliot Jaques (1955), Wilfred Bion (1961) and Isobel Menzies Lyth (1960) popularized the basic ideas underlying the approach, which has since been developed by writers like Armstrong (2004), Long (2013) and Stapley (2006). The approach has also influenced many psychodynamically oriented writers who are not directly associated with the Tavistock (e.g. Gabriel, 1999; Hirschhorn, 1988; Kets de Vries, 1991; Obholzer and Roberts, 1994).

The systems psychodynamic approach places 'the exploration of non-rational, unconscious, and systemic processes at the centre of its work' (Armstrong and Huffington, 2004: 3). It is based around three key conceptual pillars: (i) psychoanalytic ideas concerning the causes of, and defences against, anxiety, (ii) psychoanalytic ideas concerning the functioning of groups, and (iii) open systems ideas concerning the functioning of organizations.

Within psychoanalytic theory the concept of anxiety refers to a feeling of existential threat rather than to rational fears that trigger constructive action to diminish a problem. Melanie Klein (1946, 1959) suggested that there are two forms of existential anxiety: (i) persecutory anxiety, in which the person feels they are being attacked and fears

annihilation or rejection by others, and (ii) depressive anxiety, which is a less primitive and more complex form of anxiety in which the person has various conflicting thoughts and emotions such as guilt for actions by which they may have harmed another, an urge to make amends and fear of reprisals. Both types of anxiety are unconsciously defended against using mechanisms such as repression (blocking conscious acknowledgment of painful or frightening thoughts and feelings), splitting (disconnecting contradictory thoughts and feelings and either repressing some and acknowledging others or apportioning them to different groups in order to avoid conscious acknowledgement of contradictions) and projection (attributing unwanted personal characteristics or feelings to other individuals or categories of people rather than accepting them as less than perfect aspects of the self).

Bion (1961) extended Klein's theories to the analysis of group functioning, suggesting that groups utilize various collective defence mechanisms to deal with anxiety. Bion argued that groups operate at two levels simultaneously. At the conscious level, referred to as the 'work group mentality', the group is often rational and task-focused, whereas at the unconscious level, referred to as the 'basic assumption mentality', considerable effort may be needed to avoid conflict and reduce group members' anxieties. In consequence, various forms of 'groupthink' may emerge and the group's ability to carry out its primary task effectively may be compromised by unconscious attempts to deal with real or imaginary threats to the group's existence. Both individual and group-level defence mechanisms tend to function more effectively when they can be justified as an ostensibly rational response to some feature of the person or situation. For example, group members' unacknowledged fears that a workgroup will fail because group members are undercommitted may be projected onto female members using cultural stereotypes to rationalize the argument that women cannot commit fully to the group because of countervailing family commitments.

The final component of the systems psychodynamic approach is open systems theory. These ideas were introduced by Rice (1958) and developed by other early researchers like Jaques (1955), Menzies Lyth (1989, 1992) and Trist (Trist and Murray, 1990). The open systems element of the systems psychodynamic approach is essentially similar to conventional organizational theories (e.g. Tolbert and Hall, 2016) that emphasize the systemic aspects of organizational design such as task, structure, roles, boundaries, inputs and outputs, and so forth. Where systems psychoanalysis differs from conventional systems theories is in the linkages made between individual anxiety, group dynamics and organizational structure. In essence, systems psychodynamics suggests that a range of complex feedback loops exist between the psychological needs of members, the various workgroups that people belong to and the task and structural features of the organizational system. In consequence, organizational members unconsciously and collectively shape, and are shaped by, the organizational system to which they belong.

In summary, the systems psychodynamic approach emphasizes the importance of locating individual emotional experience within the wider psychosocial context of the workgroup, organization and external environment. The theory suggests that the psychodynamic mechanisms influencing individual thoughts, feelings and behaviour also operate collectively, thereby influencing organizational structures, decision-making and routines. Once defence mechanisms become communally endorsed they are generally

accepted as rational and socially appropriate responses to organizational issues. This creates considerable additional pressures towards conformity. Established organizational defence mechanisms therefore tend to develop their own momentum and to become entrenched within organizational life. This tendency is reinforced because most behaviour is 'over-determined'. In other words, emotions, thoughts and defensive routines usually have multiple causes, meet a range of needs and have multiple effects. In consequence, organizational defence mechanisms can be highly resistant to change, as the removal of one cause of anxiety or one set of behavioural triggers may still leave intact the other causes of that behaviour.

Systems boundaries, project team formation, swift trust and anxiety

Both mainstream organization theories (Tolbert and Hall, 2016) and systems psychodynamics conceptualizes systems boundaries as key sites where organizational problems may emerge (Diamond et al. 2004; Gould et al., 2006; Long, 2008). Systems boundaries are, essentially, zones where one part of the organization meets or connects with another part of the organization or with the external environment. Boundaries are also points of encounter where different parties meet, negotiate and interact. The conjunction of different parties, goals, structures and routines at boundary points creates a shifting and unstable nexus where organizational problems may coalesce, organizational anxieties become focused and collective defence mechanisms are enacted. The personal anxieties of organizational members are therefore likely to have especially large organizational effects if they influence their behaviour at these junctures.

Many researchers have observed that the process of assembling project teams functions as a key systems boundary within the film industry (Bechky, 2006; Ebberts and Wijnberg, 2009; Murray and Gollmitzer, 2012). The gendered hiring patterns associated with team formation also ensure that this boundary functions as a key site limiting women's participation in the industry (Antcliff et al., 2007; Blair, 2001; Daskalaki, 2010; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2015). A considerable body of evidence suggests that project leaders, who are predominately white, middle class and male, tend to recruit similar people into their teams. Various explanations for this propensity have been advanced, ranging from power holders' inclination to use similarity to themselves as a proxy for suitability, to women's lack of appropriate social capital and poorer calibre work networks (Antcliff, 2005; Bielby, 2009; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; Randle et al., 2015).

Summarized briefly, the film industry relies on an informal system of hiring in which key individuals are given personal responsibility for establishing project teams composed of appropriately skilled freelancers who collaborate on projects for short-lived but intense periods of work. From an economic perspective this system is well-matched with the uncertainties of film-making because it facilitates swift hiring and ensures that the risks of precarious employment are carried by the labour force. It does, however, place a large burden of responsibility onto the person charged with assembling the project team, as a dysfunctional team may damage not only the actual project but also their own future employment prospects and reputation and the career prospects and reputations of other team members (Eikhof and Warhurst, 2013). The hiring system therefore has the potential to create considerable anxiety for project leaders. It also generates anxiety in

lower-status workers, who not only have to repeatedly seek short-term contracts but also have to rely on the project leader to assemble a high-functioning team (Daskalaki, 2010).

The creation of well-functioning project teams is heavily dependent on high levels of trust between team members (Antcliff et al., 2007; Blair, 2003; Coe, 2000). Mayer et al.'s (1995) highly influential model of trust and risk-taking in organizations argues that the concept of trust involves both vulnerability and assessment of risks. Trusting others creates vulnerability as it requires relinquishing control and becoming at risk from the consequences of their actions. This means that trustworthiness needs to be assessed before trust is bestowed. Mayer et al. (1995) suggest that the three key criteria used to assess the trustworthiness of others are their perceived ability, benevolence and integrity. Ability refers to the skills and resources that a person has in relation to a particular activity, benevolence to the other person's concern for the trustor's best interests, and integrity, the extent to which the other can be relied upon to act appropriately. Mayer et al.'s (1995) model was applied to the film industry by Meyerson et al. (2006), who used the concept of 'swift trust' to describe the ways in which the members of temporary workgroups can quickly come to understand and rely on each other. This concept was further elaborated by Bechky (2006), who linked the operation of swift trust within the film industry with the establishment of clear chains of command and clearly understood role requirements that helped remove risk and ambiguity. Meyerson et al. (2006) and Bechky (2006) both emphasize the social processes involved in creating and maintaining trust relationships, arguing that trust involves the ongoing construction of mutual expectations and practices that are shaped by the specific organizational context within which they occur. This position is congruent with a systems psychodynamic framework that emphasizes the importance of collective organizational practices as defences against anxiety.

Developing a 'working hypothesis'

The systems psychodynamic approach uses the concept of the 'working hypothesis' (Reed and Bazalgette, 2006) to describe speculative analyses of organizational dynamics that are intended to enhance our understanding of complex situations rather than provide definitive explanations. The synthesis of ideas that concludes this review reflects that epistemological position.

Working from a systems psychodynamic theoretical perspective we suggest that the need for high levels of trust during the set-up phase of project teams creates anxiety, resulting in the development of various socially structured defence mechanisms that help both project leaders and team members to manage their anxieties in an organizationally acceptable manner. Gendered hiring preferences that discriminate against women appear to be one such mechanism. The question that then arises is why the prospect of employing women raises greater anxiety than the prospect of employing men.

A psychodynamic perspective suggests that the actions of other organizational members will inevitably be interpreted through the gaze of the perceiver rather than simply standing as sets of objective behaviours. The ways in which women conform to, or transgress, the perceiver's internal representation of both the ideal worker and the ideal woman are therefore crucial to understanding the ways in which women are understood

and reacted to within the industry. Working from within a sociological framework, Banks and Milestone (2011) argue that the industry 'ideal' of the creative worker is that of the single individual, unconstrained by other commitments and fully dedicated to their craft. From a psychoanalytic perspective, this industry ideal will influence film workers' conscious and unconscious evaluations of both their own and other people's behaviour. The potential for a wide range of emotional responses to a highly demanding industry ideal is therefore possible.

Feminist writers have long argued that the image of the 'autonomous worker' is more compatible with conventional representations of masculinity than with conventional representations of femininity (Kelan, 2009; Spade and Valentine, 2010). Traditional models of fatherhood emphasize men's public roles as workers and financial providers, enabling them to prioritize work commitments without compromising their identities and role obligations as fathers. Child-free male workers and male workers with children both conform relatively easily to the film industry ideal of the 'autonomous worker'. In contrast, normative expectations of motherhood emphasize women's nurturing role within the family. Women with children therefore deviate more from the abstraction of the ideal worker than do males with offspring, whereas child-free women deviate more from traditional representations of femininity.

From a psychoanalytic perspective this deviation from either organizational norms concerning the fully committed worker, or societal norms concerning female roles, may raise unconscious fears that women will be less trustworthy than men. This is potentially damaging to the team, adversely affecting both the ability to carry out primary work-related tasks and social relationships between group members. The prospect of employing or working with women may therefore create considerable anxiety in team members. This article suggests that these personal anxieties, which play out against a backdrop of more generalized anxiety created by precarious employment conditions, contribute to the institutionalization of risk-averse hiring practices that help maintain gender inequality within film production.

Research design

Background to this study

The origins of this research lie within a previous study that investigated New Zealand film production workers' subjective experiences of project-based labour (Rowlands and Handy, 2012). That research used qualitative interviews with 21 freelance film production workers to explore the ways in which the emotional rewards of creative employment interacted with the anxieties of repeated unemployment to create an addictive psychosocial dynamic that repeatedly drew workers back into the industry.

As part of that research, participants were asked about gender differences within the industry and how they felt about working with women. Three key themes from participants' answers struck us with particular force: (i) the intense anxiety that all participants with hiring responsibilities expressed about this process; (ii) the unease that many respondents, both males and females, expressed about hiring or working with women; and (iii) the highly conventional views concerning gender roles that many respondents

Table 1. Participant details.

Gender	Age range	Number of respondents	Marital status	Years in industry	Work areas
Male = 12	25–39	4	3 partnered	7–17 years	Model-making, special effects, technical, art dept, dialogue coach, design engineer, assistant director, director
			1 separated	3 continuing in industry	
	40–49	4	2 with children	1 left industry	
			3 partnered	7–25 years	
	50+	4	1 single	3 continuing in industry	
			3 with children	1 left industry	
Female = 13	25–39	5	3 partnered	11–35 years	Make-up, sculptor, designer, producer, casting supervisor, production manager, transport co-ordinator
			1 separated	3 continuing in industry	
	40–49	8	3 with children	1 left industry	
			5 partnered	3–17 years	
	50+	0	1 with children	4 continuing in industry	
				1 left industry	

espoused. These issues have not been fully addressed in previous work into gender inequality within the film industry, and cannot be adequately theorized using structural explanations that overlook the role of emotion in creating discriminatory organizational practices.

In order to explore the relationship between anxiety and discriminatory hiring practices more fully, four additional interviews were carried out. These interviews focused primarily on gender and were designed to clarify issues that had emerged during the earlier interviews.

Participants

This study is based on a total of 25 interviews (see Table 1). Twenty-one interviews (11 males and 10 females) were carried out as part of the original, more general, study of film production workers’ subjective experiences of project-based labour. These interviews covered diverse topics including entry into the industry, working conditions, cultural norms, hiring practices, networking and social relationships, intrinsic rewards of film-making, work–life balance, training and career development, gender issues and exit from the industry. The four additional interviews (one male and three females) took place after the first set of interviews had been transcribed. These interviews concentrated specifically on gender and were designed to clarify themes that had emerged during the earlier interviews. Topics discussed included working conditions and parenting, work–life balance, childcare and industry attitudes towards hiring and working with women.

Participants were interviewed individually in non-work locations. Interviews lasted over an hour, with several exceeding two hours. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. All participants had extensive experience of working in project teams. Seven male participants and four female participants also had experience leading, or hiring, project teams. The mix of skills and seniority within the participant group meant that

issues associated with gendered hiring were explored from the perspectives of both team leaders and team members.

Research setting: The New Zealand film industry

The research investigated the experiences of film production workers based in Wellington, New Zealand's capital city. The New Zealand film industry is small by world standards and heavily reliant on overseas funding. The availability of work fluctuates considerably and the industry can move rapidly from an environment where experienced freelancers find work reasonably easy to obtain to one where workers are competing for scarce employment. The industry is non-unionized, with fierce opposition to unionization coming from international film studios, local film producers and the New Zealand government. The Employment Relations (Film Production Work) Amendment Bill, which became law in 2010, means that all New Zealand film workers are classified as self-employed contractors rather than employees and are denied traditional employee entitlements such as holiday and sick pay, parental leave, workplace superannuation and the right to bargain collectively (Wynn, 2015).

The industry is dominated by a small number of people with well-known credentials and the capacity to gain international funding. The small size of the industry ensures that social networks and 'latent organisations' (Bechky, 2006; Starkey et al., 2000) within the industry are interwoven and limited in number. The preservation of strong networks and a good professional reputation is therefore crucial to obtaining regular employment (Jones and Pringle, 2015).

Although women comprise around 40% of New Zealand's freelance film production workers, they have made limited inroads into technical areas such as sound, lighting and camera or post-production engineering, and are predominately employed in traditionally female occupations such as hair, make-up and administration (Statistics New Zealand, 2012). Although women occupy some quite powerful administrative and creative positions within the industry, the higher-level positions remain male-dominated.

Although the New Zealand film industry differs from that of other countries in terms of its size and the specifics of New Zealand employment law, the core model of insecure, project-based labour is very similar to the model of film production within most western countries. The anxieties experienced by participants in this study are therefore relevant to understanding gender inequities within other film industries.

Interview analysis

The decision to examine the interviews from a systems psychodynamic perspective was taken after the data from all participants were collected. This theoretical framework was adopted because it seemed to offer a way of understanding the individual and collective anxieties that had emerged so strongly in our initial readings of the interview transcripts.

The systems psychodynamic approach is congruent with the hermeneutic tradition in social science research, which emphasizes emergent understanding rather than proof. Schwandt (1996, 1999) has argued strongly that the key purpose of interpretive social

science research is to develop explanatory frameworks that help make sense of our social world. Writing from a psychodynamic perspective, Kets de Vries and Miller (1987: 238) make a similar argument, suggesting that the interpretation of organizational issues involves 'a process of discovery rather than a single stab at explanation ... Interpretation is a dynamic, iterative and interactive phenomenon'. The use of a systems psychodynamic interpretive model within this research reflects this search for understanding, resulting from our attempts to find a framework that reconciled the structural inequities identified in previous gender research into the film industry with the very personal anxieties raised by our participants.

Once the decision to consider the transcripts from a systems psychodynamic perspective had been taken, the entire data set of 25 interviews was re-examined. A three-stage analysis of the data was carried out. In the first stage, each transcript was examined individually to identify key work and gender-related anxieties and issues for that participant. In the second stage, the key issues raised by each participant were compared and contrasted with key themes from other participants to identify commonalities or discrepancies between accounts. Finally, the emergent themes from the entire data set were examined to understand the ways in which socially enacted defences against anxiety influenced hiring patterns.

The ways in which a psychodynamic interpretation can complement more sociological analyses of inequality can be illustrated by a small segment from an interview with a male participant. This respondent had won several industry awards and was a well-respected and experienced project leader. He justified his reluctance to employ women by commenting:

I've had situations where there's been a woman and she's got young children and its 'can I come in at eight rather than seven because I've got to take the child to ...' and you say 'fine as long as it doesn't interfere with your work'. But sometimes you have to say 'look sort it or I'll have to let you go and get someone who can be here'. Being a mother usually means more than being a father so it creates more problems because who's the right person to take that child to the doctor – it's not the men.

Considered from a structural perspective, these comments reflect quite rational concerns that the highly pressured environment of film work is frequently incompatible with parenting and that workers with family responsibilities may be unable to fully commit themselves to demanding and inflexible film schedules. The emphasis on female workers' greater family responsibilities highlights gendered cultural norms concerning a woman's role as the primary caregiver. From a structural perspective, this quote therefore suggests that gendered inequality in hiring results from work conditions and normative ideologies that consistently disadvantage female film workers.

Although we absolutely agree that the structure and culture of film production is inimical to family life, a psychodynamic analysis raises additional issues and helps develop a more nuanced interpretation of the participant's position. Considered at the individual level, these comments could be interpreted as justification of the respondent's own decision to prioritize work over fatherhood and be linked to a range of issues including the respondent's relationship with his own partner and children, his own

admitted difficulties balancing work and family life, or insecurities concerning his own parenting abilities. The quote also reveals the participant's fears of being let down by group members and suggests anxiety over his responsibility for task performance and group functioning.

While all such issues would need further exploration within an individual analysis, they are only relevant as research findings if similar patterns occur in other interviews and influence hiring patterns within the industry. The issues raised in this excerpt were therefore compared to other participants' views. This second level of data analysis revealed additional anxieties, among them the unforeseen possibility that some project leaders may discriminate against women with children because they feel guilty about employing them on difficult conditions. An art department head in his thirties with a non-working partner and two young children of his own explained:

I've had people who juggle young children – single mothers working over 50 hours a week and barely keeping their head above water. It's horrendous ... but I can't offer better conditions because that's the way this industry works.

Although superficially different, this quote also implies that women have more responsibility for direct child-rearing than men and helps validate a very traditional division of labour within the respondent's own family.

To summarize, this second level of data analysis suggested that many participants felt conflicted about the difficulties of successfully combining their careers with family responsibilities. From a systems psychodynamic perspective the prospect of hiring women with children may therefore raise a variety of emotional issues ranging from quite rational fears that others will also be unable to balance work and family responsibilities to guilt at hiring women on conditions which are detrimental to family relationships or anxieties about their own lives.

The final level of analysis then looked at the ways in which these anxieties were guarded against by the development of socially constructed defence mechanisms that reduced anxiety through gendered hiring practices.

Findings

The findings are organized into three sections. The first section draws on systems psychodynamic ideas concerning group functioning to suggest that team leaders experience anxiety because they are personally responsible for ensuring that hiring decisions enable both the overt 'task-related' and underlying 'basic-assumption-related' aspects of group functioning to be met. The second section examines the ways in which the potential trustworthiness of prospective team members is assessed. This section describes the ways in which Mayer et al.'s (1995) concepts of ability, benevolence and integrity were interpreted by participants and shows how gender stereotypes helped frame women as less trustworthy, and therefore more anxiety-provoking, team members. The final section looks at the ways in which risk-averse hiring strategies that perpetuated discrimination become accepted as collective defences against anxiety.

Workgroup psychodynamics, responsibility and intuition

The literature section of this article noted that the film industry utilizes a hiring system in which project leaders are given personal responsibility for bringing together temporary workgroups that are expected to function at a high level of task competence from their inception. A large body of literature shows that this employment structure creates considerable anxiety for film workers (Blair, 2001; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2001; O'Brien, 2014). A systems psychodynamic theoretical framework suggests that these anxieties will contribute to shaping the 'basic assumption mentality' of project groups in ways that help protect members from the fears created by this organizational context.

Many writers have commented on the intensely social nature of film work and on the emotional rewards workers experience from collective creative labour within a well-functioning work group (Lee, 2012). From a systems psychodynamic perspective the 'basic assumption mentality' of many such groups seems to correspond closely to Bion's (1961) observation that an implicit assumption of many groups is that the group, through its leader, functions to care for group members and protect them from the difficulties of the task or environment. This assumption obviously helps film workers to coalesce into a supportive and functional work group and acts as a socially structured collective defence against the more competitive and precarious elements of their work environment. It also creates an implicit expectation that project leaders will choose team members who can meet both the task-related needs of the group and its basic assumption needs for high commitment and support within the group. A female production supervisor with over 15 years of experience illustrated the way in which this basic assumption mentality influenced hiring when she explained:

I've reached the middle level now – so I see how it works both ways. I look after my boss because he's given me a chance and I employ people I know will look after me and after each other because I've given them a chance. It's the only way to survive – everyone has to pitch in and watch out for each other. You see it in all departments.

The image of highly cohesive workgroups doing whatever was necessary to support each other was described, in one way or another, by all participants, and seems to function as the core basic assumption mentality throughout the industry. This creates two sets of demands for film workers with hiring responsibilities as they need to engage people who are technically competent and who can be trusted to commit fully to the group throughout its lifespan. The individualistic and informal hiring procedures within the industry heighten group leaders' sense of personal responsibility for creating cohesive teams, as they had no structural mechanisms for redirecting or sharing accountability.

One strategy that project leaders applied to try to contain these anxieties was to affirm their ability to judge character accurately. This skill was regarded by all participants as essential to success within the film industry and as an aptitude that talented individuals honed with experience. Several more senior participants described their own proficiency in this area, highlighting their ability to make accurate judgements on relatively minimal

information. This ability formed an essential part of their self-image as successful film workers and was often discussed with considerable pride. The production supervisor cited in the previous quote explained: 'You have to be quite perceptive – I have an instinctive like or dislike switch. By the time a meeting's over I'll know if someone is right or wrong for the group'.

Lower-level team members also made swift assessments of new hires. A male technician in his late twenties observed that: 'I think you can tell on their first day if someone's the right choice – if they can't fit in or work things out right from the start then usually they're not going to make it'. Team members' rapid judgements of unknown co-workers and their clear expectation that good project leaders would make apposite choices heightened the feelings of responsibility and vulnerability that project leaders experienced during the hiring process. Conceptualizing themselves as good instinctive judges of character helped project leaders deal with these insecurities by legitimating their actions and providing a rationale for backing their own decisions. However, from a psychodynamic perspective, it also created new anxieties as failures became evidence of a fundamental inability to form the accurate character judgements that workers saw as essential to survival within the industry. The ability to trust oneself, as well as the ability to trust others, was vulnerable to being damaged by errors of judgement. One way of dealing with these anxieties was by adopting highly risk-averse hiring. As the next section will show, this strategy tended to create distinctly gendered hiring preferences where women were disadvantaged because they were evaluated as more risky hires, sometimes because they lacked appropriate experience, but more often because of a perceived risk that they might not relate appropriately to the work group.

Competence, reliability and team fit

All participants with experience of engaging staff used the terms competence, reliability and team fit to describe the core requirements of a successful project team. These expressions were also used by several lower-level participants to describe the key attributes of desired co-workers. Participants' terms map reasonably well onto Mayer et al.'s (1995) concepts of ability, benevolence and integrity and are also congruent with systems psychodynamic concepts concerning the 'workgroup mentality' and 'basic assumption mentality' modes of group functioning. Conceptually, competence is virtually identical to Mayer et al.'s (1995) idea of ability. Competence is also a core requirement of successful task-related performance within workgroups. The terms 'reliability' and 'team fit' both describe personal characteristics which involve a mixture of Mayer's concepts of benevolence and integrity. These personal attributes are also essential emotional constituents within workgroups with a basic assumption mentality that envisages the group as cohesive and caring.

On the surface the three criteria described by participants are logical and reasonable requirements for trusting and choosing team members. However, the ways in which these standards were enacted involved the use of gendered selection criteria that discriminated against women but helped project leaders to manage their decision-making anxieties.

Competence was, in many ways, the most easily assessed of the three core attributes. No participants argued that women were less competent, though several people commented on the fairly strict gender divisions in the types of jobs men and women fill within the film industry, implying that women can fulfil a smaller range of jobs before being seen as risky hires. A female production manager with over 20 years of experience explained:

I think it's harder for women to work in some areas of the industry. There are some very brave women who have broken into the traditional male areas of camera and lighting and grip – but technical areas do tend to be quite male-dominated. But other departments are pretty equally sprinkled with male and female. A lot of the roles are quite organizational and women are recognized as being good at those types of jobs.

Several participants also noted that women tended to have less varied experiences than men and were therefore often perceived as a riskier choice even if their level of competence was probably on a par with that of male job applicants. A male respondent explained:

I think women are less inclined to take risks with their careers – men are more likely to say 'I'll give it a go' and try something they haven't done before. Whereas women are more likely to stick to areas they know. So if I'm looking at someone who hasn't got quite the right experience I would look to see what else they had done – so yeah, people have to show you they can learn quickly.

A slightly different perspective was given by a female producer, who suggested that women avoid risk-taking in an effort to demonstrate their competence:

Women have to prove themselves more than men – men are seen as more authoritative, more capable physically – so they can take more risks. Women need to show they are good at what they do – so they might be a bit more inclined to play safe.

O'Mahony and Bechky (2006) have discussed the significance of stretchwork in advancing film production workers' careers. They define stretchwork as work that fits with an individual's previous work experience but introduces new elements that expand the person's skill set. Stretchwork is important, partly because it gives workers new skills but also because it signals that the person is capable of learning new skills. It does, however, carry risks for both the hirer and hired, as the worker may fail to perform successfully in the new context. Our participants' remarks suggest that women take less stretchwork risks than men because they are more worried about the consequences of failure. Their lack of varied experience then creates anxiety in those looking to hire, as it means they are faced with employing someone who may not have the correct skill set and has not demonstrated the ability to learn quickly. The differing anxiety reduction strategies of the two groups are therefore essentially irreconcilable.

Competence was not the only criterion used to select team members, and participants' strongest anxieties about trusting and hiring women focused on the issues of reliability and team fit, both of which are essential components of a basic assumption mentality that

emphasizes collective commitment to the group above all else. Acker's (2006, 2009) concept of intersectionality is relevant here, as women with children were described by several participants as potentially less reliable than other workers, while childfree women were described by some male respondents as having difficulties working with colleagues.

A childfree producer in her early forties described the highly stereotypical views of women in the industry by explaining:

There are three genders in this industry: men, women without children, and women with children. A male without children and a male with children and a female who is definitely without children are probably equivalent. A female with children is different and is definitely seen as more of a risk.

One consequence of this perception was a marked unwillingness, evinced by both male and female respondents, to hire women with children. A senior producer, who had reluctantly left the industry 18 months earlier when pregnant with her first child, explained:

Female workers with children are potentially less reliable – that's the reality. I think most employers – having been in that position myself – are likely to employ the male because you've cut a high risk factor out. When I'm thinking of people for roles I'll say 'well they've got the skills for this role but they've got children and their husband's doing this so they're not workable'. You've got to remember it's your reputation on the line as well as theirs.

Many writers have observed that working conditions within the film industry are incompatible with family responsibilities (Antcliff, 2005; Banks and Milestone, 2011; French, 2014). The anxieties that senior film production workers have concerning the effects of family duties on workers' ability to commit fully to the intense demands of film work are therefore warranted given the conditions within the industry. However, family responsibilities need not be gendered, and these concerns should, logically, be applied equally to all workers with dependent children rather than simply applying to women. Sociological interpretations of this inconsistency tend to highlight the ways in which traditional societal norms around parenting emphasize men's public role as workers and financial providers and women's more private responsibilities as carers (Kelan, 2009). From a psychodynamic perspective, women with children therefore either become potentially unreliable workers because of their commitment to motherhood or unreliable mothers because of their commitment to work. Both options are anxiety-provoking as both frame women with children as potentially less trustworthy than other workers. One obvious, and organizationally acceptable, strategy for containing these anxieties is to hire male workers.

Team fit was the third key criterion which staff looked for when assembling project teams. This criterion is crucial to team dynamics and was often seen as more important than actual skill levels when it came to assembling a team. A male creative department head explained: 'People need to be compatible – quite often you don't need the best individual – you need people who are good at their job and who can work with each other easily. That way it's good for everyone's career'.

Although childfree women were conceptualized as both competent and reliable by all respondents, they were also described as difficult to work with by several male respondents. A male director in his late forties commented:

Women, for some reason, seem more prone to becoming film widows, where their whole life becomes the job. They kind of martyr themselves to the cause ... They become difficult to work with because it's not actually about the job; it's about their emotional state.

Similar comments were made by several female respondents, although they tended to focus more on the ways in which conditions within the industry influenced women's behaviour. Unlike male respondents, none of whom perceived themselves as needing to choose between family and career, several female respondents argued that the only way women could succeed in film production was by remaining childfree and concentrating totally on work. Although this dedication could lead to career success, it inevitably created its own anxieties as it necessitated focusing on one, highly precarious, source of gratification and security. In order to contain this anxiety, successful women often redoubled their commitment to the industry, striving ever harder to achieve the industry ideal of the autonomous worker.

A female production manager in her mid-thirties explained the costs of her decision to focus on her career by saying:

In terms of my relationship, I've chosen a partner who doesn't really care if I'm there or not. He just accepts that I'm workaholic. But it has definitely impacted on my decision that I won't have children, I just won't do it. I mean even having a dog I'd feel so guilty because I come home so late ... so children would be much worse. Either that or I'd just leave the industry.

This quote raises a number of issues, one key one being that childfree women may find it difficult to work with women with children because of their own unresolved dilemmas concerning career and motherhood. This quote can also be linked back to the comments made by the male art department head cited earlier that suggested that other workers may feel uncomfortable seeing women struggle to balance the competing demands of film work and parenting. The concerns evoked by this quote could also impact negatively on workgroup dynamics, creating considerable tensions around the basic assumption that group members should constitute a united collective against a hostile environment.

The determination and commitment of successful childfree women, while often admired by other workers, also constituted a very real threat to their own livelihoods. In a project-based organizational context, heavily dependent on collective activities, the intense work ethic of the exceptionally dedicated worker inevitably increases pressure on other team members, heightening productivity requirements within an already demanding situation. The zeal of the truly dedicated worker may also make other workers feel uneasy about their own level of allegiance to the industry, possibly raising private anxieties that they secretly lack the commitment of the ideal film worker. From a systems psychodynamic perspective, the intensely work-focused dedication of the highly committed worker may indeed make them seem problematic to other team members,

however reasonable the person's actual behaviour. The anxieties that team members have concerning their own careers may then be projected onto them, eventually creating a shared organizational belief that the dedicated and childfree female worker has difficulty fitting into work teams. This conviction then supports gendered hiring by providing a quasi-rational justification for rejecting childfree women on the grounds that they may hamper team functioning.

The accuracy or falsity of participants' allegations is, from a systems psychodynamic perspective, less relevant than the development of shared beliefs that women may be more problematic hires. As the quotes above show, women can be framed as less trustworthy than men because they lack suitable experience, because they have children and are potentially unreliable, or because they are childfree and possibly difficult to work with. Collectively, these perceptions encompass a wide swath of women and help rationalize inequitable hiring practices that discriminate against women.

Socialization and collective defence mechanisms

Many researchers have noted that the film industry relies heavily on informal methods of socialization through experiential learning (Blair, 2003; McKinlay and Smith, 2009). Within this research all participants talked of key early socialization experiences in which they observed, or were advised by, more experienced workers. One key piece of advice that most participants said they had received, and would give to others, concerned the merits of trying to develop a core group of colleagues who they felt comfortable working with.

A male technical department head in his forties explained:

I tell people learning the job – don't choose people you don't fit with. Find people you know are good at their work and if you get on stick with them – and if you get a sense they're not right don't use them – because if it doesn't work out it's damaging your career.

A similar point of view was put forward by a female film production supervisor who explained a well-known director's propensity for reassembling the same teams by saying:

He always wants people around him who he has worked with before. It's about trusting them. He knows those people understand what he wants and he's not prepared to try other people. You can see why. It's a risk and he doesn't want to take it.

As these quotes show, risk-avoidant hiring strategies were not simply individual tactics for containing anxiety, but they were also socially accepted ways of behaving that were seen by many workers as appropriate ways of creating high-functioning project teams. Senior production workers therefore encountered considerable social pressures to adopt quite conservative, risk-avoidant, hiring strategies when assembling project teams. These strategies had the effect of privileging male workers because they were regarded as safer hires and marginalizing women because they were collectively experienced as more uncertain hiring choices. The gendered inequality regimes described by so many critics

of the film industry therefore resulted, in some part, from collective defences against the anxieties created by a highly precarious, project-based system of labour.

Discussion

This research investigated gendered hiring practices within the New Zealand film industry using the systems psychodynamic theoretical framework developed at the Tavistock Institute. We suggest that this approach complements and extends the insights provided by previous research into gender inequality within the film industry by drawing attention to the complex web of connections linking the emotional, interpersonal and structural aspects of gendered inequality within project-based creative labour. This enables attention to be focused on the ways in which adverse structural conditions within the film industry impinge on all workers, creating problems and inequalities that affect men and women in diverse ways. The problems women face are inextricably linked to the difficulties of other workers and cannot be fully understood without identifying the dilemmas and insecurities experienced by those in positions of power within the industry.

Four themes raised by a systems psychodynamic analysis seem particularly important contributions to the ongoing debate on gendered hiring within film production. Firstly, a systems psychodynamic analysis illustrates the importance of examining the feelings and actions of different sets of participants within project teams. Secondly, this perspective underscores the relational and limited nature of team leaders' power within the industry. Thirdly, this approach draws attention to the ways in which team members' behaviour is governed by a complex mix of conscious and unacknowledged motives and anxieties. Finally, this perspective draws attention to the collective dimensions of organizational life, revealing the ways in which group dynamics and social defence mechanisms contribute to the creation and maintenance of discriminatory hiring practices within the industry. The importance of each of these issues for understanding gendered hiring practices will be discussed in more detail in the next paragraphs.

The literature review section of this article noted that most previous research into gender inequality within film crews has either provided statistical evidence of inequality or documented women's subjective experiences of inequity. The range of participants investigated in previous research is therefore slightly limited, with male film production workers' experiences of hiring or working with women and more senior females' experiences of hiring crew both being under-researched. One consequence of this is that male powerholders in particular tend to be typified as relatively indifferent to the problems women experience. In contrast to most extant research, this study investigated male and female film production workers' experiences of the hiring process, focusing on both senior film workers with hiring responsibilities and lower-level team members seeking employment. Exploring the emotions and actions of these interlinked groups from a systems psychodynamic perspective revealed that participants' position within the organization had a strong influence on their behaviour. Men and women with hiring prerogatives experienced considerable anxiety about their responsibilities and utilized a range of informal selection criteria to try to reduce the insecurities associated with this task. Both male and female team leaders' insecurities tended to become more intense when they considered hiring women, contributing to their reluctance to hire them. From a systems

psychodynamic perspective, discriminatory hiring practices can therefore be conceptualized as shaped, in some measure, by the efforts of both male and female project team leaders to reduce their own anxiety by choosing safe team members who best fit with the collectively endorsed criterion of trustworthiness.

Many organization theorists and sociologists have discussed the complex nature of power in organizations, highlighting the ways in which organizational arrangements operate to make individuals simultaneously powerful and powerless. Giddens (1984) used the phrase 'dialectic of control' to describe the ways in which power shifts between different individuals or groups within organizations, often creating unintended outcomes that are problematic for all concerned. Within this research, the anxieties that participants with hiring responsibilities recounted derived, in large part, from the complex mix of power, responsibility, accountability and vulnerability that characterized their position within the industry. Hiring procedures within the film industry are relatively informal, with hiring responsibilities often devolved to project leaders at various levels. Team leaders therefore wielded considerable power over others in the industry but were also vulnerable themselves, as poor hiring decisions that resulted in a dysfunctional team could detrimentally affect their own and other people's prospects of future employment. From a systems psychodynamic perspective, the ostensible devolution of hiring power to team leaders created a situation in which the personal accountability of team leaders to both those above them and those within their team was heightened. For several more senior participants, their overriding sense seemed to be that they were accountable to others rather than others to them. Unsurprisingly, this combination of power, responsibility, accountability and vulnerability created considerable anxiety in team leaders, who then exercised their hiring prerogatives in ways that created gender discrimination but that were primarily intended to diminish the insecurities created by the requirements of their position within the organization.

Systems psychodynamics suggests that both the individual and the collective behaviours of organizational members are over-determined and governed by a complex mix of conscious and unconscious motivation. In situations of high risk and high anxiety, the unconscious and 'irrational' determinants of behaviour tend to grow stronger, though they are generally justified as 'logical' responses to organizational issues (Armstrong, 2005; Long, 2008). Within this study all participants with experience of hiring emphasized the importance of selecting team members with suitable past experience, demonstrated commitment and a good 'team fit'. These attributes were also cited by lower-status participants as crucial components of the high-functioning project teams they wanted to join. At a conscious level, it is entirely rational for people to prefer teams where other members are skilled, committed and easy to get on with. However, the highly gender-stereotyped reasons that both male and female participants gave for perceiving women as riskier, less trustworthy hires than men suggest that unconscious defences against anxiety may also have been operating.

The highly precarious nature of employment within the film industry has been highlighted by many writers (e.g. Eikhof and Warhurst, 2013; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). The participants in this study were all aware that employment within the industry was mutable and that they were highly vulnerable to shifts in employment status. Participants conceptualized the workgroup as a bulwark against both financial and

existential insecurities, emphasizing the ways in which group members needed to support each other both practically and emotionally. From a systems psychoanalytic perspective the project team functioned not simply as a means to an economic end but also as the key mechanism for containing participants' insecurities about their work. In the absence of more traditional forms of employment security or stable organizational structures, participants sought psychological safety through the medium of team relationships. The capacity to both bestow and engender 'swift trust' therefore became a core requirement of group membership, and absolute commitment to the group an essential component of group membership. Unfortunately, the trustworthiness of women was perceived by many respondents as more problematic than that of men. This created a context in which a wide variety of anxieties and defence mechanisms were more likely to be used in relation to women than to men. In consequence, discriminatory hiring practices that diminish these unspoken anxieties became reframed as rational responses to organizational problems and embedded within the social system as collectively endorsed defences against anxiety.

Writing from a sociological perspective, Acker (2006, 2009) observed that organizational change initiatives aimed at increasing gender equality frequently founder or accomplish relatively little. She argued that one reason this transpires is that change schemes tackle relatively few elements in the intricate web of structures, practices, norms and sectional interests that sustain gendered inequality. Similar comments regarding the difficulties of organizational change have been made by several systems psychodynamically oriented organizational consultants (Armstrong and Rustin, 2014; Long, 2008). A systems psychodynamic interpretation of gendered hiring does not generate instant solutions but does help us understand the ways in which organizational members develop discriminatory practices in their attempts to contain emotional insecurity. Individual and organizational defences are created for a range of reasons and meet a range of needs. Consequently, defensive patterns will often continue even if some of the conditions maintaining them are removed. Contending with gendered inequality within film production will almost certainly necessitate an array of interventions rather than one, all-encompassing solution.

In conclusion, the findings of this research show that gendered inequality within the Wellington film industry was, in some part, created and sustained by anxieties over hiring and collective perceptions that women were riskier hires than males. From a systems psychoanalytic perspective, targeting interventions at the minimization of risk and anxiety would therefore be one strategy for starting to dismantle gender inequality within the industry. This will not be easy given the current structure of the film industry in New Zealand and other countries and the marked reluctance of both governments and industry powerholders to change working conditions within the industry. In the final analysis, creating less precarious working conditions for all film workers is essential to reducing the defensive hiring practices that contributed so strongly to the reproduction of the gendered inequality observed in this research.

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