

Cultural Diversity on Television

Phase III Research – Stakeholder One-on-One Interviews

December 2003

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I. Introduction

Solutions Research Group Consultants Inc. (SRG) and Johnston & Buchan LLP are pleased to present to **The Task Force for Cultural Diversity on Television** the results of Phase III of a comprehensive five-phase research program designed to examine the presence and portrayal of ethnocultural and racial minorities and Aboriginal Peoples on Canadian private television.

Phase III consisted of one-on-one interviews with a cross section of key representative stakeholders from the broadcasting industry and from ethnocultural and Aboriginal Peoples organizations/associations across Canada.

The primary purpose of Phase III was to gain perspective from these stakeholders with regard to:

- their perceptions of the current state of cultural and racial diversity on private Canadian television;
- perceived barriers to enhanced presence and portrayal; and
- suggestions for improvement.

This document is a summary of Phase III findings. For reference, the complete list of research phases is as follows:

- Phase I Background Research (consisting of IA, IB, IC & ID)
- Phase II Research – Best Practices Review
- Phase III Research – Stakeholder One-on-One Interviews
- Phase IV Research – Focus Groups
- Phase V Research – Benchmark Content Analysis

The findings of each phase of the research program are presented as stand-alone reports, available under separate cover.

II. Methodology

In total, 54 one-on-one interviews were conducted between May 25 and July 15, 2003. Each interview lasted between 30 and 50 minutes.

Prior to each interview, respondents were assured that their remarks would be treated confidentially and would remain anonymous. This assurance was given to encourage frank and open discussion of the issues.

The three stakeholder groups included in the interviews were:

1. Senior representatives of a wide cross section of Canadian ethnocultural and Aboriginal organizations, associations, and advocacy groups;
2. Senior programming representatives of national conventional television broadcasters and specialty services, as well as of unions, guilds and program producers' associations; and
3. Other experts, including television program producers, actors, and writers.

The agenda used as the outline for the Phase III interviews and the list of interviewees is attached to this report as Appendix B and Appendix C respectively.

III. Executive Summary

"... there has been improvement over the past 10 years, but there is still a way to go." (Ethnocultural Association Representative)

- There was consensus that private television broadcasters in Canada are doing a better job today than they were ten years ago in terms of presence of ethnocultural and racial diversity on Canadian television. This perspective was shared by broadcasters and most ethnocultural associations. The main exceptions were representatives of Aboriginal groups, and of Arab and Muslim ethnocultural associations.
- Most respondents agreed that change is needed and the time is now. The issue raised was what needs to be addressed first and the best way to move forward. It was felt that all those involved in the business of television program

production and exhibition, including the CRTC, should be addressing this issue and concentrating on removing the systemic barriers to progress.

- News programming was identified as a key genre that has made significant strides in ethnocultural and racial representation, specifically in terms of on-air talent. In terms of the content and analysis of news reporting, however, many representatives from ethnocultural associations expressed concern that Canadian news coverage still lacks balance. Specific concerns included the lack of minority “experts” to comment or offer background on stories and issues, lack of minority decision-makers, little communication with the ethnocultural, racial or Aboriginal communities regarding news coverage, and the “pigeonholing” of some minority reporters to cultural and racial stories.
- Canadian dramatic programming was generally perceived as having made the least progress in the areas of presence and portrayal. Much of this was seen to stem from barriers that are unique to the genre. Barriers identified include the perception that there are “shallow talent pools” of experienced actors; that casting and scripting decisions are largely concentrated in the hands of non-minorities; and that there is a lack of opportunities due to a decline in the number of Canadian-produced drama series in recent years.
- Ethnic or third-language services were perceived as playing a valuable role in representing ethnocultural and racial diversity and in providing programming to new Canadian audiences. It was noted, however, that ethnic media are only part of the solution in representing and reflecting Canada’s cultural diversity, and that full acceptance of ethnocultural and racial minorities would only occur when these groups become a part of mainstream broadcasting.
- The major markets of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver consist of highly diverse populations comfortable with seeing cultural diversity on television as a reflection of day-to-day life. Mainstream broadcasters operating in major urban markets perceived less risk and in fact a strong business case in support of diverse cultural and racial representation. Some broadcasters and producers felt there is not a strong business case in smaller markets since non-urban viewers may not be “ready” for culturally diverse programming.
- Children’s and Youth programming were seen as having made progress – a critical point of success given their ability to influence lifelong attitudes and

beliefs. Music programming targeted at youth was also commonly cited as an area of that reflects Canada's diversity.

- Suggestions for improvement in the areas of presence and portrayal focused on positive encouragement, monitoring, and efforts to remove systemic barriers. Most respondents within the broadcasting and production communities, as well as in ethnocultural organizations suggested that goal setting, as reflected in broadcasters' and producers' "statements of best practices" were useful, and should be encouraged.
- A few respondents, however, from both broadcasting and ethnocultural associations contended that quotas might be required, expressing concern that other progressive solutions such as "colour-blind casting" may not be successful until the talent pool of minority actors has reached a critical mass.

IV. Analysis

A. Perceived Presence and Portrayal

As a starting point of each interview, respondents were asked to comment on how they perceived the current state of the presence and portrayal of ethnocultural and racial minorities and Aboriginal Peoples on television.

Virtually all respondents agreed that over the past ten years progress has been made in terms of the presence of cultural and racial minorities on Canadian television. This was particularly true in reference to news and information programming and to music programming which were often cited as examples where ethnocultural and racial minorities are relatively well represented in terms of on-air staff. Top-of-mind references often cited were weathercasters, reporters, news anchors and music VJs.

"MusiquePlus is one step beyond the schoolyard. It reflects young people's reality. It attracts a lot of young people who are much more accepting of diversity than older people." (Broadcast and Related Industry Representative)

“I would rate the news on-camera a 6 or 7 [[out of 10 for cultural representation], whereas overall I think we’re a 4.” (Broadcast and Related Industry Representative)

“We do a better on news and public affairs...quality anchors are being put on screen not just because of race, but because they are talented anchors.” (Broadcast and Related Industry Representative)

Most, however, felt there has been less progress with regard to the quality of portrayal in dramatic programming and of coverage in news programming. Numerous ethnic organizations spoke to the issue of the depth of portrayal and the need to provide the opportunity for on-air talent to reveal or include their ethnocultural heritage as part of their on-screen portrayal. The concern was that representation without depth of portrayal leads to tokenism and stereotyping.

“It’s not about being diverse...it’s about being deeply diverse.” (Other Experts)

While it was certainly seen as a positive move to increase the on-screen presence of cultural and racial minorities, the opportunity for progress was considerably reduced if minorities on television failed to offer the viewers more than just their face as a representation of their culture.

“We have the faces, but not the voices.” (Broadcast and Related Industry Representative)

“What’s the point of having an Arab reporter if what she’s allowed to say is scripted? You have to include their ideas as well.” (Ethnocultural Association Representative)

While portrayal remains a significant work area, most agreed that the first step was to address presence and then move to deeper, more representative and accurate portrayal and reflection. Indeed, most respondents shared the belief that there is currently strong momentum toward identifying and moving forward with solutions.

News and Information Programming

With regard to news and information programming, a critical issue for most representatives of ethnocultural associations was that of biased and one-sided

coverage. Many felt strongly that the content and analysis of Canadian news and public affairs programming lacks balance on certain important issues, and tends to focus on the negative by linking crime and violence with considerations of race and ethnicity. This concern was primarily expressed by ethnocultural spokespersons, notably from Aboriginal, African-Canadian and Arab and Muslim Canadian organizations.

“Images are stereotypical and negative [on the news]. The focus is on negative crime/social representations which reinforces negative stereotypes. It’s sensationalized...” (Ethnocultural Association Representative)

Most often, these complaints focused on local or national news coverage but some also noted that international stories tended to cover sensationalized, negative issues about war, terrorism and crisis situations.

“When did we hear about museums in Baghdad – until they were being looted?” (Ethnocultural Association Representative)

Representatives of Aboriginal associations expressed concern that Aboriginal Peoples are often portrayed as problem people in the news.

“The news is one area that needs more focus on Aboriginal Peoples. The news hardly portrays Aboriginal stories unless they are crises such as Oka or Fisheries East Coast.” (Aboriginal Association Representative)

“The only time you see a Native on TV in Canada is when there is a Native issue. We call it the “leathers and feathers” syndrome.” (Aboriginal Association Representative)

Some broadcast and industry-related representatives were concerned by what they saw as an assumption that a news reporter from a particular cultural background was suited primarily to coverage of issues related to their heritage, but not given as many opportunities as other reporters to cover broader issues. Similarly, some spokespersons from ethnocultural groups complained about the “ghettoizing” or pigeonholing of news reporters and commentators within their respective communities.

“[In terms of news reporting], it’s important that we don’t make one person represent one ethnic group. They aren’t allowed to behave like regular reporters. Why do I have to be the person who does the Aboriginal stories? That’s not what I’m here to do.” (Broadcast and Related Industry Representative)

“Positive portrayal is when you see Ian Hanomansing, a visible minority anchor reporting on all news, not just on reporting on racial minorities...” (Ethnocultural Association Representative)

It is important to note, however, that a desire to cover broader topics and wanting the opportunity to cover issues relating to their own ethnocultural or racial group are not mutually exclusive. A few minority reporters felt they were better able to cover stories related to their cultural group than their non-minority colleagues.

“It’s a misconception that Aboriginal People don’t want to be slotted. They want to write about Aboriginal stories. That’s what they know. The contacts are there and they want to write about it. Other people say, ‘Why do you want to ghettoize yourself?’ [I answer] because this is who I am! I can’t separate that.” (Broadcast and Related Industry Representative)

Another key distinction was made in the nature of minority representation in news and information programming. While most respondents noted progress in the number of visible minority “faces” as hosts, anchors and reporters, they did not believe that there has been a commensurate increase in the on-air presence of “experts” selected from visual minority communities to offer comment or background on these programs.

“Right now, if you are an Iranian, you become an expert on Iran, or if you are Chinese, then you are an expert on China.” (Ethnocultural Association Representative)

A continued reliance on the same “cultural experts” by the media was identified as dangerous in that these experts were themselves representing just one perspective within a community. Some ethnocultural representatives identified a need for the media to build more inclusive databases containing a collection of experts from minority backgrounds in all areas so that minorities do not become ghettoized or pigeonholed into ethnic or race-related stories.

Another issue of representation raised by some stakeholders from ethnocultural groups was that one rarely sees news anchors or reporters wearing cultural dress or having accents. To these representatives, a well-spoken reporter or anchor who wears cultural dress when they deliver the news would act as a powerful example for “normalizing diversity” within the mainstream. The objective is not to be seen as the same as the majority, but to create an environment in which diversity is normal, eliminating the current tendency to identify visible minorities as “other.”

“Like audible minorities. What’s wrong with that? As long as you can understand someone, why not reflect audible diversity as well?” (Broadcast and Related Industry Representative)

Many noted also that initiatives promoting deeper and broader relationships with various cultural communities were needed in order to provide a more balanced perspective, particularly with respect to the coverage of issues specific to that community.

“It is a good thing in one way that SARS happened, because it is the only way we would have known that the provincial medial officer was a man of colour, and that Toronto’s leading health officer was a woman of colour.” (Ethnocultural Association Representative)

“It’s always easy to latch onto organizations that are very noisy and not necessarily the ones that are most representative of the community. But that is the responsibility of the community.” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

“There has been some dialogue between organizations and the media but most of it is reactionary and sometimes hostile.” (Ethnocultural Association Representative)

Dramatic programming

Dramatic programming was identified as having made less progress in the display of cultural diversity compared to other genres and formats. Some of this appeared to stem from what were seen as distinct barriers to progress in dramatic programming. These barriers included:

- the perception among those in the broadcasting industry that there are “shallow talent pools” of experienced actors;
- casting and scripting decisions largely concentrated in the hands of non-minorities; and
- lack of opportunities due to a decline in the number of Canadian-produced drama series in recent years.

*“You can’t say ‘wanted, one actor of colour’: what you have to do is try to spread the net as wide as you can, and hope that the right kids show up.”
(Broadcast and Related Industry Representative)*

Both broadcasters and ethnocultural community representatives identified a problem with the availability of minority talent. Many broadcasters said they find it difficult to access minority talent, while ethnocultural groups commonly expressed frustration with the lack of opportunity and training. Without this, minority actors continue to be overlooked for key roles due to lack of experience.

Colour-blind casting was raised as a possible solution to increase the presence of minority actors. In this case, roles are made available to all actors without consideration to cultural background. While this was seen as progressive by many broadcasters, representatives from ethnocultural associations noted that it does not improve the depth and quality of portrayal.

Furthermore, some respondents noted that colour-blind casting was not proactive enough to increase on-screen presence.

*“Colour-blind casting should not be seen as the be all, and end all.”
(Broadcast and Related Industry Representative)*

“We need to increase the pool in all areas and to achieve critical mass to have more choice...” (Broadcast and Related Industry Representative)

Children's and Youth programming

Some participants commented that children's and youth programming provides a better reflection of Canada's cultural diversity than does dramatic programming.

Degrassi High was held up as an early example of a highly diverse original production that enjoyed a strong viewership.

"What was unique about Degrassi was that it was multi-cultural – it did show diversity. It was the first to show diversity and it's a good example of young people responding to a show that really showed their life." (Broadcast and Related Industry Representative)

Despite perception of progress, however, some respondents felt that there was still room for improvement.

"You never see brown kids playing hockey." (Ethnocultural Association Representative)

Children's programming was identified as being particularly important since it influences viewers who are still forming impressions of the world and as such is most likely to benefit from a mandate to increase representation.

"For pre-schoolers, the critical issue is to help them understand 'same' and 'different' and most importantly that 'different' doesn't mean 'bad'. For many kids, right up to 12, home, school and around the block... that's their world. So if they're going to see what's going on beyond that world, they'll only see it on TV. If they see it on TV, then it helps them to be colour blind." (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

Ethnic and Third-Language Programming

Ethnic or third-language services were perceived as playing a valuable role representing ethnocultural and racial diversity and in providing programming to audiences of new Canadians. They were also identified as fulfilling an essential role by providing experience for ethnic talent.

It was emphasized however that, until cultural and racial minorities see themselves on mainstream television, they would not feel that they are being considered to be part of the mainstream Canadian population.

“...we want to watch mainstream TV. I don’t want to just watch Southeast Asians.” (Ethnocultural Association Representative)

The contribution made by ethnic media was seen as inherently limited, given that many Canadians do not watch ethnic television. A few ethnocultural representatives expressed concern that some broadcasters see ethnic media as fulfilling the need for display of cultural diversity.

“We have more ethnic programming in Canada which satisfies some people. But ethnic programming makes some believe they have dealt with the issue and don’t need to do anymore.” (Ethnocultural Association Representative)

Aboriginal Peoples Television Network

The Aboriginal Peoples Television’s Network (APTN) was often lauded as a good example of strong representation of Aboriginal communities and of portraying Aboriginal cultures on Canadian television. However there is the perception among some Aboriginal representatives that there is marginalization of the network and that it is not used enough as a resource by mainstream broadcasters.

“I think specialty television plays an important role in helping to build capacity. I cannot tell you enough about how APTN has empowered actors, producers, writers. It’s completely changed the way Aboriginal people see themselves – and how they can work with and partner with other people and companies.” (Broadcast and Related Industry Representative)

“APTN represents our community. I see them with other Aboriginal outlets [but mainstream] doesn’t meet with APTN.” (Broadcast and Related Industry Representative)

French-Language Television

Although there has been an increase in the number of “minority faces” in French-language television news media, the general perception among community groups and broadcaster representatives in Quebec was that there is still weak

representation of ethnocultural and racial diversity on French-language television compared to that of English-language television.

“The Francophone industry is set up to perpetuate the Quebecois story, not the immigrant story.” (Producers, Actors, Directors)

In addition, the perception among some broadcast and related industry representatives from Quebec was that the market for diverse programming was generally limited to Montreal. It was also argued that the ethnic minority audience in Quebec is drawn more toward the English-language community and programming.

As was the case among respondents in English-speaking Canada, some of the Quebec respondents also raised the issue of “shallow talent pools” which they felt limited the ability of Quebec broadcasters to showcase diversity.

B. Perceived Barriers to Improved Representation

Respondents from all three stakeholder groups were asked what barriers they see preventing increased presence and a fair and accurate portrayal of cultural diversity on Canadian television. A number of common themes emerged. Each is discussed below.

- **Broadcasters and program producers feel hamstrung by what they see as a limited supply of minority acting talent.**

Broadcasters and program producers feel that Canada still has relatively “shallow pools” of acting talent in ethnocultural and racial minorities and Aboriginal Peoples. They contend that a number of factors contribute to this under-representation.

Many respondents perceived that because of “shallow pools” of minority actors, open casting calls typically result in a less than proportionate display of diversity.

“You can’t say “wanted, one actor of colour”; what you have to do is try to spread the net as wide as you can, and hope that the right kids show up.”(Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

“My obligation is to hire diversity but also experienced people. It is challenging to find people of diverse backgrounds...” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

At the same time, specifying a preference for an actor from a particular cultural or racial minority for a role that can be considered culturally neutral is often seen as somehow inappropriate and exclusionary.

“I see the challenge in casting for drama when choice is limited. For example if we are doing a show about a wedding, we don’t call for different minorities. I don’t want to see all white actors but I don’t say it. I don’t want to be trapped in reverse discrimination.” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

As a result, producers are greeted with an abundance of non-minority actors auditioning for dramatic roles, reducing the likelihood that the part would go to a minority actor.

One barrier was the belief that some ethnocultural communities, in particular newly-arrived Canadians, do not consider television an industry in which they should encourage members of their family to seek employment.

“The cultural priorities of certain immigrant groups do not encourage participation by their members, particularly their children, in the television program production sector.” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

“To achieve progress there is a strong need to encourage youth to seek careers in broadcast and to support these efforts when they start. In terms of role models, I look at TV and I may see a Southeast Asian woman reading the news but I don’t know what her power is...We need mentors for young people, more than just the people visible on TV...a lot of our people don’t go into journalism because they don’t think there’s any opportunity for them. And a lot of them are interested but they need to feel that there’s an opportunity for them.” (Ethnocultural Association Representative)

“They don’t see themselves, so they don’t aspire to enter the industry.” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

In contrast, a few respondents from the broadcasting industry and ethnocultural associations noted, however, that the talent pool is now starting to develop as later-generation new Canadians are entering media as a career.

“We have heard there is not enough talent pool since the early 90s. Maybe yes back then, but so much has changed....“In the 90s, journalism was not seen as a profession by first- and second- generation immigrants. This is not true anymore...It is seen as a professional activity...A lot of it has to do with the work of the communities talking at the community level.” (Other Experts)

- **Lack of experience is seen as limiting opportunities for cultural and racial minorities.**

Those involved in the talent recruiting and casting process repeatedly made the point that “there is no substitute for experience.” The issue, then, is how minority actors can gain this experience.

“To get inexperienced people is too much risk.”(Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

“An actor must have the ability to “carry the scene.” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

In genres of programming such as news, weather, and sports, broadcasters and producers stressed that new entrants typically gain experience in smaller market stations, then move up through the ranks to occupy reporter and anchor positions at the mainstream national networks. This system becomes more challenging for minority entrants as small markets are typically less diverse than larger markets, meaning there is little motivation to hire talent that is not represented in the viewing community. With that career path shut down or limited, minority talent generally turns to ethnic broadcasters to gain experience. The ensuing problem is that most mainstream broadcasters do not value job experience on ethnic television as highly as “mainstream” television experience.

“Traditionally, in broadcast you start in smaller markets and then make it to the larger markets. But you hear that with a minority that’s tough, they say that they can’t find jobs in smaller markets...I don’t think that because you’re

in Red Deer you should get off the hook for not being representative. The stations in these smaller markets are often owned by the same company that owns stations in the bigger markets. They should use these smaller markets for training.” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

“...There’s a bit of elitist sentiment there where they say, “that’s not real journalism [ethnic broadcast experience]....There’s a stigma associated with ethnic media in terms of quality. We have to get the quality up so it isn’t marginalized so much. ” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

In dramatic programming, it is considered essential that an actor possess the requisite experience and the range to “carry the part.” Given the limited use of minority actors to date, less experienced minority actors are often cast in smaller, secondary roles. Often these are socially responsible supporting roles, such as that of a judge, or perhaps a teacher – roles that don’t allow for significant depth of character development nor exposure of their acting ability for future consideration.

“It’s like, I want to apply for this job, well you need experience, and well how do I get experience if you won’t give me experience?” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

“But still you can’t just cast a redhead. You have to cast a talented person who is also a redhead and if there are no redheads available then you look for the best talent that can do the role.” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

- **Casting and script decisions are still largely made by the “suits” and those in other behind-the-scenes positions, with little representation from ethnocultural or racial minorities and Aboriginal Peoples.**

Several actors and industry experts noted that most of the final script and casting decisions in major drama productions are made by senior executives from Canada’s mainstream broadcasting companies. Although these broadcasters are perceived as willing to feature minorities in their productions, the fact that they are largely white, middle-aged men is perceived to limit their experience, creating what many see as one of the major barriers to achieving a more diverse representation on television.

“...until you have people in decision making positions, who are producers, who are commissioning, who have the power to say ‘yes’, ‘I’m saying yes to this’ who have sensitivity and an interest in doing this, until then it’s going to be very slow.” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

“Power and money is in the hands of the same community. The power base has to shift. We are a long way from that.” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

“People say there are too many white gatekeepers like me, so it is hard to comment.” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

“We need to get people in positions where they can change things. When non-whites get into producing and directing, then we will see change. We now see on-air presence. This is expected in the early stages.” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

There was a common perception among representatives of ethnocultural groups that members of minority groups who currently work in behind-the-scenes positions are typically “ghettoized” in ethnic television. While ethnic broadcasting and production was seen to provide much needed career experience, this advantage was seen to be tarnished if it did not then provide leverage into mainstream productions.

Several television program producers told us that, within their professional community, there are relatively few representatives of Canada’s culturally diverse minorities. They believed that this might be a contributing factor to the under-representation of those communities in Canadian dramatic productions.

“Where I think the most effective affirmative action could be felt is in production companies. I don’t know any production companies run by Black people or Asian people in Canada. I don’t know why not. If you’re looking for influence on the air, look for influence behind the air. Broadcasters are really just on-air retailers. For instance, when you walk in and you see a Black director, the casting director is going to automatically work harder to provide a diverse cast.” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

“Who is better to do a film about the Black experience – Norman Jewison or Spike Lee?” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

One of the reasons for this under-representation in professional organizations is that many ethnic producers of multicultural programming tend to produce programs exclusively for members of their own linguistic/cultural community. As a result, some of these producers never enter the “mainstream” production community. This situation describes Aboriginal producers, as well as cultural and racial minority producers.

“It’s hard to be independent and you need to be a member of an association. It is more difficult for a person writing something about ethnic theme... Sometimes minority directors stay independent; there are few applications of interest.” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

Some broadcasters noted that this happens, in part, because the mainstream broadcasters devalue the experience gained in ethnic television, with the belief that hiring someone with ethnic television experience will require additional training.

- **Some mainstream broadcasters are concerned that the viewing population outside of major markets is not ready for culturally diverse casts.**

The major markets of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver consist of highly diverse populations comfortable with seeing cultural diversity on television as a reflection of day-to-day life. Mainstream broadcasters operating in major urban markets therefore see less risk and in fact a strong business case in support of diverse cultural and racial representation.

“Money, advertising and viewership are what works to incent broadcasters to get on board....But we also have clients and agencies coming in and saying we want these 8 languages So it’s improving but still there’s lots of education to be done.” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

Outside of the major urban markets, this is not necessarily the case. Smaller markets remain significantly less diverse than urban markets and mainstream broadcasters face the struggle to represent both diversity and their respective local market audiences. Some broadcasters and producers feel there is not a strong

business case in smaller markets since non-urban viewers may not be “ready” for culturally diverse programming.

“One in every five Canadians is from a visible minority group, Ontario is the highest at 40%. Still the primary market is non-visible minority, or non-ethnic, so if a national broadcaster is still aiming at the largest market, they can still make a case against a visible minority target.” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

“It’s time for us to do some really hard-hitting media research on minorities in Canada. Right now we’re shooting in the dark, we’re guessing. So you put together a program and if there are ethnics in it, then they think that maybe whites won’t like it and it gets changed because then they think that advertisers won’t like it either and it snowballs.” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

In the case of Quebec, in particular, mainstream network programming was seen as being designed to appeal to the province’s dominant majority. The inference was that popular télé-romans and other Quebec-produced drama programs tend to be produced with a target audience in mind that is typical of the viewer in Chicoutimi or Rimouski, rather than in Montreal. Because of this, in the areas of script selection and casting, visible minority communities tend to be under-represented.

However, members of both ethnocultural groups and the broadcast industry suggested that the success of recent films such as *“Bend it like Beckham”* and *“My Big Fat Greek Wedding”* may help to strengthen the business case for diversity. Both films had strong ethnocultural storylines but ultimately succeeded because they dealt with universal themes and issues that resonated with everyone.

“I can live with ‘Bend it like Beckham’. It doesn’t just exoticize Indian girls, it’s about moms being moms. And that’s what it’s about. Don’t make it an ethnic issue, that’s stereotypical programming. It’s about family issues. Make it a Canadian issue. We’re all just trying to raise our kids.” (Ethnocultural Association Representative)

“Themes are universal. Everyone wants a good life, jobs, children, etc. These should be portrayed so that mainstream sees that [minority] people as not

*different from them. It helps the spirit of understanding and community.”
(Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)*

“Look at Vision TV. Each community carries out the most popular programs to each community but they also cover commonalities. Their main information package is very popular – overall viewership says it is very popular among all communities.” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

- **Colour-blind casting was seen as a progressive move, but many ethnocultural organizations felt it was not yet ready to replace the need for proactive casting.**

“Colour-blind casting” is a method of casting for a role without a preconception of the cultural or racial background of the actor being sought, leaving the part open to actors of all backgrounds. Full application of this method would mean that all parts without a specific need for an actor of a particular background would be open to all candidates.

One issue that arises is with respect to “heritage” or historical drama productions. Many Canadian historical dramas are not perceived to lend themselves to casting from among members of visible minority communities as doing so would not accurately reflect the “time and place” of such Canadian historical dramas. Ethnocultural associations and ethnic broadcasters, however, argue that most historical dramas do not accurately reflect Canadian history in that they exclude the minority experience. They further contend that there is a wealth of content available which would be appropriate for diverse casting and which would also result in a more complete and accurate reflection of our history.

Many representatives of ethnocultural associations felt that the industry needs to reach a critical mass in the talent pool for colour-blind casting to work, suggesting that quotas may still be needed at least in the near term. Without a sufficient supply of minority actors, colour-blind casting could simply perpetuate a minimal onscreen presence of minorities. Also, to encourage the acceptance of cultural diversity into mainstream culture, the role must be written with an eye to the actor’s ethnic and cultural background.

“Casting minorities in lead roles is positive because it normalizes the presence of minorities and of diversity for the audience. But to move forward further,

it's then necessary to allow the minority actor's background to be revealed as part of their role. If, for instance a Korean actor is cast in a role, part of the opportunity to affect change is lost if that role does not provide an opportunity for the actor's "Korean-ness" to reveal itself as part of the storyline."
(Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

"I'm here as a performer. If my heritage can be woven in fine but I don't want to be a puppet...I have the ability, responsibility as leading character. I have the skills just like any actor. I don't want to be an object of scrutiny. I want to do my job but there is an obligation." (Actor)

- **Many broadcasters identified the difficulty in sourcing minority talent and "experts" as a barrier to progress.**

Several representatives of the broadcasting industry complained that there is currently no effective way to find minority actors.

"It is challenging to find people of diverse backgrounds. We actively seek employees. I am aiming for 50% but I'm hiring from a tiny pool and need to look more aggressively, grass roots, word of mouth." (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

Some noted that what was once a successful initiative, the "Into the Mainstream" directory spearheaded by ACTRA in the 1990s, is currently suffering from a lack of funding. This national directory included not only actors from ethnocultural and racial minorities, but also actors with accents and disabled performers. Another positive example mentioned was the online casting database service stemming from a joint initiative between the Actor's Equity Association and IBM in the US.

Others mentioned that there is currently no regularly-scheduled forum that could serve as a sourcing platform through which aspiring actors, scriptwriters, producers and directors could meet with leading broadcasters and producers. Many however did comment positively about the recent Innoversity Conference in Toronto, suggesting that it should become an annual event.

"Innoversity and a lot of associations focus on non-traditional members, but it is not enough." (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

Just as it is difficult to source minority actors and talent, those broadcasters working in news and public affairs programming identified a definite lack of resources to source “experts” of various cultural and racial backgrounds.

“They call the same people, have the same experts. Business case opportunity – must be sure that you have a handful of experts to call. We need researchers who know how to find these people. It affects story selection if there are more diverse people, a different perspective.” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

- **Ethnocultural stakeholders cited poor communication between broadcasters and ethnocultural and racial and Aboriginal communities as a major source of concern.**

Little or no open dialogue was seen to exist, from poor representation of perspective in news stories and a lack of cross-cultural sensitivity training to frustration and a perception that the issue is not being given appropriate consideration.

“We need to call them all in – the cameramen, the on-air people, the producers – and have meetings with community groups – talk to us – we’ll all come in and talk about what it’s like.” (Ethnocultural Association Representatives)

A number of representatives from ethnocultural organizations made note of the fact that dialogue between their groups and the media is typically reactionary, and often negative. Dialogue, they noted, should be proactive on both sides to effect positive change.

“Seems to be hostility between broadcasters and communities. They can try to initiate working with us. We are working on a shoestring. It needs to be a joint initiative. Usually contact is hostile and unproductive.” (Ethnocultural Association Representative)

“Building a relationship with media people is very important. And often you’re dealing with volunteer organizations, whose mandate is not media relations. And then because they are focused on dealing with specific issues they don’t always have the time to seek the kind of coverage they’d like.” (Broadcaster and Related Industry Representative)

In Quebec, it was also noted that there is a need for a dialogue that includes both the English-language and French-language broadcasters. The perception was that, at present, Quebec representatives of multicultural groups tend to focus their attention on the English-language broadcasting community.

- **Finally, inadequate funding was cited as a barrier preventing increased production of programming that would include cultural and racial minorities.**

Many representatives of broadcasters, ethnocultural organizations and the creative community expressed concern that various funding cutbacks could prevent progress in the display of cultural diversity.

Mainstream broadcasters were seen to have the deepest pockets for the production of original drama programming but the least incentive to produce it. Several respondents felt the CRTC's 1999 National Television Policy has further exacerbated the issue, stating that the number of new television drama series on English language commercial television networks has declined from 12 to four since 1999. This decline in the overall level of Canadian television production has, in turn, resulted in fewer opportunities for all producers, directors and actors, including those from Canada's ethnocultural communities.

In addition, representatives of Canada's First Nations groups all mentioned the significant decrease in federal government funding available for Aboriginal broadcasting activities over the past ten years. Specific reference was made to the termination of funding in the early 1990s for the National Aboriginal Communications Society.

It was generally acknowledged by representatives of the First Nations Peoples that the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN), the specialty television network, was performing an admirable and much needed role, but felt that its budget was limited.

Finally, representatives of ethnocultural organizations lamented the lack of funding through which community groups could effect change, including finding resources for research. In addition, representatives from community organizations stated that

there is little cohesion among minority groups, although this is slowly changing through the formation of new coalitions.

C. *Suggestions for Improvement*

When asked for suggestions on how to improve the presence and portrayal of cultural and racial diversity on television, few of those interviewed expressed a feeling of despair or hopelessness. Indeed, the opposite was true. Still, while most felt that the situation is improving, it was generally acknowledged that the process is slow and that more progress is needed. The many suggestions offered to accelerate the momentum towards increased onscreen diversity included:

- An initiative to benchmark and monitor progress toward an agreed upon and clearly communicated objective, including timelines for progress;
- Incentives to participate in an initiative to improve cultural presence and portrayal, or penalties for failure to comply;
- More and better research regarding the viewing habits of Canada's cultural and racial minorities, to help support the "business case" for diversity;
- Increased internships and mentor relationships within Canada's production and broadcasting industries, designed to help members of ethnocultural and racial communities gain access to those in decision-making positions;
- Training and educational initiatives with particular emphasis on encouraging members of ethnocultural and racial communities to participate;
- Improved dialogue between broadcasters and cultural and racial communities, either via a regular forum or conference to address issues of diversity, where aspiring actors, writers and directors could meet with those who make script and casting decisions, or through an improved and more formalized method for communication on a regular basis;
- Increased government funding for cross-cultural and Aboriginal television program productions; and

- An up-to-date database or electronic catalogue of actors, directors, producers and experts from Canada's various ethnocultural and racial minorities.

APPENDIX A: Current Initiatives and Research

In the process of conducting the one-on-one interviews, the research team came across a few organizations/associations that have recently conducted studies or are currently implementing initiatives regionally and/or nationally. We have included these in this study as a resource but the list is not comprehensive of the initiatives and programs being implemented across Canada.

Filmmakers Association of Visible & Ethnic Minorities (FAVEM) - Montreal, Quebec

FAVEM recently completed a study that surveyed English-speaking visible minority producers and filmmakers in Quebec, a group that is disadvantaged within the filmmaking community due to its dual minority status in terms of language and racial/ethnic background. The study included an online questionnaire, and a roundtable discussion.

The objective of the research was to obtain a professional profile of these filmmakers, to identify the barriers and to recommend initiatives and programs to improve access of visible minorities in the industry.

The report was funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Quebec Regional Office of the Multiculturalism Program, the Official Languages Support Program, and the Canada Council.

To receive a copy of the report, contact:

FAVEM
9-4080 rue Kindersley
Montreal, Quebec
H4P 1K8

Contact: Maureen Hill
Phone: (514) 739-8063
favem@sprint.ca

**Aboriginal Journalists Association - Edmonton, Alberta
Native Media Watch - Toronto, Ontario**

Both the AJAC and Native Media Watch, a national watchdog group, were both formed in 2002 in immediate response to a discriminatory column against Aboriginal Peoples in the *Calgary Herald*.

The AJAC includes a network of 60 journalists who communicate regularly. The association is actively pursuing dialogue with media organizations and the CRTC to help educate and combat racism and discrimination against Aboriginal Peoples in the media.

AJAC
831 Johns Close
Edmonton, Alberta
T6L 6P2

Contact: Kim Ziervogel
Phone: (780) 463-2378
kziervogel@yahoo.com

Committee on Race Relations and Cross-Cultural Understanding - Calgary, Alberta

Established in 1992, the organization works toward eliminating racism and discrimination and promoting human rights and social harmony. Its approach is multi-faceted and attempts to combat racism at systemic levels through educational and awareness activities that ensure that the rights of all citizens are respected.

It has implemented a number of initiatives in the community at various levels, including:

- Catalyst and ongoing participant in Diversity Calgary in 2000 (member of Calgary Cultural and Racial Diversity Task Force, a citizen-initiated undertaking that has conducted research and developing strategies and initiatives in the community to foster change and the elimination of cultural and racial barriers);
- Youth ROAR initiative which teaches media literacy and empowers youth to speak out against racism. In January 2001, the Committee hosted a series of

youth forums to better understand youth perceptions of racism and diversity in Calgary;

- Educational workshops to empower ethnocultural communities to speak out against the media;
- Seeking to implement the Diversity Watch program in Calgary journalism schools in coordination with John Miller from Ryerson University in Toronto;
- Worked with *Calgary Herald* Editorial Board and journalists to address “Bias in the Media.”

Committee on Race Relations and Cross-Cultural Understanding

Calgary Public Building, 8th Floor
205-8th Avenue SE, Code #19
Calgary, AB
T2G 0K9

Contact: Vilma.Dawson
Phone: (403) 268-5175
Fax: (403) 268-5196
vdawson@gov.calgary.ab.ca

The Vancouver Asian Heritage Month Society (VAHMS) – Vancouver, British Columbia

The Vancouver Asian Heritage Month Society is a non-profit society that presents the annual explorASIAN Festival - a multidisciplinary festival featuring visual arts, music, dance, comedy, film and video with over 100 events throughout the month of May. May is Asian Heritage Month in Canada.

The organization’s mandate is to help in the development of artists, filmmakers, dancers, singers from diverse ethnic backgrounds who would normally not have opportunities or exposure to mainstream media in North America. The organization represents Canadians from diverse backgrounds including Korean, Indonesian, Chinese, Persian, Indian, South Asians, and Japanese among others.

The Vancouver Asian Heritage Month Society (VAHMS)
203B- 10 E. Pender Street
Vancouver BC
V6A 1T1

Contact: Don Montgomery
Festival Coordinator
Phone: (604) 488-0119
Website: www.ahm.bc.ca

**Proposal for a Female Visible Minority Directing Mentorship Program –
Vancouver, British Columbia**

Inner Vision Productions Inc., in partnership with BC Film and The Director's Guild of Canada through the BC District Office, is proposing a female visible minority episodic directing mentorship program in Vancouver, BC.

The primary goal of the program will be to place participants into a mentoring directorship that will help them gain experience in and access to the film and broadcasting industries. Participants will be mentored during the production of two episodes of a television series and then move on to directing one episode of the same series the following season providing that the individual meets the criteria set forth by the Executive Producer and all co-sponsors.

Contact: Jinder Oujla-Chalmers
Phone: (604) 946-0422
jinderc@telus.net

Innoversity Conference – Toronto, Ontario

Innoversity is a Canadian not-for-profit organization that aims to increase cultural diversity in media and cultural institutions. It is a platform bridging ethnic and visible minority communities and the media. Innoversity runs workshops, an annual Creative Summit and produces two industry newsletters.

Innoversity Creative Summit is a two-day event that showcases the skills, talent, experience, stories and knowledge of Canadians from every race, gender, background and culture to the media industry and for media professionals to learn about and present innovative approaches to diversity.

www.innoversity.com

Innoversity
260 Carlaw Ave., Suite 202B
Toronto, ON
M4M 3L1
Phone: (416) 461-6895

Ryerson University School of Journalism, Diversity Watch – Toronto, Ontario

Diversity Watch is “dedicated to improving the often-troubled relationship between minority groups and the Canadian media.” They conduct media analyses on the coverage of minority groups and provide practical tools – resources and links, articles - to assist journalists and others interested in covering diversity issues.

J. Miller also implemented the first and only course of its kind in Canada in 1997, *Covering Diversity*, a journalism writing and criticism course at Ryerson University in Toronto.

www.diversitywatch.ryerson.ca

Diversity Watch
c/o Ryerson School of Journalism
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5B 2K3

Contact: John Miller
Phone: (416) 979-5000 ext. 6396
jmiller@acs.ryerson.ca

Appendix B: One-on-One Interviews Discussion Agenda

Cultural Diversity Task Force Project One-on-One Interviews Discussion Agenda

Objective: To understand the key attitudes and general perceptions of the current state of presence and portrayal diversity on Canadian private television among senior representatives of key stakeholder groups including: cultural organizations/associations, broadcast and related associations and representatives, and program producers, actors, writers.

Time: 40 to 50 minutes.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

What are your general perceptions of the current presence and portrayal of ethnocultural and racial diversity in Canadian Television programming, including news and information programs...drama, comedy, children's programming, etc?

What are your assessments of the current state of presence and portrayal of ethnocultural and racial diversity on Canadian private television compared to ten years ago (ask by category)?

IF BETTER – in what way? And, what were the key factors resulting in improvement?

IF WORSE – How? Why?

What barriers, if any, do you see in achieving a better presence and portrayal of Canada's diversity on private television?

AMONG REPRESENTATIVES OF ETHNOCULTURAL GROUPS

What are some key or unique issues with respect to the presence and portrayal of diversity in general and the group(s) your organization represents in particular?

What are some examples of positive portrayals on television?

IF RESPONDENT POINTS TO GAPS/PROBLEMS

What measures or initiatives would you recommend to improve the presence and portrayal of cultural diversity in general and the group(s) you represent in particular?

What resources (creative and other) are there in the communities you represent that broadcasters should be aware of to help in their initiatives?

AMONG BROADCAST AND RELATED ASSOCIATIONS AND REPRESENTATIVES

IF RESPONDENT POINTS TO GAPS/PROBLEMS

What are the constraints in terms of achieving a better presence and portrayal of cultural diversity on private television? (or what are the difficulties and challenges faced by broadcasters in employing/casting people from diverse backgrounds in the broadcasting industry?)

Can you tell us more about the process of (as applicable) casting, script or talent selection? What are the key criteria and considerations? How are decisions made and who makes the decisions? To what extent is cultural diversity a factor in these decisions?

How do you perceive the case for diversity? (e.g., social responsibility, a regulatory imperative, or a business opportunity?)

How could broadcasters improve the presence and portrayal of cultural diversity in general on Canadian screens?

Understanding rubric of dramatic roles – People talk about various character roles played in drama such as primary, secondary and tertiary characters. As far you're concerned, what are the key distinctions in each of these?

AMONG ACTORS, PRODUCERS, WRITERS

What are your perceptions of (as applicable) script selection, casting and talent selection processes? How are decisions made? To what extent is cultural diversity a factor in these decisions).

Understanding rubric of dramatic roles – People talk about various character roles played in drama such as primary, secondary and tertiary characters. As far you're concerned, what are the key distinctions in each of these?

ASK AMONG ALL

What, if any, policies are you aware of that have been effective in creating employment opportunities for on-air portrayal?

Is there a broadcaster that comes to mind when you think of best presence and portrayal of Canada's cultural diversity on television?

What does this organization do differently from the others, in your view? What can we learn from them?

What would be some appropriate measures to monitor to judge progress in the representation and portrayal of diversity in private broadcasting over time?

Final thoughts? Recommendations?

Appendix C: List of Interviewees

Representatives	Ethnocultural Organizations/Associations
Don Kelly	Assembly of First Nations
Miles Morrisseau	Metis National Council
Uzma Shakir	Council of Agencies Serving South Asians
Cynthia Pay	Chinese Canadian National Council
Keiko Miki	National Association of Japanese Canadians
Raja Khouri & Audrey Jamal	Canadian Arab Federation
Hanny Hassan	Council of Muslim Community of Canada
Len Rudner	Canadian Jewish Congress
Zanana Akande	Urban Alliance on Race Relations
Anna Chiappa	Canadian Ethnocultural Council
Karen R. Mock	Canadian Race Relations Foundation
Debbie Douglas	Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
Kalpana Das	Institut Interculturel de Montréal
Alix Laurent	Image InterCulturelles-Inforacisme
Peter Flegel	Jeunesse noire en action et membre du Global African Congress

Representatives	Broadcast & Related Industry Associations
Pierre Curzi	Union des Artistes
Elizabeth McDonald & John Barrack	Canadian Film & Television Production Association
Mike Omelus	Radio-Television News Directors Association
Richard Stursberg	Telefilm Canada
Deanie Kolybabi	Aboriginal Peoples Television Network
Hamlin Grange & Cynthia Reyes	Canadian Association of Black Journalists, and Promedia International Inc., Founders of Innoversity
Ben Viccari	Canadian Ethnic Journalists & Writers Club
Pamela Brand	Director's Guild of Canada
Louis Cheng	Fairchild Television
Shirley Adamson	Northern Native Broadcasting
Paul Quassa	Inuit Broadcasting Corporation
Lise Lachapelle	L'Association des réalisateurs et réalisatrices du Québec
Norman Bolen	Alliance Atlantis
Madeline Ziniak	Rogers Media
Loren Mawhinney	CanWest Global
Tecca Crosby	CTV Network
Aldo di Felice	Telalatio
Peter Moss	Corus Entertainment Kids' Division
René Bourdages	TVA
Stephen Tapp & Marcia Martin	CHUM

Representatives	Broadcast & Related Industry Associations con.'t
Sophie Emond	Astral Media
Barbara Williams	Craig Media
Béatrice Couillard	Société de développement des entreprises culturelles (SODEC)
Kim Ziervogel	Aboriginal Journalists Association of Canada
Sandi Ross & Stephen Waddell	ACTRA

Representatives	Program Producers, Actors, Writers [and Associations]
Irshad Manji	Author/Broadcaster
Paul De Silva	International Council for Diversity in Film and Television)
Dhirendra	Actor
Pierre Houle	Director
Monique Simard	Producer
Linda Schuyler	Producer
Steve Ord	Producer
Prem Gill	Director, Public Affairs & Multi-cultural Programming, CHUM
Maureen Hill	Filmmakers Association of Visible and Ethnic Minorities

Representatives	Other Experts
John Miller	Professor, Ryerson University School of Journalism
Fil Fraser	Author/Broadcaster
Sorej Prom Tep	Journalist
Melanie Cicheski	MediaWatch
Minelle Mahtani	Professor, University of British Columbia

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