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Film Ed for Gen Z – Industrial Issues and Motivations of the Next Generation of Filmmakers

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Introduction

> "By teaching students how to identify what employers want and then how to become it, employability normalises certain subordinating attitudes towards work and the self, promoting free labour and individualistic behaviour, which discourages collective practice and solidarity. Given the prominence of employability teaching in higher education, we see it as imperative that these spaces be used to encourage critical thinking and the development of alternatives".
>
> (Precarious Workers Brigade, 2017: p. 5)

Nowhere is the above paradigm more keenly felt than on contemporary film and television production degrees where, perhaps counterintuitively given the collaborative nature of the medium, students are often pitted against one another in contest of industry acknowledgement, accolades or, crucially, paid employment. Seen critically though, this competition is a race to the bottom and tends to obscure many difficult factors for would-be filmmakers, including the ways in which the industry they seek to enter may not be as rose-tinted as further and higher education marketing materials have made students believe. And this issue is not unique to the film and television industries. Indeed, the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre places 'Job Quality' at the top of their list of 'critical issues'. In their report *Skills, talent and diversity in the creative industries,* the authors note that: "Much of the work is often low-paid and precarious, jeopardising the health and wellbeing of the workforce, and there are significant concerns about how improvements are hampered by management and leadership capability and poor working practices" (2019: p. 6). Some of the anonymised, qualitative stories in Graeber's *Bullshit Jobs* also attest to problematic working practices in the film, television and creative industries more broadly (2018: p. 52, pp. 203-205).

Quality of jobs notwithstanding, there is also the key question of *who* is getting the opportunities in the first place and once again, data on this tells a very clear story in the UK. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) *Creative Industries Focus on*

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In 2021 Chris became co-convenor of 'Film/making Pedagogy' a new 'Special Interest Group' as part of the British Association of Film, Television and Screen Studies (BAFTSS). He is also currently Associate Editor of the Film Education Journal. He is currently writing up a research bid on class, creativity and talent in film and television industries, as well as a book proposal on anarchism.

Employment 2015, one of the last significant data analyses to break down the demographics of the creative industries, notes that "[they] employ a lower proportion of women than the wider UK economy" (2015: p. 7) at 36.7 per cent. This is worse in the screen industries as, according to the *Skills Audit of the UK Film and Screen Industries 2017*, a report produced by The Work Foundation for the BFI, "the industry workforce does not reflect the diversity of the UK […] In production, only 3% of employees are from a minority ethnic background" and "the industry is not gender balanced, especially at more senior levels […] Only one in five key production personnel working in the UK in 2015 were women" (2017:p. 3). The BFI's own *Future Film Skills: An Action Plan*, notes under a section called 'The Great Challenge of Inclusion' that "those from less advantaged backgrounds represent just 12% of the film workforce" (2017: p. 18). According to the DCMS report, those from less advantaged backgrounds are even rarer in the creative industries where "more advantaged groups made up 92.1 per cent of jobs" (2015: p. 7).

There is a disparity here between what is occurring in creative industries and on university degree programmes. Looking at some data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/what-study/characteristics) for the academic year 2020/21, there are many more female and minority ethnic students studying than are going through to work in the creative industries. This data can only be sorted through "Common Aggregation Hierarchy" (CAH) subject areas, which show 63 per cent female students in "design and creative and performing arts" and 61 per cent in "media, journalism and communications" (film and/or television practice degrees are regularly found in either of these subject areas). Non-white students are similarly in slightly higher numbers in these subject areas, at 17 and 22 per cent respectively, though the DCMS report suggests 11 per cent of these go on to work in the creative industries (ibid.) As outlined above, the film and screen industries are woefully far behind this number.

Friedman and Laurison, in their book *The Class Ceiling: Why It Pays to be Privileged,* draw on qualitative interviews to unearth hidden power structures at work in four industries, including television and acting. They note that both the interviews and data drawn from the UK's Labour Workforce Survey (LFS) indicate a level of "micro-class reproduction" (2019: pp. 34-35). That is, if your parents work in a particular profession, the likelihood that you will also work in that industry multiplies considerably. Children of parents working in film and television are 12 times more likely to enter it themselves, placing this industry behind only medicine (24 times more likely) and law (17 times) for this level of inherited advantage. Returning to Graeber, he claims that "[Hollywood] is emblematic of what has happened to all the liberal professions", continuing:

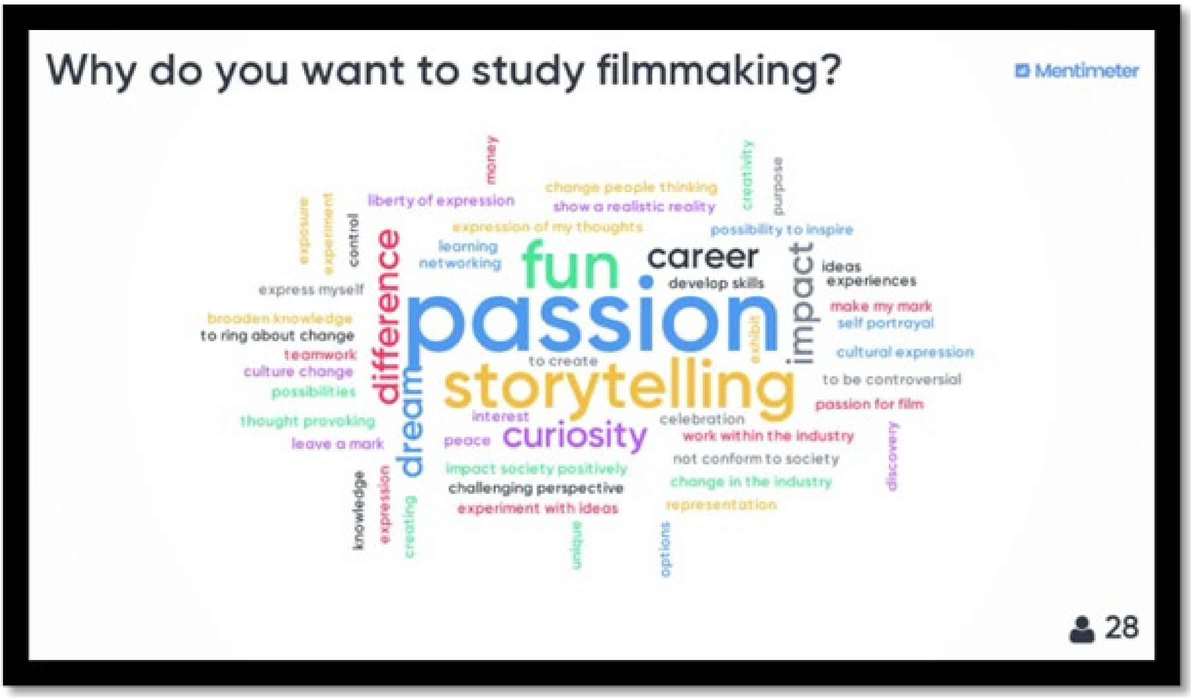
> "Look at a list of the lead actors of a major motion picture nowadays and you are likely to find barely a single one that can't boast at least two generations of Hollywood actors, writers, producers, and directors in their family tree. The film industry has come to be dominated by an in-marrying caste. Is it surprising, then, that Hollywood celebrities' pretensions to egalitarian politics tend to ring a bit hollow in the ears of most working-class Americans?"
>
> (2018: p. 279)

While it could be argued that Britain is different in this regard, mainstream film production here is largely fuelled by American money, where our talent is then used as a production house for films whose origin, in terms of either capital or concept, is not in the UK. Again, Friedman and Laurison's research above is based in the UK context, serving as another reminder that this is a shared concern on both sides of the Atlantic.

Too often contemporary film discourses, in both formal educational settings and outside of them, refer to 'the industry', itself an amorphous mass of entangled relationships, overly simplified by tagging it as a monolith. Given that a large number of degree courses, including the case study in this article, are structured around both film and television and are usually organised around the production of the short film format, what is meant by the term 'industry'? After all, it is this 'industry' from which degree courses are seeking to derive the necessary authority for their curricula. Such courses need to be referring to several different industries, acknowledging that there is not and never will be one 'industry' to which educators can target their pedagogy.

The above dynamics are further complicated by the idea that students can graduate from a degree in film and television as either 'job-ready' (or perhaps more specifically 'set-ready'), a notion which finds currency in film and television industry 'skills' advocates like Screenskills, but also with students and their families who are hoping to reach the end of the conveyer belt of education and be dropped into a decent job. Again, this concept obscures the complexities that creative industries careers often entail. As noted by Wallis: "Long-established roles are becoming extinct, whilst previously unimagined ones are born. Such forces, and the disruption they bring, raise broader social questions and present new ethical dilemmas, for which future media workers also need to be forearmed" (2021: p. 2). To reenforce the oversimplification of creative education, another example can be seen in the WonkeHE and Adobe co-authored research *Curriculum for a Complex World* in which participating "[students] particularly emphasised the value of activities that have a *"real world" application* and make use of "real world" examples" (2021: p. 9, [original emphasis]). While perhaps beyond the scope of the report to expand on this notion, it is striking how casually the term "real world" is thrown about, indicating simultaneously that university settings are somehow not "real", and devaluing what those settings might have to offer. This terminology is also regularly used by colleagues who come from creative industries into academia, and perhaps accidentally further reinforces gaps which educators are seeking to close. Issues around how practitioner academics stay "up to date" with current industry practice, should also be included in the list of problems here.

How then are students, and the staff who teach them, best placed to navigate both the unforeseen technological, and oft-obscured ethical elements of work in the film and television industries? What methods are available to co-develop our university courses into a practical, vocational, but also critical space, in which students and staff are exploring the uncertainties of the future together? This article both proposes a method through which this space might be developed, and simultaneously presents the results of using this technique with students during induction on the BA Film and Television Production degree at the University of Greenwich from 2017-2021. Teaching staff used the online audience engagement platform (AEP) Mentimeter (launched in 2012) to gather qualitative data on student expectations, in two distinct areas: challenges in the film and television industries, and motivations of the class – why do they want to study filmmaking?



Why do you want to study filmmaking?

Mentimeter
money
creativity
purpose
liberty of expression
change people thinking
show a realistic reality
exposure
experiment
control
expression of my thoughts
possibility to inspire
learning
networking
fun
career
develop skills
impact
ideas
experiences
express myself
difference
passion
make my mark
self portrayal
broaden knowledge
to ring about change
teamwork
culture change
possibilities
exhibit
to create
cultural expression
to be controversial
storytelling
dream
passion for film
thought provoking
interest
celebration
leave a mark
peace
curiosity
work within the industry
not conform to society
discovery
impact society positively
challenging perspective
experiment with ideas
change in the industry
representation
knowledge
expression
creating
unique
options
28

The number of participants varied year on year, and some of the screengrabs below display these. Apart from the first year where this was run as part of a taught module (roughly 80 participants), the sessions run during induction accounted for about half of the taught cohort (anywhere from 25 – 40 students). The numbers grew smaller as induction activities were impacted by COVID-19. The results are displayed in a word cloud, with the larger words representing submission by multiple participants (see image below as an example). It should be noted however that, given the numbers outlined above, a 'large' word in this context might only mean it was submitted two or three times. Whilst there is some consistency then in the terms submitted (analysed in more detail below) and those which are similar in tone or theme, there is the added complexity of the diversity of responses (perhaps far outweighing the 'larger' words).

As Geertz notes of qualitative anthropological work, "the trick is to figure out what the devil [your subjects] think they are up to" (1974: p. 29). While this exercise goes some way towards illuminating student understanding and motivations, the purpose is also an attempt to arrive at a collective understanding of what filmmaking is: an art, a craft, an industry. It's about storytelling, and sometimes it's not. As Gannon notes "setting expectations collaboratively can be particularly valuable for courses where the primary vehicle of instruction and interaction is group discussion" (2018: p. 90), or in this case, group production. If lecturers and students can begin to arrive at collective understanding of what constitutes filmmaking and why it is an activity we want to meaningfully engage with, then the ensuing outcomes, in terms of both study *and* filmmaking will reflect this truly collaborative effort. Crucially, as the data here partly demonstrates, that will vary from cohort to cohort.

Notes on using mentimeter

In writing this article I am assuming that many educators reading this will have had some engagement with the Mentimeter learning platform. For those who haven't and who somehow avoided the emails encouraging its use from central university teaching and learning teams, it feels necessary to expand a little on the advantages and disadvantages of using such a platform. This section is written from my professional perspective as an educator, and a researcher attempting to gather qualitative data using a new method.

The first aspect of using Mentimeter to consider is the clear advantages which a digital platform like this offers. As the creators of the platform themselves say: "By harnessing the power of together, we help presenters to transform passive audiences into active contributors. We are fundamentally changing the culture of presentations, lectures, and workshops in business and education from talking to listening" (https://www.mentimeter.com/press). While one should always take the grandiose claims of technological platforms lightly, it should be said that, especially in the context of using it in introductory exercises with a class, Mentimeter offers a participation opportunity to those students who might feel too scared or shy of participating in more conventional ways (e.g. speaking or presenting in front of the class). While the exercises ran and analysed as part of this article were followed-up by tutor-led class discussion, students who didn't want to speak up personally may feel empowered and encouraged knowing that their contributions are up on the front screen for all to see. The second advantage in the use of Mentimeter is, perhaps obvious given the existence of this article, to keep a record of what was contributed by students. In my time running the BA Film and Television Production at the University of Greenwich, we regularly returned to these results at the start of second and third year to remind students of what they had established at the outset of their studies.

The key disadvantage is that exercises using Mentimeter or tools like it are assumed to be analogous to the offline discussions or presentations which would have taken place instead. For every advantage offered, e.g., anonymity, there is a disadvantage, perhaps anonymity again. The use of the tool encourages a closed approach, where students are facing their own screens, and the submission of material which is not appropriate to the exercise, or indeed to a university setting as a whole (see analysis below for an example), is not monitored and therefore lacks repercussions. A similar feedback tool, Unitu: the Student Voice Platform, designed to replace or supplement the student course or subject feedback boards which are usually held termly, was used in our department at Greenwich until 2018 when use discontinued because of regular, unmoderated abuse disproportionally directed at female staff members (https://unitu.co.uk/). The incident which will be analysed below aside, I have not had such negative experiences with Mentimeter personally, but the fact remains that the risk exists. In all, this is to say that the use of digital online tools to enhance learning experiences can be very useful but is not, as some edtech companies would claim, a complete fix for educational issues (for examples see Morozov's *To Save Everything Click Here,* 2013). Exercises like the one detailed in this research need to be incorporated and supported through the learning design, sometimes by using more traditional teaching methods (some more ideas on this are presented in the conclusion).

Exercise design – framing the questions

As noted above, there were two questions which participants of this Mentimeter exercise were asked:

1. What do you think are the film and TV industries biggest challenges?
2. Why do you want to study filmmaking?

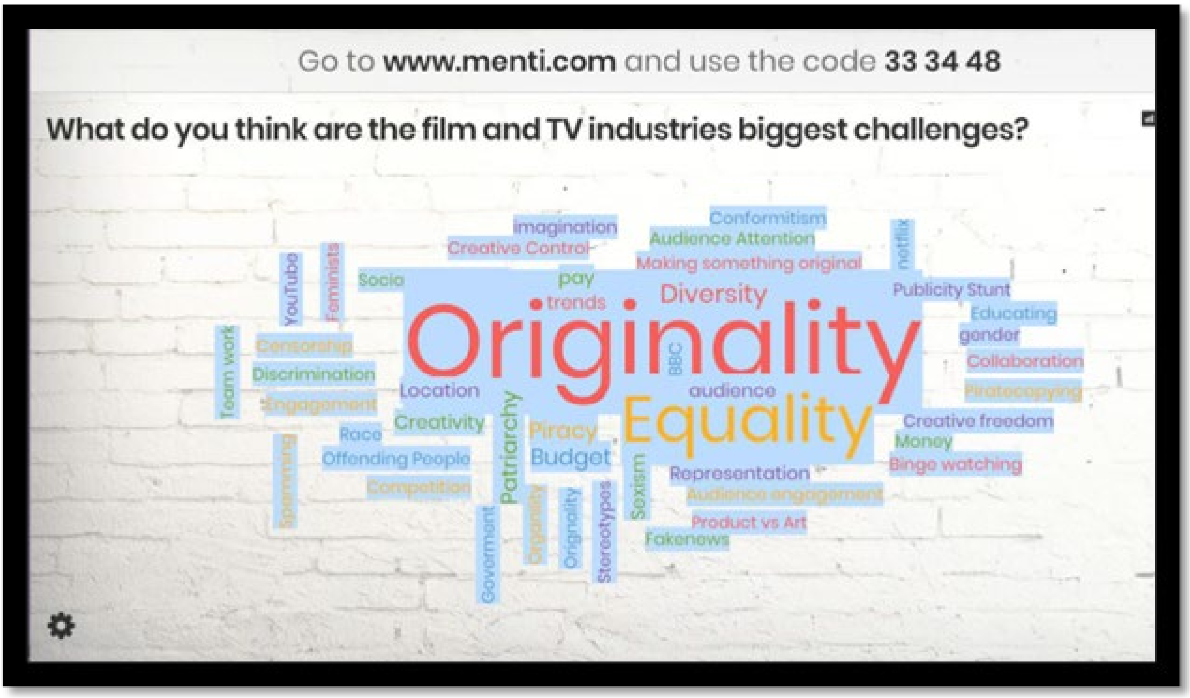
The first of these is reframing the discussion about working in the film and television industries, ensuring that the issues identified have been brought in by the students and not staff. The reason for this is that any attempt by staff to critically situate issues in industry might be perceived as bitterness, either of a career that never was (for those of us who are career academics) or else for those who have moved out of industry and into education. While there are clear issues around career transitions out of the creative industries, transitions that academia does not traditionally manage well, these are not the focus of this article. Suffice to say, if the students themselves are the ones identifying issues, and subsequently leading the discussion about them, then this constitutes a genuine engagement with problems which cannot be dismissed as one or two lecturers taking their revenge against the film and television industries.

The second question is also of crucial importance to educators who seek to understand the motivations of students in studying filmmaking, and this can be particularly important with large and diverse cohorts such as the one in this case study (approx. 70 students per year). This exercise helps with large cohorts because, as noted above, it encourages participation in a format that is more comfortable for students who are less confident. It is even more pertinent to ask this second question with a diverse cohort however, especially on a broad degree like the case study BA Film and Television Production. Why? Because no single student will be approaching this subject in the same way as another. For every student that has ambitions to be a writer/director, there will be other students who have specific interests in a single craft discipline, like cinematography or editing. Some students will come to their studies having already had some exposure to film, media or creative subjects more broadly; others will have had little to no exposure. So the questioning, upfront during induction sessions, of why one would want to come and study filmmaking can tease out details and, in an ideal version of this exercise, help to arrive at a group consensus of what filmmaking is and why it matters to us (lecturers leading the discussion, as much as students participating).

Taken together, these questions and the exercise as a whole, is offering a window into student ambitions, and the barriers that stand in the way of realising those ambitions. Whether educators agree or empathise with what the students identify through this exercise is not important (though ideally this would be the case). What matters is that the responses here begin to reflect our students experience, realised both in their education up to this point, their hopes for their educational experience on their degree, and their aspirations for the future. Gathering these responses over five years, as I have done here, the window onto the world of our students grows wider, and perhaps the most striking aspect of this research is the commonalities across multiple years. In analysing the results, I have grouped together several key terms which seem to be suggesting the same, if not similar, issues being raised. It is entirely possible that the students submitting them were not necessarily thinking along the same lines as myself or colleagues who are interpreting them after. But having been involved in the post-exercise discussion I'm relatively confident that the analysis below accurately reflects the concerns of those involved. The results stem from a moment where our students were given the opportunity to reflect and respond. The question moving forward is whether educators, and the film and television industries, are listening to and respecting these young voices? Do the issues identified in this exercise find themselves reflected, either in pedagogy design, or in film and television industry policy and working practices? These latter questions seem to be of chief importance when thinking about how staff and students in higher education spaces can collaborate, and reach a mutual understanding, of why filmmaking matters and what this practice means to us all.

Challenges in the film & television industries

Below are the stills captured from the Mentimeter exercise in response to the first question: What do you think are the film and television industries biggest challenges? Some snapshots are from the same year but different seminar groups, while others reflect the total contributions by that year's cohort, each indicated by the reference below the image.

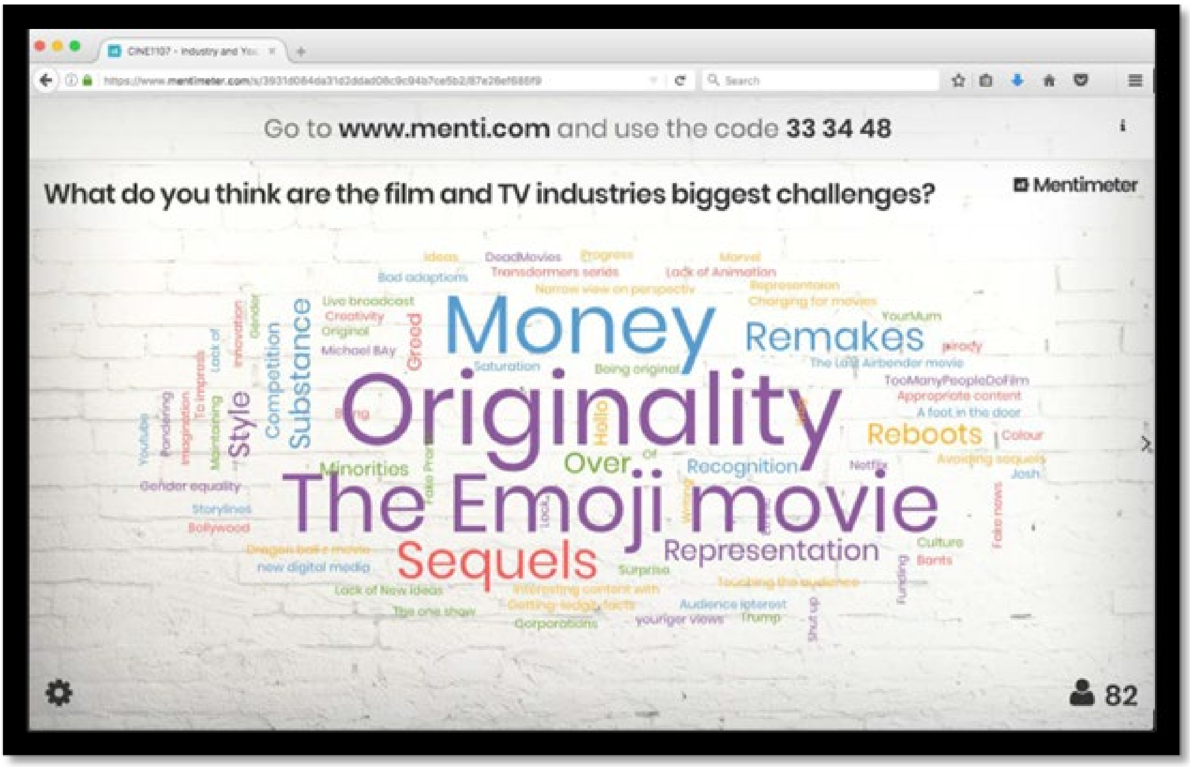


Go to **www.menti.com** and use the code **33 34 48**

What do you think are the film and TV industries biggest challenges?

imagination
Conformitism
Creative Control
Audience Attention
Making something original
netflix
YouTube
Feminists
Socio
pay
trends
Diversity
Publicity Stunt
Educating
gender
Team work
Censorship
Discrimination
Engagement
Originality
BBC
Collaboration
Piratecopying
Location
audience
Creativity
Patriarchy
Piracy
Equality
Creative freedom
Money
Race
Offending People
Budget
Binge watching
Sponsoring
Competition
Sexism
Representation
Audience engagement
Product vs Art
Fakenews
Goverment
Originality
Orginality
Stereotypes

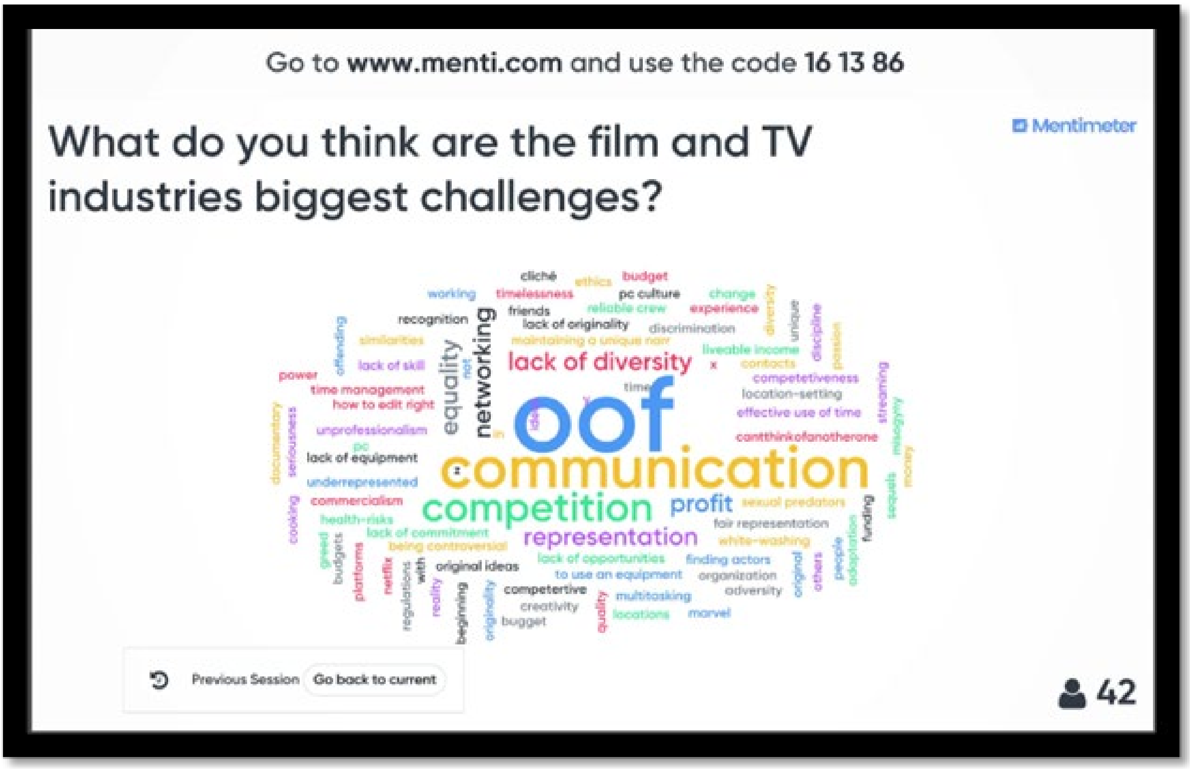
2017/18 (1)



Go to www.menti.com and use the code 33 34 48

What do you think are the film and TV industries biggest challenges?

Mentimeter
Money
Originality
The Emoji movie
Sequels
Remakes
Reboots
Representation
Substance
Style
Competition
Greed
Over
Recognition
Minorities
Ideas
DeadMovies
Progress
Marvel
Bad adaptions
Transformers series
Lack of Animation
Narrow view on perspective
Representaion
Changing for movies
Live broadcast
Creativity
Original
Michael BAy
YourMum
parody
Saturation
Being original
The Last Airbender movie
TooManyPeopleDoFilm
Appropriate content
A foot in the door
Colour
Avoiding sequels
Josh
Netflix
Gender equality
Storylines
Bollywood
Dragon ball z movie
new digital media
Lack of New Ideas
The one show
Surprise
Interesting content with
Getting dodgy facts
Corporations
Audience interest
younger views
Trump
Touching the audience
Culture
Bants
Fake news
Funding
Shut up
Youtube
Pandering
Imagination
To impress
Lack of
Maintaining
innovation
Gender
82



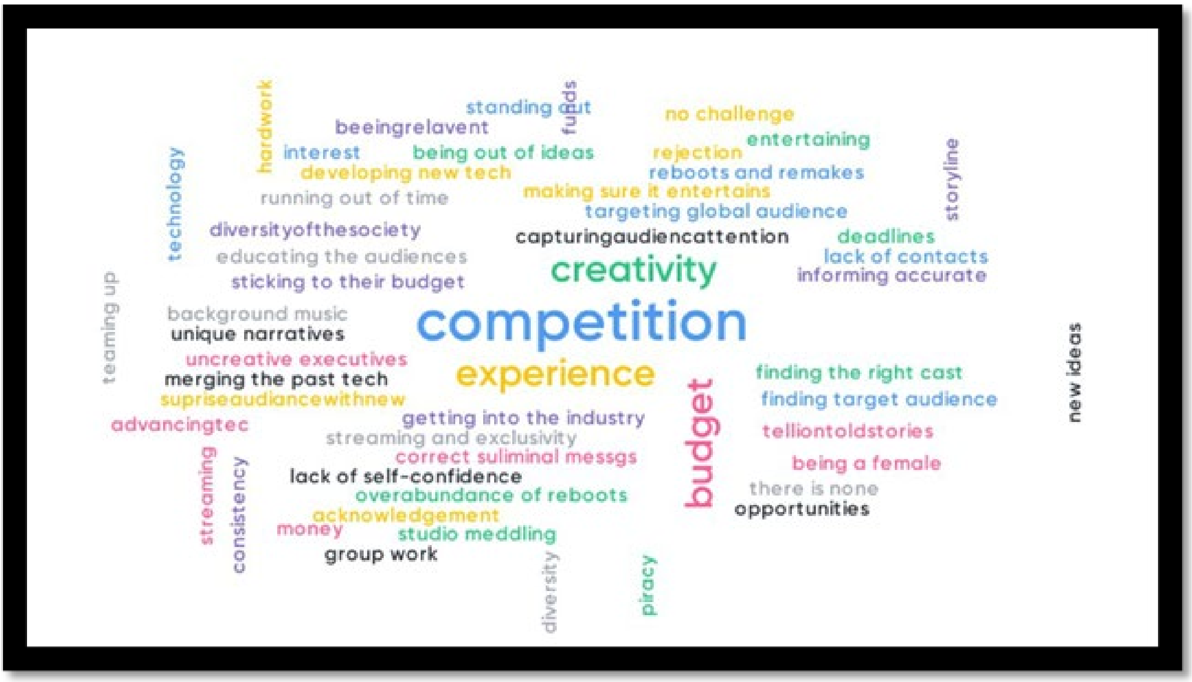
Go to www.menti.com and use the code 16 13 86

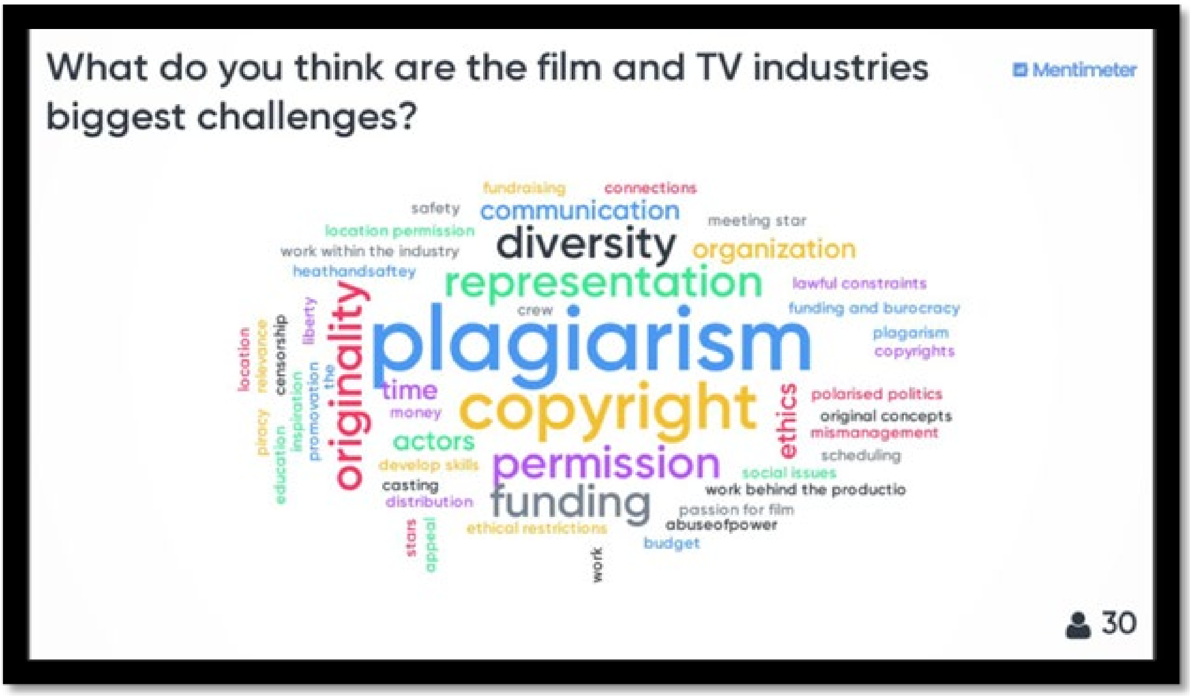
What do you think are the film and TV industries biggest challenges?

Mentimeter
oof
communication
competition
lack of diversity
representation
profit
networking
equality
cliché
ethics
budget
working
timelessness
pc culture
change
friends
reliable crew
experience
recognition
lack of originality
discrimination
similarities
maintaining a unique narr
liveable income
lack of skill
contacts
power
time management
competetiveness
how to edit right
location-setting
effective use of time
unprofessionalism
cantthinkofanotherone
lack of equipment
underrepresented
commercialism
sexual predators
health-risks
fair representation
lack of commitment
white-washing
being controversial
original ideas
lack of opportunities
finding actors
to use an equipment
organization
competertive
multitasking
adversity
creativity
bugget
locations
marvel
documentary
seriousness
cooking
greed
budgets
platforms
netflix
regulations
reality
beginning
originality
quality
diversity
unique
discipline
passion
streaming
misogyny
money
sequels
funding
adaptation
people
others
original
offending
Previous Session
Go back to current
42

2017/18 (2)

2018/19 (1)


standing out
funds
hardwork
beeingrelavent
no challenge
entertaining
interest
being out of ideas
rejection
technology
developing new tech
reboots and remakes
storyline
running out of time
making sure it entertains
targeting global audience
diversityofthesociety
capturingaudiencattention
deadlines
educating the audiences
lack of contacts
sticking to their budget
creativity
informing accurate
teaming up
background music
competition
unique narratives
new ideas
uncreative executives
experience
finding the right cast
merging the past tech
supriseaudiancewithnew
finding target audience
budget
advancingtec
getting into the industry
telliontoldstories
streaming and exclusivity
correct suliminal messgs
being a female
streaming
consistency
lack of self-confidence
there is none
overabundance of reboots
opportunities
acknowledgement
money
studio meddling
group work
diversity
piracy

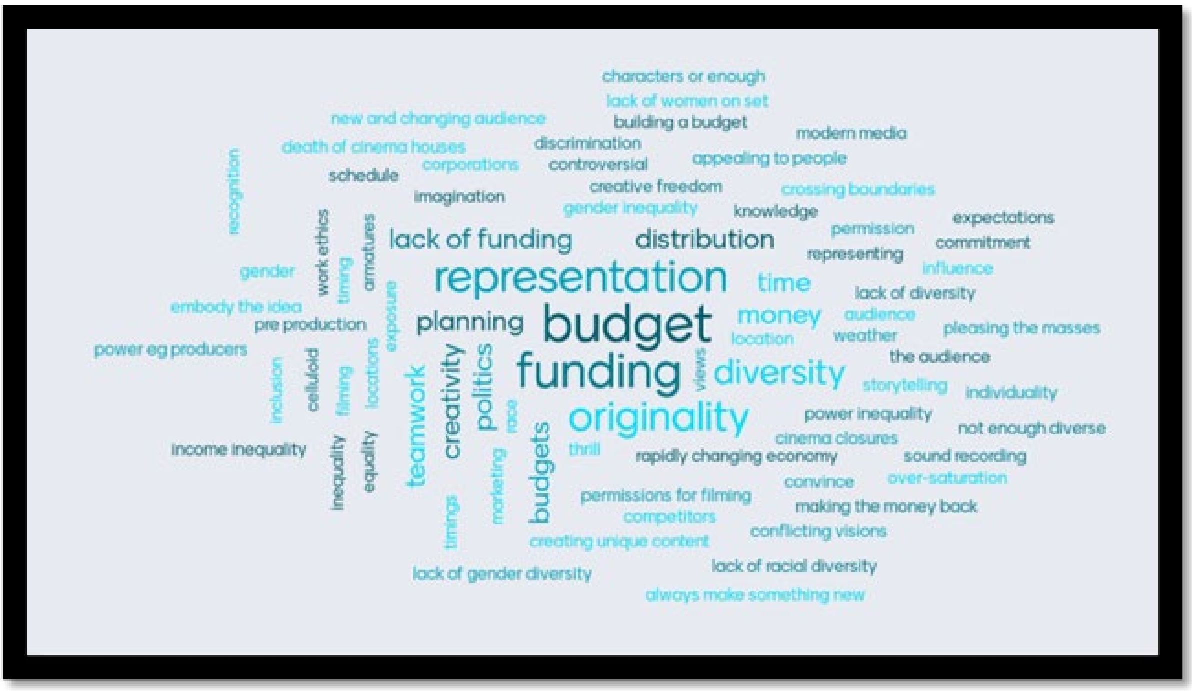


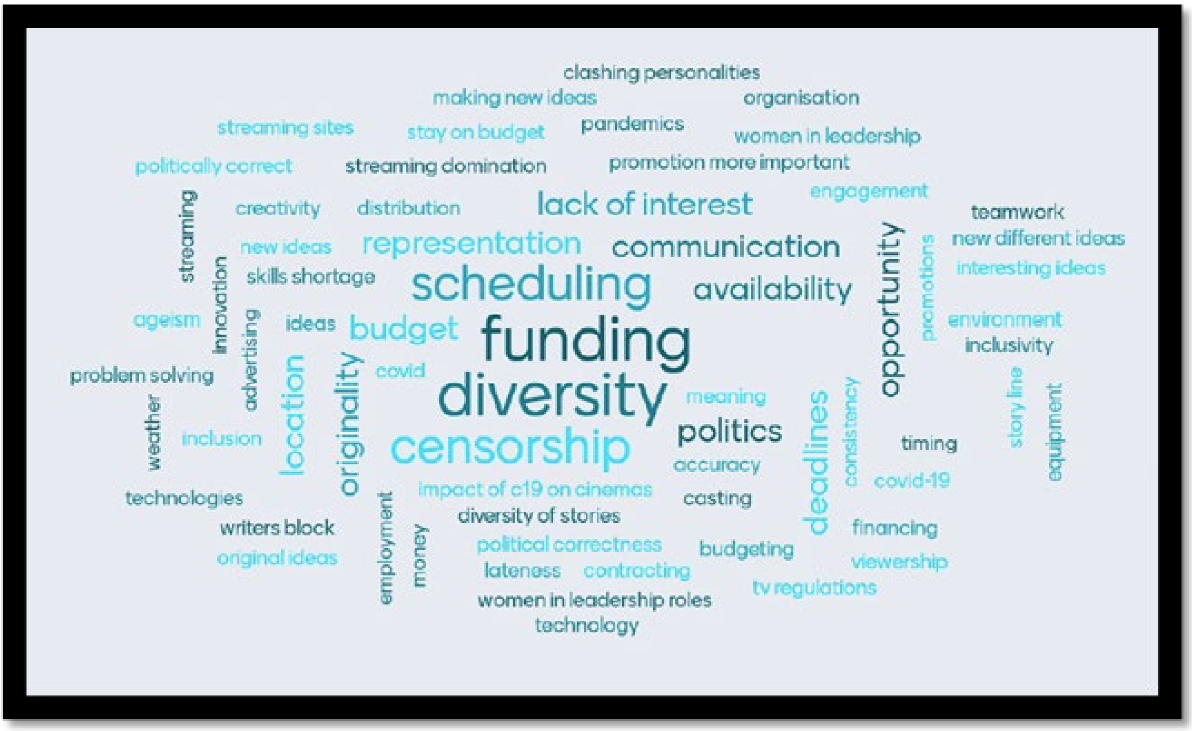
What do you think are the film and TV industries biggest challenges?

Mentimeter
fundraising
connections
safety
communication
meeting star
location permission
work within the industry
diversity
organization
heathandsaftey
representation
lawful constraints
crew
funding and burocracy
location
relevance
censorship
liberty
plagiarism
plagarism
copyrights
piracy
education
inspiration
promovation
the
originality
time
money
copyright
ethics
polarised politics
original concepts
mismanagement
actors
develop skills
permission
scheduling
social issues
casting
distribution
funding
work behind the productio
passion for film
abuseofpower
stars
appeal
ethical restrictions
budget
work
30

2018/19 (2)

2019/20





2020/21

2021/22

As discussed in the introduction, the larger a word appears in any of these, the more participants have submitted it, though this could still only be representative of three or four students. Through analysing these then, it is possible to understand which issues are more important to the student cohorts. The first time this exercise was run in September 2017 the results were made visible to the class as they were being submitted, hence "The Emoji Movie" reaching prominence as an issue for that group (although it was a particular low point for cinema). This also caused problematic answers to garner favour in response to question number 2 and these will be discussed below. For future exercises the results were hidden until a sufficient number had submitted, thus not skewing the results. As such, we might better take the latter 4 years of results as having a more genuine reflection of individual responses, with the earlier 2017/18 cohort still standing testament to group ones.

Looking at the above it is possible to identify four key challenges which are repeated, albeit sometimes in different forms, by the incoming student cohorts each year. They are: "Originality/Creativity", "Diversity/Lack of Diversity/Representation", "Money/Budget" and "Competition/Opportunity". For these headings I have gathered the most used terms but close analysis reveals that some participants expressed the same concerns using different language, e.g. instead of "Money/Budget" some students in 2018/19 used the terms "Funding" or "Profit" which seem to be indicating the same challenges. The 2020/21 and 2021/22 cohorts have at least one of the words from each of these groupings in large, coming very close to featuring all of them. While the rest of this section will focus on the four headline issues identified above, it is worth noting some of the other terms that have been submitted by multiple students in at least one year. These include: "Permission", "Ethics", "Time", "Politics", "Censorship", "Experience" and "Teamwork". Not to be fully discussed here, these are perhaps issues which readers and their students might also want to take away and reflect on, noting that they clearly have an impact on one or more of the cohorts who have studied at Greenwich in the past five years.

With regards to "Originality/Creativity" then, the question is on how these play out in both education and industrial settings. In the mainstream film industry (Hollywood or the UK which largely acts as a production house for Hollywood) it is possible to identify a trend where the originality of directors is valued briefly, until it can be capitalised on. Directors like Christopher Nolan, Rian Johnson and Colin Trevorrow, to name a few, tend to breakout with highly stylised genre pieces before being put to work in major studios where that creativity and originality is dulled, if not totally drowned out, in order to make the blockbuster film as appealing as possible to a wide audience (no Brechtian alienation here!) How do educators work with such a paradox: be creative until someone gives you proper money to make a film and then? What strategies might we employ to encourage students, noting the potential futility of filmmaking in this context? The first thing to do is certainly to question what the notion of either "Creativity" or "Originality" mean. Often students feel they need to be completely new, fresh or original but rarely consider the importance of so-called creative borrowing.

Conversely, students are also routinely seen to be deploying mainstream film and television tropes in their own filmmaking, forgoing any sense of what their own contribution to that mainstream might be. Indeed, in my time as Festival Director of Screentest: The National Student Film Festival, I was consistently taken aback by the number of short films which mimicked popular trends: zombies, gangsters, *Star Wars,* vampires, various takes on *Alice in Wonderland*. There was once a group of students who decided to remake, in less than ten minutes, Stephen King's *Misery* (already adapted into a feature film by Rob Reiner in 1990). Some of these projects are done with sufficient playfulness and originality; many are not. As the filmmaker Jim Jarmusch wrote in his '5 Rules of Filmmaking':

> Nothing is original. Steal from anywhere that resonates with inspiration or fuels your imagination. Devour old films, new films, music, books, paintings, photographs, poems, dreams, random conversations, architecture, bridges, street signs, trees,

> clouds, bodies of water, light and shadows. Select only things to steal from that speak directly to your soul. If you do this, your work (and theft) will be authentic.
>
> (*Moviemaker.com,* 2013: online)

This calls into question processes of ideation, and not only how students do this but how we *teach* them to do it. The four page "A Technique for Having Ideas" in Mackendrick's *On Filmmaking* (2006: pp. 36-39) is very useful for at least giving students a brief guide on how this process might work. Independent filmmaking culture can be a gateway to opportunity but not automatically; the production of original and creative films requires a learning culture that encourages, fosters and supports such bold projects, and presents examples of them.

On reflection, it also appears that the challenges around "Originality/Creativity" are actually the other side of the coin from "Money/Budget". Afterall, is it not a question of wanting to be original and creative in order to 'get noticed' and be *allowed* to make future films? Indeed, one might also include "Permission", "Time" and "Censorship" here, other terms which were of clear import to some of the cohorts who participated in this exercise. So again we come back to questions of how we deal with these challenges through pedagogy design. On the point about independent filmmaking cultures above, are educators foregrounding types of filmmaking that do not necessarily require budgets? Are we case studying, for example, Derek Jarman who, for every big budget 35mm film he made was also shooting Super8 at weekends with Tilda Swinton? Or John Akomfrah and the working methods of the Black Audio Film Collective? Indeed, any of the collectives like The London Women's Film Group or the Berwick Street Collective, as featured in Petra Bauer's 2010 exhibition *Me, You, Us Them* (collected in the book *Working Together: Notes on British Film Collectives in the 1970s,* ed. Bauer and Kidner, 2012). Certainly, the London Women's Film Group were clear about their intentions in forming: "for women to learn the skills denied them in industry. The film industry is excessively male-dominated and this is reflected on the screen in terms of portrayal of women and choice of subject matter. For this it was obviously essential that women acquire the necessary skills and experience (to make films)" (2012: front cover).

Most of these examples need updating, so we can find new ways of working; staff and students in a university setting are well placed to do this, together. And the examples above are by no means exhaustive, thought they serve as examples of different ways of making films that can be achieved using little to no budget. Universities also have an important role to play here because we have the film kit. At Greenwich, we experimented with acting as a production house, not just for our current students but for our recent graduates also. Obviously, this isn't always possible at peak times of the year but there are long periods of time during which the kit lies dormant and could be used. This would reduce the required budget for any short film by a considerable amount. A project like this has been piloted by colleagues at Falmouth University, where through their Sound/Image Cinema Lab students are able to get money for their own projects, as well as participate in larger feature films, during their time studying. These have recently included the Cannes premiering Mark Jenkin's films *BAIT* (2019) and *Enys Men* (2022) (more information here: (https://www.falmouth.ac.uk/research/programmes/pedagogy-futures/cinema-lab). While not filmmaking, the model of the Design Making Unit at UAL's Chelsea College of Art is another one that could be emulated on film production degrees – bringing together current students, alumni and industry partners to work on projects (https://designmakingunit.org/). Initiatives like those referenced here require institutional support, additional funding and most certainly championing by the academic teams who will implement them. The reward for this however is a genuine engagement with low-budget film production that, if actioned by enough HE institutions, would have a huge impact on the UK's film culture, and eventually the wider screen industries.

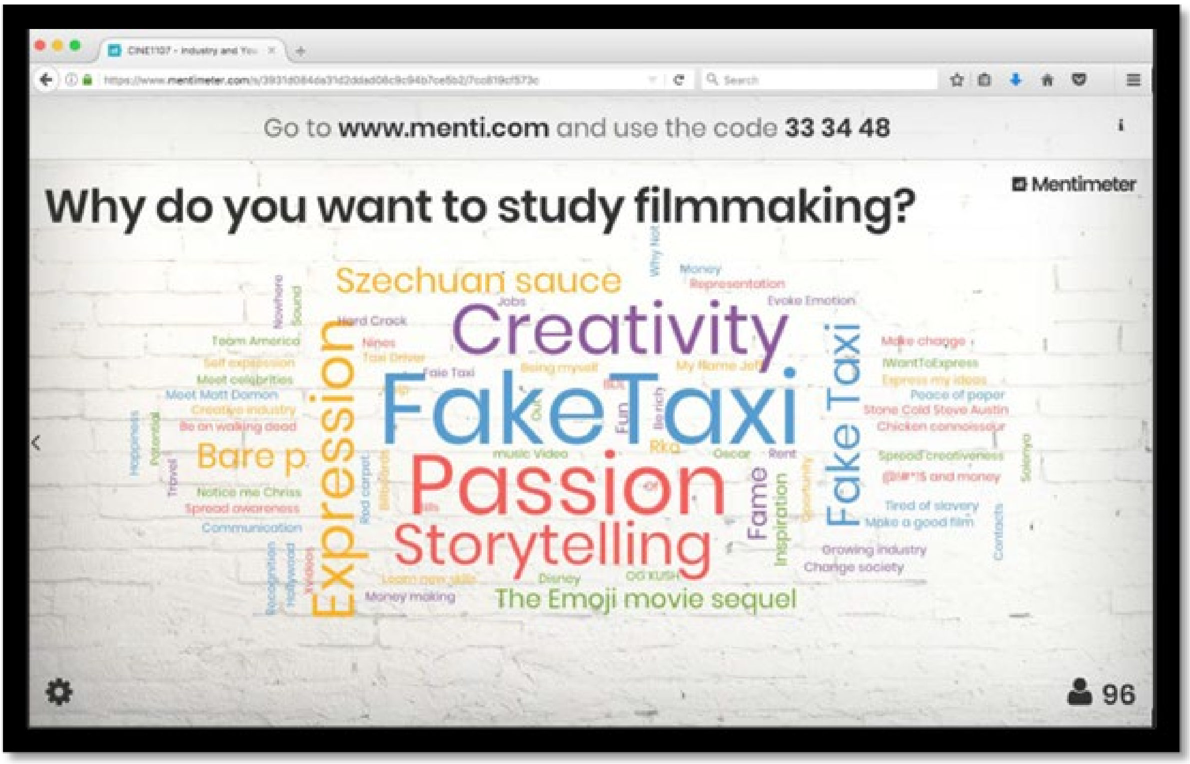
"Diversity/Lack of Diversity/Representation" are key issues currently in the film, television and wider creative industries, no doubt pushed to the fore in the student psyche by social media driven movements like #MeToo and #OscarsSoWhite. These issues are reinforced statistically in the introduction of this article, but further concerns are raised by the qualitative stories that emerge in Graeber (2018) and Friedman and Laurison (2019). As with the challenges above, it is clear that these three terms are once again the other side of the "Competition/Opportunity" coin, where "Lack of Diversity" will party be fuelled by a lack of "Opportunity". What are the participants telling us? As above, it is worth considering some of the smaller words that were submitted by at least one cohort: "Patriarchy", "Sexism", "Race" and "Equality" all seem to be challenges that the aspiring filmmakers in this exercise are keenly aware of. And all of these are feeding into the two headline challenges above of "Diversity" and "Competition/Opportunity". How can educators respond to these issues through the design of our learning? While it can seem daunting, especially when many of the structural inequalities highlighted are occurring beyond the university, some changes could have a huge impact. There are questions over who is being admitted to our film and television production degrees and how that admissions process is managed. Certainly, the UK environment suggests a variety of admissions practices and a lack of consistency between providers. Does a prospective student require a portfolio of work, for example? Or an interview? Who is deciding on final acceptance? While sometimes out of the control of academics and managed centrally by admissions teams, it is worth taking time to reflect upon the ways in which these processes may help or hinder the diversity of our degree programmes and subsequently, the potential pool of future filmmaking talent.

Similarly, staff recruitment, retention and training is also a key aspect of encouraging diverse practitioners and recent industrial disputes at UK HEIs suggests that we might not have a supportive enough environment to foster inclusive working practices (despite much rhetoric to the contrary). Before we call out the film and television industries for their working practices, we may need to put our own house in order first. While we work at that, filmmaking academic should be regularly involved in policy discussions with the screen industries; indeed we are likely needed to be dissenting voices in evidencing that ways in which 'equality, diversity and inclusivity' schemes in film and television rarely go far enough (evidenced by the literature at the top of this article). If the UK screen industries are serious about addressing equity in terms of "Competition/Opportunity", issues which aspiring filmmakers are clearly aware of, then serious work needs to be done, not just in terms of new schemes but in overhauling the working practices in film production which are, almost automatic, barriers to entry for some.

The last and perhaps most important response to the latter challenges is work around diversifying or decolonising the curriculum. While this is very much in vogue at the moment in all higher education subject areas and institutions, it has a particular resonance in film, television and other creative industries where this diversifying is part of an ongoing project in the working world. Step one in this process is about what film and television screenings we recommend or select. Who were they made by, in the first instance perhaps, but also who are the stories about? The power of seeing yourself represented on-screen cannot be underestimated, as exemplified in what is often termed 'the Scully effect' for *The X-Files* female protagonist (played by Gillian Anderson) having inspired a generation of scientists. A good article on this effect here (https://shenovafashion.com/blogs/blog/representation-matters-its-science) also makes mention of *Star Trek's* Uhura (Nichelle Nicols) and Captain Kathryn Janeway (Kate Mulgrew). Science fiction television of the mid-nineties is a fairly niche crowd but nevertheless the importance of this representation is still being seen and felt today. Screen media aside, there is also the question of readings and in film production these can often also be white male centric. It is crucial that we ensure a plurality of voices are echoed through our curricula, to reflect the often-diverse cohorts who are studying with us. As noted by the example above, we can attest that this will impact the aspirations of young filmmakers we are teaching, and this work is seen as critical given the responses below to question 2 of this Mentimeter exercise about why students want to study filmmaking.

Why do students want to study filmmaking?

Below are the responses to question 2 of this exercise, collected in the same way to those of question 1. The first two of these from 2017, captured while the class could see responses being added to the board, contain some problematic submissions which will be discussed below.

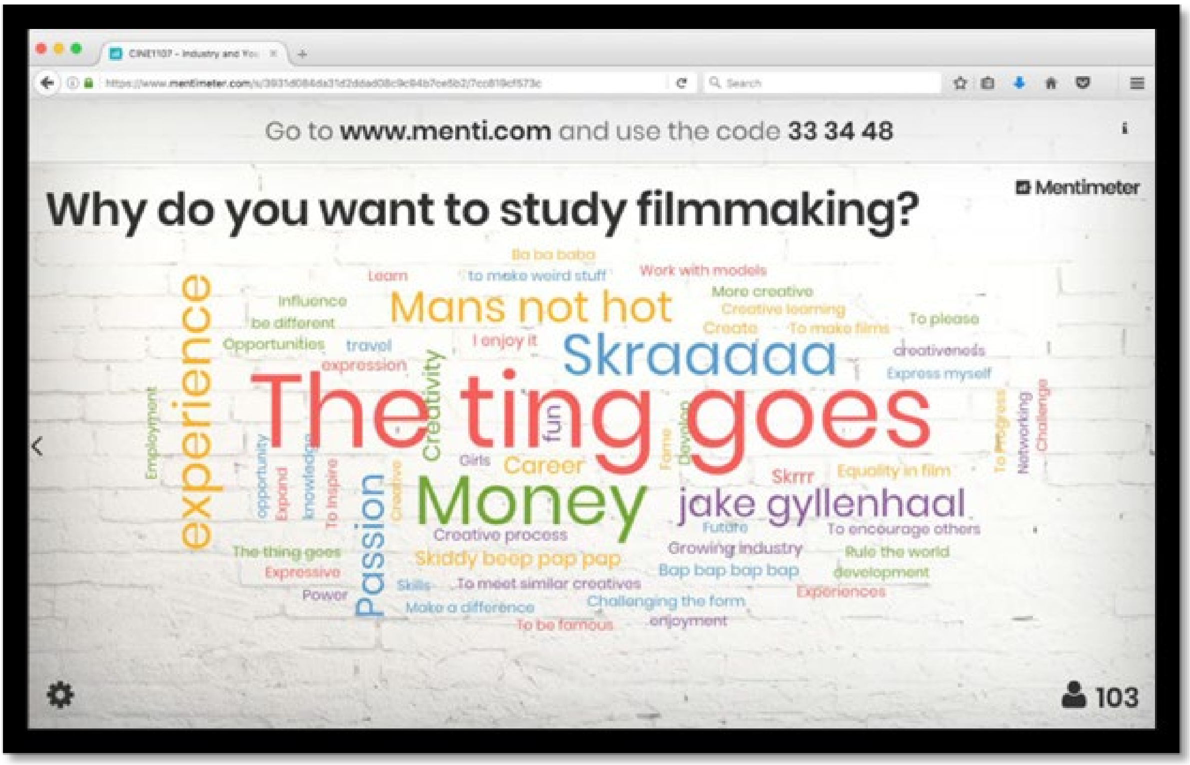


Go to www.menti.com and use the code 33 34 48

Why do you want to study filmmaking?

Mentimeter
Szechuan sauce
Creativity
FakeTaxi
Passion
Storytelling
Expression
Fake Taxi
The Emoji movie sequel
Bare p
Fame
Inspiration
Nowhere
Sound
Why Not
Money
Representation
Evoke Emotion
Jobs
Hard Crack
Team America
Self expression
Meet celebrities
Meet Matt Damon
Creative industry
Be on walking dead
Happiness
Potential
Travel
Notice me Chriss
Spread awareness
Communication
Recognition
Hollywood
Videos
Red carpet
Taxi Driver
Fake Taxi
Being myself
My Name Jeff
Fun
Be rich
music Video
Rko
Oscar
Rent
Disney
OG KUSH
Money making
Make change
IWantToExpress
Express my ideas
Peace of paper
Stone Cold Steve Austin
Chicken connoisseur
Spread creativeness
@#*$ and money
Tired of slavery
Make a good film
Growing industry
Change society
Contacts
Solenyo
96

2017/18 (1)

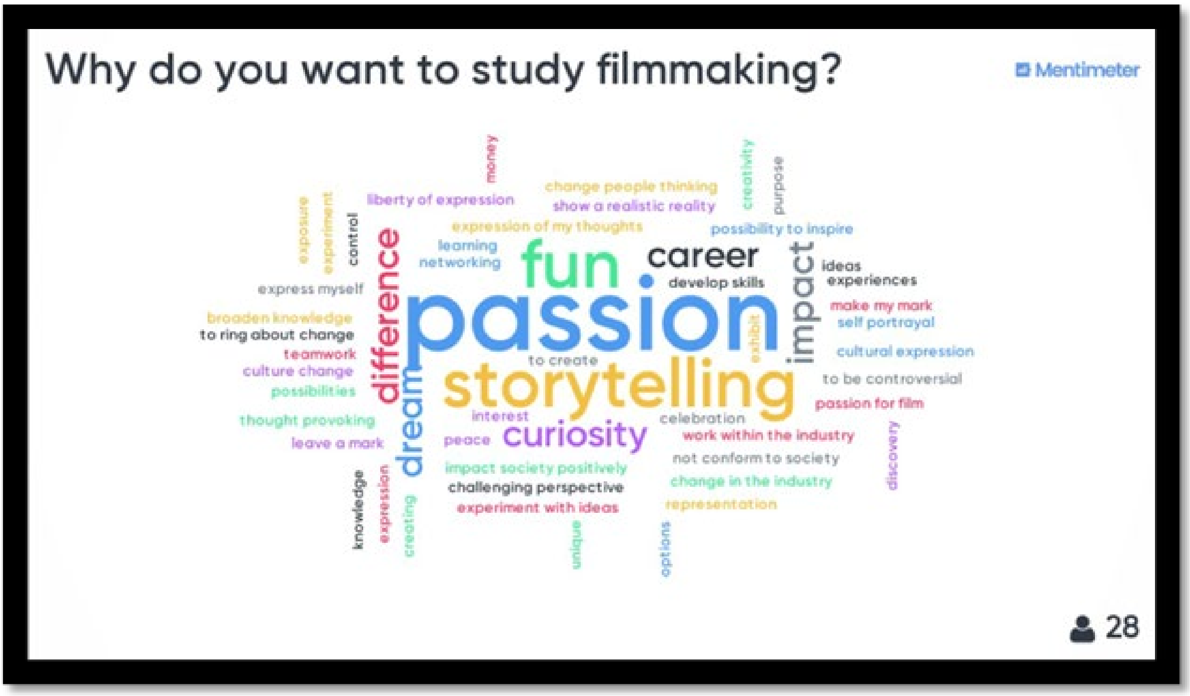


Go to **www.menti.com** and use the code **33 34 48**

Why do you want to study filmmaking?

Mentimeter
Ba ba baba
Learn
to make weird stuff
Work with models
Influence
Mans not hot
More creative
be different
Creative learning
Create
To make films
To please
Opportunities
travel
I enjoy it
Skraaaaa
creativeness
expression
Express myself
experience
Employment
The ting goes
Creativity
fun
To progress
Networking
Challenge
opportunity
Expand
knowledge
To inspire
Creative
Girls
Career
Fame
Develop
Skrrr
Equality in film
Passion
Money
jake gyllenhaal
Future
Creative process
To encourage others
The thing goes
Skiddy beep pap pap
Growing industry
Rule the world
Expressive
Bap bap bap bap
development
Power
Skills
To meet similar creatives
Experiences
Make a difference
Challenging the form
To be famous
enjoyment
103

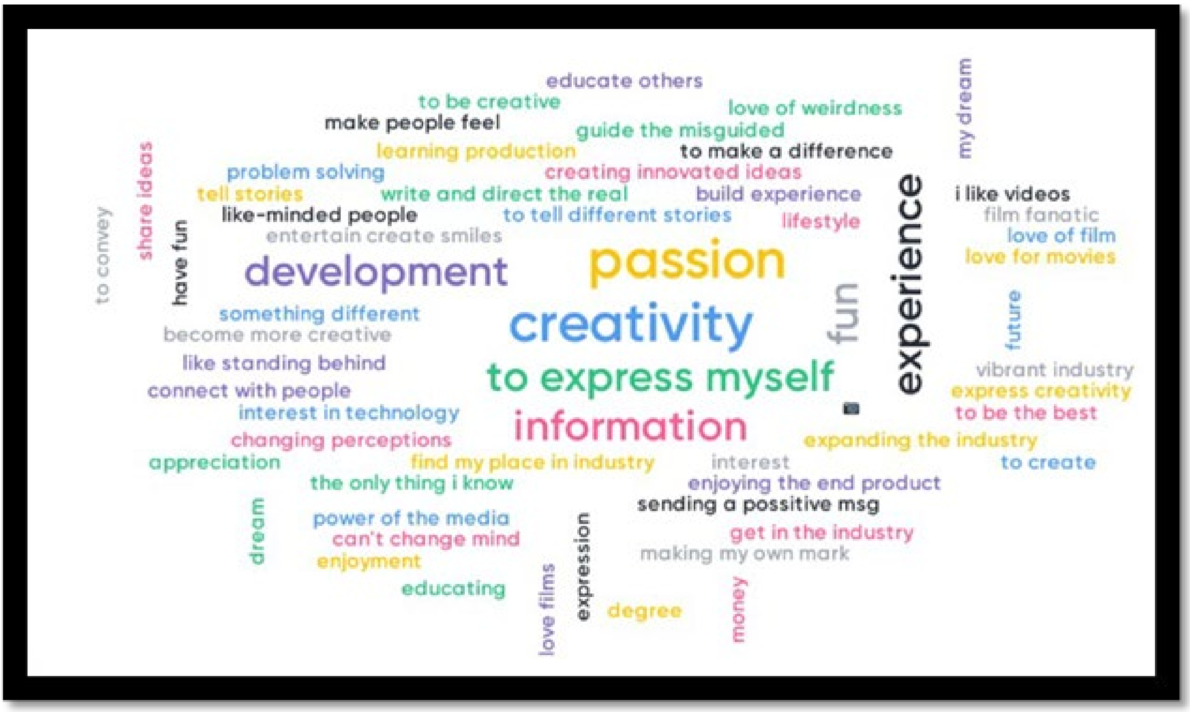
2017/18 (2)

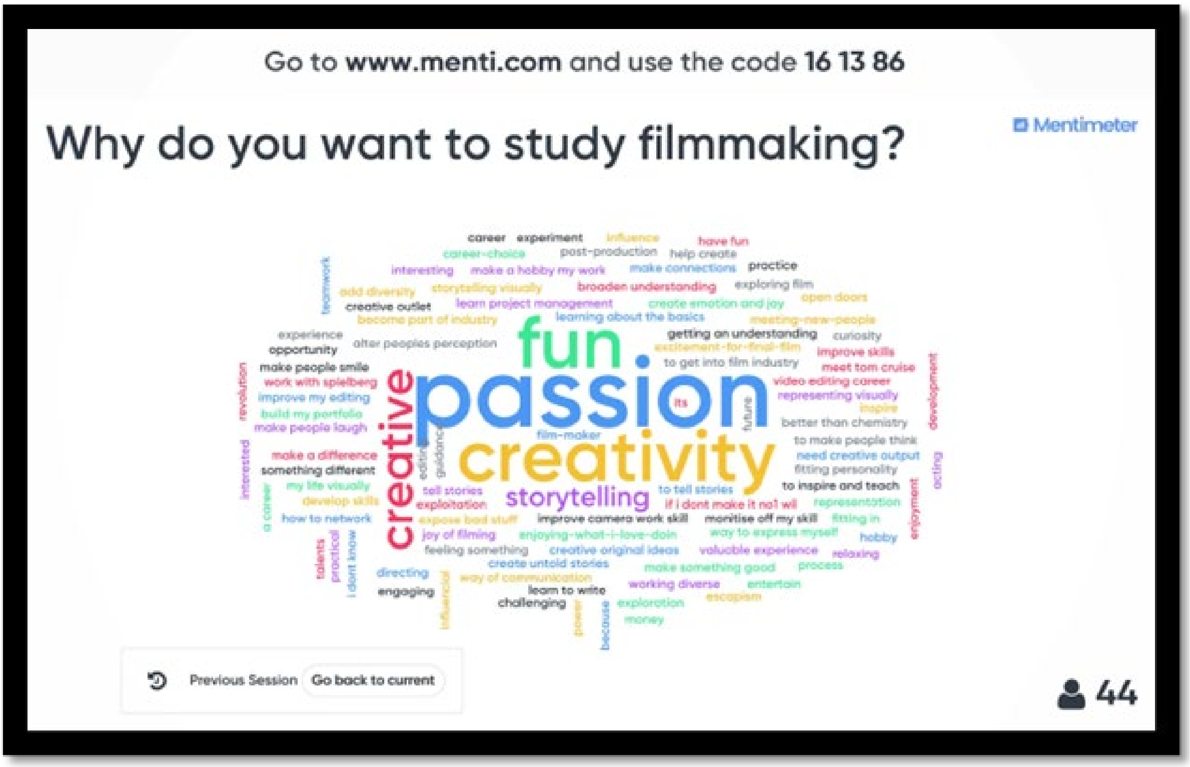


Why do you want to study filmmaking?

Mentimeter
money
creativity
purpose
change people thinking
liberty of expression
show a realistic reality
exposure
experiment
control
expression of my thoughts
possibility to inspire
learning
networking
fun
career
impact
ideas
experiences
express myself
develop skills
difference
passion
make my mark
self portrayal
broaden knowledge
to ring about change
exhibit
teamwork
cultural expression
culture change
to create
possibilities
storytelling
to be controversial
dream
passion for film
thought provoking
interest
celebration
leave a mark
peace
curiosity
work within the industry
not conform to society
impact society positively
discovery
knowledge
expression
challenging perspective
change in the industry
creating
experiment with ideas
representation
unique
options
28

2018/19 (1)


educate others
to be creative
love of weirdness
make people feel
guide the misguided
learning production
to make a difference
my dream
problem solving
creating innovated ideas
tell stories
write and direct the real
build experience
i like videos
like-minded people
to tell different stories
lifestyle
film fanatic
to convey
share ideas
have fun
entertain create smiles
love of film
love for movies
development
passion
experience
something different
creativity
fun
future
become more creative
like standing behind
vibrant industry
connect with people
to express myself
express creativity
interest in technology
to be the best
changing perceptions
information
expanding the industry
appreciation
find my place in industry
interest
to create
the only thing i know
enjoying the end product
sending a possitive msg
dream
power of the media
can't change mind
get in the industry
making my own mark
enjoyment
expression
educating
love films
degree
money

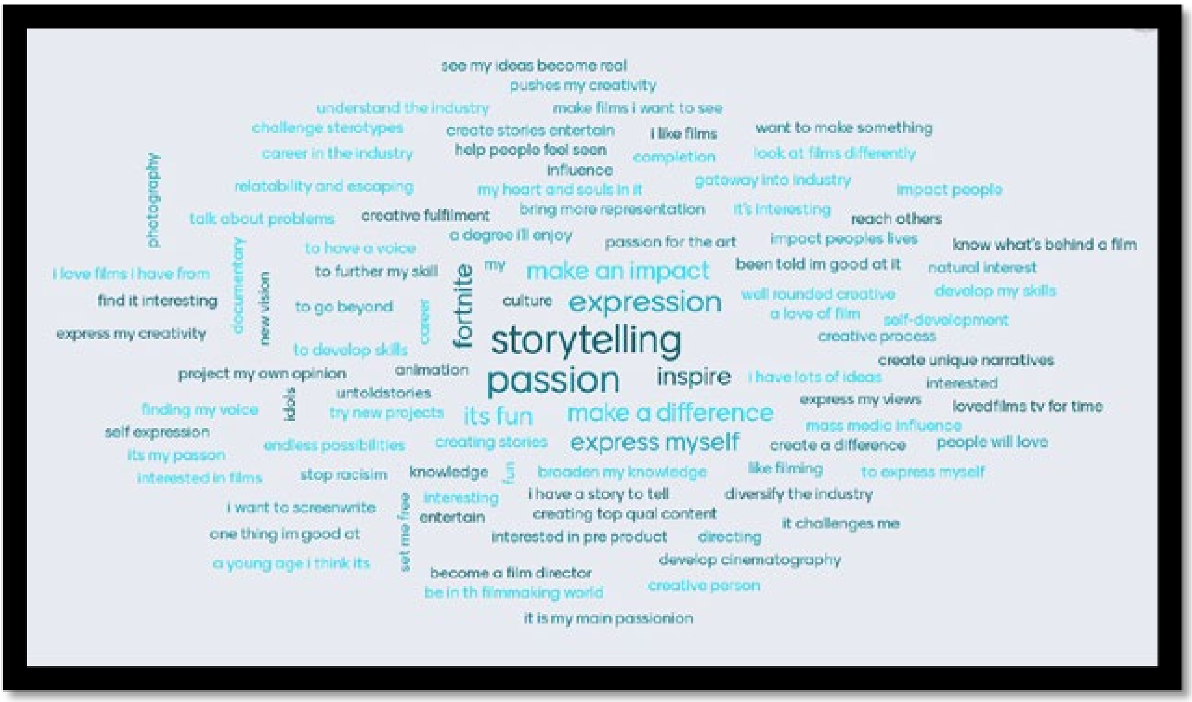

Go to **www.menti.com** and use the code **16 13 86**

Why do you want to study filmmaking?

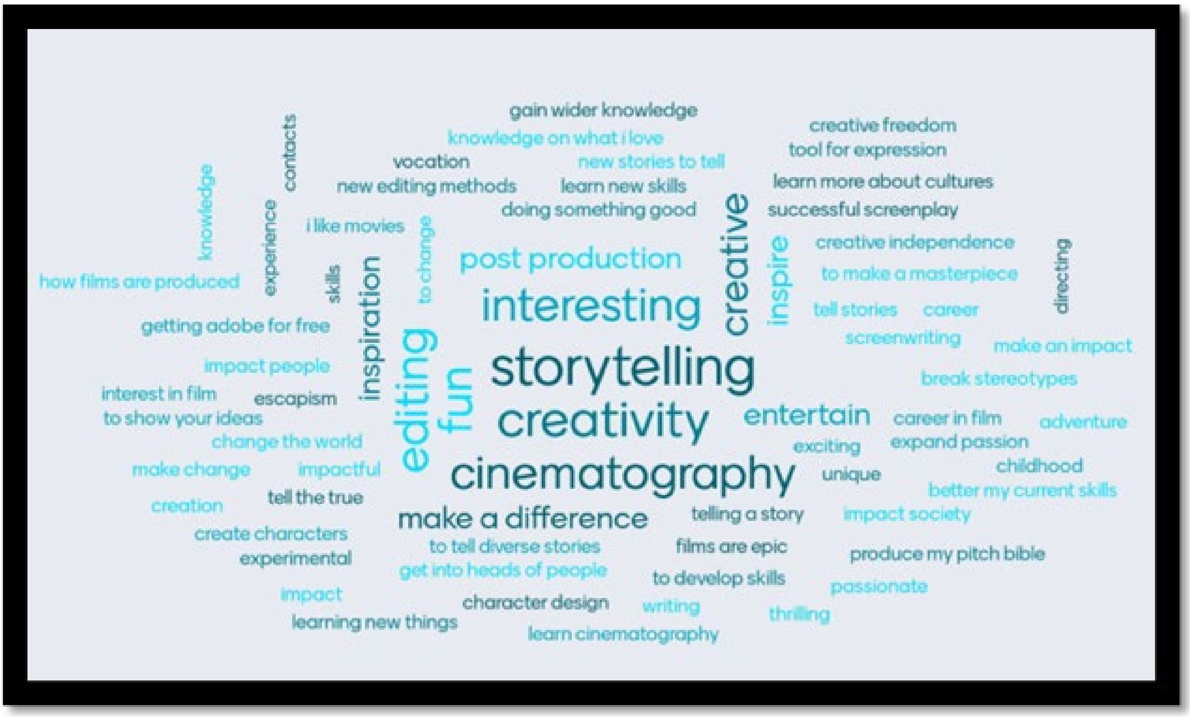
Mentimeter
career
experiment
influence
have fun
career-choice
post-production
help create
teamwork
interesting
make a hobby my work
make connections
practice
add diversity
storytelling visually
broaden understanding
exploring film
creative outlet
learn project management
create emotion and joy
open doors
become part of industry
learning about the basics
meeting-new-people
experience
fun
getting an understanding
curiosity
opportunity
alter peoples perception
excitement-for-final-film
improve skills
make people smile
to get into film industry
meet tom cruise
revolution
work with spielberg
video editing career
improve my editing
creative
passion
its
representing visually
development
build my portfolio
inspire
make people laugh
future
better than chemistry
film-maker
interested
make a difference
editing
guidance
creativity
to make people think
something different
need creative output
fitting personality
acting
my life visually
to inspire and teach
a career
develop skills
tell stories
storytelling
to tell stories
exploitation
if i dont make it no1 wil
representation
enjoyment
how to network
expose bad stuff
improve camera work skill
monitise off my skill
fitting in
joy of filming
enjoying-what-i-love-doin
way to express myself
hobby
talents
practical
i dont know
feeling something
creative original ideas
valuable experience
relaxing
create untold stories
make something good
process
directing
way of communication
working diverse
entertain
engaging
influencial
learn to write
challenging
exploration
escapism
power
because
money
Previous Session
Go back to current
44

2018/19 (2)

2019/20


see my ideas become real
pushes my creativity
understand the industry
make films i want to see
challenge stereotypes
create stories entertain
i like films
want to make something
career in the industry
help people feel seen
completion
look at films differently
influence
photography
relatability and escaping
my heart and souls in it
gateway into industry
impact people
talk about problems
creative fulfilment
bring more representation
it's interesting
reach others
a degree i'll enjoy
passion for the art
impact peoples lives
know what's behind a film
to have a voice
documentary
i love films i have from
to further my skill
my
make an impact
been told im good at it
natural interest
find it interesting
new vision
fortnite
culture
expression
well rounded creative
develop my skills
to go beyond
career
a love of film
self-development
express my creativity
storytelling
creative process
to develop skills
create unique narratives
project my own opinion
animation
passion
inspire
i have lots of ideas
interested
untoldstories
idols
express my views
lovedfilms tv for time
finding my voice
try new projects
its fun
make a difference
mass media influence
self expression
endless possibilities
creating stories
express myself
create a difference
people will love
its my passon
interested in films
stop racisim
knowledge
fun
broaden my knowledge
like filming
to express myself
interesting
i have a story to tell
diversify the industry
i want to screenwrite
set me free
entertain
creating top qual content
it challenges me
one thing im good at
interested in pre product
directing
a young age i think its
develop cinematography
become a film director
be in th filmmaking world
creative person
it is my main passionion

2020/21


gain wider knowledge
knowledge on what i love
creative freedom
contacts
vocation
new stories to tell
tool for expression
new editing methods
learn new skills
learn more about cultures
knowledge
doing something good
successful screenplay
experience
i like movies
creative
creative independence
to change
post production
inspire
to make a masterpiece
how films are produced
skills
inspiration
interesting
tell stories
career
directing
getting adobe for free
screenwriting
make an impact
impact people
storytelling
break stereotypes
interest in film
escapism
editing
fun
to show your ideas
creativity
entertain
career in film
adventure
change the world
exciting
expand passion
make change
impactful
cinematography
unique
childhood
creation
tell the true
better my current skills
make a difference
telling a story
impact society
create characters
to tell diverse stories
films are epic
experimental
produce my pitch bible
get into heads of people
to develop skills
impact
passionate
character design
writing
learning new things
thrilling
learn cinematography

2021/22

The problem with the 2017 set of responses is that they were hijacked, in the first group by relatively harmless song titles and lyrics, which have since become memes on social media. The second however makes headline reference to the explicit pornographic website *Fake Taxi*. While clearly intended as a joke by the students who submitted it, a good number judging by the fact it appears prominently twice, it actually foregrounds a strain of misogyny running through filmmaking undergraduates as they arrive. That this is deemed appropriate material for an academic setting and discussion is disconcerting to say the least. The students here are demonstrating at once a lack of understanding about the implications of pornographic material, and a misunderstanding of what is considered appropriate in a university setting. While this single incident does not discredit either this exercise or what it reveals about undergraduate filmmakers at entry level, it does highlight the fact that seminar exercises like this require careful management and monitoring, noting that difficult responses like *Fake Taxi* necessitate uncomfortable discussions. By hiding the results as students submitted, the mass submission of inappropriate material was avoided in future years.

What are the participants telling us about their reasons for studying filmmaking, here used as a broad term which on this case study degree programme also means television production? More striking than the responses to the first question is the absolute consistency of responses from year to year on this second question. One of the most interesting are the two different groups from 2018/19 where the terms “Passion” and “Fun” are headlines in both, supplemented by differences in using the terms “Storytelling” and “Creativity”. But a wider analysis of all submissions detects the substantial use of these phrases in every single year group, with some additional phrases relating to: “Expression/Express Myself” and “Make a… /Difference/Impact”. While the responses to question 1 have implications for our pedagogic approach, the responses to question 2 seem much more pertinent and require some detailed reflection, and action, which will impact what we teach, how, and why.

First and foremostly it is clear that the incoming students are putting an emphasis on themselves as creative practitioners, with key terms like “Storytelling”, “Creativity” and “Expression”. Clearly, for many first-year film practice students involved in this exercise, they want to be making films and are tying this to their personal desires for expression. And this desire certainly tallies with, and is possibly an extension of, what Potter uncovered in his research into youth filmmaking: “In the project schools the production work was combined with an overarching imperative for the whole endeavour, that of self-representation. Here we have the possibility that investment in the activity means investing in it as a practice with an explicit communicative or social action” (2009: p. 254). Creative practice as a form of personal expression is complicated at later levels because as educators we know that this desire is not always respected by mainstream film and television industries. Indeed, I quite often anecdotally hear of industry employers who express indifference at student’s graduate short films. Well, what is a graduate to make of that? What are current students to make of it, given that they are setting aside their time, money, and placing their hopes and ambitions into being a filmmaker? What are educators to make of it?

Again, this comes back to a question of how we position our filmmaking pedagogy – what’s the focus of our teaching and learning? Given the policy environment in UK higher education contemporarily, the Conservative government would no doubt suggest that our focus is on getting our graduates ‘highly skilled’, ‘well paying’ jobs which are worth the investment of time and money that a three-year undergraduate entails. Subjects which are not currently doing this, or seen to be doing it, are subsequently derided as ‘low value’, a moniker not restricted to film, television or the creative industries (Media Studies has attracted this label since before I studied it at A-Level in 2004) but recently deployed as an excuse to cut English Literature at Sheffield Hallam University (https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/jun/27/sheffield-hallam-university-suspends-low-value-english-literature-degree). This places creative degree programmes in a bind where, on the one hand, students see themselves as creative practitioners and wish to develop in this area, as exemplified by those participating in this exercise. However, educators focus is also pulled in the direction of getting students ‘graduate jobs', an obvious imperative for family and policy makers. But what about entry level jobs in film and television? They are regularly not paid enough either to be inclusive for aspiring industry entrants who do not come from monied backgrounds (again, see the case studies in Friedman and Laurison, 2019) or to be considered as 'graduate level jobs'. Indeed, is it not the case that the basic 'skills' of production, including workflows as much as kit and specific bits of software, will serve our graduates for the first five - ten years after graduation. But it is the bigger ideas, and critical practice, that filmmaking degrees can offer, which will spur graduates on through the *next* five – ten years, as creative professionals who have something to say. It is in a purely skills-based curriculum, one which looks more like vocational training, that creative university degrees would find themselves truly 'low value'.

Another issue to contend with from these responses is "Fun". Yes, filmmaking is an enjoyable activity and we all like to think that it remains so. However, those of us longer in the tooth understand, fun though it may be at times, film and television production is also extremely hard work. What happens to our students when that realisation dawns? That this creative activity they are pouring everything into, literally "Passion" but also "Dream" and "Inspire/Inspiration" as expressed by participants above, may not transpire to be as fulfilling as initially hoped. A traditional retort might go something like "well, if you think it's tough here, wait until you are working in industry" etc. But this approach serves only to reinforce negative behaviours, and the expectation that our students should not only accept them but internalise them too, be more 'resilient'.

The issue of "Fun" then seems to connect to another key point raised by the participants, the frequent terms "Make a…/Difference/Impact". Is this not what drives a large part of creative practice, particularly when the going gets tough? Do all of us, ultimately, try to rest on the fact that the work we are doing has some meaning and life beyond the pure act of making/writing/creating etc? As educators, if we can connect student filmmaking practice to something bigger, then maybe we are able to help fuel them through the difficulties. Some examples of this are present in Steve Goodman's *Teaching Youth Media* where he draws on both Freire and Dewy, noting that students learn best "through cooperative experience of engagement in authentic work" (2003: 18). Similarly, Petrie and Stoneman point to the Huston School of Film and Digital Media in Ireland where "teams of students on the MA in Public Advocacy and Activism prepare briefings for those on the Production and Direction programme […] the advocacy students propose a focus and motivation for changing public opinion through a short film" (2014: 265). These are different settings, Goodman's being an extra-curricular filmmaking course for teenagers, and the latter a postgraduate degree. But they have currency in terms of shaping our thinking around how we position the various filmmaking briefs that students will engage with on undergraduate programmes. Connecting the "Fun" with "Making an Impact" will surely serve our students in the long-run, as they think not only about what they want to make but who they will make it with, and why.

Conclusion

The exercise case studied in this article is notable for several reasons, but the real takeaway needs to be the importance of attempting to understand what the concerns, and desires, of our aspiring filmmaking cohorts are. Giving students the opportunity the voice these seems to be a necessary priority for filmmaking, if not all creative, educators. Taken over a five-year period the responses, either in their consistency or diversity, tell educators and the screen industries something about the next generation of aspiring filmmakers. Afterall, while we may identify many issues in those, and the wider creative industries that need addressing, and the introduction to this article has attempted to highlight some of these, it is crucial to get buy-in from the students who will have to face them. While universities and the staff working in them are regularly involved in policy discussion, and bring about changes in whatever small ways we can, it is ultimately our graduates who will have to carry the torch in forging new ways of working and collaborating in more inclusive ways.

Having said that, it is necessary to conclude by reinforcing the ways in which university spaces can themselves be a response to some of the concerns and desires highlighted by the participants here. The Falmouth University 'Sound/Cinema Research Lab' presents a contemporary model of the university as a film production unit. Here, students are not only gaining experience on larger feature productions but are also able to secure funding and support for their own short films post-graduation. Subsequently, a small but very active production community has formed around the university, itself largely isolated in Cornwall, the South-West of England. As such, it might be trickier for universities in more condensed spaces like London, Birmingham or Manchester to carve out such a community, but given the large numbers of students moving through degrees in these cities, as well as the number of film and television projects, the formation of production communities would be possible.

The other stand-out from Falmouth is the commitment, spelled out in their mission statement, to 'independent cinema': "Sound/Image Cinema Lab is a multifaceted partner, funder, resource and research centre dedicated to the production and education of independent cinema" (https://www.falmouth.ac.uk/research/programmes/pedagogy-futures/cinema-lab). While the term is debatable here it is taken to mean films that, without this partnership, may not be made. This statement then strikes to the very heart of why the exercise case studied here is important: to what extent are universities supporting independent production, as opposed to propping up Hollywood proxies with free/cheap labour? Clearly the students who participated in this exercise at Greenwich over the five years are keenly aware that they are not on a level playing field, as are the educators supporting and guiding them. Seeking support for their latest short film, I recently engaged in conversation with alumni from Greenwich who graduated in 2017 and the question of work obviously came up. "I'm not working in film" they said, "because I worry that I'll work too hard to be able to make my short films". So, when university management descend to ask why you don't have work placements setup with Netflix, a relationship that would undoubtedly increase student satisfaction according to the higher ups, educators have an ethical and pragmatic response in stating that we are supporting, or working towards supporting, independent productions instead. That way our students, a sample of whose voices are on display through the exercise presented in this article, can feel fulfilled, and properly supported, by an educational space that admits to the structural inequalities that are present, and intends to do something about them.

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