

WRITING

BRITISH FILMS - who writes

British films and how they are recruited

A report produced for the UK Film Council

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Royal Holloway University of London

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The Media Arts Department at Royal Holloway offers a unique mix of practical media work and innovative media theory. The research output of the Department was rated 5 in the last Research Assessment Exercise. At Master's level the Department offers courses directed to professional practice in film and television production, documentary, and screenwriting. All screenwriting at Royal Holloway is taught by professional screenwriters with current links to the industry, at BA and MA level and the MA in Feature Film Screenwriting was among the first screenwriting courses to achieve Skillset accreditation.

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UK Film Council

The UK Film Council is the lead agency for film in the UK ensuring that the economic, cultural and educational aspects of film are effectively represented at home and abroad. The Council supports:

- ***Creativity*** - encouraging the development of new talent, skills, and creative and technological innovation in UK film and assisting new and established filmmakers to produce successful and distinctive British films;
- ***Enterprise*** – supporting the creation and growth of sustainable businesses in the film sector, providing access to finance and helping the UK film industry compete successfully in the domestic and global marketplace;
- ***Imagination*** - promoting education and an appreciation and enjoyment of cinema by giving UK audiences access to the widest range of UK and international cinema, and by supporting film culture and heritage.
(<http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/information/aboutus/overview/>)

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KEY POINTS

This report was prompted by the findings of the IES study into the under-representation of female screenwriters of British films¹ and was designed to broaden our knowledge of screenwriting diversity in general by studying the way in which all screenwriters of British films² are recruited and employed.

- The study sample consisted of the 63 screenwriters credited on a random sample of 40 films certified as British in 2004 and 2005 and theatrically released in the UK.
- Most of the writers were white (98%), male (82.5%), over the age of 46 (66%) and earned relatively high incomes.
- A majority (61%) were not British.
- A majority (57%), whether of British or overseas nationality, were contactable only via a Hollywood agent. A majority were members of the Writers' Guild of America.
- Roughly half the respondents had a previous working or personal relationship with the commissioning producer, director or production company.
- Three-quarters of the respondents had worked previously in television.
- Most writers were employed after an approach from a commissioner (producer, director or production company), rather than on the basis of a pitch by the writer.
- Employers of screenwriters tend to commission established writers often previously known to them. While it is understandable to employ writers with whom a previous working or personal relationship exists, this has the effect of limiting the diversity of screenwriters on British films.
- Efforts to broaden the diversity of screenwriters of British films should focus on establishing links between the commissioners of screenplays for British films and mid-career British writers from a range of backgrounds, particularly those with experience in television, film or theatre.
- The means by which agents can be engaged to promote and represent British writers from a diversity of working backgrounds should be a focus of activity by the UKFC and the industry.

¹ See: Institute for Employment Studies, *Scoping Study into the Lack of Women Screenwriters in the UK*, UK Film Council, 2006.

² The selected films were certified as British by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) under Schedule 1 of the Films Act (1985). To qualify under Schedule 1 during the period under review, a film needed a minimum UK spend of 70% and a specified proportion of labour costs paid to qualifying individuals. A film could also qualify as a British film when it was an official co-production with other nations, where an official co-production treaty existed.

KEY FINDINGS

Key findings about the credited screenwriters of recent UK films included in this survey:

Who writes British films..?

- 12 (19%) of the 63 writers were women and of those, 1 was British. The others were: US 6, Dual UK/US 2, French 1, Danish 1, Canadian 1
- Only 17.5% of the films had a female writer
- 61% of the screenwriters were not British
- Two-thirds of the screenwriters in the sample were 46 years of age and over - (contrasting with all workers in UK film production, two-thirds of whom are under 46 years of age)
- 62 of the 63 writers were white
- 72% of respondents had annual incomes over £55,000/\$100,000

How were they recruited..?

- 50% of the writers had a previous working relationship, and many, 42%, had a personal relationship with the producer, director or production company responsible for their hiring, before the start of the project
- 77% of the writers were commissioned as a result of an approach made to them by a producer, director or production company
- 57% listed contact only via a Hollywood-based agent or manager

And...

- 77% had written television series, 38% had written television drama, 27% had written for the theatre and 23% had written radio drama
- The screenwriters who responded to the survey were four times more likely to be members of the Writers' Guild of America (53%) than to be members of the Writers' Guild of Great Britain (12%)
- Only 2 of the screenwriters questioned had studied screenwriting specifically and 7 had studied subjects related to screenwriting at university.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

This section suggests ways in which action should be taken and/or further research conducted. For more details see Recommendations: pages 35-37

Recommendation 1 Women and minority ethnic groups

The following actions are recommended:

- Solicit the views of agents and managers to accurately target appropriate events/activities that could result in the commissioning and promotion of women screenwriters and screenwriters from minority ethnic groups.
- Conduct in-depth research with women screenwriters and writer/directors and with screenwriters and writer/directors from minority ethnic groups to gauge their experiences of employment and attitudes encountered.
- Identify experienced women writers and writers from minority ethnic groups working in television and theatre and organise events or activities to introduce them to British film producers and directors.
- The UK Film Council to monitor genres in relation to gender and ethnicity, distinguishing between the work of writer/directors and commissioned screenwriters.
- Publicise the work of producers, directors and companies who commission screenwriters from minority ethnic groups and women.

Recommendation 2 Employment and recruitment of screenwriters

The following actions are recommended:

- An ongoing, more inclusive, survey of screenwriters of British film over a longer time span and in more depth, to include questions not addressed in this survey.
- Further research of television writers, male and female, who write also for film, or wish to, focussing on their experiences moving between the media.
- Further research into the value of 'pitching' and packaging as a means for securing commissions for screenwriters that lead to successful productions.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS – Continued over page

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS - Continued

Recommendation 3 Screenwriting education

The following actions are recommended:

- Monitor ways that new writers entering the film industry benefit from screenwriting education.
- Research the steps taken into the industry by the graduates of screenwriting programmes and the means by which they secure agents and commissions.
- Expand on successful initiatives into the industry for promising graduate screenwriters, or, if necessary, create them.

Recommendation 4 Credit resolution

The following action is recommended:

- Facilitate debate on the subject of credit resolution between the legislators, the Writers' Guild of Great Britain, the Personal Managers' Association³, and screenwriter representatives.

Recommendation 5 Screenwriting diaspora

The following actions are recommended:

- The UK Film Council to monitor the nationality of screenwriters on an on-going basis.
- A more detailed and in-depth survey of British writers working in the UK and overseas and of foreign writers of British films to gain a better understanding of the universality of film development and its effects on British film.
- Research the effect of the recent introduction of a cultural test for British films on the nationality of writers of British films.

³ The trade association of literary and theatrical agents.

1. Introduction

1.1. The brief

In Autumn 2006, the UK Film Council commissioned Royal Holloway, University of London to conduct a preliminary and brief survey into the employment of screenwriters writing British films.

This survey was initiated to begin to address the paucity of reliable data available on screenwriters' working lives and their conditions of employment by asking working screenwriters questions relating to their employment on recent British films.

The questions in the survey were chosen to reveal not only the circumstances of employment such as how recruitment was accomplished, but also how the surveyed writers experienced the hiring event, the numbers of drafts written, the number of writers on each film selected to be part of the survey, the point at which they joined and left the project and their satisfaction with the resolution of credit and financial issues. It also hoped to provide some facts about who are the writers of British films: their nationality, ethnicity, gender, age, guild and professional association affiliation, their relevant educational experience, if any, and the financial conditions under which they worked, such as whether they found it necessary to subsidise their work as a screenwriter with other employment, whether they were primary carers of children, an elderly or disabled person, and an indication of the income received from screenwriting in the tax year 2004/05.

1.2. The background

British film has a distinguished history. From the first days of cinema the country's filmmakers have produced films which receive major international critical and financial success. There is wide public and industry interest in the films which achieve awards and high box-office returns, but other than media and industry-generated publicity, relatively little is known about the day to day working lives of screenwriters or how they came to their craft.

In 2005, the UK Film Council's Research and Statistics Unit, Development Fund and Diversity Unit jointly commissioned a *Scoping Study into the Lack of Women Screenwriters in the UK* (see Appendix VI for a summary of the key findings). The Scoping Study, undertaken by the Institute of Employment Studies and delivered in Summer 2006, reviewed the available data and found little existing research into the employment of screenwriters, male or female, writing British film.

In highlighting the lack of information about the employment of screenwriters, the Scoping Study found that many of the beliefs widely held in the industry, expressed in interviews with screenwriters and industry leaders, were anecdotal or based apparently on unsubstantiated fact and to an extent, myth, again confirming the scarcity of research in this field.

Without concrete facts about how employment for screenwriters is secured and managed there is no obvious way to proceed either to further engage the diversity question or other issues relevant to all screenwriters.

1.3. The issues

Film development is expensive and speculative. Uncertainty may be offset by basing films on adaptations of best-selling books, casting, sequels and remakes of proven successes, but these are generally available only to the largest and most often US-based companies.

Responses to the challenge to create cinematic innovation, original approaches to structure, visual and conceptual ideas must be made by filmmakers in pace with the worldwide expansion of the industry and increasingly sophisticated audience expectation. Intelligent, informed risks must be taken and original approaches to storytelling, content, and cinematic writing from any quarter must be recognised and nurtured.

Screenwriting is complex. A screenplay contains within it the intellectual, visual and thematic concepts of the film it will become. Before production, a screenplay must conjure the imagined film for everyone from financiers to the potential cast, paradoxically utilising language in text form to describe scenes that will be composed of images, sounds, and motion while conveying the passage of time. During production, it is used by the crew and cast as the definitive guide to a complex operation incorporating a multitude of differing tasks and technologies while at the same time remaining essentially creative and in effect reflective of our national consciousness.

For a screenplay to progress to a polished draft upon which a film can be based, as many as 15 drafts, sometimes more may be written, often in collaboration with several producers, executives and the director. The film may also require substantial reworking to incorporate the needs of actors and financiers.

The collaborative nature of the work is an important aspect of film development and the working relationships formed are unlike those of many other creative fields, such as novelists, fine artists and composers, where the work is generally solitary. In addition to any creative differences, there can be additional stress as this work is usually accomplished at a time when the financial future of the film's existence is insecure, since it is rare for a film's production to be completely financed before most of the work on the screenplay has been completed. This would imply that close relationships and sometimes tensions may exist between the screenwriter/s and any producer, company executive or director they work with in the development of the film.

As there is little previously collected data available on the employment of British screenwriters, the survey though small, was purposefully broad, designed to collect basic facts about who is writing British film and their work experience.

2. Research design

2.1. The survey

The survey was designed to ask screenwriters credited on a random selection of forty recent UK films basic questions about their background, their hiring and their employment experience on that film, focusing on what led them to be hired and the conditions of that employment.

The questions required both objective and subjective answers in addition to basic demographic information and, as the questions asked required opinions of employment satisfaction, age and income, the anonymity of the writers questioned has been very strictly guarded.

The questions we asked were as follows:

2.1.1. Objective questions designed to elicit basic information about the work undertaken on the film in question as follows:

- Whether the writer was a writer alone or a hyphenate such as writer/director or writer/producer.
- Whether the writer was the sole writer on the project or the initial or final writer.
- The number of drafts written.
- Whether the material is original, rewrite or adaptation.
- Any previous relationship with employers and/or other above-the-line elements.
- The degree to which the writer's work was known in advance by the employer.
- The hiring methods: pitch by writer (direct approach), pitch by agent, direct approach from producer, direct approach from director, direct approach from producer/director via agent, or writer approached producer/director via friend/contact, or producer/director approached writer via friend/contact.
- Location of hiring event: phone or email, formal meeting, informal meeting (e.g. social function) or other?
- Who negotiated the contract?
- Whether final writer in the project. If not, when replaced.
- Whether paid a fee at or above Writers' Guild of America or the Writers' Guild of Great Britain minimum.

2.1.2. Subjective questions designed to elicit opinions on the hiring and employment experience as follows:

- Reason believed to be cause of hire: such as previous work, or previous relationship with employer, or a recommendation.
- Experience of the hiring event: whether it was complex/difficult/intimidating, or, easy/friendly/relaxed, secure/insecure feeling, fair/unfair deal, self-negotiated/needed legal advice or other representation.
- Any credit, fairness, financial issues and how they were resolved.

2.1.3. Demographic questions included:

- Previous experience as writer in film and/or other media.
- Membership in professional organisations and guilds.
- Relevant educational experience.
- Nationality / gender / age / income / ethnicity.

2.1.4. Reliability of the survey

The survey was tested on two UK based screenwriters to make sure that it was clear and unambiguous. It was also shown to a UK based film and television literary agent for comment, to a research consultant with US film development experience and to a screenwriting Master's student.

In doing the survey, there was some misunderstanding over the term 'carer,' but whether that was to the term, the relevance of the question to the writers approached, or to a term perhaps unfamiliar outside the UK, remains unclear.

2.2. The sample

The years 2004 and 2005 were the most recent years for which complete details of qualifying British films were available. As the film industry can change rapidly from year to year the selection was made across two years to eliminate any chance that one year was uncharacteristic.

The selected films were certified as British by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) under Schedule 1 of the Films Act (1985). To qualify under Schedule 1 during the period under review, a film needed a minimum UK spend of 70% and a specified proportion of labour costs paid to qualifying individuals. A film could also qualify as a British film when it was an official co-production with other nations, where an official co-production treaty existed.

2.2.1. The population

A random selection of 40 films was made from all British films and British co-productions certified in 2004 and 2005.

This first sample contained many films that never achieved a theatrical release in Britain and although they may have achieved a release in overseas markets and in DVD sales that information was not readily available. It was therefore decided that it would be more effective to survey the employment of professional screenwriters of British films by basing it on a random sample of 40 British films certified in these two years that achieved a theatrical release in Britain.

The sample was redrawn and the 40 films were selected from the 95 British films certified as British in either 2004 or 2005 that gained a theatrical release in Britain.

These 40 films became the starting point of the survey.

2.2.2. The films selected

The selection represented a wide cross-section of British films released in Britain in this period in terms of both budget and box-office return as evidenced below:

Table 1. Selected films budget band

BUDGET BAND	Very small under £2 million	Small From £2 to £9 million	Medium from £9 to £30 million	Big from £30 to £100 million	Very big over £100 million
No. of films	5	17	10	6	2
Percentage	12.5%	42.5%	25%	15%	5%

Table 2. Selected films box-office gross

BOX OFFICE GROSS	Very small under £20,000	Small from £20,000 to £200,000	Small - medium From £200,000 to £1 million	Medium from £1 million to £5 million	Big from £5million to £20 million	Very big over £20 million
No. of films	6	9	7	11	5	2
Percentage	15%	22.5%	17.5%	27.5%	12.5%	5%

Both tables above indicate that the sample had films from all budgets and achieved widely varied box-office gross returns at the time the sample was drawn. The box office grosses of selected films were from less than £500 to over £48 million in the UK – clearly indicating the breadth of the sample.

2.2.3. Genre of films selected

The UK Film Council's Research and Statistics Unit allocates up to five genres to every film released in the UK. The genres used are based on conventions used by published sources including the Internet Movie Database and the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) website. The genre list was decided following consultation with the UK Film Council production team and other industry representatives.

Taking the first genre used to describe each film, the films selected for the survey reveal a genre pattern of UK films that is reflective of all films released in this period.

Table 3. Selected films genre

GENRE	Number in selection	Percentage in selection
Action	3	7.5%
Adventure	2	5%
Animation	3	7.5%
Biography	1	2.5%
Comedy	5	12.5%
Crime	1	2.5%
Drama*	12	30%
Family	1	2.5%
Fantasy	3	7.5%
Horror	4	10%
Science fiction	1	2.5%
Thriller	4	10%

(*Please note that the term 'drama' is used here as it is used by the UK Film Council, i.e. to indicate a film that does not fall into a more specific genre category.)

2.2.4. Schedule 1 films and international production

Eighteen films qualified as Schedule 1 films. Eleven of those were solely British with no international partners. The remaining 7 were UK/US productions.

2.2.5. Co-productions

Twenty-two films qualified as official co-productions under the co-production agreements and convention⁴ to which the UK is signatory. Of these, 5 films had 1 international partner, 11 films had 2 international partners and 5 films had 3 international partners.

For the 22 official co-productions, the most frequent international partners were France with 6 films; Ireland with 4, Canada, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Italy with 3; Luxemburg, Spain, Denmark, Belgium, South Africa with 2; and Norway, Malta, Iceland and Sweden each with 1. The USA was a non-treaty partner on 6 co-productions.

⁴ The European Convention on Cinematic Co-production

Table 4. Selected films co-production partners

Co-production partner	No. of co-productions
UK	22
France	6
Ireland	4
Canada	3
Czech Republic	3
Germany	3
Italy	3
Luxemburg	2
Spain	2
Denmark	2
Belgium	2
South Africa	2
Norway	1
Malta	1
Iceland	1
Sweden	1

2.3. Selection of writers

The survey restricted itself to identifying and questioning all the screenwriters who received a screenwriting credit the films selected.

The first source of credits was the writers stored in the films database of the UK Film Council Research and Statistics Unit. These credits were compared with the writers listed as credited on The International Movie Database (IMDb) as it is considered to be a very reliable source of film industry credits (see Definitions in Appendix VI).

It is important to note that the number of writers credited does not necessarily reflect the number of screenwriters who may have been employed in writing each of the films, as films rarely credit more than 3 writers or teams of writers. It was presumed that the writers credited have been identified by either the Writers Guild of America or by the producers of the film as being the primary authors of the screenplay used in the film's production. To this end, a question was asked to elicit the interviewee's satisfaction with the resolution of the credit issue. However, as the question was put to the writers who were credited, it can be assumed that they are likely to be satisfied with the credit given (unless, for example, they shared a credit when they felt that they deserved a sole credit).

2.3.1. Screenwriters and the writers of source material

There were 89 writers credited on the International Movie Database (IMDb.) as receiving a writing credit on the 40 films selected.

However, these credited writers were not all screenwriters (see Definition 4 in Appendix VI) and did not necessarily create the screenplay text upon which the film was based. Although 22 of the selected films were original (based on an idea developed for the film selected) the remaining 18 films were adapted from a variety of original sources, such as classic and contemporary novels, non-fiction books, plays, previously made films, or stories acquired by other means, and one epic poem.

A total of 27 writers were identified as being the writers of the source material or story upon which the screenplay, and subsequently the film, was based. Only one writer was credited as being both the author of a novel upon which one of the selected films was based and the screenwriter of that film and was therefore included in the survey. The remaining 26 writer-creators of the source/story material who did not also receive a screenplay credit on the film selected, were deemed not to have had any experience on the writing of the film and were not included in the survey.

This left 63 screenwriters who needed to be contacted, as their credits on the film indicated they had been employed in the writing of the screenplay used in the production of the film.

2.3.2. Gender of writers

Twelve of the 63 credited screenwriters on the selected films were women, representing 19% of the writers to be surveyed.

The number of films which had a female writer credited was 7 (17.5%) and 5 of the women writers worked on the same film (two teams of two and one other).

2.3.3. Sourcing contact details

Although it was never considered to be an easy task to find and make contact with the screenwriters once they had been identified, it presented a much greater challenge than anticipated. Professional screenwriters, who are not also producers, seldom have an office through which contact may be made directly. Most are appropriately contactable through their agents and managers - a system which prevents them being subject to direct approach from producers, competing agents and managers, or people attempting to conduct surveys.

As direct contact was generally not possible, the logical approach to targeted screenwriters was deemed to be through their agent, lawyer or manager. These representatives were identified with difficulty, and occasionally erroneously, through examining each film's listing on IMDb, and/or The Hollywood Creative Directory and/or Studio System software and internet search engines.

- 36 screenwriters (57%) only listed contact via a Hollywood-based agent or manager.
- 12 screenwriters (19%) listed a contact via a London-based agent, manager.
- 2 screenwriters (3%) listed contact via a French-based agent or manager and one with a German agent or manager.
- 1 screenwriter was found through his website.
- No contact details were found in any sources for the remaining 12 (19%).

2.3.4. Writers for whom no contact details could be found

We were unable to approach twelve writers as no details were found through the means listed above or the UK Film Council.

The 12 uncontactable writers worked on ten films. Tables 5. and 6. below indicate that the films written by writers for whom no contact details were found had budgets and box office gross returns that were broadly similar to those of the contactable writers.

Table 5. Budget band of films written by writers for whom no contact details could be found

BUDGET BAND	Very small under £2 million	Small from £2 to £9 million	Medium from £9 to £30 million	Big from £30 to £100 million	Very big over £100 million	
Films in sample	5	17	10	6	2	40
Films written by writers for whom contact details were unavailable	1	5	2	1	1	10

Table 6. Box-office gross of films written by writers for whom no contact details could be found

BOX OFFICE GROSS	Very small under £20,000	Small from £20,000 to £200,000	Small - medium from £200,000 to £1 million	Medium from £1 million to £5 million	Big from £5million to £20 million	Very big over £20 million	
No. of films	6	9	7	11	5	2	40
Films written by writers for whom contact details were unavailable	1	3	2	2	1	1	10

Contact details were found for other writers who were credited on 3 of the same films and responses to the survey were received by all those writers. These 3 films had range of budgets - small, medium and big and the grosses were (respectively) small/medium, medium and very big.

This left 7 films (17.5%) for which no contact details were available for any of the screenwriters credited on them.

2.3.5. Methods used to make contact

Calls to agents very quickly confirmed that contact would not necessarily be easy. The first US agent's assistant to be contacted by phone hung up on hearing the nature of the query and subsequent calls were not always received with much more enthusiasm.

Contact was made in the following stages:

- On November 30, 2006, a letter (Appendix I) was sent by fax or by email, (depending on what details were available), from Marcia Williams, Head of Diversity at the UK Film Council, to the agent, manager, lawyer, for a selected

writer. This letter detailed the reason for the survey and the fact that it was part of the UK Film Council's continued research into the employment of women screenwriters. No survey was sent and the writers' representatives were instructed to contact RHUL to indicate only if their client did not want to take part in the survey.

- There were a total of 9 responses to this letter. Three writers responded through their representatives that they did not want to take part, the reasons given being pressure of work. Writers who responded with interest were asked if they wanted to complete and return the questionnaire electronically by email, or a time was scheduled for the interview to be conducted over the telephone. Even this presented unforeseen difficulties as scheduled phone interviews could be delayed unexpectedly by such events as emergency hair appointments.
- On December 9, 2006, an email was sent from RHUL (Appendix II) with the following attachments: a copy of a letter from Marcia Williams, in which the reference to the questionnaire being related to the issue of female screenwriters was deleted (Appendix III), as it was felt that this could prejudice responses, and a copy of the questionnaire. (Appendix IV). This resulted in a further 7 surveys being completed.
- Between November 2006 and January 2007 contact with writers and their representatives continued. By January 17, 2007 as only 13 questionnaires had been received, each of the non-responding writers' representatives, where details existed, were again telephoned and/or emailed and urged to respond or to encourage their screenwriters to respond.
- On February 5, 2007, writer-director Anthony Minghella CBE, a UK Film Council Board Member, sent a letter (Appendix V) by mail or fax and email to the remaining non respondent writers.

3. The Survey Results

3.1. Response to the survey

The initial return of the questionnaire was disappointing and very slow. However, after the date of completion was extended, more phone calls made, further emails sent, and, finally a letter sent from UK Film Council Board Member, Anthony Minghella, the last questionnaire was returned on March 6, 2007.

Questionnaires were returned from 26 respondents representing 41% of the screenwriters approached, a rate that compares favourably to the usual response rate received by the UK Film Council. One respondent did not identify which film he or she wrote and the remaining 25 respondents were credited on 19 (48%) of the selected films.

It is not known if the 37 non-respondents received the correspondence from their representatives or in what manner. As the reasons for not wishing to take part were rarely stated (three claimed pressure of work, one simply declined and another stated a policy of maintaining privacy). It is not known whether it was the method of approach, the fact that non-British screenwriters did not feel that a survey conducted by a British government organisation was relevant to them, or the effect of the

'gatekeepers,' ie the agents and managers. Indeed, in interview it was clear that many of the non-British screenwriters questioned did not realise that the film they had written was in any way considered 'British.'

3.2. Objective questions

This group of questions was designed to gather some basic facts about this particular employment; what led to it, their role and the outcome as well as a general idea of selected writers' careers and educational backgrounds.

3.2.1. Role on the project

The writers responded as follows to questions regarding their role on the film:

Table 7. Screenwriters' role on the film

Role on the film	Number of writers
Screenwriter	19
Screenwriter/director	6
Screenwriter/producer	1

3.2.2. Initial approach

The writers responded as follows to questions regarding how initial contact was made:

Table 8. Initial approach

Commissioned as the result of a direct approach from another	
From a producer	8
From a director	5
From a production company	7
Commissioned as the result of contact initiated by the writer	
To a producer	2
To an executive	-
To a director	2
To their agent	1
Other	1

These figures indicate that the screenwriters who responded to the survey were three times more frequently approached by a producer, director or production company with a commission than in initiating a project themselves.

Where the writer does initiate a project, they appear to be more successful in approaching a director or a producer than directly approaching an executive for a production company.

3.2.3. Previous relationship(s) with employer(s)

Sixteen writers said that they knew the people key to their employment before discussing the subject, 10 did not.

Thirteen writers (50%) had a previous working relationship and eleven had a personal relationship with at least one person key to their employment (producer, director or executive).

These results indicate that not only is the screenwriter's previous work known to the employer in advance of the project, but quite often the writer is too and in many cases, they had worked together previously. In fact, 50% of the respondents have had a previous working relationship and many (42%) consider that they had a personal relationship before the start of the project.

3.2.4. Starting point of the project

The screenwriters, when asked how their involvement with the project commenced, responded as follows:

Table 9. Starting point of the employment

The script was based on:	Number of writers
A pitch	3
A spec.* script	3
Source material brought by the writer to the producer/director/executive	5
Source material from a producer/director/executive to the writer	9
A first draft written by another writer	4
Second draft written by another writer	2

* A script written speculatively without a commission or option agreement.

Interestingly, these figures show that the majority of screenwriting work (15 commissions) was on source material initiated by a producer or production company and on rewrites. Writers were somewhat more successful presenting source material (5 commissions) to a producer or production company rather than receiving a commission on an original idea presented by the writer in the form of a spec. script (3 commissions) or a pitch (3 commissions).

3.2.5. Numbers of drafts

The writers responded as follows to questions regarding the writing they had done on the films selected:

Table 10. The work done on the films by respondents

Nature of work	Number of drafts in total	Number of films
Outline/treatment	12	10
First draft	22	17
Second draft	24	18
Final draft	16	11
Polish	16	13
Total number of drafts written	140*	25**

Note: *Some writers did not know the exact number of drafts written and answered 'lots' or 'many' or added a question mark instead of giving an exact number. Several commented that they and all the writers they know write many more than are commissioned. A practice, they said, that is so widespread that it is rarely raised as a complaint. See 3.3.4 **Fairness issues**, below.

** One respondent did not indicate any number of drafts.

In a few cases equivalent drafts were written for the same film (for example, 22 writers wrote first drafts on 17 films indicating that 2 first drafts from different writers were commissioned on 5 of the films).

3.2.6. Initial contact

The writers responded as follows to questions regarding how the initial contact which led to the employment was made:

Table 11. Initial contact

How initial contact was made	Number of respondents
By phone	12
By email	-
At a formal meeting (in office)	6
At a informal meeting (eg social function)	4
Other	2

Personal contact (phone or face to face) was the principal method of contact. One respondent was on staff at the production company. One writing team's first meeting was at a restaurant in West Hollywood where they drank three bottles of champagne to celebrate and another had a meeting, set up by her agent, at her house with the producer, who previously she had not known. Another discussed the project informally with the producers while working with them on an earlier film.

3.2.7. Means of negotiation

The writers responded as follows to questions regarding the negotiation for fees, delivery schedule, credit, etc.

Table 12. Negotiation

Negotiator for the employment	Number of respondents
A lawyer	17
An agent	14
Lawyer & agent	7
Manager	1
The writer/himself alone	1

There appears to be no consistency in screenwriters who engage a lawyer in addition to an agent, or why some use a lawyer to negotiate rather than an agent, leading us to assume that it is a matter of preference. The one writer who negotiated his own fee was on a small budget film (grossing under £550,000).

3.2.8. Outcome of this employment

The writers responded as follows to questions in regard to the outcome of their work:

Table 13. Outcome of this employment

Respondents who were the final writer on the film	Number of respondents
No	9

Yes	17
-----	----

Asked at which point in the film's development they were replaced, the reasons were given as follows: one writer was replaced by the director for a final polish by a more experienced writer; another, a US writer on a UK-located film, was replaced by a team of British writers on the final draft, and a third team left because they had other commitments. Others were replaced without reason given.

3.2.9. Fees received

The writers responded as follows to questions regarding the level of fees received:

Table 14. Fees received

Fee at or above Writers' Guild minimums	Number of respondents
No	1
Yes	23
Writers' Guild of Great Britain	3
Writers' Guild of America	16
No guild specified	4

This question ascertained writers' knowledge of the minimum fees for screenwriting set on the selected film. The response indicates that 88% of the respondent writers knew their fee was at or above minimum.

Note: A writer may know the fee is at or above minimum without being a member of any guild. Some knew they were paid above minimum, but did not identify which guild. The one writer who was paid a fee below the minimum wrote an animated film and thought that animated films were not covered or protected by a guild.

Some UK based freelance writers and writers in staff positions at production companies were unsure, or did not know, that there were minimums set for writers' pay, but believed that they probably were paid at or above guilds' standards.

3.2.10. Membership in professional organisations

The writers were asked if they were a member of either the Writers' Guild of America or the Writers' Guild of Great Britain.

Seventeen of the respondents were members of a writers' guild and most, 14, were members of the Writers' Guild of America. 3 were members of the Writers' Guild of Great Britain and 1 was a member of both.

Table 15. Writers' guild membership

Writers' Guild	Number of respondent members	Number of British respondent members
Writers' Guild of Great Britain (WGGB)	3	3
Writers' Guild of America (WGA)	14	5
No guild membership	7	7

Interestingly, one-third (5) of the British respondents were members of the Writers' Guild of America and all respondents listing contact details in the US were members of the WGA. None of the overseas writers were members of the WGGB.

The writers were also asked to list other professional organisations to which they belonged, and responded as follows:

Table 16. Membership in other professional organisations

Professional organisation	Number of members	Number of British members
ALCS*	7	7
Directors' Guild of America (DGA)	1	-
AMPAS**	1	-
ASCAP***	1	-

* ALCS - The Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society

**AMPAS - Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences

*** ASCAP - The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers

3.2.11. Previous writing experience

The writers were asked about their previous writing experience on material that had been produced, broadcast, or published.

Table 17. Work published in other media by all respondents

Published work	No. of respondents	% of respondents
A radio play	6	23
A theatrical play	7	27
A novel	5	19
Television series	20	77
Comedy sketches	8	31
Feature journalism	7	27
Television drama	10	38
A feature film	20	77
A short film	10	38
Other: Corporate	1	N/A
Mixed media	1	N/A

All the writers who responded had been published previously in other forms, primarily in television, indicating that the career path of screenwriters currently working in film includes varied experience in other written media before writing features.

The selected film was the first feature film credit for 6 (23%) of the respondents. Table 18, below, compares their previous published writing with those writers who had had a film released before.

Table 18. Work published in other media by respondents who had at least one previous credit on a feature film and those who had none

Published work	Respondents with a previous credit/s on a feature film	Respondents with no previous credit on a feature film
A radio play	4	2
A theatrical play	5	2
A novel	4	1
Television series	16	4
Comedy sketches	5	3
Feature journalism	4	3
Television drama	10	0
A short film	8	2

Table 18 indicates that none of the 6 first time feature writers who responded to the survey had written television drama previously although 4 of them had written TV series. This is in clear contrast to the 20 writers who had previously written a feature film, 50% of whom had also written television drama.

3.2.12. Genre of film

The genre of all 40 films in the sample was known (see 2.2.3.). Table 19 below indicates those which have male, female or both male and female writers credited.

Table 19: Gender of writers on the selected films

GENRE	Only male writer/s	Only female writer/s	Male and female writers
Action	3	-	-
Adventure	2	-	-
Animation	1	-	2
Biography	1	-	-
Comedy	4	-	1
Crime	1	-	-
Drama	8	2	2
Family	1	-	-
Fantasy	2	1	-
Horror	4	-	-
Sci-Fi	1	-	-
Thriller	4	-	-

Women writers on the films selected wrote in distinctly fewer genres than their male counterparts, writing only in animation, comedy, fantasy and drama. The 2 films directed by women were both dramas; one was written solely by the director, the other by the director and a male writer.

As this was a small survey, and the numbers of women writers few, the results may not be conclusive and should be read in context with the results for the larger group of women covered by the IES report⁵. This showed from data collected from IMDb and

⁵ See Institute for Employment Studies, *Scoping Study into the Lack of Women Screenwriters in the UK*, UK Film Council, 2006.

the UK Film Council, that female screenwriters were writing in similar genres to male writers between 1999-2003.

3.3. Subjective questions

Writers were asked questions that required their opinion about the reason/s that they were hired, their feelings about the outcome of the employment (such as whether their treatment was fair) and the resolution of credit issues.

3.3.1. Why they were hired

Logic suggests that a producer or production company would be unlikely or unwise to commission a writer whose work was unknown to them. The purpose of this question was to find the writers' perception of this. The results indicate that not only was the writer's work known to the employer in advance of the project, but often the writer was too.

A very high proportion of the total respondents (24 out of 26) believed they were hired as a result of their previous work and that their work was known to the employer in advance of contact being made. 19% stated that they were hired on recommendation by their agent or manager.

A woman screenwriter believed she was hired not because her work was known, but because her country of origin gave her an additional insight into the film she was hired to write. A male screenwriter believed he was hired because of his 'vision and enthusiasm.'

3.3.2. Extraneous aspects that led to their employment

The writers were asked if they believed there were any extraneous aspects, such as their gender or sexual orientation that led to their being hired.

Interestingly, only one man answered affirmatively to this question, stating that he believes his gender was a factor in his employment, 'as a woman was unlikely to be hired to write a science-fiction action film.'

Two women consider that they were hired because of their gender as it was a 'female empowerment movie' and another woman considered that she had been hired due to her country of origin (see 3.2.1 above).

3.3.3. Experience of the hiring event

The writers were asked their opinion of the first meeting with the hirers.

Table 20: Experience of hiring event

Atmosphere of meeting	No. of writers
Easy	7
Friendly/relaxed	17
Difficult	1
Intimidating	2

As these are the writers who were hired, it is probably fair to assume that their first meeting with their prospective employers would be remembered as a positive experience.

One writer, male, in the 45-65 age bracket found the experience difficult, but had no complaints about any aspect of the employment.

Two female writers who found the experience intimidating also said it was 'friendly/relaxed.' This meeting involved sharing three bottles of champagne at The Ivy, West Hollywood.

3.3.4. Fair treatment in this employment

Only 3 writers answered negatively to this question.

A writer-director stated that the studio insisted on a different ending to the film to that which he had written and that he had complained that the film was not marketed sufficiently enthusiastically in the US.

Another had creative differences with the director which she raised with the studio.

One did not complain, but felt that the screenplay was put into production too soon and before it was finished.

A fourth writer answered that he was treated fairly, but noted that the producers 'demanded extra work' although he had not complained. Several writers in telephone interviews mentioned that they had written many more drafts than they were paid for.

3.3.5. Credit issues in this employment

The writers were asked if credit issues were resolved to their satisfaction. Twenty-four answered that they were, three adding that this was after WGA arbitration. A British writer, on staff at a successful production company and who had no membership in a professional organisation and was not sure whether he was paid the minimum fee, added that there was 'some lack of clarity over the final credit.'

Of the 2 others who were dissatisfied with the resolution of their credit, (both British and not members of a guild), one stated that: 'The final writers tried to take sole credit. They did not deserve it.' And the other, who was British, stated, 'Two people who did no writing on the project were given writing credits as part of a deal to buy out their putative (and disputed) ownership of development rights.'

3.4. Demographic questions

The demographic questions were designed to help gain an understanding of screenwriters' backgrounds and personal circumstances. The results for gender, nationality and age of the writers selected were not dependent on survey respondents as much of this information was available on IMDb and through other sources.

3.4.1. Gender

Twelve of the 63 screenwriters selected for this survey were women. These 12 represented 19% of the selected writers.

This number of female writers writing the selected films is a high percentage in both the UK (average 15%) and the US (average 10% on the top 250 grossing films in 2001).

Six women screenwriters responded to the survey, representing 50% of the women writers in the sample. Nineteen men of a total of 51 in the selection responded representing a 37% response. (There was one response from someone who did not indicate gender).

3.4.2. Nationality

This was not solely dependent on responses to the survey as nationalities for 28 of the writers selected were found on sources such as IMDb, Sight & Sound, Wikipedia, interviews published on the internet, etc. The nationalities for 54 screenwriters (86%) for whom nationality is known was as follows:

UK 20
The United States 20
Dual UK/USA 2
Denmark 3
Canada 2
France 3
Germany 1
Norway 2
Eire 1

Discounting the 2 writers with dual US/UK citizenship, 32 of the 52 writers for whom nationality was known were not British, indicating that 61% of screenwriters writing British films in this period were not British.

The nationality of all 12 of the women screenwriters is known. Six were US citizens, 2 were joint US/UK citizens, 1 was French, 1 Danish, 1 Canadian and 1 British.

The 1 female screenwriter in the selection who was British was from a television and theatre background and was the writer of a small budget British drama, her first feature film. Two of the women surveyed, with dual British/US citizenship, were living and working in the US and also had television credits.

Of the respondents, 14 were British, 7 were US citizens, 2 were dual US and UK citizens, 1 each were Canadian, German and Danish.

The greater response from British screenwriters to this survey is perhaps due to their better understanding of the UK Film Council's remit, the conditions of work for screenwriters in Britain and the novelty of being asked questions about their employment.

3.4.3. Age

Again, this was not entirely dependant on responses to the survey as 42 of the screenwriters' dates of birth are available on IMDb and other sources.

Of these, 4 were aged over 65, 23 were aged between 46 and 65, and 15 were aged 25-45, indicating that screenwriters work in their middle years. As many (77%) of the writers surveyed had a credit/s on a feature film previously, this is not necessarily the age they began their screenwriting career.

Interestingly, in comparison with all workers in UK film production, roughly two-thirds of whom are under 46 years of age,⁶ approximately two-thirds of the screenwriters in this sample are 46 years of age and over.

Of the respondents, 4 were aged over 65, 14 were aged between 46 and 65 and 8 were aged between 25 and 45. The ages of the respondents who were also first time feature film writers were as follows: 3 were between 25 and 45 and 3 were between 46 and 65.

3.4.4. Ethnicity

With only one exception, all the writers were white. No contact details could be found for the one writer who was from a minority ethnic group, and therefore they could not be invited to respond to the survey. Ethnicity was identified through a combination of survey responses and other reference sources.

3.4.5. Education

Respondents were asked if they had studied screenwriting or any course related to it.

Undergraduate:

Five respondents had studied a subject related to screenwriting (such as drama or creative writing), or as part of a degree at BA level at the following institutions:

Creative Writing, University of California, US

Drama, University of Hull, UK

One had dropped out of a related field at a university in Canada

One had studied screenwriting as part of a degree at NYU, US

One had taken a few courses in screenwriting at the University of Michigan, US

Postgraduate:

Two respondents had studied screenwriting and two had studied a subject related to screenwriting at Master's level at the following institutions:

Screenwriting, Middlesex University, UK

Screenwriting, Sheffield University, UK

Drama, University of Hull, UK

Creative writing, University of California, US

Short Courses

The courses taken were as follows:

One had taken a six week course at UCLA Extension, USA

One had taken a short course at the College of Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA.

⁶ UK Film Council, derived from *Skillset Workforce Survey 2006*

3.4.6. Income

This question was answered by 22 respondents.

Table 22. Income of respondents

Annual income for the year ending 2005/2006	All respondents	Number of male respondents	Number of female respondents	First-time feature respondents
Under £25,000/ \$45,000	3	3	0	2
Between £25,000- £55,000/\$45,000 - \$100,000	3	2	1	1
Over £55,000/\$100,000	16	11	5	3

Of the writers who did respond to this question, 16 had incomes over £55,000 and 3 had incomes between £25,000 and £45,000 in the year ending 2005/6.

Of the 3 writers who earned less than £25,000, one US writer, who was not a first time feature film writer, subsidised his work as a stand-up comedian. The other 2 were first-time feature writers, 1 who was British, wrote British television series to subsidise his work and the third, who was German, did not subsidise his work.

Five of the 6 women respondents had incomes of over £55,000 and were US residents and citizens. The one who did not is Canadian and had an income between £25,000 and £45,000.

3.4.7. Screenwriting subsidised by other employment

Four respondents said that they subsidised their work as a screenwriter as follows:

A stand up comedian – income from screenwriting less than £25k in 2005/6

Two film directors – one of whom earned between £25-£55k and the other earned between £25-£55k from screenwriting in 2005/06

A university lecturer – who earned between £25-£55k from screenwriting in 2005/06

None of the remaining 21 respondents, including 5 others who were hyphenates (writer/directors or writer/producers) felt that their other employment subsidised their work as a screenwriter.

3.4.8. Screenwriter carers

None of the responding writers were the primary carer of a child, relative or someone with a long term health condition.

4. Conclusions

The preceding chapters have detailed the demographic information of the writers of the selected films, the basic information about the films selected, and the responses to the questions asked.

In this chapter the details of the findings most pertinent to the survey's objectives are summarised and recommendations are suggested for further research and initiatives to improve the recruitment and working conditions of screenwriters.

4.1. Summary

This survey came about following the Institute of Employment Studies, Report for the UK Film Council *Scoping Study into the Lack of Women Screenwriters in the UK*, which made clear the lack of data needed to fully understand the possible barriers encountered by female screenwriters in Britain. However, the findings from the present survey demonstrate demographic detail and employment conditions for all screenwriters, men and women.

The findings reveal not only a snapshot of writers' working lives at this time, but an image of the writers themselves, who are typically male, white, affluent, middle-aged and often not British.

It is important to remember that these findings are gathered from the screenwriters of films which were certified as British and gained a cinematic release in the UK. There would have been many screenwriters writing and developing films in this period, whose work was never produced, or produced but not released, and who therefore were not part of the survey.

4.1.1. Recruitment

The survey confirms what has been generally felt but not previously supported by research evidence, that screenwriters are commissioned by people they know and with whom they have a personal or previous working relationship. Screenwriting is an intense creative, technical and interpretive endeavour that requires collaboration for an extended period, often longer than 18 months, so logic suggests that producers are likely to engage the services of those writers with whom they know they have shared values and the ability to maintain a good working relationship under pressure.

The findings indicate also that the screenwriters were most often commissioned by producers, directors or production companies to draft a screenplay based on an idea, source material, or re-write, initiated by the commissioner. This is a vital piece of information valuable not just to screenwriters, but to all who work in film development and screenwriting education.

Clearly it is necessary for novice screenwriters to write in screenplay form before they are commissioned. Not only must they learn to address the subject matter, develop their craft and an original and cinematic approach to film, they also need to demonstrate their abilities to producers and directors. However, realistic expectations of the likelihood of screenplays written speculatively, or commissions made as a result of a 'pitch' or story idea suggested by a writer, resulting in a film released, could be a useful result of these findings for novice screenwriters.

4.1.2. Recruitment from television

A high percentage (77%) of writers had previous credits in television series and 38% had written television drama.

Although 4 of the 6 first-time feature writers had credits in television series, none had a credit on a television drama. There are perhaps several reasons for this. This is a small sample, there were possibly fewer television dramas made in recent years and therefore fewer writers commissioned to write them, or, possibly this indicates that the producers of television drama commissioned credited feature film screenwriters in this period in preference to other unproduced screenwriters.

4.1.3. Women screenwriters

The proportion of female to male screenwriters - 12 of the 63 screenwriters (19%) in the selection were female and worked on a total of 7 of the 40 films selected (17.5%) - is not great, but also not unexpected. However, the finding that less than 2% of the films were written by British women is startling.

The one female screenwriter in the selection who was British was from a television and theatre background and was the writer of a small budget British drama, her first feature film. Two of the women surveyed, with dual British/US citizenship, who worked on the same film, were living and working in the US and also had television credits.

4.1.4. Nationality

Although it is well established that the cinematographers, directors, actors, editors, etc. of British films are not necessarily British, the fact that 61% of the writers of the films covered by this survey were written by non-Britons is a new finding. There have been no figures until now to demonstrate that successful screenwriters move in both directions - primarily across the Atlantic and to a lesser degree the North Sea and the Channel.

The movement of writers may well be an important means through which film in all nations refresh ideas through incorporating views from outside. It has been generally understood that many British screenwriters work in the US for a range of reasons that include the greater availability of work there, more realistic fees, a sophisticated professional practice that protects credit, and the opportunity to examine and comment on the culture. However, there is no evidence or information to explain what may be attracting overseas screenwriters to write British films, or why UK producers are commissioning screenwriters from abroad.

Filmmaking involves collaboration across national boundaries and, unlike individualistic works of art a film may be characterised as British, Hollywood, American Independent, etc., reflecting both the nationality of the creators of the films as well as the location of the action. The films of German writer/director Billy Wilder are recognised as American, just as the films written by Hungarian screenwriter Emeric Pressburger are recognised as British, raising interesting questions relating to the uniqueness of the form and to the ongoing debate on authorship of film.

It is important to remember that, at the time the films in this survey were made, the assignment of 'British' nationality to film was based on an expenditure test designed to regulate access to tax relief.

The revised Cultural Test, in effect from January 1, 2007, which all Schedule 1 films claiming the new film tax relief will be required to pass, places more emphasis on the

story, characters and locations of a British film, but it is too early to assess its impact, if any, on the nationality of the screenwriters of British films.

4.1.5. Screenwriting education

Few of the respondents had studied subjects related to screenwriting and only 2 had studied the subject specifically. There are several possible causes; teaching screenwriting is relatively new in Britain and procedures through which the industry can identify promising emergent screenwriters may still be insufficient. It could also be linked to the age of the respondents, as most of them are in the 45+ age group and, if they attended university or college, they would have done so in the 1960's and early 1970's when the teaching of screenwriting was in its infancy.

Although the age of the surveyed writers may be a factor, the fact that few of the respondents had studied screenwriting or a related subject is important to note. Realistic expectations of the efficacy of training or 'teaching' a complex form such as screenwriting are useful not only to novice screenwriters but also to those funding or subsidising their training.

4.1.6. Location and contact

A high proportion, 60%, of the writers selected to take part in the survey listed contact details overseas, primarily (57%) in California. Twelve screenwriters (19%) listed a contact via a London-based agent, manager. This appears to indicate that successful screenwriters are facilitating contact through an LA based agent or manager.

There could be several reasons for this. We may guess that just as British films are not necessarily being written by British writers, British writers are writing, or attempting to write, for overseas markets, mainly the US.

4.1.7. Screenwriter carers

This question did not appear to have much relevance to working screenwriters, although that itself may be its relevance. Writers who are caring for a child or relative, or someone with a long term health condition may not currently be gaining much employment in this field.

4.1.8. Credit resolution

Credit resolution has an important financial and career impact for screenwriters. The respondents who experienced unsatisfactory resolution to a credit problem in the survey were British, suggesting that it would be timely for the UK film industry to reconsider the UK system for resolving credit issues.

4.1.9. Ethnicity of screenwriters

Less than 2% of screenwriters in this survey were from a minority ethnic group. The one screenwriter from a minority ethnic group to receive a screenwriting credit on any film included in this selection was the sole writer and also the director of a very small budget film.

4.1.10. Women screenwriters and genres

Women writers on the selected films wrote in fewer genres than their male counterparts, writing only in animation, comedy, fantasy and drama. As only a small number of women writers (12) were in the survey, this was to be expected. Combined with the evidence from the IES survey (IES, Table 3.7) however there is some evidence that women are employed to write fewer genres than men as no women in either survey had written action, horror, sci-fi or war films and female writers appear to be more concentrated writing in drama.

It will be useful to discover if a contributory factor to lack of women screenwriters in British film is that they are offered employment in a limited range of genres and if there is any difference in the genres that women screenwriters prefer to write in and those for which they are offered employment.

4.2. Recommendations

In this section of the report we recommend several areas that warrant immediate attention and suggest ways in which action should be taken and/or further research conducted.

Recommendation 1 Women and minority ethnic groups

In order to address the under-representation of women and screenwriters from minority ethnic groups in the film industry in Britain, attitudes in relation to gender and ethnicity need to be addressed and, where possible, actions taken to correct imbalance.

The career routes revealed in this study should be explored further and efforts taken to understand the move between writing for television and film, and whether female, male and minority ethnic group television writers have similar success moving between these media.

The commissioners', producers', production companies' and directors' roles in commissioning screenwriters in relation to gender could be opened for discussion, and, if assumptions are made, they should be challenged.

The following actions are recommended:

- Solicit the views of agents and managers to accurately target appropriate events or activities that could result in the commissioning and promotion of women screenwriters and screenwriters from minority ethnic groups.
- Conduct in-depth research with women screenwriters and writer/directors and with screenwriters and writer/directors from minority ethnic groups to gauge their experiences of employment and attitudes encountered.
- Identify experienced women writers and writers from minority ethnic groups working in television and theatre and organise events/activities to introduce them to British film producers and directors.

- The UK Film Council to monitor genres in relation to gender and ethnicity, distinguishing between the work of writer/directors and commissioned screenwriters.
- Publicise the work of producers, directors and companies who commission screenwriters from minority ethnic groups and women.

Recommendation 2 Employment and recruitment of screenwriters

Screenwriting is a complex form and bears much more detailed ongoing examination that could enable writers, agents and all involved in film development to maintain an accurate picture of film development in Britain and to provide the best and most innovative use of limited resources for the benefit of UK screenwriters.

Two facts emerged from the survey that appear to have direct relevance to how screenwriters get commissioned – the lower number of writer respondents who received a commission as result of a ‘pitch’ they had made, and the higher number of respondents whose work originated from an approach made to them by a studio or production company.

The numbers of feature film writers who have credits in television, theatre, radio, fiction and journalism is an important indicator of where new talent may be sourced.

The following actions are recommended:

- An ongoing, more inclusive, survey of screenwriters* of British film over a longer time span and in more depth, to include questions not addressed in this survey. For example, how entry into the industry was made, full details of educational or career paths taken, the numbers of un-produced and ‘spec’ film screenplays written before the first credit, etc.
- More research into the employment of screenwriters in television and the transfer of television talent to film and vice versa.
- Further research into the value of ‘pitching’ and packaging as a means for securing commissions for screenwriters that lead to successful productions.

*Due to the difficulties encountered in reaching the writers selected for this survey, preparation would be beneficial. For example: the cooperation of the Guilds and writers’ agents and managers through the Personal Managers’ Association⁷ and other industry organisations and leaders could be gathered in advance of the project.

Recommendation 3 Screenwriting Education

The relatively recent availability of screenwriting education specific to film in the UK and the age of the surveyed writers may be reasons why few of the respondents had studied screenwriting or a related subject. However, this is not necessarily the case. With the rise in the number of courses and means to study screenwriting education in Britain it important to ascertain whether screenwriter training is at the right level, directed to the right cohort and that the industry has access to the best new screenwriters.

⁷ The trade association of literary and theatrical agents.

The following actions are recommended:

- Monitor ways that new writers entering the film industry benefit from screenwriting education.
- Research the steps taken into the industry by the graduates of screenwriting programmes and the means by which they secure agents and commissions.
- Expand on successful initiatives into the industry for promising graduate screenwriters, or, if necessary, create them.

Recommendation 4 Credit resolution

A re-examination of credit resolution in the UK is long overdue and could be of great use to screenwriters, especially if the industry wishes to make working in the UK more attractive to screenwriters.

The following actions are recommended:

- The UK Film Council to facilitate debate on the subject of credit resolution between the legislators, the Writers' Guild of Great Britain, the Personal Managers' Association, and screenwriter representatives.

Recommendation 5 Screenwriting diaspora

The findings raise questions that relate to the representation of the UK in British film, the access that British based producers and directors have to screenwriters.

The following actions are recommended:

- The UK Film Council to monitor the nationality of screenwriters on an on-going basis. To ascertain both British writers working overseas and non-British writers working on British films.
- A more detailed and in-depth survey of British writers working in the UK and overseas and of foreign writers of British films to discover the reasons they work abroad and to gain a better understanding of the universality of film development and its effects on British film.
- Research the effect of the recent introduction of a cultural test for British films on the nationality of writers of British films.

4.2.1. The future

These recommendations are by no means exhaustive. There are numerous issues of relevance to screenwriters' employment and film development that could be examined in more detail and many more directions for investigation, debate, expansion and action than are outlined above could be suggested.

For the film industry to keep pace with audience expectation, discover and nurture genuine talent it must be prepared to face the challenge of innovation in whatever form it takes.

Appendix I

30 November 2006

Dear

RE:

The UK Film Council is the British Government-backed strategic agency for film. We aim to stimulate a successful, vibrant film industry and to promote the widest possible enjoyment and understanding of cinema throughout the UK.

As part of our aim to address the under-representation of women screenwriters in the UK, we have commissioned Royal Holloway, University of London to conduct a piece of research looking into the experiences of screenwriters of both genders credited on feature films that have been certified in the UK as 'British'.

Consequently, _____ has been selected at random from among the screenwriters credited on British films released in the UK in 2004-05. I am therefore writing to request his participation in this important research.

If you are in agreement, an independent interviewer from Royal Holloway, University of London, will phone to ask _____ a series of questions about his role on _____, how the initial contact was made that resulted in getting the commission, his experience on it, for example. The survey should last no more than 15 minutes.

The answers will be treated in strictest confidence in accordance with the UK's Data Protection Act, and all quotes will be non-attributable.

We hope that you will be able to help us with this study. We believe it is the first time that writers have been asked questions about their employment on British films.

If _____ does not wish to take part, please contact Susan Rogers at Royal Holloway, University of London on +44 (0) 20 7307 8604 or Susan.Rogers@rhul.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,



**MARCIA WILLIAMS
HEAD OF DIVERSITY**

Appendix II

Email sent from Susan Rogers on December 12, 2006

RE: "NAME OF FILM" We would be extremely grateful if you would forward the email below with attachments to "NAME OF WRITER" :

Dear "NAME OF WRITER":

We would appreciate your participation in the first survey into screenwriters' employment on British films. The screenwriters chosen to take part were selected at random from all screenwriters credited on a British film released in the UK in 2004-5.

The survey has been commissioned by the UK Film Council and it is very important to receive as many responses as possible from screenwriters at all stages in their careers.

It is simple - it should take 5-10 minutes at most – it can be completed by email or phone. It will help us gather some important information about screenwriters writing British films so the UK Film Council can begin to develop a true picture. It is being conducted by Royal Holloway, University of London and all responses will be entirely confidential.

I have attached a letter from the UK Film Council which outlines their aims, and the questionnaire, which can be completed and returned to myself as an email, or we can arrange a time when I can phone you.

Again, as screenwriters have never been surveyed about their employment experiences before on British films, your participation will be most gratefully received.

If you have any questions at all, or you would like to conduct the questionnaire over the phone, please email at susan.rogers@rhul.ac.uk or phone me on the number below.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Susan

Susan Rogers
Senior Lecturer
Department of Media Arts
Royal Holloway-University of London
11 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3RA
44 (0) 20 7 307 8604

Appendix III

30 November 2006

The UK Film Council is the British Government-backed strategic agency for film. We aim to stimulate a successful, vibrant film industry and to promote the widest possible enjoyment and understanding of cinema throughout the UK.

We have commissioned Royal Holloway, University of London to conduct a piece of research looking into the experiences of screenwriters credited on feature films that have been certified in the UK as 'British'.

The writers selected were chosen at random from among the screenwriters credited on British films released in the UK in 2004-05. I am therefore writing to request your participation in this important research.

If you are in agreement, an independent interviewer from Royal Holloway, University of London, will ask you a series of questions about your role on the film selected. Questions include how the initial contact was made that resulted in getting the commission, your experience on it, for example. The survey should last no around 5-10 minutes.

The answers will be treated in strictest confidence in accordance with the UK's Data Protection Act, and all quotes will be non-attributable.

We hope that you will be able to help us with this study. We believe it is the first time that writers have been asked questions about their employment on British films.

Please contact Susan Rogers at Royal Holloway, University of London on +44 (0) 20 7307 8604 or Susan.Rogers@rhul.ac.uk who will arrange a time to ask you the questions by telephone or send them to you in email form.

Yours sincerely,



MARCIA WILLIAMS
HEAD OF DIVERSITY

Appendix IV

Screenwriters Employment Research Questionnaire

ANSWER

Interviewee Name :

1. Your role on the film:

- Were you the screenwriter of the project?
- Were you the screenwriter/director of the project?
- Were you the screenwriter/producer?
- Other

Other: Please explain:

2. The nature of the project:

Was the script you wrote based on:

- A pitch you gave?
- A spec. script you had written?
- Source material that the producer/director/executive* brought to you?
- Source material that you brought to the producer/director/executive*?
- A first draft written by another writer?
- Second draft written by another writer?
- Other

Other: Please explain:

3. The writing you did:

Tick all that apply or add numbers where relevant:

- Outline/treatment
- First draft
- Second Draft
- Final Draft
- Polish

Total number of Drafts written by you:

4. How initial contact was made:

Were you hired as a result of a direct approach?

Yes

No

The direct approach was:

- From a producer
- From a director
- From a production company?

Or, were you hired the result of contact you made directly:

- To a producer
- To an executive
- To a director
- To your agent
- Other

Other: Please explain:

5. What caused you to be hired:

Were you hired as a result of your previous work?

- Yes
- No

Were you hired as a result of a recommendation?

- By your agent
- By a friend or business contact
- Other

Other: Please explain:

6. Previous relationship with key people involved with the project

Did you know any of the people key to your employment on this film before you discussed this project?

- Yes
- No

If Yes:

Had you worked with any of the people key to your employment on this film before you discussed this project?

- Yes
- No

Had you a personal relationship with any of the people key to your employment on this film before this project?

- Yes
- No

7. Possible Additional Factors

Do you feel that any extraneous aspects of your identity, such as your gender or sexual orientation, were factors in you being hired for this work?

- Yes
- No

If Yes: Please identify what you think was an additional

factor

8. Initial Contact:

How was the initial contact made?

By phone?

By email?

At a formal meeting (in office)?

At a informal meeting (e.g. social function)

Other

Other: Please explain:

9. Experience of the hiring event:

Did you find the experience?

Easy

Friendly/relaxed

Difficult

Intimidating

Other

Other: Please explain:

10. How the writer's employment was negotiated:

In negotiating your fee, delivery schedule, credit, etc., did you use the services of:

A lawyer

An Agent

Yourself alone

Other

Other: Please explain:

11. Outcome of your work:

Were you the final writer on the film?

Yes
No

If no, at what point in the film's development were you replaced?

12. Credit Issues:

Were any issues of credit resolved to your satisfaction?

Yes
No

If no, why do you believe this is the case?

13. Financial Issues:

Were you paid a fee at or above Writers' Guild minimums?

Yes
No

Was it the:

Writers' Guild of Great Britain?
Writers' Guild of America?

If no, please explain:

14. Fairness Issues:

Do you believe that you were treated fairly in this employment?

Yes
No

If no, please explain:

Did you have cause to complain about any aspect of the employment?

Yes
No

If so, to whom did you complain?

15. Your Previous Experience:

Previous to this employment, what work had you ever written and had produced, broadcast, or published:

Please indicate all that apply to you:

- A radio play
- A theatrical play
- A novel
- Television series
- Comedy sketches
- Feature journalism
- Television drama
- A feature film
- A short film
- Other:

If other please explain

The following questions about you will help us gain an understanding of screenwriters' personal circumstances:

1. Have you studied screenwriting or any subject directly related to it?

- Yes
- No

A. At BA level
If so where?

B. At Postgraduate level
If so where?

C: Short Course or Diploma
If so where?

2. Are you a member of a professional body such as

- Writers Guild of America
- Writers Guild of Great Britain
- ALCS
- other

If other, which?

3. Are you the primary carer of a child, relative or someone who is long term ill?

- Yes
- No

4. Age

Are you?

- A. Under 25?
- B. Between 25-45?
- C. Between 46 – 65?
- D. Over 65?

5. How much do you earn from screenwriting in the last tax year 2005/6?

- Under £25,000/ \$45,000
- Between £25,000-£55,000/\$45,000 - \$100,000
- Over £55,000/\$100,000

6. Is your Work as a Screenwriter Subsidized?

- Yes
- No

Do you subsidize your work as a screenwriter?

- Yes
- No

If Yes, what is the source/s of the other income?

7. What is your Nationality?

- British
- Other

If other, which?

8. Would you describe yourself as:

Asian:

Indian
Pakistani
British
US
Bangladeshi
Any other Asian background

If other, which

Black:

Caribbean
African
British
US
Any other Black background

If other, which

Mixed:

White and Black Caribbean
White and Asian
Any other Mixed background

If other, which

White:

British
Irish
US
Any other White background

If other, which

Chinese or other ethnic group:

Which

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN TO:

susan.rogers@rhul.ac.uk

Appendix V

5 February 2007

NAME OF WRITER at WRITER'S CONTACT ADDRESS

Dear "NAME OF WRITER":

I am writing to you both as a filmmaker and in my capacity as a Board Member of the UK Film Council to urge you to complete and return the very brief questionnaire on your employment on "NAME OF FILM" that you will have received in the last month.

The survey will help us gather some important information about screenwriters' employment on British films so the UK Film Council can begin to develop a true picture. It is being conducted by Royal Holloway College of the University of London and can be completed either by email or over the phone and should take 5-10 minutes at most.

You and I, and the other screenwriters chosen to take part, were selected at random from all screenwriters credited on a British film released in the UK in 2004-5. The survey is the first to look at some of the experiences and conditions of employment of writers of British films and it is very important to our research that we receive your response. All responses will be entirely confidential.

If you have any questions at all, or you would like to conduct the questionnaire over the phone, please email at susan.rogers@rhul.ac.uk or phone her at 44(0)207-307-8604.

Thank you so much for your participation in this important project.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Minghella

Appendix VI

Institute for Employment Studies, Scoping Study into the Lack of Women Screenwriters in the UK, UK Film Council, 2006

Key Findings

- Women make up 53 per cent of those writing as their main occupation in the population at large, but only 26 percent of those writing for film.
- Women screenwriters are credited on less than 15 per cent of UK films made between 1999 and 2003.
- Between 1990 and 2005 women represented less than one in ten of the BAFTA nominees for best original or adapted screenplay, and represented even fewer winners at just three out of 43 (seven per cent), none of whom were British.
- Films written by women screenwriters are as likely to gain a release as those written by men.
- The box office return for British films with a female screenwriter is \$1.25 per £1 budget, compared with \$1.16 for films with all-male writers.
- Women write a variety of genres, and an equal percentage of films by men and women (just over 30 per cent) are comedies, the most financially successful genre at the UK box office.
- Women represent approximately 40 per cent of participants on industry-accredited screenwriting courses.
- Overall cinema audiences are roughly equally balanced between men and women, and women aged 35 plus - not young men - make up the biggest single part of UK cinema audiences at 18 per cent.

Appendix VII

Definitions

There are many definitions and understandings of the terms used in film development. To clarify matters, we have included some definitions below:

1. Definition of professional screenwriter

As the majority of respondents to the survey who are affiliated with a writer's guild are members of the Writers Guild of America, we have chosen to use their definitions as follows:

The Writers Guild of America defines a professional writer as:

A person who has received employment for a total of thirteen weeks as a television or theatrical motion picture writer; or received credit as a writer on a television or theatrical motion picture (including series); or received credit for a professionally produced play or a published novel. (WGA website February 24, 2007)

2. Definition of a screenplay

The Writers Guild of America defines a screenplay as:

Individual scenes and full dialogue, together with such prior treatment, basic adaptation, continuity, scenario and dialogue as shall be used in, and represent substantial contributions to the final script. (WGA website February 24, 2007)

3. Definition of stages of development

The Writers Guild of Great Britain defines the stages through which a screenplay proceeds through development as:

Treatment

An outline or synopsis in narrative form of an entire story indicating the fuller structure and development and characterization of the plot.

First Draft

The first draft shall mean the full development of the treatment or in its absence a definition in terms of visual action and dialogue suitable as a production for cinema and/or television exhibition.

Second Draft

The second complete draft of the screenplay as requested by the Associate, which if accepted, shall become the script as next defined.

Principal Photography Script

The approved and finally accepted version of a shooting script for principal photography with individual scenes, and full dialogue incorporating all alterations and amendments required by the Associate.

(WGGB Website February 17, 2007)

4. Definition of credit

The source of credits was The International Movie Database (IMDb) which has adopted the Writers Guild of America (WGA) means of determining credits and in general, the credits determination process is as follows:

When the film is finished shooting, the producer sends a notice to the guild and the writers proposing the writing credits. If any writer disagrees with those credits, or if the proposed credits require mandatory arbitration (e.g., a producer or director sharing a writing credit), a WGA arbitration committee reads all drafts of the script and various supporting materials and determines the actual/official credits.

If there is no source material (novel, play, article, etc.) and the same writers receive credit for both the story and screenplay, the credit is "written by".

The "story by" credit is used when the basic narrative structure was originally written with intent to be used for a movie (as opposed to a short story) and the actual screenplay had different authors. A shared "story by" credit is the minimum awarded to the author of an original screenplay.

If there was previously existing source material but the writer creates a substantially new and different story from the source, then the "screen story" (or "television story") credit is used.

Finally, the "screenplay by" (or "teleplay by") credit is used to denote the screenplay (teleplay) authorship if the story credit had to be separated as above.

In rare cases, "adaptation by" can be awarded to a writer who shapes the script without qualifying for one of the above credits.

Within each of these categories, members of a writing team are joined by "&"; teams or writers working on separate drafts are joined by "and".

The IMDb will not accept uncredited writers for titles with WGA-determined credits.

International Movie Database February 13, 2007