
ukie
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Centric
MOMENTS TO MOVEMENTS

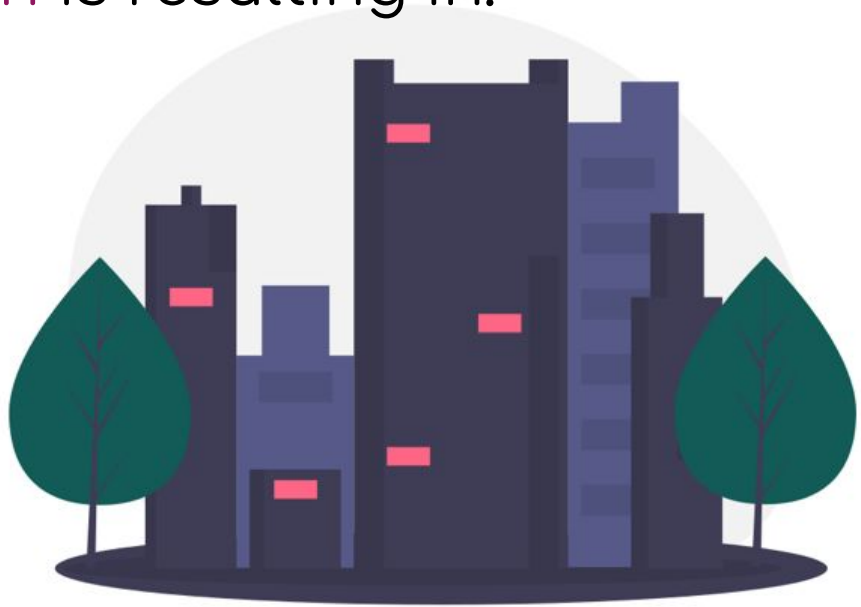
The Problem of Research

An absence of involvement from urban communities in research, analysis and design is resulting in:

LACK OF ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY MISTRUST

DEEPENING INEQUALITIES



Centric's Community Research Approach

We recruit, train and upskill researchers from local communities who will solve local problems through research:

COMMUNITY LED AND OWNED

AUTHENTIC INSIGHT

CULTURALLY NUANCED



Why Centric ?

Community Research

We'll ensure that people who are living in a place and are experiencing the challenges that organisations are trying to solve in that place, are more involved in both local research and the projects and interventions that come out of that research.

Why we are the ones to deliver it?

- We are part of the communities we are serving.
- Our team has a diverse range of skills, cultural backgrounds and expertise.
- We have a bespoke ethics approval process that champions community consent and ownership.
- Our model has been designed and is run by Community Researchers themselves.
- The programme is accessible and offers unique progression routes for Community Researchers.



Contents

- Problem Context
- Projects Aims and Overview
- Project Team
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- Interview and Focus Group Insights
- Further Insights and Unintended Outcomes
- Recommendations
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Problem Context

Problem Context

Video games, despite the claims of 'horse play' offer its players the opportunity to become professionals in any field. It also offers insight into prevalent ideologies and the deployment of race, gender and nationalism (Leonard, 2003). The video game industry has a closed-source culture which benefits the gamers, however the industry continues to be challenged with the lack of diversity and representation in its workforce.

The gender divide in the workforce for the video game industry is well documented (Prescott, 2011), however it seems the racial divide is not. It is clear that across different tech sectors including the video game industry there is an underrepresentation of those from seldom-heard communities (Black, Asian, and ethnic minority backgrounds). There are many examples of the lack of diverse characters in video games, which could stem from the lack of diversity in the workforce itself. Such a correlation has previously been cited in relation to the development of AI and facial recognition (Ferreira 2021) which has concluded racial and gender bias may be a direct result of those involved in the development of such tools mainly consisting of white males. This represents an example of the lack of diversity in the workforce having an impact in outcomes that are bias.



Project Aims & Overview

Project Aims and Overview

Project Aims

- To conduct an initial exploration of the barriers that exist for seldom heard communities to enter the workforce of the interactive entertainment industry, more specifically video games.
- To identify recommendations for the video game industry to improve representation in the workforce.
- To identify areas for further exploration and research

Project Overview

The Association for UK Interactive Entertainment (UKIE) have partnered with Centric to explore the barriers and influencing factors contributing to the lack of diversity and representation of these communities within the interactive entertainment workforce. The project team engaged 30 people from these communities through a series of interviews and focus groups. Participants joined from a variety of locations nationally including Manchester and Leicester. The demographic information is further detailed in the appendix


Centric
Project Team

Meet the Team

CENTRIC



Muhammed Rauf
Project Director



Bukola Joel
Project Manager



Femi Aseru
Senior CR



Danna Rodrigues
Senior CR



Elaine Brown
Senior CR



Remmi Aziz
Community Researcher



Dion Tansey
Community Researcher

Meet the Team

UKIE



Shahneila Saeed
Head of Education and Director
Digital Schoolhouse



Siân Mayhall-Purvis
Education Programme Coordinator


Centric
Project Approach

Project Approach

- Potential participants were identified by the project team.
- Project poster was shared on social media.
- Participants were provided with project information and expectations should they wish to participate and completed an onboarding form.
- Participants were informed of consents i.e their right to withdraw from the research.
- Interviews (interview guide) and focus groups were scheduled. We utilise a semi-structured format to allow for participants to lead and develop the conversation to unearth insights that may not have previously been hypothesised. A total of **30** people were engaged via **16 interviews and 2 focus groups** were conducted for this project.
- Following this the team conducted an analysis of insights shared in the interviews and focus groups that have been collated and shared in this report.



Interview and Focus Group Insights



Insights

Contents

- Insight 1: Knowledge of Interactive Entertainment
- Insight 2: Lack of Awareness
- Insight 3: Parental and Cultural Influences
- Insight 4: Lack of Representation
- Insight 5: Access to Information
- Insight 6: Recruitment Processes



Insight 1
Knowledge of Interactive Entertainment

Centric Photography

Knowledge of Interactive Entertainment

Participants were asked about their initial perspectives on the interactive entertainment industry. The lack of knowledge on the terminology, expressed a disconnect in language for those who are outsides of the industry. Following questions were directly more explicitly on the video game industry, however this initial interaction displayed a lack of understanding of the interplay between both. Moving forward it can be seen that clear guidance on what the interactive entertainment industry is, and how the video game industry sits within this, would be beneficial for people to garner a better understanding of how to identify roles that are suited to them in reference to their own interests. Ensuring the wider population is able to make the distinction between both would be helpful when advertising for positions in employment. This is something that was discussed within the Centric team, as at times there was the need for a further understanding of the terminology that was best suited to use for engagement.

Quotes

"I've never really heard of that phrase. I think with you just mentioning it. But yeah, that's what I think engagement through a media platform is."

"Probably something that's got a little bit more like educational aspect or like, like like yeah like more like an uplifting sort of game instead of sort of, you know, something that you get out of it that makes you feel good about of it."

"I think it's a great outlet for people, you know, as much as I critique the media, I think it can be quite a great outlet for people, an outlet just to unwind and relax."

"I was listening to something about how there's been an increase in social isolation. So increase in some form of entertainment. Yes it might be brain numbing. Yes. It might not be always profitable or beneficial. It does have that positive element of bringing people together and addressing some of these issues that has arisen during the covid, suffer depression, isolation, social anxiety."


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Insight 2
Lack of Awareness
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Lack of Awareness

Participants overall had a lack of awareness of different roles available in the industry. They were unaware there is a wealth of creative, advertising and sales roles to name a few and the initial engagement, sparked intrigue into consideration that there is an opportunity to enter the industry based upon their current skill set. When participants were asked about skills required to enter the workforce, participants immediately identified the public facing side of the industry, relating to Youtube, Twitch, and content creators, however typically failed to identify roles and skills required in video game industry more broadly. This shows the lack of visibility of roles that are available in video game development is further overshadowed by content creators and other more public facing arms of the industry. This further lead to a misconception that those interested in entering the workforce would need to able to develop skills and purchase equipment to stream and create content.

Lack of Awareness contd.

The public facing nature of this side of the industry could be better utilised to create awareness of roles in video game development as these roles may be viewed as less accessible and attainable. Participants continued to cite knowledge on content creators, with a lack of awareness of the types of roles even available in video game development, unable to cite how their own skill sets, may and in turn did align with such roles. This was most prominent for those with creative skills who through having engaged with us, understood there is a wider array of roles relevant to their existing skill set.

Quotes

"I did want to be a creator at one point. Like make the game actual con like yeah that storyline and story and everything. Yeah. But it's just something that requires a lot of work and a lot of like studying and stuff."

"I don't even know, to be honest. I'm not sure what options there are"

"There's the traditional with like applying for a job and then there's like one where you can just kind of do video games at home, play games on, and then upload it to Youtube. A lot of people watch that."

"I mean I was trying to get into the sort of art side of things and yeah, it's, it's difficult. There's, you know, some very sort of talented people out there that you're competing against, so it's kind of hard coming straight out of uni to, to be sort of in that crowd."

"The way I would see it is just if you do go through university, try and make connections through there, there's lots of options through university as well. Yeah. To get ahead before you finish and get your degree through those connections, you're able to find employment the quicker."

Quotes

"They still do it now. It's a, it's a tournament. Players have to qualify by playing normal games and then you get put into like a, a pool of like a hundred other players and if you get, you get points per kilo per win and placement and stuff. If you win you get like $3 million or something like that. But that's like an example I can give."

"That's probably a lack of opportunities or a lack of interest towards actually working in the video gaming and field. Unless me, as the individual was interested, then maybe someone from my cultural community, you know, depending on my age could help assist me on getting further within that field."

"As far as career wise, I'm not really sure in terms of exactly what is out there. As I said, I am sales consultant. I'm not really sure where those types of expertise would fit within the video game company."

"I think the same would apply to something like computer games and also think like going on LinkedIn, finding out who are the big gaming companies and if even messages them and if they have any jobs available. And going from there and developing your skill set that you, you can qualify."



Insight 3
Parental and Cultural Influences

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Parental and Cultural Influences

Participants spoke to the impact of their parent's views on the industry playing a huge role in influencing them to consider a career. Older generations do not view a career in the sector as stable or offering routes for progression. This is in part as their parents are from generations when these careers were not previously available. This has had a direct impact on the choices made by their children, steering them to alternative careers, but also potentially led to them not even considering a role in video game industry even if they have the relevant skills.

This shows the importance of influencing parents as well as children from a young age on the types of careers available. Those who are conscious of the role available typically speak of content creator roles, such as those streaming on Youtube or Twitch. This provides a false misconception for most of the true breadth of skills required to working in video gaming. It is clear that further work is necessary to inform parents as well as their children on the different career pathways available, the necessary skill sets, and financial gain that is obtainable.

Parental and Cultural Influences contd.

What also became apparent is there is a cultural influence toward gaining employment in industries that are well established and traditionally considered rewarding. Seldom heard communities have also been consumers of video games, but not seen in development. Those from african backgrounds cited the possibility of discrimination in the industry and a barrier to attaining a career. There is a link here with traditional recruitment processes that are conducive to particular ethnicities and genders, and in turn exclude the latter. This may be an influencing factor in why some do not consider a career in video gaming however further research would be required to validate such an insight.

Participants from african communities mentioned careers in video games are not considered serious. They specified they are typically motivated to take on careers such in law or finance. This shows there is a lack of knowledge for these communities regarding the growth of video gaming as a serious industry. Moving forward it is important that this misconception is challenged as it is clearly having an impact, refraining those with the relevant skill sets from considering working in the sector.

Quotes

"I think culturally you, it's like those who are from, I know from African backgrounds, they will need to almost guide their parents through that process to show them the benefit before the parents come on board. Cuz it's just not something that is just celebrated. And I'm saying this and my parents were fairly liberal"

"I think there's a domino effect in that in regards to, like, it needs to start with like the parent, you might want to market it in a better way to like, towards the parents so that way they can be more warm to the idea. Let them choose that pure path."

"Well I wanted to do when I was younger and obviously like this is when it was a new thing, parents didn't understand it and didn't think there could be money made"

"Africans generally, if you say gaming, it's just not gonna be encourage, you know, so it's not even necessarily that, oh, it's discriminated against, we're discriminated against in that industry"

"They'd rather like you become a doctor or something like that. Just like typical stuff."



Insight 4
Lack of Representation

Centric Photography

Lack of Representation

Participants who were able to distinguish between content creators and roles in video games development cited there was an issue in representation which further influenced their view of entering employment in the sector. They specifically cited the lack of representation in management and even those they engaged with in recruitment processes made them feel as though the roles 'were not for us.' This could be cited as an issue across wider tech industries, as there is an overrepresentation of males with a white heritage. This further reinforces the misconception that the industry is reserved for those of a particular skin colour or background.

Conversely it may be argued that representation of these communities in the public facing content creator roles resonate with people, which is why they identify these types of roles first, and sight them as roles they would be interested in working in.

Centric initial inception and training of community researchers cited this similar issue. Seldom heard communities viewed research as an industry for 'academics and people who work in universities.' It is clear in this insight there is much more to be explored to deconstruct this perception and attitude towards the video game industry. There is research to be done to further understand why this barrier exists and how it can be overcome.

Quotes

"The other day I was having a chat with a friend of mine and she's in the entertainment industry and she used to work for TikTok. Now she works elsewhere. And she just said when we were talking, she was like, oh, you know, she would never, probably never consider becoming a C E O partly because she doesn't see it"

"There's just this level of drive or it's tends to be the people that are more confident in applying for things are middle class white men. Do you know what I mean?"

"Maybe to recruitment maybe to make it a bit more diverse if it's not, cause a lot of these fields, which is not diverse, like it's the majority, like, you know, Caucasian people and the few so-called black people"

"If I don't necessarily see enough people that are like them in more senior positions and that will impact again the, the jobs that they go through, et cetera."

Quotes

"So people are probably looking for inspiration. So in the back of their minds they might just think that it's just a hobby. So yeah, cause of lack of representation."

"So just maybe put more truth within these games as to who we are and where we really come from. Cause the majority of us don't come from Africa. Africa, we actually come from America, you know what I mean?"

"Do you know what I mean? Maybe make some revolutionary games where, you know, you've got a hero breaking out of the plantation and saving enslaved people. Do you know what I mean? Or kicking out colonizers, you know, just make it a bit more real and not fake. I mean, cause a lot of the information we be given is false anyway."



Insight 5
Access to Information

Centric Photography

Access to Information

Participants throughout the course of this project, regardless of geographical location spoke to the lack of availability of information regarding roles in the industry. Some participants spoke to setting up Youtube accounts and developing a portfolio to create their own career. They were not considering a role in video gaming, and this as cited by them, could be due to the lack of information that is advertised for such roles. These communities have in turn focused on content creation roles which may be viewed as easier to obtain considering the lower barriers to entry. This issue may be further compounded by the public representation of these communities in the content creation field and conversely the lack of representation in the latter as cited in the previous insight.

Access to Information contd.

Centric previously conducted research with black youth in Lambeth surrounding employment who also cited lack of information, or knowing where to find information related to employment in particular sectors as a barrier. It is essential that advertisement of such roles moving forward is made public on platforms that these communities already engage in, for example Tik Tok. Centric is currently innovating on such methods (Centric TikTok) to make research insights more accessible via social media and the recent launch of CenX which will a platform for podcasts based on research areas.

Quotes

"Go to the community versus like, you know, just literally do outreach stuff. We literally go to the communities and, you know, making that their presence known"

"The gaming industry has never really, well, I can't say appeal because it's never really been put out there. It's not advertised in our communities"

"But also I also think it should be available as an option at school. Okay. To kind of explain if someone wants to get into the gaming and industry, what type of skills or criteria that they need"

"There's no like course you can do like with a lot of jobs you do like uni degrees and stuff. With gaming it's nothing like that. You have to like prove your skill. So the only way you can gain really is by proving your skill obviously like through playing normal games, maybe like putting videos out on Youtube and getting noticed by people.



Insight 6
Recruitment Processes

Centric Photography

Recruitment Processes

Participants have cited the issue of recruitment processes. Some participants expressed attempts to enter the industry for video game development roles where they did not receive responses. They cited this may be due to bias perceptions held by those recruiting in the industry who may assume they do not have the adequate skills or knowledge for a role in video gaming. Traditional methods of recruitment have been cited previously as not being conducive to those from seldom heard communities.

Through previous research Centric has conducted it has been cited that lengthy processes which require multiple rounds and stages do not favour those from lower income households and minimumal experience previously working in the industry. An example of this has been cited specifically in roles for local authorities, where those with previous experience working in other local authorities are best placed and typically favoured in recruitment for new roles as they are able to better navigate such processes, while assessment criteria will also favour them. If an industry has overrepresentation of one particular group, it could indicate (intentional or not) bias in recruitment process. However further research would be required to identify the number of applications from people in these communities.

Quotes

"*Yeah but I'd have to like have like some kind of assurance that like I'm gonna get something out at the end of the day cause there's a lot of people that are starting it now and they're just doing it full-time but they're not working like I can't, obviously you need money as well*"

"There's just this level of drive or it's tends to be the people that are more confident in applying for things are middle class white men. Do you know what I mean?"

"The other bits to this is, it's the process. You know, what's the process to kind of get in? You know, we already know recruitment is an issue and the process within recruitment around recruitment is problematic because a lot of these processes are not conducive to the black community. You know, they actually alienate or exclude black people or people of color or from low end before they start"


Centric
Further Insights and
Unintended Outcomes

Further Insights and Unintended Outcomes

Further Insights

1. A member of the team observed interest and responses were from young people who are White and of European background when advertising for the research online. One may suggest there is a lack of interest based upon this insight, although is has been demonstrated over the course of the project this is more likely to be due to a lack of awareness.
2. Additionally it is noted that there were no differences in insights shared based upon location participants reside in.

Unintended Outcomes

When conducting focus groups we observed that 3 additional participants had joined who are based in Nigeria. Although there contributions cannot be included in the insights above we have provided these insights in a separate document attached below.

The Nigerian Perspective



Recommendations



Recommendations

Contents

- Dissemination of Knowledge
- Graduate Scheme and Apprenticeships
- Local Events
- New Methods of Recruitment
- Tap into Black Creativity and Innovation

Dissemination of Knowledge

Centric is currently working with partners to develop new and innovative comms to engage seldom heard communities - Dissemination of Knowledge. This work will develop learning on the best use of language as well as several other considerations related to comms that are engaging to the seldom heard. We would recommend embarking on a similar exploration to deconstruct the perceptions of the video game industry cited in our insights and develop comms that are effective at addressing them, while communicating the true nature of working in the industry. Such an exploration would be beneficial as this research project has already identified the following avenues;

- Utilising social media platforms such as TikTok for advertising
- Advertising roles directly in video games themselves
- Promotion via social media influencers and content creators

Considerations

- Representation of seldom heard communities in these advertisements will be essential as participants stated this will help them to visualise themselves in the role.
- Advertisements in multiple languages
- Providing direct links to applications
- Assessing how such an approach could be implemented globally

Graduate Scheme and Apprenticeships

Participants cited the importance of graduate schemes/apprenticeships to facilitate entry into the industry and garner a better understand of what the opportunities are. This would also allow for them to identify and develop the required skills sets. Entry level roles in the industry are well sought after, so ensuring there are alternative pathways to accessing careers in video gaming will be necessary to increase representation of seldom heard communities. Although there are already some schemes available it is important to advertise and create awareness of them more widely to encourage participation from those who would not traditionally have engaged with such opportunities.

Trying to get on an apprenticeship or a graduate scheme. Cause I think that way you can get in and I would imagine they will have different type of experience. So you can look at the, the graphic design element, the game development, project management etc."

Local Events

Participants cited larger events in stadiums such as excel are only appealing to those already considering a career in the industry. Furthermore awareness of the event would normally be disseminated via existing networks which may not reach wider networks of people from seldom heard communities. It would beneficial to hold smaller events in residential areas. This will increase awareness and participation from seldom heard communities who are not currently attending video gaming events. For those who may not have previously considered attending such an event, this will be a simple but effective tool to open their eyes to what they are missing out on.

Centric's previous research has shown that seldom heard communities want more local events, that are cheap and accessible to them. It has been previously expressed that in person events provide an opportunity for people to engage better with information and allow for networking.

New Methods of Recruitment

Building upon the previous recommendation it would be advantageous to explore the benefits of new methods and process for recruitment. Participants felt traditional approaches to recruitment made attaining jobs difficult. We would recommend an exploration to further understand how current recruitment processes are impacting the progression of people from seldom heard communities into careers.

An example cited in previous research conducted by Centric on employment of black youth in Brixton cited the need for job fairs based in local venues e.g. libraries, community centres, faith based institutions and other venues where local residents congregate. Job fairs can be to be used as a medium for the following;

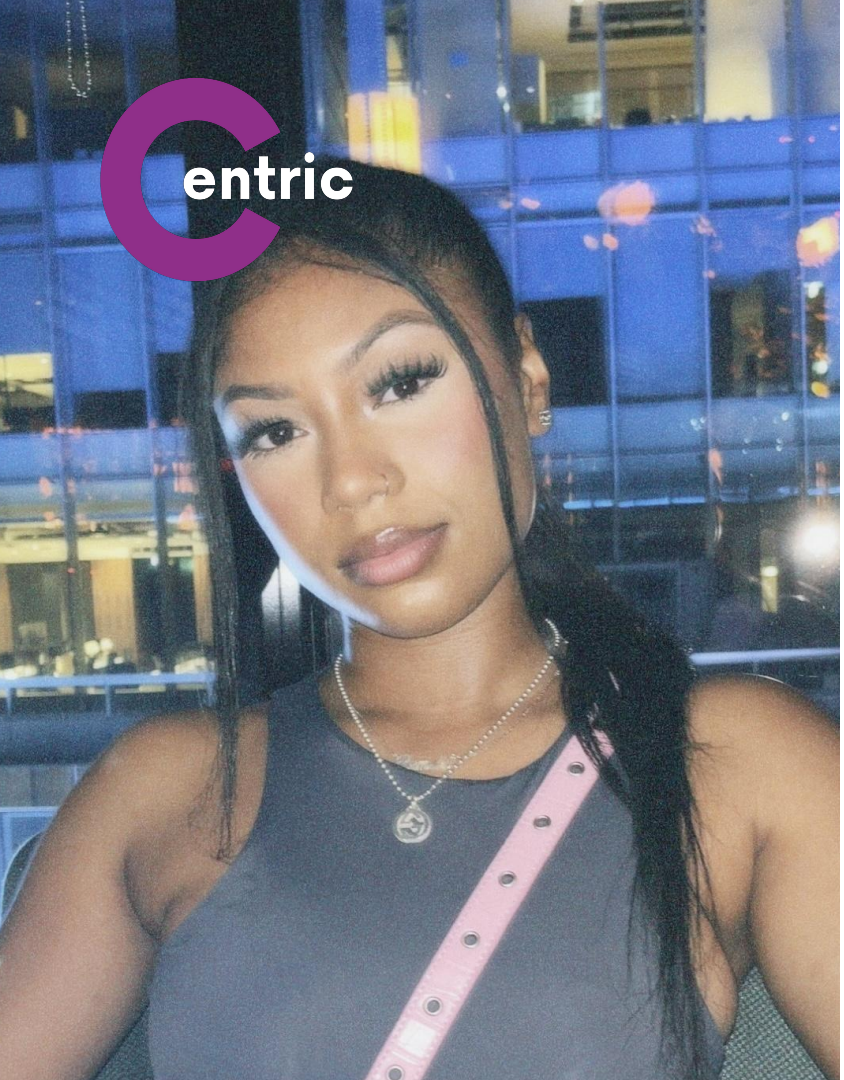
- Gaining access to information of relevant jobs and skill sets required
- Networking with industry professionals
- A more 'human' approach to recruitment

Tap in Black Creativity and Innovation

Increasing participation and engagement with those from the black community in video games events is important as It has been cited through our engagement with black participants in this and previous research projects there is a wave of innovative and creative skill sets that exist in black communities that can be utilised effectively for the development of video games.

The role of innovation and creativity in the black communities is sighted in our literature review - Street Corner Innovation. Our founder Shaun Danquah synthesises this in the following quote - 'a hungry belly is a creative mind.' This speaks to the need for these communities to creative and develop innovative approaches to improve their income and quality of life, based upon the lack of equality of opportunity. They therefore create their own opportunities, which has lead to the rise of entrepreneurial initiatives in a post pandemic UK. Developing methods and roles to encompass such creative skill sets in the video game workforce would lead to a diversity of innovative solutions and developments in areas such as gaming narratives, character development arcs, and overall, video games which resonate more closely with consumers from the black community.


Centric
CR Project
Reflections

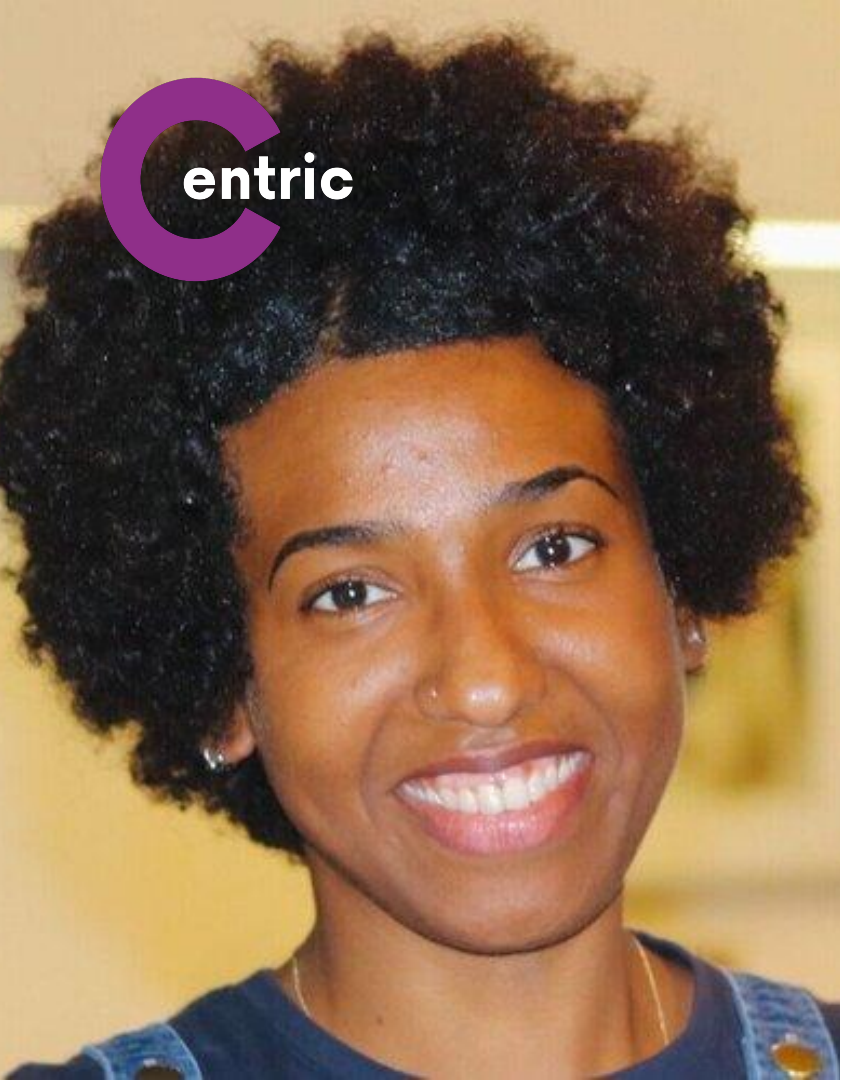


CR Reflections

The video game industry has really taken off and I have been able to observe this over the years due to my own interest. It has always occurred to me that more should be done within the UK. We seem to be watching the US expand in terms of networking and career opportunities, which could be replicated here.

I hope this project is a stepping stone for better representation in the video game workforce, changing the stereotype and to be seen as a career choice that is not frowned upon, within seldom heard communities,

Remmi Aziz



CR Reflections

Working on this project has given me knowledge and helped me understand more about the video game industry. As a fashion and tech-connected student, I can also see that there is a bridge between these two worlds, many companies dedicated to fashion also use video games to interact with customers, but in the same way, to look for a relationship for those who want a career more focused on animation.

Many of the skills that I have learned during my career as drawing, illustration, among other programs, are used in video games development. It has been very educational to be able to listen to the experiences of the participants. I, an Afro-Colombian woman currently residing in London, observed that the lack of information and integration, either because of the language or being unaware, makes it difficult to pursue a dedicated career in this field.

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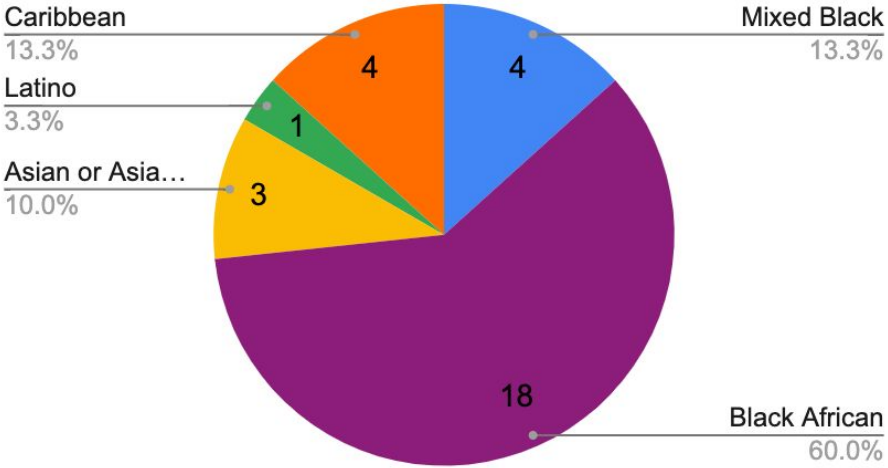
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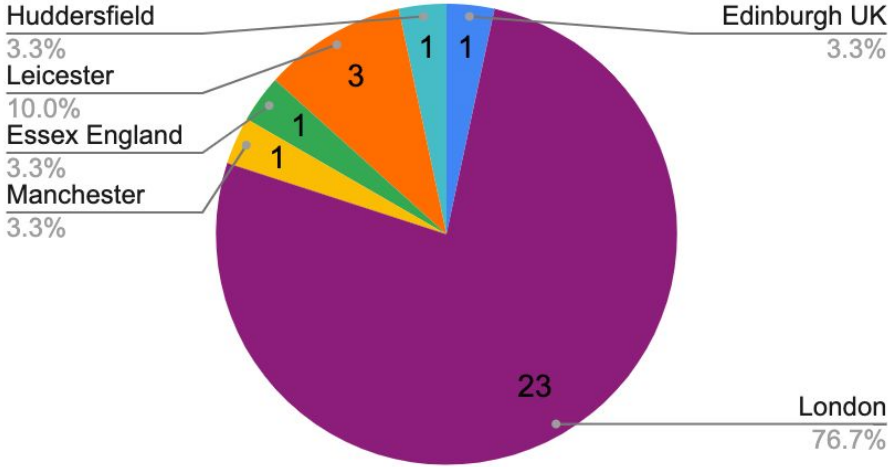
Participant Demographics

Ethnicity and Location

Ethnicity

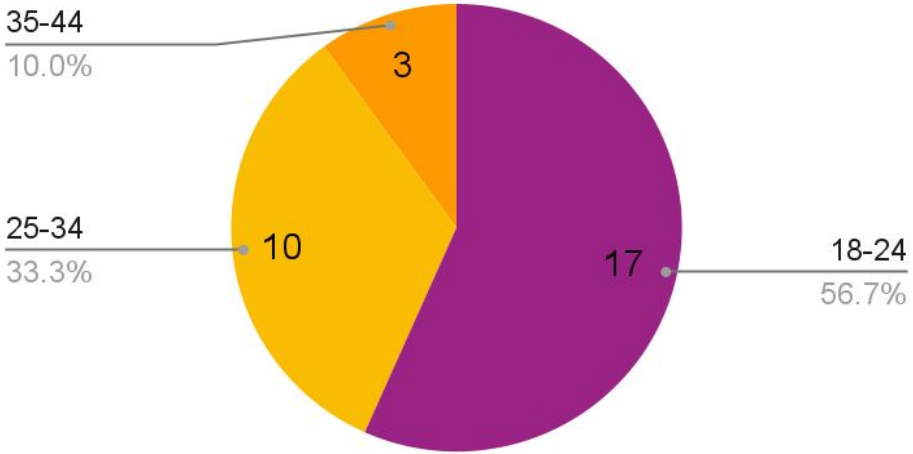


Location

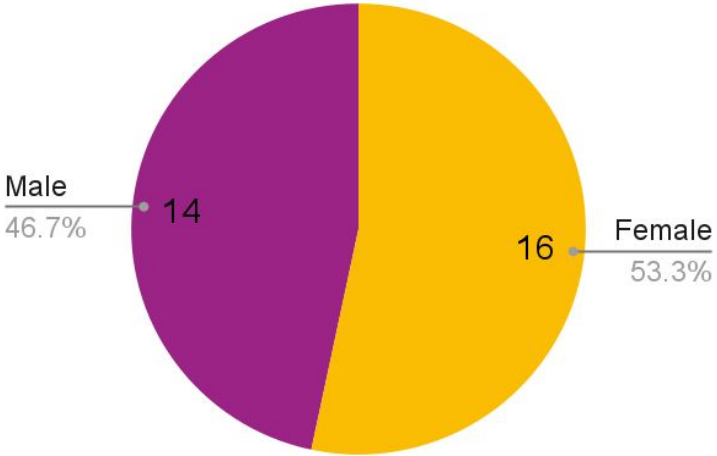


Age and Gender

Age Group

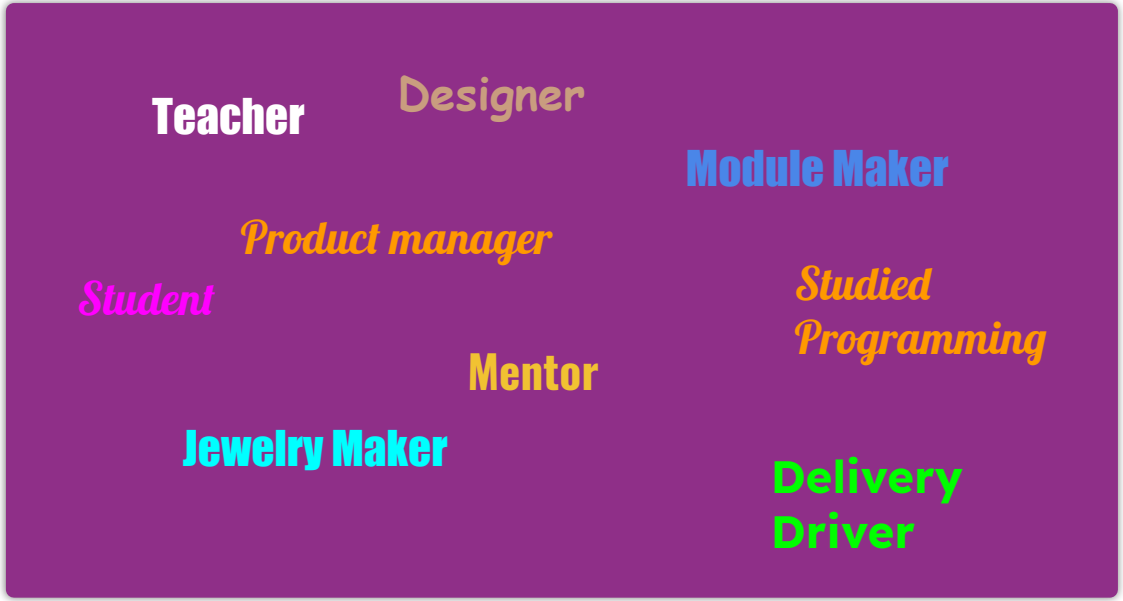


Gender



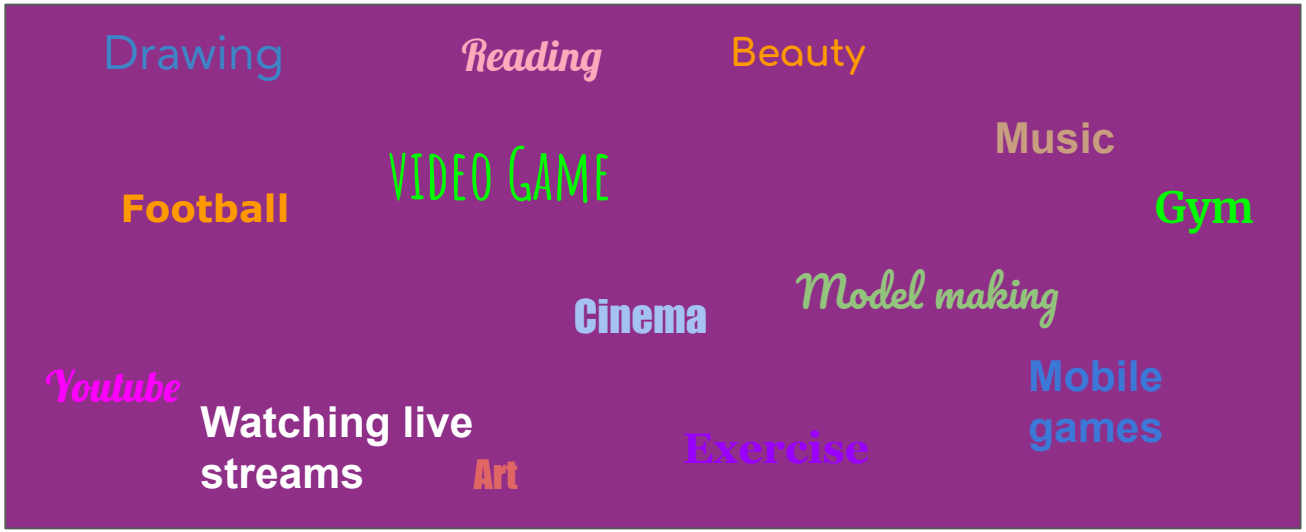
Employment Status

Some participants shared their current employment status below.



Participant Hobbies

The participants were asked about their hobbies to capture their engagement with any form of interactive entertainment. Some of the hobbies are represented in the word cloud below:





Views & Interactions with Video Games

Centric Photography

Age Started Playing Video Games

The participants were asked what age did they begin to play video games and what their experience has been, from when they initially started playing video games, to currently. A large proportion of responses said they started playing video games from the age of six. However the age that some of the participants started to play video games at, did not necessarily equate to the amount of experience they had, due to not consistently playing and other barriers and factors, also indicating their experience wouldn't be enough to be extensive enough and would be an additional barrier to entering the workforce.

The views shared were represented in the following quotes from participants:

"From probably the age or six, you know, six or seven"

"I would say i was about six or seven"

Time Spent Playing Video Games

Another participant linked his inability to play video games to the challenges such as expressed below. While others expressed times spent playing video games.

"You know, because right now there is a high higher level of people playing, It's very hard to get in. If maybe I became better at playing video games"

"I am very interested in gaming. I know I don't play it as much as I used to back in the day, but I've always been interested in, which is the reason why I watch Youtube videos."

"If I watch Youtube that maybe Stream as well, I watch those channels from time to time."

"I spend hours playing games"
"I only play games when not working"
"I play 6 hours a week"

Favourite Games





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