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Citation: Percival, Neil (2016) Profession, passion, or play? Attitudes to unpaid work in the film and TV industries. In: Work and Play: An Interdisciplinary Conference, 6th July 2016, Manchester, UK.

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Profession, passion, or play?

Attitudes to unpaid work in the film and TV industries

6th July 2016

Neil Percival
University of Northumbria

Introductions

- **Former TV documentary producer/director; worked in TV for 15 years**
- **Ran online community 'TV Freelancers' with about 9,000 members**
- **TV WRAP campaign in 2005 against illegal employment practice**
- **Joined Northumbria's media department in Jan 2007**

TV vs film reception of anti-unpaid work campaigning

Introductions

- TV Wrap campaign in 2005 helped to raise awareness and influence policy in the TV industry regarding unpaid work
- **Switched focus from TV to the independent low-budget film industry**
- Different response from independent film community – different funding models, different production culture and a different response to the campaign

The research question
TV vs film reception of anti-unpaid work campaigning

**Is this simply a difference in culture between the 2 industries – or
can we map differences in moral attitudes more precisely?**

Online survey

The research question

- **Online survey – 1,100 respondents**
- **Self-selecting sample accessed via variety of online networks and mailing lists: unions, online communities, guilds, job sites, screen agencies, film festivals, indie film sites**
- **557 respondents from TV, 148 from film, 314 ‘both’**
- **Range of questions to build up a profile, then a number of ethical agree/disagree statements about unpaid work**

Profiles of respondents

Online survey

Profiles of respondents	TV	Film
Working mostly on commercially funded productions?	85%	49%
Do you ever engage people on an unpaid basis?	17%	41%
Have you ever worked unpaid?	65%	94%
Age – average	43	36
Annual income – average	41.7K	24K
Freelance/self-employed/casually employed	53.2%	75.5%
Income from sector forms more than 80% of personal income	79.6%	45.0%
Male	62.5%	44.8%

Differences in film and TV sectors

Profiles of respondents

Statement – rank agreement from 1 to 10 (averages given)	Whole %	TV %	Film %
'I believe that asking someone to work for free is morally wrong'	6.9	7.1	6.5
'I believe in the individual's right to choose to work for free'	6.4	6.3	7.1
'The morality of unpaid work depends on the budget available'	3.9	3.5	4.7
'I would not take part in any form of illegal employment practice'	7.4	7.6	6.4
'For me, working for free was (or is) the only entry route available'	4.7	4.2	6.2
'Unpaid work is a good selection mechanism for industry entry'	3.5	3.2	4.7

Differences in film and TV sectors

Words which describe unpaid work	Whole %	TV %	Film %
Learning experience	53	49	66
Networking	36	31	50
Contacts	42	38	53
Unethical	53	56	44

Factors correlating to ethical attitude Differences in film and TV sectors

Film sector was consistently more positive about unpaid work

...but there were other factors that mapped onto moral attitudes even more closely.

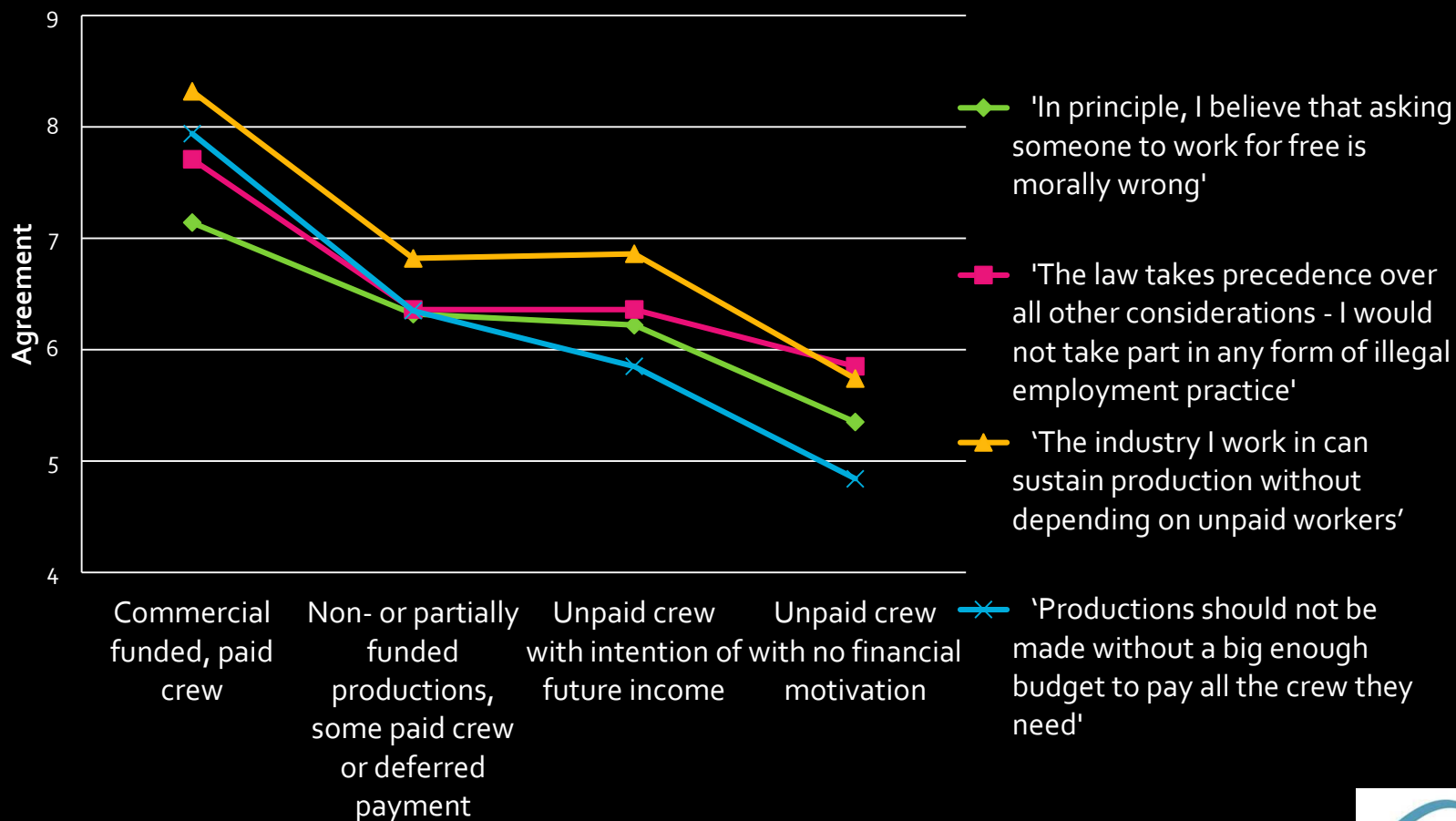
Correlations between anti-unpaid work position, and:

- Higher budget, fully funded production models
- Older and more experienced
- Being freelance or an employee as opposed to an employer
- Higher personal income
- Union connection
- Better legal awareness

Funding models

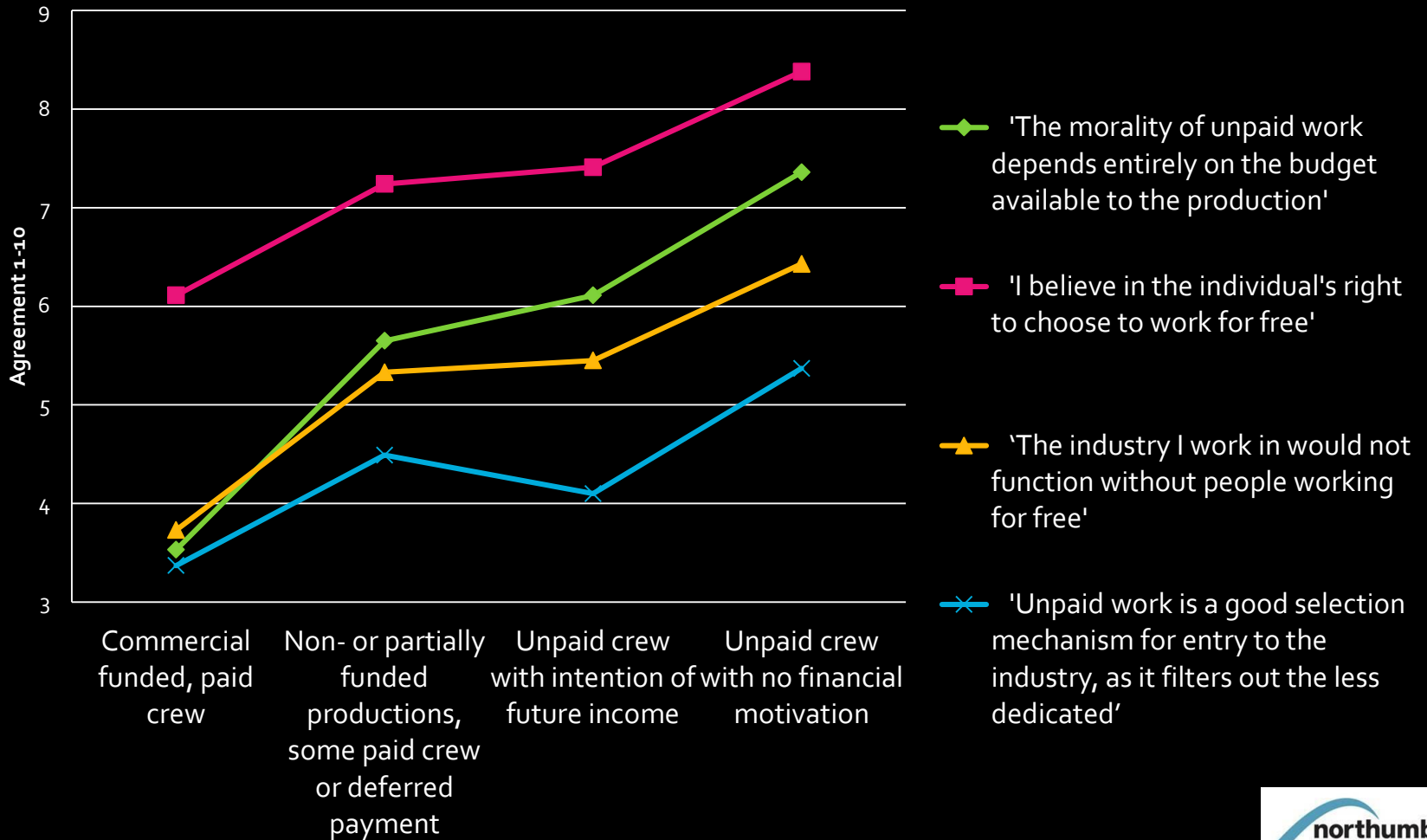
Factors correlating to ethical attitude

Funding model vs anti unpaid work statements



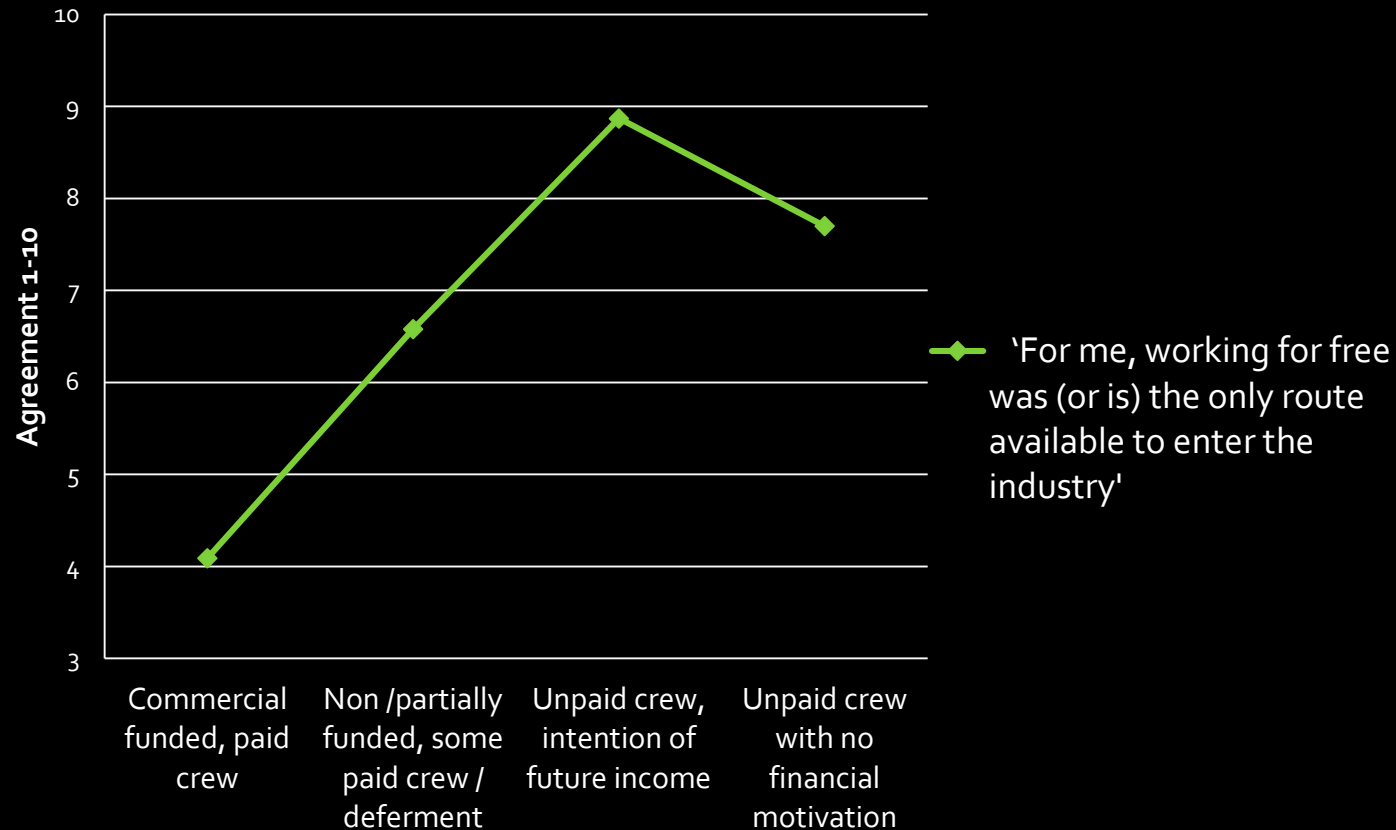
Funding models

Funding model vs pro unpaid work statements



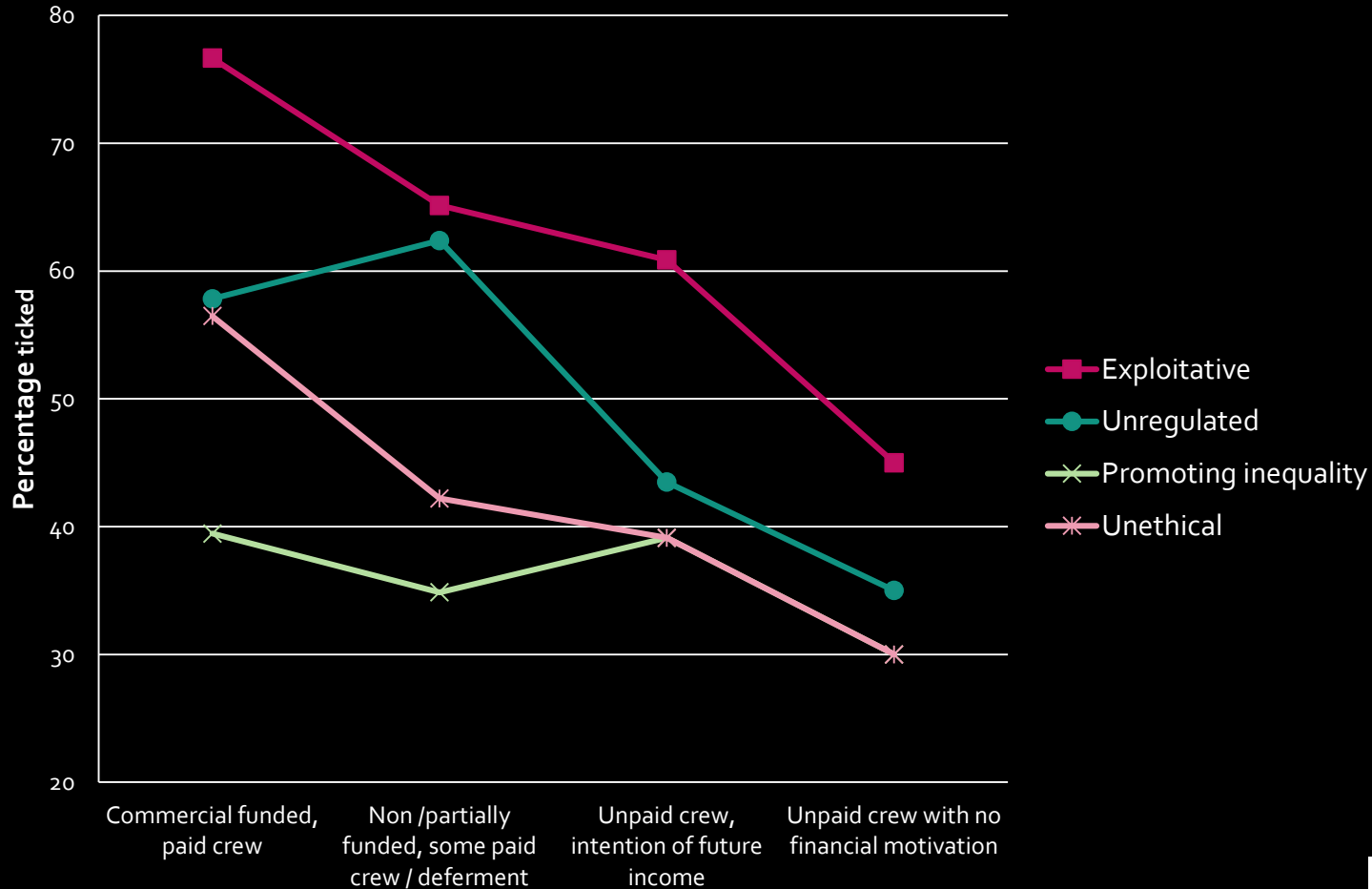
Funding models

Funding model vs 'only way in'



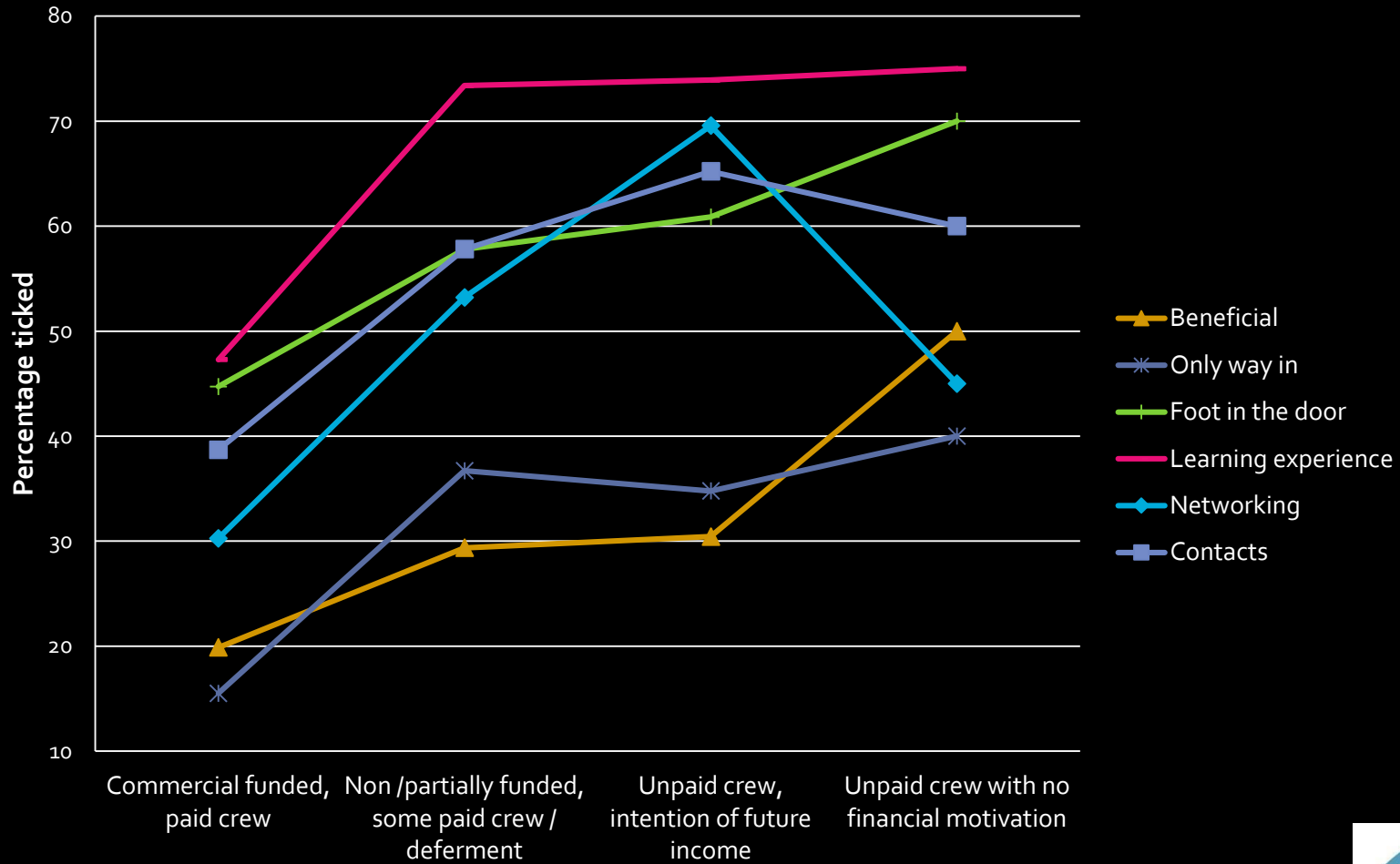
Funding models

Funding model vs negative word choice



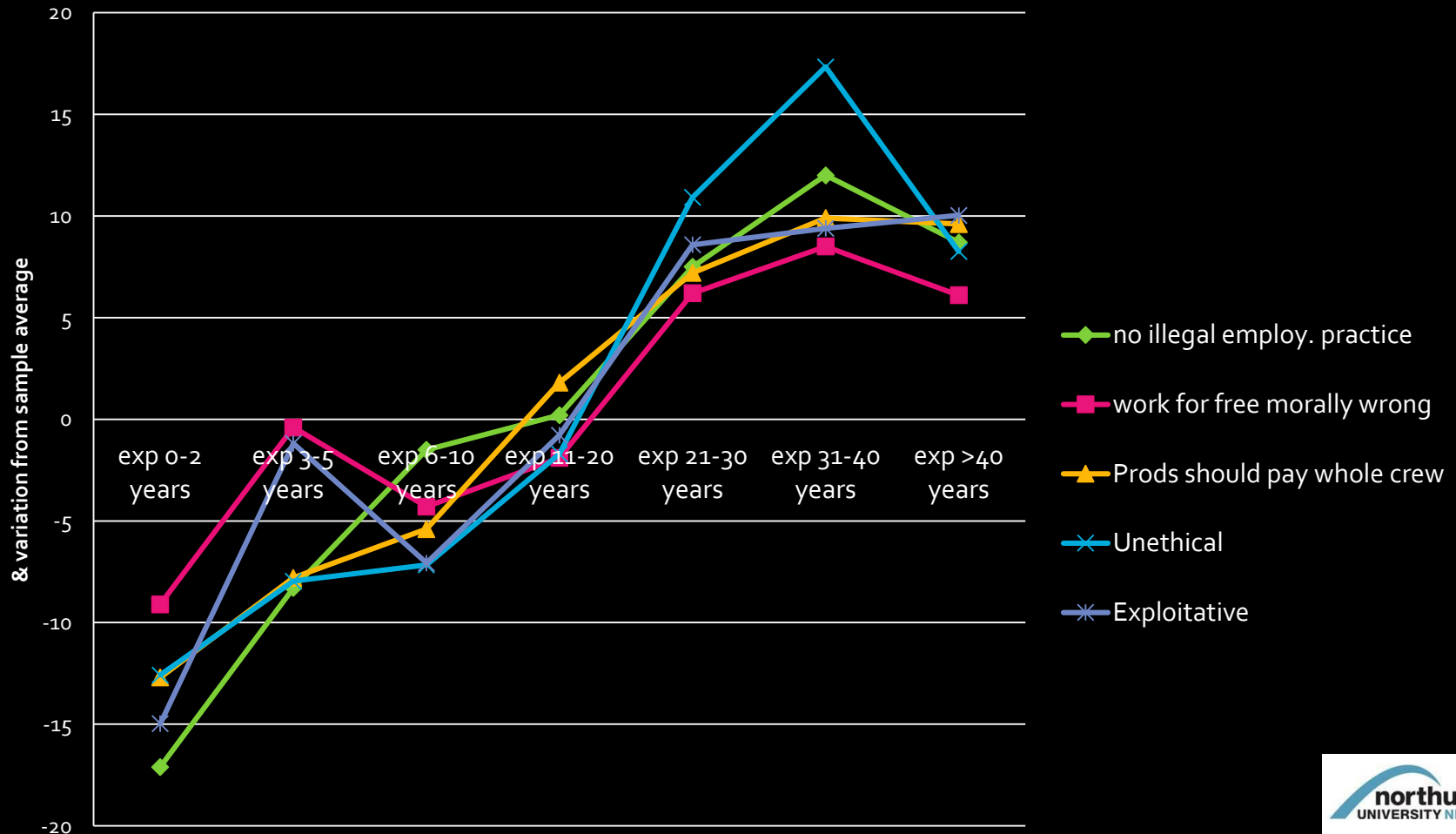
Funding models

Funding model vs positive word choice



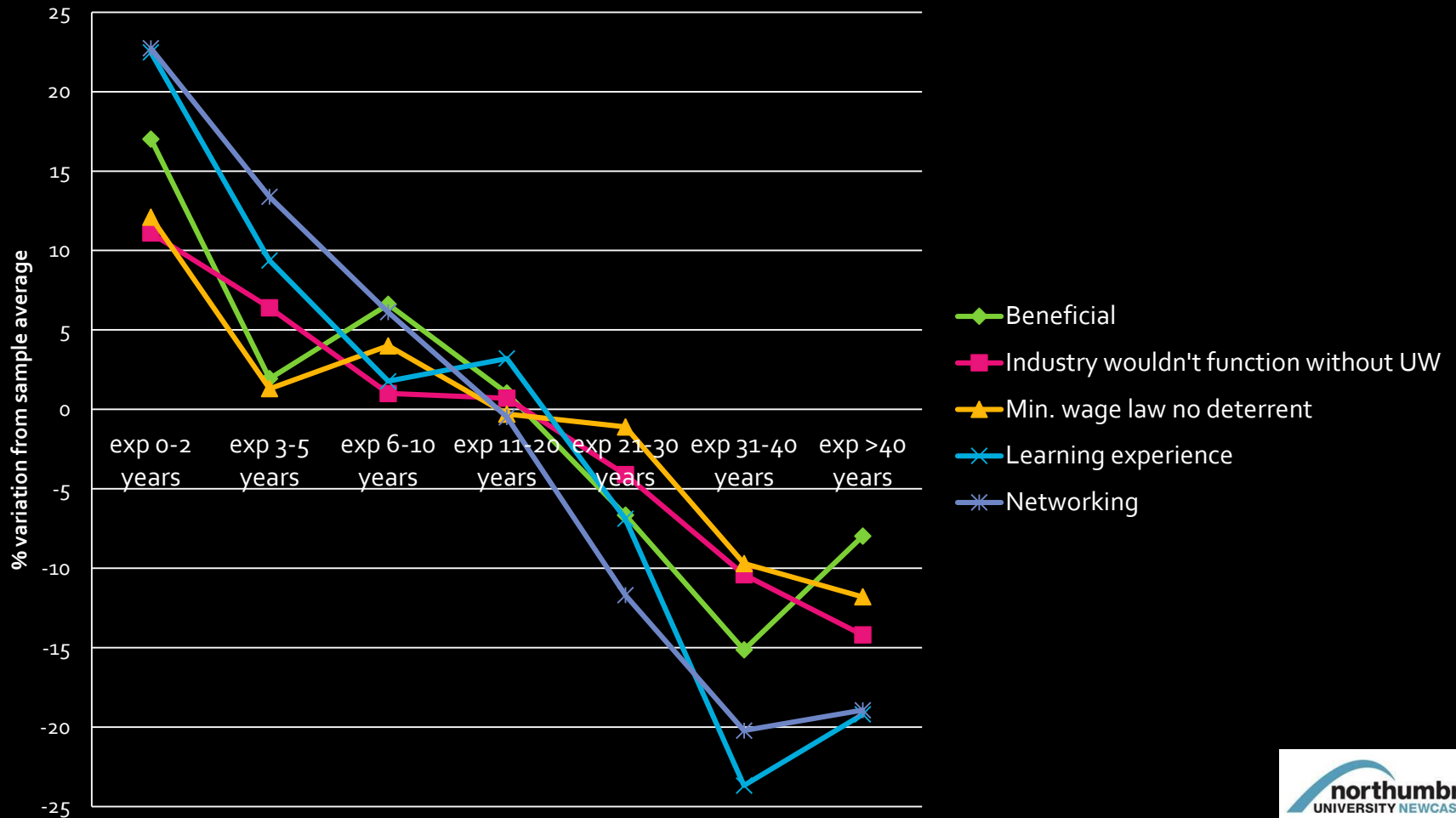
Levels of experience

Experience vs anti unpaid work statements



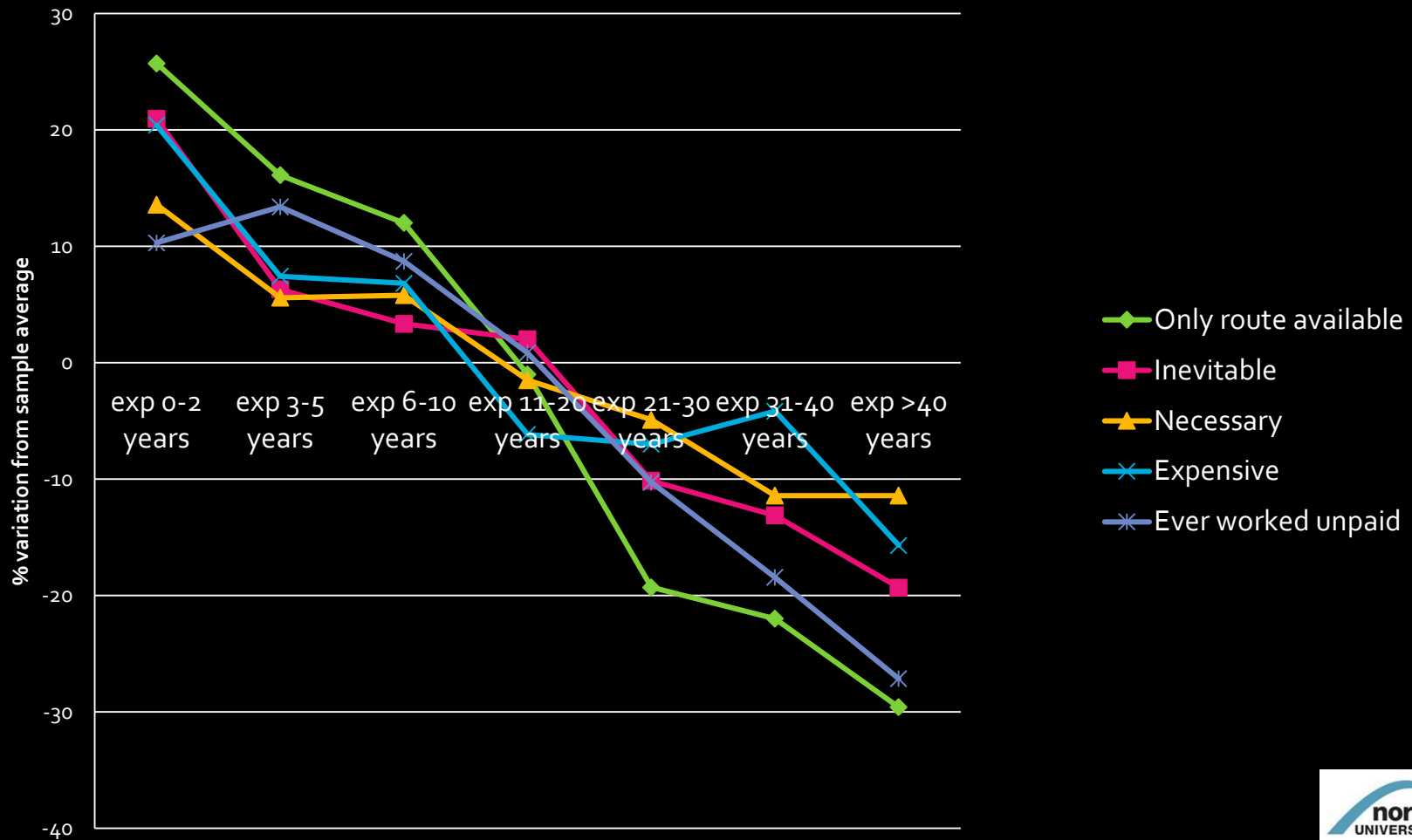
Levels of experience

Experience vs pro-unpaid work statements



Levels of experience

Experience vs inevitability (trend over time?)



More exploration of the unpaid category

Levels of experience

Motivation for working unpaid

	Commercially fully funded	Partial or non-funded
I would be prepared to work for free:		
For a good cause	67%	67%
To improve chances of paid work	25%	71%
To improve CV or work at higher grade	26%	65%
To support a project I believed in creatively	46%	72%
To work with a big name or company	14%	49%
To develop new skills	36%	58%

Other observations

More exploration of the unpaid category

- All those with unpaid worker models, and those with less than 5 years experience, feel more strongly that **ethics is dependent on budget**
- Yet workers (esp. film) also clearly articulated benefits of unpaid work
- > 90% who engage others unpaid, have also worked unpaid themselves
- Key finding: strong agreement that fairness within productions is a very strong driver across the board
- 'Collective action can bring about change in working practices within the industry' - strong 7.5 average agreement – also little variation
- Need more statistical data about what is actually happening at entry level – as opposed to anecdotal

Questions
