

## ASQ In-depth Interviews and Focus Group Topic Guide

### Informed Consent and Ethical Statement

- My name is Kathryn.
- I am conducting this research to gain insight into the experiences of women studying creative media and art courses that prepare them to enter the creative departments of advertising agencies or women currently working or who have worked in these departments. My research focuses on the topic of gender and occupational segregation within these organisations.
- This research will form part of my journal article submission for Advertising and Society Quarterly.
- I will be voice recording this research for my own transcription. These voice recordings will not be shared with anyone else. All transcripts, or quotes, used within my report will be anonymised. They will only be labelled with basic demographic information so it would be impossible for anyone to identify you as the participant. This means your identity will remain confidential.
- I will give you the opportunity to read a transcript of your interview to check whether your views, meaning and sentiment have been accurately represented. There will be the opportunity to feedback on any elements you would like to exclude from my analysis at this point.
- With regards to this interview you have the right to withdraw at any point. You can ask any questions or feel free not to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable with. Do you have any questions at this stage?
- **Upon this basis can I gain your informed consent to continue with this interview. Please say yes for the tape.**

### For Focus Group Only

- I am interested in hearing from all participants
- It doesn't matter if not everyone agrees with one another

- Please respect each other's' views and do not talk over one another

**Before we start...**

This interview should last no longer than the agreed hour. I will move the discussion along to ensure this. If you want to speak for longer on any issue, then please let me know during questioning.

## 1. Personal Experience

### I am... exercise

- *Introduce exercise – can either vocalise or take a minute to write response to share.*  
*Individual written responses first in focus group.*
- *Moderator starts e.g. I am Kathryn and I am writing a journal article. I am a wife and a cat lover and a Bristolian. I am a massive perfectionist and control freak.*
- *Each participant in turn completes the sentence*
- *Probe:*
  - Current role and title
  - Number of years in industry
  - Age
  - Ethnic group
  - Marital status and sexuality
  - Family situation – do they have children? How many? Living at home?
  - Traits or qualities they have

### Brief Oral History and Future Aspirations

- *Introduce timeline template. Encourage participants to talk you through as they fill it out.*  
*Ask them to focus on their study and career related to creative arts and media and advertising agency creative departments. Include elements like higher education study, graduation, applying for jobs, work placements, first jobs, points of promotion, progression or achievement.*
- *Probe and request the following related to their study and career:*
  - Education
  - Historic career path and experience – include unpaid placements
  - Future ambitions and motivations
  - Any events where their gender, as a woman, has felt visible

- Any times when their gender has been an advantage
- Any times when their gender has caused difficulties or hardship
- Any times when their gender has caused conflict – either internally or externally

**Where you are now**

- Gain any missing details on the composition of their course or creative department
  - Male-female split – employees, students and educators
  - Hierarchy – who holds positions of power?
  - Culture/ethos
  - Typical type of person who works there

## 2. Exploring the Gender Gap

### The Ideal Creative Director

- *Introduce the exercise. Ask participants to draw or describe the ideal creative director.*  
*Allow a minute or two to complete.*
- Probe elements like:
  - Gender
  - Traits/qualities
  - Which of those traits or qualities do you possess?
  - Which come naturally to you as a woman? Which are not so natural?
  - Are any more natural for men?

### Trait Sorting

- *Introduce the exercise and distribute cards. Run as following:*
  - Sort cards into those traits most important to succeed as a creative in an advertising agency and those which are less/not important
  - Sort the important traits into those they think come naturally and those which do not
  - Sort the same traits into those they associate with men and those with women

### Rules of the Game

- *Introduce the exercise and the game board. Invite participants to think about success in the creative department of an advertising agency like a game of snakes and ladders, with the ultimate aim to become creative director.*
- Ask participants to describe how they think the following might work in such a game:
  - How they move around the board
  - What the advantages the ladders represent
  - The gatekeepers – who grants permission, or prevents you from climbing the ladders

- What pitfalls the snakes represent
  - What achievements there are along the way
  - What the prize is
  - Prompt any points related to gender and inequality
  - Always ask why for each rule
- What strategies have you employed to succeed in such a game for real?

### 3. Exploring the Causes for the Gender Gap

#### Surprising Facts

- *Share surprising facts cards one by one. May only need to share one or two from a randomised order.*
- Probe:
  - How surprising?
  - Why/why not?
  - How would they explain this fact? What are the causes?

#### Causes Cards

- *Spread out all cards and give participants a couple of minutes to read through. Ask them to pick those that most resonate with their experience and that they believe may be valid causes for the statistics shared in the surprising facts exercise. Also ask them to identify those they reject.*
- In discussion probe:
  - Why/why not valid?
  - Explain or expand on the causes they have chosen as valid
  - Ask them if they have any personal experience related to these causes
  - Ask for any I have missed

#### 4. Exploring the Strategies to Close the Gender Gap

- What advice do you wish someone had given you at the start of your career?
- What career advice would you give to graduates trying to enter the creative departments of advertising agencies today?
- Would your advice differ for a male versus a female graduate? How?
- How could industry, or your agency specifically:
  - Raise awareness of gender inequality in advertising agency creative departments?
  - Prepare female graduates for entry into creative roles?
  - Help retain entry level female talent?
    - Prompt flexi/family time? Work life balance?

#### Suggested Strategies

- *If struggling to suggest initiatives use prompt cards.*
  - Ask them to choose some of the ideas they think could work and explain why.
  - Also ask for those they do not think will work and explain why

#### 5. Closing Statement

- Do you have any questions or anything further you would like to say on this topic?
- Are you still happy to have your responses used as part of my project?
- Thank you very much for your participation.

#### Useful Probes to Remember

- Silent probe: e.g. nod while retaining eye contact
- Echo probe: repeat what participant has said
- Uh-huh probe: sound to encourage the participant to say more



- Probing by leading: more explicit, use a specific question or touch on a specific issue
- Always ask How? And Why?