AUTHOR(S):

TITLE:

YEAR:

Publisher citation:

OpenAIR citation:

WOMEN IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Prof. Rita Marcella, Graeme Baxter and Lorraine Illingworth, Aberdeen Business School, The Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen
March 2006

CONTENTS PAGE	PAGE NO.
Introduction	2
Aim	2
Methodology	2
Case study findings	3
Policies and practice	4
Business start-up issues	5
Training and professional development	5
Education and skills	5
Focus group findings	6

Being in receipt of this bulletin indicates you are a company, employee or sole-trader working in the creative industries. You are therefore included in the project's contacts list, and in the past have been invited to participate in this study.

INTRODUCTION

THE FOLLOWING SUMMARY DESCRIBES THE RESULTS OF THE SECOND YEAR OF AN ESF FUNDED PROJECT WHICH WAS CARRIED OUT IN 2005. THE SECOND YEAR AIMED TO BUILD AND EXPAND UPON THE FIRST YEAR OF THE PROJECT AND FURTHER DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE BARRIERS, PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES WOMEN ENCOUNTER IN THE SCOTTISH CREATIVE INDUSTRIES.

AIM

The aim of this stage of the project was to explore equality policy and practice in companies in the Scottish creative industries, from the perspective of both employers and employees, and to identify examples of good practice that might be adopted throughout these particular industries.

METHODOLOGY

The project consisted of two elements: case studies of companies and sole-traders based in the Scottish creative industries; and focus groups with a sample of female individuals who are or have been employed in the industries. The case studies aimed to enable an in-depth examination of company policy, its implementation and operation, and the attitudes and experience of the company's employees. A total of 51 case studies were conducted between May and October 2005. These included studies of 25 sole traders/self-employed individuals. During these case studies, a total of 125 people were interviewed (see Table 1 for a breakdown).

TABLE 1: CASE STUDIES SAMPLE, BY INDUSTRY AND GENDER				
Industry	Female	Male	no	%
Architecture	2	1	3	2.4
Crafts	12	0	12	9.6
Designer fashion	2	0	2	1.6
Film and TV production	6	1	7	5.6
Games	2	0	2	1.6
Graphic design	3	3	6	4.8
Interior design	2	0	2	1.6
Marketing	3	2	5	4.0
Music	2	1	3	2.4
New media	2	1	3	2.4
Public relations	14	5	19	15.2
Publishing	6	5	11	8.8
Radio	11	4	15	12.0
Theatre	9	6	15	12.0
Visual arts	9	1	10	8.0
Cross-industry	10	0	10	8.0
Totals	**95 (76%)**	**30 (24%)**	**125**	**100**

The second element of the study consisted of focus groups which enabled discussion of the issues raised during the case studies by a mix of professional, organisational and employee representatives. Seven focus groups were carried out in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Inverness during the months of November and December 2005. Eighteen women participated in the discussions from a range of occupations and industries (see Table 2 for a breakdown).

TABLE 2: TOTAL NUMBER OF FOCUS GROUPS AND PARTICIPANTS		
Focus Groups	No. of Participants	Occupations
Glasgow (4 Groups)	9	ex-TV Producer; ex-Musician; ex-Film/Theatre Props; Film/TV Editor; Music Editor; Advertising Account Directors(2); Visual Artist; Architect
Edinburgh (1 Group)	4	MD Publishing Company; Illustrator; Arts Officer; PR Consultant
Dundee (1 Group)	3	Graphic Designer; Cultural Enterprise Officer; ex- Graphic Designer
Inverness (1 Group)	2	Arts Officer; Glass Artist/Retired Journalist

CASE STUDIES FINDINGS

The case studies further explored and, in many cases, reinforced the findings of the first year of the research.

Thirty-five (28%) of the interviewees believed that women are still under-represented in senior positions in the Scottish creative sector. Although it was felt that this under-representation was not so extreme in public relations, publishing and theatre, and was improving in the film and TV industries.

Almost a quarter (23%) of the female interviewees felt that women lack the confidence and self-belief required to progress in the creative industries; while 16% of the women believed that they have to be more determined and try harder than men to succeed in the sector. Seventeen of the females felt that women have to adopt male traits and characteristics in order to adapt to and work in what can be male-dominated environments; although five women stated that displaying a more feminine side can be equally effective. Six females noted a tendency for women occupying senior positions to bully and be unhelpful to other women.

Twelve (13%) of the female interviewees believed that women are more ambivalent than men about career progression, although it was recognised that having children, and a consequent change in personal priorities, can be an important factor here. Nineteen respondents believed that females are more inclined than males to enter an industry at the lowest levels, often in administrative roles, in order to get their "foot in the door". However, there was also a suggestion that women can remain clustered at these administrative levels, particularly in the architecture and music industries, and in art schools.

'I THINK MEN ON THE WHOLE ARE BETTER AT PUSHING FORWARD THEIR OWN CASE AND FIGHTING THEIR CORNERS. I THINK WOMEN GO 'WHAT SHALL I DO?', AND AGONISE OVER IT A LOT MORE, AND MAYBE PLAY DOWN THEIR SUCCESSES. EVERYBODY'S DIFFERENT, BUT I DO THINK WOMEN CAN SOMETIMES BE THEIR OWN WORST ENEMY.'

'IT TAKES AN ENORMOUS TOLL ON YOUR RELATIONSHIP. MY HUSBAND IS 'LONG-SUFFERING'. NOT EVERYBODY MIGHT BE ABLE TO SURVIVE IT.'

Other forms of occupational segregation were noted by 38% of the participants. For example, it was noted that males still tend to dominate the technical roles in a range of industries, including film and TV, games, music and theatre; while females are dominant in the likes of film and TV production roles, commercial radio sales, PR consumer accounts and events management, and theatre stage management.

In contrast to the first year of this research, where 39% of participants noted the existence of male-dominated social networks in the Scottish media and communication industries, just 14 (11%) of the case study participants cited such a phenomenon. In industries such as PR, publishing and theatre, it was felt that the sheer number of women working in the industries precluded a male dominance.

The importance of networking, in terms of raising their profile and gaining work, was emphasised by 22 (23%) of the female participants. However, a lack of self-confidence and time (especially for women with family commitments), as well as geographic location, meant that many of these female interviewees could not participate fully in networks. Seven of these women were members of female-only networks, and these were generally regarded favourably. Four women, all from the PR industry, felt that they have to come up with "creative" and "clever" alternatives to the largely sports-based networking events organised and enjoyed by their male colleagues, and therefore concentrate on attending or organising more "female-friendly" events such as awards ceremonies, business breakfasts and dinners.

'IF YOU'RE A GOOD NETWORKER YOU DO GET ON. BUT WOMEN ARE NOT AS GREAT AT NETWORKING AS MEN. IT'S ABOUT SHYNESS, IT'S ABOUT TIME – 'I'VE GOT TO GET HOME AND MAKE PEOPLE'S TEA, I DON'T HAVE TIME TO GO FOR DRINKS'. IT IS HARD FOR WOMEN. I REALLY STRUGGLE WITH IT. I HAVE TO PUSH MYSELF TO DO IT.'

Over 40% of the interviewees (46% of the females, and 33% of the males) felt that achieving a healthy work-life balance in the creative sector can prove difficult, particularly for women with children, with one of the major factors being the long and flexible hours required in the industries. Fifteen participants had observed a higher turnover of women than men, principally due to family commitments, with these women moving to part-time positions, becoming freelance or self-employed, or perhaps leaving the industries altogether.

Just four of the female participants had personally experienced a gender-based pay gap, where they had been paid less than their male colleagues for work of equal value. However, making accurate comparisons proved difficult for many participants, because: their particular company was dominated by females; they worked on a part-time basis; pay is often individually negotiated and performance- or bonus-based; and that pay is simply not discussed in the workplace.

Fifty-six (42%) of the interviewees believed that there was an age bias in the creative industries, although 35 of these individuals believed that such ageism was not gender-related. This bias was aimed both at older individuals, who were perceived as lacking energy, dynamism and a connectivity with the more youthful target markets of industries such as games and music; and at younger individuals, who were regarded as lacking the necessary gravitas, particularly in client-focused roles. Older individuals, particularly in the crafts and the visual arts, also noted discrimination from galleries and funding bodies. Elements of lookism were also cited by 17 individuals, largely in communications roles, who believed that attractive young women were regarded more favourably by employers and clients. Fifteen female participants provided examples of sexist behaviour and comments, from male colleagues, clients, suppliers, and (for architects, interior designers and architectural glass artists) construction site workers.

Twelve respondents highlighted examples of nepotism or cronyism, in terms of obtaining employment, business, funding, and, in the visual arts, exhibitions; although, other than with two female interviewees who believed an Old Boys' Network was at play, these examples were not regarded as gender-related. Ten participants believed that bias and elitism existed in the visual arts and crafts industries - particularly amongst galleries and funding bodies - aimed against individuals from the lower social classes and those who are self-taught rather than art-school trained. Again, however, this bias was not believed to be gender-related.

'I THINK THE PRETTY YOUNG GIRL, WHEN SHE'S INVITED IN, THE PATRONISING FACTOR GOES STRATOSPHERIC AT THAT STAGE. WE DO HAVE A COUPLE OF VERY PRETTY BLONDES, WITH THE EMPHASIS ON PRETTY. THEY'RE SOFT, THEY'RE GENTLE, THEY'RE BLONDE. AND THEY WILL BE INVITED TO A LOT MORE MEETINGS THAN PERHAPS THEY WANT, BUT THEY WON'T BE TAKEN TERRIBLY SERIOUSLY. I DON'T ENVY THEM THAT.'

Geographical barriers were highlighted by 22 participants, of both sexes, from across the creative industries. Twelve interviewees noted the more extensive job opportunities available in England, and the consequent move south by many young creatives. While the remainder, largely located in rural areas and in the North of Scotland, felt excluded from the commissioning, funding, networking and training opportunities more readily available to their counterparts in Scotland's Central Belt.

POLICIES AND PRACTICE

Just 10 of the case study companies had formal gender-related policies in place. Where policies did exist, employees were generally vague as to the type and extent of the policies, even when these were available for inspection on the companies' intranets. It was felt that they would only be investigated when needed personally.

'FROM A MOTHER'S POINT OF VIEW, THE DIRECTORS HAVE YOUNG CHILDREN THEMSELVES, AND THEY FULLY APPRECIATE AND SUPPORT ANY PROBLEMS YOU HAVE WITH CHILDCARE.'

Instead of formal, written policies, many of the other companies attempt to foster "informal", "flexible", "family-friendly" cultures in the workplace, where employees are given time off, or enter into alternative working patterns, as and when family-related problems and events arise. Employees generally spoke positively of these arrangements, and an important factor in the success or otherwise of these informal approaches seemed to be whether or not the directors and managers themselves had families.

Flexible working methods (e.g. part-time, compressed hours, staggered hours, job share, home working) had been introduced in 13 of the case study companies. In all of these companies, directors and managers had considered flexible arrangements on a case by case basis, with their introduction being dependent on the resources available at the time, the nature of the roles being considered for flexible working, and the potential impact on company performance. However, there was also evidence of some female employees with children, who had moved to part-time contracts, but who were still effectively working full-time hours because of workload pressures, or who had lost disproportionate levels of pay and benefits through moving away from full-time, and who were therefore effectively being disadvantaged by moving to a more 'flexible' arrangement.

Flexible working methods were regarded, by both managers and employees, as more suitable for administrative roles, or for some industry-specific occupations (e.g. copy editing and proof reading in publishing). In contrast, it was felt that flexible working would be very difficult: in client-focused roles (e.g. in public relations and in commercial radio sales); in roles requiring almost constant interaction with colleagues and/or subordinates; in deadline-orientated roles; and in roles requiring long and unsociable hours (e.g. in theatre and in film and TV production).

'THERE'S NO QUESTION NOW THAT A SALES ROLE IN COMMERCIAL RADIO IS NOT A PART-TIME JOB. THAT'S A FULL-ON JOB, GIVEN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REVENUE STREAM. WE NEED PEOPLE WORKING A 5-DAY WEEK. IT MUST HAVE CONTINUITY – THE MINUTE YOU DON'T HAVE THAT YOU LOSE BUSINESS. PEOPLE SPEND MONEY ELSEWHERE, OR THEY DRIFT AWAY FROM THE STATION.'

'I'M ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES. MY HUSBAND WORKS IN A VERY LUCRATIVE JOB, SO I DON'T HAVE TO BRING HOME THE BREAD, SO TO SPEAK, AND SUSTAIN MY FAMILY. IF I HAD TO, I COULDN'T SURVIVE. NO WAY.'

'PERHAPS A BIG REASON IS BECAUSE A LOT OF THE PEOPLE TEACHING IN ART SCHOOLS HAVE POSSIBLY NEVER EARNED THEIR LIVING THROUGH THEIR CHOSEN SUBJECT. IF YOU'RE BEING TAUGHT BY SOMEONE WHO'S NEVER HAD TO SELL A PAINTING TO PAY THEIR BILLS, HOW ARE YOU GOING TO LEARN?'

BUSINESS START-UP ISSUES

Seventeen of the respondents (each one a sole trader or a director of a recently established small company) believed that the start-up advice and assistance provided by various agencies was not entirely suitable for creative businesses - "applying business standards to a creative subject". There also appeared to be geographical differences in the standard of the advice and assistance provided. Difficulties in finding professionals, such as accountants and lawyers, who are aware of the specific problems and issues concerned with running a creative business, were also reported.

Thirteen of the sole traders, largely in crafts and the visual arts, felt that they lacked, or did not pay enough personal attention to, basic business skills, such as bookkeeping and marketing, or found it difficult to set prices and rates for their own work. As a result, many of the problems reported by these interviewees related to financial and cash-flow matters.

The importance of the emotional, practical and/or monetary support of a husband or partner was also emphasised by 12 of the 21 female sole traders.

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Forty-five (36%) of the interviewees were conscious of having a current training or professional development need. A wide range of training needs were cited, including basic business skills, communication and presentation skills, the use of specific software packages, and people management.

The vast majority (90%) of employees with training or professional development needs felt confident that their employer would assist them in addressing these needs, if the relevance, benefit to the company, and cost effectiveness of doing so could be argued and justified. Three of the case study companies pay the fees of those employees undertaking work-related, part-time degree courses; while one PR company pays employees' subscriptions to a local professional organisation.

Just six of the interviewees had taken part in a formal mentoring or 'buddying' scheme, arranged either by their employer or by a business support agency, while 12 had had an 'informal' mentor at some point throughout their careers. A further 15 interviewees felt that some form of mentoring would be useful for their own development; while three companies were currently investigating the introduction of a formal scheme. However, the six interviewees involved in a formal scheme had generally been disappointed with the results, citing a lack of time and commitment, inappropriate advice, and a lack of understanding of creative issues on the part of their mentor. Greater levels of satisfaction were reported by those interviewees who had personally researched and arranged their own informal mentors.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Fifty-four (43%) of the participants were critical of the extent to which Scottish higher and further education prepares students for working in the Scottish creative industries.

Concerns were expressed by employers about the calibre and quality of new graduates from 'media' and 'creative' courses - many of whom had been taught by academics with little or no practical experience of working in the creative industries - and about new graduates' unrealistic expectations of job opportunities, salary levels, and the speed with which they will progress in their chosen career. Indeed, it was felt by a number of employers that the Scottish creative talent pool was not particularly deep, and that it was difficult to find "good", "experienced" people.

Employees and sole traders, meanwhile, felt that their courses had provided them with too much theoretical, and not enough practical, knowledge and skills, including the basic business skills required when starting up their own company.

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

Just under half of respondents (8 of the 18) believed women feel they have to choose between their career and family and, in some instances, women choose to dedicate their lives to their career as suggested by five participants. Seven respondents stated that many women do not return to work or find it difficult to return once on maternity leave while two respondents felt that as a result some women do not tend to start a family until they reach a certain level of seniority. It seems that some women are forced to work due to financial constraints and/or sheer ambition and as a result many cut short their maternity leave or work from home during that time.

'I HAD MY KIDS AND HAD WORKED ALL MY LIFE AND CERTAINLY DIDN'T INTEND TO NOT WORK AGAIN AND 8 YEARS ON I AM STILL TRYING TO FIND A WAY THAT I CAN WORK. IT TOOK ME A REALLY LONG TIME, I WAS QUITE AFFECTED PSYCHOLOGICALLY BY HAVING TO COME TO AN ACCEPTANCE THAT I COULDN'T DO THAT JOB ANY MORE.'

Three participants believed their only option is to re-enter the industry at a lower level while one participant would be happy to accept a reduction in salary. While the nature of the creative industries initially attracts women to the industries, half of the participants felt the long hours culture can cause difficulties once women start a family. In addition, three participants suggested other aspects such as work-related travel and entertaining clients were equally difficult for women with family commitments.

Eight participants (45%) felt job share and flexible working are not possible and not encouraged, particularly in the press industry and sectors that are client-focused. Six participants stated that women working on either a part-time or job share basis are likely to work longer hours than contracted.
A significant proportion of participants (50% or 9 of the 18) indicated the need for a reliable support network that consists of a combination of professional carers, family, friends and spouses. It appears, while the expense of professional child care is an issue, the lack of suitable child care can also cause difficulties, particularly for women with children of school age. Indeed, four participants indicated a concern over the lack of child care provision between the end of the school day and the end of the working day.

There is evidence to suggest (39% or 7 of the 18) women are under-represented in senior management and decision-making roles in the creative industries, particularly in press, advertising and public sector arts. Interestingly, this is also the case in sectors or departments which are seen as predominantly female.

'WHAT WE DO IS SEEN BY EVERYONE ELSE AS LEISURE AND ENJOYMENT AND I THINK THAT IS ABUSED SLIGHTLY IN THAT OKAY YOU HAVE JUST DONE 9 HOURS WORK BUT THERE IS A PLAY ON SO YOU NEED TO GO AND SEE[REVIEW] THAT PLAY. YOU COULDN'T HAVE A FAMILY AND WORK THOSE LONG HOURS.'

A number of participants (5 of the 18) felt women tend to occupy roles which are administration based, and require diplomacy or multi-tasking skills. In some cases women who occupy non-traditional female roles (such as film props or architects) can experience some form of sexist attitudes and behaviour. Twenty-eight percent (5 of the 18) suggested women in general adopt male traits to adapt and succeed in primarily male dominated environments. Indeed, it appears that this is more prevalent in women who occupy senior levels. Reasons for this alleged change of personality include the notion women are playing to male rules or women in senior positions are attempting to hold onto their positions. In addition, six participants suggested women are pushy or try harder in the workplace.

Three participants had personally experienced a gender-based pay gap. While six participants believed the inability to self-promote is particularly problematic in a male-dominated environment, it was noted that this issue is not gender-specific in the visual arts, as marketing and promotion can be difficult for all artists.

'I THINK OUR LINE MANAGER HAS ALMOST CHANGED HER PERSONALITY ... BEING A WOMAN IN A MAN'S BUSINESS ... SHE IS HAVING TO PLAY WITH A DIFFERENT SET OF RULES AND THEY ARE NOT NATURALLY HER RULES. IT IS QUITE INTERESTING AS THOSE ARE ATTRIBUTES YOU WOULD EXPECT FROM A MAN YET IT DOESN'T SIT SO WELL IN A WOMAN.'

A number of women (3 of the 18) believe a perception exists whereby men are seen as superior. This view may be due to the differences between the sexes. In this context eight women believe men are: more confident; happy to boast about their achievements; able to talk in business terms; have the ability to negotiate; can be dominating; and believe in their abilities.

Six of the eighteen participants acknowledged the importance of networking, particularly in terms of meeting like-minded women to discuss problems and gain advice. However, it appears that the quality of networking can depend on the area in which the women are located. Despite none of the participants being involved in a mentoring scheme, many are aware of the importance of such a scheme to their working lives. Several participants (6 of the 18) perceived a lack of understanding towards the creative industries by those outwith the industries. It was felt this resulted in ill-informed advice or a general lack of support in terms of careers and business guidance. Indeed, five participants stated there is little encouragement by careers advisors to enter these industries.

Eleven participants highlighted the idea that women working in freelance positions can find it difficult negotiating fees and earning a living, as well as encountering problems obtaining payment. Four participants argued that the limited ability to negotiate, together with the lack of clarity of fees and rates, can prevent women charging appropriate fees for their freelance work.

Half of the participants suggested solutions which included:
- Networking events specifically tailored for women;
- Government funded childcare and training for women returners;
- Companies include elements of gender equality in their training and team building;
- Companies recognise that their employees have lives outside the workplace.

FURTHER COPIES
If you require further copies of the briefing please contact Graeme on 01224 263889, g.baxter@rgu.ac.uk or
Lorraine on 01224 263477. l.illingworth@rgu.ac.uk