Topic guide

[Welcome discussion]

[Confirm everything OK with consent form and whether they have any questions]

[Check participant OK to be recorded]

[Explanation of ‘theory-led’ interviews – that I will be sharing academic theories and my thinking process in order to check their validity based on participant’s experience]

[Starting interview:]

SCRIPT:

‘My understanding is that someone’s background is likely to have an effect on people’s abilities to make take certain actions, so I would like to ask you questions regarding your background, your education, your social networks, and your career to-date’.

Biographical information

* Ask about age, gender identity, ethnic identity, class identity, geographical location of home and work, disability status.

Educational background

* Education history including state/public school, university if applicable, other education, including industry specific training.
* Did you develop any useful networks in your education that helped with your career?

Career history

* Tell me about your current job
  + How are you employed? (employed, freelance, contracts, etc.)
    - Has this changed over time?
* Could you give me a career history, from [normally when they left education] up until now? You can include as much detail as you like, and I will take some notes. [Pull out reasons for career decisions. These might include work-related or life-course related reasons, or something else].

SCRIPT:

‘There is a lot of recent research on the working conditions, and work cultures, of digital and creative workers. These questions, and the follow-up questions I ask you, are framed by the debates that are raised by that research. I may ask you questions about some of your assumptions, based on the perspectives I have been exposed to as I have read this research. I do this as a way of getting you to look at your position in a reflexive manner, not to challenge your beliefs or to question your experience’.

Questions related to research themes

CONDITIONS

* What are the main pressures associated with your work, now and in the past?
  + Conditions, pay, security, pressure to perform, etc.

WORKPLACE/SOCIETAL CULTURES

[Each interview is different – be flexible and ask relevant questions. Think of general theories (feminism, class struggle, etc.), or specific research (e.g. discourses of self-promotion vs solidarity) which could be useful for participants to look afresh at their situation].

* Tell me about the workplace cultures you have experienced? Now and in the past
  + How have you experienced these changing over your career?
  + How do you think these have affected your working life?
    - For example, is ageism a problem? Any other prejudices?
* How to you feel your workplace culture fits in with wider societal feelings about those issues (ageism, other prejudices)? – with, or against, the grain of societal norms…

SCRIPT:

‘I understand from my research so far that in order for older workers to sustain careers in your line of work, they might need to make changes to their working lives for a variety of reasons. These may include making adjustments for work/life balance reasons, or to try and remain employable by acting in certain ways. These next questions are asking you about such things.

(We might have already covered some of this, so apologies for any repetition)’.

Strategies for sustaining work

* Bearing in mind the positive/negative aspects of work you have already discussed, have you made any strategic choices in your career in order to sustain work, improve work, or make work more tolerable?
* What choices have you made to try and help make your career successful?
  + Continued training,
  + Going freelance, joining a union, joining a cooperative, other ‘positive’
  + ‘Performing youth’, self-commodifying, other ‘negative’
* What were the outcomes of these decisions? – As expected?
  + (If different decisions made at different times, address each one in turn)
* Do you think the decisions you made were due to the industry/due to the type of employment you were in?

For those participants who have left their digital/creative career

* Why did you leave [the industry]?
  + Did you try to make it work, how so, and for how long?
  + Was there any one thing that made you leave, or was it a combination of things?

Future plans, wrapping up

* Have you got any plans for your future work in this industry?
* Any thoughts on the future of your industry?
* Anything else you would like to discuss?

[Asked for leads on other potential participants]

[Thanks, information on timeline for research outputs]