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Two Englands? Blokishness, Masculine Habitus and the North-South Divide in the Advertising Industry

This work was supported by the British Academy research grant under SRG18R1\181033.

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the paper was to analyse the position of women in the advertising industry with the lens of organizational theory and Bourdieuan concept of habitus, to explore whether women are expected to embrace masculine characteristics to succeed and whether advertising industry can be seen as a masculine habitus.

Design/methodology/approach: Qualitative interviews were conducted with 37 women working in the advertising industry in England. The data was analysed using thematic analysis.

Findings: Women report masculine expectations as a condition to succeed in their careers and show large internalisation of masculine habitus. While women recognise that the position of men is better, they do not report challenging organisational structures that enforce masculine expectations of them, and they generally report having to communicate and behave like men to succeed. Women in the north show more work satisfaction and report less sexism and career barriers.

Originality/value: To the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first study addressing blokishness and masculine habitus in the context of the advertising industry in England. Besides, the study identified a regional divide in work experiences, which are linked to early socialisation.

Practical implications: Employers wishing to present their brand as inclusive should consider the impact of organisational structure and design internal policies that promote inclusivity.

Social implications: Advertising industry has a mass reach, similar to one of the media, and reshaping organisational structure to foster inclusivity would enable more supportive and less stereotypical campaigns. Class origin and early socialisation influence communication and behaviour in adulthood, which influences career opportunities.

Introduction

While the media often portrays women's affairs through post-feminist lenses of all battles being won, the situation in the field tells a different story. For example, women are still portrayed in

advertises in a patriarchal way that enforces expected roles (Thompson-Whiteside et al, 2020; Eisend, 2019; Cooke, 2019; Rittenhouse, 2018; Reichart, 2003) and since the situation was not improving within the industry itself, the UK has introduced legislation in 2019 which bans enforcing sexist stereotypes in adverts (Sweney, 2019). The fact legislation had to be introduced to ban stereotyping leads to the question of what is the position of women working in the advertising industry? According to the available information, the majority of the workforce in the UK's advertising industry are women, but women still do not hold senior positions and advertising is generally seen as a man's world (UK Digital and Creative Sector Talent Insight Report, 2017; Sleeman, 2019; Stein, 2017). One study has shown that 91% of women working in the advertising industry have heard demeaning comments about women from their male colleagues, 58% said they felt excluded from important business decisions, 54% have been subjected to unwanted sexual advances in their career, and only one in four women stated that they felt they had the same opportunities as men in the industry (Mortimer, 2016). Other studies reported that women face the problem of so-called '(homo)sociality and space' (Crewe and Wang, 2018, p. 12) where men on top are oriented towards other men "within a patriarchal gender order" (ibid, p. 13), and this formal and informal communication can happen deliberately or spontaneously (Gregory, 2009). This means that there is something like an 'old boys' networks in the advertising industry, which naturally constructs hierarchies and affects promotions (ibid) and masculine organisational culture has been recognized as a barrier to women's progress in the advertising industry (Weisberg and Robbs, 1997; Broyles and Grow, 2008; Crewe and Wang, 2018).

The situation is not much different in other industries where scholars continually report inequality and lack of career progressions and power for women (Einarsdottir, 2018; Hovden et al, 2011; Holton and Dent, 2016; Simpson and Kumra, 2016). However, an interesting

observation on women is found in research conducted in the field of media, where several authors reported that women have to be like men, or blokish, to succeed. For example, Mills (2014) reported that some of the women who progress to senior positions “become so bloke-ified by the macho water in which they swim that many younger women looking up don’t see them as role models for the kind of women they might want to become” (p. 19). Other authors also argued that many women do not feel comfortable with blokish culture and cannot join in (Gallagher, 2002), however, this opens up a question whether women are generally expected to embrace, what is commonly understood, as masculine characteristics to succeed in the organisation.

Against this backdrop, this paper analyses lived experiences of women working in the advertising industry, in particular in regards to the so-called blokishness, with which the paper further contributes towards extending the debate on cultural masculinities in organisations and advertising industry specifically. Since the majority of works on women in advertising focus on women in the south of England, London in particular (IPSOS MORI, 2019; Crewe and Wang, 2018; McDowell, 1997), this paper also broadens existing works on women in advertising by focusing on women who are both employees and managers and who are based in both south and north of England. By doing this, the paper explores masculinities in the organisation from a sociological perspective, using the framework of cultural masculinities in organisations (Acker, 1990; 2009; Alvesson, 1998; 2013) and Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, which explains social norms and the way they get embedded into society and individuals through the socialisation process (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 2007).

Gender and Organisation, and the Advertising Industry

Organisational theorists deconstructed gender division of labour in which men monopolise higher positions while women remain in lower positions (Alvesson, 1998). Acker (1990) proposed the study of gender and organisation as a gendered process where organisational structures, which includes advantages and disadvantages of staff are understood and patterned as masculine and feminine. However, this leads to the perspective of ‘gendered organisations’ rather than a ‘gender in organisations’, which means that researchers must explore concepts such as organisational structures, processes and behaviours, which might be culturally understood as masculine. This means that organisations often work under culturally masculine meanings or, meanings that feel more natural to men than women (Alvesson, 1998). Alvesson (2013) outlines that many technical jobs are constructed as masculine and thus seen as an anti-thesis to women, and the same rule applies for jobs that require aggressive approach, persistence, toughness and determination (ibid), which are all seen as masculine characteristics.

According to Acker (1990), organisations can be seen as gendered and part of the reason for this is because workers are culturally understood as bodiless and gender-neutral and this is how job roles and expectations are understood. This neutral and bodiless worker “has no sexuality, no emotions, and does not procreate” (Acker, 1990, p. 151), and this has historically benefited men more than women since it is women who bear children and who are socially expected to provide care for children and family as a whole. This particularly applies to the advertising industry where the masculine work culture dictates long working hours and sometimes socialising with clients after work, which includes going to bars, parties, lunches and various events to network and bring new business (Crewe and Wang, 2018; McLeod et al, 2011; Gill, 2014). Because of this, many women leave the industry and thus the advertising industry remains an industry for young people and for those individuals who are not parents (Clare, 2013; Jarvis and Pratt, 2006; Grabher, 2004). Therefore, the worker is conceptualised as a man,

and it is man's "minimal responsibility in procreation" (Acker, 1990, p. 152) that enables working, for example, long hours, socialising after work with clients, because women were historically at home with children. In a gendered organisation, this is used as a reason for control and exclusion (Acker, 1990) and it creates the 'inequality regime' in the organisation, which means that "the persons at the top of most organisations are likely to be white men; they are very privileged and have great class power compared with most other people in the organisation" (Acker, 2009, p. 3).

In the advertising industry, creative departments still predominantly have men as creative directors and thus there is a sense of old-boys mentality (Broyles and Grow, 2008) or homosociality (Crew and Wang, 2018). The fact advertising is known for a masculine work culture of long working hours and (homo)sociality makes it a good case study for exploring whether women are expected to be blokish and act like men to succeed. In other communication industries, such as media, there are reports on strong macho culture and "a deeply entrenched bloke culture" (Mills, 2014, p. 22) and reports that women in their 20s are as tough as any men, however, as other life pressures come, the hierarchy starts looking increasingly male (ibid). Since advertising is also known for sexism and (homo)sociality (Crewe & Wang, 2018) the question this paper explores is whether women have to be like men to succeed and whether women have unconsciously internalised masculine practices (Bourdieu, 2007) and thus joined masculine habitus without challenging the oppressive structures that enforce these practices.

Theoretical Framework and Method

Two perspectives have been used in the paper. From one point, the paper looks at the masculinity in organisational culture as discussed in work of Acker (1990; 2006; 2009) and

Alvesson (1998; 2013), and Bourdieu's concept of habitus, which explains social norms and the way they get embedded into society and then individuals through the socialisation process (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 2007). This means that individuals rarely challenge inequality because inequality is so embodied in the system that many women fail to challenge it due to the lack of recognition on what constitutes oppression and injustice (Chambers, 2005). Bourdieu (2007) argued that masculine domination and injustice work in an established order and perpetuate itself easily to the point it becomes "acceptable and even natural" and this practice can be seen as "symbolic violence, a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims" (p. 1). The masculine dominance is grounded in "arbitrary division which underlines both reality and the representation of reality" (ibid, p. 3). Therefore, Bourdieu (2007) argues that "we have embodied the historical structures of the masculine order in the form of unconscious schemes of perception and appreciation" (p. 5), which means that the division between sexes is based in biology and this is socially constructed. However, this social construct is embedded in society to the point that it is perceived as the natural order of things and individuals unconsciously obey to the rules of domination imposed in daily interactions. Bourdieu (2007) argues that this is the case because individuals fail to observe mechanisms of domination because they are deeply rooted in everyday practices. Thus, the social order "functions as an immense symbolic machine tending to ratify the masculine domination on which it is founded: it is the sexual division of labour, a very strict distribution of the activities assigned to each sex, of their place, time and instruments; it is the structure of space, with the opposition between the place of assembly or the market, reserved for men, and the house, reserved for women" (p. 9-11).

Bourdieu's theory of habitus was seen as particularly useful for this study as it explores unconscious beliefs and internalisation of women who might be accepting things as they are

because they do not know for different due to embeddedness of masculine domination in the social order and everyday life. In terms of organisational research, the two concepts from Bourdieu (2007) were particularly useful, unconscious acceptance of the social order of things and habitus as an everyday normal where cultural masculinities are the normal practice and women who do not fit into those expectations face the 'inequality regime' (Acker, 2009). Cultural masculinities are understood as Alvesson's (1998) definition of practices that come naturally to men and this cultural masculinity would include behaviour and communication seen as inherently masculine due to differences in socialisation process where boys and girls get socialised differently, and this different socialisation forms a habitus in which masculine domination comes as a natural order of things (Bourdieu, 2007). Because of the socialisation, Bourdieu (2007) correctly argues that many women, when they try to progress to the senior position, face the dual requirement. From one point, they need to have the right qualifications for the role, but then also characteristics that come naturally to men due to socialisation, such as "a physical stature, a voice, or dispositions such as aggressiveness, self-assurance, 'role distance', what is called natural authority etc., for which men have been tacitly prepared and trained as men" (p. 62, emphasis in the original).

In research in media studies, these characteristics are known as blokish and scholars and practitioners questioned deeply entrenched blokish culture where women are expected to be like men to succeed (Mills, 2014; North, 2016). This view is closely aligned with the Difference approach in feminist theory, which also argues that women and men are socialised differently and therefore have different ways of doing things. For example, some studies report that women and men communicate and lead differently because women are socialised to have supportive communication styles whereas men are socialised to have a dominant style full of interruptions and domineering conversations (Tannen, 1995; 1990; 1986; Merchant, 2012;

Vukoičić, 2013; West & Zimmerman, 1983). These differences then result with obstacles in work organisations, and especially because of the domination of men in higher positions (Acker, 1990; Bourdieu, 2007; Vukoičić, 2013). When speaking of women who embrace culturally masculine behaviour and communication, this means that blockish women would communicate more directly, behave in a way that commonly comes naturally to men rather than women (for example not showing emotions, being focused on work more than on family life and show work-first attitude), and they would do the work like a man normally does, thus embracing masculine work patterns (North, 2016; Mills, 2014; Lofgren-Nilsson, 2010; Ross, 2001; 2018; Lobo et al, 2017; Shor et al, 2014).

Against the backdrop above, women were asked a variety of questions on their lived experiences, such as whether they heard sexist comments in advertising offices or disapproving comments at work, whether they have been told they are not good for something for being a woman, whether they have been treated differently for being a woman, what hours they work, what the work-home life balance is and what attitudes women need to demonstrate and how they need to behave to progress, the latter two questions exploring whether women are expected to behave like men to succeed. All these questions could be seen as constituting sexist practice, however, since many women fail to recognise injustice and oppression (Chambers, 2005) due to masculine habitus in which they are socialised (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 2007), this set of interview questions was constructed to explore sexism in the advertising industry in-depth and thus sexism is conceptualised through everyday practices that constitute lived experiences of women, including an expectation to embrace cultural masculinity. Besides, women were asked their views of equality of opportunities for career progression and questions on their background, such as early socialisation process (who they spent time with, e.g. boys, girls, mixed) and to self-assess their communication style. The latter was asked to

address concerns expressed in socialisation research, which recognised that women and men are socialised differently (Tannen, 1995; 1990; 1986; Merchant, 2012; Vukoičić, 2013; West & Zimmerman, 1983), and thus the socialisation experiences are linked to the notion of blokishness and used to explain responses from interviewees.

The research was guided by several questions, i.e. Do women have to embrace masculine behaviour and communication patterns to succeed, i.e. do they have to be blokish? Is the advertising industry operating under masculine habitus? Are women aware of masculine habitus? What is the role of socialisation in embracing (or rejecting) cultural masculinity?

Forty-one women were interviewed, between December 2018 and March 2019. The sample size was standard for feminist research on the lived experiences of women (Childers Hon, 1995). While many feminist researchers are conducting up to 25 phenomenological interviews (Creswell, 2007), in this case, the sample was extended to explore differences between employees and managers. Thirty-eight women from London, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, two smaller places in the south of England and one smaller place in the north of England were interviewed. Women from the south of England were mostly based in London, while those based in the north were based in several cities as outlined above. Interviewed women were both employees with no managerial duties as well as managers, and they came from both agencies and in-house, with the agency being more represented in the sample (31) than in-house (7). The total breakdown of interviewees is 21 from the south (of which 19 from London) and 17 from the north. Of that, 18 interviewees were employees without managerial duties while 20 were managers. The work experience of interviewees ranges from one month to 34 years in the industry, with the majority of interviewed women having between one and five years of experience and 11-20 years of experience. Interviews were conducted face-to-

face (4) and via telephone (34) and each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. Interviewed women work in a variety of roles in the industry, including creative directors, account managers, marketers, designers and administrative roles. Besides, one woman from Cardiff, one from Belfast and one from Edinburgh were also interviewed, however, since it was impossible to obtain any more interviews in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, other than one for each country, this paper captures the situation in England only and the data from women from Scotland, Ireland and Wales were removed from the sample. Due to the low response rate from women working in N. Ireland, Scotland and Wales, an attempt was made to google advertising agencies in these countries, however, this was also not successful. Having said this, it needs to be emphasised that the advertising industry in England is significantly larger than in other UK countries, and thus it was possible to persevere and recruit 38 women. For example, according to The Drum's list of Top 100 advertising agencies (n.d.) in the UK, only two agencies are based in Wales, two in Northern Ireland and one in Scotland whereas all others are based in England, and predominantly in London, which further justifies the sample where nearly half of the sample of interviewed women are from London. Finally, due to technical issues, it was not possible to accurately transcribe an interview with interviewee 3, and thus data from this interviewee was also removed from the dataset. The total number of analysed interviews is, therefore, 37.

TABLE 1 HERE

Interviewees were recruited through LinkedIn (37). Organisations were identified on the IPA website, and each organisation's page was opened and every female staff member was then manually searched on LinkedIn. LinkedIn is a useful tool because it enables sending a short message with the connection request, and it is also a professional network, thus there is no possibility of trespassing into interviewee's private sphere and gaining access to private information such as with Facebook, for example. Identifying practitioners is also easier on

LinkedIn then it would have been on any other social network because the LinkedIn profile is a professional social media account, which enables identifying the right practitioners as they have employment information and the industry in which they work on their profiles. Besides, LinkedIn is a social media network with high usage in the communications industry in the UK, thus, most practitioners have a developed LinkedIn profile and use it regularly, which then enables easier recruitment for research purposes. Also, not all agencies had email addresses of their staff members on their website, which then made LinkedIn the only available tool to reach out to practitioners.

A connection request was sent to each person with a short message outlining the goal of the research, and upon acceptance of connection request, a longer email was sent along with the information pack and consent form. The longer email contained information about the research grant, invitation to participate and two attachments, the information pack (outlining voluntary participation, informed consent, right to withdraw and the aim of the research) and the consent form. The research study has obtained ethical approval from the local research coordinator at the researcher's institution. During the interviewing process, interviewees were not asked leading questions or prompted in a way that would create bias. For example, when women gave their answers, many of which are seen as demonstrating sexism, they were not prompted with a question, e.g. do you think this is sexist, etc.

The interviews were semi-structured and the interview questionnaire has been designed taking into consideration Bourdieu's (2007) concept of habitus and thus exploring lived experiences. All interviews were transcribed for the analysis, and the transcripts have been analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a good method for capturing views of interviewees and identifying common themes in responses. In this study, thematic analysis enabled identifying

two different themes, which showed not just how masculine habitus works but it also fleshed out regional differences in experiences of women and potential reasons for that. The thematic analysis is a sense-making method, which was convenient for this type of analysis centred on making sense of masculine habitus in the advertising industry. In other words, thematic analysis is a “systematic approach to the analysis of qualitative data that involves identifying themes or patterns of cultural meaning; coding and classifying data, usually textual, according to themes; and interpreting the resulting thematic structures by seeking commonalities, relationships, overarching patterns, theoretical constructs, or explanatory principles (Lapadat, 2010, p. 926). In the presentation of findings, an approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used, and the findings are presented as a graph with the main themes and sub-themes. This thematic outline and elaboration of the results are accompanied by direct quotes from interviewees. This approach also enables interviewees to “speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings” (Berg, 2007, p. 96), which goes in line with the usual practice in qualitative research.

The saturation of responses has been reached among all interviewees and in regards to their demographic (younger versus more senior women and employees vs managers), and thus the sample of 37 women is enough for an inquiry of lived experiences of women working in the advertising industry in England.

Findings

The thematic analysis revealed two major themes, blokishness as a norm (with subthemes of masculine communication and masculine behaviour) and north vs south divide (with subthemes showing differences in sexism and career opportunities, communication skills and class). When analysed against the theoretical framework used in the study, it seems that there

is a masculine habitus in the advertising industry and that this system gets perpetuated with the lack of recognition of the oppressive organisational systems. The thematic map is visualised in graph 1.

GRAPH 1 HERE

Theme 1: Blokishness as a norm

The data from this theme points towards blokishness as a norm for women to succeed and this leads to the internationalisation of sexism and masculine habitus (Bourdieu, 2007) because women report masculine mechanisms and expectations in behaviour and communication as a recipe for success. For example, interviewees emphasised that women have to be “bold and not afraid to ask for higher salaries” (interviewee 7, London), “shout louder about their achievements” (interviewee 10, London) and have the “ability to sometimes strike the right balance between being emotionally sensitive and having a sound business head, what’s right for the business” (interviewee 13, Newcastle). These characteristics are commonly ascribed to men rather than women (Tannen, 1995; 1990; 1986; Merchant, 2012; Vukočić, 2013; West & Zimmerman, 1983), and women being expected to embrace this way of behaving can be seen as a sign of entrenched blokish culture (Mills, 2014). As Bourdieu (2007) argued, women are expected to show characteristics that are normally a part of socialisation for men, such as “a physical stature, a voice, or dispositions such as aggressiveness, self-assurance, ‘role distance’, what is called natural authority etc., for which men have been tacitly prepared and trained as men” (p. 62, emphasis in the original).

Nevertheless, some women stated that women “need to, at times, be quite determined and almost aggressive to get that outcome” (interviewee 20, London), which again brings back the notion of blokishness and masculinities in the organisation because aggressive and assertive

behaviour is usually seen as a masculine characteristic due to differences in the socialisation of boys and girls (Bourdieu, 2007; Mills, 2014; Tannen; 1995; 1990; 1986; Merchant, 2012; Vukočić, 2013; West & Zimmerman, 1983). Therefore, women who state that these characteristics are needed to succeed unconsciously accept the masculine habitus and sexism (Bourdieu, 2007) and organisations as men's worlds. However, many interviewees demonstrated an understanding that they have to be like men and work three times harder than men to succeed, and they labelled this practice as an advantage of men, thus demonstrating masculine domination in organisations (Bourdieu, 2007),

“I think for women to progress at the same rate as men they need to work about three times as hard, I would say (interviewee 30, London)

“ I feel that obviously men are just given it more automatically just because of the world that we live in (...) because you feel like you are starting on the backfoot already (interviewee 31, London)

Some women also said that women have to demonstrate that they do not have a home life, thus again bringing the notion of organisations as masculine worlds and women having to be like men to succeed. For example,

“I think we have to demonstrate that you don't have a home life, if I'm honest (...) You have to really show that you are 100% committed and, if I'm being totally honest, they don't want to see that you have a family at home that is going to deter away from doing your job 100%. So I think you have to show that you are competent, you are strong and that you are going to give your all to the role and sort of hide the that you are a mum, if you like, try and do things (...) If they see a weakness in you then they use that to their advantage. From previous experience, working under a male, I definitely know that he didn't understand if I had to do something at home (...) People in the higher roles are very much male and as a woman you juggle...”(interviewee 17, Leeds)

Therefore, to succeed, women need to behave like bodiless workers (Acker, 1990) and denounce their feminine side to join the men's world or play to their femininity to satisfy men's ego. Bourdieu (2007) recognised this as paying the price, which means that women can only achieve professional success at the expense of private life.

Theme 2: North vs South Divide

The data points towards strong differences between women based in the north and south of England, and this particularly applies to practices such as career progression and sexism. For example, women employees in the north tend to show a tendency to report less discrimination than women employees based in the south; however, women managers tend to report sexism across regions but the extent of perceived sexism among women managers seems to be stronger in London than in the north. For example, in the north, many women mentioned they heard some jokes but they were often unable to recall what that was, or they say they did not hear anything. In the south, however, women reported sexism as inherent to the industry and as a daily occurrence in the work environment, and this applies to both employees and managers. In that, women reported having to spend lots of time “stamping out the C-word” in agencies (Interviewee 14, London) and some women stated that sexism is inherent to the advertising industry and that they hear it “all the time. Every day”(Interviewee 30, London). Nevertheless, some women stated that sexism is inherent to Oxford and London (Interviewee 34, south of England) and some women reported sexual harassment, which echoes the 1920s when women first joined offices (Saval, 2015),

“There’s definitely been a case within our agency where we’ve had HR issues where at a Christmas party, for example, people get a bit handy, often by very senior members of the team who you can’t ... It’s very difficult as a girl to say to someone who literally owns the company, “This is not good”. And it’s all really like ... It’s minor stuff. It’s nothing really serious. A bit too close to ... too low down where your hands are. Yes, maybe a little bit too close for comfort” (Interviewee 38, London).

As Bourdieu (2007) argued, sexual harassment is not always centred on sexual possession because, in some cases, it can also be centred on “sheer possession, the pure affirmation of domination in its pure state” (p. 21), which the example above demonstrates.

Some women managers from London stated they experienced dismissive behaviour, and they particularly mentioned issues with male bosses including dismissive behaviour and lack of career opportunities. For example, one woman reported slanderous talk and accusations of the

lack of sincerity as well as the use of profanity where a male boss told her that she says “yes with your mouth, but you say fuck you with your eyes” (Interviewee 25, London). Other women mentioned the dismissive behaviour of male managers but also a general culture of dismissing women and not taking them seriously even though they are more qualified than men. Interviewee 8 explained how she was made to feel like a silly little girl regardless of her qualifications and how she never had a promotion,

“... I think a lot of times in my working life I’ve been made to feel like a silly little girl and it was only really recently that I realised that maybe that’s not true about me and that because I kept being made to feel like that I just assumed it was true. (...) So yes, I’ve often been made to feel like I’m too ambitious, so for example, any time I’ve tried to speak to my boss in the past, speaking to different bosses, whenever I’ve tried to speak about a pay rise or promotion with my boss, I feel like I haven’t been taken seriously like there’s been a moment of them raising their eyebrows that I would even ask and a little bit like smirking as though I am not deserving of a pay rise or promotion but they are going to listen to me because I have asked them to listen but they are not going to make any changes in terms of pay rise or promotion. I feel like I’ve never... I’m trying to think. I don’t think I’ve ever had a promotion before. Maybe once” (London).

This leads to the notion of equality in career progress for women comparative to men, and many women in the north said they believe their chances are equal whilst in the south there is less optimism, which counts for both employees and managers. For example, interviewees in the north authoritatively stated they believe in equal chances in progress whereas interviewees from London tend to express lots of reservation towards the equal chances in their career progress by arguing that motherhood often impedes opportunities for women, thus emphasising inherent sexism in the industry. One part of the reason why working mothers face career barriers also lies in long work culture in the advertising industry due to social expectation that women will care for children (Saval, 2015). When it comes to working hours in this study, there seems to be a recognition that hours are generally longer in London and that networking is expected in London where women work long hours, and this experience was felt by both employees and managers. However, what emerges from the data is the internalisation of this situation by women who either explained their hours in a matter of fact way or expressed resignation, but not one interviewee mentioned this as a woman’s problem or called this practice sexism. In other words, the fact organisations are gendered and operate various

mechanisms recognised in feminist research as everyday sexism is not recognised by interviewed women, which brings Bourdieu's (2007) unconscious acceptance of the situation due to the embeddedness of masculinity within the social order.

The findings also show that there are numerous sexist practices in the advertising industry, however, not all interviewees recognise these practices as sexist, thus confirming Bourdieu's (2007) observation of habitus where the oppressed groups often fail to perceive oppression. For example, many women voiced they have been treated differently for being women and emphasised that the working culture in advertising is controlled by men, however, discrimination of working mothers was not recognised as sexism. For example, some women emphasised that white upper-class men get taken seriously and have more credibility than women (Interviewee 27, London) while others mentioned that men get favoured for bigger brands and the reason for this is often in senior CEOs who still tend to be male (Interviewee 16, London). This habitus then results with the perpetuation of inequality of women (Bourdieu, 2007). Besides, some women report that having a job in the advertising industry and a child means making "twice as much effort and I think as well the perception by men is that you are not working as hard as they are" (Interviewee 33, south of England), thus showing that the work culture is set on what Acker (2009) recognised as inequality regime and what Alvesson (1998) calls as the culturally masculine understanding of everyday situations.

However, the work culture in the north seems to be more relaxed and some women made a comparison between work hours when they worked in London and now when they work in the north by saying that they did not have a life in London because they would be getting "emails at 2 o'clock in the morning from clients in Australia and expected to respond straight away" (interviewee 23, Newcastle). This signals a more woman-friendly work culture in the north

with work hours being shorter albeit some interviewees did report issues with being a mother. However, this signals that there are problems in the north too but this seems to be work-place dependant whereas answers from the south, London in particular, signal a culture of unfriendly policies that benefit men.

These differences between the south and the north pose a question as to why women from the north of England express higher work satisfaction and generally feel more equal to men than women in the south. The main difference in the dataset emerges when the information on family conditions is taken into consideration. For example, women in the north report growing up with siblings (in most cases of mixed gender) whereas women in the south often report being the only child. Women in the south also often report going to boarding schools and having nannies, and generally tend to be more from the middle-class origin whereas women in the north tend to be from the working-class origin. The class origin in the north is visible in mentioned parent's occupations (manual workers, lower-paid workers, single parents) and thus, women in the north show a tendency to come from a different socio-economic background than women based in the south. The class origin, therefore, has the potential to explain why there are differences in responses between women in the north and women in the south of England.

Another difference lies in communication skills where women in the north described their communication style as direct, i.e. 12 out of 16 interviewed women, thus showing more masculine characteristics and possibly fitting in the (masculine) organisation better. As opposed to this, 10 women based in the south described themselves as a considerate communicator, one woman said she became direct with time and two identified as in-between, thus showing a tendency to define their communication style as, what is commonly understood as feminine. Since organisational research (Acker, 1990; 2009; Alvesson, 1998; 2013), as well as this study, show that women are expected to embrace, what is commonly understood as

cultural masculinity or blokishness (Mills, 2014), then one reason for better work position of women in the north could be a more masculine way of doing things in the north, which is further linked with socialisation with mixed-gender siblings. Generally speaking, early socialisation process influences communication style and behaviour in the workplace and women who spent more time girls when growing up tend to show more feminine characteristics than women who spent time with boys. The socialisation process generally seems to influence behaviour and communication skills later in life, however, the data also indicates the influence of siblings and class origin.

Conclusion

In summary, the data from this study indicates that women have to embrace masculine behaviour and communication patterns to succeed and demonstrate what is commonly known as blokishness to navigate their way through (masculine) organisations. This is visible in attitudes women have to demonstrate and the expected behaviour such as an expectation to show aggressiveness, lack of emotions or attachment to their family life, issues reported by working mothers, etc. Since all available research points towards cultural masculinities and outlines that organisations operate under expectations that come natural to men rather than women (Alvesson, 1998; 2013; Bourdieu, 2007), and since research points towards blokishness as a recipe for women to succeed in the organisational world (North, 2016; Mills, 2014; Lofgren-Nilsson, 2010; Ross, 2001; 2018; Lobo et al, 2017; Shor et al, 2014), this points towards the conclusion that advertising organisations also operate as a masculine habitus (Bourdieu, 2007). This, in itself, presents a danger for the equality plight for women, however, the fact that the advertising industry has a mass reach makes it even more problematic. The advertising industry is often blamed for promotion of patriarchy and enforcing expected roles

(Kiefer, 2020), and it can be argued that the fact the UK had to introduce legislation to ban stereotyping in 2019 comes also from the fact that the advertising industry operates under a masculine habitus where men hold decision-making roles and thus enforce masculine expectations on women (Bourdieu, 2007).

While women in this study reported issues with inequality and were aware that men have it easier than women, issues on expectations such as communication and behaviour were reported in a matter of fact way, and this form of sexism seems to be entrenched into advertising culture. The advertising culture, according to the results from this study, shows clear signs of blokish expectations and entrenched blokish culture, which has previously been recognised in media research (North, 2016; Mills, 2014; Lofgren-Nilsson, 2010; Ross, 2001; 2018; Lobo et al, 2017; Shor et al, 2014), thus pointing towards a conclusion that blokishness is not an issue in media only, but might be a wide-reaching issue. Further research is, therefore, necessary in other industries to compare findings and explore cultural masculinities within the organisational world. Whilst findings from this study go almost entirely in line with available research in media studies, further research is necessary bearing in mind the division to traditional masculine (e.g. construction, banking, finance) and feminine (e.g. public relations, nursing, teaching) industries, which will shed the light whether cultural masculinities emerging in expectations of women in regards to communication and behaviour are specific to communication industries or a wider social problem.

However, interestingly, women from the north of England report far less sexism and work dissatisfaction than women from the south, which warrants further research. In this study, women were asked questions on early socialisation, however, the question on class origin was not asked. It was many interviewees who mentioned this as part of the answers on their

socialisation and this needs to be explored further to establish to what extent class influences work satisfaction and equality of opportunities. Generally speaking, the class origin and early socialisation seem to influence communication and behaviour in adulthood, which seems to influence career opportunities and work satisfaction.

Besides, further research should look more closely in social activities during the early socialisation process as well as parenting styles and peer networks to explore in-depth what the reason for differences might be. This is particularly relevant because women in this study reported playing with siblings as well as peer groups, and further research can shed the light on potentially distinctive influences of different groups on communication and behaviour later in life. Finally, further research should explore regional differences in regards to communication and behaviour, or what is colloquially known (but largely unexplored) as 'the northern culture', and the potential impact of this regional distinctiveness to work satisfaction and equality of opportunities. Nevertheless, since some women in the south mentioned boarding schools, the impact of education on work satisfaction and work socialisation warrants further exploration.

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Table 1. Interviewee’ data

INT. NO.	TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	EMPLOYEE OR MANAGER	PLACE	Comments
1	Agency	30	manager	north of England	A small place, anonymised as per ethics requirements
2	Agency	2.5	manager	London	
3	In-house	1 month	employee	Leeds	Removed from the dataset
4	Agency	4	employee	Manchester	
5	Agency	34	manager/owner	Manchester	
6	Agency	4	employee	Leeds	

7	In-house	1.5	employee	London	
8	Agency	7	manager	London	
9	Agency	5	employee	London	
10	Agency	12	manager	London	
11	In-house	3	manager	Liverpool	
12	Agency	14	manager	Belfast	Removed from dataset
13	Agency	27	employee	Newcastle	
14	Agency	18	manager	London	
15	In-house	20	manager	Leeds	
16	Agency	19	manager	London	
17	In-house	25	employee	Leeds	
18	Agency	6 months	employee	Manchester	
19	Agency	17	manager	Leeds	
20	Agency	4	employee	London	
21	Agency freelance	30	employee	London	
22	Agency	20	manager	Edinburgh	Removed from dataset
23	Agency	5	employee	Newcastle	
24	Agency	3	manager	London	
25	Agency	18	manager	London	
26	Agency	15	manager	Newcastle	
27	Agency	20	manager	London	
28	Agency	9 months	employee	Cardiff	Removed from dataset
29	Agency	12	manager	London	
30	Agency	12	employee	London	
31	Agency	5	employee	London	
32	Agency	7 months	employee	Leeds	
33	Agency	4	employee	south of England	A small place, anonymised as per ethics requirements
34	Agency	22	employee	south of England	ibid
35	Agency	5	manager	Leeds	
36	Agency	22	manager	London	
37	In-house	8 months	employee	London	
38	Agency	5	employee	London	
39	Agency	19	manager	Manchester	
40	Agency	19	manager	London	
41	Agency	11	manager	Leeds	

Graph 1. Thematic Analysis

Masculine Habitus

