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‘The Girls at the Desk’: Timeless Blokishness in the Newsroom Culture in the British Press?

Abstract

This paper explores the lived experiences of women working in journalism in the UK. To do this, 20 interviews were conducted with women who worked in newspapers and magazines from the 1970s to the present day. The research was conceptualised using Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and works previously conducted in journalism studies on blokish culture in newsrooms. The purpose of the paper was to further explore blokish culture in newsrooms by looking into expectations of women and the work culture. Thematic analysis was used in analysing findings. The results show that not much has changed in newsroom culture and interviewees who worked in journalism across decades report the same issue with blokish culture and cultural masculinity in work expectations. Besides, results show that women face both direct and indirect sexism and deeply entrenched blokish culture that impedes opportunities for women. Results indicate that the situation in women’s magazines, as predominantly female-led environments, is more relaxed and women who work in magazines do not report blokish culture. Finally, abductive analysis of results showed a link between early socialisation and blokishness expressed in newsrooms among women who internalised masculine habitus.

Keywords: women, journalism, newsroom culture, blokishness, masculinities, UK

Introduction

Women became involved with journalism in the 19th century. However, since then, they have historically dealt with issues such as an expectation that journalists were men whereas a woman’s place was in the home. Women were faced with prejudice that they would introduce emotion in news reporting, thus they were expected to report on topics linked to their biological

status (Franks, 2013; Lonsdale, 2013; Christmas, 1997; Delano, 2003). This is the reason why women predominantly worked in health, lifestyle, food and beauty sections or sections that were historically of interest to women (Christmas, 1997; van Zoonen, 1994). Therefore, some authors argue that women are still seen as outsiders in the industry as male journalists do not experience the newsroom culture but rather constitute it because the news-making decisions are homo-socially shared (North, 2009b). This means that newsrooms are still places for men, operating under masculine work and behavioural patterns, such as masculine understanding of what constitutes news and the division of hard versus soft news still largely remains in place (Lofgren-Nilsson, 2010; Ross, 2001; 2018; Lobo et al, 2017; Shor et al, 2014). However, this does not mean that women who cover the so-called feminine topics can necessarily take the same status as business reporters, for example, should a topic enter the agenda. One study of bylines from UK newspapers has shown that when health entered the news agenda, it was men who covered this topic (Topić, 2018). Besides, other studies have demonstrated that there is a notion of the so-called male superiority in newsrooms and this applies even to situations when women are nominally the decision-makers (Byerly, 2013), thus women being tokens that feed into the post-feminist argument that women have achieved equality (Kanter, 1977; Grow & Deng, 2015).

Therefore, the situation has not changed much since the early days because the majority of journalists covering politics and business are men whereas women face the glass ceiling, struggle to take the same beats as men and also leave the industry earlier (Ross et al, 2018; North, 2009; 2016a; Robinson, 2005; Lobo et al, 2017; Knowles, 2020). For example, research on bylines is continually showing that men dominate political and business journalism (Greenslade, 2011; Mills, 2014; Jackson, 2015; Bawdon, 2016; Topić, 2018). The continuity of discrimination of women in journalism prompts the questions, what is the culture in newsrooms and how do everyday realities influence the masculine character of journalism? In the remaining part of the paper, we discuss the blokish culture of newsrooms (North, 2009; 2009b; Mills, 2014; Mills, 2017) and then we contribute to the existing knowledge with a study of experiences of women in journalism in Britain where we particularly look at expectations of women and women's views of what women should do to succeed, to further explore blokishness in British newsrooms. While this paper discusses the situation in Britain, and the concept of blokishness has been developed in English-speaking countries (UK, US, Australia), the concept has a general potential to explain why women still face inequality despite all positive legislature and public debates. The concept of blokishness is linked to behaviour and

communication in the organisation, and as such is linked with the concept of cultural masculinities (Alvesson, 1998; 2013). This concept has an application outside of Britain because organisations operate in similar ways, and authors universally warn about masculinities in organisations. Thus, studying behaviour, communication and expectations of women in organisations can have a wider application and *blokishness* as a concept can help in analysing the reasons why women fail to progress at the same rate as men.

Newsroom Culture

Authors have been arguing for decades that there are several concerns in regards to newsroom cultures. For example, Ross (2001) emphasised difficulties in “trying to manage the work/home balance, especially for working mothers, and were concerned with the dominance, still, of a long-hours culture” (p. 532) while other authors have argued that women who consider having children face difficulties in combining family and career (Ross et al, 2018; Ross, 2001; North, 2016; Organ et al, 1979; Lafky, 1991, 1993). However, these are not the only issues women in journalism historically faced. Some authors also argue that women who succeed become *blokish* to the extent that other women cannot look up to them. For example, Mills (2014) argued that,

“there are a good handful of 20-something women in newsrooms proving themselves – and, as in other industries, a 20-something woman is as tough and long-hours friendly as any man. But as other life pressures begin to bite in the mid-20s and the management pyramid begins to contract, meaning there are fewer jobs going, the hierarchy – particularly in news, sport and business – starts to look ever more male. And unfortunately, some of the women who do remain in 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).

In other words, it has been recognised that women have had to merge into the masculine newsroom culture in order to succeed because newsgathering techniques and news values have not changed despite the rise of women in journalism (Graber, 1980; Christmas, 1997; Djerf-Pierre, 2011). This is because newspapers still have “macho cultures, desk editors openly watching and talking about porn, and heading off to the pub (...) The tabloid newsroom is far from being woman-friendly – visitors would be lucky to see a woman anywhere near a news desk or a backbench. There is a deeply entrenched *bloke* culture. It’s all about the boys’ club, promotions are dished out in the pub and women aren’t invited. In the end, women just get fed

up” (Mills, 2014, p. 22). This is a result of a historical situation in which men always networked and helped each other through the creation of “‘old boys’ networks, golf club buddies, corporate hospitality built round boxes at Twickenham and Chelsea, drinks at the club, pints in the bar after work” (Nicolotti Squires, 2016, p. 7). This means that the work is organised around masculine norms where a man is seen as a norm and woman as an interloper, which also means that women “have to beat the boys at their own game, by becoming more assertive and more macho” (Ross, 2001, p. 535). Nevertheless, some scholars reported that both male and female journalists expressed the same beliefs about journalism as a profession and what the role of a journalist entailed (Hanitzsch & Hanusch, 2012), thus showing that women have merged into male-dominated newsrooms and internalised masculine values (Lobo et al, 2017).

Mills (2014) also warned that the exclusion of women is a never-ending cycle in newspapers as newspapers are edited “purely by men. There are women in features and fashion departments but the view from the top is that what they do is a bit of fluff. Attitudes in these parts seem often to be positively neanderthal – tales of bullying, sexual bullying, writing women off when they have kids and a laddish culture are depressingly frequent” (p. 22). Nevertheless, authors report that women are still groped by senior editors (Mills, 2017) and when a woman manages to succeed she faces derogatory remarks and undermining, such as gossip that she slept her way to the top or they are described in slanderous terms, such as ‘hard-bitten old hag’ (Ross, 2001).

In this paper, therefore, we are exploring the newsroom culture and whether only women who embrace masculine behavioural and work patterns succeed in journalism. In that, we are particularly looking at lived experiences of women in newsrooms and expectations of women to succeed and we built an argument from the works of North (2009; 2009b) who recognised blokish culture in newsrooms and emphasised that men constitute the newsroom culture, and Mills (2014; 2017) who emphasised that women in the UK have to be bloke-ified to succeed in newsrooms. We are particularly looking into women’s views on what it takes to succeed to explore whether women have internalised masculine habitus and embraced norms that come naturally to men to the point that they no longer challenge these norms (Bourdieu, 2007; Chambers, 2005), with which we contribute to the ongoing debate on blokishness in newsrooms.

Method and Theoretical Framework

In conceptualising the study, we used Bourdieu's concept of habitus, which is linked to the Difference Approach in feminist theory. The Difference Approach argues that women and men are socialised differently and thus do things differently. For example, Tannen (1995; 1990; 1986) argued that women are socialised in groups and develop supportive communication styles whereas men are socialised individually and encouraged to be dominant, which then later results in men having a communication style marked with dominance and interruptions whereas women develop communication style called 'rapport' and focus on building relationships. These differences are also linked with how men and women lead and often result in the domination of men in higher positions as organisations still work under masculine principles so employees are expected to show assertiveness and aggression in their approach, which is often not applicable to women due to the socialisation process (Acker, 1990; Bourdieu, 2007; Vukoičić, 2013; Tench et al, 2017; Tannen, 1990; Merchant, 2012; West & Zimmerman, 1983; Christopher, 2008; de la Rey, 2005; van der Boon, 2003; Growe & Montgomery, 2000; Crawford, 1995; Stanford et al, 1995; Alimo Metcalfe, 1995).

Bourdieu (2007) added that women face dual requirements, from one point, they need to prove they are the right person for the role but they also need to demonstrate employee characteristics 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). Therefore, Bourdieu (2007) speaks of habitus or a situation in which women are part of a masculine culture and they frequently fail to challenge some of the aspects of sexism or masculinities because these practices are deeply ingrained into the everyday social order (see also Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Chambers, 2005). Bourdieu (2007) also argues that this is the case because individuals fail to observe mechanisms of domination since they are deeply rooted in everyday practices and 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). This could also be the reason why women and men expressed similar views on journalism as a profession and what the role entailed, as reported in a study by Hanitzsch & Hanusch (2012).

Masculinity is, in this paper, understood as cultural masculinity or as a practice and everyday behaviour that comes naturally to men due to their socialisation process (Alvesson, 1998; 2013; Bourdieu, 2007). According to Alvesson (1998), cultural masculinities would include behaviour and communication that occurs in workplaces on an everyday basis. The habitus concept (Bourdieu, 2007), which is linked to cultural masculinity, explores unconscious beliefs and internalisation of masculinities by women and this is particularly useful for exploring the concept of blokishness in more depth, as this exploration can reveal not only whether there is a blokish culture in newsrooms (since this has already been recognised in the literature) but also which practices could be seen as constituting blokish culture in newsrooms and whether women who work in journalism have internalised masculine ways of doing things and see them as a normal newsroom culture. In this paper, we are conceptualising blokish women as those who embrace masculine behaviour and communication, which means that blokish women would be communicating directly (which is often ascribed to men), behave in a way that is seen as masculine or as something that comes more naturally to men than women (e.g. not showing emotions, focused on work more than private life, engaged with masculine banter, showing toughness and assertiveness) (Bourdieu, 2007), and who would also engage in news-making as defined by men (e.g. hard news vs soft news).

To that end, we conducted 20 qualitative interviews with women journalists and editors working in newspapers and magazines. Interviewees were recruited using personal contacts (19) of which two were former students, and one interviewee was recruited via direct email based on her public engagement for equality of women in journalism. Of the 20 interviewees, 16 work in journalism (either on staff or as freelancers) and four were former journalists, two have a full-time job outside of journalism and write on the side as freelancers. The age range of interviewees ranges from 20 years old to 68 years old, thus providing an overview of the situation decades ago and comments on changes in journalism as an industry, as well as views of women who currently work in the industry and who are more junior to the profession. The diverse recruitment concerning the age was deliberate because the research also aimed to explore whether the newsroom culture is changing and whether there are differences in responses between older and younger journalists. Equally, we also recruited women who also work in magazines to explore whether the blokish culture is inherent to the press rather than magazines.

Interviews were conducted between August 2019 and February 2020. Of 20 interviewees, 10 were journalists and 10 were editors. Nine interviews were conducted face-to-face, two via email and nine via phone. Seven interviewees work as freelance journalists, whilst others work full-time. Those who work as freelance journalists previously held full-time positions (table 1).

Table 1. Interviewee' data

Interviewee no.	Type of work	Position	Years of experience	Journalist or editor	Type of interview	Area of work
1	Newspapers and magazines	Former journalist	20	Editor	Face-to-face	News, then women's interest features
2	magazines	Freelance	3	Journalist	Phone	Features, now arts
3	newspapers	News reporter	13	journalist	Phone	News
4	newspapers	Editor and publisher	14	Editor	Phone	News
5	Magazines and newspapers	Freelance journalist and ex features editor	26	Editor	Face-to-face	News, then women's interest features
6	newspapers	Senior reporter	5	Journalist	Email	News
7	newspapers	Reporter	7	Journalist	Email	News
8	Newspapers and magazines	Freelance	28	journalist	Phone	News and features
9	Newspapers and magazines	Freelance	28	Editor	Face-to-face	Features (women's interest)
10	newspapers	Live reporter	6	Journalist	Phone	News
11	Newspapers and magazines	Freelance journalist and ex-staffer	21	journalist	Face-to-face	News and features
12	Newspapers	Section editor	31	Editor	Phone	Lifestyle
13	Newspapers	Former journalist	30	Editor	Phone	News and features
14	Newspapers	Freelance	1.5	Journalist	Face-to-face	News
15	Newspapers and magazines	Freelance	26	Editor	Face-to-face	News and features
16	Weekly newspapers	Former journalist	14	Editor	Face-to-face	News

17	Daily newspapers, BBC	Former journalist	13 in newspapers and a total of 30 in the media industry	journalist	Face-to-face	News
18	newspapers	Editor-in-chief	26	Editor	Phone	News
19	newspapers	Journalist	26	Editor	Phone	Features and lifestyle
20	Local newspapers	Reporter	1	journalist	Face-to-face	News

Interviewees were based in London, North East, North West and Essex. The work experience of interviewed journalists ranges from two to 30 years of experience. Of 20 interviewees, 19 work or have worked in national newspapers whereas one interviewee worked in weekly newspapers. Of 19 from newspapers, seven also write for magazines alongside newspapers. Interviewees work or have worked, in *The Telegraph*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Mirror*, *The Sun*, *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Guardian* and a range of local newspapers in the north of England. Interviewees also worked in a range of magazines including *Cosmopolitan*, *Grazia* and *Elle*.

The study aimed to understand what kind of women succeed in journalism or what women think they need to do to succeed. Here, we were trying to explore whether women embraced, or think they have to embrace, masculine characteristics to succeed and thus become *blokish*. Against this backdrop, we asked questions about working in newspapers and raising a family, opinion on whether women can progress in their careers in journalism, whether women have been told they were not good enough for something for being a woman and whether they think there is an equal opportunity culture in newsrooms. We also asked what kind of attitudes women need to demonstrate and what they need to do to progress in their careers, to explore whether the interviewees think that merging into newsrooms dominated by men and adopting their way of doing things is what women need to do to succeed; whether they have, therefore, internalised masculine *habitus* and accepted *blokish* behaviour as a way forward. As Steiner (2012) pointed out, many women do not develop gender-consciousness or female approaches to work, and thus the fact that women report journalistic norms as men do (Hanitzsch & Hanusch, 2012) might mean that work expectations fit into cultural masculinity (Alvesson, 1998; 2013) and a masculine *habitus* (Bourdieu, 2007; Chambers, 2005).

Interviews were transcribed and then coded using Strauss and Corbin's (1990) approach where the data is coded throughout the process to allow constant comparison and interpretation of data with the focus being on coding data throughout (Morse & Richards, 2002). Thematic analysis was used in analysing data, and this 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, we follow an approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), where themes and sub-themes have been identified in the data, and then we present findings per main themes. As per thematic analysis practice, we also used direct quotes from participants to illustrate findings.

The two-tier thematic analysis has been done, i.e. first the traditional thematic analysis which identified two main themes and sub-themes as explained, and after adding abductive data on socialisation, a final thematic map has been created. Thematic analysis was deemed as good choice for this study because it is a sense-making approach that helps organise large data sets, such as this one, and it also helps in identifying trends in data. The latter was useful for this study because we wanted to explore what would constitute blokishness in newsrooms, and contribute to the existing literature on this phenomenon.

As the data will show below, interviewees responded differently to the questions, and thus some interviewees confirmed the culture is masculine but they also said they fit in and expressed positive views whereas some interviewees expressed negative feelings. The data was then analysed abductively and we looked at the transcripts again to see whether there was anything in demographic information or other answers, such as personal background, that could explain this difference. In other words, "abduction is required when you encounter surprising, anomalous observations" (Tavory & Timmermans, n. d.). Tavory and Timmermans (2013) proposed this approach and argued that it provides a good ground for causality in qualitative research because it enables "temporal generalization anchored in actors' observed meaning-making process" (p. 684). The approach does not imply that the data is explained using what participants said in the 1st person, instead, "their actions, (whether verbal, cognitive or otherwise) (...) form the bedrock of analysis" (ibid). Whilst Tavory and Timmermans (2013) developed an abductive approach in ethnography, in this research study, the approach was deemed as useful as it helped explain where the differences between women come from, and

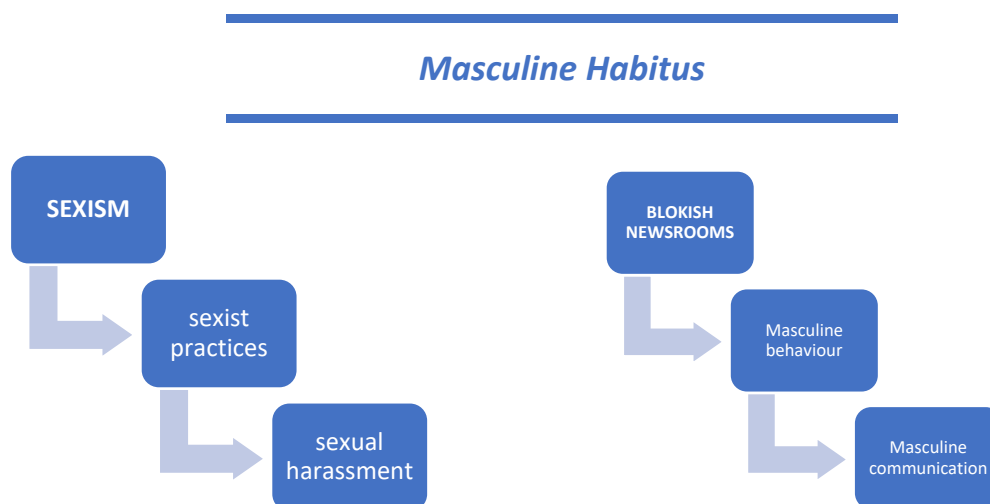
thus the approach provided a causal explanation, i.e. women's behaviour and communication differ because there is a difference in the socialisation process.

In the presentation of findings, interviewees are referred to as 'interviewee 1', etc. The latter was the case to provide full anonymity and confidentiality, which was guaranteed to interviewees as part of our University's ethics policy. In conducting this study, we were guided by several questions: What is the position of women in newsrooms? Is the newsroom culture changing? What are the expectations of women in newsrooms? Have women internalised masculine habitus and norms of behaviour in the workplace? Are newsrooms still places for blokes? Is there a difference between newspapers and magazines?

Findings

The findings show that two main themes dominate throughout the responses from interviewees: sexist practice (with sub-themes of sexism and harassment) and blokishness (with sub-themes of masculine expectations and communication), and these practices contribute towards masculine habitus of newsrooms.

Graph 1. Thematic Analysis



Theme 1: Sexism

On the one hand, some women said they had experienced direct sexism in the sense that they had heard and witnessed sexist practices and sexual harassment, and they had also had to work long hours and face issues with maternity leave, which have historically been recognised as sexist and organisations as a masculine world (Saval, 2015; Alvesson, 1998; 2013). On the other hand, they also face masculine expectations, which can be seen as indirect sexism and a sign of blokish culture in newsrooms, which did not change with time. In other words, interviewees who are senior to the profession, as well as junior ones, report the same issues, thus signalling the timeless culture of masculinity and blokishness in newsrooms. What seems to emerge from the data is that there is a masculine habitus in newsrooms that manifests in work allocation, sexist views and behaviours, and also in expectations of journalists, which are still synonymous with men. As mentioned, these views did not change over time. Notably, some senior journalists (or former journalists) mentioned the period of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s as the time when they particularly faced sexist comments. However, some younger journalists stated they are still experiencing sexist comments today.

For example, senior interviewees said that, in the 1990s, men were openly sexualising women by making comments about their appearance and that women were treated like models if they were considered attractive by male editors. Some also experienced sexual harassment from editors. However, this view is not restricted to the senior journalists. Some journalists also said that this still happens today but instead of openly making remarks, like in the 1990s, now there are “a lot of looks between men at their desk, and lots of insinuations” (Interviewee 6). These views signal that women are working in a masculine culture where men decide how to behave and what constitutes appropriate behaviour or the men are the culture themselves (North, 2009b). Bourdieu (2007) argued that women face what can be called a ‘catch 22’ because from one point they are afraid to miss out if they do not join the organisational culture and accept behaviour imposed by men, however, if they do join in they lose an opportunity to protest later if they no longer wish to accept this culture. Besides, one interviewee mentioned that as soon as a woman is successful in journalism, men assume she must have slept her way to the top and that journalism is a man’s world where women need to be tough to succeed, which goes in line with existing literature that has reported the prejudice successful women face when they obtain senior positions (Ross et al, 2018; Ross, 2001; North, 2016; Organ et al, 1979; Lafky, 1991, 1993) and the masculine newsroom culture constituted by men (North, 2009b). However, this behaviour also shows that norms are set by men and that women are seen as suitable for

supportive roles only (Alvesson, 2013; Saval, 2015) or they have to embrace blokish culture (Mills, 2014) and be one of the boys.

The majority of women also believe that the opportunities for progress are not the same for them, mainly because of parenting responsibilities. However, they also believe this was not just because of the difficulty in combining journalism with having a family, which has been reported in other research (Ross et al, 2018; Ross, 2001; North, 2016; Organ et al, 1979; Lafky, 1991, 1993), but also because some women felt they would be afraid to announce they were pregnant out of fear of losing their job or being forced to go freelance. Interviewees in this study pointed out they would be “worried about announcing I was pregnant and going on maternity leave so soon into my seniority” and the reason for this is fear that “peers would see it as wasting the effort I put into get this far” (interviewee 6). Other women also expressed reservations about having children out of fear of being “limited” (interviewee 7) whereas some women also emphasised that a career in journalism presents “a choice for women” because they have to either sacrifice career or motherhood (interviewee 5). The fact women are afraid to get pregnant because they would have to choose between career and parenthood shows that newsrooms operate under masculine patterns where women have to be like men to succeed and embrace a work-first attitude, which has historically been a masculine way of doing things (Saval, 2015). Bourdieu (2007) also argued that the social order of things works in favour of the preservation of masculine habitus and this domination is founded on “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).

The women interviewed also commented on their working culture, such as long hours, networking expectations and lack of free time and holidays. For example, interviewees mentioned they worked from 10am until 8pm and they often worked in the evenings. They stressed that social media increased their workload, making them feel as though they were constantly working, and that there was almost an expectation that journalists do not to have a life outside of work, which has traditionally been seen as a masculine understanding of work due to historical expectations of women as caregivers (Saval, 2015). However, some women also show internalisation of this practice and complain about it but do not call it sexism or recognise that this practice disproportionately affects women, thus showing the internalisation of masculine habitus (Bourdieu, 2007). For example,

“...this is the nature of the industry, I sometimes feel as though you are expected to not have a life outside of it for the sake of a good work opportunity. I think if you said, “Oh no I can’t come to this or do that,” there would be very much a oh well you haven’t earned your slice yet. You just have to do as you are told kind of thing (...) Sometimes I do 10, 12-hour days or other times it’s kind of just freelancing..” (Interviewee 10).

Bourdieu (2007) recognised this issue as “the order of things” and as something ingrained to the extent that people refer to it as “what is normal, natural, to the point of being inevitable” and this system of social order is the “habitus of the agents, functioning as systems of schemes of perception, thought and action” (p. 8). In this study, this is visible in the fact women of all generations report the same issue with masculine expectations and masculine newsroom culture or what Bourdieu (2007) also called “socially constructed division between sexes, as natural, self-evident, and as such contains a full recognition of legitimacy” (p. 9). The fact many women do not challenge these expectations shows also that the social order functions under cultural masculinity and as an “immense symbolic machine tending to ratify the masculine domination on which it is founded” (p. 9).

These long hours lead to the notion that it is near impossible to work and have a family unless a good support network is in place or if one is in a very senior position and able to afford nannies. This is the reason why many women also leave journalism and decide to go freelance or leave the profession altogether. But, women speak of this practice in a matter of fact way and seem to accept it as it is without challenging the patriarchal structures that have put these expectations in place, such as men historically being the ones who work long hours due to lack of family responsibilities (Saval, 2015; Bourdieu, 2007; Chambers, 2005), and thus forming masculine habitus (Bourdieu, 2007). For example, interviewee 4 emphasised that many senior women do not have children because journalism is not a job “where you can just get up at your home time and go home if you are in the middle of something, you can’t do that, so I do think it’s really tricky”, thus demonstrating that women are expected to put the job first and that newsroom culture has not moved on much since early days when men worked and women were waiting for them at home (Saval, 2015; Alvesson, 1998; 2013). Other women emphasise that they left journalism because of this expectation as they did not want to pay for nannies and rarely see the children (interviewee 5). This inevitably leads to the notion of newsrooms being places for blokes and women having to embrace this pattern, constantly working out of fear

they will not be taken seriously or even lose their job for taking maternity leave. Some interviewees openly said women were expected to be in all day like men were, as well as adopt the masculine behavioural style to succeed in their careers, and this view spans across generations with both senior and junior journalists saying the same thing, thus signalling that the newsroom culture is not changing for women. For example, interviewee 13 as a former journalist identified the same problem as interviewee 3 who currently works in journalism and emphasised an expectation of women to join in with the men in a masculine banter.

“Well it goes back to what I said before, you had to join in with the men, because if they were having a banter about something you had to sort of join in. If they were making jokes... I do remember an occasion when one of my fellow journalists was getting married and there was a really obscene cartoon drawn by one of the designers on the paper and it was passed around the office. It was really rude. It involved a football and a woman. I mean, I was disgusted by it, but you had to join in the laughter. It was as though the culture was you had to join in. It makes you sound very weak and pathetic but if you didn't you were dismissed as a soppy woman” (Interviewee 13).

“...I think probably they are still expected to probably adopt some of the mannerisms that male managers might have in the way they might conduct themselves. I think because you've still got a lot of men in senior positions if they are doing the hiring they are not going to want someone who comes across as being very emotional and family-focused because they are just going to be thinking well their mind is not going to be on the job. I think they would expect you to... I guess because you've got to manage other men as well in the office, that you can kind of hold your own with them almost and I think that's not great because it just promotes a lot of the management style that actually are not particularly nice managers. When people are complaining about a manager it's because they are aggressive and unsympathetic and don't listen to what people are saying [laughs] and if that is what people's idea of being a manager is, I don't know, it's not great” (Interviewee 3).

The comments above demonstrate masculine habitus and its definition as non-female or as an anti-thesis to femininity. In other words, Bourdieu (2007) argued that all divisions between men and women are socially constructed and founded on biology, with biology being used as a reason to justify differences in treatment even though socialisation research has been showing for decades that the main problem lies in gendered socialisation. Bourdieu (2007) thus argued that masculine habitus intends to produce “the social artefact of the manly man or the womanly woman” (p. 23).

Theme 2: Blokish Newsrooms

The blokish culture was also visible in a response from interviewee 5 who emphasised that women need to “be able to give as good as you get in what was traditionally a man’s world”, thus recognising that newsrooms are a man’s world that operate under masculine patterns and women having to adapt to masculine ways of doing things. Nevertheless, interviewee 5 also emphasised that women have to be “very tough, very determined” unless they are willing “to sleep your way to the top”, and she emphasised that male attitudes towards women demonstrate sexism because “there’s an assumption among men still that those who get to the top must-have slept their way (...) it’s all to do with male attitudes towards women” (interviewee 5). The masculinity of newsroom culture is also visible in the allocation of work. For example, some women reported that they were “expected to do the features and women’s stories” and “there was never any encouragement to go into sports or stick on news and if you were on news you’d have to be blemin’ hard-faced to deal with the men” (interviewee 15). Other women mentioned, for example, that they were depersonalised and uncomfortable in interactions with male editors, thus again showing masculine culture in newsrooms,

“I think the women on the features desk, the girls, were treated differently, made to feel I guess a bit worthless in terms of the environment and were very dismissed as a group, we never felt like individuals, you always felt like you were treated as ‘the girls at the desk’, never individuals yourselves. And I felt uncomfortable” (Interviewee 2).

However, those women who had only ever worked in female environments said they had heard about such issues but that they did not experience it themselves, thus showing that the newsroom culture in male-dominated environments is often grounded in sexual harassment (Mills, 2017), and signalling that women-dominated environments tend to lean more towards an inclusive working atmosphere. For example,

“Me personally, no, I didn’t - No, because it was an all-female environment. And even on the (mentions section in a large daily newspaper), it was female, if you see what I mean...” (Interviewee 8).

However, adopting a masculine style of work and behaviour also means a lack of emotion, and thus women are also expected to act like men and hide emotion, which further shows a tendency towards cultural masculinity. Socialisation and organisational studies have demonstrated that the majority of boys and girls face a gendered socialisation process where boys are encouraged to develop individualism and be tough whereas girls learn to work in groups, build relationships and show emotions (Acker, 1990; Bourdieu, 2007; Vukoičić, 2013; Tench et al, 2017;

Merchant, 2012; West & Zimmerman, 1983; Christopher, 2008; de la Rey, 2005; van der Boon, 2003; Grove & Montgomery, 2000; Crawford, 1995; Stanford et al, 1995; Alimo Metcalfe, 1995). Boys are also, during the socialisation process, encouraged to enter gendered games, and boys find social approval when they express “various forms of the *libido dominandi*” (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 56, emphasis in the original). Blokish culture is further demonstrated in this situation because interviewees argue that women cannot show emotions, or they will be seen as unfit for the role. For example,

“A lack of emotion. I think there is an assumption you are going to burst into tears if you are told something. I guess you have to reinforce the fact that you have got a bit of a backbone and you can hold your own” (Interviewee 11).

“I feel like you are expected to have it all together. People expect you to have the relationships at home, but to keep it all at home and then still boss your day, have a really great working environment. Sometimes I don’t think they equate that there can be problems. It is not really allowed for that to happen but when they do struggle, there isn’t all that much support for them. That is what I worry about...” (Interviewee 14).

This signals a masculine habitus because the expected behaviour is “tailor-made for men whose manliness is itself constructed by opposition to women as they are today” (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 62). Nevertheless, women are expected to show masculine characteristics to succeed in a man’s world even though they have not been prepared for this during their early socialisation. Bourdieu (2007) argued that to “succeed completely in holding a position, a woman would need to possess not only what is explicitly demanded by the job description, but also a whole set of properties which the male occupants normally bring to the job – a physical stature, a voice, or dispositions such as aggressiveness, self-assurance, ‘role distance’, what is called natural authority, etc.” (p. 62). In the same way, women in this study mentioned a variety of expectations of women, such as showing “flexibility to be able to do everything” (interviewee 2), “hard work and persistence” (interviewee 7) “a lack of emotion” (interviewee 11) and “have it all together” (interviewee 14). These remarks signal masculine expectations as women are expected to demonstrate behaviour that comes naturally to men (Alvesson, 1998; 2013; Bourdieu, 2007).

Several interviewees specifically mentioned masculine expectations and women having to be like men, further signalling a blokish culture in newsrooms. For example, interviewee 3, stated

that women have to “adopt some mannerisms that male managers might have in the way they might conduct themselves” and this is linked to the fact that the majority of managers are men and thus “if they are doing the hiring they are not going to want someone who comes across as being very emotional and family-focused because they are just going to be thinking well their mind is not going to be on the job” (ibid). Other interviewees stated that women have to find their place in a man’s world and prove that they can do everything men can do, thus showing the masculine expectations of women and blokish newsroom culture entrenched in cultural masculinity (Bourdieu, 2007; Mills, 2014; Alvesson, 1998; 2013). Nevertheless, these views are present among women of all generations, thus signalling that the newsroom culture has not changed much since the early days. For example, interviewee 5 has 26 years of experience whereas interviewee 6 has five years of experience, and they expressed similar views,

“I think you have to be able to give as good as you get in what was traditionally a man’s world. I think you have got to be very tough, very determined. That’s if you are not willing to sleep your way to the top, which I wasn’t (...) I think there’s an assumption among men still that those who get to the top must have slept their way. I think there’s still an assumption among some men that women can’t get to the top unless they associate, let’s say, with the right people. In my experience, that’s not true anymore” (interviewee 5)

“They need to show willingness and they can do any task a man can, such as door-knocking potentially violent offenders, going out on to the streets and other situations. Female reporters are expected to be reporters” (interviewee 6).

Nevertheless, long hours are accompanied by going out after work and engaging in banter with men, and it seems as if only blokish women were able to do that. For example, interviewee 12 stated that she drank with men from her newsroom as she was the only woman in the conference at the time and that she had to be “one of the boys”. She said her male colleagues liked her style, calling her ‘ballsy’ and ‘tells it like it is’ and introducing her to senior management, thus enabling her to join the boys club and progress, a practice which is normally homo-socially shared (North, 2009b). This view is aligned with other women’s views who were saying that women have to “join in with the men” (interviewee 13). However, some women also mentioned that being one of the boys has a disadvantage, thus bringing back Bourdieu’s (2007) argument of women’s situation in masculine habitus because they have to join in men’s banter and meet masculine expectations but then they find themselves in a situation that they cannot complain when things go too far. For example,

“I don’t know, I suppose in some ways you create a bit of a rod for your own back, so if you are slightly one of the lads you are not particularly pretty, you don’t flinch when people make rude jokes, you are quite ballsy in the way that you banter back with the men, you can then find yourself in some difficult situations where actually you might feel quite uncomfortable about it but because you’ve sat through quite a lot of it it then becomes quite hard to stand up and say, “Actually, you’ve crossed the line here, mate” (interviewee 18).

In other words, women face duality dilemma and accompanying discrimination. If they “behave like men, they risk losing the obligatory attributes of ‘femininity’ and call into question the natural right of men to the positions of power; if they behave like women, they appear incapable and unfit for the job” (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 67-68, emphasis in the original). Interviewee 18 also stated that the best way to succeed in some newspapers is to internalise misogyny and promote anti-feminist views and criticise women in general. For example, she said that, “there are a lot of women who have internalised the patriarchy, right, a lot of women who embrace their own inner misogynist and actually that’s quite a good way to get on in journalism” (interviewee 18), thus bringing back Bourdieu’s observation of manliness as a construct that is constructed “in front of and for other men and against femininity, in a kind of *fear* of the female, firstly in oneself” (p. 53, emphasis in the original).

The Link with Socialisation

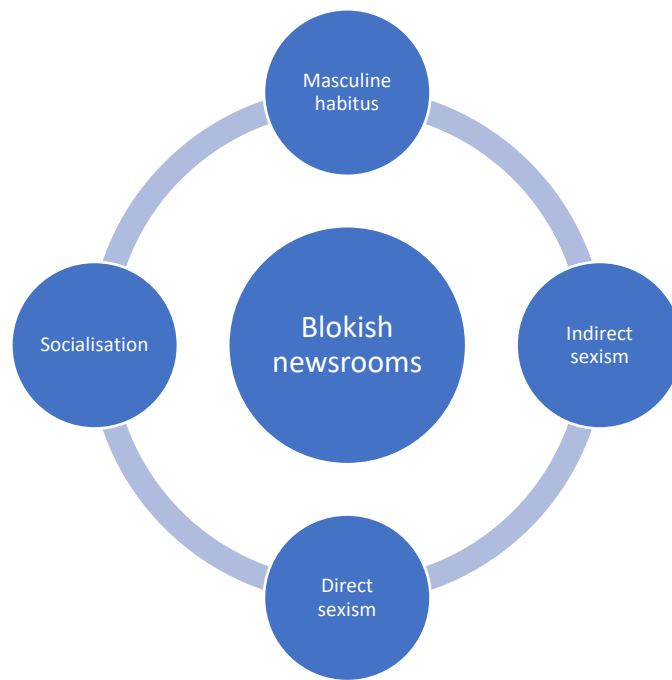
Finally, a question emerged as to why some women from this study demonstrate blokish characteristics and report inclusion into homo-socially shared practices despite being women and why they seem to accept masculinity in newsrooms. The data collected was then analysed abductively and we looked at answers from the beginning of each interview when we asked questions on interviewees’ background and early socialisation.

What emerged from the data was that women who grew up playing with boys and/or spending time with their fathers tended to show more masculine characteristics and accepted masculine ways of doing things, which they also tended to promote and embrace. For example, interviewee 12 said she “had close male friends, who were my best friends outside of the school as a teenager” and this interviewee previously said that she was “one of the boys” and that her male colleagues describe her as “ballsy” and “tells it like it is” and introduced her to senior management, thus enabling her to join homo-socially shared spaces. On the other hand, interviewee 5 who also said that women have to “be able to give as good as you get in what

was traditionally a man's world" and that women have to be "very tough, very determined" said she grew up spending more time with her mother but she "did more exciting things with my father" and she also emphasised that she was "a bit of a tomboy so I played cricket and rounders with the boys and football". However, interviewee 15 who expressed criticism of newsroom culture said she grew up spending time with her mother and sister and she "didn't have that much exposure to boys as such". The findings, therefore, indicate that early socialisation and who one spent time with when growing up has an impact on newsroom culture, which is in line with Bourdieu's (2007) habitus theory as well as Difference Approach (Acker, 1990; Bourdieu, 2007; Vukoičić, 2013; Tench et al, 2017; Tannen, 1990; Merchant, 2012; West & Zimmerman, 1983; Christopher, 2008; de la Rey, 2005; van der Boon, 2003; Grove & Montgomery, 2000; Crawford, 1995; Stanford et al, 1995; Alimo Metcalfe, 1995), both of which have been arguing the impact of socialisation on later life for decades.

The findings, therefore, reveal a cycle that seems to be occurring in newsrooms (graph 2), i.e. socialisation influences gendered behaviour and women then join and perpetuate masculine habitus (either by embracing masculine characteristics and thus becoming blokish or by not challenging the situation enough), and this then results in direct and indirect sexism that women in journalism face (e.g. long working hours, an expectation that job comes first regardless of family life and social expectation of women to be the carers, sexist practice in assigning stories, no showing of emotions, harassment, etc).

Graph 2. The Final Thematic Analysis



The situation in newsrooms, according to this sample of interviewees who come from different walks of life, seems to demonstrate a perpetual cycle of inequality and blokishness or a situation where some women embrace masculine characteristics through the socialisation process and then join a man's organisational world. This then results in not just gendered inequality but a structural inequality. In other words, it does not seem to be so much that all women are discriminated, but women who fit into the feminine stereotype (Bourdieu, 2007).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it seems that women face exclusions and deeply embedded blokish culture in newsrooms, which only blokish women can break into, enabling them to join the boys' clubs. This signals cultural masculinity and shows that one's biological sex is not necessarily the reason for exclusion but one's socially constructed gender. Thus, as Bourdieu (2007) argues, cultural masculinity seems to be constructed as anti-female and women who fit into a feminine style of behaviour struggle in succeeding in journalism whereas those who can join boys' clubs are, they say, embraced and praised for their ability to fit in. This was visible in this study where women reported issues of being forced into what is usually seen as traditionally feminine topics (e.g. features) whereas those who can prove that they are like any man reported acceptance in homosocial circles. The newsroom culture seems to keep the same pattern of behaviour regardless of positive equality legislation, as women who worked in journalism since the 1970s until the present day report the same issues and use similar examples to illustrate

their experiences. While some women recognise discrimination, many accept the newsroom culture in a matter of fact way and report that this is how it is in journalism, thus signalling acceptance of masculine habitus and masculine domination (Bourdieu, 2007). Women report expectations that come naturally to men, such as lack of emotion, being tough and determined for example, and some even refer to journalism as a man's world, thus demonstrating that men form the newsroom culture (North, 2009b) and signalling that only women who can demonstrate masculine behaviour or who are 'blokish' can succeed and join homo-socially organised newsrooms (Mills, 2014; 2017; North, 2009b). However, women who work in magazines report different work culture, thus signalling that women are less inclined to form girls clubs and create feminine newsrooms where one cannot fit in. This warrants further exploration where a larger study on newsroom culture in magazines could reveal whether magazines are perhaps feminine habitus where blokish women would have no place, which was beyond the scope of this research.

What emerged from the data is that early socialisation influences one's success in journalism and thus women who spent time with boys seem to be more likely to succeed in journalism and obtain acceptance by men whereas women who show more feminine characteristics end up leaving the profession. Since this study is based on 20 qualitative interviews, further research is needed to explore socialisation patterns and their impact on newsroom culture. Also, future research should look at differences in editorial strategies and atmosphere in newsrooms led by women of diverse socialisation experiences, which would enable social advocacy and further feminist activism in changing work environment to make it more women-friendly. In addition to this, future research should look at the experiences of men who do not fit a cultural stereotype of masculinity and also the impact of racial and class origin to the position in the newsroom.

In other words, our qualitative study indicated that the key to different organisational experiences lies in the socialisation, which fits within Bourdieu's (2007) habitus theory as Bourdieu also argued that early socialisation experiences influence chances and experiences later in life. This finding also fits into the Difference Approach (Acker, 1990; Bourdieu, 2007; Vukoičić, 2013; Tench et al, 2017; Tannen, 1990; Merchant, 2012; West & Zimmerman, 1983; Christopher, 2008; de la Rey, 2005; van der Boon, 2003; Grove & Montgomery, 2000; Crawford, 1995; Stanford et al, 1995; Alimo Metcalfe, 1995). However, since this is a first study analysing the influence of socialisation in newsrooms on a small qualitative sample of 20 interviewed women, further research should look at this phenomenon in more detail using

different samples to explore the socialisation differences and its impact on newsroom experience.

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