'You really struggle not to come across as bitchy if you are trying to be authoritative' – BLOKISHNESS, HABITUS, BEHAVIOUR AND CAREER EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

Purpose: This study analysed the position of women in public relations, using Bourdieu's habitus. The study also draws from works on women in journalism on the 'bloke-ification' or a situation where women have to behave like men to succeed, thus becoming one of the boys due to masculine habitus in mass communications organisations.

Method: Qualitative interviews were conducted with 26 women practitioners asking questions about their experiences of working in the public relations industry. The triple coding was conducted holistically and cross-referencing against answers on early socialisation of interviewed women. Thematic analysis was used to analyse and present data.

Findings: The findings show acceptance of masculine habitus with women not always challenging the usual order of things and recognising only direct sexism but not every day (masculine) practices. Women who demonstrate feminine behavioural styles are more likely to have negative working experiences than women who demonstrate masculine behavioural styles. Findings show a link between early socialisation and organisational behaviour with women who were socialised with boys reporting more masculine behavioural traits as expected for career progression as opposed to women socialised with girls who report feminine characteristics. The findings also signal that women work in a masculine culture in which they are often ostracised, and the profession as a whole is ridiculed by male managers and senior officials despite women being the majority of the workforce in the PR industry, thus showing that women also work in what Bourdieu calls a (masculine) habitus.

Policy Implications: Organisations should implement HR policies that regulate internal office behaviour so that no staff member or department feels unappreciated and has less influence over the organisational work. A greater focus on treating employees fairly is needed, and this change needs to include structural problems that are often hidden, such as remarks in offices and internal practice and the dynamic between different departments bearing attention to departments where senior roles are traditionally given to men (e.g., finance) and those where senior roles also have women managers (e.g., PR).

Originality: The paper contributes to studies of cultural masculinities in organisations from a sociological perspective and uses a case study of the public relations industry. The paper further extends the bloke-ification framework and contributes toward the conceptualisation of this framework from the public relations perspective and using a sociological approach. In addition

to that, the paper drew from works conducted in journalism and advertising and showed that issues women face are very similar across industries, thus opening a question of a wider social problem, at least when mass communications industries are in stake.

Limitations: This study remains limited regarding its qualitative aspect of 26 interviewed women. Whilst this is a relatively large sample for a qualitative study, these findings show trends in data that can be explored in further research but cannot be generalised. In addition to that, phone interviewing presents a limitation of the study as face-to-face interviews could have enabled a better rapport and a more in-depth conversation as well as an observation of non-verbal communication, which could have led to additional sub-questions. Also, the findings are based on perceptions of interviewed women, which are personal and do not necessarily need to present the reality in the whole of the industry, however, the thematic analysis revealed common patterns which point towards the direction of a wider issue in the industry, which can be explored in further research.

Keywords: women, public relations, blokishness, habitus, behaviour, socialisation

Introduction

Women in public relations is a field of interest that gained prominence in the 1980s when scholars first reported that women face work discrimination and bias such as the glass ceiling, pay gap, confinement to technical positions despite being better educated than men, chauvinism, stereotypes and as the field feminised, and women joined the industry in higher numbers, wages and the prestige of the field decreased. The situation has not improved since the initial works from the 1980s because women continue to report discrimination and dissatisfaction with their work position and these complaints continue to appear in research findings during the 1990s, 2000s and in the last decade, with the only difference being that women are now also reporting lack of mentorship opportunities which prevents them from obtaining leadership roles (Cline et al, 1986, Aldoory et al, 2008, Topić et al, 2019, Topić et al, 2020). However, there is no research on masculinities in public relations organisations, and in particular not on what kind of women succeed in the industry. The latter is relevant because public relations is one of the most feminised industries and yet women continually report obstacles in their career progression, which requires an analysis of organisational conditions that women working in public relations face.

This paper draws from the sociological theory of habitus and Bourdieu's concept of masculine domination (Bourdieu, 2007, 1998, 1985, Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), and from the notion of differences between men and women regarding behaviour or blokishness (North, 2016, 2009; Mills, 2014, Topić, 2018, Topić and Bruegmann, 2021) as a way to explore whether women continually report discrimination in public relations despite the feminisation of the industry because public relations organisations function as a masculine habitus and women have to be like men, or blokish to succeed and whether this presents a structural reason why scholars have been reporting for decades that despite the rise of women in the profession, the inequality persists. In addition to that, the paper explores whether women reference masculine expectations as a condition for organisational success and thus, whether they have merged in masculine habitus and see masculine practices as natural (Bourdieu, 2007).

Literature Review

Bourdieu's Habitus and the Masculine Domination

Bourdieu (2007) argued that social norms are embedded in society through the socialisation process, which is fundamentally gendered (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), and this means that individuals do not often challenge the usual order of things because the division between genders is deeply engrained into the social order that women do not challenge it as they do not always recognise oppression, injustice and sexism (Bourdieu, 2007, Chambers, 2005). Therefore, masculine domination becomes "acceptable and even natural" and Bourdieu (2007) calls it "symbolic violence, a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims" (p. 1), and what makes it possible is "arbitrary division which underlines both reality and the representation of reality" (ibid, p. 3). Thus, Bourdieu (2007) states that "we have embodied the historical structures of the masculine order in the form of unconscious schemes of perceptions and appreciation" (p. 5) and this feeds into daily interactions because women fail to observe mechanisms of domination due to them being deeply rooted in everyday practice.

Bourdieu (2007) argued that because of this people tend to subscribe to "arbitrary division which underlines both reality and the representation of reality" (ibid, p. 3). 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 translates to the organisational world where women who want to progress in their careers face dual requirements. Bourdieu (2007) argued that women have to have the right qualification for the role but then also demonstrate characteristics that come naturally to men, and not women, because of the socialisation process where men develop 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). Adkins and Lury (1999) argued that men who embrace some feminine characteristics, turn this into their advantage whereas feminine women cannot because they are seen to naturally possess these characteristics, and femininity is not symbolically dominant as masculinity, nor can it be turned into symbolic capital by women (Skeggs, 2004).

Bourdieu is most known for his studies on cultural capital and some authors also linked the position of women in society with capital by arguing, for example, that symbolic capital co-exists with social, cultural and economic capital (Reay, 2004). Whilst social capital is generated through social processes that occur between family and wider society through the creation of social networks, symbolic capital is often linked to prestige and personal qualities such as charisma and authority (Bourdieu, 1985), the latter is something that is not often associated with femininity nor do women develop authority through the socialisation process (Bourdieu, 2001). Women are often expected to demonstrate symbolic capital such as symbolic work "which generates devotion, generosity and solidarity", and Bourdieu argued that this work "falls more particularly to women, who are responsible for maintaining relationships" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 68). A habitus is thus a form of a dialectical process, which involves the objectification of some features that then end up forming habitus over time (Skeggs, 2004). Practices that form habitus often start in childhood during the early socialisation process where children form social identities and part of this identity is their sexual identity and gender roles in society, which they also observe in their household (ibid). These social norms are often hidden, and form objective and cognitive structures (Bourdieu, 2001) and social identity entail sexual identity shaped through early socialisation within the family (Skeggs, 2004). In other words, socialisation is "a process by which individuals of a given society learn the skills, behavior patterns, standards, customs and values of the society" (Hoominfar, 2019, p. 1) and through early socialisation, individuals learn "institutionalization of values, the beliefs, and

standards of the society for all members of a given group. Socialization can help one to predict how people behave, think, and feel in a group or society" (ibid, p. 2).

Lawler (2004) correctly summarised that habitus constitutes a "factor of social difference (…) which is also a factor of inequality. It is an important means through which 'large scale' social inequalities (such as class and gender) are made real, and are also made to inhere within the person, so that it is persons themselves who can be judged and found wanting, and persons themselves who can be made to bear the 'hidden injuries' of inequality" (p. 113, emphases in the original). In other words, Bourdieu (1990) speaks of the reproduction of social practices that individuals learn in childhood and through their social interactions and this reproduction rests at the level below consciousness, or individuals do not memorise the past but rather enact it and bring it back to life through their actions. Therefore, habitus is "a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions" (Bourdieu, 2000, pp. 82-83). Habitus also becomes a structuring experience that "brings about a unique integration, dominated by the earliest experiences" (ibid, pp. 86-87; Skeggs, 2004a).

Lovell (2000) argued that not all women experience masculine habitus and manage to strategically play and experiment with masculinity in a man's world and succeed. I am arguing that this is true and that masculine women did manage to play into masculinity and succeed and not get caught in a man's world, however, I also argue that this is because organisations function as a masculine habitus in which only women who embrace masculine behaviour succeed. I also argue that this behaviour stems from early socialisation and interaction in peer groups where women who played with boys embrace masculine behavioural styles, or blokish behaviour, and then climb the ladder and fit into the organisational world more easily than women who were socialised with girls and embrace the feminine behavioural characteristics.

With this, habitus becomes not just about social class but also about one's socially constructed gender, which happens in families and societies during the early socialisation process where children learn what is commonly perceived as feminine or masculine behaviour and then repeat these behavioural patterns. What is more, whilst habitus is leading towards reproducing social structures in line with people's understanding of the material practices they are surrounded with, people still have agency in constructing the world (Crossley, 2001, Sweetman, 2003), in this case, girls who play with boys and bypass a more common early socialisation where girls

play with girls and embrace feminine characteristics and patriarchal expectations of girls and women. What I am arguing is that early socialisation affects behaviour later in the organisational world and that organisations function as a masculine habitus as well as that women do not always notice discriminatory practices because masculine expectations are deeply engrained into the organisational world that many women do not challenge it and outline masculine characteristics as desirable for leaders and a career progression (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, Chambers, 2005).[1] With this blokishness becomes also a disposition and a doxa because women who experienced non-traditional socialisation develop a disposition that shapes their perceptions and actions and act at the level of unconscious (Bourdieu, 1977, Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, Davey, 2009, Spence and Carter, 2014) because the actions are reproduced through social encounters and experiences, thus habitus becoming "a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 83). In other words, doxa presents a taken-for-granted understanding of the world developed in one's habitus, and whilst this concept is linked to habitus and fields, it works with women in organisations too because doxa relates to "implicit and explicit rules of behavior, and its own valuation of what confers power onto someone; that is what counts as "capital". The *illusio* of the field makes the resulting power relations appear invisible, natural or inevitable plays a crucial role in upholding the logic of the field. It masks and obfuscates power and thereby reduces resistance" (Leander, 2009, p. 4, all emphases in the original). This means that to succeed in organisations, women (and Bourdieu tackles this in masculine domination as already emphasised) need to have a taken-for-granted understanding of how to do the works and rules of behaviour, which does not come naturally to them, except for those who experienced a non-traditional socialisation as the data in this paper indicates.

Blokishness and Organisations

Blokishness is a term originally introduced in research on women in journalism where it is common knowledge that journalism remains a masculine profession where standards of work such as newsgathering techniques and the way newsrooms operate have not changed even with

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[1] This is not to say that early socialisation is the only socialisation individuals go through. There is also middle socialisation as well as organisational one and it is a process that lasts the whole life. However, research has confirmed the early socialisation as very influential because of its centredness on institutionalising beliefs and behaviours (Smetana et al, 2014, Arnett, 2014).

a significant arrival of women to journalism (Lofgren-Nilsson, 2010, Ross, 2001, Franks, 2013). Gallagher (2002) warned about the laddish culture in newsrooms which makes women uncomfortable whereas Mills (2014) stated that senior women who manage to progress in journalism "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 a recent study, women working in journalism also reported unfavourable work conditions, masculine culture in the newsrooms, having to be like men to succeed and inherent sexism (Topić and Bruegmann, 2021). In a study on women in advertising in England, Topić (2021), drawing from journalism studies, found that women also form the majority of the workforce in advertising, yet blokish women seem to go ahead, thus opening a question of whether the situation would be the same in public relations industry and whether the concept of blokishness explains why the number of women employees grew exponentially in mass communication industries (advertising, public relations, journalism) but inequality remains. In all of these studies, blokishness is conceptualised through Bourdieu's habitus and behaviour that comes more naturally to men than women, and this includes competitiveness, work-first attitude, not showing empathy or emotion at work, ability to join office banter and 'give it as good as one gets it', assertiveness, aggression, etc. It is relevant to emphasise that these characteristics represent masculinity in behaviour and does not necessarily mean all men have these characteristics; what this approach examines and argues is that only those women who demonstrate these characteristics go ahead because organisations are also dominated by men and women who demonstrate these characteristics.

In organisational studies, Workman-Stark (2020) argued that harassment is less prevalent in organisations when there is a greater focus on treating all employees fairly, however, often "work becomes a masculinity contest when organizations focus on masculinity over mission, which can be enacted through hypercompetitive contests, such as carrying heavy workloads and working long schedules, stepping on or over others (i.e. cutthroat competition), or taking unreasonable risks" (p. 6). Berdahl et al (2018) argued that hegemonic masculinity in organisations means that dominance, aggression and competition dominate workplaces, and this is visible in attitudes such as reluctance to show weakness and thus get seen as vulnerable and emotional, which are characteristics commonly associated with femininity. In addition to that, strength and stamina and putting work first, and certainly ahead of the family, are characteristics that are valued and those who put long hours into work can progress more easily, which is a practice that historically benefited men due to social expectation of women to act as

carers whilst men worked (Saval, 2015, Mušura et al, 2015). Some studies have shown that organisations that practice this approach also end up in extreme competitiveness and this then leads to bullying, harassment and poor working culture (Glick et al., 2018, Matos et al., 2018, Rawski and Workman-Stark, 2018, Workman-Stark, 2020, O'Moore and Lynch, 2007) as well as to only masculine or blokish women achieving career progression whilst other women fall off the ladder and do not see these women as role models they could identify with (Mills, 2014, Topić and Bruegmann, 2021).

What is more, these practices have an impact on employee engagement and wellbeing due to poor work/life balance. For example, Mušura, Koričan and Krajnović (2015) argued that when organisations do not take care of their employees, social and financial consequences ensue including lower employee engagement, productivity, profit and satisfaction. In addition to that, Wadsworth, Llorens and Facer (2018) studied employee turnover respective of flexible work policies and gender and found what appears a contradictory result. They found that generally, alternative work schedules result in a lower turnover intent for female employees whereas there was no statistically significant difference for male employees. However, when looking specifically into female employees, authors found also that "for female employees, being able to choose a work schedule results in an increase of 0,36 in the log odds of expressing the highest level of turnover intent" (p. 268). Authors called this latter result counter-intuitive because these results also conflicted with "the findings related to hypothesis two that women working the alternative schedule had lower turnover intent than their female counterparts not working under alternative work schedules" (ibid). However, this is precisely why studying women's behavioural styles are relevant because segmenting women based on behaviour and personal background, such as early socialisation, can point towards differences among women who are not one homogenous group as research into masculinities in organisations has shown so far. Understanding employees in-depth will become even more relevant as work environments have turned, with the rise of technology, towards a 24*7 work culture, which is contributing to work-life imbalance as well as talent attraction and retention, thus affecting organisational outcomes more generally (Maurya et al, 2021, Madsen, 2006, Allen et al, 2000, Whiston and Cinamon, 2015, Thompson et al, 1999).

Method

Against the backdrop above, 26 interviews were conducted with women working in public relations in England. Of 26 interviewees, 16 hold managerial roles whereas 10 were employees

without managerial responsibilities. All interviews were done via phone due to the fact they were conducted in April 2020, during a COVID-19 lockdown in the UK. Interviewed women work both in-house (16) and in agencies (10) and they work in a variety of industries, such as public service, higher education, fashion and beauty, health, caring, retail, finance, banking, logistics, communications, events, nuclear sector, professional services, technology and the media. Also, some interviewees changed jobs and moved between industries, with which they were able to reflect on how things are across different sectors. Some interviewees now work as freelance practitioners whereas previously they also had full-time jobs in large organisations and/or agencies, which also provided good ground for reflecting on the position of women in the industry. This diversity in sampling provided a good overview of the situation in the public relations field. Nevertheless, the sample is diverse in regard to locations, and thus interviewees are based in Manchester, Leeds, Channel Islands, Durham, London, Huddersfield, Chester, Birmingham, Nottingham and Newcastle upon Tyne. Interviewees have between one and 32 years of experience, thus providing a good overview of the situation and development in the field of public relations. The age of women ranges from 22 to 56 years old and encompasses both junior and senior women.

Interviewees and Interviewee Questions

Table 1 gives information on the interviewees. In the cases of two interviewees, six and 16, they are based in Yorkshire and for anonymisation, the term Yorkshire has been used for these two interviewees rather than the full name of the place where they are based. This is because attaching the place to the responses of these two interviewees would potentially make clearer who was interviewed. Besides, in the case of interviewee 10 based in the south of England, the reference to the place has been removed at the request of the interviewee and the data from this interviewee has not been used in the analysis below.

Table 1. Interviewees' demographics

INTERVIEW NO.	TYPE OF COMPANY	In-house or agency	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	EMPLOYEE OR MANAGER	PLACE
1	Public service	In-house	25	manager	Manchester
2	PR agency	Agency	25	manager	Leeds
3	Health company	In-house	3.5	employee	Channel Islands
4	Caring company	In-house	1.8	employee	Leeds
5	Retail company	In-house	4	manager	Durham
6	Building society	In-house	10	employee	Yorkshire (place redacted for anonymity)
7	PR agency	Agency	13	manager	Manchester
8	PR agency	Agency	2	employee	London
9	PR agency	Agency	17	manager	Huddersfield
10	Large corporation	In-house	20	manager	South of England (place redacted for anonymity)
11	Freelance (before that in-house, nuclear sector)	In-house	15	manager	Manchester
12	Freelance (before that in-house, fashion sector)	In-house	5	employee	Chester
13	Health corporation	In-house	24	manager	Channel Islands
14	Banking industry (now runs her agency)	In-house	19	manager	London
15	The logistics industry	In-house	20	employee	Chester
16	Education	In-house	20	manager	Yorkshire (place redacted for anonymity)
17	PR agency	Agency	10	manager	London
18	Finance corporation	In-house	6	manager	London
19	Professional services	In-house	4	employee	Birmingham
20	Agency (technology)/freelance	Agency	20	manager	London
21	Freelance	Agency	6	employee	Manchester
22	Freelance	Agency	22	employee	Leeds
23	Education	In-house	32	manager	Nottingham
24	Agency	Agency	12	manager	Manchester
25	Agency	Agency	11	manager	Newcastle upon Tyne
26	Media organisation	In-house	5	employee	Manchester

Interviewees were asked questions on work hours, work-life balance, working and raising a family, career progression opportunities, expectations on women's behaviour and attitudes women need to demonstrate to progress, experiences of direct discrimination such as disapproval, different treatment based on gender, sexist comments and practices, having to behave differently to be taken seriously and equality of opportunities. What is central to all questions is an exploration of blokishness in the public relations industry, and thus whether women have to be like men to succeed and whether women have to embrace what is commonly understood as cultural masculinity in behaviour and thus become part of masculine habitus (Bourdieu, 2007). In other words, blokishness is conceptualised through questions on expectations, behaviour and attitudes that women should demonstrate to succeed, with which it was possible to assess whether women are outlining what is usually understood as masculine characteristics in work (e.g., assertiveness, aggression, etc.), and which would furthermore show that women are socialised in a masculine habitus (Bourdieu, 2007). Blokish women would be those who say they are assertive and aggressive, and who say that women, to succeed must embrace these characteristics. In addition to this, blokishness would also be a view that women must hide emotions and be very tough and determined and embrace work first attitude, which is historically attached to men due to a social expectation that a woman will care for children (Saval, 2015, Bourdieu, 2007, Maurya et al, 2021, Madsen, 2006, Mušura et al, 2015). These views showed in answers women gave on questions such as what behaviour women need to demonstrate to succeed in their careers as well as in questions asking what attitudes women need to demonstrate to progress. Interviewees were also asked questions on early socialisation to explore whether there is a possible link between socialisation and behaviour later in life. These questions included asking where they grew up, whom they played with when they were growing up and what they did as children, etc. All these questions helped in unpacking behaviour that women demonstrate in the workplace, and this was then analysed against their own perceptions of their position in the workplace and whether they perceive themselves as having equal chances to succeed or whether they report facing obstacles and discrimination, which revealed what type of women report facing obstacles and discrimination and whether only women demonstrating masculine characteristics succeed and go ahead.

Interviewees were recruited via personal contacts and LinkedIn. Of 26 interviewees, eight were personal contacts (of which five were former students). Other interviewees were recruited via LinkedIn. Several interviewees were also recruited through recommendations from public

relations practitioners who supported the project by asking their contacts to participate in the research. The research has obtained ethics approval from the University's local research ethics coordinator. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes with a few exceptions that lasted for 45 minutes. All interviews were transcribed for analysis and the total word count of analysed transcripts was 109 785 words / 273 pages. The whole dataset was analysed by the author of this paper and the coding and thematic analysis were done manually.

Bourdieu's habitus was used for this study because it explores the internalisation of masculinity and the acceptance of behaviours that are deeply embedded into society and the organisational world. Two concepts were particularly explored in Bourdieu's (2007) work, unconscious acceptance of the social order of things and habitus as a normal way of doing things with women who do not fit into masculine expectations.

Analysis

Transcripts were read several times and the data was continually compared and contrasted using the coding approach of Morse and Richards (2002) and open coding was done first. This helped in identifying critical themes that emerge from the data and the process entailed reading transcripts and coding answers with descriptive codes. These codes were then grouped, and selective coding (ibid) was done next, which helped in identifying and capturing the most relevant themes that emerge from the data, and these themes are then related across data to provide an overall thematic analysis. In addition to that, axial coding was used to analyse and cross-reference data particularly looking at answers regarding socialisation and how this links to answers about women's experiences to explore whether women who grew up with boys show more masculine behavioural characteristics.

Theoretical triangulation was used for designing the questionnaire and conducting this study by using concepts from blokishness approach from research conducted in journalism and advertising (North, 2016, 2009, Mills, 2014, Topić, 2018, 2020, Topić and Bruegmann, 2021), which helped in analysing data in a more meaningful way and answering research questions set out at the beginning of the study and then combining them with Bourdieu's habitus. As argued by Skeggs (2004), "Bourdieu's terribly well organized habitus cannot encompass all the practices between gender and sexuality, the contradictions, plays, experimentations,

swappings, ambiguities…" (p. 27), but habitus as a form of masculine domination does explain women's expected behaviour and where this expectation is coming from.

In terms of the research process, the approach was deductive, and the research was centred on exploring the concepts of blokishness and habitus and applying them to public relations organisations. In addition to that, the approach to research was linear with the researcher first conducting a literature review on blokishness and women in organisations, then designing the questionnaire and then analysing data. All interviews were conducted at the same time, in a period of three months and the questionnaire has not been changed during the interview process nor has data been analysed singularly, i.e., all transcripts were analysed together at the end of the data collection.

Thematic analysis was used for 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). Thematic analysis is a sense-making approach and a systematic way of analysing qualitative data and is the method which is most similar to quantitative methods in the sense it codes and organises data methodically and looks for links between various datasets, in this case, interviewee responses both amongst themselves as well as internally with each interviewee (i.e., the socialisation vs behavioural answers). However, the aim of the thematic analysis is not to provide correlations or generalisations but to point towards trends in data and possible links between datasets, which can enable further research including quantitative studies.

A three-tier thematic analysis was conducted with the researcher first analysing data generally based on open-ended coding, then analysing the data based on axial coding looking into the link between socialisation and behavioural answers. Finally, a final thematic analysis has been conducted taking both findings into consideration.

In the presentation of findings, an approach of Braun and Clarke (2006) was followed, and the paper first presents the main themes identified in the study, and the writing of the results has plenty of direct quotes, which also enables interviewees to "speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings" (Berg, 2007, p. 96). A thematic map is provided at

the end of the analysis to provide a conceptualisation of findings and enable further research. The questions guiding this study were, is blokishness manifested in public relations organisations? If so, how? Have women internalised masculine habitus?

Findings and Discussion

The initial data analysis revealed that blokishness runs as a central theme in responses from interviewees, with sub-themes sexism, cultural masculinity in organising work, the Queen Bee syndrome and expectations on personality.

Cultural masculinity in organising work

The majority of women reported long working hours and the sense of constant working, which puts them in a situation that they cannot switch off. For example, interviewee 18 said that she gets to "the office at 7, I leave at 7 or 8 but I am on my phone 24/7 (…) Yes. When I am not sleeping, I have my work phone right next to me. The emails are coming in", thus showing the sense of non-stop working and heavy workloads, which fits into organisational literature that argues organisations are still man's world (Bourdieu, 2007) where women are expected to develop the work-first attitude, which has historically been a masculine characteristic due to the fact women stayed at home and looked after children (Saval, 2015; Workman-Stark, 2020, Maurya et al, 2021; Madsen, 2006; Mušura et al, 2015). This also signals a masculine habitus and internalisation of work practices that are set out by men (Bourdieu, 2007, Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), due to the fact no woman called out these practices as masculine and benefiting men and the findings echo a study in journalism where women also reported they have to hide any interest in life outside of work (Topić and Bruegmann, 2021). In management studies, authors also argued that "If women conform to the gender role by displaying predominately feminine characteristics, they fail to meet the perceived requirements of the managerial role, which calls for mostly masculine characteristics. However, if they compete with men for managerial positions and conform to the managerial role by displaying predominately masculine characteristics, they fail to meet the requirements of the female gender role, which calls for deference to the authority of men" (Powell and Butterfield, 2003, pp. 92, cited from Mavin, 2006, p. 267).

This leads to the question of workloads, which are seen as unnecessarily high and thus also part of masculine habitus where masculine work-first attitude dominates the way organisations operate. However, some interviewees mentioned that lack of flexibility and long work hours are linked to the type of PR one does. For example, interviewee 17 argued that if a woman works in media relations, she lacks flexibility because of the deadlines journalists work with and a similar issue is with crisis management and business development, which requires lots of out-of-hours networking. This interviewee feels that only strategy is flexible, however, this rarely seems to be a woman's role,

> "I think if you're doing work like PR strategies, that's much easier because basically, it requires research which you can slot into times that suit you; it's not dramatic deadlines (…) But the fact is that very few women do strategy. It's one of the highest levels of public relations, and most of the women that I've come across, they tend to work much more in the tactical areas, not in the strategy. Often a man walks in, he tends to have a beard and glasses, and funny looking socks, and he's the strategy person. And the women are the ones who are all running round who often get a fraction of what he gets paid, and they do a lot of the heavy lifting" (interviewee 17, London).

Other women also mentioned a problem when a woman is doing the strategy because clients "didn't respect my strategic input as much as male colleagues" and clients also often tend to get "quite flirty (…) if there is a guy there, they understand why they are there, but if it is a woman, occasionally they can simply misunderstand that you are not there just for their company on a friendly or romantic level (…) I don't think men would have that experience" (interviewee 24, Manchester). Bourdieu (2007) called this practice sexual domination, which does not always involve sexual advances, but still represents sexism because "faced with men's sexual jokes, women often have no other choice than to exclude themselves or participate, at least passively, in order to try to integrate themselves, but then running the risk of no longer being able to protest if they are victims of sexism or sexual harassment" (p. 68). This also shows an internalisation of masculinity because women report that networking out of office hours is what PR does, not questioning whether this is a historically a masculine practice that leaves many women behind, thus showing the influence of organisational habitus where practices are expected as they are subconsciously reproduced without a challenge (Bourdieu, 2007, 1990, Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

However, when networking women often feel they have to be careful when trying to build relationships with other men because if "he gets an idea of something, that relationship

completely changes and I think men often get the wrong idea when it comes to these things" (interviewee 18, London). These issues show masculine habitus where men decide what is the appropriate way of doing things and where women are treated as interlopers and objects of harassment, which does not always have to be physical sexual harassment. Bourdieu argued that violence does not have to be just physical, but it can also be a "symbolic violence, a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims" (p. 1). Interviewee 17 also mentioned that it is difficult for a woman to do strategy because men will try to bring the woman down, which means that women have to be forceful too, thus bringing the notion of blokishness and embracing masculine ways of doing things (Mills, 2014, North, 2016, 2009, Workman-Stark, 2020),

> "… And because it was a big client, the other agencies were all middle-aged white men, and basically, I think they were shocked that a skinny brown woman was doing the strategy. And so, they collectively tried to call me out on my strategy all the time, but I was actually quite forceful back, and then they backed down. So, I feel that sometimes when you're in an environment, men are more aggressive and wanting to play office politics and bring you down, but you just have to be forceful back and then they back down" (Interviewee 17, London).

Being domineering and aggressive are characteristics normally recognised as masculine (Bourdieu, 2007, Tannen, 1995, 1990, 1986, North, 2016, 2009, Mills, 2014, Topić, 2018, 2021, Topić and Bruegmann, 2021) whereas women are commonly expected to be feminine, which means "smiling, friendly, attentive, submissive, demure, restrained, self-effacing" (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 66), and this comes from the socialisation process where women learn submission, relationship building and working in groups whilst men learn individualism and dominance (Tannen, 1995, 1990, 1986, West and Zimmerman, 1983), thus when a woman comes to the position of power it comes naturally that men feel uncomfortable with being dominated by a woman. Women who reached higher positions and who do not have children mention that they would probably not be able to go as high (above office manager to the board level, for example) had they had children. Women who hold higher positions noted that it is near impossible to have flexibility if in a senior position because the expectations are higher and having "a senior job on the board means that I do a lot of evening events" (interviewee 23, Nottingham). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that many women in public relations get stuck in middle-level managerial roles, for those that can progress at all, as very senior positions have time-consuming work demands, which are linked to masculine habitus where men can put the

hours in as they are not normally caregivers (Bourdieu, 2007, Saval, 2015, Workman-Stark, 2020, Maurya et al, 2021, Madsen, 2006, Mušura et al, 2015).

Sexism

A major issue that came up in interviews is the lack of recognition of public relations as a discipline. Interviewees mentioned that they, for example, did not face disapproval because of being women but because they work in public relations as communications, in general, are not often taken seriously. For example,

> "I think, again, it comes down to people not taking PR or communications seriously as a major asset to business in a way that there isn't ever for, say, to the finance director or to the operations director. So I think for some people they still don't always see the value in PR" (interviewee 2, Leeds).

Some other women mentioned disapproval from older colleagues, for example, with comments on their tattoos, or older male managers who expressed dissatisfaction and showed micro-managerial tendencies. Other interviewed women echoed views from the 1930s when women first joined the office and were expected to do menial jobs (Saval, 2015), such as interviewee 13 (Channel Islands) who stated that she is 47 and still faces this discrimination where men, particularly from the UK office, come and ask her "to print something for him or treat me like a secretary", and she links this with the lack of recognition of public relations, which was mentioned by other interviewees. The same experience was expressed by interviewee 20 (London) who was asked by a client to go and make some tea and coffee in the middle of the press briefing where "there were a lot of journalists there and reporters" and the male client interrupted her in the middle of the press briefing when she was giving a media brief with a menial job. Thus, some women report signs of a masculine habitus where women and femininity are associated with supportive roles (Alvesson, 2013) and where men dominate in higher positions and constitute the work culture themselves (North, 2009). However, what is also problematic is that PR is a feminine profession dominated by women since the 1980s when the number of women joining the profession started to rise (Topić et al, 2020, Cline et al 1986) and the fact women's profession is not recognised by other men in the industry again brings a notion of symbolic violence Bourdieu (2007) mentions where men set the rules of the game and decide, in this case, who should be recognised.

Interviewees also noted that women get different treatment when presenting as opposed to men. For example, "when one of the guys would speak, they would seem to sit up and take more notice" (interviewee 14, London), and this does not come as a surprise given that many women report being treated differently or asked to do menial stuff, which is a form of sexism (Saval, 2015). Sexism is, however, directly recognised by interviewee 23 (Nottingham) who said that as soon as she was in her 30s and single, she "became automatic mistress material". This sexual harassment is accompanied by many women reporting sexism and sexist remarks in public relations offices such as stereotypical views that "women are good at cooking and shopping and painting their nails" (interviewee 8, London), and these comments were heard by interviewees in several different industries such as "health sector, within nuclear sector, within aviation, education" (interviewee 11, Manchester), which means that even industries with large numbers of women (e.g., health or in this case PR) are prone to masculine domination and sexism (Bourdieu, 2007).

Expectations on personality

Women also reported facing expectations on their professional appearance, which can be linked to blokishness used in this study. The expectation imposed on women is not a patriarchal one where they are expected to look like Barbies and be very smiley and friendly, as Bourdieu (2007) recognised when discussing the need for women to satisfy male egos by being friendly, smiley and cheerful. Quite the contrary, in this study, women report having to appear serious and tough to meet masculine expectations and thus be like men or one of the blokes to succeed. For example,

> "I suppose, at these very masculine board meetings, you felt like you had to try harder and get your presentation and your messaging that much more slick because I just felt like sometimes I was losing their attention, it was almost like, 'Here we are, the little PR marketing coming in.' If the accountant came in next or the business development manager, or I guess A Man would come in then they would sit up a bit more. So, yes" (interviewee 14, London).

This shows that women have to change their personalities and hide emotions and appear tough to be recognised in a masculine world, which brings the issue of blokishness. In other words, women reported they need to show authority because they are not always taken seriously in meetings or when speaking about strategy, which means they need to possess a symbolic capital of charisma and authority (Bourdieu, 1985, 2001). Not all women have this capital as this

depends on early socialisation and learnt behaviour during formative years (Bourdieu, 2001, Skeggs, 2004) and thus not all women are able to fit into a masculine world.

When it comes to expectations of women in regard to their behaviour to succeed, women reported issues by saying, for example, that they "really struggle not to come across as bitchy if you are trying to be authoritative, which isn't generally the case across men" (interviewee 3, Channel Islands). Therefore, women have to be "a lot more soft-spoken when you're trying to get things done, which makes it more difficult when you're trying to be authoritative" (ibid), thus showing that from one side they have to be like men, or blokish, to succeed but from the other side, women are also treated to a double standard and seen as 'bitchy' when trying to assert authority. Bourdieu (2007) argued that men were prepared for assertiveness and authority during their whole lives whereas women are expected to demonstrate feminine behaviours, which then sets them back as they will not be seen as managerial material unless they behave like men. However, it seems that some women also face a 'catch 22' because they have to balance authoritativeness with softness and find themselves in a position they cannot enforce decisions, thus bringing back the argument from Bourdieu (2007) who argued that in a masculine habitus men decide how women should behave, which normally leads to blokishness, as reported in journalism studies where women have to be bloke-ified to succeed (North, 2009, Mills, 2014, Topić and Bruegmann, 2021). Bourdieu (2007) recognised this view as masculine habitus by arguing that women face 'double bind' in their access to power because "if they behave like men, they risk losing the obligatory attributes of 'femininity' and call into question the natural right of men to the position of power; if they behave like women, they appear incapable and unfit for the job" (p. 67-68, emphasis in the original).

Finally, there are signs that women have internalised masculine habitus and embraced the masculine way of thinking (Chambers, 2005, Bourdieu, 2007, Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Some women argued that women have to be present and cannot put restrictions on employment because of family, which is typically seen as a masculine view. Besides, some women also mentioned confidence, not being walkovers and being as good as any men, thus showing that organisations are man's world and women have to behave like men to succeed, since toughness is seen as a masculine trait due to socialisation differences between boys and girls (Alvesson, 2013, Tannen, 1995, 1990, 1986, Bourdieu, 2007). For example,

"I still think that there is this expectation that you have to be present. I think if you're trying to build your career, it's difficult on the rise to then start a family and to be putting in restrictions, say "Oh, I want part-time hours," or do less days per week (…) As we know, a lot of the time it isn't a set day Monday to Friday. You have to be responsive and reactive a lot of the time when it's changing, so adaptability, I would say for core strength is needed" (interviewee 7, Manchester).

"They need to show they are not a walkover. They need to demonstrate their knowledge, their experience and what they can bring to the table. They don't need to be aggressive, but they need to show they have real drive and that they are driven towards a goal and won't tolerate fools easily" (interviewee 19, Birmingham).

"They just need to be good at whatever they are doing in the same way that a man does." (interviewee 22, Leeds).

The characteristics mentioned by interviewees clearly point towards masculinity and the fact women embraced masculine habitus by not challenging it, thus habitus reproducing itself and status quo being maintained. What is more, the findings point towards women having to be blokish to succeed in organisations that function as a masculine world given that expected behaviours largely fit masculine meanings and behaviour that comes more naturally to men than women (Bourdieu, 2001).

The Queen Bees

Some women also mentioned the problem of older women who "like things more precise (…) their way" (interviewee 5, Durham). Besides, one woman mentioned that it was other women who told her to "tone it down if you want to be taken more seriously" (interviewee 15, Chester) and interviewee 18 (London) also mentioned that older women were disapproving of the way she dressed, especially from finance departments, and they would comment, for example, "Have you spray painted your jeans on?" These experiences lead to the Queen Bee syndrome, which explains a situation in which very few women manage to succeed in a man's world and then fail to support other women (Cline et al, 1986). In addition to that, some authors argued that women lack solidarity in behaviour (Mavin, 2006) and thus often engage in competitive behaviour with other women, which includes "sub-conscious jealousy and competition based on age or appearance (attractiveness, weight, dress sense)", and this suggests that some women might be reading "each other's sexed bodies through men's eyes in sexual competition" (Starr,

2001, p. 9, cited from Mavin, 2006a, p. 354). Mavin (2006a) calls this phenomenon also female misogyny.

Whilst the research finding on Queen Bees is not new in management where studies on this issue started to appear in the 1960s (Mavin, 2006), it is under-explored and rarely appears in public relations scholarship. The findings from women who mentioned this issue signal that some senior women lack solidarity in their behaviour and that other women do not see them as what Mavin (2006) calls natural allies because they criticise other women who, as a result, do not see them as a type of woman they might want to become in the future (Mills, 2014) and, as in this study, sometimes say they prefer to work for men. Authors also argued that queen bees prefer to work with men and that they can be recognised by observing their behaviour toward men. This behaviour is also recognised as sexist and outdated because it perpetuates the status quo (Mavin, 2008) and whilst it has been more than a decade since this recognition, it appeared in findings of this study too.

However, women who advance to senior positions also report that they have to dedicate their whole life to careers, including in this study, but in some studies, they reported resentment about other women expecting them to pick up the slack and work for them because they are mothers (Pompper, 2012, Dubrowski et al, 2019), the implication being that women without children can somehow participate in the motherhood of working mothers by picking up their workload. This created another catch-22 because the so-called queen bees have to work extra hard for working mothers, which is an unrealistic expectation (that also opens the question of the right of childless women to free time and time for themselves) and if they do not recognise motherhood and insist everyone gives their all to work, they are seen as 'bitchy' or too masculine to be role models (Mills, 2014). What is more, management and organisational studies have argued that women had to internalise organisational behaviour and be more like men to succeed (Mavin, 2006, 2006a) but then they face rejection from other women for moving out of expected gendered behaviours (Mavin and Williams, 2013, Mill, 2014).

The Socialisation Link

As mentioned in the methods section, data was initially analysed in itself as presented above and then cross-referenced against data on socialisation to explore what kind of women succeed in senior positions as well as expectations of one's behaviour in the workplace. The analysis

of interviewee responses showed a tendency that women who were socialised with girls tend to develop a feminine leadership style and prefer to work for feminine women managers whereas women socialised with boys tend to develop a masculine leadership style and prefer to work for male managers. Equally, women who were socialised with boys in this study tend to emphasise masculine behaviour as desirable whereas women who were socialised with girls tend to prefer feminine behavioural styles. For example,

> "You have got to be willing to be flexible, you have got to want to listen to people, you have got to be considerate of people's feelings, the fact that everyone needs to learn, everyone needs to develop. Being a good mentor so you can always be trustworthy as well. Making sure your staff can confide in you is so important. One of the reasons why I left my job to go freelance was because the management I had above me was shocking. Anything I would have told them or anything I did tell them went other places. When I went to hand my notice in, I told one of the directors and before I knew it, he told three of the others. You need to make people understand what your reasons are. I think that is so important to have trust" (interviewee 12, Chester, feminine socialisation).

> "I prefer a man (…) I don't know if it is just me, but I have found with women I have had some really good female bosses, but a lot of them can get quite bitchy. I find with a man we can sit down, you can talk to them and they will take you seriously. Not always. There have been some awful male bosses I have had, but generally, there isn't the bitchiness. You can talk to them and you don't feel like you are being judged" (interviewee 19, Birmingham, masculine socialisation).

What these two illustrative answers demonstrate is that women who experienced feminine socialisation tend to embrace feminine behavioural styles and support feminine characteristics in the workplace whereas women who experienced masculine socialisation tend to show a preference for masculine behaviour and leadership. In other words, women need to possess symbolic capital such as charisma and authority (Bourdieu, 1985) but this capital is usually found in women who experienced masculine socialisation and grew up with boys and who can fit into a masculine world.

These early experiences of social peer groups and learning behaviour then translate to the organisational world or the level of one being able to fit into habitus, which involves the objectification of some features that form habitus over time (Skeggs, 2004). Practices such as learning behaviour in early childhood, either with girls or boys, create roles and identities later on and these social norms and behaviours are often hidden and taken for granted (Bourdieu, 2001). Therefore, a conclusion can be made that PR functions as a masculine habitus where

men set the rules of the game including expectations of behaviour with women being able to succeed if they merge into a masculine organisational culture and become one of the blokes whilst feminine women are seen as a support and PR as a feminine profession remains unrecognised (figure 1).

Figure 1. PR as a masculine habitus
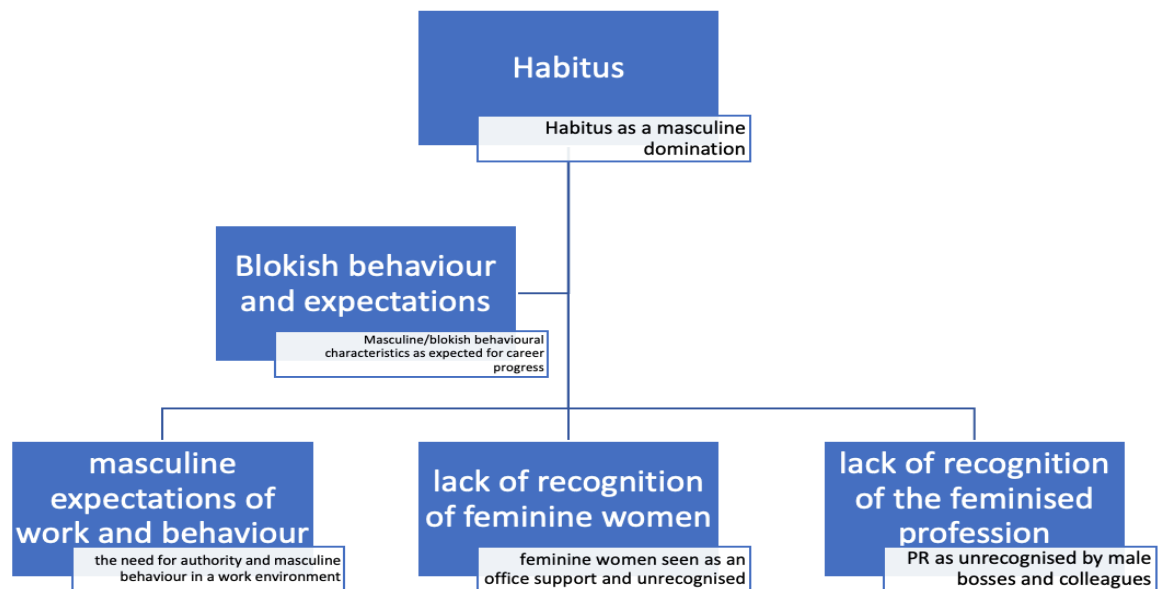
Conclusion

In conclusion, and to answer research questions for this study, it seems that blokishness is manifested in public relations organisations (RQ1) in a way that presents a structural barrier for many women. In other words, women outline characteristics commonly associated with masculinity as those one needs to have to succeed in their careers, which means that many women are left behind. The results show that women who are left behind are most likely those who were socialised with girls and who embraced what is commonly perceived as the feminine behavioural pattern. This means, and in answer to the second research question, that women have internalised masculine habitus (RQ2) because they outline behavioural characteristics commonly associated with men as those that one needs to succeed. What these results also mean is that there seems to be a wider social issue with masculinities in organisations and habitus because results from this public relations study to a large extent match studies in journalism and advertising (Mills, 2014, Topić, 2018, 2021, Topić and Bruegmann, 2021), the only difference being the lack of recognition of PR as a profession and queen bee syndrome, which means that at least when mass communication industries are in stake, there seems to be

a habitus and a masculine organisational culture that affects women in a way that only women who embrace what is known as blokish behaviour can succeed and go ahead. But, even if they do then they sometimes face a catch-22 and find themselves in a situation that they cannot win because when they are tough, they are perceived as too masculine and women cannot identify with them or accept them, but if they are perceived as soft, they are not accepted by masculine structures and seen as a manager material or role models (Mills, 2014).

The paper's contribution, other than exploring blokishness as a framework in the context of public relations is the fact the paper used works produced in journalism and advertising and applied them in the context of public relations finding very similar results. This then opens a question of a wider issue of masculine culture and habitus in mass communications industries generally. In addition to that, the paper outlined differences in behaviour respective of women and how these played out in the organisational context, thus opening avenue for further research applicable to industries outside of mass communications, with the figure provided potentially serving as a conceptualising tool for further research. Future research should look into quantifying these results on a large-scale survey that could be generalised, as well as further explore the queen bee syndrome and to what extent senior women become not just bloke-ified but also fail to provide a helping hand to other women or even actively undermine other women. In addition to that, future research should look into the experiences of men to explore to what extent feminine men suffer from prejudice and lack of opportunities. Bourdieu indeed said that these behavioural expectations and habitus can have a negative impact on men because they also need to behave in a particular way in a front of their 'mates' so they do not 'loose the face' as they will, otherwise, be "relegated to the typically female category of 'wimps', 'girlies', 'fairies', etc. (…) Manliness, it can be seen, is an eminently *relational* notion, constructed in front of and for other men and against femininity, in a kind of fear of the female, firstly in oneself" (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 52-53, all emphases in the original).

Further to Bourdieu, many women seem to suffer from a lack of symbolic capital such as authority and assertiveness, but they have to demonstrate they have qualifications and characteristics that come naturally to men due to the socialisation process (Bourdieu, 2007; 1985), which only those women socialised with boys tend to show. These behavioural patterns embraced during the early socialisation process, such as assertiveness and competitiveness, lack of emotion in behaviour, then become objectified and carried on into adult organisational life, and over time form habitus (Skeggs, 2004) or in this case, enable these women to join

masculine habitus and progress in their careers. Therefore, through the early socialisation, habitus reproduces itself (Bourdieu, 1990) because individuals learn social practices such as behaviour in childhood and carry this on in their social interactions, which reproduces behavioural patterns through action throughout their adult lives. Therefore, habitus indeed acts as "a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 82-83). Habitus also becomes a structuring experience that "brings about a unique integration, dominated by the earliest experiences" (ibid, p. 86-87; Skeggs, 2004a). Since habitus is not static and people have agency in constructing the world (Crossley, 2001, Sweetman, 2003), this could change but more action is needed at the earliest stages in both families and the education system to tackle the social order produced, and then reproduced. However, this also opens a question of an emotional impact the change of behaviour in the organisation might have, by focusing for example, on women who have changed their behaviour to fit into organisational world, which some interviewee participants mentioned when referring to being taken seriously. This should be explored in further research, possibly by using Goffman's frontstage and backstage identities as a framework that can help explain how organisational behaviour works in the context of a masculine habitus.

The findings have also indicated issues with work-life balance particularly respective of networking and the impact this has on private time. Wellbeing and work-life balance have not been studied extensively in neither public relations or mass communications generally and these findings open the issue of work-life balance due to what is usually perceived as a masculine practice of out of office hours work such as networking. Aldoory, Toth and Sha (2008) as authors of one of the very few studies on work-life balance in public relations asked whether this is just a woman's issue since all practitioners report issues with heavy workloads, however, historically it was women that stayed at home and looked after families whilst men worked and set out organisational culture (Saval, 2015), thus the issue of work-life balance remains a gendered issue that requires further research in the context of mass communications industries.

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