

# »I wouldn't worry about it, you've still got a great pair of legs« – Masculine Habitus, Blokishness and the Office Culture in UK Newsrooms\*

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This paper explores the office culture in UK newsrooms by looking into intra-organisational informal practices such as social interactions, banter, and organisational culture. Cultural masculinities in media organisations were analysed using the blokishness approach and

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Bourdieu's theory of habitus, and the paper explored whether only women who demonstrate masculine behavioural and communication patterns succeed in fitting into organisational culture. Twenty qualitative interviews were conducted with women working in the media in the UK. Ten editors and ten journalists were interviewed. Triple coding (open, axial, selective) was used to code the data, and thematic analysis was used to analyse the results. The findings show that women perceive masculine habitus in newsrooms, which is perpetuated through gendered social interactions and banter, patriarchal office culture, glass ceiling, and blokishness as a recipe for success. The socialisation process is linked with behaviour, communication, and experiences in newsrooms. Women perceive media organisations as discriminatory, exclusive, and non-appreciative of their work; however, this perception is present among women who demonstrate what is commonly known as feminine characteristics and who were socialised with girls. Women who were socialised with boys and who demonstrate what is commonly considered a masculine trait in communication and behaviour report fitting in and being one of the boys, both groups of women signalling that the perception of acceptance and power in the organisation comes from the ability to fit into informal intra-organisational practices such as social interactions and banter.

*Keywords: office culture, women, journalism, blokishness, cultural masculinity, UK*

## INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2020), an inclusive world is supposed to be achieved by 2030, and managing diversity is seen as a key by many organisations as well as the general public with growing expectations on diversity and inclusion urging organisations to integrate diversity into organisational structures through the change in HR policies (Cole and Salimath, 2013; Mansoor, Tran and Ali, 2021). What is more, the agreement among scholars is that integrating diversity into organisational policies and procedures is not enough because employees need to feel valued and have an impression that organisational diversity is more than just a policy and that the organisation has a diversity climate (Mansoor, Tran and Ali, 2021; Ng and Sears, 2018; Herdman and McMillan-Capehart, 2010). In other words, it is known that employees perceive organisational commitment to diversity and valuing all staff, not just through policies and procedures, but also through signals and cues, or aspects of organisational practice noticed by employees (Spence, 1973; Avery, McKay, Wilson and Tonidandel, 2007; Turban and Greening, 1997; Mansoor, Tran and Ali, 2021). As argued by organisational scholars, »employees pay attention to what they encounter and the surroundings within their organization, and

consequently reach conclusions about the priorities and values upheld by their organization« (Mansoor, Tran and Ali, 2021, p. 22). These observations include reward management systems, recognition, pay and promotions, work-life supportiveness, such as work overload and work hours, job security, flexibility, work support, and consequently, these observations affect how employees perceive appreciation of their work (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002; Valcour et al, 2011; Mansoor, Tran and Ali, 2021). What is more, some studies have shown that organisational culture affects employee satisfaction (Čuček and Mlaker Kač, 2020), which can then be linked with staff retention and organisational achievements, where organisations perceived to be unfair or corrupt experience a decline in business, linked to lower ethics in the way they operate (Hermansdottir, Stangej and Kristinsson, 2018). However, whilst there are notable goals on equality and diversity in place, it is well known that women work in an environment in which men monopolise high positions whilst job roles are constructed as *masculine* and *feminine* (Alvesson, 1998; Lahtinen and Wilson, 1994, our emphasis). Alvesson (2013) argued that managerial jobs that require an aggressive approach, persistence, toughness, and determination are constructed as masculine because these characteristics are often ascribed to men, and it is men who determined that being a good manager means possessing these characteristics. However, what is less explored is how informal intra-organisational practices influence career prospects and equality of opportunities, and women's perception of these practices.

Organisational social networks affect employees. Some studies have shown that these networks and interactions increase perceptions of organisational support, create social attachment, and help with employee retention (Hayton, Carnabuci and Eisenberger, 2012; Murphy, Burton, Henagan and Briscoe, 2013; Siedlok, Hibbert and Whitehurst, 2020). Feeling supported in an organisation through intra-organisational networks creates camaraderie, trust, and helps career progress and meet organisational aims (Burby, 2003; Kilduff and Brass, 2010). What is more, social networks »make the social fabric of organizations more (or less) effective in creating and transferring knowledge« (Levin and Cross, 2004, p. 1487). Siedlok, Hibbert and Whitehursts (2020) thus argued that the embeddedness of individuals within intra-organisational networks is important because »this embeddedness facilitates individual progress within an organization (...), provides support for certain organizational capabilities, includ-

ing performance, collaboration, learning and innovation implementation (...), influences the organization's deliberate and emergent patterns of change over time« (p. 19-20). Siedlok, Hibbert, and Whitehurst (2020) looked at inter-organisational networks in the context of closure and organisational change; however, there is a case to look at how intra-organisational networks and informal interactions affect employees and their careers, as well as their perceptions of equality and appreciation of their work. This is particularly relevant for the position of women in the organisational world. In other words, whilst lots of progress has been made, women still report inequality and exclusions, and this is particularly the case in journalism.

Journalism scholars and practitioners argued that women have to become bloke-ified to succeed or embrace behavioural and work patterns commonly associated with men such as laddish behaviour (Mills, 2014; 2017; Galagher, 2002; North, 2016; 2016a). For example, Mills (2014) argued that women who obtain 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) and some studies have shown that many women report job requirements in masculine terms or that men and women who work in journalism do not show much difference in their view of the profession (Hanitzsch and Hanusch, 2012), thus signalling merging into the masculine organisational culture. Other authors argued that women »have to beat the boys at their own game, by becoming more assertive and more macho« (Ross, 2001, p. 535; see also Topić and Bruegmann, 2021), and thus men cannot be seen as joining the organisational culture but rather constituting it (North, 2009b). Scholars also argued that women have been confined to sections such as features, health, beauty, food, and lifestyle because of an expectation that women should only cover topics that were seen as suitable for them (Franks, 2013; Lonsdale, 2013; Christmas, 1997; Delano, 2003). Therefore, studies show that women rarely have the most prestigious beats and that the majority of important bylines are still signed by men (Greenslade, 2011; Mills, 2014; Jackson, 2015; Bawdon, 2016). What is more, whilst women have been historically confined to the so-called women's sections, such as lifestyle and health, some studies have shown that when these topics enter the news, not many media organisations move women from specialised pages to the news section, but these topics tend to be handed over to men (Topić, 2018).

As a result of this inequality regime (Acker, 1990), women are paid less, have less influence in newsrooms even when they are nominally in power and tend to leave the industry earlier than men (Ross, Boyle, Carter and Ging, 2018; North, 2009; 2016; 2016a; Robinson, 2005; Lobo, Silveirinha, da Silva and Subtil, 2017; Knowles, 2020; Topić and Bruegmann, 2021).

Whilst the position of women in journalism has been well-documented, there is a research gap in the office culture and organisational approach to studying newsrooms. This research agenda is relevant because it provides an insight into organisational practices that lead to inequality, or structural reasons for inequality, and the masculine culture of media organisations. Therefore, this paper explores the role of social interactions and banter and links them with opportunities for career progression by looking into office culture in UK newsrooms. By doing so, the paper looks at informal intra-organisational practices in media organisations, such as social interactions and banter, and perceptions of employees, both with and without managerial roles (journalists and editors), on their position in the organisation. We also draw from Bourdieu's (2007) theory of habitus, which argues that masculine domination is deeply embedded into society and the Difference Approach according to which women and men have different interests due to the socialisation process, which is also an argument Bourdieu (2007) supports, and thus women tend to be interested in different topics than men, as well as have different behavioural and communication skills. The latter then influences how each gender fares in the organisational world. In other words, organisational structures, including intra-organisational networks and the effect organisational interactions affect employees, need to be looked at from the point of diversity and also gendered organisations because whilst nominally many organisations have equality policies in place, in practice, employees are often not equal, and this paper looks at these intra-organisational practices and employee perceptions these practices (social interactions and banter) have on their perceptions of the organisation, equality of opportunities and career development. We do this through an analysis of interviews with 20 journalists and editors who have worked in journalism since the 1970s, to explore whether the organisational practice in the UK newsrooms is changing, or is journalism still a boys' club where informal practice affects career progressions and the perception of appreciation and equality.

## HABITUS AND THE DIFFERENCE APPROACH

The Difference Approach scholars argue that women and men have different interests and do things differently because of the (gendered) socialisation process (Rakow and Nastasia, 2009; Maltz and Borker, 1982; Yule, 2006). These differences result in different work styles and different leadership skills, and often with women facing obstacles in their careers (Merchant, 2012; Vukoičić, 2013; Christopher, 2008; de la Rey, 2005; van der Boon, 2003; West and Zimmerman, 1983; Tannen, 1990). For example, in communication, Tannen (1995; 1990; 1986) argued that men and women communicate differently because, through the socialisation process, women develop a supportive communication style and relationship-building attitude, whilst men develop a dominant style of communication often marked with interruptions and domination in conversation. In other words, women develop the 'rapport talk' whilst men develop 'report talk', which means that women are often engaged with interaction, whereas men are engaged with sharing information (Tannen, 1986; 1990; Maltz and Borker, 1982). This is furthermore linked to women being inclined to develop connections, whilst men are promoting their skills and experience. Yule (2006) argued that communication is a learnt skill and men and women learn these skills differently. This means that when we are growing up, we do not just learn to speak, but we also learn how to speak, and this is often conditioned by our upbringing and social expectations. Tannen (1995) argued that »girls tend to learn conversational rituals that focus on the rapport dimension of relationships, whereas boys tend to learn rituals that focus on the status dimension« (p. 140). Tannen (1995) thus argues that girls learn to downplay differences and do not compete with each other as much, whereas boys play in larger groups and compete with each other to be the leader of the group. Bourdieu (2007) also argued that women are disadvantaged because of the socialisation process since women are expected to be like men and thus embrace »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).

Bourdieu (2007) also argued that cultural masculinities are deeply embedded in social practice, which many women fail to recognise as unequal or discriminatory due to the socialisation process that is largely gendered and embedded into patriarchal social norms

(Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 2007; Chambers, 2005). Steiner (2012) argued that women do not always develop consciousness to recognise oppression because of which cultural masculinity and oppression perpetuates itself and this practice constitutes »symbolic violence, a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims« (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 1) because it is embedded into social practice to the point it became »acceptable and even natural« (ibid.). Bourdieu (2007) also argues that this practice constitutes masculine domination, and this practice is grounded in »arbitrary division which underlines both reality and the representation of reality« (ibid., p. 3). Therefore, Bourdieu (2007) says that »we have embodied the historical structures of the masculine order in the form of unconscious schemes of perception and appreciation« (p. 5), and this means that the division between sexes is socially constructed rather than natural. This view is linked with the concept of blokishness because it enables understanding whether newsrooms are gendered and whether this affects women in a way that could be seen as impeding their progress, and importantly, whether women recognise everyday practices as oppressive. Blokishness is understood as behaviour and communication that most commonly comes naturally to men rather than women due to the socialisation process, and this behaviour would include directness in communication, aggressive behaviour, work-first attitude, an ability to fit into masculine social context by, for example, accepting masculine banter, and generally being one of the boys (Bourdieu, 2007; Mills, 2014; North, 2009; 2016; 2016a; Topić and Bruegmann, 2021; Topić, 2018).

According to Bourdieu (2007), masculine domination is a social construct embedded in society, and women unconsciously obey these rules without challenging them; thus, becoming one of the boys to succeed can be seen as an unconscious acceptance of masculine domination. This means that 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).

Appropriate work behaviour and an appropriate work environment are rightfully seen as key to the success of any organisation (Adisa, Cooke, Iwowo, 2019), and in this paper, the office culture is

explored using the data from interviews with women journalists and editors and their experiences and perceptions of the newsroom culture.

## METHOD

This paper explores organisational informal structure in newsrooms in the UK, such as informal practices (social interactions and banter), as well as office culture. In doing so, authors are drawing from the Difference Approach to explore whether newsrooms and their office culture are gendered by looking into views of women about social interactions and banter, and women's feelings about the organisational treatment of women, such as exclusion from business decisions, working harder to succeed, and disapproval from the office colleagues. With this, we contribute towards organisational studies that look at how employees perceive organisational support (Mansoor, Tran and Ali, 2021) and the role of intra-organisational informal practices (Siedlok, Hibbert and Whitehurst, 2020), such as social interactions and banter, as well as office culture, have on the perception of women of their appreciation in the organisation.

Bourdieu's theory of habitus was deemed useful for this study because this concept explores unconscious beliefs and internalisation of habitus by women who should be challenging these practices but often fail to do so, and take, for example, becoming one of the boys as recognition and acceptance due to a culturally masculine context in which they operate. Cultural masculinity is, in this paper, understood as Alvesson's (1998) definition of practices that may come more naturally to men rather than women due to the socialisation process, and these practices would include behaviour and communication. Therefore, we are exploring the office culture and daily practices such as banter and social interactions, as well as the culture in offices. In doing so, we also use arguments from the Difference Approach, according to which the majority of men and women communicate and behave differently, which then affects opportunities in their careers, and this is linked to the socialisation process. This is then linked with the blokishness concept and thus explores whether only women who embrace culturally masculine characteristics succeed, with which it can be argued that one's biological sex is not necessarily an obstacle towards succeeding in an organisational world, but one's socially constructed gender, which permeates organisational practices both formal and informal.

Women were asked questions on the office culture, most importantly, social interactions and banter, as well as questions on wider office culture such as exclusion from important decisions, disapproving behaviour from colleagues and senior managers, whether they felt they had to work harder to succeed, and whether they had to move jobs to progress in their careers. The latter two questions were asked of editors. These questions enabled an exploration of habitus by looking at a largely unexplored field of office culture, which stems from organisational and sociological studies. Since the focus of the Difference Approach and Bourdieu's habitus theory is on socialisation, we also asked questions on early socialisation, such as parenting, peer groups, and activities during childhood, and we asked interviewees to self-assess and reflect on their communication style.

Interviewees were recruited using personal contacts (19), and one interviewee was contacted directly via email due to her public work in supporting women journalists. A total of 20 interviews were conducted, 10 with editors and 10 with journalists, between August 2019 and February 2020. Interviewees work in all major national newspapers such as *The Telegraph*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Mirror*, *The Sun*, *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Guardian*, and a range of local newspapers. Interviewees have worked in a range of sections such as news, women's interests, features, and lifestyle, and there is a range of experiences amongst interviewees. In other words, both junior and senior women were interviewed, experience thus ranging from the 1970s until the present day, which gives a good overview of the situation in the industry and its developments (table 1).

All interviews were transcribed for the analysis, and the data were analysed using the triple coding process as proposed by Morsing and Richards (2002). First, open coding was done, and this process included identifying critical themes emerging from the data, which enabled comparison, contextualising, and categorising the data. Second, axial coding was done to explore answers from interviewees against their experience and length of service. Finally, selective coding helped in identifying the most important themes and exploring them across different answers in the data.

Thematic analysis has been used to analyse data further, and in the presentation of findings, we use the usual method of summarising research into dominant themes, and then we present findings using illustrative quotes from interviewees, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The thematic analysis can be defined as »a systematic

Interviewee no.	Type of work	Years of experience	Journalist or editor	Type of interview	Area of work
1	Newspapers and magazines	20	Editor	Face-to-face	News, then women's interest features
2	Magazines (previously newspapers)	3	Journalist	Phone	Features, now arts
3	Newspapers	13	Journalist	Phone	News
4	Newspapers	14	Editor	Phone	News
5	Magazines and newspapers	26	Editor	Face-to-face	News, then women's interest features
6	Newspapers	5	Journalist	Email	News
7	Newspapers	7	Journalist	Email	News
8	Newspapers and magazines	28	Journalist	Phone	News and features
9	Newspapers and magazines	28	Editor	Face-to-face	Features (women's interest)
10	Newspapers	6	Journalist	Phone	News
11	Newspapers and magazines	21	Journalist	Face-to-face	News and features
12	Newspapers	31	Editor	Phone	Lifestyle
13	Newspapers	30	Editor	Phone	News and features
14	Newspapers	1.5	Journalist	Face-to-face	News
15	Newspapers and magazines	26	Editor	Face-to-face	News and features
16	Weekly newspapers	14	Editor	Face-to-face	News
17	Daily newspapers, BBC	13 in newspapers and a total of 30 in the media industry	Journalist	Face-to-face	News
18	newspapers	26	Editor	Phone	News
19	newspapers	26	Editor	Phone	Features and lifestyle
20	Local newspapers	1	Journalist	Face-to-face	News

Table 1 — Interviewee data

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). This method is not linked to any theory but serves as a sense-making approach, and due to the scarcity of works on journalism and the office culture, it was deemed particularly useful because it identified recurrent themes. The thematic analysis is not a quantitative method meant to generalise findings, but an approach that helps in more systematically analysing large amounts of data, such as interview transcripts, and is less prone to bias and personal interpretation because answers are coded and codes are then analysed against each other, whereas themes emerge from codes.

The research has obtained ethics approval from the Local Research Ethics Coordinator, and all interviewees obtained an information pack and have consented to participation in the research and the publication of results. As many interviewees agreed to be interviewed under the strict condition of anonymity and confidentiality (and this is also the policy of the University to ensure confidentiality and anonymity even when interviewees are willing to speak in their name), the data was edited in a way that enabled full anonymity. For example, interviewees often mentioned specific examples of practices they find discriminatory, and, in that, they sometimes mentioned the name of the newspaper or their names. These references to newspapers were removed from direct quotes to protect the anonymity of interviewees.

The research questions for the study were: Do women report that they engage in social interactions differently than men? If so, do women report differences among women that could be explained using cultural masculinities and blokishness? Are social interactions during early socialisation linked to social interactions later in life? Are women observing intra-organisational informal practices as an obstacle to their careers?

## FINDINGS

Findings from the data reveal that newsrooms function as a masculine habitus, which is perpetuated through gendered social interactions and banter, and patriarchal office culture that leads towards a glass ceiling and exclusion of women, and a situation in which blokishness seems to be a way forward for some women (figure 1).

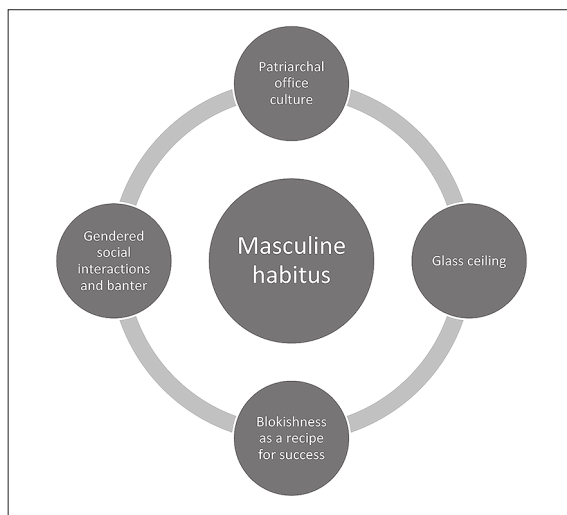


Figure 1 — Thematic Analysis

Interviewees reported that their social interactions are gendered. In that, interviewees outline that social interactions with other women are related to personal issues such as partners, children, families, and popular culture, whereas social interactions with men tend to be very ‘bantery’. Interviewees also emphasise that men tend to engage with banter more and refrain from discussing their private lives, so banter becomes mainly work-related. Some interviewees said that banter happens »mainly when men are around. Women not so much« (interviewee 15), signalling that banter might be a masculine practice. Interviewees who worked in predominantly masculine newsrooms expressed concerns about banter and said there is »some quite kind of fruity situations or things implied or sexual innuendo and banter is quite common. People may be a bit drunk. Quite a laddie culture« (interviewee 18). According to Bourdieu (2007), 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« (p. 62). Bourdieu (2007) also 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, emphasis in the original). Thus, many women are unable to meet this requirement and embrace masculine or blok-

ish behaviour. In this case, banter is seen as a male practice, signalling potential exclusion. However, concerns about masculine culture were expressed by women who would fit into stereotypically feminine behaviour and communication, whereas women who showed more masculine personal characteristics reported fitting into this culture and becoming one of the boys. For example, interviewee 2 stated she was uncomfortable with masculinity, and interviewee 9 was uncomfortable with the intimate behaviour of a male colleague,

»I felt uncomfortable with the atmosphere as well. When speaking to the editors, they had the offices upstairs so you had the newsroom on the ground floor, upstairs were the offices where the senior people of the agency were. I remember going up on my first day to speak to them to see how my first day went and there were pictures of topless women all over the walls. Really uncomfortable« (Interviewee 2)

»We were going somewhere and when we were getting back in the taxi he said something to do with my weight, he said 'I think you've put on a lot of weight recently, you look much better without it', 'when you were slimmer' or something like that. And when it folded and on the day it folded I went to see the guy that ran the company, and he said 'Don't worry about it', as I walked away he said 'I wouldn't worry about it, you've still got a great pair of legs' (...) That's what he said to me (...) and when I went for the job he took me for lunch and he insisted that we share a pudding and I was like oh my god, this is ridiculous. And I did. But the editors of the other magazines said 'Watch out for it: he always wants to share a pudding.' It wasn't Harvey Weinstein territory but it was a really odd thing that you had to... Well because I'm quite self-conscious it feeds into that. If you are self-conscious it just makes you feel like oh my god, this is the kind of organisation where not only do you have to be good at what you do but you have to look... And be pretty and feminine and tick all those feminine boxes that men like« (Interviewee 9).

As Bourdieu (2007, p. 21) argued, sexual harassment is not always centred on sexual possession because, in some cases, it can also be centred on »sheer possession, the pure affirmation of domination in its pure state«, which the example above demonstrates with a woman being forced to listen to comments about her appearance and participate in an intimate ritual of sharing food. However, some women said they joined the masculine culture and found their place by joining the banter or hanging out with guys, thus demonstrating

embracing cultural masculinities in the organisation and becoming blokish to fit in (Mills, 2014; 2017; Ross, 2001). For example,

»I gave as good as I got. I've always given as good as I got. I quite enjoyed it. I understand that's how men relate to each other and to women that they work with. I thought it's a sign of kind of affection and friendship rather than anything. It certainly wasn't bullying« (Interviewee 5)

»They don't really understand the background sexism (...) And I definitely was guilty of that. I drank with all of them (...) In some ways, it was hilarious, but in other ways, I definitely had to be one of the boys. I would go out drinking with them. I had a young baby at the time on one of those jobs, and that was very difficult« (Interviewee 12).

Nevertheless, interviewee 12 also said she has advanced her prospects by embracing masculine work patterns and not engaging with female colleagues in an interactive way, which is common for many women due to the socialisation process (Tannen, 1995; 1990; 1986; Rakow and Nastasia, 2009; Maltz and Borker, 1982; Yule, 2006; Bourdieu, 2007; Merchant, 2012),

»And the editor loved me. We'd get people like the managing director would come, the chairman of the company would come, that kind of thing, and they'd all say, 'you've got to meet (name removed). She's brilliant. She's really ballsy. She tells it like it is.' And I played up to it a bit. But to be fair, I was quite a direct and ballsy sort of person. I wasn't one to fanny about. I just wanted to get stuff done. I was full of ideas, and I loved features, and I loved writing. I just wanted to get stuff done properly on paper, how I thought it should be done. I did try to indicate to the staff that that was exactly what I wanted, and I use to rewrite their copy if it wasn't good enough. All these 50-year-old women who were clearly go through the menopause [laughter] using new technology, which was a very difficult thing back then. When people first came into working on computers and stuff like that, we would have middle-aged women dashing out of the room in tears. I wasn't unsympathetic, but I would sigh, grab their copy, rewrite it and send it through, which would upset them again of course, because it was (...) It makes you realise... It's always the case that you have to get it done, of course, with a daily newspaper. What can you do?« (interviewee 12).

Therefore, Bourdieu's (2007) 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) applies here because women have to give up femininity to succeed in man's world and while for some it means risking their obligatory femininity as Bourdieu (2007) argued, it seems as if this is working well in newsrooms which are entrenched into blokish culture and women who can accept that behaviour tend to succeed and go further than women who feel uncomfortable with that culture.

The findings indicate that the office culture with masculine domination can be linked to the larger organisational culture, which, according to interviewee responses, seems to be embedded in a patriarchy where women face disapproval predominantly from senior men but also women who they described using what is commonly seen as blokish or culturally masculine. Therefore, the majority of interviewed women reported exclusion from business decisions, having to work harder to succeed, and moving jobs to get promoted, which constitutes a glass ceiling in organisations. For example, newsroom office culture seems to be deeply entrenched in patriarchal structures that have historically been reported in research where women were in assisting roles, whereas men were decision-makers (Saval, 2015). Thus, the majority of interviewees experienced exclusion from important decisions, both as those who were supposed to be in power (which signals tokenism) and also when their careers were in question. For example, interviewee 12 said the organisation was, at the time of the interview, trying to reduce her contract to two days due to redundancies, and whilst discussing how this would be done, nobody was considering her view on how she could manage her workload. Other interviewees said that women are asked to leave the news conference, and stories are being hidden from them, or they report being forced into women's pages against their will

»You would go into a news conference and you would be asked (...) some of us were asked to leave because they were talking about a particular aspect of a particular story. Yes. And I feel as well that there were specialist reporters and sometimes you would be working on a particular story and a couple of the male reporters would withhold information that they had because they didn't want you to know it. I think they would write it up and it would go in the paper, but I'd sometimes be left floundering as news editor because I hadn't realised that angle was coming up. They deliberately withheld it« (Interviewee 13).

»For example, I think if I can go back to when it was decided that I would be moving to the women's desk, and that was a business

decision in the sense that the journal where I was working at the time had quite a big female readership, they needed somebody in that position who was very committed to the role. It wasn't what I wanted to do. I wasn't asked about it. When I was consulted and said no, I was made to do it (...) Yes, they absolutely made me do it. And I think that was poor business management as well as people management« (Interviewee 17).

Bourdieu (2007, p. 9-11) argued that organisation »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«. Thus, some interviewees referred to newsroom culture as 'laddy' and also expressed frustration with their treatment and the fact that men bond and make all decisions. For example,

»Yes, something once happened recently and I actually complained to my editor about it because I was furious. I thought I had been excluded on the basis that I was a woman (...) a big story was breaking (...) as the only female manager within news who was there, and some of the more senior male managers, I think three or four of them, went into a room and everyone could see them talking and we were like what the hell is going on and then they came out and one of the managers took another member of the news desk staff who was male into a room and talked to them and came back out and then there was me and one other male colleague left and we were like what is going on? But no one was saying anything and they were all being really weird about it (...) So then I ended asking the manager who had started briefing other people and he was incredibly patronising, implied because I was going off to work drinks I would tell everyone about this story (...) And I was really offended by it. The implication being that I'm unprofessional and I can't keep a secret (Interviewee 3).

The example above signals tokenism and masculine domination because a female editor was ignored in matters directly concerning her senior role, which signals a patriarchal culture in the office culture in UK newsrooms. Bourdieu (2007, p. 8) recognised this issue as »the order of things«, but the office culture in which men can ignore women and treat them as tokens also leads to blokish women. This is particularly visible in the treatment of working mothers, where

many women reported facing disapproval from women who did not support them. For example,

»I've had all sorts of comments (...) »Why do you think it's acceptable to have children and then expect work to be flexible for you?« I've had that. So, for example, I had a female colleague who said to me, »I don't expect time off to look after my dog, why should you have time off for your children?« (...) I had somebody describe me as permanently pregnant and can I just say that was two children which I don't really think constitutes being permanently pregnant. You would never say that about somebody who was fathering a number of children in reasonably quick succession. So yes, I've had a lot of quite disparaging comments« (Interviewee 17).

Some interviewees also mentioned that women who succeeded in a man's world were trying to put other women down, which echoes observations from the research on Queen Bee syndrome. The Queen Bee is a situation where senior women pull the ladder up and fail to support other women by refusing »to help other women achieve the same success they worked so hard to achieve« (Cline, Toth, Turk, Walters, Johnson and Smith, 1986, p. III-13). In this study, many interviewees also mentioned this problem. For example,

»I had one problem, it was a female boss and she was probably one of the most tricky ones to deal with, there was an ongoing battle with her because she was always trying to put me down and stop me from progressing (...) Very much tried to be in a man's world and very much almost resentful to other women who weren't doing the same thing (...) was actually probably worse than the men in some ways« (Interviewee 1).

Finally, what also emerges from the data is that women identified as *blokish* in this study experienced a non-traditional socialisation process where they spent more time with their fathers and played with boys. These women tend to show masculine characteristics. 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 showing acceptance in the office culture regardless of her being a woman and many women feeling excluded and marginalised. On the other hand, interviewee 5 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

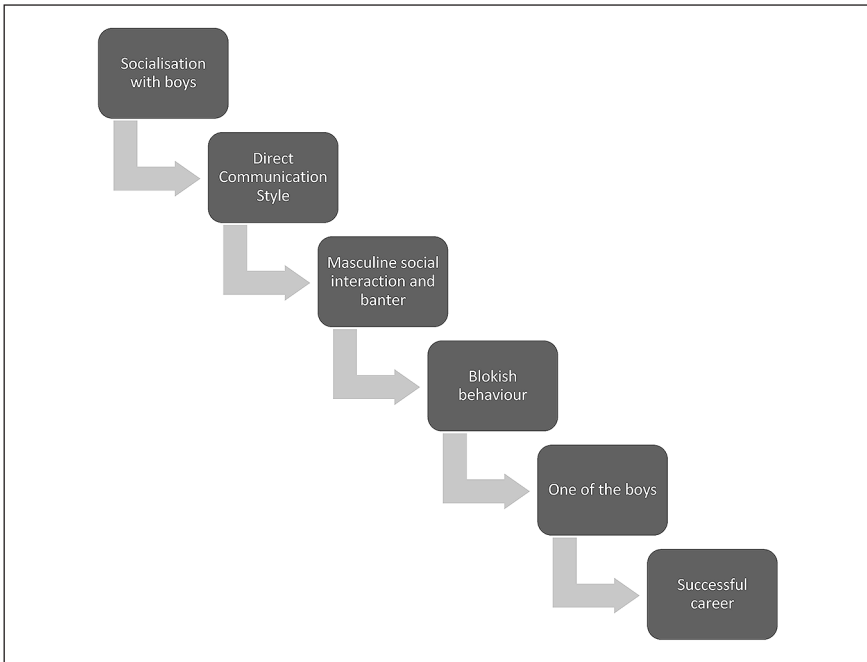


Figure 2 — Blokish women

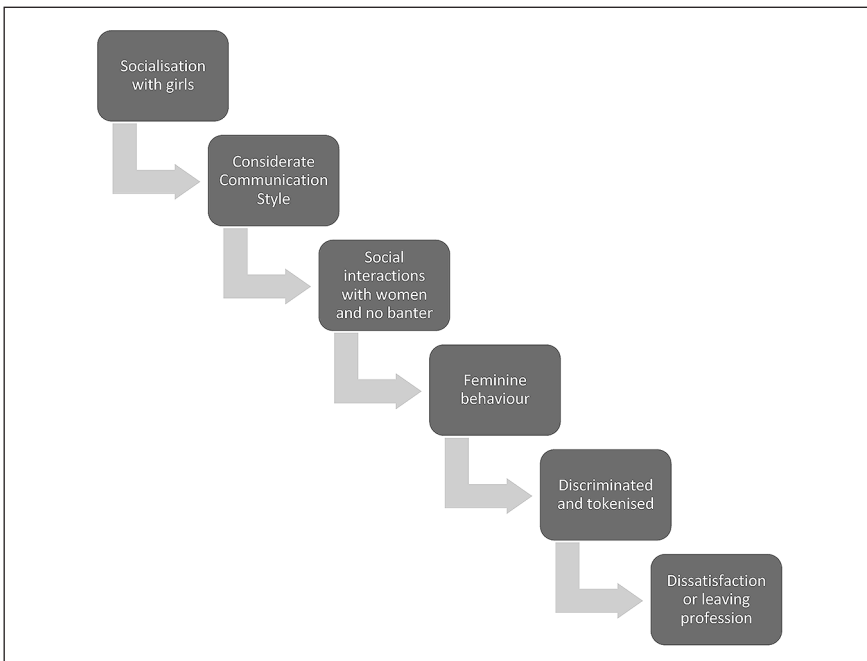


Figure 3 — Feminine women

»a bit of a tomboy, so I played cricket and rounders with the boys and football«. In this study, this interviewee said, »I gave as good as I got. I've always given as good as I got. I quite enjoyed it«, thus demonstrating inclusion in masculine office culture. However, interviewee 15, for example, said she grew up spending time with her mother and sister, and she »didn't have that much exposure to boys as such«, and in this study, this interviewee reported being bullied out of work by a woman she described in blokish terms. In the same way, women who were socialised with boys tend to describe their communication style as direct, or a mixture whereas women who were socialised with girls tend to say they are considerate communicators, thus signalling what the Difference Approach scholars (Merchant, 2012; Vukoičić, 2013; West and Zimmerman, 1983; Tannen, 1995; 1990; 1986) have been arguing for decades, that socialisation influences communication skills and behaviour later in life and this can be extended to understanding the office culture in UK newsrooms as well. The findings, therefore, indicate that early socialisation and who one spent time with when growing up have an impact on newsroom culture. Nevertheless, there seems to be a pattern emerging where women who were socialised with boys show masculine communication and behavioural styles (figure 2), whereas women who were socialised with girls show a feminine behavioural and communication style (figure 3).

## CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, and based on findings from this small qualitative study, women tend to report that they engage in social interactions differently than men, and there is a link with the socialisation process. In other words, women who spent time with boys when they were growing up tend to embrace a direct communication style, which has historically been associated with men, and they tend to merge into the blokish culture of newsrooms and achieve recognition from men. This is often done through engaging in social activities after work and in the office banter, which interviewees recognise as a masculine practice. It is women who were socialised with girls and who thus embraced more feminine behavioural and communication characteristics, who express concerns about the masculine culture of newsrooms, and who report being uncomfortable. This then leads to these women reporting exclusion from business decisions and tokenism, and some also reported harassment, thus signaling that the lack of ability to engage in informal practices such as social interactions and banter af-

fects one's standing in newsrooms, and consequently, an office culture can be seen as impactful on the opportunities for women.

However, another problem identified by interviewees is the lack of support from blokish women who succeeded in careers and who often undermined their confidence; in some cases, this led to losing jobs. This echoes observations from the literature on the Queen Bee syndrome (Cline, Toth, Turk, Walters, Johnson and Smith, 1986) and also on the fact that some women become so bloke-ified that other women cannot see them as role models (Mills, 2014) and engage with them. Therefore, it can be argued that some women have internalised masculine habitus by embracing »a physical stature, a voice, or dispositions such as aggressiveness, self-assurance, 'role distance', what is called natural authority etc., for which men have been tacitly prepared and trained as men« (p. 62, emphasis in the original). Nevertheless, these women seem to accept masculinity in newsrooms as an »order of things« (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 8) and tend to see recognition from men as a sign of success. Therefore, it seems that informal organisational practices such as communication and banter affect women who perceive these practices as disadvantageous. What was striking in the data is that there is not much difference in views and perceptions of senior and junior women, and they all report similar issues with newsrooms, thus signaling that whilst the movement for women's equality has made gains, newsroom culture seems intact and entrenched into blokishness and boys clubs, at least according to our study.

Future research should look at organisational practices such as networking to explore whether women network with other women and to what extent women's networking could help in eradicating inequality and making newsrooms more inclusive for women of all characters and backgrounds.

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