

Abstract

This paper is concerned with the relationship between gender performativity and organizational place, taking the City of London as the focus for the empirical research, and extending a Lefebvrian understanding of space through the practice of flânerie. The paper explores how the City is imagined, constructed and experienced in and through gender performativity. This is explored with reference to fieldwork including photographic and interview data, as well as through an embodied, immersive methodology based on the observational tradition of flânerie, showing how this can help to both sense and make sense of organizational place, particularly in terms of how such places can compel feelings of belonging or non-belonging. The research looks beyond the spatial configuration of a single organization to encompass the wider geographical location of multiple organizations, in this case the City. The analysis highlights the interplay between two dominant forms of masculinity, emphasizing how the setting both reflects and affects this interplay. In this way the paper contributes to scholarship on organizational place and the placing of gender performativity, and extends Lefebvre's theories of space as socially produced by (re)producing the City through peripatetic practice based on the tradition of the flâneur.

Keywords: The City, organizational place, gender performativity, Lefebvre, flânerie

Introduction

There is a club of City men that women are not part of. (Sasha, Business Development Manager for a City technology company, London 2015)

Membership is determined by male notions of what constitutes *the club*, by what determines the pecking order, and by who is able to exercise power. (Höpfl, 2010, original emphasis)

This paper is concerned with gendered performativity within organizational settings, specifically the relationship of gendered performances to both the culture and the materiality of place and to feelings of inclusion and belonging. Both of the quotations above, one drawn from the empirical data from this study, and the other from research literature, point to the existence of gender based membership in organizational life. Exploring how this is manifest in the City of London, and the relationship between membership, gendered performances and places of work (in the sense of the wider geographical location of multiple organizations), is the basis of this paper.

It is almost twenty years since Gregson and Rose (2000: 433) claimed that spaces need to be thought of as performative, and that more needs to be made of the complexity and instability of performances and performed spaces. The analysis presented here draws upon and extends writing on performative spaces, gendered performative places, and research concerned with the financial services sector, specifically the City, in order to explore the ways in which place, sector and gendered performance are mutually constitutive. Drawing upon Lefebvre's (1991) writing on space as socially produced as a theoretical lens for the empirical research, I argue that an immersive method, developed from the urban tradition of the flâneur, can be an insightful spatial practice which allows for a rich understanding of how performative

organizational place is re-produced, lived and experienced, extending Lefebvre's insights to encompass gendered spatial practices.

The overall aim of the paper is to better understand the performances of gender in a particular setting, namely the City of London, the financial heart of the wider city of London which surrounds this district¹. That the City is associated with all that is culturally valued as masculine (McDowell, 1997: 34) leads us to consider how this masculinity is performed, which other gender performances may be perceived and experienced here, and what this means for those working in this place. As McDowell (ibid: 59) explains in relation to the City, 'for the majority of its temporal existence it has been the ebb and flow of men who have given meaning (to these spaces).' How this ebb and flow is experienced in a spatial sense is the focus of the fieldwork, part of which takes place directly on the City streets.

As the financial and business hub of one of the leading global cities, the City of London has an almost 50:50 gender balance in overall staff numbers, but only 19.5 percent of senior roles across top City employers are held by women (Financial Times, 2015); it can therefore be described as 'top heavy' in terms of its masculine orientation. The research explores the impact of gendered subjectivity in this setting; how it is imagined, constructed, perceived and, importantly, experienced in relation to a dominant masculinity, or, more precisely, to the performances of different types of masculinity. Examining what this might mean for organizational life on a wider scale than that of individual organizations, extended therefore to the scale of geographical setting, allows an exploration of what it means for those who work in this place, and how the place itself might compel particular gendered performances.

¹ The City of London, or the Square Mile, to use its metonym, is the heart of the UK's financial services sector and is the financial and business hub of one of the world's largest cities. It employs approximately four hundred thousand people, mainly in the financial services industry, with an approximate 50/50 balance of men and women employees (CityofLondon.gov.uk, 2017).

The basis of the paper is, therefore, an empirically immersive understanding of this particular place as the lens through which gender performativity is analysed.

Building upon Gregson and Rose (2000) that more work needs to be done to tease out the performative qualities of space and the gendered practices that bring these spaces into being, the underlying questions that the paper seeks to answer are, firstly, what role do places of organization play in compelling or constraining gender performances and related feelings of inclusion and/or exclusion? And, secondly, how can these places be researched in order to develop a rich understanding of how they are experienced?

In order to answer this, the paper is structured as follows. It begins by considering the nature of the City as a workplace, focusing particularly on its long association with financial services and the gendered cultural traditions which have been established, and drawing upon literature discussing performative places. I then explain the methodological approach, drawing particularly from the tradition of the flâneur, before discussing the various ways in which gender performativity is materialised, highlighting the presence of two competing types of masculinity, here termed the 'hypo' and the 'hyper' masculine.

The discussion of the theoretical insights gained from Lefebvre extends his theories of the social production of space to what is often experienced as a highly performative work setting which compels and constrains particular ways of enacting and embodying gender, and which in turn leads to feelings of inclusion and exclusion. In other words, the City is analysed as a performative place which compels particular gendered performances.

In sum, then, the paper seeks to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between gender performativity and organizational place in three broad ways. First, it aims to develop an empirical understanding of the ways in which gender is performed in a particular place, by extending the concept of 'organization' to include the geographic location of multiple

organizations. Second, I aim to make a theoretical contribution to our understanding of place and setting within organization studies by applying insights from Lefebvre to the gendering of a particular place. Third, the paper aims to make a methodological contribution to research on organizational place, through a focus on the embodied observational tradition of the flâneur, which enables a sensory and immersive view of the way in which the social and the material interact and interconnect in this setting. Below, I will review studies on the City and on financial services, particularly those focusing upon performative elements which produce, reproduce and sustain masculinity in financial sector organizations,

The City of London: where place and sector collide

The 'Square Mile' remains the visible heart of London's financial landscape.

Figure 1

Notwithstanding recent expansion into Canary Wharf and elsewhere, (for example the establishment of hedge fund headquarters in Mayfair), the City of London is still equated with finance (Allen and Pryke, 1994). Thrift (1996) discusses how the City was historically reproduced by its traditions and materiality, combining to form what he calls 'a coherent City space.' (ibid: 241). The network of contacts, always so vital to professional life in the City, has been focused by the City's small spatial extent, so ensuring that the City, was, in effect, kept within the City. He also refers to the historic social and spatial segregation of women, when large numbers of women took up office positions, mainly in clerical roles, following the Second World War, but who were excluded from the homogeneity of the City by the prevailing codes of sexuality, by the gendered nature of the work, and by class distinctions.

More recently, women have been entering management posts in the UK in growing numbers, yet the most lucrative positions in banks' boardrooms and stock market trading departments

are still widely seen as male preserves (McDowell, 2007). Organizational restructuring within this sector often involves gendered practices through which men's careers and employment conditions are promoted and prioritized over women's (Ozbilgin & Woodward, 2004). The majority of junior staff working in financial services are women, but only 16.2 percent of City banks' managing director level posts are held by women, as are only 16 percent of partner positions at the 'Big Four' accountancy firms (Financial Times, 2015). Women account for 23% of board members and just 14% of executive committee members across UK-regulated financial services companies, according to a report putting the UK's HM Treasury Women in Finance Charter² into context (30percentclub.org, 2016).

Figure 2

Simpson and Lewis (2007), in their study of the (in)visibility of women in the workplace, discuss how women are often largely excluded from the dominant group culture in the workplace, which tends towards the masculine, and how discourses of masculinity often silence competing meanings. Knights and Kerfoot (2004) also discuss the dominance of masculinity in organizational life and its association with hierarchy, whilst others emphasise the non-binary nature of gender identity and focus on the fluidity as well as the multiplicity of gender identities (Pullen and Knights, 2007, Linstead and Brewis, 2004 inter alia). Pullen and Thanem (2010) explore the intersection of research interests in sexuality with spatiality, and the way in which the sexuality of space affects organizations. Reading the City as a historically and a contemporary masculine professional space means paying attention to the performances of masculinity within it and how these are sensed and experienced by both

² The Women in Finance Charter commits financial services firms to link the remuneration packages of their executive teams to gender diversity targets. It also commits firms to set targets for gender diversity within their senior management structure, publish progress reports against these targets, and appoint a senior executive responsible for gender diversity and inclusion (www.gov.uk, 2016)

genders. With regard to the financial services sector, Knights and Tullberg (2012) problematize concepts of organizational masculinity with regard to the most recent global financial crisis. They argue that in contemporary working life, remuneration and hierarchy are important visible yet also symbolic elements of the social construction of masculinity (ibid: 386). They identify a number of performative elements which produce, reproduce and sustain masculinity in organizations and which include:

Acquiring a managerial status; complying with deeply felt heterosexual norms that sustain male bonding; displaying authoritative expertise; thinking smart; taking risks and not least, securing ever increasingly high levels of remuneration (ibid: 388).

These performative elements have a high impact, they argue, on values, attitudes and behaviour in the context of managerial life in financial institutions. Paying particular attention to the normative aspects of masculinity, they highlight an interest in its repeated confirmation, in other words, proof that you are a man of material and symbolic substance. Certainly the criteria associated with being a successful senior manager in the City include conquest, competition and control; all performative elements of masculinity (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993), although, as Knights and Tullberg point out, ‘the spoils of conquest can readily be lost in a highly competitive environment’ (2012: 390), meaning that masculine and managerial identities are extremely fragile.

McDowell (1997) explores the multiple ways in which masculinities and femininities are constructed in the City, leading to a tradition of inclusion and exclusion based primarily on gender. She discusses several types of male workers in the City, for example the ‘old school’ patriarchs in the boardrooms of investment banks, and the younger, macho traders on the dealing room floors. They are clearly different in their ‘uniforms’, their behaviours and their embodied actions. The former, for example, maintain discreet and immaculate traditional

business attire; the latter are more likely to discard suit jackets and roll their sleeves up. The everyday language and social practices of the dealing room, its 'bodily imagery' (McDowell, 1997: 178) represent an exaggerated version of masculinity, for example the naming (not shaming!) of successful traders as 'big swinging dicks'. She found during her empirical research that not only were military and sporting metaphors and analogies common when men were talking in the workplace, but that ways of referring to the actual work carried out in the City were sexualised, specific examples being the way that a rising market is described as a hard-on, a successful trade is greeted by cries of 'bollocks out', and deals are consummated and compared to orgasms (ibid: 148). They do, however, share similar performative attributes which constitute their masculine identities, and which include control and high levels of competitive behaviour.

It can be argued that in the City there are two dominant but competing masculinities in play; McDowell identifies both the patriarchal, cerebral, almost disembodied masculinity of the 'old' City and the noisy, sweaty, 'carnavalesque' masculinity of the trading floors. In this paper I will term these two versions of dominant masculinity the 'hypo' and the 'hyper' respectively; these terms will be referred to and discussed in more detail below.

It is twenty years since McDowell studied the City, and a re-exploration of it as a research setting is overdue. With this in mind, the research is concerned with the ways in which gender is currently situated in the City, with particular relevance to what is experienced as in place and out of place. In order to explore this, I turn to the theories of Henri Lefebvre as a conceptual lens through which to view the social and organizational production of urban space. In order to examine space/place as a social product, it cannot be understood or imagined as an independent material reality. Lefebvre, using the concept of space as socially produced (1991), posits a theory that understands space as fundamentally bound up with

social reality and with our lived experience of the world. Space cannot therefore exist in itself but is produced by human actors.

The urban is accorded a central place in Lefebvre's philosophy and politics, since he argues that processes of capitalist enclosure lead to the intensification and extension of urban agglomeration, and that since everyday life is socially produced and colonised by capitalism, so is its location (Lefebvre, 2003). From his trialectic of the various forms of space – conceived, perceived and lived, which combine in the social production of space, not always coherently, but rather as the outcome of a dynamic process – it is his writing on conceived space which is most relevant to studying the City as gendered place and which is pivotal in understanding how the place is perceived and experienced. His (1991) concept of conceived space is space, usually urban, that has been designed by architects and planners, space where an attempt to define its meaning and purpose has been made. The dominant form of conceived space is abstract space (ibid: 52). Abstract space is the ultimate space of capitalism, and the City is central to the reproduction of capital. This space will forever remain abstract since it is by nature conceived, as opposed to directly lived and shaped organically. The ideal organizational abstract space is rarefied, cerebral and disembodied where the worker is a rational and calculating instrument (Massey, 1995). The model is a masculine one (McDowell, 2009), and the behaviours that it seeks to contain within the space 'affirm masculine solidarity ... by excluding women and behaviours that might be associated with femininity' (ibid: 53). As Lefebvre explains, it is a homogenous space, erasing distinctions, and its dominance is gendered: 'monuments have a phallic aspect, towers exude arrogance' (1991: 49).

Despite this emphasis on the overt masculinity of abstract space, few studies have connected Lefebvre's theorisation with gendered space. Wasserman and Frenkel (2015) is an exception;

applying Lefebvre's spatial theory to an analysis of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they argue that gender and class largely define the emotional reactions that employees develop towards organisational space. They also conclude, however, that:

Whilst men are able to identify with the 'masculine' design, and thus so not experience it as contradicting their self-or professional identity, women clearly sense a conflict between their gender identity and the masculine/professional space (ibid: 1502).

Feminist geographers (e.g. Rose 1993, Valentine 1989, Listerborn 2002) have explored the insecurity often felt by women in public spaces and their perception and use of such spaces, concluding that women's public inhibitions are often expressed spatially. Turning to gender performativity and its spatial representations, Gregson and Rose (2000: 441) use a performance metaphor to help illustrate the relational understanding between the spatial and the temporal:

Performances do not take place in already-existing locations: the City, the bank, the franchise restaurant, the straight street. These 'stages' do not pre-exist their performances ...rather, specific performances bring these spaces into being'.

Tyler and Cohen (2010) apply a critical analysis of the production of space to the performance of gender within work, concluding that organizations workspaces matter to the myriad ways in which people perform, practise and negotiate gender at work. They describe the relative neglect within organization studies of the ways in which space is gendered as a theoretical lacuna, and argue that gender materialization constitutes an important theoretical lens through which to understand the gendering of organizational space.

Understanding the relationship between gender, place and performativity is central to the analysis in this paper. Here I turn to Gieryn's (2000) conceptualisation of place as a collision of location, material form and meaningfulness. He also comments on the inherently symbiotic relationship between the social and the material, since places 'are made through human practices and institutions even as they help to make these practices and institutions' (ibid: 467). For the purposes of this study, I argue that it is a sense of shared familiarity which differentiates place from space. Agnew (2011: 5) points out that a sense of place 'expresses a certain communality and performance' (ibid: 22). This sense of a shared cognitive understanding, of a shared sense of place, and of particular, situated, performances, underpins this research. This was particularly evident in participants' reflections on the way that gender is performed on the City streets, which will be discussed below.

Methodology: flânerie as spatial practice

Edensor (2000), arguing that the relationship between bodies and the city has been somewhat neglected, reminds us that bodies are the means through which we experience and feel the world:

'Bodies act upon the city, inscribing their presence through movement in a process of continual remaking. Accordingly, social relations are not only inscribed upon the body, but are produced by it'

The particular focus with regard to the City for this aspect of the research project was to observe how the bodies moved within the space, how this movement was experienced and sensed in terms of gender, and how participants experienced daily life in the City. Since attention was mainly focused on the visual and the observations of gender inclusivity and exclusivity in the setting, I wished to develop a method which took me out onto the streets and allowed me to both observe and participate in the street life. For this I turned to the

tradition of *flânerie*, as I wished to experience how the space was produced (drawing on Lefebvre) and how it might be constantly reproduced via walking, so using Lefebvre as a theoretical lens through which the City can be re-inscribed via the bodily practice of walking:

We can therefore speak of the reciprocity between the *flâneur* and city space, for the *flâneur* (re)produces and reinvents the city as text through his peripatetic practice, as Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre have theorized. (Boutin, 2012)

Various forms and practices of walking have been used as methodologies by authors for understanding city life and modern urbanity (Edensor 2010, 2012; Elkin, 2016). Most recent scholarly contributions have originated from the discipline of geography (Matos Wunderlich 2008, Edensor 2010, 2012; Simpson, 2012, *inter alia*), and are loosely bound by a shared understanding that seeks to uncover, through walking, a nuanced and immersed sense of place. What differentiates *flânerie* from many of these studies is its unfixed status, poised between belonging to the urban and yet apart from it, and it is this preoccupation with observation, with the joys of watching, that means the focus becomes attuned to the sense of existing between two world, both participant and observer.

De Certeau's theorisation of city walking as a 'practice of everyday life,' (1984) describes a process of appropriation playing out on city streets, whereby through walking people enter into contracts with one another. He is primarily concerned with an exploration of power relations in urban settings, which sees walking as a form of potential resistance of the weak towards the power of architects and planners (Pink, 2007). Although my observations as a *flâneur* were focusing on the performances of gender, not on power and resistance, there is an element of *flânerie* which is concerned with spatial re-appropriation of the city. In this way the *flâneur*, who walked uncontested through the teeming city streets and delighted in the urban, foreshadows Lefebvre's writing on the right to the city (1996, first published in France

in 1968). The aimlessness of the flâneur, in contradiction to the regulated movement of traffic and people in cities, becomes a radical act and offers an extended, observant ‘reading’ of street life and returns urban streets to the scale and tempo of the solitary walker.

The flâneur in the City

I walk because it confers – or restores – a feeling of *placeness* (Elkin, 2016: 21)

Urban consciousness in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had been developed by the ‘flâneurs’ (strollers, loiterers) of mid-nineteenth century Paris. In the wake of industrialisation, these male flâneurs had created a new aesthetic of the urban, perceiving an intensity and beauty in the extremes of city life which, to them, constituted its seduction. Baudelaire is credited with the first description of the flâneur in his 1863 essay *The Painter of Modern Life* (1964, first published 1863). Baudelaire was essentially nostalgic, responding to the remodelling of Paris being undertaken at the time by Haussmann, altering for ever the labyrinth of medieval streets, so that the city was becoming alien to its own inhabitants, who became explorers or even detectives in response to this alienation. Some seventy years after Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin offered an analysis of flânerie in his incomplete account of nineteenth century Paris, *The Arcades Project* (1999). The title evokes the spectacular and beautiful enclosed glass arcades which were the highlight of pre-Haussmann Paris, and which typified the dandified environment of the flâneur. Benjamin repeatedly refers to Baudelaire and the flâneur as symbols of a bygone age; essentially an outsider, a wanderer, although his main characteristic, for Benjamin, is the way in which he makes the urban street his home.

The flâneur is regarded as a representative of early modernity who developed visual and spatial practices and methodologies of movement and observation which interpreted the city. The act of being a flâneur is essentially active in that you are engaged in the physicality of walking and directly experiencing that which is all around (Elkin, 2016). As a research

methodology, *flânerie* is an active and physical form of observation; as a researcher, becoming a *flâneur* is a valuable way of merging aspects of social theory which use the human body as a metaphor with the physicality of a lived set of material practices and discourses.

During my investigation of *flânerie*, there appeared to be an element of detachment inherent in the art. Benjamin, like Baudelaire before him, registers the city as a text to be inscribed and read, then rewritten and reread as a result of repeated meanderings. Yet the *flâneur* is outside the text, not within it. He walks idly through the city, listening to its stories, recording its narrative, but apart from them. My interpretation of *flânerie*, therefore, was to try to record feelings of being both an insider – someone who knows the City well and has worked there for long periods – and outsider – a university researcher, not dressed in corporate attire.

In this respect, the study draws upon the argument made by Ybema et al (2009: 101) that distance is equally as important as closeness for an adequate understanding of the field and, indeed, becomes crucial exactly when a researcher gets immersed in the field:

For organizational ethnographers, the very ‘un-strangeness’ of the surroundings in their research prevents them from seeing it. So, when doing fieldwork in situations or settings that are or have become strongly familiar to us, strangeness is not a given but an achievement.

This approach calls for a dual stance on the part of the researcher: being both immersed and estranged in order to leave oneself open to moments of surprise or mystery (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007). Ybema et al (2009) argue that distancing from and immersion within may be interrelated:

Paradoxically, enmeshing oneself in the field and becoming an insider who can come in 'through the backdoor' might well be a necessary precondition for distancing oneself from frontstage appearances (ibid: 113)

The sense of making strange the familiar, and of both being both insider and outsider, through the sensory method of walking and observing are central to *flânerie* and central to the study. With this in mind, I carried out a total of ten walks around the City, taking a different route each time, mapping the walks retrospectively as a visual representation of ground covered, taking photographs, making notes, and watching, observing, listening and sensing the flow of men and women around me.

The second phase of the fieldwork focused on the lived experience of those working in the City, in order to better understand how the place is perceived and sensed, and how shared meanings accumulate. Eighteen research participants were recruited (via a snowball sample, starting with contacts who were known to the researcher), who work regularly in the City and who took part in face to face semi structured interviews. The focus of the interviews was on their sensory and emotional reactions to the setting, with particular reference to how they perceive the space according to their gender. The interviews also helped to develop the subjective data gathered in the streetwalking stage, in that the analyses helped with an understanding of the lived experience of City workers.

Data collection and analysis

With these considerations in mind, my approach called for a high degree of reflexivity since during the first stage of the fieldwork I was both engaged subject/participant and observer. Each walk that I carried out was recorded by means of field notes and a research diary. Within the written accounts of my walks I referred to my own history of working in the City;

it is a space that I am very familiar with, yet engaging with it as a researcher was very different to engaging with it as someone who works there every day. Although in one sense I was immersed in the setting and therefore 'within', I was also free to 'dip in and out' as I wished, finding dates and times for research which accommodated my other responsibilities. The walks were carried out mainly over a period of five months. The aim was to record observations, thoughts, feelings and memories and to be as reflexive as possible in my accounts, so that a rich and detailed account of the walks could be analysed. The distinction between data collection and analysis was therefore fluid during this stage. Times of day varied between early morning and late evening. I also collected data by means of photographs taken during the walks. The purpose was to help develop a richer understanding of the setting and to capture data that illustrate the environment in a way that written accounts cannot do in isolation. In terms of ethical considerations, I did feel uncomfortable at times photographing street scenes which involved people. Given that faces have been pixelated when reproducing photographs, this unease could be considered to be relatively unproblematic.

In relation to the interviews, the findings were anonymised through the use of pseudonyms, and their individual organizations referred to in generic terms (for example 'investment bank' or 'insurance broker'). During the interviews my own status as interviewer was never fixed, but continually re-made through a process of negotiation; my personal history of having worked in the City for a period of time, and of familiarity with some of the financial services terminology, helped establish me as someone who was not there to be prurient or in some way critical about the City. A degree of anxiety was expressed by all participants with reference to how they might be viewed by the 'outside' world. At other times, however, my status as a University researcher who has not worked in the City for ten years made it easier to express a naivety and interest in their working lives, and helped them to see the need to offer fuller explanations or descriptions of their daily lives.

Findings

Navigating the City space

If I was to think of a typical sort of person that I associate with the Square Mile, I think of a man. That's just what I see. (Matt, Software Developer).

Over the course of ten days of walking in the City, I saw no groups of women at all on the streets; by contrast, solitary men are rare, except at the beginning and end of the working day, yet groups of men are omnipresent:

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

This was perhaps my first observation as a flâneur; that men and women use the space differently. Unlike in shopping crowds in the West End of London, where groups of women are common, the women I observed were always walking singly. Men, by contrast, spread out over the space, often walking four or five abreast across the pavements.

The male propensity to spread out in the streets was noticeable in the nicer weather as well; although women were also pouring out of buildings in the hot June sunshine at lunchtime, again I never observed groups of them sitting together, although men spilled out from pubs and cafes:

Figure 6

Figure 7

This sense of the invisibility of women on the streets was referenced during interviews. Matt, a software developer in his early twenties, remarks of social life in the City:

When you walk home you walk past pubs and you see a lot of people outside having a drink... and, guess what ...they're all men. They're always, always men. Women ... it's weird, yes, but you definitely don't see them as much.

His colleague Tim, who works for the same technology company, initially claimed that he'd never noticed that gender was an issue here, yet when asked about the visibility of women on the streets, he admitted:

I mean, you look out the window and there are just males in suits. There are not many women seen around here. Now I think about it ... it definitely feels... it's just very masculine.

Phillip, an actuary, who views himself as a City insider, having spent his whole career there, gives a different perspective on what it takes to belong as a man in the City. For him, masculine status is always fragile and insecure, because the pressures of performativity are such that success can quickly come and go. He defines the behavioural norm for men in the City as about being – and, importantly, being seen to be – sociable and, as he says, 'clubbable':

If you ask me about norms of behaviour I'd say it's not for quiet, non-drinking, non-sociable men. You don't have to always be aggressive, in fact that won't win you many friends, but you have to be, how can I put it, clubbable. It isn't a place for loners.

Nigel (an Insurance Broker) and Ian (a Financial Consultant,) both agree that it is ‘the ability to engender trust and develop ‘good personal relationships,’ (Ian), which are the key to male success here. Nigel loves that it is ‘fundamentally all about personal relationships’ and that it is the ability of the City to engender face to face meetings (due to its tight spatial construct) which sets it apart, and means that ‘we (men) all sort of know each other, we know who is working for who’. Phillip links this need to be sociable, to be a good networker (which those who discussed it seemed to consider only applied to men), directly to the fragility of male status in the City:

You have to fit in ... to survive you have to band together ... Men tend to be mob-handed in the City. It's that keeping in a pack mentality. You're safer if you keep people close to you!

It is the relentless focus on performance in the City which creates, as Philip puts it, a place which is ‘aggressive in its expectations’ and many of the male participants spoke about the need to maintain performance levels and to be fit for purpose. Philip makes a direct connection between masculine status and fragility and insecurity. My own perceptions of the groups of men on the streets were that they were hunting in packs, that the large groups spreading out over the pavements reflected an aggressive dominance. Philip’s interpretation, however, suggests a fragile status.

The material and masculine City

I always wanted to work in the Square Mile. I don't know why, it was just the lure of it, what it looked like, all those tall buildings. (Rob, Insurance Broker)

As a stroller in the City, you are often forced to look up, since the pavements are so crowded, and the streets often narrow. Masculine imagery abounds:

Figure 8

The symbolic representation of a priapic masculinity is probably the most visibly obvious and attested example of the materiality of the City reinforcing and sustaining the socio-cultural City. I took many photographs of and notes on the soaring glass and steel towers which dominate the skyline and sightlines on each corner. The photograph of 30 St Mary Axe, popularly known as the Gherkin, and informally by a number of more ribald colloquialisms, is an example of this.

This form of masculine symbolic imagery is both highly visible and dominant in the City. Skyscrapers draw the eye down every street, and more and more are being erected. In the presence of these huge buildings which dominate the skyline, I noticed walking faster and more purposefully. I felt more self-conscious about taking photographs in these spaces. There is, however, a contrast of architectural styles in the City. As well as the examples of Lefebvre's 'phallic verticality'(1991: 36), in the heart of the City, especially in the area around the Bank of England, there is an abundance of imperial architecture in the classical style, mainly eighteenth and early nineteenth century, with some later Victorian buildings. This is the heart of the 'traditional' City, the historic setting of men in bowler hats and furled umbrellas, of Gentleman's clubs and sober respectability. This imperial 'centre' of the City is architecturally coherent (although the 'phallic verticality' emerges priapically in the background):

Figure 9

In this part of the City I had the sense of being safe and contained when surrounded by the imperial and classical, in contrast to the noisy, frenetic side streets.

For Neil, both the old and the new architectural styles are rooted in the symbolism of power and money:

I guess the older buildings are about being dominant in an earlier sort of fashion. That screamed power to people then, these tall buildings scream it now.

The materiality of the City was considered by many to strongly reflect, sustain and often create the performative culture. For Anna, her reaction to the contemporary soaring towers of the City is that they are:

Big black monsters some of them are really monstrous, in your face huge edifices, just showing off really! All to accommodate those 'big swinging dicks' I suppose!

Many mentioned the stress of walking around such a dense and compact space; as Ian says, 'You just need to know where to go. You have to be able to find your way around,' stressing the need to be an 'insider' to be able to confidently navigate the setting, and evoking memories for me of walking the streets and feeling like an outsider because of my repeated failures to navigate the streets. How the data gathered shows that 'insider' status often excludes women will be summarised below.

The 'otherness' of City women

But you never really feel like it's a place for you...you always have that sort of sense of being here on sufferance (Anna, Communications Director for an Investment Bank).

As seen above, Philip emphasises the need for men to be ‘clubbable’ in the City if they want to succeed. Yet for Sasha, a young woman working as a business development consultant in the City, it is precisely this ‘clubbability’ that means that she feels excluded. She describes having a feeling that ‘there is a club of City men that women are just not part of’, and gives an example of how this male bonding directly affects women:

I love our Vice President, and I get along with him very well. But, you can see that his buddies are the men. You can see that. They all go out together, there’s a sort of shorthand that they all use, you know, male banter.

Her own subject position changes from that of an ambitious, professional woman in a mixed gender team, to being that of an outsider, directly because of this male need to stick together. As she says, with some degree of frustration, ‘It boils down to the fact that in the City there is a back door discussion that’s going on that we’re not part of.’

All participants conflated ‘gender’ with ‘women.’ When asked about gender in the City, whilst most female participants discussed the lack of career progression available to women, the male participants mostly associated it with childcare and families. Maria (an HR Director for an Investment Bank) felt that gender wasn’t an issue, and was proud that her company was actually in the press the day I interviewed her, for having one of the highest male to female ratios for investment, with 28% female. Nigel, however, whilst overall feeling that the opportunities and the rewards were the same for anyone, irrespective of gender, he did say that ‘It (the City) isn’t a particularly family friendly place’, although the question had been about whether he perceives the City as a male or female space, not specifically about working parents. Rob, again, feels that gender is no barrier but conflates it with women and children: ‘It depends on your qualifications, how well you do at your job, not your gender, in other words, whether or not you’ve had a baby.’

Jennifer, a Chartered Surveyor, did disclose, however, that it was pregnancy which was a defining moment for her in her City career. She had previously enjoyed the male camaraderie and she had enjoyed feeling like ‘one of the chaps’. Once pregnant, however, she felt excluded from the place, not only in a socio-cultural sense (she describes how her changing body became the butt of male jokes, ‘you know, a sweepstake on when my belly would grow bigger than my boobs’) but also in a spatial sense – she describes how the narrow, confined streets and the rush and speed with which they need to be navigated made her feel vulnerable and physically uncomfortable. Perhaps the most poignant example of how the place itself serves to exclude anything which does not adhere to its masculine performative culture was expressed by Jennifer, when she tells an anecdote about how she felt that she was no longer ‘acceptable’ in the City:

So I was in a meeting one day and one of the directors was in it with me and then he sort of gestured to me to step outside the room, and I looked down and I’d started leaking milk from my boobs. And I went outside and he had three kids and he was actually really nice about it and he said, right, you need to go and get these pads, because I didn’t know. And I said, right, yes, okay, where do you get them from? He said go to Boots, and of course I went into about five Boots and not a breast pad in sight because I was in the City and they didn’t sell them.

Her lactating body became both unacceptable, un-catered for, and yet at the same time public property, exposed and ‘revealed’.

Both Anna and Jennifer now viewed the City as inherently hostile to anything that was seen as feminine; as Anna says, ‘you just feel that the whole place is created by men for men, sort of thing’, and that she felt that she was only there on sufferance, ‘like you’d walked into a

boy's school and you might have to leave when they tell you to.' Claire, who left the City before she had children, could not understand why anyone would want to still work in a place that she claims is all about work, and the need to be seen to be performing work, and is deliberately designed to exclude, as she puts it, 'normal life', which for her is represented by 'schools, hospitals, children, parks'; the sphere of the feminine and maternal, in other words.

In sum, three main themes recurred from my own observational walks as a flâneur, and were extended and elaborated upon by City workers. Firstly, the relative invisibility of women on the streets compared to men, and how they use and treat the space differently. Secondly, the materiality of the City was perceived to co-create and sustain a masculine dominance. Thirdly, anything deviating from the masculine norm(s) is positioned as Other. In the following section I discuss these findings with reference to Lefebvre's concept of monumental space, arguing that patterns of inclusion and exclusion in the City can be revealed through an immersive and embodied methodology.

Discussion

The data considered above suggests the presence of two different, but competing masculinities; different in their architectural expression, and their cultural behaviours, and competing for dominance. The findings also indicate the ways in which both the architecture and the social practices create, reflect and sustain these dominant masculinities. I have termed these competing masculinities 'hypo' and 'hyper' masculinity; dictionary definitions for the former tell us that it is from the ancient Greek for under, i.e. something restrained or controlled, in this context, and for the latter we read overexcited, overstimulated. The built environment of the City reflects both, with the solid, imperial stone buildings representing the hypo-masculine, the protective paternalism (Kerfoot and Knights, 1993) that produces feelings of containment and control that, as noted above, were almost tangible as I walked

through the space. The hyper-masculine is represented by the dominating towers of the newer City; walking within this space felt frantic, hurried, noisy and intensely competitive in its gendered culture.

McDowell's (1997) discussion of what she terms the shift from the 'old' to the 'new' City (ibid: 43) describes the radical changes in employment practices, culture and the physical environment that occurred from the late 1980s onwards. Entry to City jobs after this point was increasingly based on merit and credentials rather than on personal networks and recommendations, and the prevalent architectural style became more and more focused on vertical towers; or, in other words, a shift from a hypo to a hyper masculine dominance was taking place. McDowell claims that this dualistic narrative has become dominant since the 1980s, but I show how these exist side by side, not shifting from one to the other but performing as materially and culturally symbiotic.

The analysis here is focused upon the interplay between the two identified versions of masculinity, since the performances of femininity were neither discussed by participants nor immediately visible during the observational fieldwork. Men talked mainly about the fear of 'slippage' as the dominant factor influencing performances of masculinity in the City. The relentless focus on performance creates, as Philip puts it, a place which is 'aggressive in its expectations' and many of the male participants spoke about the need to maintain performance levels, to be fit for purpose, and to not be left behind.

The way in which these gender performativities are present in the City reminds us that 'space too needs to be thought of as brought into being through performances and as a performative articulation of power' (Gregson and Rose, 2000: 434). An analysis of place based upon Lefebvrian theories has attempted to connect perception, performativity and place in a way

that ultimately leads to an understanding of what the conditions of membership might be here.

Lefebvre emphasises how abstract space (particularly monumental urban spaces) is a repressive male space which finds its representation in the phallic aspect of towers; likewise the monumental architecture serves to represent the hyper masculine:

Phallic erectility bestows a special status on the perpendicular, proclaiming *phallocracy as the orientation of space* (1991: 287, emphasis added)

In other words, the phallic soaring towers in the City are more than merely a way of saving space by building upwards; they proclaim the dominant orientation of the City (Parker, 2007, 2015, De Cock et al, 2009). Although there are economic imperatives at play here in terms of the built environment, I argue that they cannot be separated from the cultural imperatives in the City.

In such a masculine hierarchical setting, the performances of gender not only reinforce the cultural norms but also position competing gender performances as Other. As seen in the quotation at the beginning of the paper, Höpfl (2010:40) reminds us that full membership of organizational life is often denied to women. As we have seen from participant accounts, being clubbable, demonstrating your credentials to belong to the club which is the City, is viewed as important, and is connected, in Philip's account, with being male.

Figure 10

The conditions of membership of this club, it would appear, include an understanding having the confidence to network, to know people, and to know your way around; to demonstrate that you are familiar with the 'shorthand' of the City. Yet at the same time, Phillip tells us that being 'clubbable' means that for men, clubbing together offers some protection in what

is fundamentally an unstable environment; earning your place is critical, as many participants explained, but keeping it is even harder, reminding us of Knights and Tullberg's (2012) analysis of the fragility and insecurity of male managerial positions in financial services. For women, the perception of working in a space which is a 'club' can lead to feelings of exclusion, linked (in Sasha and Jennifer's experiences) to inequality.

Analysing how gendered performativities are enacted in the City has allowed me to extend Lefebvre's theorisation of space by applying it directly to the performances of gender. Wasserman and Frenkel (2015: 17) claim that 'while Lefebvre's theory is deployed by scholars to understand power relations regarding class, his theory has not been used to research gender relations in organizations'. One of the aims of this paper is to add to their research both by applying a Lefebvrian reading to organizational settings, and by applying his theories to the performances of gender in wider organizational space and setting. In this way the study builds upon Tyler and Cohen (2010) and their argument that organizational space is a gendered matter, describing the materialization of gender in and through the performance of spaces that matter.

My interpretation of *flânerie* in the City was to walk and to gaze, to attempt to recreate the familiar as new and unfamiliar by the depth of observation, reflecting on what I saw and how I perceived it. What this sensory method revealed, and which was supported by interview participants, was that place and gender performativity are mutually constitutive in the City

Concluding Thoughts

The aim of this paper is to explore what role places of organization play in compelling or constraining gender performances, and how they can be researched in order to develop a rich understanding of how they are experienced. By researching the specific performativity of the City, I have connected a critical analysis of a performative place to the performance of

gender. In doing so, I have made three broad contributions to the understanding of how such places are lived and experienced. Firstly, I have developed an empirical understanding of the ways in which gender is performed in the City, and what this means for those working in this place, here applied not to a single organizational space, but encompassing the wider setting of multiple organizations, helping to extend what is usually thought of as organizational space.. Secondly I have made a theoretical contribution by extending Lefebvre's theories of the production of space to include the spatial performances of gender. Third, I have made a methodological contribution to research on organizational place, through a focus on the tradition of the flâneur, which has enabled a sensory and immersive view of the way in which the social and the material interact and interconnect in this setting.

The focus here has been on demonstrating that geographical location will help towards an understanding of how and why gender is enacted in a spatial sense. The dominant masculinities in this place shape the conditions of membership here. Future research into the multiple variations of femininity present in the City could extend this study, as would further research into other less visible aspects of City life, focusing for example of the intersections of gender, class, race and ethnicity. One of the limitations of flânerie as a method is its subjective nature; this can be compensated in part by the inclusion of other voices via interviews, however future research could explore the possibility of walking alongside participants to allow a richer understanding of how they move within the space and allowing for 'real time' observations to emerge.

This paper has discussed how patterns of gender inclusion and exclusion can be studied in a particular research setting, and concludes by reflecting on whether the findings are particular to the City of London at this time, or whether they can be extended to other organizational environments when place and sector collide; if so, then what conclusions can be drawn about

the conditions of membership of certain organizational places and settings, and can patterns of spatial exclusion be said to relate directly to gender inequality in particular places?

References

- Agnew, J. (2011) Space and place. In Agnew, J.A. and Livingstone, D.N. (2011) *The Sage Handbook of Geographical Knowledge* pp.316-330. London: Sage.
- Allen, J. and Pryke, M. (1994) The production of service space. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 12(4), pp.453-475.
- Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2007). Constructing mystery: Empirical matters in theory development. *Academy of management review*, 32(4), 1265-1281.
- Baudelaire, C.P. (1964) *The painter of modern life*. London: Phaidon.
- Benjamin, W. and Tiedemann, R. (1999) *The arcades project*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- Boutin, A. (2012). Rethinking the flâneur: Flânerie and the senses. *Dix-Neuf Volume 16, 201 Issue 2: Rethinking the Flâneur: Flânerie and the Senses*, pp. 124-132
- CityofLondon.gov.uk (2017). *Statistics about the City*. Available at: <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/business/economic-research-and-information/Pages>. (Accessed 12 July 2107)
- De Certeau, M., (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life*. London: University of California Press, Ltd.
- De Cock, C.J., Fitchett, J. and Volkmann, C. (2009) Myths of a near past: Envisioning finance capitalism anno 2007. *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization*, 9(1), pp.8-25.
- Edensor, T. (2010) Walking in rhythms: place, regulation, style and the flow of experience. *Visual Studies*, 25(1), pp.69-79.
- Edensor, T. ed. (2012) *Geographies of rhythm: nature, place, mobilities and bodies*. London: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.
- Elkin, L. (2016) *Flaneuse: Women walk the city*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Financial Times (2015) *London: Sexism and the City*. Available at www.ft.com January 16, 2015(accessed 20 July 2017)
- Gieryn, T.F. (2000) A space for place in sociology. *Annual review of sociology*, pp.463-496.
- Gregson, N., & Rose, G. (2000). Taking Butler elsewhere: performativities, spatialities and subjectivities. *Environment and Planning D: Society and space*, 18(4), 433-452.
- Höpfl, H. (2010). A question of membership. In *Revealing and Concealing Gender* (pp. 39-53). Palgrave Macmillan

30percentclub (2016). Financial Women in the UK. Available at:
https://30percentclub.org/assets/uploads/UK/Research/New_Financial_Women_in_UK_finse rv_2016_FINAL.pdf (accessed 15 July 2017)

Kerfoot, D. and Knights, D. (1993) Management, masculinity and manipulation: from paternalism to corporate strategy in financial services in Britain. *Journal of Management Studies*, 30(4), pp.659-677.

Knights, D. and Kerfoot, D., (2004) Between representations and subjectivity: Gender binaries and the politics of organizational transformation. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 11(4), pp.430-454.

Knights, D. and Tullberg, M. (2012) Managing masculinity/mismanaging the corporation. *Organization*, 19(4), pp.385-404.

Lefebvre, H. (1991) *The production of space*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Lefebvre, H (2003). *The Urban Revolution*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Lefebvre, H., Kofman, E., & Lebas, E. (1996). *Writings on cities* (Vol. 63, No. 2). Oxford: Blackwell.

Linstead, A. and Brewis, J., (2004) Editorial: beyond boundaries: towards fluidity in theorizing and practice. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 11(4), pp.355-362.

Listerborn, C., (2002) Understanding the Geography of Women's Fear: Toward a Reconceptualization of Fear and Space. *Subjectivities, knowledges, and feminist geographies: The subjects and ethics of social research*, p.34.

Matos Wunderlich, F. (2008) Walking and rhythmicity: Sensing urban space. *Journal of Urban Design*, 13(1), pp.125-139.

McDowell, L. (1997) *Capital culture: Money, sex and power at work*. Oxford: Blackwell.

McDowell, L. (2009) *Working bodies: Interactive service employment and workplace identities*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Özbilgin, M. F., & Woodward, D. (2004). 'Belonging' and 'otherness': sex equality in banking in Turkey and Britain. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 11(6), 668-688.

Parker, M. (2007) Organizing: Skyscrapers and multitudes. *Critical perspectives on international business*, 3(3), pp.220-225.

Pink, S. (2007). Walking with video. *Visual Studies*, 22(3), pp.240-252.

Pullen, A. and Knights, D., (2007) Editorial: Undoing gender: Organizing and disorganizing performance. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 14(6), pp.505-511.

- Pullen, A. and Thanem, T., (2010) Editorial: Sexual Spaces. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 17(1), pp.1-6.
- Rose, G., (1993) *Feminism & geography: The limits of geographical knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Simpson, P. (2012) Apprehending everyday rhythms: rhythm analysis, time-lapse photography, and the space-times of street performance. *Cultural geographies*, 19(4), pp.423-445.
- Simpson, R. and Lewis, P. (2007) *Voice, visibility and the gendering of organizations*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Thrift, N. (1996) *Spatial formations*. London: Sage.
- Trewethy, A., (1999) Disciplined bodies: Women's embodied identities at work. *Organization Studies* 20 (3), pp 423-450
- Tyler, M., & Cohen, L. (2010). Spaces that matter: Gender performativity and organizational space. *Organization Studies*, 31(2), 175-198.
- Valentine, G., (1989) The geography of women's fear. *Area*, pp.385-390.
- Wasserman, V. and Frenkel, M. (2015) Spatial work in between glass ceilings and glass walls: Gender-class intersectionality and organizational aesthetics. *Organization Studies*, 36(11), pp.1485-1505.
- Ybema, S., Yanow, D., Wels, H., & Kamsteeg, F. H. (Eds.). (2009). *Organizational ethnography: Studying the complexity of everyday life*. London: Sage.