'Northernness', gender and Manchester's creative industries.

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Abstract

This article explores northernnessand gender in the context of creative industries in Manchester. I argue that a version of northernness has been mobilized by those within the creative industries and that this identity is strongly linked with masculinity. This appears to stand in the way of women's full access to, and participation in, the city's creative industries. Using Manchester as a case study I argue that place specific identities need to be explored in debates about exclusion and underrepresentation of women in creative industries.

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Introduction

Outside of London, Manchester is the city with the highest number of people working in creative industries in the UK. Local labour market research claims that 84,900 employees in Greater Manchester work in;*'digital media and broadcasting, creative and cultural industries, entertainment and publishing'* (Manchester Independent Economic Review, 2013). Research about the geographical distribution of creative industries in the UK shows that Manchester is well represented in '*Advertising, Architecture, Software, Computer Games and Electronic Publishing, and Radio and TV.'* (De Propris et al 2009, p. 23) and that Manchester is also notable in terms of *'Designer fashion/photography, film and video/ Music and the visual and performing arts'.* The authors of this report acknowledge how atypical Manchester is compared to other cities in the North of England. Other than London the following places are highlighted as 'creative hot-spots' '*Bath, Brighton, Bristol, Cambridge, Guildford, Edinburgh, Manchester, Oxford and Wycombe- Slough.'.* These findings emphasise the existence of a north south divide in the creative economy in which only Manchester proves to be the exception to the rule. The city has more creative industries than all the other northern English cities put together (NESTA 2009).

Howeverrecent national sector specific[i] research highlighted that the number of women working in the creative industries in the North of England is noticeably lower than the national average. '*Female participation in the North however is significantly below average (23%) compared to the wider Creative Media workforce (42%).* (2010, p 4)[ii]The report goes on to highlight that; *'for the content for computer games sector and interactive content sectors the figures are low at 6% and 2% respectively.'* (2010, p.50).Theseare alarming statistics. Whilst there are a number of acknowledged widespread barriers to women's full

participation in the creative industries (author 2002, Perrons 2003, Gill 2002 and Christopherson 2008),this paper argues that there may be additional,unexplored barriers connected to the symbolic capital of place(s). Local contexts can produce distinctive, place-specific gender dynamics (Massey 1994, Nayak 2003). In depth exploration of these links between gender and place when researching creative industries may expose barriers facing women or, conversely, assets that may enhance women's success in gaining employment in male dominated areas of the sector. Thus far this place specific context has been under-developed in discussions of women's employment in creative industries.

Drawing on material from qualitative interviews, existing research and media discourses, we consider explanations for the homophily (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012) of the creative industries sector in Manchester and link such patterns to local contexts. This paper aims to challenge 'aspatial' discourses and argues instead that there are signs of distinctive, place-specific gender dynamics at play. In the Manchester case study, the strength of linkages between the social constructs of northernness, masculinity and creativity appear to inhibit women's full participation in the creative industries.Whilst there are many patterns and features of the creative sector in Manchester that are undeniably similar to other places, we want to explore what is particular to Manchester as this might be significant in helping to explain the demographic of the creative industries in this city. In the Manchester example, as will be detailed later, its contemporary creative industries were born out of a music and club scene that flourished in the late 1980s and 1990s was centred on 'lads' and their interests. This has contributed to the ascendency of closed, male dominated networks in the creative sector. Although the paper emphasises the specific cultural identity of one case study city this approach could be productively replicated elsewhere.

The paper seeks to highlight how the legacy of earlier networks, representations and already embedded local entrepreneurial attitudes associated with Manchester, have impacted on gender relations in the city's contemporary creative industries. I argue that there has been little evidence of culture change across the creative sector in terms of gender. This trend is clearly not unique to Manchester but I argue that the masculine power that pervades the formal and informal power structures in Manchester render it particularly difficult to challenge and change.The paper is structured in the following way; overview of literature on place, masculinity and northernness; discussion of methods, contextual information about the emergence of the Manchester case study and an analysis of the contemporary creative industries in Manchester.

Key Literature

In this section we attend to literature that focuses on place, masculinity and northernness. The arguments made in this paper are informed by academics who have deconstructed the linkages between place, gender and work in other contexts. Massey's arguments about the regional inflections of cultural constructs of gender are highly pertinent. Massey highlights that *'the gendering of space and place both reflects and has effects back on the ways in which gender is constructed and understood'* (1994, p.180). Massey's proposition is applied to the context of the creative industries sector in Manchester. Similarly, although focussing on class as opposed to gender, recent work by Allen and Hollingworth (2013) examines the interrelations of place and class in terms of the knowledge economy. Drawing on Bourdieu (1984), Allen and Hollingworth propose that a concept of a 'place specific habitus' (2013, p.499) can be used to challenge 'aspatial' discourses about the knowledge economy. Bourdieu's work is highly germane for helping understand the process of how certain identities are privilegedat the expense of others.

The relationships between physical place and social identity are dynamic. As Lippard argues (1997, p.9) *'our personal relationships to history and place form us…and in reciprocal ways we form them.'*. Doreen Massey's work is pivotal in highlighting the variable dynamics of gender and place in discussions of local gender cultures and myths (1994, p.178). As Massey argues, there are significant differences between masculinities in, for example, Lancashire compared to those of the Fens and that gender is socially constructed and locally rooted. Therefore it is important to note that gender identities are not uniform across different spaces. AnoopNayak's (2003) work explores the dialectical relationships between masculinity and place in the north east of England. In his research on a youth subculture who call themselves the 'Real Geordies', Nayak found that the young men in his study, when negotiating the transition from industrial to post-industrial lives frequently called upon place specific traditions and histories in the construction of their identity; *'the culture of manual labour was recuperated and refashioned in new, out-of-work spaces that resonated with the eerie echo of industrial prowess.'* (2003, p.22).

In their research into extreme metal bands in the north of England, Spracklen, Lucas and Deeks argue that via the mobilisation of a range of myths and symbols *'"heritage" in extreme metal music is used to construct exclusive, white masculine identities'* (2014, p.49). Certainly in the Manchester case there is a strong sense of heritage being utilised in similar ways - though a very different evocation of northernness to that which is called upon in the extreme metal scene. As Spracklen et al go on to highlight; *'Heritage narratives and the myths of history present potential for the authentication of a collective and in doing so legitmize the symbolic boundaries of belonging through exclusionary practices.'* (2014, p.49). What these authors describe is highly pertinent to the Manchester case where the recent past is frequently referenced in discourses about the contemporary creative industries. This is a past where

being 'northern' has been constructed as a masculine subject position and this has inhibited women's access to high status, lucrative roles in the city's flourishing creative industries sector.

The north of England has long had an intensely strong cultural identity. The heartland of the industrial revolution (Marx and Engels), the land of 'satanic mills' and 'the land of the working class' (Shields 1991). Its cultural identity, as represented in literature, popular culture and the media, is that of a space constructed as gritty and bleak, populated by 'authentic', hard working, down to earth, friendly people (Hoggart 1957), who stoically endure hardships. The importance and impact of these cultural constructions of the north (of England) have received growing interest in recent decades (see Shields 1991, Massey 1994, Kirk 2000). Of course the north is not homogeneous and the counties and cities of this highly populated region have developed numerous inflections of this northernness which have been increasingly increasingly emphasised for the 'tourist gaze' (Urry1994). Recently high profile writers have written recent pieces exploring the specificities of the north of England (for example Maconie 2007, Armitage 2009 and Morley 2013). Both Maconie and Morley are British music journalists who made their mark researching the period in Manchester that I argue has had an impact on the contemporary creative industries. That they have both written books about 'the north' demonstrates the great symbolic power that 'northernness' continues to hold.

In the 1950s, heavily influenced by popular culture emerging from North America, new forms of pop culture began to flourish in Britain. By the late 1950s and early1960s the north (of England) started to develop a powerful new cultural identity. This came from fictional representations such as the television soap opera *Coronation Street*, 'Kitchen Sink' cinema

(Higson 1984, Hill1986) and rise of northern pop groups - most notably, *The Beatles*. The 1950s and the 1960s were also decades in which working class people became involved in cultural production and in which the value and status of popular culture was redefined.

There is a range of interesting literature about young men and the negotiation of masculine identities. This literature grew as the ravages of deindustrialisation displaced traditional sources of working class work and sources of masculine identity formation. Paul Willis' seminal work in the 1970s explored 'lads'and their active rejection of the education system. Certainly in the Manchester case music offered new alternative spaces where formal sources of industrial labour disappeared. More recently, Edwards (2003) identified three key figures of masculinity emerging from representational culture. These are the 'old man' (associated with traditional masculinity) the 'new man' who first appeared as a cultural figure in 1980s and the 'new lad' of the 1990s. As Gill (2003) argues, all of these versions of masculinity continue to coexist (the 'old man', for example, has not disappeared). The men of the Manchester creative scenecan be framed in terms of 'new lad' discourses (and were described as such in the music and popular press). Connell (1987) introduced the notion of hegemonic masculinity, a form of masculinity which overrides the multiple gender identities at play. At any given time, one form of masculinity is valued more than others and which secures; '*the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.*'(Connell 1995, p.77).Connell goes on to argue that these figures of hegemonic masculinity don't necessarily come from traditional institutions of power but can also be represented by '*exemplars, such as film actors, or evenfantasy figures, such as film characters.*'This point is highly relevant to the Manchester case where persistent media representationsof the'northern lad' have led to this figure being culturally ingrained in the collective imagination as the 'ideal type' of hegemonic masculinity of the Manchester creative.

Hegemonic masculinity rests on strength and power, being active, competitive, assertive and active in the public sphere and the qualities identified by Connell are present in discourses about the creative sector in Manchester. Indeed there is a 'mythology' about Mancunian creativity which frequently surfaces in narratives about Manchester's popular culture. In her work on gender and city marketing in Rotterdam, Marguerite van den Berg draws on Roland Barthes' (1957) work on 'myth' and argues that researchers need to be; *attentive to the gender dimensions in myth-making and the gender dynamics at work in the production of space and the 'revitalising' of industrial cities.'* (2012, p.165).This is a crucial proposition in terms of the Manchester case where the creative industries have been centrally bound up in the regeneration and re-imaging of Manchester.

Methodology

The arguments made in this article are based on qualitative case study research. This includes interviews with representatives from Manchester's creative industries, analysis of policy documents, media discourses and symbolic and artefacts connected with Manchester's pop culture scenes. The creative industries referred to in this article are focussed on music and/or digital creativity (such as games design) and are predominantly small to medium sized enterprises and micro businesses. These are subsections of the Creative Industries that have been highlighted as particularly difficult for women to access.

Although this paper emphasises data from one research project the paper also needs to be seen in the context of a series of research projects about Manchester's creative new media industries which have taken place over the last two decades. This on-going research includes over 60 interviews with cultural workers, policy makers and attendance at industry

networking events. During the research period Manchester's creative industries have developed and expanded considerably – in size but not diversity.

This paper explores explanations for low levels of female representation and examines interview data from representatives of 20 creative industry businesses about recruitment practices, equal opportunities policies and the type of skills that are sought and valued within the sector. As such this paper takes an approach that is comparable with research carried out by Perrons (2003) about the new media sector in Brighton and Hove, UK. In Perrons' work she focused on a specific geographic locale which, like Manchester, emerged as a new media hub. Perrons critically examined issues around work-life balance and the potential for the new economy creating new opportunities for people with caring responsibilities. Perrons concluded that as the new media had been shoehorned into existing social structures that a marked gender imbalance remained in the new media sector. Perrons' work is highly informative and provides valuable insights into the problems and opportunities for women in this developing sector. However the specificities of the local cultural identity were not fore-grounded in Perrons' research. In this paper I argue that whilst there are a number of widespread commonalities that account for the low level of female participation in creative industries, that there are also a range of local cultural experiences that potentially exacerbate, reinforce and solidify cultural expectations about the type of person that is 'naturally' suited to working in the creative industries. I want to encourage other researchers to reflect on the culture of place in their research on the creative industries. I concur with Kennedy (2010, p.190) that empirical research that acknowledges local dynamics, idiosyncrasies of particular places and the impact that these have on how creative businesses operate, is important.

The case study will now be explored in two parts. The first details a key period when Manchester's creative industries began to establish and highlights the presence of a culture where masculinity and northernness were important sources of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1994). The second section looks at contemporary creative industries and highlights discourses that reveal deeply entrenched ideas about masculinity and creativity. Northernness, particularly which references the heritage of earlier Manchester based creative scenes, can be seen as a bridge that joins masculinity and creativity in the Manchester case study and which has produced a 'place specific habitus'.

Setting the scene: Northernness, masculinity and the rise of creative industries in Manchester

As noted earlier, Manchester has the largest creative industries sector outside of London. The city has long been rich in assets that have helped to secure its profile. For example, it was the main centre for the national press outside of London and is the base for the most successful and longest running independent TV station in the UK (Granada). It also has an international airport, high profile football clubs and a large number of students. All of these factors have had a positive impact on its emergence as the UK's strongest base for creative industries outside of London.It was Manchester's strength as a site for popular music that significantly boosted its creative industries profile.The mid 1970s saw the city develop a notably active punk scene (see Savage, 1991) that led to the formation of new underground networks and the formation of new spaces and enterprises centred on innovatory popular music. The example of *Factory Records* is the most high profile example of a Manchester based creative industry but there were numerous other examples of punk inspired spaces and businesses emerging. As I have argued elsewhere (author, 1996), there was an emphasis on prioritising a Mancunian and northern identity in this creative period. This included musicians

incorporating or foregrounding signifiers of working classness, emphasising the grimness of the de-industrialising landscape and referencing earlier icons of northern popular culture in their cultural products. The most high profile bands in the late 1970s were *Joy Division* (later *New Order*) and *The Buzzcocks*. A couple of years later came *The Smiths* (in the early 1980s), and then *the Happy Mondays*, *Oasis* and *the Stone Roses*. These bands all had international success (Champion 1990, Haslam 2000, Lee 2002). At the same time Manchester's club scene flourished and the city was much focussed on by the music press. This was the era of rave culture (Rietveld, 1998), the rise of 'superstar' DJs and dominance of key night clubs and Manchester was a key site for the rise of dance music culture in the UK. Taking a cue from the title of the Happy Mondays second E.P 'Madchester Rave On' (released in 1989 on *Factory Records*), the city earned a new nickname, 'Madchester' amongst the press and consumers of the city's pop culture. In a move echoing the intense media focus on mid 1960s 'swinging London', 'Madchester' featured on the cover of US *Time Magazine*. A pop scene was generatedthat was recognisably Mancunian, 'northern' and working class (a feature that was enthusiastically fuelled by the media). This was in spite of the fact that many of the key players come from Salford, Cheshire and Lancashire. Many were also middle class.

Wiseman-Trowse observes both the importance of place and masculinity of the 'Madchester' era of the city's music scene; *'The notions of community and locale are intrinsic to the Madchesterscene, on a variety of levels. One can look to the individual bandsinvolved to see camaraderie, kinship and a (male) gang mentality consistently articulated.'* (2008, p.170). Here this author identified the importance of place and gender within this high profile moment of Manchester's pop history. This symbolic capital of this period (the late 1980s and early 1990s) is still very much celebrated in Manchester via the presence of posters, T shirts and publicity forclub nights and comeback concerts.These male role models and 'icons' of

Manchester's cultural scene are frequently alluded to in contemporary Manchester. The Tourist Information Centre sells paraphernalia such as mugs and mouse mats with platitudes from Tony Wilson (instigator of *Factory Records*), Noel Gallagher (*Oasis*) and Sean Ryder (*the Happy Mondays*) and T Shirts with images of Morrisey (*The Smiths*), Liam Gallagher (Oasis) and Ian Curtis (*Joy Division*) with the words 'Legends' emblazoned across their faces. There are no references Manchester women in any of this paraphernalia. The fact that Emmeline Pankhurst or Shelagh Delaney, for example, are not held up as a 'Manchester legends' is remarkable.

Part of Manchester's cultural identity is that of a masculine city in terms of its roots as a working class, industrial city (Taylor, Evans and Fraser 1996) and high profile bands such as *Oasis* and *the Happy Mondays* might be seen in these terms. Kari Kallioniemi describes this northern working class masculinity as a dominant feature of the habitus of Sean Ryder of *the Happy Mondays*; *"Madchesters' most important band, The Happy Mondays, translated their ruffian anti-charisma and boorish celebration of rave culture to the postmodern fantasy of an endless holiday. Shaun Ryder sold this image to the mainly middle class media by playing Mancunian working class oik to the hilt.'* (1998, p.362). It was during this period that the creative economy emerged. The laddish camaraderie that was to be found in the music and club scene found its way into other subsections of the locally rooted, closely networked creative industries. Being 'northern' is a feature that has been repeatedly referenced within Manchester's pop cultural scene(s). *'Born in the north, exist in the North, Die in the North'* was a notable slogan that appeared on T shirts and other related paraphernalia during the 'Madchester' era.

The cultural construct of the 'angry young man' which emerged in literature and then film in the 1950s and early 1960s, appears to be a cultural identity that has trickled through to more recent times. There is a qualityreminiscent of Arthur Seaton[iii]in the habitus of Sean Ryder (lead singer of *the Happy Monday*s) and Ian Brown (lead singer of *the Stone Roses)* and countless other male Mancunian creatives. The lead singers of these two high profile Manchester bands have comfortably adopted the bravado, irreverence and swagger of the angry young man.[iv]Indeed television and radio presenter Terry Christian, (himself an example of this subject position), specifically refers to the 'angry young man' inhis description of the Manchester music scene ; *'Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government put much of Northern Britain in to serious decline during the 1980's, over 4 million people being declared unemployed, with factories in Manchester closing down left, right and centre. As a result the generation of angry young men that she created picked up guitars and translated their angst into song.'.* [v] As Lawler incisively points out;*'nostalgic reclamations of a lost, paradisiacal time, involve narratives not only of class but of gender, as men's heroism, or their authentic anger, is built on this refusal of the feminine.'* (2014, p.12).This refusal of the feminine has led to the exclusion of women from the creative industries in contemporary Manchester. Of course the creative industries are not only male dominated but also cannot claim to represent the ethnic diversity of Manchester. Further work needs to be carried out to explore the multiple intersections of identity that have been excluded from creative industries (Tatli, A and Özbilgin,M (2012) .

Concurrent to the city's rise in pop cultural terms Manchester also became a site for new forms of urban entrepreneurialism – particularly in the 1980s and 1990s when the Labour controlled City Council engaged with neo-liberal strategies for urban renewal. As Tickell and Peck observe, this urban development was driven by a group nicknamed the new 'Manchester

Men'. They highlight the exclusion of women from this network and the fact that; *'male power is being naturalized as the legitimate conduit for effective local governance. The political process in unelected bodies privileges pre-existing male networks while their modus operandi marginalizes and excludes women and women's interests.'* (1996, p.595).Peck and Tickell go on to describe an elite network, also dubbed the 'Manchester Mafia', which *'is lubricated by business relationships, personal friendships and other 'informal' links'* (1996, p.597). I argue that this, along with what was happening in terms of the masculinised pop culture, set the tone for the unfolding of gender relations in the new economy of Manchester.

A significant moment in the recent history of Manchester's creative industries came when a group of creative entrepreneurs (self-dubbed the McEnroe group in reference to the tennis player's catchphrase 'you cannot be serious') fought against the imposition of a dull and outmoded marketing campaign for the citywhich included the ill-conceived slogan 'We're Up and Going' which was described as;*'"little more than dull" in a letter signed by more than 30 members of the city's cultural community.'*(*Design Week*, July 1997)

This group of Manchester based creatives campaigned for an alternative marketing campaign for Manchester and one that would be defined by them. The 'Manchester Men' were now joined by a new group of powerful 'movers and shakers' who were representative of the ascendency of pop culture in Manchester. The McEnroe group formed in order to challenge the institutions and values that were perceived to be out of touch with the zeitgeist. John Myles notes that this group clearly come from the creative sector; *'the McEnroe Group's members are generally liberally educated, creative media, arts and entertainments people....this group ranges from directors of some of the key music production companies in the city, to night-club owners, media production companies and 'designer led' property redevelopers.'* (2004, p.276).

This description of the McEnroe group fails to point out that it is, like the Manchester Mafia, almost exclusively comprised of men. There was no cataclysmic break between the demographic of the old economy and the new one. It is pertinent to note that a number of members of the McEnroe group became centrally involved in powerful and lucrative roles in terms of Manchester's governance: The pop property developer Tom Bloxham (who began his working life selling posters in Affleck's Palace) was Chancellor of Manchester University and was awarded an MBE. Colin Sinclair (former musician and club promoter) became Chief Executive of MIDAS (Manchester's Inward Investment Agency), Peter Saville, one of the cutting edge graphic designers of Factory Records, was appointed the 'Creative Director' of Manchester in 2004 and was responsible for branding and marketing the city. With so many men involved in the redefining of post-industrial Manchester a tone was set.The masculinity of the Madchester era may have been exaggerated. As Stella Grundy of Manchester band *Intastella* recalls*; "The press wanted people in Manchester to behave and be in a certain way – laddy, boozy, druggy, gangstery – and if you didn't fit in with that scene they'd make it up anyway."*[vi]

The Contemporary Case Study:Manchester's Creative Industries

A report by the sector skills council for creative media, Skillset (now known as CreativeSkillset) highlights that; *'Female participation in the North however is significantly below average (23%) compared to the wider Creative Media workforce (42%)'*. (2010:3). In the north west of England 320,000 people are employed in the creative and digital sector (2010, NWDA). In Greater Manchester it is estimated that 5% of employment is categorised as creative and digital that 73,000 people are employed in the sector (2011, Sector Skills Analysis). In the city of Manchester ONS statistics estimate that 7.7% of the working

population work in creative and digital companies (22,585 people) (Manchester City Council, 2011).

The creative industries in Manchester are highlighted by the city council as an important growth area. Research commissioned by the city council predicts that over the next ten years *'the creative industries could bring an estimated 23,000 new jobs to Greater Manchester'* (New Economy 2013).Within the creative industries in Manchester businesses that focus on the creative use of digital technology are seen as strategically important. Recent policy documents claim that Manchester has the largest cluster of digital and creative businesses outside London and the south east. *'It is made up of a very diverse spectrum across art and design, broadcast media and digital content which are now converging to form an inter-related digital content sector.'* (New Economy, 2013) and claims are made that Manchester has the potential to *be 'a truly global digital content hub by 2025'* (Oliver and Ohlbaum Associates, 2012). A recent census by Skillset, the largest gender specific research on the creative industries concludes that there is *'widespread under-representation across the board and enormous variance between sectors and occupations in levels of employment of women'* (2010, p.2). The authors note that women are most heavily represented in sectors with large employers who are able to offer more stable and long term employment prospects (television, radio and book publishing cited as the largest employers of women). Of relevance to this research is that they saw a massive drop of women in interactive content design (dropping from 32% to 5% from 2006 to 2009). This is a very startling statistic and one which indicates that the situation for women is not improving.

I propose one explanation as to why the creative industries in Manchester does not currently have a diverse workforce. I argue that the recent legacy of pop culture and entrepreneurial culture in Manchester defined creativity as a masculine force. The city's recent history has contributed to a cultural identity where men and male culture dominate. Key role models, modus operandi and social attitudes in the Manchester case contribute to what emerges as a culture defined by Mancunian laddishness. This is a habitus that is frequently and routinely adopted by Manchester's male creative workers. As one interviewee stated; '*The dominant force is twenty something, thirty-something, males who went to Manchester Poly. They control the [Manchester] scene basically*.'With the case of Manchester I suggest that an overarching culture and structure of men as key decision makers and creative entrepreneurs presents barriers forwomen to be imagined, and imagine themselves, in powerful roles in the new economy.

I now focus on empirical work about creative industries and draw on material from in-depth interviews with 20 key decision makers (typically owners and managers) in 'creative new media' companies in Manchester. The businesses focussed on were involved with design work that relied on the use of ICT/new media in the design and dissemination process. The types of companies interviewed were working in the fields of interactive games design, web design, internet marketing and advertising sectors that are particularly hard for women to access. The interviews were carried out between 2004 and 2006. The biggest of the companies employed 80 people at the time of interview. The smallest consisted of two partners who employed one other person on a part-time basis. This is consistent with Skillset research on creative industries in the north of England; '*Most companies in the north of England in Creative Media are SMEs, many micro businesses employing fewer than 5 people.*' (2010, p.3).

When employers were asked about what sort of people, skills, attributes they were looking for, a masculine 'ideal type' (Joan Acker, 1992) was frequently and powerfully alluded to;

> *'I have a guy who works for us, he is as thin as a rake, never eats, appears to exist on black coffee, red bull and amphetamines and can survive on 3 or 4 hours sleep a night, it is a sort of fire and energy they have which is crucial to the projects and our business'* <u>Company 16 (creative agency –brand management)</u>

Use of the word 'they' in this context confirms the presence of an ideal type. Another respondent referred to a 'checklist' of ideas qualities to look for when recruiting;

> *'I mean one does build up a kind of personal checklist with about five points on it. You know, has he got the skills? What kind of tech is he? What kind of hobbies is he in to? Is he in to extreme sports? That tends to be the thing. Its seems to be a common theme of extreme sports, hardcore techno dance music, and they tend to go to festivals.......absolutely seem to be the key indicators.'* <u>Company 5 (designers of games for mobile phones)</u>

Here there are powerful descriptions of creative workers who are clearly male. There is little priority given to technical skills but rather the celebration of the habitus and lifestyle of an (angry) young man. Heroic masculinity is recaptured not necessarily via work directly but through leisure pursuits. It is significant that sport is mentioned as an ideal attribute. As Connell argues *'men's greater sporting prowess has become a theme of backlash against feminism. It serves as symbolic proof of men's superiority and right to rule'.* (1995, p.54). Engagement with the music scene is also another attribute that is highly valued.Given that the Manchester music scene has

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been identified as being intensely masculinised it is clear that this is another framework that (perhaps unwittingly) excludes women.

The 'ideal type' of creative cited in the quotes above chimes with Proctor-Thomson's work on gender and the digital industries in the north west of England. She analysed recruitment material for the digital sector, which though aimed at attracting more women, positioned women only in non-technical roles *'the presence of women in the sector is made recognisable, legitimate, through associations with other elements that have greater established links with traditional roles for women:broad (non-technical) educational backgrounds and client servicing. These practices create specific feminised roles as communicators and business professionals, but most importantly reposition them as not technically focussed.'* (2013, p.99). The positioning of women outside of the roles using creative digital technologies in the marketing material reinforces the practices and gendered role distribution in the 'real life' creative industries where women were absent from key creative and decision making roles.In the 20 companies in this study we identified six women who were part of the creative teams. Indeed in some companies there were no women at all;

> *'I'll come right out and say it, we don't have any women working for us, not by design, it's just worked out that way'*<u>Company 4 (interactive products mainly for education sector)</u>

> *'In my personal experience of multimedia, in terms of the nitty gritty end you don't tend to see women.....you do see a lot of female project managers, more organisational than hands dirty.'*<u>Company 11 (multimedia development company)</u>

'Hands dirty' is a significant metaphor and evokes (northern) hard, industrial graft in the world of light, 'clean' technology. There were women working in some of the new media companies we interviewed but there were clear signs of a gendered division of labour. In the

majority of the new media companies that were interviewed, the male employees were the designers and content producers and women were the administrators and project managers;

> INT *'Do you often get women sending their CVs in?'*
>
> Company 10, (advertising) *'Yeah, quite a lot. And quite a lot of the stuff that I've seen is really good but some blokes are really good and there's rubbish of each. So you know, I've not noticed any polarisation except that curiously here, some of, well only two girls work here out of fifteen, sixteen'*
>
> INT *'But do they do technical things as well?'*
>
> Company 10, (advertising) *'No actually, interestingly....'*

These comments suggest that this managerhasn't noticed the gender make up of his workforce and when he reflects on it he seems to find it a curious coincidence that women are absent. A spokesperson for a company of 11 men (and no women) again implies that they are a 'gender neutral' company – in spite of having an all-male workforce. There was a recurring tendency for female workers to be referred to as 'girls'. *'I'm not saying we'd want girls but if they are girls then brilliant, it really doesn't matter to us one way or another'* Company 1 web design. (All male workforce). This is both sexist and ageist and has contributed to an ideology that women have a limited lifespan in the creative industries.

That there is a distinct Mancunian creative scene and the importance of this for creative workers came through strongly in our interviews;

> *'Manchester is a huge resource for designers, popular culture, the Hacienda, and I've actually gone round (Manchester) with clients......I'm very proud to be Manchester based and part of the Manchester creative scene.'* Company 17 (graphic design)

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Many of the new media workers we spoke to expressed very positive views about the creative milieu that Manchester offered and regard themselves as inheritors of the innovation of the post Punk Manchester pop culture.

> *'we've got in the office guys who are in their mid twenties, they're locals, lived here all their lives....they have their finger on the pulse. I mean that's the thing that impressed me about Manchester, it happens in London but I guess you kind of expect it to, but what interests me about Manchester is that there are lots of these informal networks in place.'* Company 5 (designers of games for mobile phones)

In this quotean admiration is expressed for informal networks of Mancunian 'guys' with their finger on the pulse. Once again the link between place, creativity and gender has been masculinised. The problem with informal networks is that they are notoriously hard to break in to.This recent interview with a male representative from a Manchester creative marketing company for an online magazine feature about creative hubs, describes a paradigm that draws on masculinity and the importance of early music scene mythology to the contemporary milieu; *'"There's a lot of going out and drinking," he laughs. And, in line with Manchester's go-getting reputation, Wharton says that there's a self-organisational spirit about the place that has enabled it to prosper. "There's a swagger about it like there was about the music scene.'*[vii]The term 'swagger' was a recurring one in interviews about Manchester's creative industries and has emerged as an embodied masculine habitus.

Conclusion

In Manchester opportunities for women to work in high status, creative roles in new media companies are currently limited. There are a number of factors at play. Firstly there are powerfully vivid social constructions of the ideal creative workers amongst

the gate keepers of the sector. This ideal worker is routinely characterised as being young, male, and not involved caring roles outside of the workplace. Masculinity is linked to qualities such as obsessiveness, heroic commitment to working long hours and being in possession of social and cultural capital that involves an interest in extreme sports, club culture and music. Women were never described in these terms – instead attributes such as being balanced, being able to multi-task and not allowing work to consume them were attached to women and these qualities did not work in their favour. Secondly, recruitment practices clearly work against women. Employers frequently stated that they were not interested in formal qualifications and training and instead favour word of mouth recommendations. Thirdly it was claimed that that women 'don't apply'. However as it was reported by the interviewees that jobs were rarely advertised it would be difficult for women to identify potential opportunities. Fourthly, there was no expression of desire to develop strategies to recruit more women and similarly no debate about how to make working practices more flexible for all employees. Within the sector there is scant evidence of reflection on the gendered division of labour. Instead informal networking and 'appointing in their own image' is the dominant strategy for recruitment and getting on in Manchester's creative industries. Finally the powerful legacy of the period when Creative Industries first began to develop in the city has been mythologised as a masculine realm. Indeed there were women creatives during the 'Madchester' period but their presences and contribution has been obscured and underplayed in narratives about this period. There are signs that these forgotten women are beginning to fight back. Journalist Penny Anderson describes in a press interview how she was airbrushed out of a cinematic representation of 'Madchester' history, the 2002 film *24 Hour Party People*;*'It's not so grand, but I appear in Michael Winterbottom's accurately*

shambolic depiction of the chaos that was Factory Records. Well – I say appear. During those crazy days of Madchester, I wrote for the NME. In one scene, contemporary music journalists are lectured by Tony Wilson (as played by Steve Coogan). The extras cast as writers are men, and to rub salt in the wound, they are played by male music journalists of my acquaintance.Does my editing-out matter? Well, it does to me. Madchester was a time of corrosive, putrid, knuckle-dragging misogyny, and the fact that some music journalists around at the time were women is important. I would have enjoyed the opportunity to interrupt with: 'I was there, too.'.[viii] Likewise, Stella Grundy (of 'Madchester' band *Intastella* has recently written a play exploring female experience of this period. In a press interview she commented that 'Madchester' *'was very much a gentleman's club because of Factory and the way that was run. I just think we haven't moved on, and I'm finding that now with my show which is slightly marginalised because it is a female story.'*[ix]Significantly Grundy points out that in her opinion the situation hasn't progressed for women, and the research data in this paper confirms this.

In exploring the shifts that took place in Manchester from the 1980s onwards – a key period in which Manchester was being reinvented – we can see that powerful networks of men redefined the city but in this redefinition there was a failure to call on diverse groups to shape the city's future. A number of local specificities had an impact on linking creativity to masculinity in the Manchester case. I suggest that all empirical case studies could find value in reflecting on the local context and specificities of place. A paradigm of northern 'ladishness' pervades the creative sector in Manchester which is amplified and sustained by a powerful, media fuelled, cultural identity of the city and its popular culture. In particular the nostalgia for, and referencing of, popular culture from previous decades (especially the late 1970s to the mid 1990s) hangs heavy in the air. The new economy did not bring with it new

ideas about masculinity and femininity and creative labour. Media images of this scene fuel, play back and reinforce a dominant ideology that powerfully links masculinity, northernness and creativity. Further research could productively explore the impact of local mythologies on contemporary creative industries in other places. Only through exposing and making visible these subtle, yet ubiquitous, powerful and essentialised social constructions of ideal creative workers, can a dialogue be entered in to about how to bring about change.

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i Skillset report Women in the Creative Media Industries, 2010

ii http://creativeskillset.org/assets/0000/6044/Strategic_Skills_Assessment_for_the_Creative_Media_Industries_North_of_England_2010.pdf

iii Arthur Seaton was the hero of the 1960 film *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning*(based on a novel by Alan Sillitoe and set in Nottingham). This role was played by Salford born actor, Albert Finney.

iv For those not familiar with Madchester and its representatives these photographs will help convey a sense of the 'look and feel' of that movement; http://www.theguardian.com/music/gallery/2012/apr/22/madchester-hacienda-stone-roses-happy-mondays

v http://www.prideofmanchester.com/music/1990s.htm

vi http://www.backseatmafia.com/2015/06/08/meet-stella-grundy-from-the-rise-and-fall-of-a-northern-star/

vii http://www.virgin.com/entrepreneur/hubs-creatives-in-manchester

viii https://film.list.co.uk/article/61468-me-madchester-and-frank-how-i-was-edited-out-of-fictional-history/

ix http://www.backseatmafia.com/2015/06/08/meet-stella-grundy-from-the-rise-and-fall-of-a-northern-star/