# Exploring Women Managers' Gender Role Experiences in Advertising Agencies*

# Kadın Yöneticilerin Reklam Ajanslarındaki Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rolü Deneyimlerinin İncelenmesi

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## Abstract

Although the advertising industry seemingly welcomes women globally, strong horizontal segregation resulting in the feminization of specific departments exists alongside glass ceiling and sticky floor issues. Thus, it is essential to explore how women negotiate their existence through gendered work experiences in organizations. This paper focuses on how women managers experience gender roles in advertising agencies in a developing country. As a developing country integrated into global capitalism, Turkey's advertising industry is mainly made up of international network advertising agencies. Tracing women's growing place in advertising is important for presenting a model for gender equality and women's rights in developing countries. Through an interpretive phenomenological analysis of interviews with 15 women managers with more than 15 years of advertising agency experience, the study finds that women who are in managerial positions in ad agencies tend to define themselves as a manager rather than a woman. In order to become ideal workers, they embrace the hegemonic masculinity and ambivalent sexism within the heteronormative matrix as they learn to perform unfemininity. They choose not to contest gender meanings and categories that function as disempowering and marginalizing elements for women.

**Keywords:** Gender Roles, Advertising Agency, Women Managers, Advertising, Gender Equality.

## Öz

Kadınlar reklam endüstrisinde görünüşte rahatlıkla yer alıyor gibi görünse de, sektörde cam tavan ve yapışkan zemin sorunlarının yanı sıra belirli departmanların genellikle kadınlardan oluşmasıyla kendini gösteren güçlü bir yatay ayrım mevcuttur. Bu nedenle, kadınların ajanslarda toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı iş deneyimleri aracılığıyla varlıklarını nasıl müzakere ettiklerini araştırmak önemlidir. Bu makale, Türkiye'de kadın yöneticilerin reklam ajanslarında toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini nasıl deneyimlediklerine odaklanmaktadır. Küresel kapitalizme entegre olarak gelişmekte olan bir ülke olan Türkiye'de reklam sektörü, ağırlıklı olarak uluslararası network reklam ajanslarından oluşmaktadır. Kadınların reklamcılıktaki artan yerinin izini sürmek, gelişmekte olan ülkelerde toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği ve kadın hakları için bir model sunmak açısından önemlidir. Bu çalışma,15 yıldan fazla reklam ajansı deneyimine sahip 15 kadın yöneticiyle yapılan görüşmelerin yorumlayıcı fenomenoloji yoluyla, reklam ajanslarında yöneticilik pozisyonlarında bulunan kadınların kendilerini kadından ziyade yönetici olarak tanımlama eğiliminde olduklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Reklam sektöründeki kadın yöneticiler ideal işçiler olabilmek için, kadınsı olmamayı gerçekleştirmeyi öğrenirken heteronormatif matris içindeki hegemonik erkekliği ve çelişik duygulu cinsiyetçiliği kucaklamaktadır. Görüşülen yöneticiler kadınlar için güçsüzleştirici ve marjinalleştirici unsurlar olarak işlev gören toplumsal cinsiyet anlamlarına ve kategorilerine itiraz etmemeyi tercih etmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rolleri, Reklam Ajansı, Kadın Yöneticiler, Reklamcılık, Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitliği.

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# Introduction

This paper focuses on how women experience gender roles in the advertising industry in Turkey. As a developing country integrated into global capitalism, Turkey's advertising industry is mainly made up of international network advertising agencies. As organizations promote women's growth in the workforce globally, it is essential to develop research in creative industries such as advertising where women do not move up to decision-making positions. Women and their experiences in creative industries are a neglected area of research.

As Klein (2001) suggests, although creativity is not related to gender, advertising professionals underline that certain personal characteristics are demanded for an effective creative process. Male advertisers are thought of as more confident and ambitious, accelerating their promotions in the workplace, compared to cautiousness and empathy, which are linked to women (Garcia Gonzales and Pinero Otero, 2011, p. 508). However, limitations in social aspects seem to result in a difference in creative production. In addition to cultural biases against women, the "role of opportunity for creative performance" (Runco et al., 2010, p. 344) becomes an important factor in being successful creatively.

Creative departments in agencies are predominantly masculine settings representing features associated with a boys' club (Kazenoff and Vagnoni,1997; Klein, 2000; Mallia, 2009; Gregory, 2009; Mallia and Windels, 2011; Windels and Lee, 2012). Sports, humor, clubbing, and sexualization of women (Gregory, 2009, p. 343) cultivate the "hegemonic masculinity" found in a locker room. Consequently, this masculine environment is centered around codes that represent masculine symbols dictating clothing and communication (Kazenoff and Vagnoni, 1997). One's creative career can and frequently does define how one bonds and to whom (Grow and Broyles 2011).

Women employed in creative departments in agencies struggle because success models were generated with masculine values (Windels and Lee, 2012). International advertising agency cultures are created during a long time period (Pritchard and Morgan, 2000), and gender differentiations are constructed and sustained with "male homosociability, paternalism, and sexism" (Windels and Lee, 2012, p. 515). Such masculine coded environments influence creativity and the generation of original ideas (Hirshman, 1989).

Advertising is considered a feminized industry due to a high female workforce participation rate. However, a more suitable expression is "pseudo-feminization." Pseudo-feminization exists where women have high access to a business, although vertical gender segregation is powerfully present (Pueyo Ayhan, 2010, p. 247). Media departments are filled with women in advertising agencies because "the task of costing out and purchasing time and space has been thought of as primarily clerical skills" (Pritchard and Morgan, 2000, p. 123). Although the gender distribution of entry-level jobs in creative departments is relatively equal, women rarely make it to managerial positions (Grow and Deng, 2014).

## 1. Gender, Performativity and Gendered Habitus

Gender is described as a cultural construction by many theorists. Society produces the feminine being instead of biological, psychological, or economic qualities (de Beauvoir, 1949). One's gender is created and formed through everyday interactions (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Judith Butler's

conceptualization of gender performativity theory centers around the idea that gender is constructed through one's own repetitive gender performance. Butler discusses that "the act that one does, the act that one performs is, in a sense, an act that's been going on before one arrived on the scene" (Butler, 1988, p.526). Social norms and rituals construct gender, and gender identities are cultural performances (Meijer and Prins, 1998).

Gender reproduction is a power negotiation (Bristor and Fischer, 1993). Since gender is repeatedly performed, individuals can modify their performances in disruptive ways affecting heterosexist norms (Butler, 1990). Gender performativity explains "the way in which gender is produced and regulated in a system of structural relations, which is the heteronormative matrix" (Butler, 1998). Consequently, differences of gender are a sociocultural effect produced through performativity, and has an institutional and cultural presence (Thompson and Ustuner, 2015). Butler's (1988) idea is that gender is not just an act but is performative as "it is real only to the extent that it is performed" (p. 526). Particular acts are usually decoded as communicative of a gender core or identity, where such acts either conform to anticipated gender identity or question that expectation in some way (Butler, 1988, p. 528). Performativity is a production that is ritualized and repeated under a constraint, not a single event (Allen, 1998). Thus, gender is a doing. Butler's performativity mediates between the individual subjects and regulatory power that are both produced, controlled, enabled and constrained by it (Allen, 1998).

Gender is another "multiple, interlocking systems of domination" (Clark 1994, p. 422). Butler (1993) proposes that a self in control with a core identity does not really occur. Individuals can develop a gendered habitus, which is predispositions within a social environment to deliberate and act in certain ways. The gendered habitus (Bourdieu 2001; Lovell 2000; McNay 1999b; Thorpe 2009) "places a greater emphasis on the enduring patterns of behavior and comportment that are formed through primary socialization and that come to be experienced as second-nature" Thompson and Ustuner (2015, p. 240). Individuals' actions are

> schematically structured by an embodied history of gender socialization and their material immersion in a system of dominant gender discourses, categories, distinctions, norms, and gendered practices. Owing to these embodied tendencies, a given man or woman will tend to enact their habituated gender patterns even in social contexts where these over-socialized norms are not being directly enforced (Thompson and Ustuner, 2015, p.240).

Thompson and Ustuner (2015) define themes of interaction existing between gender performativity and the gendered habitus. Gender performativity points out the institutional structures regulating social expressions of gender. On the other hand, the gendered habitus emphasizes the ways in which gender socialization inclines men and women toward certain practices and means of social interaction. The gendered habitus stresses the lasting patterns of behavior and conduct formed through socialization which are experienced as second-nature.

## 2. Advertising Industry in Turkey and Transnationalization

Transnationalization is the movements of goods, people, practices, and ideas across national boundaries that transforms the strict differences among nations (Grewal and Kaplan, 2005) and makes them more adaptable to each other. Thus, the internationalization of the advertising industry through mergers and acquisitions of multinational agencies resulted in a global advertising culture. Through acquisitions, advertising agencies intended to become conglomerates specializing in

integrated communications and expand in related design and communications areas and advertising (Leslie, 1995).

The advertising industry in Turkey was part of the global media industry's transnationalization process. The first examples of international advertising in Turkey started with McCann Erickson in 1973. After the neo-liberal policies of 1980 to open up the Turkish economy to the world, multinational companies entered into the advertising industry in Turkey with the prerequisite to buy 51% of shares, beginning a new era (Tore, 2014). Structures have been in the form of partnerships because a joint venture could only have a 51% share. McCann Erickson created a partnership with local Pars Advertising Agency, and the newly formed advertising agency was named ParsMcCann/Erickson. Similarly, in 1985, ManAjans/Thompson and Guzel Sanatlar/Saatchi and Saatchi partnerships were formed in continuation of the multinational partnership process. Currently, some of the partnerships changed hands, while in some partnerships, all of the shares were purchased by international advertising agencies. As an example, the Moran Ogilvy partnership turned into Ogilvy and Mather (Gencturk Hizal, 2005). 85% of the total advertising agencies were established after 1980. Relying heavily on network agencies, the advertising industry in Turkey currently has 81 registered advertising agencies (RD, 2021) that have 80% of the revenues. Large-scale advertising companies are 100% foreign-owned or foreign-partnered companies (Tore, 2014).

In the 1980s, with the arrival of global capital in Turkey, multinational network agencies began to form representative agencies in Turkey. With each agency acquisition, global advertising executives were also positioned in Turkey. These global advertising executives worked with local advertisers in multinational network agencies, changing the way Turkish advertisers did business. Thus, the natural outcome of this process was multinational advertising agency representatives educating local advertisers (Tore, 2014). Advertising agencies mediate the economic strategies of clients and culturally define the geographic boundaries of markets and consumer identities (Leslie, 1995). Advertising agencies are part of transnational "third cultures" with an active role to mediate between different cultures (Featherstone 1991, p. 146). Advertising professionals work as outsiders negotiating problems of intercultural communication (Leslie, 1995). Thus, local cultural values and global values are at an intersection in transnational companies.

Gender hierarchies are constructed and maintained into transnational routes of labor mobilization and capital around the world (Mills, 2003). Hierarchical gender ideologies serve to define women as supplementary or devalued workers. Global factories imitate similar organization models where the lowest levels both of pay and authority are associated with women, while supervisory and managerial positions are occupied by men (Mills, 2003). As movements and ideas move across national borders through the transnationalization process, the ideological constructions of women as docile and dexterous workers (Mills, 2003) require an investigation in the creative industries. Thus, the question that arises is whether traditional gender roles are contested or perpetuated through transnationalization in the advertising industry in Turkey.

## 3. Methodology

The study was structured as an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) to examine how women executives experience traditional gender roles and perform gender in the advertising industry in Turkey. IPA is concerned with the detailed examination of the lived experience (Smith, Flowers, and

Larkin 2009). It is preferred in exploring how individuals perceive particular situations and make sense of their personal and social environment (Smith and Osborn, 2007). Phenomenological studies describe the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (Creswell 2013, p. 76). Furthermore, a phenomenological study is an interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation of the meaning of the lived experiences (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p.126). It is an in-depth qualitative research method examining "how people make sense of their major life experiences" (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009, p. 1). It uses a broad investigation of each participant's response and how their personal experience addresses the questions about the phenomenon. IPA aims to construct a deep and thorough portrayal of the explored phenomenon with an idiographic approach (Lyons, 2007; Smith, 2011), not aiming to formulate laws or generalize results.

The research question of the study has both "social meaning and personal significance" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 104) and is defined as follows:

- How do women experience traditional gender roles in a transnationalized advertising industry in Turkey, a developing economy?

## 3.1. Data Collection

Face to face in-depth interviews were conducted with a homogenous purposive sample "chosen to give a detailed picture of a particular phenomenon" (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p. 79). The informant group consists of 15 influential women with more than 15 years of advertising agency experience in Turkey. The study employed the method of naturalistic semi-structured interviews, which is the preferred data collection method for IPA studies for collecting in-depth and personal information (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Semi-structured, conversational, and open-ended questions (Moustakas, 1994) were used, and follow-up meetings were utilized to probe into particular topics to obtain descriptions of the participants' experiences. Over four months of interviews produced 217 pages of transcribed data with 15 women managers ages 38 to 68 working in top managerial positions in advertising agencies. Each interview took between 1,5 to 2 hours and was audio-recorded and fully transcribed. Informants are chosen because they have lived through the specific experience (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) of being a woman manager in advertising agencies. Interviewees were contacted through snowballing, facilitating access to a closed community of busy executives. Each informant's consent was taken and participants are anonymized to protect their confidentiality. The list of participants can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1.** List of Informants

| NAME | AGE | POSITION | AGENCY | YEARS IN ADVERTISING |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Papatya | 44 | CEO | Local Agency | 22 |
| Gül | 63 | CEO | Local Agency | 25 |
| Leylak | 51 | Former Creative Director | International-Local Partner Agency | 20 |
| Defne | 41 | CEO | Local Agency | 18 |
| Menekşe | 66 | PA to one of the first advertisers in Turkey | International-Local Partner Agency | 24 |
| Nilüfer | 43 | General Manager | International Agency | 20 |

| Orkide | 54 | Country Head | International Agency | 28 |
|--------|-----|--------------|---------------------|-----|
| Lale | 68 | Art Director | International-Local Partner Agency | 25 |
| Gelincik | 47 | Creative Director | Local Agency | 26 |
| Manolya | 38 | Creative Director | International-Local Partner Agency | 15 |
| Leylak | 39 | Account Management Director | International-Local Partner Agency | 15 |
| Mimoza | 46 | Art Director | International Agency | 20 |
| Yasemin | 39 | CEO | International Agency | 20 |
| Karanfil | 43 | CEO | International Agency | 19 |
| Nergis | 60 | CEO | International-Local Partner Agency | 21 |

## 3.2. Data Analysis

Data analysis involved an iterative and inductive cycle, including the following process. Each participant's experiential claims, concerns, and understandings were analyzed individually. Meaning units or themes (Creswell, 2013, p. 193) were identified, emphasizing both convergences and divergences. Phenomenological themes are not generalizations, "they are more like knots in the webs of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes" (van Manen, 1990, p. 90). A conversation between the researcher, the coded data, and her knowledge about what it might mean for participants to have these concerns was carried out. In this context, it led to the development of a more interpretative account. The reflective analysis is produced as "a joint product of the participant and the analyst" (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009, p. 80). A frame or gestalt illustrating the relationships between the themes was developed. A full narrative, evidenced by data extracts, taking the reader through this interpretation theme-by-theme was developed. Table 2 shows the themes used in the analysis.

**Table 2.** Themes Used in the Analysis

| Theme | Data | Interpretive Summary |
|-------|------|----------------------|
| Internalized Hegemonic Masculinity | "A foreign executive had… said that 'you are very different from women in other countries, you are very much like men.' He meant this in a positive sense… He said that Turkish women have a very dominant and strong character." | Internalized hegemonic masculinity is linked to seniority in the advertising agency. |
| Ambivalent Sexism | "I think I may have been more patient, a listener, mother-like, both toward our brands and my colleagues, and I think we might have lived the benefits together." | Women managers show ambivalent sexism as they talk about other women or being a woman at the advertising agency. |

| Disregarded Gendered Struggles | "I was 7 or 8 months pregnant, and I had just gotten home from work and took a shower. My husband's alarm went off since it was time for him to go to work. Think about it. It was 6:30 am or so. And I was pregnant. I had worked so much and hadn't realized it." | Disregarding gendered struggles become second nature to women managers in the advertising agency. |
|---|---|---|
| Learning Unfemininity | "The state of being a businesswoman, this "business femininity" becomes dominant and femininity disappears." | Women managers in advertising choose to perform unfemininity in the office. |

## 4. Findings and Discussion

Although advertising creativity is genderless, the advertising agency is a gendered habitus. Women in managerial positions in an ad agency are inclined to define themselves as managers before women. While they learn to perform unfemininity, they embrace hegemonic masculinity and engage in ambivalent sexism within the heteronormative matrix. While receiving social support for their traditional gender roles in the family, disregarding gendered struggles becomes second nature to the woman manager in the advertising agency. Through this process, women managers choose to become ideal employees demanded by the gendered habitus they are working in (see Figure 1).
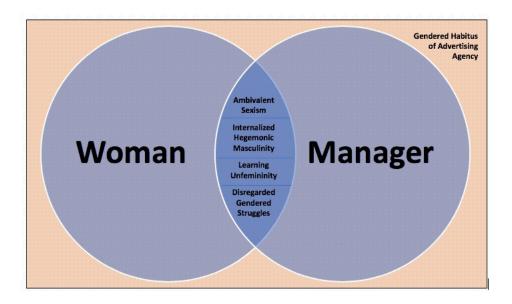


**Figure 1.** Gender Role Experiences of Women Managers in Advertising

## 4.1. Internalized Hegemonic Masculinity of Women Managers

The women in this study have learned to become successful with men's rulebook defining the heteronormative matrix. Hegemonic masculinity is associated with culturally dominating cultural forms and expressions (Connell, 1993). Proficiency in embracing and implementing the dominant male voice in the advertising industry in Turkey benefits women to get promotions. As Grow and Broyles (2011) explain, personality traits such as toughness, perseverance, competitiveness, and

having a thick skin are reasons in succeeding.

Orkide clearly states that "the successful woman is mostly the woman acting similar to a man" in the advertising business. This concept came up frequently in the interviews as Nergis indicates that "women in the advertising industry have a problem, in fact… to continue to work in this business as a woman, you need to be like a man at work." Yasemin talks about a non-Turkish advertising executive praising Turkish women for their male-like qualities:

> But I think women are good at marketing. A foreign executive had told me that he thought that Turkish women are very strong. He said that 'you are very different from women in other countries; you are very much like men.' He meant this in a positive sense… This is a man. He said that Turkish women have a very dominant and strong character.

As women learn to navigate the gendered habitus of the advertising agencies, they learn to internalize the masculine performances seen in male advertising managers. This behavior can be described as a function of the performative script of advertising agencies' gendered habitus and the kinds of experiences and success emerging from the corresponding social interactions. Additionally, consistent with system justification theory, "people want to hold favorable attitudes about themselves and about their own groups, but they also want to hold favorable attitudes about social and political systems that affect them" (Jost et al. 2004, p. 887). Women who powerfully believe that the status quo is appropriate are more likely to express sexism against women (Glick and Fiske, 2001). Nergis talks about the freedom she had as a creative director:

> I returned to work 20 days after delivering my child. But I had this freedom. When my breastfeeding break has come, (I could) go home a little early. (I would) breastfeed and come back at night. Work until one o'clock at night. Wake up the baby at 6 in the morning, you know, spend quality time with her, then go to work again. So, I had the opportunity to be flexible. Moreover, after my daughter was 2 years old, I took her to the agency sometimes. And I remember very well when I was doing my work, and she rolled over with her paints. And some days, when she was sleepy, she'd be on the sofa. There is even a photograph of her sleeping on the couch—a photo of a sleeping child at work.

Instead of conceptualizing this memory as an employee rights issue, she normalizes the mistreatment and even positively contextualizes it as having freedom. System justification theory indicates that "members of disadvantaged groups are not expected to engage in social change strategies to a substantial degree" (Jost et al. 2004, p. 906). Thus, as a woman manager, instead of trying to change the workplace for women she hires, she decides to continue to administer the status quo. Although the education level of advertisers is very high, strikes, unions, or other organized conflicts against employer demands are nonexistent.

Experiences with their women managers were described as merciless and cold-hearted. For example, Gelincik states the situation as;

> Unfortunately, women managers were much harsher, unstable, and they lack empathy. In one agency I've worked in, I was exposed to verbal abuse by my boss. I have also had managers who do not like working with women and exclude them. My promotions were delayed because of this.

Most informants lived through numerous negative experiences with women managers, and many explain the negative experiences they caused for women advertising professionals working for them. Nergis explains how she "does something evil" in the interviews she conducted with potential employees:

> Let me tell you an evil deed. During the interview, I'd say to the people I was going to hire not to give birth as

soon as they get the job. I remember asking: Are you pregnant? It's evil, but… you work for two years, you get in my workgroup and understand the ways of our job. After that, you can raise that child with independence and reason. But if you're never open to a life like that, and you come and give birth here, I don't know how many hours you will be able to focus, so I don't know if you're capable of any work. With light megalomania, the person in my group knows how to give birth, and the person knows how to work and how to travel. At first, I was such a harsh manager. Surely, I need to ask the employees. I mean, I wasn't a rose without thorns.

Nergis's views toward other women in the agency can be explained as "Queen bee syndrome," coined by Staines et al. (1973). Queen bee is a metaphor used to describe successful women who have reached senior managerial positions in their company and do not support women they work with. A queen bee "will sting if her power is threatened by other women" (Mavin, 2006, p. 271).

The distinct gender dynamics created in advertising agencies (Tuncay Zayer and Coleman, 2015) promote an environment where a thick skin is obligatory (Grow and Broyles, 2011) in a culture of masculine hedonism and homosociability (Nixon and Crewe, 2004). Gül defines this agency culture clearly:

I don't interview the newcomers here a lot anymore. But I've always told the people whom I've hired what I was told when I was hired. Come and try the system in advertising; it will either keep you in or throw you out. It is a very tough industry. People are harsh, merciless. One needs to be thick-skinned. If you can't handle these tough words and fight them, you can't do this job. The one who starts crying about 'why he said that' will lose in this industry. For example, they put creative work out, and I ruthlessly criticize, especially me. Because it is necessary to make the cruel criticism for good to come out, I do it very little now, though. They tell me I am so good, but I used to be cruel and belligerent about creative work.

The similarity can be observed in Gül and Nergis as they talk about women employees in gender-neutral terms and how they used to be evil and cruel to other women in advertising agencies. Acker (1990) suggests that "gender is a constitutive element in organizational logic or the underlying assumptions and practices that construct most contemporary work organizations" (p. 147). The concept of "the ideal worker" in an organization is presented with gender-neutral and disembodied terms. This ideal employee is a male who works full time and is committed entirely to the company, and has someone else (conventionally, a wife) caring for all of his needs outside of the working environment (Acker, 1990). Nergis states that "corporate culture is important. My rights and values are mirrored in the teams that work with me. And the corridor I work in." Thus, the employee who starts the advertising agency as a woman employee is transformed into an ideal worker in a few years. Manolya states, "although there are more women working in some agencies, the male mentality is dominant." In both cases, there is an expectation from women workers to embrace the hegemonic masculine gendered habitus of the advertising agency. Women who do not want to live in such an environment leave the agencies. The women who leave are seen as unambitious. Lale explains that

advertising requires a lot of hard work. The earliest time you get home at night is ten o'clock. Or ten-thirty. If your tooth aches, you can leave at seven. The person has to make that decision first. And the will that makes you say 'I'll finish this work' is something that comes from within. Nobody is born so ambitious, so it may be the driving force for people to leave the agency life.

Orkide explains how women's life expectations might be different; and thus, they leave the advertising industry by choice, internalizing and normalizing traditional gender role expectations:

The expectation of the woman may not be a success, premium, profit, business focus in life. That doesn't make her weaker...Maybe the men don't necessarily get in the way of women; I think maybe she leaves the ad industry by herself. A man has nothing but work to feed his life with. He has a wife; he has a job. The woman is not like that. She has a child, a family, a house, a man. Women who have succeeded in business can sometimes be divorced. Or alone. You know, it's called women who are like men…. She's probably freer when she's stripped of the mold

in the family. But when she reflects it on her family, she pays a price.

When asked whether they have experienced any double standards or sexism in the workplace, all of the informants said they did not observe any negativity toward them because they are women. Mimoza explains:

> I have never had such an observation. My managers acted more equal when it was about work. They would expect me to work as flexibly as other male employees. They gave me the same amount of responsibilities. Their expectations were the same. However, there were individual differences in understanding. Some managers were even considerate of PMS, while others even objected to legal maternity leave. It was a woman executive who only approved one month of my 3-month legal maternity leave. But another female executive allowed me a week when my son was two years old, during the busiest campaign period. Because I couldn't pay enough attention to my son, my son became very cranky, and I was so unhappy. My manager, who assigned me to a position where I had to work up to 12am every night was a man. When I told them that I couldn't work under these conditions, I had a husband and a family, he said that everyone has a family. I saw the same insensitivity in a female manager at another agency. However, this attitude is not only towards female employees but also against male workers in this sector.

## 4.2. Ambivalent Sexism in Women Managers

Ambivalent sexism is a theoretical framework that suggests that sexism appears in two forms, hostility toward women and the endorsement of traditional gender roles. A type of sexism faced in workplaces is hostile sexism, defined as antagonism toward women who challenge male power (Glick and Fiske, 1996, 2001). The second type of sexism, called benevolent sexism, occurs when women are stereotyped as affectionate, delicate, and sensitive (Glick and Fiske, 2001; Frye, 1983). People who have benevolent sexist beliefs perceive women to be weak individuals who need to be protected and provided for (Glick and Fiske, 1996). Research has shown that benevolent sexism is just as oppressive as hostile sexism (Glick and Fiske, 2001). Hostile and benevolent sexism exist together in a culture. If people in a society accept hostile sexism, they also show benevolent sexism; and if they reject one of these ideologies, they also reject the other (Glick and Fiske, 2011).

The characteristics that surfaced repetitively in the interviews are voiced by Papatya as "being attentive, hard-working and organized are the qualities that differentiate women." The fact that women are better listeners, their empathy and detail-orientedness make them better at establishing relationships with clients. Although qualities mentioned are very positive, they stereotype women as affectionate, delicate, and sensitive (Glick and Fiske, 2001; Frye, 1983). Attributing certain characteristics to male and female employees has a role in the segregation of areas of expertise by gender. "Passivity, patience, subtlety, delicacy, and punctuality" are seen as typical female qualities (Ecevit 1998, p. 278) in Turkish culture. Leylak denies that she has experienced any type of discrimination, and she describes herself as a mother-like figure who shows empathy towards others. She defines herself with an ambivalent sexist attitude:

> I didn't experience any discriminating behavior, but when I analyzed my own situation, I think I may have been more patient, a listener, and maternal, both toward our brands and my colleagues, and I think we might have experienced the benefits together.

It is observed that in Turkey, women are generally excluded from the branches of management, where scientific knowledge, capital and technology should be controlled by concentrating on certain industries and services. Women are associated with routine, social welfare, community healthcare and service work, based more on helping others. Women are mostly in the position of executing decisions of others, not administrators (Ecevit, 1998, p. 277). Leylak defines the qualities that

made her successful as being maternal and a care-taker. These are qualities related to females in Turkey. Although she believes that she resists traditional gender roles, it is evident that the informant cherishes and values these qualities as the drivers of success for women. Manolya states that "women are comfortable in thinking five steps ahead; they can do more than one job at the same quality simultaneously. I've always seen women to be more practical. But women experience more emotional ebb and flows." Although this statement starts off positive, it turns into a sexist statement labeling women as sensitive and emotionally unstable.

### 4.3. Women Advertisers Learn to Perform "Un-femininity"

The women of this study feel as if they have become "un-feminine." Karanfil defines her gender as

> almost androgynous; not like a woman, not exactly like a man either. The womanly characteristics are moved to the background. When motherhood is added to being a businesswoman, womanhood vanishes. The state of being a businesswoman, this "business femininity" becomes dominant and femininity disappears. I'm not saying this just for the advertising agencies but for the entire business life in general. One of the main problems is that people have lost the womanly and manly roles. It is far behind us. It doesn't even look like that, it's even weird seeing a person like that… what a womanly woman, that's her first feature.

Although Butler proposes that individuals can modify their performances with various approaches that might disrupt heterosexist patterns, women advertising managers choose to perform unfemininity in the office.

If a woman wants to move up to a managerial position, she needs to embrace the status quo, internalize hegemonic masculinity and perform "unfemininity" to become an ideal androgynous worker without reflecting on it. This finding is in line with international research findings that show that women adopt the strategy of erasing their femaleness (Grow and Broyles 2011) and adopt a male career model (Mallia, 2009) to be successful in an environment dominated by masculine values. In a culture where masculine values are favored, women must "learn to behave and think in ways more commonly associated with men;" and as a result, it can be difficult to form an identity (Windels and Mallia, 2014, p. 127).

### 4.4. Disregarded Reality of Gendered Struggles

The informants of the study unanimously agree that producing advertising is a genderless process. Defne explains this belief as "I believe there isn't a difference between women and men in terms of creativity. Everyone is creative; however, some are less fearful or less of a memorizer. I think this is the only difference."

There is a documented agreement in literature that being a woman, especially a woman with children negatively impacts an advertising professional's career (Kazenoff and Vagnoni,1997; Mallia, 2009; Grow and Broyles, 2011). The women in this study clearly support the idea explained by Mallia (2009b) that "gender isn't really the issue, motherhood is." Expressed clearly by one of the participants (Orkide), "motherhood and housework, the fact that women have to have multiple roles are the factors that make it hard for women to put in overtime." After maternity, many women prefer to leave their demanding advertising careers. The women managers' memories are knitted with a guilty conscience about not being able to spend enough time with their children. Nilüfer gets teary eyed when she describes the times when she couldn't leave her flat:

> When she started talking, I remember that, now we don't have issues like this, when my daughter was 2,5 or 3 years old, I couldn't get out of the house in the mornings! She would cling to my legs and cry. She would say 'let's play for another 10 minutes.' I remember leaving the house at about 10am. Or if I had a meeting, I would shake her off my feet and go. Really unpleasant things.

In order to be able to advance in the advertising industry in Turkey, employees are expected to put in excessive amounts of overtime. Gül explains how a chance meeting turned into a job interview for her as the advertising agency CEO explained working conditions as follows: "This job is 24/7. The most important thing in your life should be this job. I mean we will get you out of bed at 12am. Anything might happen." The following quote from Karanfil also shows the normalized inhumane working conditions well:

> Many years ago, a very well-known creative director left the agency I was working at with all his large accounts. I decided to stay at the agency rather than leave with him. We got into an intensely busy work schedule because we had lost 30% of the clients. We were trying to replace them. We were working extremely hard and I was pregnant. I remember a scene like this: I was 7 or 8 months pregnant, and I had just gotten home from work and took a shower. My husband's alarm went off since it was time for him to go to work. Think about it. It was 6:30 am or so. I had worked so much and hadn't realized it. I couldn't believe my eyes. It was really strange.

Yasemin explains how it was different for men and women in the workplace in terms of traditional gender role expectations:

> I'm thinking about men and they all have 2-3 children. They do not even care (about their children's daily routines). They know that children somehow eat, and are taken out of school. The mothers must be taking care of it. A mother has to think about what her child will do on the weekend. A man will not be expected to do that. I guess they can't. It's kind of like waiting for something that won't happen… It's hard for the men because women do it more. For example, I remember thinking. Men right now need to pay the bills, pay money, work like a man, get a salary, set up their business, but bring some money, and be clean. In fact, women do it altogether… Or the men always say, Turkish men say to women who work: "What did you do today anyway?" I wonder if he does all the different management tasks that she does. He is just doing business and going to the office and comes back home again. Again, there's not much change in a man's life after having children. Women do a lot more. Even the social life of the man, even the social life of the X family goes through the woman. It's not much of a man's role.

Informants believe that they need to lead and manage various fragments of their lives well and surrender in some areas to meet society's expectations. Consequently, they adopt a performative life model centering around the construction of hybrid identities as a collection of situational doings. Nilüfer states:

> In Turkey, a lot of things are expected from women. I have a friend who used to say, 'It is expected that I am a good mother, a good businesswoman, a good wife, a good daughter-in-law, a good daughter. She said she can't do all of it at the same time, and so resigned from being a good wife and a good daughter-in-law and she got a divorce.

Managing the stress and overload associated with having multiple roles of hybrid identities becomes difficult for women as long working hours and sacrificed personal relationships are accepted as the unavoidable price to pay for success (Ensher et al., 2002).

Emphasizing the function of grandmothers in the traditional Turkish family life, the comfort of employing domestic helpers, and the encouragement of the significant other is essential as a social support system. Lale explains, "we had a very good babysitter. My mother kept coming and going to the house as well. It is not possible that you could do without these types of supports." The significant other's understanding attitude is invaluable for an advertising woman's accomplishment. Women without social support frequently choose to change their careers. Nergis explains how lucky she is to have a partner who does not expect traditional gender roles from her:

One important point to be mentioned in all of these conversations is that your life partner should be open to flexible work conditions. So sometimes it can be an important determinant. He hinders or supports. I mean, if you come home, and one makes the salad, and the other one gets something from the deep freeze, that food can be sweet. However, if the guy is waiting for ready meals and nagging on his own, and if you're worried about losing him for not being feminine enough… it is difficult.

In a capitalist system, the ideal employee is depicted as a male working full time, and is dedicated entirely to the company and has someone else (conventionally, a wife) taking care of his personal and domestic needs (Acker, 1990). In the above quotes, it is evident that the women have turned themselves into the ideal employee demanded by the gendered habitus they are working in.

## Conclusion

This study investigates how women managers who could move up the glass ceiling in network agencies experience traditional gender roles in a transnationalized advertising industry in Turkey. The essence of the experience was described as women in managerial positions in an ad agency tend to define themselves as a manager before a woman. In order to become ideal workers, they embrace the hegemonic masculinity and ambivalent sexism within the heteronormative matrix as they learn to perform unfemininity. The social support they receive for their traditional gender roles in the family, enables them to disregard gendered struggles of the women advertisers in the agencies. Ultimately, women managers choose to perform as ideal managers demanded by the gendered habitus they are working in.

This study's informants believe women are better at listening, organizing, detailed-oriented thinking, and multitasking. Nevertheless, women experience that those who have internalized the hegemonic masculine values are granted managerial positions. It was noted that women managers internalized and normalized traditional gender role expectations in advertising agencies. Gender roles are engrained and perpetuated in a seemingly progressive sector such as advertising in the context of Turkey, a developing country. It is particularly important for developing countries to work on gender equality in every sector as gender inequality has more costs in an interrelated world. Gender inequality can diminish a country's power to grow internationally and hurt its international standing. Advertising acts as a socializing instrument and has an important influence on the values of society. Thus, moving beyond limiting traditional gender roles and their associated consequences, it is vital to replicate these values in the organizations including the individual actors creating these images.

The process of transnationalization and westernization in Turkish advertising agencies have created a pseudo-equality in the company cultures. The women in this study feel as if they have not experienced discrimination in the advertising industry in Turkey. While gender distinctions are not based on physiological differences, they seem to be engrained in the cultures of organizations, daily and interpersonal relations in this study. Ambivalent sexism in women managers was evident yet not self-recognized in the way informants talked about themselves and other women in the advertising agencies. The women managers this study focused on portrayed was a well-established internalized hegemonic masculinity.

Although they are in power positions, women in this study submit to the working conditions rather than attempt to change them. There is a strong disregard for women's struggles. They cannot contest gender meanings and categories that function as disempowering and marginalizing elements for women. They are not willing to expose the ideologically contingent gender meanings or create a

space for the negotiation of existing gender norms. Policy changes are needed in the advertising industry. Advertising agencies and clients need to understand that underrepresentation of women in advertising compromises creativity and make accommodating changes for women as a smart business decision.

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