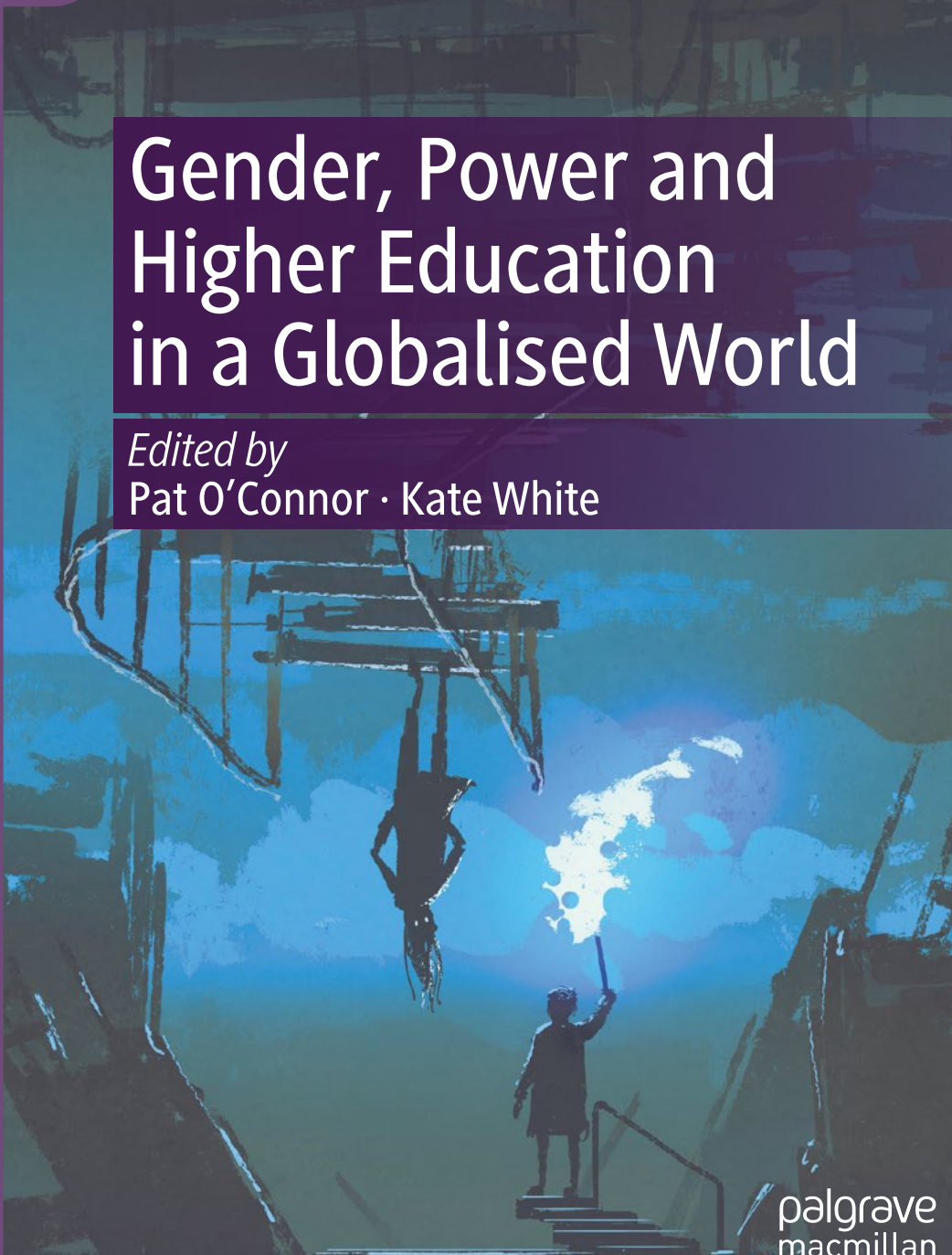




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Gender, Power and Higher Education in a Globalised World

Edited by
Pat O'Connor · Kate White

The background of the cover is a dark, atmospheric illustration. It depicts a figure standing on a set of stairs, holding a glowing torch that illuminates the scene. Above the figure, a large, dark, abstract shape hangs from the ceiling, resembling a person or a complex structure. The overall color palette is dark with a prominent blue and purple hue, creating a mysterious and contemplative mood.

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To Jenny Neale (1945–2019) who was a valued member of the Women in Higher Education Management Network. She made a significant contribution to research on gender and higher education, and was a wonderful colleague and friend.

Praise for *Gender, Power and Higher Education in a Globalised World*

“Gender inequality in higher education is a persistent, complex and global concern, with varying dynamics in different national and regional contexts. This book is a very welcome contribution, investigating reasons behind the slow pace of progress towards gender equality in higher education, by in-depth analyses of contexts, developments and discourses in fourteen countries and five continents.”

—Liisa Husu, *Senior Professor, Örebro University, Sweden.*

“Progress on the elimination of gender inequality in higher education has been minimal despite herculean efforts by many institutions and governments. This insightful collection of case studies of universities in 14 countries explores how taken-for-granted, ostensibly *bias free* policies and assumptions, continue to stymie progress. The book documents diverse dynamics and discourses that prevent progress on gender equality, for example, definitions of ‘excellence’, biological essentialism bias and assertions of gender neutrality. The volume is a must-read for anyone interested in fairness and justice around gender.”

—Patricia Yancey Martin, *Professor Emerita of Sociology,
and Daisy Parker Flory Distinguished Professor,
Florida State University, United States.*

“This is an engaging and informative book that offers an insightful and comparative analysis of the persistence of gender inequalities in higher education. Edited by two leading feminist scholars, this book documents the challenges women academics continue to face within deeply gendered structures of academic power and privilege. It reminds us all of the work that has been achieved as well as the critical questions that must continue to be asked. A compelling and timely contribution to the field.”

—Professor Tanya Fitzgerald, *University of Western Australia.*

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Gender Equality in Higher Education: The Slow Pace of Change

Pat O'Connor and Kate White

1 INTRODUCTION

This book is about gender equality and inequality in higher education (HE). It is over 20 years since Valian (1998) in her seminal book questioned why women's progress in the professions, including academia, was so slow. The fact that this question still needs to be asked in the context of academia is revealing. Gender equality is widely seen as a human rights issue (EIGE, 2020a; UN, 2020). Assuming a binary concept of gender, the first problem frequently identified is gender parity; that is, that the proportion of powerful positions held by women in the institutional

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structures of society (including HE) should be the same as those held by men. This symbolically challenges stereotypes about the gendered enactment of power and its consequences. However, the idea of parity accepts the existing institutional structures. Although it raises important issues, some of which will be discussed in this book, it is a limited perspective.

A distinction is often made between gender parity and gender equality. Gender equality has frequently been depicted as treating everyone the same so as to ensure that they have equal resources such as money, position, power, time and cultural value to shape both their own lives and the society in which they live. However, in an unequal world treating people the same will perpetuate rather than reduce inequality. In order to create real gender equality for women in societal and institutional structures (including HE) which have been created by men for men and which incorporate and normalise a patriarchal dividend (Connell, 2005), it is necessary to transform the structures and cultures of those institutions and to re-imagine gender relations and the taken-for-granted ways of behaving and allocating tasks, power and resources. It is difficult to even envisage what such a world would look like.

It is important to recognise that in some countries (including India and the United Arab Emirates [UAE]; see Chap. 6 in this volume) biological essentialism is taken for granted, with women being regarded as simply different from men and in need of their protection, so that gender equality is effectively irrelevant. In other societies the binary concept of male/female is rejected, and intersex, transgender and other non-binary categories are identified. Thus gender, rather than being a set of characteristics or physical attributes attached to particular sexed bodies, is seen as 'a situated social practice, actualized through social interaction and rooted in the doing and saying of organizational actors' (van den Brink & Benschop, 2012, p. 73). This reflects the idea of individuals 'doing gender' (West & Zimmerman, 1987) regardless of their biological characteristics, in particular interactional situations. Typically, however, the attributes that are culturally valued and rewarded by access to public power, position, cultural value, money and time are enacted by bodies which are male, white, western and middle class (Connell, 2005).

Other bases of inequality such as race, gender orientation, religion, disability and family status have been identified. There has been increasing global awareness of race or ethnicity reflected in global movements such as the # Black Lives Matter. Even yet, in most countries, with notable exceptions such as the United Kingdom (HESA, 2019), there is little published

data on such intersectional characteristics in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) or specifically on black women, although this is a key issue in countries such as South Africa (see Chap. 4 in this volume; also O'Connor, 2011).

HEIs vary cross-nationally in their relationship with the state and the market (Clark, 1986); in their characteristics as single sex or co-educational institutions; as undergraduate and/or postgraduate institutions; as elite, mass or universal in terms of the recruitment of the student cohort (Burrage, 2010); and in their dependence on student fees, particularly from international students. They also differ in their valuation of teaching versus research; in the nature of their internal academic career structures; their gendered horizontal as well as vertical disciplinary patterns at staff and student level; and in awareness of gender inequality as an issue that needs to be tackled.

HEIs overwhelmingly remain male-dominated organisations with masculinist structures, cultures, criteria, procedures and processes (O'Connor, 2020). Both directly and indirectly they play an important part in reflecting and legitimising the patriarchal structures in wider society, and in validating their constructions of valued knowledge and gendered allocation of resources and micropolitical practices (O'Connor et al., 2020). The position of women in such structures, even those at senior level, is fraught with ambiguity (see Chap. 6 in this volume; Fitzgerald, 2018, Fitzgerald & Wilkinson, 2010; Burkinshaw, 2015; O'Connor, 2015). Attempts to transform these structures are resisted internally, directly and indirectly, with the silencing and marginalisation of those who are seen as 'subversive'; and with attempts to co-opt others and promote changes which appear radical but are little more than 'lipstick on the gorilla' (Saunderson, 2002).

Various schemas have been used to differentiate between the levels at which gender inequality operates. They typically include the individual, interactional and organisational as well as systemic and cultural levels (O'Connor et al., 2015; Risman & Davis, 2013). At the individual level, gendered selves are created which are differently valued; at the interactional level, gendered expectations and practices normalise differential access to resources and the informal enactment of power; at the organisational level, gendered structures, cultures, discourses, procedures, criteria and practices legitimate differential access to and valuation of those who occupy hierarchical positions. At the systemic level, the state through funding mechanisms and regulation can inhibit or promote gender and

other intersectional equalities (Ferree, 2008; Yuval-Davies, 2006) through allocating resources differently. The cultural level includes discourses which legitimate such patterns at individual, interactional and organisational levels. Thus, gender inequalities, typically rooted in a valorisation of hegemonic masculinities versus the rest, are embedded at every level.

The European Research Area (EC, 2012) involving 34 countries has defined gender equality success in terms of three pragmatic political goals: firstly, gender equal representation in all fields and hierarchical positions; secondly, the abolition of structural and cultural barriers to women's careers; and thirdly, the integration of a gender dimension in all teaching and research content. These goals envisage breaking down vertical and hierarchical segregation and embedding gender in teaching and research. Gendered change at the organisational level is not only indicated by the presence of women in positions of academic and managerial power, but also by structural and cultural changes that facilitate the transformation of hegemonic male-dominated masculinist structures, culture, procedures and practices. Furthermore, since HEIs are ultimately about knowledge, one would expect to find an attempt to offset the gendering of knowledge in their purpose, their core teaching and research function, and the interests and values of stakeholders. It is widely accepted that progress in creating gender equality in HEIs globally has been slow, despite considerable investment and encouragement by the European Union over the last 25 years (Linková & Mergaert, 2021).

This chapter focuses on the 14 countries which are included in the book—Australia, Austria, Germany, India, Ireland, New Zealand, Portugal, South Africa, Sweden, the Czech Republic, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States and Turkey. They comprise the Women in Higher Education Management (WHEM) Network which was established in 2007 as a feminist research consortium with a vision to analyse the challenges for women in university management and to develop strategies that can empower them to apply for and succeed in senior management roles (Bagilhole & White, 2011). The chapter examines the ranking of these 14 countries on the World Economic Forum's (WEF's) Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) and on a sub-measure which specifically relates to the position of women in power, viz. the Advancement of Women to Leadership Roles (AWLR). It also examines indicators of gender equality in HEIs in these 14 countries; that is, the gender profile of top leadership positions and the proportion of women at professorial level.

The chapter suggests that without organisational transformation, the effect of any intervention is being continuously undermined by processes and practices which are part of the taken-for-granted structure and culture of HEIs and which are underpinned by legitimating discourses.

2 GLOBAL RANKING ON GENDER EQUALITY IN THE 14 COUNTRIES IN THE STUDY

While there are limitations to ranking schemas, they do provide an indicator of a country's commitment to gender equality and facilitate crude international comparisons. We therefore looked at global rankings to examine where the 14 countries in the WHEM Network were positioned. Since only half of the countries are in Europe, the most appropriate global measure of gender equality is the GGGI (WEF, 2020). This overall measure consists of four indices. The first relates to economic participation and opportunity (measured by the difference between men and women's labour force participation rates, estimated male to female earnings and an assessment of wage equality for similar work). The second focuses on educational attainment (measured by the ratio of men to women in primary-, secondary- and tertiary-level education as well as the ratio of male to female literacy rates). The third relates to health and survival (measured by the sex ratio at birth and the gap between men and women's life expectancy), and the fourth to political empowerment (measured by the ratio of men to women in ministerial level positions, in parliament and in national executive office in the last 50 years).

It is clear from Table 1.1 that the countries included in this book vary in their ranking on the GGGI (WEF, 2020). Four of them are in the top ten places (Sweden, New Zealand, Ireland and Germany), three are ranked lower than the 100th position (India, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey) and several are between the 30th and 50th positions (Austria, Portugal and Australia). Surprisingly, the United States is ranked below these at 53rd and the United Kingdom is at 21st, far below the top group. Although this overall measure does provide some indication of gender equality at the national level, it can be skewed by excellent performance on one of these sub-indices (such as health) or strong performance on elements within a sub-index (such as literacy). It also takes into account the position of all women and therefore is affected by

Table 1.1 Global ranking of 14 countries and percentage of women among university Heads/Rectors/Presidents/VCs

<i>WHEM Countries</i>	<i>Ranking on Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) 2020^a</i>	<i>Advancement of Women to Leadership Roles (AWLR)^a</i>	<i>Proportion of Women among Heads/Rectors/Presidents/VCs: (date of most recent data)^b</i>
Sweden	4th	5.43	48 (2019)
New Zealand	6th	5.24	50 (2020)
Ireland	7th	4.89	0 (2019)
Germany	10th	4.96	15.8 (2017)
South Africa	17th	4.06	15 (2020)
United Kingdom	21th	4.82	29 (2018)
Austria	34th	4.62	27.6 (2017)
Portugal	35th	4.34	22.7 (2017)
Australia	44th	5.14	24.3 (2021)
United States	53rd	5.25	34.3 (2017)
Czech Republic	78th	4.81	6.5 (2017)
India	112th	3.92	17 (2016–17)
United Arab Emirates	120th	5.51	N/A
Turkey	130th	3.63	8.5 (2019–2020)

Sources: ^aWEF, 2020; ^bSweden, SS 2020; New Zealand, UNZ 2020; Ireland, HEA 2020; Germany, Austria, Portugal, Czech Republic, EU 2019; South Africa, Khumalo 2020; UK, HEPI 2018; Australia, UA 2021; United States, ACE 2017; India, NL 2018; UAE, Not Available; Turkey, TCOHE 2019-2020

intersectional inequalities such as those experienced by black women in the United States or in South Africa. Nevertheless, it does locate these countries on an overall gender equality continuum and shows the extent of their variation.

One focus of this book is on the relationship between women and public power and the existence of what Brandser and Sumner (2020, p. 122 and p. 124) referred to as a ‘Medusa’ effect; that is, ‘the sanctioning and stereotyping that take place when women ... enter positions of authority and disrupt the established gender order’ ... ‘alluding to the emblematic status the mythological Medusa has in symbolizing men’s fear of powerful women’. Hence, we looked at the scores of the 14 countries

on the Advancement of Women to Leadership Roles (AWLR), a contextual indicator in the Global Gender Gap Report (2020) assessed on the basis of responses to the question: ‘In your country, to what extent do companies provide women with the same opportunities as men to rise to positions of leadership’. While the data is limited and focuses on leadership in companies rather than HEIs, it is clear that there is considerable variation (see Table 1.1). The high score of the United Arab Emirates is surprising and might reflect positive attitudes to Emiratis who comprise only a minority of the population (see Chap. 6 in this volume). Sweden follows the UAE, with Turkey scoring lowest on this measure among the 14 countries.

Focusing on the seven European countries in the WHEM Network, EIGE’s (2020b) economic power scores produce some similarities, with Sweden having the highest score out of 100 (71.7), followed by the United Kingdom (57.1) then Germany (56.5), Ireland (50) and Portugal (44.9), with Austria (24.4) and the Czech Republic (16.4) at the lower end. It is worth noting that the EU average economic power score is 46.8 out of 100, which could illustrate the strength of the ‘Medusa’ effect in the EU.

There appears to be little relationship between the ranking of the 14 countries on the GGGI and on the AWLR. Some countries such as Sweden and Turkey have broadly similar relative rankings on the two. Others such as Ireland score higher on the GGGI than the AWLR, suggesting less positive attitudes to women in leadership than to more broadly based indicators of gender equality, while the United States scores higher on the AWLR than on the GGGI as an overall measure of gender equality, arguably reflecting the highly individualistic nature of that society. Many of these countries have National Gender Equality Action Plans to promote gender equality (Wroblewski, 2020). While the countries which rank highly on the GGGI tend to be those with plans, there is no clear relationship between the two (e.g. Austria with a national plan has a relatively low ranking). This may indicate that the existence of such plans does not guarantee their effective implementation.

The conclusion from this overview of the rankings of the 14 countries is that they vary both in their scores and in rankings on the GGGI and on the AWLR, with no clear relationship between the two. We now turn to indicators of the position of women in higher education.

3 INDICATORS OF GENDER EQUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The most common indicator of gender equality in higher education is the proportion of women in senior academic positions (O'Connor, 2017). Its selection partly suggests its accessibility and attractiveness as a numerical indicator, reflecting the impact of global neo-liberalism and managerialism. However, it also reflects a framing of the problem in terms of gender parity and so fails to problematise Fraser's (2013) misrecognition-related gender inequalities and implicitly limits policy responses to affirmative action, rather than to transformation (Sidelil, 2020).

It is clear that HEIs remain male dominated (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2). Across the EU, men made up 76% of full professors in 2016 (Grade A: Table 1.2) and the proportion of all men at that level was over twice that of women (EU, 2019). Because the most recent EU figures are five years old, where more up-to-date data is available at national level, it is used with implications as regards potential loss of comparability.

Table 1.2 Women as a percentage of full professors (Grade A) in the 14 countries: 2000, 2010, 2020 (or nearest approximate date for the data)

<i>Country</i>	<i>%2000</i>	<i>% 2010</i>	<i>%2020</i>
United States	22.7 (2001)	28.0 (2009)	33.5 (2018)
Turkey	25.5 (2000)	28 (2010)	32 (2020)
South Africa	14.5 (2001)	25.6 (2012)	27.5 (2016)
Australia	16	20	30.1 (2019)
United Kingdom	14.4 (2002/3)	19.8 (2006)	27.4 (2018/9)
Portugal	23.9 (1999)	22 (2009)	26.3 (2016)
New Zealand	12.9	17.5	26.6 (2017)
Sweden	14 (2001)	20 (2009)	29 (2019)
India	18 (2000)	18.5 (2006)	24 (2018/9)
Austria	7 (2000)	17 (2009)	22.7 (2016)
Ireland	7.5 (2000)	19 (2012)	26 (2019)
Germany	8.3 (2001)	15 (2009)	19.4 (2016)
Czech Republic	8.7	13 (2008)	15.4 (2018)
UAE	N/A	10.3	12 (2016)

Sources: **United States:** NCES (2002, 2009, 2018); **Turkey:** EU (2006, 2013), TCOHE (2020); **South Africa:** Boshoff (2005), HEIMS (2016); **Australia:** UA (2015, 2020); **United Kingdom:** HESA (2004, 2019, 2020); **Portugal:** EU (2006, 2013, 2019); **New Zealand:** NZMoE (2019); **Sweden:** EU (2010), SS (2001, 2020); **India:** Singh (2008), Gov of India 2018/9; **Austria:** EU (2004, 2013, 2019); **Ireland:** EU (2004), HEA (2013, 2020); **Germany:** EU (2004, 2013, 2019); **Czech Republic:** EU (2013), Hasova and Oliverius (2018); **UAE:** 2000 N/A—Not available, FCSA (2016)

In New Zealand, drawing on a comprehensive data set, Brower and James (2020) found that a man's odds of being at professor or associate professor level were more than double a woman's among those with a similar research score, age, field and university. And the odds were even higher when attention was focused only at full professorial level. In Irish universities women's 'chances' of accessing a professorship remain much lower than men's (1:13 for women as compared to 1:5 for men) (O'Connor, 2020). Assumptions that this simply reflects women's maternity leave, caring activities or lack of ambition are difficult to sustain in the face of variation in 'chances' in Irish universities, for women from 1:9 to 1:27 while men's 'chances' varied little (1:4 to 1:6) (O'Connor, 2020).

Global processes are increasing the proportion of women professors in HE. It is clear from Table 1.2 that between 2002 and 2016, the proportion of women at full professorial level became more homogenous and increased overall. Although there is still some variation in the proportion of women at full professorial level, there is a good deal of similarity; in eight of the 14 countries the proportion of women at full professorial level around 2020 was between 22% and 29%. However, all 14 countries are below 40% gender representation which can be seen as a minimal definition of gender parity. The pace of change since 2002 as reflected in this indicator has been fastest in Austria, Ireland, Germany, New Zealand and Sweden, where the proportion of women full professors more than doubled over the period, and almost doubled in South Africa, Australia, the United Kingdom and the Czech Republic (Table 1.2). It is striking that in countries such as Turkey, Portugal and the United States, which started at a higher level in 2002 the growth has been more modest, suggesting that increases are not inevitable (O'Connor, 2020).

Since Wenneras and Wold's (1997) classic study, there has been increased awareness that the purportedly gender-neutral discourse of excellence (widely used to legitimate the under-representation of women in senior positions, see Chap. 3 in this volume) is problematic and without a clear definition (Campbell, 2018; Ferretti et al. 2018). There is also bias in evaluation of women's CVs (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012) and recognition of how organisational criteria, procedures and practices effectively discriminate against women. Despite rhetoric about the importance of excellence in a meritocratic system, in some HEIs professorial positions are not publicly advertised, criteria are narrowly defined to suit an

individual (sometimes local) candidate and even where detailed criteria are available, gendered micropolitical practices persist (van den Brink & Benschop, 2011; Nielsen, 2016; O'Connor et al., 2020; O'Connor & O'Hagan, 2016).

The gender profile of top leadership in universities can also be seen as an indicator of gendered change (Wroblewski, 2020). It is clear from Table 1.1 that it varies a great deal; it is highest in New Zealand and lowest in the Czech Republic and Ireland (where the first woman in 428 years was appointed as president/rector on an interim basis in 2020 and within six months three further women were appointed, so that by 2021, 40% of those at presidential/rector level in Irish public universities were women). Reflecting the greater prestige of universities, the proportion of women who are in Rector/President/Vice Chancellor positions across the EU is lower than in HEIs which are not universities (EU, 2019).

Much EU attention has focused on gender parity at full professor and senior management level, particularly in Austria where there has been considerable progress in altering the gender profile of management structures, and some progress at full professor level. It will be shown that this falls far short of institutional transformation (see Chap. 8 in this volume).

Wroblewski (2020) found no relationship between EIGE's (2017) measure of gender equality and the proportion of women at full professor level. Among the 14 countries in the present study, there also appears to be no relationship between the proportion of women who are full professors and that country's rank on the GGGI or AWLR (Tables 1.1 and 1.2). Thus, Turkey's proportion of women professors is high at 32%, but it ranks 130th on the GGGI and is the lowest of the 14 countries on the AWLR.

4 WHY IS THE PACE OF CHANGE SO SLOW? THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Feminist institutionalism is the underlying theoretical perspective for this book (Mackay et al., 2010; Krook and MacKay 2011; Verge et al., 2018). Building on the work of Acker (1990, 2006) on gendered organisations and Connell (1987, 2002) on gender regimes, feminist institutionalism sees gender operating at both the structural and cultural, and formal and informal levels (O'Connor, 2020). Acker (1990) highlighted the gendered nature of organisations and suggested that their processes

create and/or sustain gender segregation within paid work, gendered segregation between paid and unpaid work, gendered income and status inequality, stereotypical cultural images and individual gender identity. Acker (2006, p. 443) described organisational regimes as: ‘loosely inter-related practices, processes, actions and meanings that result in and maintain’ gender inequalities that are themselves ‘gendered processes’ (Acker, 1990, p. 140). They are typically ‘care-less’ (Lynch et al., 2012), premised on paid workers who are unencumbered by caring responsibilities.

In HEIs women appear to have equal rights and privileges in what purports to be a gender-neutral world. The reality is more complex. Each organisation has a particular gender order or ‘gender regime’ involving ‘a set of *relationships*—ways that people, groups and organisations are connected and divided’ (Connell, 2002, p. 53). For Connell (2005) the gender order is a structure that benefits men who have a vested interest in upholding it. Hence, gender inequality is embedded in the structure and culture of organisations and shapes and is shaped by the individuals in it. Feminist institutionalism (Mackay et al., 2010, p. 580) sees gender as an element constituting ‘social relations based upon perceived (socially constructed and culturally variable) differences between women and men, and as a primary way of signifying (and naturalising) relations of power and hierarchy’. Thus, it involves the devaluation of women and of areas of predominantly female employment in HEIs. It is reflected at both a structural and cultural level.

At a structural level it is evident in the under-representation of women in senior positions with men dominating senior posts, and predominantly male areas having better resources, working conditions and access to promotion than predominantly female ones. Such male-dominated areas typically have a higher ratio of senior to junior posts, better staff/student ratios, greater access to research funding, more highly valued research output and are considered more highly skilled and strategic than predominantly female ones (Steinþorsdóttir et al., 2018; White et al., 2011; O’Connor, 2020). While the time-line for accessing permanent positions in HEIs appears gender neutral, it is unhelpful for women as it conflicts with the peak time for bearing and rearing children (Caprile, 2012; HOC Science and Technology Committee, 2014; White, 2014).

At a cultural level it is reflected in the legitimacy of discourses and practices that value men and facilitate their access to top positions. Indeed, the

organisational culture of HEIs frequently reflects the wishes and needs of powerful men, underpinned by gendered discourses which legitimise women's position at lower hierarchical levels (Benschop & Brouns, 2003). Increasingly in HEIs in Western Europe, undergraduate teaching and pastoral care are considered 'housekeeping' (Heijstra et al., 2017), and devalued and disproportionately allocated to women (El-Alayli et al., 2018; O'Meara et al., 2017; Santos & Dang Van Phu, 2019). Frequently this reflects underlying assumptions about women's 'nature' and patronising attitudes about what is best for them (O'Connor, 2015). Activities that are considered high profile and status (e.g. postgraduate teaching and research) tend to be allocated to men. The net effect is that women are less likely to be the 'obvious' next-level person when opportunities for recruitment/promotion appear.

The day-to-day interaction—what Martin (2006, p. 254) called 'the literal *practicing* (sic) of gender that is constituted through interaction'—including through the enactment of informal power or micropolitical practices (O'Connor et al., 2020) also perpetuates gender inequality. Thus, senior managers with influence leverage off their own power and reputation to advance the careers of their (typically male) protégés through sponsorship (De Vries & Binns, 2018; Ibarra et al., 2010). Micro-aggressions which ultimately impact on women's careers have also been identified, including gendered devaluation (O'Connor et al., 2020) reflected in incivility, denigration, threats, invisibility, condescension, disparagement, ostracism, ridiculing, 'catch 22' evaluations, blaming, withholding key career-related information, and taking unearned credit for others' work and sexual harassment (As, 2004; Miner et al., 2017; Naezer et al., 2019). 'Doubt raisers' such as questioning women's intellectual independence and devaluing their achievements in informal asides have been observed even on Swedish funding boards (Ahlqvist et al., 2013). Schraudner et al.'s (2019) survey of staff at the Max Planck Society found that one in three women had experienced unequal treatment on the basis of gender in the previous 12 months (three times the corresponding number of men)—rising to almost 60% of women in senior leadership (compared with less than 12% of comparable men). Chapter 7 in this volume argues that gender-based violence and harassment exist on a continuum from microaggression to rape and its eradication requires transformation of HEIs and their organisational culture.

Leadership positions are typically seen as gendered ('Think Manager, Think Male': Schein et al., 1996). Such stereotypes create challenges for

women (Fitzgerald, 2018, 2020). The masculinist definition of the characteristics and behaviour of a leader means that women are wrong footed; if they behave like women they are not seen as leaders, if they behave as leaders they are criticised as women (Burkinshaw, 2015; O'Connor, 2015). A further complication is that women are frequently in female-dominated areas which are perceived as low status and thus not locations for identifying future leaders (Morley, 2014). The under-representation of women in senior positions can be construed as symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 2001) and as limiting the role models available to students and junior faculty. Male occupancy of positions of power, including professorial positions, has been remarkably resistant to change cross-nationally. However, since women are also products of that system, simply changing the gender profile of such positions will not necessarily transform HEIs. When women legitimate an individualistic model of success and denigrate a focus on gendered structural and cultural factors, symbolic success is bought at a high price.

The EU sees diversity as contributing to research innovation (EC, 2012) and the OECD (2012) as contributing to economic growth. Diversity makes an important contribution to governance and effectiveness in business. If we assume that talent (however defined) is normally distributed in the population in a bell-shaped curve, then excluding a large proportion of the female population limits talent in the public arena.

The focus in this book is mainly on the organisational level, but the individual and systemic level can also inhibit or promote gender equality/inequality (Ceci & Williams, 2011; O'Connor et al., 2015; Risman & Davis, 2013).

5 METHODOLOGY

In order to identify the key themes to be explored in this book, researchers from each of the 14 countries in the WHEM Network were asked to reflect on why progress in gender equality continued to be so slow (Valian, 1998), particularly within their own country. From the subsequent discussion it was agreed that we needed to look at institutional resistance to gender equality, and particularly at the discourses perpetuating and legitimating the *status quo*. We also needed to analyse the current situation in neoliberal managerialist HEIs; examine sexual harassment as a manifestation of unequal power; and identify internal structures, processes and practices which facilitate gendered change, with a particular emphasis on

leadership. These ideas were distilled through a process of continuous debate over a six-month period into the following seven key themes:

- Institutional resistance in the existing system
- Excellence as a legitimating discourse
- Choice as an individual legitimating discourse
- Displacement and the invisibility of gender equality
- Revitalised biological essentialist discourse
- Gender-neutral discourse: obscuring gender-based power and sexual harassment
- Gender competent leadership and empowering structures

Each of the researchers in the Network then examined the relevance of these themes to HEIs in their country. Most saw synergies with other countries in relation to a particular theme and agreed to collaborate with other researchers in exploring that theme. The first theme introduces the concept of institutional resistance. The next five themes focus on how HEIs have effectively resisted the gender equality agenda through the creation of legitimating discourses which ensure that the pace of gendered change has been so slow. The final theme identifies ways of moving forward.

The book encompasses a range of quantitative and qualitative methodologies in exploring these seven themes—institutional resistance (Chap. 2, focusing on Sweden and Portugal); excellence (Chap. 3, with Ireland and the United Kingdom as exemplars); individual choice (Chap. 4, the Czech Republic, South Africa and Turkey); displacement and invisibility (Chap. 5, Australia and New Zealand); a revitalised biological essentialist discourse (Chap. 6, India and the United Arab Emirates); a gender-neutral discourse obscuring gendered violence and sexual harassment, with professional associations as a means of tackling this (Chap. 7, the United States) and gender competent leadership and empowering structures as a way of moving towards institutional transformation (Chap. 8, Austria and Germany).

The focus in this book is on how male-dominated organisations reproduce and legitimise gender inequality. Chapter 2 explores the forms of institutional resistance to gender equality and how they prevent/suppress/hinder/slow down advances in gender equality projects in HEIs in Sweden and Portugal. Chapter 3 problematises the legitimating discourse of excellence as reflected in UK policy documents. It suggests that this

discourse obscures informal power and, examining an Irish HEI, puts forward a typology of such micropolitical practices. Chapter 4 draws on data from HEIs in the Czech Republic, South Africa and Turkey and examines the use of ‘individual choice’ as a legitimating discourse that obscures structural sources of gender inequality and decontextualises women’s choices. It examines both the internalisation of choice by individual academics and its use by managers to explain women’s position in academia. Chapter 5 focuses on Australia and New Zealand where, although HEIs have implemented gender equality policies and frameworks, they have combined gender with other diversity categories. As a consequence, gender equality is not prioritised in the strategic plans of public universities, despite the commitment of those senior managers responsible for gender equality. Chapter 6, using an auto and ethnographic approach, examines women’s experiences in case study HEIs in India and the UAE focusing on the silencing and marginalisation of women, even those in leadership positions. Chapter 7 examines gender-based violence and harassment as a systemic abuse of power and identifies professional associations in the United States as potential stakeholders and whistle blowers. Chapter 8 critiques sex quotas and gender mainstreaming in Austria and Germany for their limited impact on gender equality. It indicates that gender competent leadership and the empowerment of structures promoting gender equality are crucial if real gender equality is to be created.

All draft chapters were peer reviewed by members of the Network. All researchers received ethics approval from their university before undertaking primary data collection. While most used data collected before 2020, there were unique challenges for those who collected data during the COVID-19 global pandemic. All the researchers experienced difficulties created by working from home at this time. Since women spend much more time than their male partners on child care, housework and home schooling (Benzeval et al., 2020), this has been shown internationally to have implications for women’s careers (Ferrari, 2020; Matthews, 2020).

In summary, the issue of why gendered change has been so slow in HEIs is addressed in this book from various perspectives in 14 different countries across five continents.

6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Gender inequality in higher education is a global, complex and intractable issue. There is no clear relationship between its indicators, such as the proportion of women as full professors or Rectors/Vice Chancellors/

Presidents in HEIs, and national ranking on the GGGI or AWLR (WEF, 2020). The structures, culture, procedures, practices and processes in HEIs are clearly important, as are the societies in which they are located, and the extent to which these structures are supported or challenged by individuals. Using a feminist institutional perspective and drawing on a variety of methodologies, this book focuses on why the pace of change in HEIs has been so slow; the question posed by Valian (1998) over 20 years ago. Key topical issues in relation to gender equality are explored in the 14 WHEM Network countries. It is to a detailed examination of these issues that we now turn.

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Institutionalised Resistance to Gender Equality Initiatives in Swedish and Portuguese Academia

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1 INTRODUCTION

Feminist scholarship on Higher Education (HE) has accentuated the need for change: *from* gender inequality *to* gender equality. The implementation of measures to address gender inequality in HE however goes hand in hand with displays of institutionalised resistance which previous research has described as a more or less inevitable consequence of initiatives to

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promote gender equality (cf. e.g. Agócs, 1997; Thomas & Hardy, 2011; Van Dijk & Van Dick, 2009). The reasons for such persistent and pervasive resistance are complex. Gender equality change challenges norms, practices and assumptions regarding the relationship between women and men, but also calls into question their own personal identities and beliefs (Lombardo & Mergaert, 2013). Attempts to implement change also threaten existing power structures and relationships built on the privilege and dominance of certain groups. Institutionalised resistance to gender equality therefore often tries to maintain and reproduce the status quo in organisations and specifically protect the power relations between groups (Roos et al., 2020).

This chapter explores institutionalised resistance towards interventions aimed at increasing gender equality in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), with particular attention to similar forms of resistance identified across two different national contexts. It addresses the following research questions: How is institutionalised resistance to gender equality initiatives manifested in HEIs? By what institutional processes, practices and structures are resistance towards gender equality initiatives in HEIs produced and reproduced? What similar types of institutional resistance to gender equality initiatives do gender equality change agents in HEIs identify, despite contextual differences in national settings, types of change agendas and the position of change agents?

2 RESEARCHING RESISTANCE THROUGH FEMINIST INSTITUTIONALISM

The analysis in this chapter draws on feminist, sociological institutionalism as a theoretical framework (cf. Mackay et al., 2010; Mackay et al., 2009; Krook & Mackay, 2011; Verge et al., 2018; Waylen, 2014; see also Chap. 1). The feminist institutionalism framework facilitates an investigation of how formal and informal institutional processes, practices, norms and mechanisms in HEIs reflect, reinforce and reproduce gendered power

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relations and gender inequality (Krook & Mackay, 2011). One manifestation is the different forms of institutional resistance towards initiatives to promote gender equality (Mackay et al., 2010; Mackay & Waylen, 2009). Resistance is here understood as situated and contextualised (Powell et al., 2018) and as emerging during processes of change, with the aim of maintaining the status quo (Mergaert & Lombardo, 2014). Institutional resistance towards gender equality is manifested as patterns of action or inaction that are systematically repeated and collectively orchestrated (Mergaert & Lombardo, 2014). Carol Agócs (1997, p. 918) defines institutional resistance as “patterns of organizational behaviour that decision makers or people in power positions employ to actively or passively deny, reject and refuse to implement, repress or even dismantle gender equality change proposals and initiatives”. Agócs also offers the following understanding of institutional resistance:

To say that resistance is institutionalized means that it is embedded in and expressed through organizational structures and processes of legitimation, decision making and resource allocation. Institutionalized resistance may be embodied in decisions to provide or withhold resources, to adopt a new policy or change an established one, or to implement or refuse to implement a policy. (Agócs, 1997, p. 918)

This chapter adopts the same understanding, identifying and analysing manifestations of institutionalised resistance “embedded in and expressed through organizational structures and processes of legitimation, decision making and resource allocation” (Agócs, 1997, p. 918). The analysis thus builds on, and develops, the conceptual categorisation of institutionalised resistance, manifested in three separate types of institutional structures and processes, regarding: (1) legitimation, (2) decision-making and (3) resource allocation.

Focusing on manifestations of institutionalised resistance facilitates an analysis that elaborates on relations between gender, power, hierarchy and resistance, taking into account the formal and informal institutional contexts and barriers to gender equality (Mackay et al., 2010; Mackay & Waylen, 2009). Previous research has suggested that more overt, active and explicit resistance has become subtler and implicit and therefore also more difficult to identify and address (Mergaert & Lombardo, 2014). Concentrating on institutionalised resistance enables an exploration of how the structures and cultures of organisations are permeated by gendered processes and practices which would otherwise remain hidden as expressions of power (Agócs, 1997).

3 METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

The analysis in this chapter draws on a total of 15 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with so-called Gender Equality Change Agents (GECAs) in Swedish and Portuguese HEI's who were involved in the implementation of two different types of gender equality change agendas: the Swedish GECAs were implementing gender mainstreaming plans (GEMPs) while the Portuguese GECAs were implementing gender equality plans (GEPs). The GEMPs and the GEPs were tailor-made for five Swedish HEIs and five Portuguese HEIs, respectively.

In Portugal five interviews were conducted with women who were the national Principal Investigators (PIs) of projects funded by the European Commission (EC) within the Horizon 2020-programme.¹ The aim of the projects was to implement five tailor-made gender equality plans (GEPs) in five different HEIs with initiatives to provide equal opportunities for women and men: to increase gender balance and the number of women in senior academic and management positions and on decision-making bodies. In Sweden, ten interviews were conducted with women and men who were responsible for implementing tailor-made gender equality mainstreaming plans (GEMPs) in five different HEIs. The GEMPs comprised a wide range of initiatives regarding organisational change: gender budgeting, increasing gender awareness among staff and managers, targeting gender bias in recruitment and promotion processes and addressing gender inequality in career opportunities (cf. Jordansson & Peterson, 2019).

All 15 interviewees had either official accountability for implementing gender equality agendas in the organisation, or practical responsibility for co-ordinating and supporting the implementation process, which means that it was part of their administrative, academic and/or leadership role within the HEIs. Due to ethical considerations regarding confidentiality and anonymity, more detailed information about the informants will not be revealed, but it is noted that there was great variety in their formal positions and titles.

The 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted using a similar interview guide focusing on gender equality, gender equality change agency, gender equality initiatives and experiences of resistance. As always with semi-structured interviews, the interview guide was used flexibly and

¹The Portuguese authors acknowledge the cooperation and work of Carina Jordão in conducting one interview and transcribing all the recorded interviews.

allowed the interviewer to follow up on individual stories. The interviews were between 60 and 90 minutes long and characterised by the informants' openness and willingness to share their experiences and knowledge. The transcribed interviews were subsequently analysed using a thematic approach that focused on identifying different dimensions of the contextualised and situated manifestations of institutionalised resistance. A theoretical typology was added as an explanatory framework in a later analytical phase to facilitate comparisons of the manifestations of institutionalised resistance in the two sets of data (Agócs, 1997).

The units of analysis in the study were the manifestations of resistance towards gender change agendas, experienced and re-told by the GECAs. This chapter thus explores institutionalised resistance to gender change agendas in HEIs through the perspectives of GECAs who, in the semi-structured qualitative interviews, shared their personal experiences and gave first-hand accounts of situations where resistance was demonstrated. This is a common methodological approach when investigating resistance towards gender equality (cf. e.g. Thomson, 2018; Verge et al., 2018). The analysis was carefully elaborated through detailed coding of the data and subsequent development of themes, during an oscillating process between coding of the empirical data and returning to previous research and the theoretical framework. The analytical process was thus characterised by structured reflection, consistency, robustness and rigor.

Incorporating interviews from both Portugal and Sweden in the analysis allowed the research to compare the “most different cases” (Seawright & Gerring, 2008) within the European context. As described in Chap. 1, the HE context in the two countries is characterised by their different rankings in the Global Gender Gap Report and other indicators, with Sweden ranked at the top on most indicators, and Portugal ranked below Sweden on all current indicators for achieving gender equality (cf. also Chap. 1).

The chapter provides the HE context in the two countries as a backdrop for investigating similar types of institutionalised resistance while at the same time identifying their differential salience. It is thus an investigation primarily of similarities but also variation (Kohn, 1987; Tilly, 1984). The institutional context for HE in Sweden and Portugal is described further below.

3.1 *Institutional Context of Swedish Higher Education*

Sweden has long cherished a self-image as a world leader in terms of equality, egalitarian values and gender equality (Lykke, 2016). The Swedish Government is explicitly feminist with a feminist agenda, and the goal for its gender equality policy is that “women and men shall have the same power to shape society and their own lives” (Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2020). Gender mainstreaming is the strategy adopted to reach gender equality objectives and gender-responsive budgeting is an important tool. The welfare system includes a social security scheme at the core of which is the family model for work-family balance. A highly subsidised public child care system and gender-neutral paid parental leave benefits encourage dual-earner households. Critical voices have, however, also contested and nuanced the image of “the myth of Swedish gender equality” (Lykke, 2016, p. 117; cf. Lane & Jordansson, 2020; Martinsson, & Griffin, 2016). Nevertheless, these initiatives and policies have earned Sweden a place at the top of different country rankings based on indices for gender equality. In the most recent Global Gender Gap Index (WEF, 2020) Sweden is ranked number 4, with high labour force participation for women and a low gender pay gap, and the country has consistently been at the top of the Index for several decades. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) ranks Sweden first among the 28 EU-member states (EIGE, 2020).

The formal institutional context for Swedish HE is characterised by laws, rules and policies regarding gender equality at national, sector, organisational and departmental level. More specifically, the sector is governed by the rules and regulations in the Swedish Higher Education Act and the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance. The Higher Education Act (SFS, 1992: 434, §5) states that equality between men and women shall always be taken into account and promoted in the activities of universities. The Swedish Higher Education Ordinance (SFS, 1993: 100, chapter 4, §5) stipulates the need for gender balance in selection committees for teaching appointments, unless there are specific reasons for not reaching equal representation. Gender balance in decision-making is also addressed in these laws. The Swedish Government appoints the boards of HEIs and in doing so adheres to equal representation policies, which means that women and men are often equally represented in these boards (Göransson, 2011). Several academic leadership positions are also gender balanced (Peterson, 2011). In 2019, for example, 48% of the Swedish

Vice-Chancellors were women (compared to 20% in 2003) (Statistics Sweden, 2020).

In addition, like all organisations in the Swedish labour market, HEIs have to adhere to the Swedish Discrimination Act and engage in active measures, documented in a GEP, to provide equal opportunities and to prevent discrimination, harassment and inequality at work. Besides the legal framework and the recruitment targets, the Swedish Government has implemented different gender equality interventions in Swedish HE since the mid-1990s. When the interviews for this study were conducted (2018–2019), the operation of HEIs was guided by government directives initiated in 2016 that obliged them to implement specific GEMPs, in addition to the GEPs. The GEMPs focus on organisational transformation, using gender mainstreaming as a strategy to complement equal opportunities efforts in the GEPs.

One of the problem areas identified and repeatedly targeted by gender equality and gender mainstreaming initiatives in Swedish HE concerns gender inequality in the professoriate. In 2019, only 29% of full professors in Swedish HE were women, which was an increase from 14% in 2001, 19% in 2008 and 24% in 2013 (Statistics Sweden 2020). To combat the low percentage of women in the professoriate, the Swedish Government in the late 1990s introduced a long-term measure of recruitment targets for each HEI that indicated the desirable proportion of women to be included among newly recruited professors during a three-year period. The purpose of the targets was to encourage HEIs to recruit more women mainly from a pool of associate professors and lecturers who could be hired as professors. The latest recruitment targets included a long-term goal of half of all professors to be women by 2030 (Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2020). Few HEIs reach their targets and there are no clear consequences for those who fail to do so. There was an initial positive effect when the recruitment targets first were introduced. It is difficult to evaluate to what extent other factors have influenced the slow increase of women in the professoriate although it seems possible that it reflects the impact of informal processes maintaining the status quo (Dryler & Gillström, 2012).

3.2 *Institutional Context of Portuguese Higher Education*

Although equal opportunities have been enshrined in the Portuguese Constitution since 1974, the tendency has been to promote gender

equality as a general principle in the legislation, avoiding the use of explicit affirmative action in HE. Historically gender equality was adopted in the political agenda mainly as a result of external pressure. For instance, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations (UN) influenced legislation in the 1970s giving women the right to the same salary for the same work and protection during maternity leave. Similarly, a Commission for the Equality in Work and Employment (CITE) was created in the Ministry of Work to ensure legal equality for women and men at work, in this instance mainly influenced by Sweden's policies. The integration of Portugal into the European Union (EU) in 1986 led to the implementation of gender equality policies in order to comply with European equal opportunities policies. Legal initiatives to promote gender equality have included: equality of opportunity and treatment at work in the public sector (1988), the establishment of a Commission for Equality and Women's Rights (1991) and legislation addressing direct and indirect discrimination in the workplace (1997). More general rules to promote equality at work were also established outside HE in relation to part-time work (Laws 103/99); parental leave (Law 7/2000); applying the principle of equal remuneration for women and men in the workplace; and equal treatment of women and men in accessing employment, training, promotion and working conditions.

More recently two affirmative action initiatives have been implemented in Portugal, namely Law 3/2006 and Law 62/2017. The first defines quotas for female candidates in political parties and the second requires all public sector companies to have at least one third (33.3%) of women in their administrative and supervisory bodies.

In the Global Gender Gap Index (WEF, 2020) Portugal is 35th of 153 countries. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) ranks Portugal 16th among the 28 EU-member states (EIGE, 2020), but adds that although the country has a lower score than the EU average, it is moving towards gender equality at a faster rate than the EU as a whole.

Turning to the Portuguese HE sector, we find the same tendency as in the broader society. The dominant discourse in HE is that universities are a "gender neutral organisational field," established according to universal merit and equity principles (White et al., 2011). Only recently, and mostly as a result of EC funding for research (through FP7 and H2020), some institutions have started designing and implementing GEPs. Eight HEIs have been or are still participating in these funded projects which aim to

implement tailor-made GEPs that are designed to boost women's careers and to create gender equal decision-making bodies and processes. More specifically, their goal is to identify structural barriers to women's career progression and to increase women's participation in decision-making processes. The first university to develop such a plan was University Beira Interior (UBI) in 2011 followed five years later by the University of Minho with the Equal-IST project. In the same year, the SAGE, in ISCTE-IUL and Plotina projects were established at the University of Lisbon. Four other projects are currently being implemented: Supera at the University of Coimbra; CHANGE at the University of Aveiro; SPEAR at the Nova University of Lisbon and Gearing Roles in IGOT (Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning) at the University of Lisbon.

4 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 *Institutionalised Resistance Towards Processes of Legitimising a Change Agenda*

Establishing the legitimacy of the case for change is fundamental to all organisational change agendas (Kotter, 1995). While our informants had the mandate from the European Commission to implement GEPs and from the Swedish Government to implement GEMPs, they identified institutionalised resistance manifested in denials of the legitimacy of the case for change (Agócs, 1997). The GECAs therefore also described how engaging in processes regarding establishing the legitimacy of the gender change agenda was more or less an inherent part of their role and their implementation strategies. Engaging in processes of legitimation meant that they strategically addressed the need for increased gender awareness in their HEIs to achieve agreement on a credible problem definition, organisational status quo and objectives of the change agenda.

Several Portuguese GECAs reported that gender inequality was not recognised as a problem, which concurs with previous studies (White et al., 2011). They faced resistance aimed at generally undermining the legitimacy of feminist knowledge about gender inequality in organisations. They also confronted arguments that denied change was necessary in their own HEI. These arguments rejected the validity and reliability of evidence of gender inequality and attempted to silence such views. The Portuguese GECAs also admitted that their change message was not as strong as it could be. They recognised the lack of information about their

HEIs as weakening their role and challenging their change message. Consequently, gender inequality remained invisible for the decision-makers and the people in positions of power:

They [the causes of resistance] are based on a great lack of information and knowledge. And [...] that is why it is important for institutions to have disaggregated data by sex and to monitor indicators of the situation in terms of gender equality, because this makes inequalities visible. (GECA, female, PT)

Another Portuguese respondent explained how they worked to offset resistance based on lack of gender awareness and knowledge about gender inequality:

Unequivocal data and evidence must be presented based on numbers that partially contradict the rejection that there is a problem. Then [...] you must resort to studies that indicate the causal relationship between that data and institutional action. (GECA, female, PT)

However, in the Portuguese context, even when information was available and disseminated, there were attacks on the legitimacy of the gender equality change message. One GECA explained:

In a meeting presenting the results of the empirical work sustaining the existence of gender inequality a very well-known man researcher, from hard sciences, said: 'you can't sustain your results because the number of interviews is quite low.' (GECA, female, PT)

The importance of building a strong case for gender equality change was also emphasised due to the cognitive biases surrounding gender:

If we don't have that [i.e. facts] [...] people will assume a reality which is the one they see with their eyes, but their eyes are biased from their personal experience, from their individual subjectivity, and, therefore, they will always deny it. (GECA, female, PT)

According to the Portuguese respondents, this type of institutionalised resistance reflected, reinforced and reproduced the understanding of gender (in)equality as a contested area within HE. The lack of formal rules, knowledge and tradition in designing and implementing GEPs in Portuguese HEIs was seriously undermining their role as GECAs and

preventing them from building a convincing case for gender equality change. Institutionalised resistance can be manifested in the existence of formal rules which oppose gender equality change, but also in the absence of formal rules which support it (cf. Mergaert & Lombardo, 2014). Moreover, the distrust of the knowledge of GECAs about processes and practices that reproduce gender inequality in Portuguese HE was systematic and collectively orchestrated, and thus an example of gender ignorance manifesting as institutionalised resistance (cf. Lombardo & Mergaert, 2013).

Unlike Portugal, in Sweden the gender equality change agenda generally has formal (although not always informal) legitimacy. One of the Swedish GECAs described the lack of resistance towards their GEMPs: “I really don’t see any resistance but instead commitment. [...] I did not expect any resistance because I don’t think anyone dares to voice that politically today” (GECA, female, SE). This suggests that gender equality has become an institutionalised value and norm in Sweden. While gender equality had the status of a legitimate societal value and was embedded in formal rules and regulations, this did not mean that it also had become informally institutionalised and influenced “the ways of doing things” in HEIs (Mackay et al., 2009, p. 254). One of the Swedish GECAs illustrated this somewhat ambiguous situation:

[...] [E]veryone agrees that gender equality is *really* important to work with. [...] [But] I have not talked to one person that supports gender equality when it affects themselves. Everyone supports gender equality as long as it doesn’t cost themselves anything. But it has to cost. (GECA, male, SE)

This can be interpreted as an example of decoupling, that is when the organisation’s formal rules about the implementation of GEMPs are subverted by informal norms and routines that instead support individual gain or academic freedom (cf. Ljungholm, 2017). Some of the Swedish GECAs, however, also experienced the legitimacy of the gender equality change agenda being openly contested: “Nowadays, we have to fight more for our legitimacy. [...] I see how the knowledge, the theoretical field, is being questioned, and that is somewhat intimidating” (GECA, female, SE). Likewise, it was reported as important to expose gender inequality by presenting disaggregated data by sex and using statistical indicators. Being able to present a powerful case for a gender change agenda established a sense of urgency and motivated organisational members to commit to

change (cf. Kotter 1995). One of the Swedish GECAs explained their strategy to counteract institutionalised resistance to the legitimacy of the change agenda: “Much of the early work has been focused on making people aware about which hindrances exist [for women]” (GECA, male, SE). But efforts to stimulate gender awareness were not always successful. Another Swedish GECA referred to an internal document from a male-dominated department in his HEI which reflected this lack of gender awareness: “They wrote ‘there are no gender orders here, it is naturally gender equal’ and I couldn’t believe it. Have we not all taken the class?” (GECA, male, SE).

The sense of urgency regarding the case for change thus also appeared to be negotiable in Sweden. One of the GECA in a HEI with a recruitment target of 53% experienced a lack of commitment to the target from senior academic leaders: “Our Vice-Chancellor comes from a male-dominated HEI and thinks that 34% women professors is not a problem” (GECA, female, SE). These examples could be interpreted as illustrating that in organisational contexts where there are clear formal rules that give legitimacy to the gender equality change agenda, people in power can deny the legitimacy of, or re-negotiate, the case for change.

To sum up, although the gender equality change agendas were officially sanctioned, our analysis of the institutionalised processes of de-legitimation illustrates resistance being manifested in active and open denial of the legitimacy of the change message (primarily in Portugal), and in more informal norms and values (specifically in Sweden).

4.2 Institutionalised Resistance in Assessment, Recruitment and Promotion Processes

Addressing organisational decision-making processes and practices is fundamental to all gender equality change initiatives (Agócs, 1997). This was also true for the implementation of Swedish GEMPs and Portuguese GEPs. They generally included initiatives to ensure gender-aware decision-making processes and practices and to prevent decision-making that produced gender unequal outcomes (cf. Lombardo & Mergaert, 2013). In both countries, the GECA also reported on how gender equality initiatives to review, improve and change institutionalised decision-making processes and practices faced resistance. One of the key components in this type of resistance was the protection and preservation of meritocracy as an essential academic institution. One of the Portuguese GECA shared:

Then, the argument about merit follows, because in academia, what is valued is merit, and merit is a guarantee of equal opportunities for everyone, because everyone has the opportunity to demonstrate how brilliant he/she is. (GECA, female, PT)

This type of argument is not obviously identified as resistance. It is used to protect the academic ideal about formal institutionalised rules and informal institutionalised routines that objectively praise and protect merit and identify excellence in teaching and research (cf. Chap. 4). Any gender equality efforts, and especially those involving positive action, were therefore generally perceived not only as unnecessary but also as harmful to the meritocratic culture. However, as our informants argued, uncritically assuming that meritocracy permeates all decision-making is no guarantee of equal opportunities for women and men. One Portuguese GECA described how members of her HEI refused to take responsibility for implementing change initiatives to promote the inclusion of women throughout the HEIs, with reference to “the mirage of equality”:

[...] the mirage of equality was the dominant note in all interviews carried out by me [...]. They all began [...], “we believe that somehow equality is already guaranteed,” “we already have women in engineering,” “we already have women in medicine,” “we already have women in decision-making bodies” and therefore, even if they had only one [woman] among twenty people, their mere presence was already extrapolated as representing a balanced situation in terms of gender. This was constant. (GECA, female, PT)

The quote highlights how the inclusion of one or a small number of symbolic, token women (Kanter, 1977) was taken as evidence of gender equal decision-making already being achieved through an institutionalised meritocratic system (cf. Fitzgerald & Wilkinson, 2010). This is a type of resistance that protects the status quo of both formal institutionalised decision-making (the decision-making rules and structures) and informally institutionalised decision-making (how these rules are applied in practice) (cf. Mackay et al., 2010). Furthermore, this type of argument reflects a lack of gender awareness as it relies on purely quantitative arguments that vaguely define gender equality as the inclusion of underrepresented groups. This somewhat limited definition of gender equality and of gender equal decision-making neglects its qualitative aspects which involve informal institutionalised culture, norms, values and behaviours (cf. Verge et al., 2018).

The Portuguese GECAs also reported how references to meritocracy were used to shift responsibility for gender unequal outcomes away from the decision-makers themselves—that is from formal rules and the informal routines and conventions—to women (see also Chap. 3). According to one Portuguese interviewee, different arguments are used “in the common discourse about equality to disclaim responsibility” (GECA, female, PT). For example, any evidence of the lack of gender equality in their HEIs tended to be interpreted as a “women problem” and gender imbalance a result of women’s choices (cf. Chap. 4). One respondent described how:

[...] it always appeared in the people’s speeches the idea that if there was some inequality, some gender imbalance, it was due to personal choices [...]. If inequalities exist it is not because the institution discriminates against anyone, it does not discriminate. (GECA, female, PT)

This quote illustrates how the GECA understood the belief in the institutionalised meritocratic values was closely linked to the refusal to take responsibility for change. Meritocracy was presented as an essential, institutionalised informal value that needed to be protected, and not changed. Arguments about the HEI being a meritocracy were thus used to deny responsibility to address change initiatives involving decision-making processes and practices.

Swedish interviewees also reported institutionalised resistance to gender equality change initiatives with reference to meritocracy. One Swedish GECA described how gender equality initiatives became entangled in what he referred to as “meritocratic traps.” Despite problems with their recruitment processes, institutionalised resistance to gender equality initiatives was clear: “It’s really astonishing. And the organization doesn’t see any problem [but says]: ‘We use meritocratic principles. This is not a problem’” (GECA, male, SE). Based on conversations in his HEI, another Swedish GECA imagined how initiatives to recruit women professors would be met with resistance, referring to the meritocratic principles about excellence (cf. Chap. 3):

People would object if we departed from the principle about excellence and instead went for 50% women. I think people would object and ask “What the heck, are we not applying the excellence assessment here?”. (GECA, male, SE)

This type of resistance relies on “the cult of individual merit” (cf. Verge et al., 2018, p. 96) but ignores the fact that the implementation of formal meritocratic rules can be compromised by informal rules and practices. Most of the GECAs agreed that the decoupling of the formal rules from the informal norms and routines meant that the results of academic decision-making processes and practices regarding recruitment, employment and promotion produced gender unequal results. The importance of informal power or micropolitical practices also emerged in Chap. 3 (see also O’Connor et al., 2020).

One of the most common institutionalised structures for decision-making and the “rules-in-use” (Mackay et al., 2010, p. 576) in HEI’s is the committee structure. Recruitment processes are for example often planned, prepared and decided within a recruitment committee. One of the Swedish GECAs illustrated how institutionalised resistance was demonstrated in decisions to reject initiatives to recruit more women professors:

I think everyone here understands the problem and that we really want to have more women [professors]. [...] But the recruitment committee has tied our hands behind our backs when they conclude that there are no competent candidates. Although the candidates were professor competent at another HEI! But here they cannot live up to the high standards of excellence. Then you have a problem. I find it highly questionable. (GECA, female, SE)

This is an example of how GECAs perceived the meritocratic principle, in practice, as faulty and as an expression of institutionalised resistance which efficiently dismantled gender equality initiatives and prevented them from threatening the status quo. The decision-making structures could also be used in a more covert manner to repress and defuse gender equality change initiatives. A Swedish GECA described how she identified institutionalised resistance in the formation of a new committee to deal with recruitment targets:

There’s been a discussion about how to deal with the recruitment targets. The board appointed a committee, without us knowing, which started to plan for short-term solutions. Not even the Pro Vice Chancellor was informed about this committee and they had not enquired about any gender competence. We just found out about it by chance. But it was dismissed [by the PVC]. So now we [the GECA and her GECA colleagues] are working more long-term. So, there are definitely different opinions about the recruitment targets. (GECA, female, SE)

The creation of alternative decision-making structures can thus be interpreted as separating and decoupling the formal rules about implementing long-term gender equality change agendas from the “ways of doing things,” which protect the status quo.

To sum up, this section has addressed institutionalised resistance evident in the refusal of organisational decision-makers to take responsibility for gender equality change initiatives. The examples highlight how the GECAs identified decoupling of the formal meritocratic institution from the actual implementation of the meritocratic rules, which produced unequal outcomes for women and men.

4.3 Institutionalised Resistance in Resource Allocation Processes

Scarce resources have been identified as a common reason for unsuccessful change initiatives (Kotter, 1995). Institutionalised resistance to change can also be embedded in processes of resource allocation and demonstrated in decision-makers controlling and withholding resources. Agócs (1997, p. 927) for example describes how: “the most severe and demoralizing form of institutionalized resistance” involves shutting down gender equality change policies or programmes by withdrawing resources. Generally, creating equal access to resources was identified as a key component in the GEMPs and the GEPs in the Swedish and Portuguese HEIs.

The lack of resources emerged as an apparent form of resistance to gender equality change agendas in the Portuguese context. The absence of a gender equality culture in the Portuguese HE sector means that there are no specific funds to develop GEPs or even to conduct research on gender, although this has been partly addressed by EC funding. Nevertheless, the will to change was lacking, as one of the Portuguese interviewees explained: “the EC throws money, countries make some little legislation every now and then, but deep down nobody wants this to change, it’s my feeling” (GECA, female, PT). This suggests that the argument about lack of money, rather than being an actual restriction, reflected institutionalised resistance to gender equality initiatives and little commitment to the goal of gender equality. Similar experiences were shared by the Swedish GECAs who interpreted repeated calls for more resources as a resistance strategy and an excuse for inaction and not taking responsibility:

[Others say:] “We need resources, we need resources.” But we have actually received more resources. [...] To me it seems like an argument that without resources nothing can be done. [...] It really disturbs me. The attitude that nothing can be done without resources. Use your brain—that is a great resource! We have great resources and great opportunities. (GECA, female, SE)

More generally, Swedish GECAs identified resources as a key component for successful implementation of the GEMPs. Most reported that they had to fight for available resources and criticised decision-makers who expressed official support for the gender equality change agenda without allocating any resources: “You cannot only say that this [gender equality] is a prioritized area, you have to prioritize it with resources, with people, with competence and everything. Otherwise nothing will change” (GECA, female, SE). For some it was obvious that the absence of resources allocated for implementation of GEMPs hampered the results: “We are doing this [implementing GEMPs] within the framework of our regular jobs” (GECA, female, SE).

Most Swedish GECAs also considered gender unequal allocation of research funding as a real concern and something that should be prioritised as part of the gender equality change agenda: “We have to gender analyse what we do with our money. Where does the money go?” (GECA, female, SE). One GECA highlighted the significance of collecting information and data about the conditions for researchers: “We need to look at the facts, like [the distribution of] money and time” (GECA, female, SE). The results of such investigations could reveal considerable gender gaps, as one GECA explained: “I have really focused on the resource allocation [between women and men]. [...] It has been very skewed. It is not unusual that 70% of research funds go to men” (GECA, male, SE). The same GECA explained how he identified unequal resource distribution as a result of a biased decision-making process and had confronted the decision-makers who defended their assessments: “[They said:] ‘We are aware of this problem but we have evaluated it and this is the result. These are the best research applications’” (GECA, male SE).

Nevertheless, some of the GECAs also reported interventions regarding uneven resource allocation between women and men. One explained that at his HEI they had withdrawn the co-funding of one of the most prestigious external research funding grants from an international research funding organisation: “It’s because it’s almost exclusively granted to men.

[...] It's a very prestigious grant but also a very gender unequal type of grant. Because of that we decided that we will remove it [the co-funding]" (GECA, male, SE).

But such radical intervention was not common. Instead, unequal resource allocation was described as an almost untouchable topic: "Resource allocation and research ... those are really sensitive issues" (GECA, female, SE). At another HEI, the GECA explained how their initiative regarding resource allocation had faced institutionalised resistance after a legal verdict determining that such initiatives discriminated in favour of men:

Our efforts were stalled due to a legal verdict. We were going to develop a program to recruit women, but we had to cancel it. We haven't gone in the direction of quotas but instead wanted to give grants for women to qualify for positions. But this was not possible due to this verdict—why should only women receive the grant? Instead now we have an incentive for the departments to make an effort, when recruiting, to include women among the candidates. (GECA, male, SE)

To sum up, the analysis of the Portuguese and Swedish data identified several different types of resistance involving institutionalised processes of resource allocation. It was apparent in decision-makers refusing to allocate appropriate resources to implement GEPs and the GEMPs, and more complex and indirect processes and practices related to resource allocation.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the distinction between different forms of resistance towards gender equality initiatives in Swedish and Portuguese HEIs. Feminist institutionalism as a framework has provided insights into how resistance is embedded in institutional structures, rules and norms in HEIs. The results highlight how GECAs identified and interpreted manifestations of institutionalised resistance that threatened to restrict, repress and defuse the impact of GEPs and GEMPs.

The types of institutionalised resistance presented in this chapter are examples of three prominent expressions of resistance as retold by the GECAs in the two countries and reflect findings in other studies: disbelief about gender data and refusal to learn from a feminist analysis (Lombardo & Mergaert, 2013); refusing to take responsibility, blaming the

disadvantaged group and arguing that there are more pressing priorities (Agócs, 1997); relying on “the cult of individual merit” (Verge et al., 2018, p. 96) and refusal to allocate appropriate resources (Agócs, 1997). Our results provide further nuances to these previous findings based on two, very different, cases.

The institutionalisation of a culture of gender equality, in the Swedish case, seems to diminish the denial of the legitimacy of the case for change. This type of resistance was identified to a much higher degree in the Portuguese context. Even in Sweden, with its relatively rigorous formal institutional support for gender equality, institutionalised resistance to gender equality initiatives was identified in an unwillingness to recognise the need for, and take responsibility to address, the change issue. The results show that GECAs see that resistance to gender equality initiatives often involves the mechanism of decoupling and is evident when the formal institutional structure and its rules are separated from informal values, norms and collegial practices (cf. e.g. Ljungholm, 2017; Verge et al., 2018). The support voiced by institutions was thus not always interpreted as genuine or as a manifestation of true commitment. Moreover, in both Sweden and Portugal there was a focus on the failure to allocate appropriate resources.

A final reflection we want to make is that despite manifestations of institutionalised resistance in both countries, the implementation of the gender equality change initiatives continued, possibly because they were either funded by the EC or initiated by the Swedish Government. Although the credibility of the gender equality change agenda was met with resistance in both contexts, the legitimacy of these entities made it more difficult to deny the change message or to entirely refuse to implement it (cf. Agócs, 1997). The EC is a credible and powerful actor in the European Research Area and affords high integrity to GECAs involved in any of their funded projects. Some of the Swedish GECAs also understood their position as being strengthened because the assignment to implement GEMPs came from the Swedish Government. The continuation of the initiatives, however, depended on the GECAs and their commitment to implementing the gender equality change agenda in the face of institutionalised resistance. Their ability to identify and strategically counteract evidence of institutionalised resistance should not be underestimated. This chapter has highlighted how our interviewees recognised these strategies as an intrinsic part of their role as GECAs. Increased understanding of the manifestations of institutionalised resistance can hopefully facilitate development of even more efficient strategic responses to it.

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Problematism Excellence as a Legitimizing Discourse

Pat O'Connor and Sarah Barnard

1 INTRODUCTION

In neoliberal managerialist higher education institutions (HEIs) (Deem et al., 2008), excellence is used as a legitimating discourse in explaining the persistence of gender inequality. Thus, it is suggested that 76% of those in full professorial positions in HEIs are men (EU, 2019) because women are not excellent enough or because excellent women do not want these positions. Global rankings (Hazelkorn, 2015), with the exception of THE Impact rankings (2020a), make no reference to the gendered construction of knowledge or the gendered character of academia and its

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career structures. However, there is an increasing awareness that excellence is a problematic discourse (Campbell, 2018; Ferretti et al., 2018; Husu, 2014; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012; Nielsen, 2016). Using a feminist institutional perspective and a multi-methods approach, this chapter problematises the discourse of excellence and its use as a 'rationalising myth' (Nielsen, 2016). The data is drawn from documentary sources including UK sectoral evaluation framework documents and those related to recruitment and promotion within a UK case study university, as well as qualitative data collected as part of an EU-funded project in an Irish case study university. The chapter argues that, as used in these contexts, excellence is frequently tautological, contested or reflects situationally specific masculinist interpretations. Micropolitical practices, that is informal power understood as 'the strategies and tactics used by individuals and groups in an organisation to further their interests' (van den Brink, 2010, p. 29), are seen as affecting the outcomes of recruitment and advancement—advantaging men and disadvantaging women. Thus, the under-representation of women in professorial positions reflects micropolitical practices, with excellence being used as a legitimating discourse.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical perspective is Feminist Institutionalism (FI) (see Chap. 1; Mackay, 2011; Mackay et al., 2010). Little attention has been paid by FI to HEIs. FI sees gender operating at both a structural and cultural level and a formal and informal level. It suggests that a devaluation of women is implicit in the very construction of gender. One of the ways the status quo is maintained is through the idea that HEIs are gender-neutral meritocracies. Excellence 'can be conceptualised as a component of the ideological apparatus' of managerialism (Santiago & Carvalho, 2012, p. 513). Managerialism reflects the adoption by public sector organisations of policies and practices from the private sector. It is compatible with state pressure for greater accountability (Deem et al., 2008) and is 'the organisational arm of neoliberalism' (Lynch, 2014, p. 968). In higher education, a managerialist logic includes an explicit focus on what purports to be objective, gender-neutral, key performance indicators (KPIs), particularly involving research performance (Ramirez & Tiplic, 2014). The focus on excellence in HEIs emerged at different times in different countries, depending on when managerialism took hold. For example, it was identified in the UK

from the early 1980s (Deem et al., 2008), but became entrenched in Irish universities much later (Lynch et al., 2012).

The assumption of gender neutrality in constructions of excellence has been challenged by gender theorists (Acker, 1990, 2006; Risman & Davis, 2013). There has been increasing recognition that evaluations of excellence, no matter how they are done, are not really neutral or objective (Lamont, 2009; Campbell, 2018). Biases are implicit not only in the procedures and criteria involved in recruitment and promotion, but in the way academic and research careers and HEIs themselves are gendered (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012; Nielsen, 2016; Vettese, 2019). Excellence in higher education (EU, 2004; Nir & Zilberstein-Levy, 2006) has become a 'hooray word' (Whyte, 2005), which is widely and uncritically used as an 'idealised cultural construct' (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 342) and a 'rationalising myth' (Nielsen, 2016).

Each institution has a particular 'gender regime' (Connell, 2002, p. 53) that operates through a 'hidden' day-to-day interplay of formal and informal norms with gendered implications' (Verge et al., 2018, p. 88). The concept of micropolitics was applied by Morley (1999, p. 4) to higher education, focusing on 'everyday practices. ... Micropolitics is about influence, networks, coalitions, political and personal strategies to effect or resist change.' She concentrated on informal power and the ways in which it was used to marginalise, frustrate, undermine and coerce women in the academy. For her, micropolitics existed in 'the subterranean conflicts and minutiae of social relations. ... It is about relationships rather than structures, knowledge rather than information, skills rather than positions, talk rather than paper' (Morley, 1999, p. 73). Other work has referred to informal power as involving 'intrigue, subterfuge and a racketsy underworld of scams and plots' (Mackenzie Davey, 2008, p. 667). Power and practices in higher education have been discussed theoretically and empirically (Martin, 2003, 2006) but a focus on micropolitics in the academy has generated few studies (with a small number of exceptions such as O'Connor et al., 2020; Teelken et al., 2019; Lumby, 2015; Montes Lopez & O'Connor, 2019). A discourse of excellence works to obscure such informal power relationships that perpetuate gendered patterns.

Micropolitical relational practices include nepotism, which legitimates individual relationships with powerful others as the basis for recruitment/promotion (Wenneras & Wold, 1997). While it has been discredited, an attempt has been made to re-label it as sponsorship, talent management or 'backing winners'. Sponsorship involves senior managers leveraging their

own power and influence to advance the careers of their protégés, whether by advocating, recommending, protecting or fighting for them (De Vries & Binns, 2018, p. 7; see also Ibarra et al., 2010; O'Connor et al., 2019). Equalising access to such relationships, although helpful for individual women, perpetuates nepotism (O'Connor, 2018).

Vázquez-Cupeiro and Elston (2006) identified a moral discourse of responsibility, loyalty and care for those who had been nurtured by a department and to whom it felt a responsibility. This has been depicted as 'inbreeding' (Montes Lopez & O'Connor, 2019; Cruz-Castro & Sanz-Mendez, 2010) and although officially denigrated it persists within the collegial Spanish system. A less extreme version was documented in the Irish second-level educational system (Lynch et al., 2012; Grummell et al., 2009). Potentially opposed to excellence, it is also likely to be gendered.

In summary, in settings where the discourse of excellence, which legitimates the under-representation of women at full professorial level, is vacuous, tautological or masculinist, micropolitical practices affect recruitment and advancement.

3 METHODOLOGY

Case studies enable a contextual understanding of evaluative practices (e.g. Buzzanell & D'Enbeau, 2009). Two universities, one in Ireland and one in the UK, were used as case studies in a multi-method approach. These universities differ substantially in their ranking; the UK case study university was ranked between 351 and 400 on the THE (2020b) global ranking, while the Irish case study university was ranked considerably lower (501 to 600). A document analysis was undertaken in the UK case study university and a qualitative analysis based on interview data in the Irish one. In addition, evaluation of UK framework documents from the sector and policy makers were included. By comparing excellence discourses in policy and institutional documents with micropolitical practices it was possible to construct an in-depth, multi-level understanding of HEIs and the multiple 'realities' they comprise.

The document analysis in the UK case study was based on a discourse analytic method that attempts to uncover a shared understanding of phenomena and to show how collective ways of comprehending the world are produced (Foucault, 2002; Saarinen, 2008). This approach connects meaning to power structures, demonstrating how some have more power

over the dominant discourse than others. Acknowledging power relations can help to frame qualitative empirical research and provide opportunities for exploring what is taken for granted and unspoken. Sources used included evaluation framework documents at sector level and public-facing discourse and internal documents from the UK case study. Inclusion criteria were: does the document inform how academics and HEIs are evaluated in the UK case study and does it mobilise the term ‘excellence’? A sample of documents was collected and analysed using a critical stakeholder mapping exercise. Key questions addressed in the analysis included: how is excellence defined; who defines excellence and to whom is the concept of excellence applied.

The qualitative data was drawn from 43 interviews (25 women and 18 men) with academics from Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in the Irish case study university and received ethical approval. The interviews were from two sources. The first source consisted of 14 people (7 men and 7 women) drawn from a study of constructions of excellence (Wolffram et al., 2015). The second source was interviews with 29 academics at early, middle and senior levels (18 men and 11 women) mainly selected by random sampling using an online, random sequence generator. In both cases, interview guides were developed and agreed among the EU partners. References to the construction of excellence emerged in response to questions such as: ‘What criteria were used to assess candidates?’ ‘Do you think these criteria signify academic excellence?’ ‘Are there other skills or qualities a candidate could possess which would signify academic excellence?’ References to micropolitical practices emerged in response to a variety of questions such as ‘Has gender affected your career progression in a positive or negative way?’; ‘When you look back over your career what do you see as the critical points?’; ‘Is there any difference in the careers of men and women here?’ Interviews averaged one hour and were tape-recorded and transcribed. The methodology used was processual and reflexive in the grounded theory tradition. The interviews were all undertaken as part of a wider cross-national research project, where language constraints made it impossible to use a computer software programme. Hence content analysis was conducted, during which evaluative micropolitical practices emerged. Respondents are identified by gender and a unique identifier number. In the interests of confidentiality, identifying information (such as position) is not included.

4 CONSTRUCTIONS OF EXCELLENCE: THEIR EXISTENCE, CHARACTER AND CONSEQUENCES

In this chapter, through UK sector and institutional policy documents, excellence is presented as an unproblematic, universal albeit vacuous term. Given such ambiguities around the substantive content of excellence, micropolitical practices become important. Through the qualitative Irish data, evaluations of excellence are seen as political processes: 'academic evaluations are not simply technical endeavours intended to measure the quality of academics; instead, they are political endeavours that involve negotiations between multiple actors' (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012, p. 509).

4.1 *Policy Discourse Analysis: The UK Documents*

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) established by UK research funding bodies and the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) each use particular criteria to evaluate HEIs and mobilise the term excellence without clearly defining what it means in practice. In the REF (2019), excellence is referred to as 'excellence in research', 'excellent research' and 'excellent researchers'. An explicit definition is not foregrounded and the specifics of what that looks like and how it might vary across disciplines are left open. Broadly, according to the REF, research quality is assessed in relation to 'originality, significance and rigour', the definitions of which are not specified and the details of how they are operationalised are in the hands of the subject-level panel. Therefore, the interpretation of excellence is to a certain extent based upon the conventions and established practices within a discipline. Researchers are categorised according to a star system (1–4), four-star being the highest quality. As indicated in the notes, the standards of starred categories are those based on 'world-leading' 'internationally excellent or recognised' (REF, 2019, p. 86). While the meaning of excellence is often unspecified, a definition is offered in the REF guidance on research impact. 'Excellent research' may have impact that can be measured and 'excellent research' is research that is at least equivalent to two-star 'quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour' (REF, 2019, p. 73). It is clear from REF documentation that the process has been designed by research funders so that judgements are made on what excellence means according to the disciplinary contexts in which academics work. However, there is some acknowledgement of the ways that

academic judgement may privilege some forms of research and knowledge production over others. In the section on equity it is stated that:

All types of research and all forms of research output across all disciplines shall be assessed on a fair and equal basis. Panels have been instructed to define criteria and adopt assessment processes that enable them to recognise and treat on an equal footing excellence in research across the spectrum of applied, practice-based, basic and strategic research, wherever that research is conducted; and for identifying excellence in different forms of research endeavour including interdisciplinary and collaborative research, while attaching no greater weight to one form over another (REF, 2019, p. 7).

Here the guidance for panels indicates that the *location* and *form* of research does not constitute excellence in itself nor should it be used as a marker for quality, perhaps responding to biases related to these aspects that have been found in the lower funding success of interdisciplinary research (Bromham et al., 2016). The openness of the concept of excellence and evident need for interpretative action about quality to be taken during the REF process may create a situation whereby risk averse HEIs pre-emptively curate a research portfolio that conforms to simplified, measurable, gendered definitions of excellence (Spence, 2019).

In the UK, a pattern of devaluation and gendering of commitment to teaching has been found (Deem, 2003), which remains significant for individual career progression despite the introduction of the TEF. The TEF does not have the same positive career-impact as the REF, with a focus on assessment criteria that defines ‘student engagement’ as a key aspect of quality, meaning ‘teaching provides effective stimulation, challenge and contact time that encourages students to engage and actively commit to their studies’ (Department for Education, 2017, p. 25). Furthermore, academic staff ‘quality’ (and the institutions that employ them) is measured according to several criteria including: whether the institution is committed to continuous improvement in teaching; whether teaching staff are inspiring and engaging; are leading experts in industry or business; have high-level academic qualifications such as PhDs; have teaching qualifications and are on permanent contracts (Department for Education, 2018, p. 89). The impetus for evaluating institutions using this framework relates to prospective student decision-making, institutional rankings, TEF awards and overall student satisfaction with teaching. Broad debates around teaching excellence acknowledge how discourses and

practice are underpinned by values that require reflection (Skelton, 2009). The discourse of students as consumers of HE is fully embedded in the evaluative structures in the UK HE sector (Morley, 2003; Naidoo & Williams, 2015). Crucially the TEF explicitly links HEI evaluation to student satisfaction despite research showing a broad range of other influencing factors (Wiers-Jenssen et al., 2002; Bell & Brooks, 2019) and evidence of gender and racial bias in how students evaluate lecturers (Fan et al., 2019). All of this challenges the assumed gender neutrality of constructions of excellence.

The UK case study institution's strategic planning up to August 2020 centred on 'building excellence', which crucially framed the academic recruitment strategy. Thus, excellence was used as the key criterion in the appointment of academics. Generic job descriptions are used across disciplines and departments foreground excellence. In the lecturer generic job description, the job purpose is 'to contribute to and enhance the research, teaching and enterprise activities of the School in support of the University Strategy, Building Excellence ... [and] Successful candidates will have a record of excellence which is contributing to the furtherance of knowledge in their discipline'. Again, the concept of excellence is devoid of content.

Following appointment, new lecturers enter a probation period (usually three years) during which they are expected to achieve objectives that focus on research, teaching and enterprise. The institution expects a probation advisor to support the probationer to 'strive for excellence'; demonstrate a teaching 'excellence portfolio' and deliver research outputs: 'a minimum of three high quality academic journal publications (or equivalent) will be required'. Once out of probation, academics are required to take part in annual appraisal processes—the Performance Development Review (PDR)—that assesses performance against a range of indicators. Through this process academics are given one of three possible ratings: exceeds, meets or does not meet expectations. To exceed expectations the reviewee 'completes appropriate PDR objectives, meets the requirements of the job description and behaves in a way that is expected for that grade, job family and level of experience and goes above and beyond in the majority of these areas'. Issues around the interpretation and subjective judgement on which such a process relies are briefly acknowledged in guidance documents where PDR reviewers are encouraged to educate themselves about the expectations of their department.

Indications of how excellence is formally constructed and elaborated are mirrored in documentation on academic promotions. An analysis of the frameworks used for promotion to senior lecturer and professor level shows that the term is headlined in particular ways. ‘Candidates for promotion to Senior Lecturer must have a record of excellence’, excellence being defined as ‘contributing to the furtherance of knowledge in their area of activity’. Evidence for such excellence is seen as deriving from: ‘a programme of enquiry that is becoming recognised internationally for its *originality, significance and rigour*. Associated with this programme, a record of academic outputs of an excellent quality, as judged against international norms’ (emphasis added). The evidence required for promotion to professor, a ‘sustained and continuing record of excellence’, uses the same definition with the expectation that the programme of enquiry is ‘progressive’ and that international recognition has been achieved. The repetition of excellence as originality, significance and rigour from the REF guidance demonstrates how sector-level evaluation of research for funding purposes feeds into professional academic career norms and rewards for individual academics, but with little indication of what these terms actually mean.

The signifier of excellence as a concept offered by the REF remains extremely vague as it is reconstructed in HEI strategy and policy documentation for how academics are recruited, evaluated and promoted. In terms of such recruitment, probation, PDR and promotion in the UK case study, excellence is used often and defined in ways that can be (re)interpreted during processes that superficially adhere to centralised bureaucratic frameworks. The document analysis found little difference in academic recruitment requirements between departments, representing apparent standardisation across disciplines. Promotion requirements for academics closely followed the excellence discourse presented in REF guidance, whereby subjective judgements were framed unproblematically as meritocratic principles that require straightforward translation (and also ‘fleshing out’ somewhat) within established disciplines. Therefore, these documents shape the setting of baselines for gatekeepers to make discretionary decisions (Husu, 2004) about who is recruited, made permanent, judged as excellent and promoted.

UK government evaluation frameworks applied to research and teaching activities have significant implications for institutional funding. ‘Excellence’ is used rhetorically as an empty signifier and contextual interpretation is key (Carli et al., 2019). Position and discipline impact on

which activities and outcomes are defined as adequate or excellent. There is a disconnect between the apparent value of interdisciplinarity articulated in discourse and the ways stakeholders who strongly identify within a discipline evaluate the activities, and outcomes of more junior academics (Herschberg et al., 2018). Therefore, excellence can be mobilised, distorted or constructed as stakeholders see fit. Most of these are men who have been recruited and promoted within masculinised structures and cultures.

4.2 *Micropolitical Practices: The Irish Case Study*

In the Irish case study interviews, excellence was mostly defined as research excellence (O'Connor, 2020). However, there was no agreement about which aspect of research was most important (e.g. publications, funding, PhD students, reputation, citations). There was also confusion about when adequacy became excellence. Activities that were essential to the functioning of a HEI, for example undergraduate teaching, pastoral care and academic administration, to which women were seen as particularly suited, were undervalued. Since excellence was ambiguous, informal power as reflected in micropolitical practices came into play. These practices were obscured by the legitimating discourse of excellence.

Four types of micropolitical practices will be discussed: procedural subversion; gendered devaluation and stereotyping; sponsorship and local fit. Although only one of these is explicitly gendered, in hierarchically male-dominated HEIs they are all likely to disadvantage women.

Micropolitical Practices Subverting Procedures

The focus here is on micropolitical practices that implicitly or explicitly subvert organisational procedures. They include the narrow framing of advertisements, the tweaking of criteria and marking schemes, a reliance on intuitive feelings and 'horse trading', that is the pragmatic support for candidates favoured by other evaluators (O'Connor & O'Hagan, 2016).

Rules governing the procedures for academic recruitment and promotion were very detailed in the case study university with criteria and related marking schemas identified before the job was advertised. Practices seeking to benefit some people over others affected the framing of the job specification:

I've had first-hand experience and other anecdotal experience where people tailor the job specification to suit a certain individual who is maybe already in the job and just needs to be made permanent ... all the criteria are pre-arranged (IE, woman, 8).

Transparency in recruitment was considered important (ETAN, 2000), but was not observed to exist in practice: 'It is never transparent' (IE, woman, 10). There were suggestions that ostensibly objective criteria were modified to support a particular candidate. For example, if one person had 40 publications and the other person had 22 publications, the committee could decide that 20 or more publications deserved 10 points. In this way, the second person would be helped by the committee and the objective difference between the two candidates on this criterion would be eliminated (Montes Lopez & O'Connor, 2019).

Reliance on intuitive feelings about potential, often unhelpful to women, was mentioned. As in Lamont's (2009) study, some suggested that it was necessary to go beyond the factual information: 'a lot of the time you are going on this word called potential' (IE, woman, 7). Others recognised that the criteria they were using were vague:

there is an expectation of consistent delivery beyond the promotion ... you expect a person relative to his or her position to show that he or she is performing in a way that distinguishes, no, no, not distinguishes him, but shows that he or she is making the right strides relevant to the level in the discipline-that is very vague (IE, man, 6).

Another respondent relied on a subjective response to the first two pages of an extensive application form: 'I only read his first two pages. ... I gave him full marks on the basis of the first two pages. That was enough for me. ... I just flicked through the rest of it, and said yeah, absolutely' (IE, man, 3).

Although decisions about the best and worst applications are usually reasonably clear cut, differences in the middle are frequently very small, culminating in 'rather arbitrary' decisions which are affected by the composition of the board and the characteristics and behaviour of evaluators (Van Arensbergen et al., 2014). The chair (typically male) played a key role in encouraging comment on individual candidates and reviewing/modifying numerical assessments in the light of such comments: 'I mean obviously the chair will have [influence], [and] direct the way the meeting goes' (IE, man, 2).

Lamont (2009) suggested that although there was an expectation that consistent and universal standards of evaluation would be applied, in practice respondents assented to decisions about which others felt strongly in the hope that they would gain credibility and good will, and that this would be reciprocated. Thus, as long as decisions were 'within the zone of acceptability' (IE, man, 6) they were supported. This reflects the perception of the evaluation process as involving pragmatic negotiation or 'horse trading' (O'Connor & O'Hagan, 2016), with a political rather than a bureaucratic model underpinning the evaluation of excellence.

Micropolitical Practices: Gendered Devaluation and Stereotyping

These micropolitical practices included the devaluing of women and expectations that they should conform to male stereotypes. Gendered devaluation has been widely identified in teaching and research contexts (Vettese, 2019) and experimental studies (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012), involving subtle misrecognition (Fraser, 2008), informal sexist bias (Flood & Pease, 2005) and a devaluing of women and their contributions. In the Irish case study university, women referred to feeling patronised and marginalised by their male colleagues:

And you just feel like this young one, particularly a girl in the room with all these men when you ... you're definitely still an outsider and you are, I definitely have felt the female thing there, definitely, just like this young girl that can't say a word (IE, woman, 32).

Hiring boards typically consisted of 5–7 people and promotion boards of 11–14 people, and were predominantly male. There was differential evaluation of men and women's contributions on such boards, with women's voices being marginalised because they were women:

It's not what the woman says or what the man says. It's the fact that it's coming from [a man or a woman]. Its gendered ... the person listening to it will automatically associate a positive connotation to whatever the man says and a less positive, less, just put it that way, to what the woman says (IE, woman, 8).

Gendered processes may also operate so that women but not men are expected to be exceptional (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012; Vettese, 2019). In this as in other studies (O'Connor, 2014; Currie et al., 2002)

women mentioned that: ‘you have to work longer and harder ... to prove yourself better than a man ... certainly men got promoted here who certainly were nowhere near [as good as] the women’ (IE, woman, 1).

Expectations about successful behaviour were stereotypically male, with women being required to ‘market’ their achievements (Mackenzie Davey, 2008): ‘he [a colleague] said to me “do it the way the men do it ... sell yourself as best you can and gloat and gloat and gloat because no-one is going to read between the lines”’ (IE, woman 10). The message was that women needed to adopt male styles of behaviour and by implication women’s behaviour was in some way deficit. This was occasionally made explicit: ‘I think the fact that I am a certain gender has been a barrier. ... I am girl and I don’t deny it and I’m a real girly-girl, I won’t deny it either’ (IE, woman, 18).

Gendered stereotypes also underpinned the image of the scientist and this had implications for women. In some cases, the stereotype was a gendered monastic one (White, 2014; Banchefsky et al., 2016), where the commitment and life style of a scientist was considered incompatible with caring responsibilities:

The very successful (scientists) are generally obsessed. And they don’t really have anything else going on in their lives. And they’re, as a result, bad fathers and bad parents and bad husbands and bad friends because they don’t have the time for anything else (IE, man, 36).

Others suggested that in the competitive university environment the expectation to work long hours had been normalised: ‘Be industrial, you know, work hard. Be productive and ... do a fifty, sixty-hour week’ (IE, man, 23). The criteria were based on the assumption that an entire life could and should be dedicated to scientific activities, with implications for women:

You are not judging the quality of what they do within the 39-hour week, you are judging what they do 24 hours a day seven days a week. And some people, more so women than men, have less time to devote twenty-four seven (IE, woman, 7).

Thus, the implicit suggestion was that women’s lives were incompatible with being a ‘proper’ scientist. Maternity leave was considered a major problem and affected future hiring intentions, reinforcing the idea that a

career in STEM and maternity were incompatible: 'do I go for a woman who's not child bearing? Forty-five and upwards? Or a guy? Or a girl who's in her early twenties, single? Do you know what I mean?' (IE, man, 23).

Micropolitical Relational Practices: Sponsorship

Men viewed sponsorship relationships with powerful internal people as crucial for success in promotion/recruitment competitions (O'Connor et al., 2019). They referred to the strategy of 'paying forward' that is doing favours for those in positions of power on the assumption that this will create obligations that will be repaid when they go for promotion: 'If you've nobody on the other side of the table fighting your case, you've no chance. ... You arrange [that] ..., through [favours], you know. ... And you do it not just once, you might do it fifty times. So, when your application [for promotion] goes in you'd expect them to support you' (IE, man, 23). Thus, sponsorship is being provided at a price and is mutually beneficial: the sponsor delegates their routine work to junior academics who get 'pay back' at promotion.

Women did not appear to be aware of this internal system. Thus, although Catherine (IE, woman, 37) thought that her HOD encouraged her and provided money for conference attendance, she saw him as unable to influence career progression: 'with regard to actual promotion, they have very little influence'. Expectations were also much lower among women; for example a male HOD was seen as providing 'huge support in that: if you want to participate in activities, he's very happy to let you participate' (IE, woman, 26). Thus, advocacy and leveraging power to advance careers of protégés (characteristic of sponsorship) was not expected. Dana (IE, woman, 24), who was older than her contemporaries, was unusual in identifying sponsorship of a male colleague at the same level as problematic: 'If there's a conference coming up and you need to give a talk, he would be sent rather than me. He gets favoured at some level even though he might not actually want it. ... They're just little things but at the same time you know they mount up.'

Men are more likely than women to be sponsored by senior people (Ibarra et al., 2010) including their PhD supervisor (O'Connor et al., 2019). Academic women were often excluded from wider male-dominated academic networks, not least because of the difficulties of penetrating them in social contexts: 'If I was at a conference on my own and I didn't know anybody, then I'd be very reluctant to go into the bar and network

on my own. It shouldn't be any harder [for women] but it does seem to be' (IE, woman, 19).

Sponsorship is frequently perceived in a different light to nepotism (De Vries & Binns, 2018). However, it too has a relational base that often involves homosociality, defined by Lipman Blumen (1976) as a preference for members of one's own sex—a social rather than a sexual preference (see also Grummell et al., 2009), as this respondent described:

Guys tend to group together. They tend to form teams. It's something that's, I think it's natural in guys to do that ... and in the process of doing that, if you're not on the team, you're outside the team. And there could be, not a, not if you like an overt gender bias, but there could be an implicit one on that basis (IE, man, 2).

Some women in STEM, who had bought into the meritocratic model, disapproved of sponsorship relationships, seeing them as endorsing power rather than objective merit (O'Connor et al., 2020). Given the predominance of men in the structures of power, it is highly likely that sponsorship practices advantage men.

Micropolitical Practices: Local Fit

The vagueness surrounding the definition of excellence facilitated the emergence of local micropolitical practices enabling those who 'fitted' to be recruited/promoted. Inbreeding is an extreme version of this and refers to favouring the in-house candidate. Even in Spanish HEIs it was a departmental rather than an approved institutional practice (Montes Lopez & O'Connor, 2019). At a less extreme level, fit involves 'local logics' (Lynch et al., 2012; Grummell et al., 2009) which might be based on familiarity, similarity or departmental usefulness. This discourse has its own morality, rooted in availability, affection and loyalty (Sanz-Menéndez et al., 2013). Its implications were recognised by some of the respondents: 'So it's my guess that the scores [of the promotion board] will bring in who they want to get promoted' (IE, man, 4).

Evaluators prioritised specific criteria to facilitate the recruitment of local candidates who 'fitted'. Sometimes the most valued attribute was to be well known and a 'team player' (i.e. acceptable to those in power). Some referred to their own qualities, characteristics or experiences in explaining what they looked for—assuming (problematically) that reflexivity would always exist and be sufficient to eliminate bias: 'I'm sure I am

biased in the same way that when a particular person talks in a particular way it resonates with me. You just have to be aware of it' (IE, woman, 4). Another key consideration was the alignment of individuals' skills with the relevant academic unit: 'I look at alignment in the sense of what are we trying to do ... would they match?' (IE, woman, 7). Some women were perceived as not recognising that their priorities and behaviour hindered their career progression:

Women are wasting their time doing the right thing. ... They are more committed lecturers, they are more committed to ... looking after the students, being more diligent with lecture preparation ... and all those other areas that give them no brownie points when it comes to promotion. Not quantifiable (IE, woman, 1).

Thus, their conscientiousness was seen as negatively affecting their careers.

The gap between the ostensibly objective constructions of excellence, reflected in fact-based scores on KPIs and ideas about fit was occasionally mentioned. Thus, for example, through personal friendships, candidates could compare their scores with other candidates. In one case this revealed that a successful candidate with considerably less teaching expertise and experience, and similar teaching evaluations, was given higher scores on teaching by the assessment panel than an unsuccessful candidate. On raising this issue in a feedback session, the Dean was discomfited that they had shared information, leading the interviewee to conclude that teaching scores could be 'adjusted' upwards for various reasons: 'if your research is excellent, and if you have the bare minimum done for teaching, the board would increase your teaching [score] to excellent' (IE, woman, 10).

For some women there was a good deal of confusion as they sought to combine a focus on the purportedly objective criteria indicating excellence with what they saw as the reality of informal ties and their reflection in micropolitical practices involving local fit. Thus, although the idea that 'excellence is research' was officially endorsed, gendered ties affected outcomes through providing differential opportunities for familiarity and friendship: 'all that playing golf at the weekends, it certainly does help' (IE, woman, 1).

5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Excellence discourses filter unproblematically through multiple areas in higher education. In managerialist HEIs excellence is presented as an unambiguous, legitimating, gender-neutral rationale for decisions about recruitment and advancement, although the need for interpretation and translation is acknowledged.

This chapter used a multi-method approach. The documentary analysis examined the use of excellence in evaluation frameworks and institutional documents in a UK university and revealed its vague, tautological content, with subjective judgements being framed unproblematically as meritocratic principles. The evaluation of the excellence of individual academics mirrors the sector policy-level excellence discourse which is standardised through centralised frameworks and from which discretionary decisions are made. In the Irish case study university constructions of excellence prioritised research. However, it was not clear what aspect of research excellence was most important, or how adequacy was to be differentiated from it. Ambiguities in the construction of excellence facilitated the importance of micropolitical practices. Using qualitative interview data, the chapter identified and illustrated four such micropolitical practices: procedural subversion; gendered devaluation and stereotyping; sponsorship and local fit. Although only one of these is explicitly gendered, given male hierarchical dominance and homosociability they are all potentially likely to disadvantage women.

In a context where excellence is an important criterion for recruitment/promotion but its content is unclear, informal power comes into play. This chapter highlights that academics are not de-gendered automatons immune to informal power, but agents with identities and interests who engage in everyday practices to advance their own or others' 'agendas'. Underpinning this is the idea that evaluation is, in essence, a political process which raises challenging issues for HEIs who have responded by putting observers on boards (Ahlqvist et al., 2013) and obscuring a candidate's gender in funding applications (IRC, 2018).

The COVID-19 pandemic (2020) seems likely to exacerbate gender inequality in HEIs as the closure of schools, crèches and the absence of other child care arrangements means that women in western societies disproportionately carry these increased workloads. Its impact has already been indicated in female first-author journal article acceptances slipping (Matthews, 2020; Ferrari, 2020). While HEIs continue to adhere to what

purports to be a gender-neutral construction of excellence, without compensatory strategies (such as relieving women of course administration and pastoral responsibilities during the pandemic), women's future academic career prospects are likely to be further diminished.

The problematising of the construct of excellence and identification of micropolitical practices raises questions about those evaluative decisions which play a crucial role in creating, maintaining and legitimating imbalances in the gender profile of those in senior academic positions.

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Making the Right Choice: Discourses of Individualised Responsibility in Higher Education

Marcela Linková, Özlem Atay, and Connie Zulu

1 INTRODUCTION

“If a woman does not have children, I do not think she is disadvantaged here in any way”,¹ remarked a male assistant professor at a Czech technical university in a recent study. Firmly embedded in what Mol (2002) terms the logic of choice, this approach conceptualises the individual as an autonomous rational being making either-or choices

¹ All quotes related to Turkey and the Czech Republic are translations by the Turkish and Czech authors; quotes related to South Africa were collected in English.

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independent of the contexts in which she lives and works, for her individual benefit and of her own free will.

This chapter uses the notion of “choice” to examine neoliberal discourses of individualised responsibility in higher education and research, and the ways in which they are used to create a particular form of feminine subjectivity. These discourses obscure structural gender inequalities and shift the responsibility for women’s disadvantaged position and underrepresentation in leadership onto women academics. As such, these discourses, closely linked to those of individual excellence (see Chap. 3) and meritocracy (see Chap. 2), are a form of resistance that exonerates institutions (Gill, 2017, p. 609) and impedes gender equality.

In the liberal tradition, choice is regarded as the ultimate goal for emancipatory projects. However, the rise of neoliberalism as a form of governmentality has problematised choice and its effectiveness in delivering on women’s empowerment (Budgeon, 2015; Ferguson, 2010). As Gill (2017, p. 607) argues, some of the core features of post-feminism include individualism, choice and agency while structural inequality and cultural influence are muted. With individuals constructed as rational entrepreneurial actors, neoliberalism has eradicated “any idea of the individual as subject to pressures, constraints or influence from outside themselves” (Gill, 2008), thus rendering invisible power structures in which choices are made and in effect circumscribed. A key problem then with the discourse of individual choice is that when it is used to perpetuate inequality and structural constraint, its explanatory value is inadequate in elucidating the conditions under which people make decisions (Beddoes & Pawley, 2014). We therefore conceptualise choice as performative, where it is not merely “covering up power of structures” but also “*producing* dichotomies and differences by the appearance of individual agency” (Sørensen, 2017, p. 310; italics in original). In this logic of choice, the combination of motherhood and research career commitments are construed as conflicting and irreconcilable dimensions of a feminine subjectivity while, at the same time, women are held accountable for making choices regarding family and work.

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The chapter examines three countries that underwent political regime change at the end of the twentieth century (the Czech Republic, South Africa and Turkey). While they differ widely in their former political regimes, dominant religion or the salience of race issues, they have in common a recent neoliberal turn with a stress on individualism and choice, transformation of the higher education and research sectors, and a highly conservative gender order which either stems from historical patriarchal views and cultural heritage (South Africa and Turkey) or a backlash against women's emancipation under the state socialist regime (the Czech Republic). In Turkey and the Czech Republic, these trends have been recently exacerbated by the rise of nationalism, pro-natalism and anti-immigration (Polyakova et al., 2019).

In relation to choice we examine two inter-related issues. The first is the way women academics internalise individual choice to make sense of the structural pressures they experience in academia regarding work-life balance and the way this results in the acceptance of their alleged responsibility for career choices and feelings of intense work-life conflict. The second issue is the use of "individual choice" as a figure of speech, as a way of explaining away the dearth of women in leadership positions and deflecting responsibility for creating non-discriminatory working conditions in higher education and research. Individual choice—made by women academics irrespective of symbolic, structural, interpersonal and individual circumstances—is used to argue why they are under-represented in top echelons of academia (cf. Linková, 2017). This is related to a specific bias that academic women who are mothers face—the *maternal wall* (Smithson & Stokoe, 2005; Williams & Dempsey, 2014)—and the traditional notion of the research profession as a care-free zone where women in particular hit *the care ceiling*. Lynch (2010) argues that this effect has been exacerbated by new managerialism embedded in neoliberal governmentality, which builds on the assumption that introducing the principles of competition and competitiveness as we know them in the private sector into the public sector will result in improved performance (Shore, 2008). The rise of the audit culture and the spread of novel accountability technologies (Dunn, 2003, p. 60; Shore & Wright, 2000, p. 57) have produced changes in academic subjectivities. It has been noted (Anderson, 2008; Karreman & Alvesson, 2009; Linková, 2014) that resistance to these practices has been rare due to the academic culture of heightened individualism, self-management, autonomy, competitiveness and ambition. The intensification of the demands placed on researchers and growing competition thus

accord a moral status to carelessness (Linková, 2017; Lynch, 2010) and contribute to making invisible the gendered organisation of academia.

We argue that this does not mean a failure to adopt gender equality policies and implement actions. Rather, their framing tends to be individualised, embedded in an “equip the woman” (Meyerson & Kolb, 2000) or “fixing the women” approach rather than “fixing the institution” (Burkinshaw & White, 2017). While men not participating in housework and childcare may be a global trend, the heightened importance ascribed to women’s motherhood, the notion of irreplaceability of women in infant care and the gender division of responsibilities prevail in these three countries, as well as other countries. As Zulu (2013, p. 758) contends: “This has its roots in enduring culturally defined gender roles and gender socialisation patterns that associate women with home-making”. With the tendency towards conceptualising the issue as individual choice, policies and their implementation are then framed in terms of “fixing women”. This makes it possible to hold women responsible for their “failure” to meet the increasing demands of a research career. Work-life balance issues, the resulting role conflict for women and the support that men receive at home from their partners are regarded as external to academia and research careers. Our analysis contributes to understanding how choice as a figure of speech is performative of power structures that are then materialised through appointment and hiring practices. With the insight that the conceptualisation of a problem shapes the solutions that are imagined and enacted (Beddoes & Pawley, 2014, p. 1574), our analysis also contributes to understanding why change has been so slow and why there is a tendency to put in place “fixing women” solutions in these three countries.

2 HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE, FAMILY POLICY AND THE GENDER CONTRACT: CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

In this section we present contextual factors for our discussion of the choices that women academics make and are alleged to make. Firstly, we discuss the neoliberal transformation of higher education and research and the attendant implications for research careers. Secondly, we address the gender contract in the three countries embedded in family policy and availability of childcare facilities, and thirdly, the gender division of work at home. These three factors are crucial to understanding the structural

constraints facing women academics which, as will be seen, are rarely addressed in discussing the role conflict they experience.

The Czech Republic, South Africa and Turkey underwent regime change at the end of the twentieth century (a 1980 Turkish coup d'état, the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 in the Czech Republic, and the end of apartheid in South Africa in 1994), followed by neoliberal reforms under the guidance of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These reforms affected higher education and research, and entailed reduction in public funding for universities, introduction of private universities, massification of higher education, a rise in competitive distribution of research funding, attempts to introduce university tuition fees, introduction of metric-based assessment systems and change in the societal role of universities and research, with universities becoming service providers (Aslan, 2014; Baatjes et al., 2012; Cini, 2019; Inal & Akkaymak, 2012; Linkova & Stockelova, 2012; Styger et al., 2015). The research carried out in the Czech Republic underscores gendered impacts of these shifts (Linková et al., 2013; Linková & Červinková, 2013; Vohlídalová & Linková, 2017). With these changes came a novel stress on research assessment and performance, especially through impact factor publications, linearisation of the research career, a shift from core institutional funding to projectification through grant funding and introduction of international academic mobility as a sign of excellence. All these factors are gendered in the sense that childbirth and childcare commitments strongly conflict with these new features of academic careers.

In terms of family policy and the gender order, a very traditional and rigid gender contract continues in these three countries, with women held responsible for childcare and housework. This gendered division of labour is reflected in family policy which has only slowly recognised the entitlement of fathers to parental leave. Maternity and parental leave provisions differ starkly in terms of financial support received and length of leave. Maternity leave in the Czech Republic is 28 weeks paid at 70% of salary, followed by parental leave drawn over two, three or four years with a total financial provision of approximately EUR 8500. In Turkey maternity leave is 16 paid weeks which can be followed by up to 24 months of unpaid leave taken by the mother or the spouse. In South Africa maternity leave is four months and unpaid, though from 1 January 2020 employees could claim benefits for parental leave from the Unemployment Insurance Fund of up to 66% of their earnings, subject to the maximum income threshold. What these systems have in common is the expectation that the mother

uses the leave. Fathers in the Czech Republic can take parental leave but they constitute less than 1% of parental leave recipients; specific paternal leave was introduced as late as 2018 and provides seven days after the birth of a child. In Turkey, fathers are allowed five days of paid leave. Those in the Turkish civil service can use ten days of paternity leave (Excuse Leave) when their wife gives birth. In South Africa, from 1 January 2020 employees were legally entitled to three categories of leave: parental leave (ten consecutive days), adoption leave (ten consecutive weeks) and commissioning parental leave (ten consecutive weeks).

Another important factor for women's success in the labour market is the availability of public childcare facilities. All three countries have very little in terms of public day-care facilities for children under three years of age, and this is a huge problem especially for young academics. The Czech Republic saw the almost complete closure of public day-care nurseries for children under three after 1989, and the availability of kindergartens for children over three remains an enormous problem especially in large cities where universities and research centres are located. In Turkey only companies with more than 150 female employees are required by law to provide childcare facilities. In South Africa the absence of childcare facilities at the workplace forces women to hire a helper as a matter of necessity rather than choice. In all three countries, private services are available but are extraordinarily expensive. They tend to be used a great deal in South Africa but they are quite costly; in the Czech Republic and Turkey these are largely unaffordable for early career researchers.

Lastly, all three countries share a highly unbalanced division of housework between partners, with women performing most of the childcare, tutoring and daily cleaning at home. When men contribute to housework, this is regarded as "help" to their partner. A 2016 report by the International Labour Organization found that in Turkey women devote three times more time to unpaid care work than men (International Labour Organization, 2016, p. 68) and only 20% of husbands share family work equally with their academic wives (Özkanlı & Korkmaz, 2000). In the Czech Republic women are reported to do twice as much housework (Chaloupková, 2005), while in South Africa, child rearing and household responsibilities are also relegated to women. In traditional African societies, mothering and motherhood are unquestionably a woman's job, whether or not one is a working woman, and are an internalised and idealised value in society.

In sum, the new demands related to research careers, family policy predicated on the assumption that women are the primary childcare provider, the lack of childcare facilities for children under three and the continued unequal distribution of childcare and housework between partners all combine to create very different conditions for women's and men's career aspirations and choices in academia.

3 DATA AND METHODS

In exploring the issue of choice, the authors relied on a variety of data sources. The data related to the Czech Republic came from several research projects. These included a large-scale combined methods study funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs carried out in 2017–2018 in the public research and higher education sectors into women's and men's careers (interviews with 27 men and 17 women academics) and from three EU-funded projects focused on gender equality issues in higher education and research, one carried out in 2006–2008 (an ethnographic study with 19 interviews and 3 focus groups) and two in 2015–2017 (7 interviews with 6 men and 1 woman in top management and team leadership positions; 4 focus groups and 20 interviews with male academics and 20 with women academics). All these projects were in compliance with the institutional personal data protection, informed consent and other research ethics regulations.

In South Africa, data were collected from two captive audiences of female academic and professional leaders/managers who were attending a special leadership academy for women in 2015 and 2018 that caters for 80 participants each year. With 43 questionnaires completed, the response rate was 54% in 2015 and 63% in 2018. Permission to collect data on both occasions was granted by the director of the academy. A quantitative questionnaire combined with a set of open-ended questions was used to generate data in 2015 with the aim of determining perceptions of barriers to women's advancement into senior management and leadership positions at universities. The 2018 data were generated by means of a written open-ended question seeking one main reason why progress in the advancement of women into higher education leadership was still slow. Simple descriptive statistics were computed for quantitative data while thematic analysis allowed for identification of dominant themes and patterns in open-ended questions.

The Turkish data entails an empirical study of female and male university senior managers conducted between 2016 and 2018. Qualitative data analysis from interviews and document analysis using the “Success Case Method” (see Yin, 2018) were undertaken in this case study. The Case Study University (CSU) was chosen as the research site because it had made great progress in gender equality in education, research and training. Ethics approval was secured before conducting in-depth interviews with 6 female and 16 male senior managers in fundamental and applied sciences as well as social sciences (1 rector, 5 vice-rectors, 7 deans and 9 deputy-deans).

4 GENDERED CHOICES: INDIVIDUALISING DISCOURSES INTERNALISED

In this section, we present findings across the three countries related to the perceived barriers to women’s career progression and particularly the uptake of leadership and managerial roles (for an overview see Fox et al., 2017; Machado-Taylor & Özkanlı, 2013; Neale & Özkanlı, 2010; Özkanlı, 2007; Özkanlı et al., 2009; Özkanlı & White, 2008, 2009; White & Özkanlı, 2011, Zulu, 2007, 2017). Firstly, we discuss the role conflict they experienced and the internalisation of the individualised, highly gendered responsibility for childcare and homemaking. We then examine how they used individual choice as a frame to make sense of their career choices, limitations on their aspirations due to intense work-life conflict, and the structural pressures they experienced in academia in relation to work-life balance. Secondly, we address the gendered expectations of leadership and managerial positions in research and higher education, and the related feelings of failure and unworthiness of the women academics.

4.1 *Gender Discrimination, Work-Life Balance and Role Conflict*

Academic women in the three countries did not often identify the existence of gender discrimination in academic hiring, promotion and management, and were of the opinion that obstacles to leadership had been largely overcome (Zulu, 2011, p. 839). Furthermore, academic institutions were considered by some, especially those in managerial roles, as offering equal opportunities to women and men to aspire to leadership

(for similar findings in Portugal, see Carvalho & de Lourdes Machado-Taylor, 2017, pp. 123–125).

The most common issue emerging from the data was family responsibilities and the related intense role conflict women academics experienced. The only obstacle that came clearly to the fore was the difficulty of combining an academic career and childcare:

The greatest obstacle to achieve work/life balance is my marriage and motherhood. Time and role conflict are my priority stress factors. (Interviewee 5, female, Deputy Dean, Turkey)

Academia and family were both identified as “greedy institutions” (Burkinshaw & White, 2017) for women, with a total grasp on the individual, and women academics experienced an intense conflict of being between a rock and a hard place of two value systems of family and academia (Vohlídalová, 2013). On the one hand, women were faced with the demands of the conservative ideology of motherhood with responsibility for childcare (with the concomitant refusal on the part of many spouses to contribute their share and support their partner’s career aspirations, or the situation of single parenthood). On the other hand, was the extremely competitive research system with its expectation of linear career progression and strong research output. The conflict was succinctly described by the following interviewee:

Classical family roles, giving birth, taking care of babies/old parents and worst of all being wives of terribly trained, over expecting and over demanding Turkish husbands are barriers for female academic women in attaining senior management. (Interviewee 8, male, Vice-Rector, Turkey)

However, women academics rarely considered the conflicting demands of these two social institutions and the disadvantage this created specifically for them. Instead, they internalised their own responsibility for managing the conflict and navigating the difficult terrain of making the right choice:

My colleagues or former classmates are considering how much to dedicate to the family and how much to work. They take it as their own responsibility, that it is their choice whether they really want to do this work. (Female, assistant professor, Czech Republic)

This role conflict has been exacerbated as a result of the change in the neoliberal governance of research and higher education. In the Czech Republic, for example, what used to be a manageable birth-related career break became an almost insurmountable barrier after the post-2000 reforms (Linková & Červinková, 2013).

Importantly, role conflict affected not only the actual decisions that women academics made; they also felt that they should or would have to reduce or even give up the pace of work in anticipation of childcare and their role as mothers. Family and children were inseparable from their consideration of a scientific career (cf. Beddoes & Pawley, 2014, p. 1579).

I think that when the children are small, I will reduce science a lot. I want to dedicate myself to children as much as I can. I definitely don't want to be the type who gives a six-month old baby to a babysitter. (Female, doctoral student, Czech Republic)

Hence, they did not make decisions as autonomous individuals but rather in relation to their real as well as prospective family commitments. These commitments also limited their career ambitions, as this interviewee explained:

In Turkey, childcare and domestic responsibilities are considered to be primarily a woman's duty and women seek administrative positions less because of role conflict. (Female, Vice-Rector, Turkey)

In contrast, single, childfree men in early career stages did not raise family concerns in their future plans. When prompted, they usually talked about their ability to provide for a future family financially and were worried that science was not the profession that would make that possible. Still, a slow and careful change was evident among some early career male researchers, as demonstrated in this comment: "My child has a VERY high impact factor ... and citation index. ... So I slowed down big time, a year and a week ago" (postdoctoral fellow, male, Czech Republic). Similarly, a Turkish male Deputy Dean (Interviewee 20) explained that "I could not undertake the position if I had a young family".

Additional constraints were also evident in relation to international mobility, which has become an important feature of academic careers. Children and family responsibilities directly conflicted with the ability to be mobile:

Being single or married without children or one child may be an advantage for women in accepting managerial positions because the requirement for mobility, long business trips and national/international networking is then possible. (Interviewee 1, female, Dean, Turkey)

In South Africa, the demand for internationalisation, particularly in research collaborations and mobility, often resulted in women academics with families choosing their families over the demands of travel. They often sacrificed their own career development in order to support their husband's career, as one woman in Obers' (2014, p. 1114) study explained: "I have said that my family responsibilities have constrained my career development. That is completely self-imposed ... someone needs to play the support role and I CHOSE to do that." Mobility was an advantage for career advancement in terms of accessing study opportunities abroad and relocating for better job opportunities: "I left SA to study in the USA to get my PhD ... only in retrospect did I realise that it would have been very difficult to get my PhD in SA due to institutional and social culture" (participant in Zulu's 2015 study).

Patriarchy is often cited as a serious challenge to the choice women make in their career progression in South Africa. Participants in Zulu's 2015 and 2018 studies pointed to the existence of patriarchy "in powerful and decision-making roles" which made it difficult for women to be "recognised and promoted". A related issue was the effort to avoid conflict at home, where some women made a choice not to rise too high above their husbands in rank: "women married to low rank men don't see the need to be in higher positions at work". In some instances, a wife who earned more than her husband was a threat to her husband's status as the provider, and this role reversal was a potential source of conflict.

In all the three countries, we can see that the internalisation of individual responsibility resulted in a particular subjectivity whereby women academics accepted their near sole responsibility for caring for children and homework, resulting in them experiencing extreme role conflict. Often, women did not regard this as systemic disadvantage that required institutional attention but rather as something that just happened, a matter of individual priorities as this female participant in the South African study succinctly explained: "Some choose careers first (mostly men) and most women seek family first".

4.2 *Gendered Expectations of Leadership*

The lack of progression to leadership and managerial positions is not, however, only due to the role conflict that women academics experience. Another factor is the masculine gendering of leadership and the perceived role incongruity between femininity and leadership (Heilman & Eagly, 2008; Morley, 2013). This manifests in two ways.

Firstly, women internalise leadership as masculine (Zulu, 2003), which then hampers their choices due to feelings of insufficiency. Such beliefs emerging from Zulu's 2018 data included: "feeling unworthy", "inability to publish alone", "insecurity", "inability to negotiate a balance between demands of home and work responsibility". This was related to the organisational culture of leadership often being based on strength and dominance, as one Czech interviewee explained: "Unfortunately, in leadership positions, not only here but generally, men predominate. She has to be a bit of a predator so as not to get lost because some of the guys are bulldozers" (male, lab leader, Czech Republic). Women, however, often prefer different leadership styles that are more participative, empathetic and caring (Ramohai & Marumo, 2016, pp. 144–146), and the institutional expectation to perform a certain form of leadership creates feelings of insufficiency. This notion of leadership has been normalised and accepted to such an extent that leadership is considered to be a man's affair. Having to navigate the conflicting demands of femininity and leadership may appear to be a daunting task. As one participant in Zulu's study put it: "Women need a mind shift—they've been socialised into thinking female leadership is more complex than male leadership".

Family responsibilities which also affect how women see their ability to reach managerial positions may lead women to renegotiate what they consider to be success. In contrast to formal measures of success (such as impact factor papers, membership in scientific societies, professorships), on which leadership positions have often become contingent, women reframe success in terms of small successes and importantly the ability to achieve some degree of work-life balance, as this female lab leader in the Czech Republic put it: "In fact I am quite proud of some phases of my life which, if I were to put them in a CV, would be total failure, but I am proud that I got over it, that I persisted and found the strength to come to the lab". This is particularly true of the younger women academics, whereas the older generations are more likely to frame success in terms of succeeding in the men's world of research management (Nyklová & Víznerová, 2017, p. 14).

The second way leadership manifests as masculine is in the perceptions of some current leaders in academic institutions. They regard motherhood and academic careers to be in sharp opposition, as two mutually exclusive systems. Czech and South African studies found that women's perceived caring responsibilities disqualified them from leadership roles in the eyes of colleagues and managers (Cidlinská et al., 2018, p. 113; Linková, 2017; Shober, 2014). Women were regarded by leaders as deficient: "women lack motivation to be in managerial positions, particularly in the early phase of their career and when they have young children" (female, Dean, Turkey). Some interviewees mentioned that there was no institutional discrimination and that women might prefer not to be a manager because of role conflict. Several asserted that women could create their own barriers: "there are no barriers to promotion for women in the CSU. However, women may create their own barriers because of role conflict and they prefer not to be a manager" (female, Dean, Turkey).

We can see that respondents in the three countries, both women academics affected by role conflict and people in managerial positions in higher education and research institutions, identified role conflict and the difficulties of combining work and family commitments as a crucial obstacle to leadership positions. Some research managers recognised that active support was necessary to create change. For example, this female vice-rector in Turkey mentioned that "senior management planned to increase support for women in management by offering mentoring for leadership roles, improved childcare/elder care facilities and quotas for women managers". In a few rare examples like this one, leaders did include the structural nature of gender inequality and the need to address it through structural measures at the institutional level.

This attitude contrasted sharply with the discourse of individual choice which was sometimes used in more insidious ways by current leadership in academic institutions: "Women in science do not have a more difficult position, no one is preventing women from doing anything, it is their personal choice what they want to do" (male, top management, Czech Republic). This is an embodiment of a sentiment voiced frequently by people in decision-making and leadership positions, and is related to the dominant research culture and expectations placed on academic managers and leaders: "the work-life imbalance. That absolutely comes with the job. You have to expect that", said a male deputy dean in Turkey, echoing a strongly inbuilt expectation of total dedication. Similarly, "Saturdays, Sundays, there is always work. Some call this workaholism but there is no

other way. Either it gives you joy, and if it doesn't, you have to abandon it. ... I expect this sort of effort, whoever doesn't want that shouldn't be here", stated a Czech highly successful male lab leader. The total dedication and absolute availability form core values on which higher education and research are built, and help to elucidate the invisible structural barriers in which people, generally mothers who must juggle work-life balance, are constrained in making career decisions.

This use of individual choice is performative of gender inequality in two ways. Firstly, people in leadership and decision-making positions use it to shift blame for lack of career progression onto women and to deflect their responsibility for creating non-discriminatory working conditions (e.g., research assessment systems that take parenting breaks into account or revising eligibility criteria for certain positions). Secondly, it obscures the ways in which men often rely on their partners' support at home and in which people's home and paid work lives are linked (Vohlídalová, 2014). This is only rarely made explicit, as in this quote from a top research manager:

Here I see the biggest problem, because I was able to totally ignore child-care because I knew that I could rely on my wife ... and I see the biggest problem in the switching—that childcare needs to be thought about constantly and scientific work does, too. (Male, Director, Czech Republic)

Similarly, in Turkey a female dean (Interviewee 1) claimed that: "male managers are lucky because their wives do all the housework, childcare responsibilities and prepare their luggage for business trips". These provide an eloquent expression of what often remains invisible (men ignoring childcare) as well as the mutually exclusionary cultural imaginaries of academic work and parenting, both of which allegedly require 100% of a person.

In contrast to the quote from the Turkish vice-rector above, Czech top managers declared that it was not necessary to take any action to improve the gender balance in management and leadership positions because if there was nothing actively preventing women from academic career progression, it was the same as supporting them in building a career. In other words, inactivity was perceived as support (Cidlinská et al., 2018, p. 114). Logically, this belief about women and men having equal access to management and leadership roles turns proactive measures into an unjust prioritisation of one group at the cost of another. This is reflected in the continued conviction that no action is necessary to support women's

careers or to change the way academic institutions are organised. The failure to recognise that people live and work not as rational atomised individuals but embedded in social relations and that the lives of women and men academics are linked with their spouses, allows higher education and research managers to act in gender-blind ways.

In South Africa, the persistence of sexism in the workplace is coupled with racial (and gender) discrimination from male-dominated environments. These were perceived by the study participants as inimical to women's advancement. The persistence of "male dominance in managerial senior leadership positions" as well as "cultural issues" and the fact that "men still occupy top decision-making positions" pointed to lingering notions of gendered expectations of leadership. In response to a question on barriers experienced before attaining their current position, two women replied:

The most prominent for me had more to do with my race than my gender. You could see some white males did not expect much from me. (HERS-SA participant, 2015)

I'm a white female. I was finally appointed because of my scarce skills and there was no one else that applied. (HERS-SA participant, 2015)

In South Africa, racialised (as well as gendered) discourses often underlie women's perception of their slow progress into leadership positions. Whereas black women often have to contend with white (and black) male resistance to their career progression, white women tend to be threatened by a transformation agenda that seeks to redress past racial imbalances by appointing black females (and males) into senior positions. For instance, a white participant who stated that she was "finally appointed because of my scarce skills" specifically indicated in her response that race had been a barrier to her advancement.

To conclude this section, the notion of individual choice is not a useful framing for considering women's under-representation in senior leadership positions, since their ability to make choices is constrained and limited by extrinsic factors. For instance, the persistence of sexism in the workplace—in South Africa coupled with racial discrimination—from male-dominated environments is inimical to women's advancement. This persistence is underscored in one of the most important recommendations made in the Ministerial task team report on the Recruitment, Retention

and Progression of Black South African Academics which spelled out “the need to tackle institutional and individual racism and sexism in direct and visible ways” (DHET, 2019, p. 10).

5 THE STRUCTURING POWER OF CHOICE

While the three countries examined in this chapter differ in many ways, as do the trajectories they took after regime change, they are similar in the dominance of neoliberal individualising discourses combined with a very traditional gender order and stress on motherhood. These discourses are evident in higher education, where researchers are said to have a choice about whether or not to work in research. What these individualising discourses highlight is the failure to recognise structural gender inequalities that exist in society and in the academic cultures and practices that circumscribe the types of choice academics can make. This means that both women and men in academia internalise the unequal gender order, with the responsibility for managing work and family duties placed on women. Women academics with children then navigate their careers as already circumscribed by the hyper-visibility of motherhood (Lorenz-Meyer, 2009, p. 103), while for men academics with children fatherhood often remains invisible and does not affect their career aspirations or progress unless they actually decide to act as caring fathers.

Secondly, individual choice is used as a legitimating discourse for the lack of women in leadership and decision-making and as an argument for the reluctance and sometimes outright refusal to take any action in support of achieving gender balance in academic institutions. After all, it is suggested, if women are opting out of their own accord, what can leaders and managers do.

While gender equality policy in research and higher education has been addressed at national and institutional levels in the three countries, the dominance of the individualising discourses means that these initiatives often remain on paper only and that initiatives to support gender equality in academia have so far often focused on “fixing women” or “equipping women” due to the perception that their lack of achievement is a result of their deficits. Consistent with this approach is the introduction of support programmes to build managerial skills, mentoring and coaching programmes or providing role models, even when an institution implements a gender equality plan (e.g., with the support of EU funding). We therefore argue that the continued dominance of individualising discourses

limits ongoing attempts to foster gender equality and affects the type of actions taken. This differentiates these three countries from those other countries in the volume which report on actions that recognise gender inequality as a structural issue (e.g., Lipinski and Wroblewski in Chap. 8).

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Whatever Happened to Gender Equality in Australian and New Zealand Universities?

Brigitte Bönisch-Brednich and Kate White

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines gender equality in relation to strategies to support career progression for women in universities. It defines gender equality as both genders being equally valued—with different behaviours, aspirations and needs considered, valued and favoured equally—and recognises that higher education institutions (HEIs) perpetuate hegemonic masculinities, so that gender equality can only be achieved through changing their entrenched and self-perpetuating leadership cultures (Burkinshaw, 2015). The chapter argues that the structural sources of gender equality must be tackled. Most recently the failure to do this has been reflected in the displacement of gender equality by merging it with other initiatives and thus

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transforming it from a separate and stand-alone goal to a less prominent position in the HEI's agenda. Focusing on universities in Australia and New Zealand (NZ), this chapter compares the responses of senior managers responsible for gender equality during COVID-19 with an analysis of these universities' strategic plans and those of other public universities. It concludes that collapsing issues around gender equality into equity and diversity or inclusion portfolios leads to less emphasis on the barriers to women's career progression and thus weakens women's participation and influence in HE leadership roles.

2 GENDER INEQUALITY, STRUCTURAL CHANGE AND DISPLACEMENT

Since the early 1980s both Australia and New Zealand have had national gender-equality frameworks to remove sex discrimination, and universities have implemented gender-equality policies and put in place a range of initiatives to increase women's representation in senior academia (White, 2011). However, Fitzgerald and Wilkinson (2010) have questioned if this ostensible commitment to strong gender-equality frameworks and institutional equality policies and practices has had an impact on the participation of women as leaders and managers in higher education.

Higher education in both countries has for the most part not dealt with gender equality as a question of structural change that needs to be addressed. Rather, existing structures tend to perpetuate inequality. For example, Strachan et al. (2016) identified three structural issues impacting on Australian women academics: job insecurity—the tendency for women to be in fixed-term rather than continuing jobs; marginalisation—which they saw as newly appointed women often being placed in teaching-intensive positions; and funnelling—reducing proportions of women moving into higher academic levels. Similarly, Brower and James (2020) demonstrated deep structural gender inequality in academia in New Zealand. They found that a man's odds of being ranked professor or associate professor were more than double a woman's with similar recent research score, age, field and university. They observed a lifetime gender pay gap of ~NZ\$400,000, of which the research score and age explained less than half. In another study, Walker et al. (2020) reviewed the representation of men and women in the New Zealand university workforce from 2002 to 2017 and found women were more likely to be employed at

lower levels of seniority, to advance to seniority more slowly than male colleagues, and were more likely to be employed part-time. They called for strategies to address the cultural and structural bias in universities that favour the hiring and promotion of men and to improve workforce diversity at all levels of seniority. It is therefore clear that discrimination against women academics in both countries continues, despite the existence of gender-equality policies and of national anti-discrimination and affirmative action legislation (White, 2011). So far, not a single New Zealand university has announced how or if it is going to address the issues raised in the above articles.

Further evidence of the need for structural change was offered by Morrish (2019), who identified four causes of stress in university staff. These were: workloads which do not take full account of “legitimate working patterns; new directive modes of performance management driven by managerial desire to ascend league tables and rankings” that were based on targets, outcomes and metrics which may be set at levels that staff find unattainable; higher education becoming an “anxiety machine” in which excessive pressure to perform has been normalised; and, concurring with Strachan et al.’s (2016) findings, HE careers becoming more precarious as short-term contracts are now the norm for early career staff.

While quotas are one means of addressing continuing underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, they can be seen to undermine the merit principle; this is problematic as the definition of merit is based on performance measures that privilege white male academics (Brower & James, 2020). Implementation of targets and affirmative action in recruitment could directly speed up progress on gender equity (Pyke & White, 2018), but Täuber (2019) warns that mandatory gender diversity measures will not succeed unless genuine organisational transformation is achieved (see also Chap. 8).

In the absence of structural change and in a context where women are depicted as “the problem” (Burkinshaw & White, 2017), they are encouraged to undertake leadership-development training and to find mentors (White & Burkinshaw, 2019), but invariably facilitators of this training are practising masculine models of leadership (Burkinshaw, 2015). One of the authors recently co-facilitated a promotion workshop for women where one participant provided feedback that “every time I am attending these workshops for women, I am being asked to be like a man” (personal communication 2020).

It can therefore be argued that universities in Australia and New Zealand have not systematically addressed the need for structural change, particularly in relation to increasing the representation of women in senior positions in HE (White, 2011). It is suggested that the merging of gender equality with other initiatives, transforming it from a separate and stand-alone goal to a less prominent position in the HEI's agenda, reflects another attempt to displace a structural approach to gender equality. Thus, gender equality for women has been combined with other diversity categories—Indigenous people, ethnic minorities, the disabled and students—with implications for gender-equality strategies and potentially for a focus on women's career advancement (Neale, 2017).

Universities Australia, the peak body for universities, has implemented a separate Indigenous strategy (UA, 2017) and many of the New Zealand universities have similar goals, but the impact of these is not clear. While such initiatives are to be applauded, it appears that this quest for diversity and inclusivity may not be helpful for Indigenous women, as most Indigenous scholars who are not able to get jobs are also women. It is all too easy for any gains made by particular diversity groups to slip away (McAllister et al., 2019; Naepi, 2019; Neale, 2017). In short, grouping gender equality issues in equity and inclusion portfolios may risk making the over 50% of staff who are women less visible (Bevan & Gatrell, 2017); this does little to increase the representation of women in senior positions.

The displacement of gender equality in HEIs can produce a sense of disillusionment about the impact women can have in/on university management under current leadership models, and therefore a silent but pervasive process of retreating from senior administration, especially among younger women (Morley, 2014; Acker, 2014; Burkinshaw & White, 2017; Blackmore & Sachs, 2007)

Feminist institutionalism is the theoretical approach used in this chapter. It asserts that gender is a key element in “social relations based upon perceived (socially constructed and culturally variable) differences between women and men, and as a primary way of signifying (and naturalising) relations of power and hierarchy” (Mackay et al., 2010, p. 580). It therefore provides a framework to address the gendered nature of institutions and institutional change.

3 UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

In New Zealand and Australia, both former British colonies, higher education (HE) was originally modelled on the British system. New Zealand has eight and Australia 37 publicly funded universities.¹

Women make up over 50% of university students in NZ, and 51% of academic staff at public tertiary-education providers were women in 2017. However, as in other countries, the more senior the position the less likely it is to be filled by women (see Chap. 1). Only 26.6% of professors and deans at the eight universities in 2017 were women, compared to 19% senior women in 2012; thus just under 74% of senior academics were male, compared to 84% in 2012 (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2012). In 2020, four of the eight universities (or 50%) were led by women compared to the EU average of 22%.

In Australia, women comprise over 50% of the domestic university student population and in 2019, 66.4% of professional (administrative) staff and 47.7% of academic staff were women (Universities Australia, 2020). While women are over-represented at entry level in academia (in 2017 they comprised 52.0% of lecturers (Level B) and 53.2% of below lecturer level (Level A)) (Larkins, 2018), they continue to be under-represented at associate professor (40.7%) and full professor (30.1%) levels (Universities Australia, 2020). They are more likely to be employed as sessional workers, at lower pay levels and have interrupted career development (Strachan et al., 2016) and are thus effectively held back or slowed down in many more ways that men are not, often making academic tenure and progression elusive (Pyke & White, 2018).

Women continue to be under-represented in top HE roles in Australia. In 2021 24.3% of Vice-Chancellors were women. As in NZ (Brower & James, 2020), Australia has a significant gender pay gap in HE. The full-time average total remuneration gender pay gap in 2018 was 13.4%, very similar to the national average gender pay gap of 14% (WGEA, 2020a) and only slightly less than 2015 when it was 14.7%. As with other professions, gender pay gaps are linked to poor female representation at the top of the academy, which perpetuates inequality in HE.

¹We would like to thank Dr Graeme Whimp for his excellent background research for the New Zealand part of this project.

4 METHODOLOGY

This is a mixed-methods study. It is based on qualitative data collected during the first half of 2020 and quantitative, textual analysis of the strategic plans of all Australian and New Zealand public universities. We analysed written responses from senior university managers responsible for their university equity portfolio and compared these with a critical reading of strategic plans across the sector. We were interested in exploring if the views of these senior managers with responsibility for gender equality aligned with the published priorities of their university. We asked if they could describe any progress that has been made over the last 10–15 years in increasing the percentage of women at senior levels, and we asked about initiatives taken to quicken women’s progress into senior roles, the trajectory of success (or failure), their views on subsuming gender under the general “equity” category, and if and why they thought women’s progress was so slow.

The process of ethics approval at Victoria University of Wellington (granted in May 2020) was prolonged as COVID-19 required a -re-thinking of our fieldwork. As both countries were in lockdown we opted for a mail-out of a project outline and a list of questions to be considered and responded to in writing. This approach ensured that managers could organise responses around their own timetables, and ask executive assistants and colleagues for help while focusing on urgent COVID-19 responses for their institutions. This method not only provided more time and flexibility to respond, but also allowed a high degree of agency for the managers whose responses varied in length but showed significant engagement with the topic.

Senior managers responsible for gender equality, similar to those interviewed in Chap. 2, were identified from university websites. In New Zealand, the appropriate person from each of the eight universities was selected and approached by email. In Australia, senior managers responsible for gender equality were selected from each of the main university groupings—the Group of Eight research intensive universities, the Regional Universities Network, the Innovative Research Universities, and the Australian Technology Network of Universities—and senior managers from 13 universities were approached. Thus, a total of 21 such senior managers were approached. A total of six NZ and six Australian managers provided written responses; in addition, one NZ manager requested a face-to-face interview. None of the senior managers approached refused to participate in the project, but several did not respond to the initial or follow-up email. This was not surprising as we approached them in the initial

months of the pandemic. In order to preserve anonymity, because of the small size of the sample, the gender of the participants and other identifying characteristics are not included.

Benchmarking these responses with published university strategic plans suggested that these methods complemented each other by allowing any inconsistencies to emerge. We used critical discourse analysis to analyse these plans. Such analysis can have “important implications for the textual agency of strategic plans, their performative effects, impact on power relations and ideological implications” (Vaara et al., 2010, p. 685). It will be shown that the analysis of the strategic plans indicated that gender equality was either invisible or had low priority.

Responses by equality-portfolio managers in both countries to questions about gender equality initiatives revealed a strong personal commitment, even when progress was slow. However, their responses were balanced by the textual analysis of the strategic plans. Hence, a mixed methods approach yielded more insightful results about tensions between personal portfolio commitment and overall strategic goal-setting in Australian and New Zealand universities.

5 THE VIEWS OF SENIOR MANAGERS

We were interested to establish if gender equality in relation to improving women’s representation in senior roles was a high priority for HEIs or if, as the analysis below of strategic plans indicates, it had been displaced by/included in broader categories. These senior managers had direct responsibility for gender equality and thus their views represented the policies, if not the priorities, of their universities. Respondents were keen to discuss the topic and pointed to: significant increases in the representation of women in senior roles although this was uneven across faculties with “much still to be done at Level E [full professor]” (Participant 4 AUS (P4 AUS)). They also referred to high levels of academic promotion (P10 AUS); and more women in senior leadership teams (P11 NZ). However, one participant identified women as more likely to be appointed to senior management support roles, which reflects other research (e.g., Bagilhole & White, 2011a):

We have data to suggest that deliberate succession planning has taken place ... [which] included a strong effort towards gender equality for areas such as associate head of school roles. The proportion has stabilised in terms of numbers and it will be of interest to determine whether these women move up to full Head positions rather than remaining in supporting roles. (P1 NZ)

Another cautioned against focusing solely on increasing representation of women in the professoriate as a marker of progress, reflecting O'Connor's (2017) recognition that there were other issues: "such as pay equity, support for gender diverse staff, preventing bullying and harassment, providing employment conditions that support staff with carer responsibilities (flexible working arrangements)" (P3 NZ). Interestingly, this perspective broadened out gender equality to notions of a "safe, inclusive and equitable environment", thus merging it with wider equity concerns.

5.1 *Plans and Strategies*

Several universities had a range of specific strategies designed to get more women into senior positions (Pyke & White, 2018). They included: key performance indicators (KPIs) of targets of 40% women at associate and full professor levels by 2025, and 50% for professional staff (P2 AUS); an annual review of salaries for professors (P1 NZ); collecting pre-appointment pay data (P5 AUS); senior leaders being "asked to include gender equity strategic interventions in their planning" (P3 NZ); and improving retention of women academics through piloting a sponsorship and leadership network (P7 AUS). These were all strategies identified by respondents as necessary to overcome women's structural disadvantage (Strachan et al., 2016).

Improved recruitment processes were also mentioned. One senior manager considered that a range of initiatives was required including "ensuring that there is a gender balance on selection committees; search agencies have a clear directive to ensure women are represented in long lists; and all selection panel members to have recruitment training" (P3 NZ). A further initiative identified for getting more women into HE leadership was priority targets (P6 NZ) and targets at all levels (P5 AUS), although more radical measures were also countenanced such as "the courage to institute quotas" (P1, NZ):

The issue of quota-based planning can be controversial, but ... can have positive and lasting effects, not just in terms of more diverse thinking but improved outcomes from decision making. I suspect this might be a bridge too far for many people in senior management in our conservative context; my view, however, is that ... targets are immensely helpful in breaking through existing structural norms. We cannot afford to rest simply on natural and incremental change. (P1 NZ)

While aware that advocating quotas was possibly controversial, these comments suggested that this was an effective way of “breaking through existing structural norms”, thus endorsing some of the literature that calls for radical measures (e.g., Wroblewski, 2017; Pyke & White, 2018) to achieve structural change in relation to gender equality (see Chap. 8 for a discussion of the limitation of quotas).

All the respondents mentioned fixing the women strategies, including internal women in leadership development programmes offered at either the divisional (P4 AUS) or university-wide level and the New Zealand participants also mentioned the national New Zealand Women in Leadership (NZWiL) programme. But there is evidence of the limitations of these programmes in addressing the impact of excessive workloads, high levels of administration and male colleagues receiving more support, resources and recognition (Tessens et al., 2011).

Other “fix the women” measures—see also Chap. 8—required to get more women into leadership roles included mentoring (P4 AUS), and funding for professional coaching (P1 NZ). Their views reflected Francis and Stulz’s (2020) Australian findings on barriers and facilitators for promotion. However, they suggested that “it isn’t any one initiative that can act as a ‘silver bullet’. It is instead tackling gender from multiple angles and doing so consistently, at the same time” (P2 AUS).

Indigenous women are also under-represented in more senior roles (Neale, 2017). However, in one New Zealand university “all senior Maori and Pasifika staff” were women (P9 NZ). One Australian participant noted that it was “not surprising Indigenous academic women are also under-represented” (P2 AUS), while another thought: “This is both a pipeline issue—fewer indigenous women coming through the system—and a result of persistent structural inequities” (P1 NZ). Interventions specifically focused on Maori women were in place in some universities—mostly reflecting a fix the woman approach. Thus, there was a separate Maori Women in Leadership programme (P3 NZ) and a “specific programme for early career Māori and Pacific academics”, and this has been widely used by women (P11 NZ).

5.2 *Displacement of Gender Equality*

We then directly broached displacement and invisibility and asked whether or not in recent years gender equality appeared to have become part of the equity and diversity portfolio. There were mixed views on the topic, with

some supporting its inclusion in broader portfolios and others seeing this as potentially risky. “Quite right and long overdue” came one response (P11 NZ), while another university manager said they supported “a Safe, Inclusive and Equitable environment to support all staff members’ well-being and success. Intersectionality is recognised and multiple group membership is typical for many staff. ... in preference to a singular ‘gender’ lens” (P3 NZ). Similarly, others talked of the “ultimate aim ... to provide a more equitable, inclusive and respectful campus for the University community” (P7 AUS), and gender equity initiatives being “part of the EDI theme which sits within the broader Strategic Priority which is ‘Social Impact’” (P2 AUS). These views suggested that there had indeed been a move away from a singular gender equality lens to it becoming one of several competing priorities within inclusion or social impact.

Others appreciated the danger of displacement or making gender equality invisible “often bundled together in an ‘equity’ suite of policies” (Neale, 2017, p. 190). One argued that placing gender equality in a broader category: “risks marginalising and minimising gender issues which cut across the entirety of the university’s workforce and business” (P4 AUS), given that women comprise over half its students and staff. Several participants agreed: “Good in theory (so much intersectionality) but challenging in practice as key aspects of equality or targeted actions get ‘lost’ in a very competitive and crowded equity and diversity space” (P5 AUS); and “education institutions must not then downplay or disregard the need to attend to gender equity through putting more of a focus on ethnicity or diversity” (P6 NZ).

5.3 *Impact of COVID-19 on Plans, Priorities and Strategies*

When we probed about what further needed to happen to achieve gender equality in the representation of women in university leadership and also to achieve gender pay equity, especially at senior levels, some responded through a COVID-19 lens. Thus, while COVID-19 might impact on such gender equity programmes, one participant asserted: “The senior leadership team remains committed nonetheless to providing development opportunities for women” (P1 NZ). Another considered that “arising from the financial impacts of COVID-19” higher education needed to be “careful that restructuring and other responses to COVID-19 impacts do not inadvertently reduce the proportion of women in

leadership”; and ensure that gender equality was “embedded into all decision-making” (P2 AUS). Similar initiatives were cited by P3 (NZ). One participant was clear that “COVID-19 is not an excuse, but it will delay our plans for 2020” (P1 NZ). These responses mirrored the widely articulated view that women in HE will be more likely than men to feel the impact of the pandemic (Kramer, 2020).

A range of impacts was identified: “Early indications are that fewer sole-authored publications are being submitted by women this year. It is anticipated that these disruptions may have impact on recruitment, selection and promotions processes for several years and will require careful monitoring” (P3 NZ), and that: “The financial impact of COVID-19 on the University’s budget means all activities and spending are being reviewed. Unfortunately, there will likely be impacts flowing through to the University’s gender equity initiatives” (P2 AUS). One response was even more blunt about the likely impact: “Covid has the potential to throw us backwards. We have to be careful not to lose a whole generation. The online teaching was very gendered” (P9 NZ); this implied that women delivered or designed most of online teaching. In general, the displacement of gender equality through merging it with broad inclusion categories was likely to be exacerbated by COVID-19, which raises the question about the commitment of universities to the careers of women staff (see Michele Cardel et al., 2020; Kramer, 2020; Peterson Gabster et al., 2020).

In October 2020, Australian and NZ universities announced redundancies, many of them in subject areas such as humanities and social sciences in which the representation of senior women was higher than in STEM disciplines (Blackmore, 2020).

5.4 *Why So Slow?*

Thinking about the focus of this book and reflecting on Valian’s (1998) work, we asked participants to reflect on whether or not they thought progress towards gender equality in higher education had been slow and, if so, why they thought this was. All acknowledged slow progress, most of them describing the university as a “male” working place. One labelled progress as “glacial” and saw universities as having “a more traditional culture that could create a sense of ‘marginalisation’” of those of different “gender, ethnicity, and class” (P3 NZ). Another also mentioned underlying cultural issues: “there is an unseen, unacknowledged core of culture

that does things in the same way they have always been done. This is generally in a way that works for men” (P4 AUS). Other reasons were the stereotypical assumptions of a

“good leader” having masculine characteristics; women, Māori and Indigenous people being more highly represented in social sciences and humanities, which may be perceived as less prestigious than “hard” sciences when selecting senior leaders; and women often being employed in part-time, fixed-term and casual positions creating an environment of “precarious” employment. (P3 NZ)

Thus, there were myriad reasons for women’s slow progress, which have been identified in various studies (e.g., Strachan et al., 2016). Another reason, consistent with White’s (2014) research was: “Women’s low participation in STEM disciplines that attract a higher proportion of government research. ... The ability to secure grant funding is significant for both job security and applying for promotion” (P3 NZ). One respondent cautioned that “the ‘fixing the women’ approach can only take us so far” (P5 AUS), as Burkinshaw and White (2017) also found.

Structural issues were also identified as a factor: “Yes, progress has been inordinately slow given the existence (still) of a gender pay gap. That we still have a gender pay gap is shameful. It is not the levels of participation we need to focus on, but the starting salaries of male academics and the need to ensure much more transparency around this” (P1 NZ). This response reflected other findings on entrenched structural, gendered discrimination in academic careers (Brower & James, 2020; Walker et al., 2020; White, 2011). At the same time, reinforcing Walker et al.’s (2020) research, “women continue to have the lion’s share of caring responsibilities in the home, and the career interruptions associated with these—these have an impact that it is difficult to turn around in an academic’s career trajectory” (P4 AUS). Caprile (2012) describes this as the rush hour, when career and family collide.

The importance of gender equality being a priority in university strategic plans was made clear by one respondent: “a strategic goal [was needed] which should be initiated at the highest level where gender equality needs to be modelled” (P6 NZ). Another neatly articulated the challenge: “You can’t take your eye off the stuff; the moment you do that you are in danger to lose ground again” (P11 NZ), which resonates with studies by

White (2017) and Neale (2017). The relationship between what senior managers identified as key for gender equality and what strategic plans reveal will be discussed in the next section.

6 STRATEGIC PLANS AND THE INVISIBILITY OF GENDER EQUALITY

As indicated in the methods section, the responses of senior managers with responsibility for gender equality, who reported directly to the Vice-Chancellor, demonstrated deep thinking and engagement with problems, solutions and future plans for addressing gender equality issues in university policy making and strategic planning. All accepted that women's representation in senior roles needed to increase and that more should be done. We therefore benchmarked their responses by analysing the strategic plans of all Australian and New Zealand public universities to examine if this thinking was reflected at the highest strategic planning level.

6.1 *Mission/Values and the Emphasis on Equity and Inclusiveness*

The analysis of strategic plans indicates that gender equality is no longer central to the agenda of most institutions. The emphasis is on improved performance in various international rankings such as THE, QS, ARWU and US News (which do not include gender equality). Less than a third of the strategic plans made any direct reference to gender equality. We then used critical discourse analysis to identify categories/phrases that encompassed a broader sense of equity and diversity. There were myriad categories that appeared to encompass various disadvantaged groups, such as: diversity and inclusiveness; equal opportunities; equity and diversity; equity and social justice; equity in employment; accessibility; innovation and inclusion; safe and inclusive place; diversity and fairness; respect, honesty and unity with safe and inclusive environments; promoting positive well-being and managing risk using a multidimensional view of wellness which builds a safe and supportive workplace and learning environment; commitment to advancing human rights within a free, tolerant and inclusive society and contributing to better societal outcomes; creating a values-driven culture where safety and well-being are front of mind; fostering a high performance culture that is values-led, collaborative and open, and

that embraces diversity; and valuing our diversity, embracing difference and nurturing a connected, safe and respectful community. This reflects a trend to emphasise “values” that are equally hard to measure, but such high-level ethics can obscure the realities of enduring gender inequality.

Inclusiveness was the most common theme in strategic plans and to a lesser extent a safe environment and well-being. Another strong theme was Indigenous Australian and Maori and Pasifika students respectively and several took an intersectional approach to equity and diversity. For example, promoting equality, diversity and social responsibility was one of five themes in Edith Cowan University’s strategic plan, with an emphasis on under-represented groups, such as those from low SES backgrounds; Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders; people with disability and people from regional and remote areas. But generally there was mostly no recognition that the experience of women as students and staff might be different from that of their male colleagues, or that while over half of university staff are women, they are significantly under-represented at senior levels.

The strategic plans mostly did not recognise the structural sources of gender inequality, nor did they include a goal for gender equality; rather they exhorted an institutional culture that fosters respect, collaboration, fairness, social justice, well-being and human rights. But there is little discourse about how this culture is to be embedded into organisations. As Blackmore and Sachs (2007, p. 240) assert, equity policy is “often more symbolic” than “real”.

6.2 *Limited Visibility of Gender Equality: Strategic Plans*

There was a sense then that women in universities and the goal of gender equality have become invisible in the strategic plans. There was mostly little indication, at the strategic level, of how those universities who did mention gender equality planned to implement policies and KPIs to achieve gender balance at all levels of their workforce.

Some identified the need to improve women’s representation in leadership (Federation University, Macquarie University); one noted that it now had more senior women (University of New South Wales) and another said the VC had “committed to making 50:50 hires over his five-year tenure across the entirety of the University Leadership Group” (Australian National University). Similarly, Auckland University of Technology was committed to “increasing the number of women in a range of senior

academic and leadership roles, with the aspiration of continuing to lead New Zealand universities in gender balance in senior positions". Others focused on addressing the barriers to women's career progression (University of Queensland; Australian National University, University of Canberra) because "progression rates of academic staff, especially from fixed-term to continuing positions remain biased against women" (Australian National University); and an intersectional approach to ensuring equity in staff recruitment, development, retention and promotion, "particularly ensuring no disadvantage on the basis of gender, cultural background, disability or Indigenous origin" (University of New South Wales). Only one university (Macquarie) specifically focused on professional staff, the majority of whom are women: "A better career pathway for professional staff, with clearer and more standardised roles, and increased opportunity for mobility". The University of Sydney was one of the few universities with a road map for gender equality and had "set targets for women's inclusion in various levels of university employment", as well as participating in SAGE (Science in Australia Gender Equity) and implementing a leadership programme for culturally and linguistically diverse women.

If women were mentioned at all in strategic plans, in most cases we found only vague wordings, half sentences, equity group listings and aspirations.

7 DISCUSSION

The senior managers who participated in this research all had responsibility for gender equality in their institution, including addressing the marginalisation of women in their workforce (Strachan et al., 2016), the significant gender pay gap (Brower & James, 2020), and women advancing to senior levels more slowly and being funnelled into lower levels of seniority (Walker et al., 2020). These are all structural and cultural issues for women's career progression in higher education and for which feminist institutionalism (Mackay et al., 2010) provided an appropriate theoretical framework.

There was evidence in both the analysis of strategic plans and in the written responses from senior managers of failure to tackle structural sources of inequality and displacement leading to the invisibility of gender equality. Only one-third of the strategic plans directly mentioned it. Gender equality was often hidden in euphemistic titles such as a safe

environment, diversity, inclusion and social impact or an intersectional approach. It is acknowledged however that two of the 13 universities whose senior managers participated in this study had set targets and KPIs for gender equality and had been making good progress.

While strategic plans often focused on international league tables and metrics for performance, only one university had specific KPIs for managers to implement gender equality, even though these can be effective (White, 2017). In contrast, the responses of senior managers suggested that this was a priority for their institutions.

The danger of hiding gender equality and risking “marginalising and minimising gender issues” was acknowledged, as other research has indicated (e.g., Blackmore & Sachs, 2007). Responses from senior managers suggested that displacement of gender equality and making it invisible could be addressed by improving recruitment processes and monitoring these at faculty and departmental level, more training and mentoring and, when these strategies were ineffective, structural change such as “the courage to institute quotas”. But few systematically addressed structural gender inequality (Steinþórsdóttir et al., 2017, 2018) and “the more subtle forms of exclusion” (Lynch et al., 2012, p. 153). Gender inequality needed to be tackled from “multiple angles” and the agency of women leaders increased, which concurs with other studies (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007; Burkinshaw, 2015). However, displacing gender equality and transforming it from a separate and stand-alone goal to a less prominent position in the HEI’s agenda meant that these multiple approaches were unlikely to be adopted. There was little mention of the gains of disadvantaged groups slipping away (Neale, 2017).

The participant’s analysis of the university workforce acknowledged deep-seated structural and cultural problems, including women being appointed to senior support roles rather than more prestigious positions, which mirrors Walker et al.’s (2020) findings. Another was the inadequacy of focusing solely on increasing women at associate and full professor levels as a “marker of progress” which “can meet the need for institutional legitimacy but may not challenge the dominant paradigm” (O’Connor, 2017, p. 274). Change was also needed to address a deep-seated culture “that does things in the same way they have always been done” and privileges masculine leadership styles in higher education (Burkinshaw, 2015).

While participants appreciated that structural and cultural change was required to increase the representation of women in senior positions, the strategies recommended were mostly unlikely to achieve this change.

Some interventions reflected a “women as the problem” approach (Burkinshaw & White, 2017) through women in leadership programmes, mentoring, teaching buyout for women returning from parental leave, and unconscious bias training for promotion and selection panels. However, such interventions “continue to help individual women fit into organizational cultures while leaving those cultures untouched” (Tessens, 2007, p. 10) and are merely tinkering around the edges of much more entrenched structures (Bagilhole & White, 2011b).

There was agreement that progress in achieving gender equality had been slow due to the traditional masculinist nature of higher education, women’s higher representation in the less prestigious humanities and social sciences, their more precarious employment, low participation in STEM disciplines that attract a higher proportion of government research funding or women juggling careers and family responsibilities (White, 2014). However, on one issue, the gender pay gap, they were prepared to suggest more radical measures. Some called for the system of wage structures to be redesigned, including an annual review of salaries for professors where women were still significantly under-represented; regular analysis of the “shameful” gender pay gap and transparency around the starting salaries of male academics. It is hard to know if these views were influenced by Brower and James’ (2020) recent finding of a lifetime gender pay gap for New Zealand professors of ~NZ\$400,000.

Strategies that senior managers suggested for reversing the displacement of gender equality included implementing targets and quotas; for example, for getting more women into professorial positions and for “rules based” targets or quotas to break through existing structural norms, which has certainly worked in some European countries (see Wroblewski, 2017) and has been implemented at several Australian universities to recruit women to senior roles (Pyke & White, 2018). Quotas might not only lead to more women in senior roles, but also “more diverse thinking [and] improved outcomes from decision making”, as Wroblewski (2017) demonstrated. The argument here was that relying on “natural and incremental change” was not effective in achieving any paradigm shift, as other research has indicated (O’Connor, 2017; Yeom, 2019).

The additional layers of disadvantage of Indigenous women working in universities required specific interventions, such as on the one hand acknowledging in workloads their additional service responsibilities, but on the other “fixing” them with Indigenous women in leadership programmes which could further entrench gender discrimination. There was

no indication that Indigeneity could provide positive social capital for women in universities, as Wilkinson (2008) suggested.

Finally, there was evidence of further displacement of gender equality during COVID-19 as women shouldered more caring responsibilities and could be at greater financial disadvantage (WGEA, 2020b). It thus had the potential to reduce the focus on gender equality as universities grappled with contracting budgets. Our research emphasised that it was important to mitigate COVID-19's impact on career disruption of women staff with career responsibilities and those considered vulnerable or at risk, and there was general consensus that the virus should not be "an excuse" for discontinuing development opportunities for women or reducing the number of women in leadership roles. Early signs are that women will disproportionately lose their positions in restructuring following the pandemic; as long as the structural inequalities identified in Mackay et al.'s (2010) work persist, universities will remain workplaces that work for men that are worked by men.

On balance, the responses of the senior managers in this study demonstrated a certain ambivalence. On the one hand some were comfortable with gender equality being subsumed into and diluted in broader categories, but on the other they realised that the gender pay gap and the underrepresentation of women in senior positions needed to be addressed. But most strategies suggested for remedying persistent discrimination were unlikely to achieve change and might continue the trend of making gender equality invisible. Until the KPIs of all senior managers include targets to address gender inequality little will change, and even then, progress may be slow (see Chap. 8). This raises the question of the extent to which senior women and men with responsibility for gender equality can impact on the organisational culture and can deal with resistance from those leaders who wish to maintain the status quo. The danger is that institutions will require conformity to their prevailing masculinist leadership culture which produces a "disconnect" between an organisation's headline equality policies and processes, and the resulting embedding of practices" (Burkinshaw, 2015, p. 136). Those in leadership positions with responsibility for gender equality often have little room for manoeuvre in influencing the direction of institutional policy. Mackay (2019) asks: "Is it better then to leave it to non-feminists to steer, shape and exert power in the Academy? Is it enough to rely only on strategies of resistance or critique from the margins ...?" However, Mackay favoured multiple strategies "including insider strategies-while being mindful of the potential for co-option".

In summary, there was an unresolved tension between the strong commitment to gender equality in the managers' responses and gender policies being part of crowded "inclusion" portfolios and their mostly marginal presence in strategic plans. The slow progress in improving the representation of women at senior levels suggests that strategic goals might override or slow down commitment to progressing change. Displacement of gender equality which then makes it invisible suggests that the shifts needed for transformation require deep structural change and foregrounding of strategic goal setting for gender equality.

8 CONCLUSION

Our small-scale survey yielded valuable results; senior managers were willing to participate and provided thoughtful responses. These however varied between a radical commitment to change, to continuing to "fix women" and tinkering around the edges. Nevertheless, the discussion seemed to be moving in a positive direction with more effective measures, such as quota setting, considered. There was also awareness that COVID-19 will revive traditional gender roles at home and have a much more detrimental effect on women's than men's careers. The inevitable cost-cutting will hit the disciplines where women have been thriving (humanities, education and social sciences). Analysing strategic plans shows clearly that the commitment of our respondents was seldom mirrored in official documentation.

Displacement and making gender equality invisible do not align with flattening inequities. To effect change, gender equality needs to be made more visible; therefore, displacement involving over 50% of the university workforce into equity, diversity and inclusion portfolios is problematic. The introduction of quotas needs to be considered (although on its own it may not be sufficient, see Chap. 8), and gender pay gaps need to be made transparent and addressed. To effect real structural change, to make female academics visible, to introduce measurable and key goals require a re-setting of priorities, nothing less.

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Silencing Women's Voices: An Ethnographic Perspective from India and the UAE

Monica Gallant and Tanuja Agarwala

1 INTRODUCTION

Despite the increasing number of women completing university degrees and working in higher education, progress continues to be slow in improving the percentage of women in leadership roles and in having their voices heard. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), women comprised only 12% of full professors and 32% of all teaching positions in 2016, just a slight improvement from 2012 when they made up 10% of full professors and 26% of the total teaching staff (UAE Government 2020b). The representation of senior women in India is higher, with 21% of full professors being women in 2015–2016 (Government of India, 2015–2016) and a slight

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improvement to 24% in 2018–2019 (Government of India, 2018–19). Women constituted 42% of the total teaching staff in 2018–2019. This chapter examines possible factors that inhibit the active decision-making, participation and influence of women in higher education in the UAE and India. These are patriarchal and conservative societies in terms of gender roles and gender inequality with low levels of senior women in higher education and few women professors. Neo-liberalism as an ideology and related managerialist practices in higher education have contributed to a culture characterised by aggressiveness, assertiveness, task-orientation and competitiveness (Atkins & Vicars, 2016). In this chapter we focus on three indicators of these influences: the male centralisation of power, performance metrics and stealth power dynamics (O'Connor et al., 2019), all of which marginalise and silence women's voices, even those in leadership positions.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW: CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

The UAE is a unique mix of diverse cultures with only 11.5% of the population being 'Emirati' or citizens of the country. The remaining 88.5% are 'ex-patriate' workers who are granted visas to live and work in the UAE based on employment. Of these, the largest portion are Indian nationals who comprise 27.5% of the population. Men make up 72% of the country's residents (UAE Population Statistics, n.d.). Their predominance puts an added strain on women who are trying to find their own voices. Looking at career advancement, the statistics show that from 2010 to 2018 only 12.2% of senior and middle managers in the UAE were women (United Nations Development Programme, 2019).

India has a diverse culture. The gender ratio is relatively balanced with 48.04% females and 51.96% males; that is, 92 females per 100 males in 2020 (Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, 2020). The percentage of female senior and middle managers in 2019 was 13% (United Nations Development Programme, 2019).

The UAE is a Muslim Majority Country (MMC) where society is based on Islamic principles but other religions are tolerated. India on the other hand is a secular country and there is no state religion. However, there are similarities between the two countries; both are patriarchal societies where the family is revered and the father is considered the head of the household. There are clearly defined gender roles; a woman's role as a wife and mother is considered her first priority with career development as a second

priority. Men, on the other hand, are expected to provide financially for the family and play a minor role in daily household management. As in other countries, women's participation in the workforce is hampered by balancing expectations to fulfil family duties with work responsibilities. For this reason, some women in the UAE may be reluctant to consider prestigious careers requiring a high degree of commitment (Gallant & Pounder, 2008; Looker, 2000). This prevailing philosophy influences both Emirati and ex-patriate women who do not have much agency due to their guest status in the country (Kemp & Rickett, 2018). Lack of flexibility in working hours, limited working from home options and less affordable child care make it difficult for women to balance work and home life (Sidani, 2018). Consequently, more women are either deciding not to join the workforce or dropping out after a few years. In India women's labour force participation rate has declined sharply from 31.2% in 2011–2012 (Rukmini, 2019; Chakraborty & Jain, 2019) to 20.52% in 2019 (India, Female labour force participation rate, n.d.). According to the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) 2019 *India Skills Report*, 68.3% of women graduates in urban India are not in paid jobs (Ratho, 2020, p. 4; United Nations Development Programme).

While equal pay and maternity benefit policies in the UAE and India compare favourably with many Western countries, additional policies in both countries specify that women should not work at night, except under special circumstances and that they are prohibited from working in "hazardous, strenuous or physically or morally harmful jobs", demonstrating the widely held belief that certain employment roles are suitable for each gender (UAE Government 2020a; Ministry of Labour and Employment, 1948).

3 HIGHER EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT

Higher education institutions (HEIs) have tried to address the gender imbalance in leadership roles by conducting training programs for female academics. While these have been beneficial in creating self-awareness, developing skills and establishing useful female networks, they do not address the systemic issues that hold women back (Parker et al., 2018; Selzer et al., 2017). Such programs run the risk of suggesting that the women need to be 'fixed' to fit gendered role expectations (Burkinshaw & White, 2017).

The patriarchal culture in both India and the UAE is echoed in the corporate environment of HEIs which are also affected by neo-liberal managerialist influences. Neo-liberalism in universities creates an increased focus on outcome-driven performance measures such as high-impact publications, income generating activities and student-teacher evaluation scores (Atkins & Vicars, 2016). Managerialism has been associated with increased male centralisation of power, performance metrics and stealth power dynamics (O'Connor et al., 2019) all of which marginalise and silence women's voices, even those in leadership positions.

3.1 *Male Centralisation of Power*

A multi-country study of higher education institutions found that under the influence of neo-liberal managerialism, decision-making power is concentrated at the top of the male-dominated hierarchy (O'Connor et al., 2019). This rewards a more autocratic leadership style. Increasingly universities tend to exhibit a managerial neo-liberal competitive culture focused on accountability, evaluation and economic efficiency where the influence of academics is diminished. In these environments, women leaders who often value a more inclusive approach feel the need to compromise their leadership style in order to fit in (Burkinshaw & White, 2017). Their more participative and less assertive leadership style may be misinterpreted as weak and may not be as appreciated in the dominant corporate culture (Parker et al., 2018; Lipton, 2017). However, women leaders may also face social sanctions for acting assertively at work, as this is regarded as less desirable behaviour and hampers their leadership effectiveness. While women are criticised for being overtly feminine, they are also devalued when they adopt masculine autocratic and directive models (Barker & Monks, 1998). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002) refers to the shared stereotypical expectations of women and men in leadership positions. Female leaders experience prejudice because of the incongruity between the stereotypical expectations of them as women and as leaders. According to role congruity theory, the prejudice against women leaders plays out on two levels: women's perceived potential for leadership and women's actual leadership behaviour. Thus, leadership ability is believed to be stereotypically male and leadership behaviour is perceived as less desirable for women than men. In this context, women's self-confidence may be negatively affected by their own assessment of their leadership abilities (Herbst, 2020).

The under-representation of women in academic leadership positions, and the existence of masculine practices and leadership norms all function to exclude women from making significant contributions (Dunn et al., 2014). Since men dominate leadership roles, they assume a high level of centrality and influence in the university power structure. Kanter (1979) listed indicators of power to identify those who have power in an organisation. These include the ability to intercede for someone in trouble, getting items on the agenda in meetings, access to early information, having top management seek out their opinion and securing promotions for favoured colleagues (Kanter, 1979). It is easy to see that male professors are more likely than their female counterparts to have these kinds of power.

3.2 *Performance Metrics*

Reflecting a managerial focus, many academic institutions focus on a numbers-based performance appraisal system, linking promotion and retention to various numerical outcome metrics such as student ratings and the number of publications. While these scores can be helpful, by virtue of the potential they offer for comparing and ranking all faculty members, they create a highly competitive environment where the success of one may inhibit the success of another. Further, they also hide other significant contributions that are more difficult to measure. Many women leaders feel passionate about these non-numerical contributions relating to well-being and supportive behaviour. Balancing the expectations of a career characterised by stringent performance targets with the demands of motherhood may also not be a realistic choice (Sorensen, 2017). The managerialist emphasis on performance metrics in appraisals may be especially disadvantageous for female academics who seek a more balanced model (Anderson-Gough & Brown, 2008; Lipton, 2017).

Women and men can view career success differently. Women may value having an interesting job, being considered experts in their field, having personal achievements and a good work/life balance. Many women in higher education are motivated by personal values, finding purpose in their work and maintaining positive relationships with colleagues (Yeh, 2018). On the other hand, men may tend to define success in terms of promotion, gaining influence and earning higher financial reward (Selzer et al., 2017). Gender equality is often described in terms of women having the 'choice' to pursue a career, though this choice may be an illusion (see

Chap. 4). Current performance appraisal schemes with numerical scoring systems and defined targets tend to ignore the factors that are important to many women leaders.

3.3 *Stealth Power*

In addition to the more outward manifestations of gender imbalance, there are less obvious internal power dynamics that tend to undermine women leaders. While organisations purport to be gender-neutral, there was evidence of ‘stealth power’ or hidden power embedded in leadership practices involving rhetorical collegiality, agenda control, in-group loyalty and the invisibility of gendered power (O’Connor et al., 2019). Rhetorical collegiality refers to the illusion of allowing people to voice opinions and participate in decision-making when in fact decisions are reached by alternate mechanisms. Agenda control is a practice that fosters the manipulation of strategic direction through pre-setting meeting agendas to steer the organisation in a particular direction. In-group loyalty involves the creation of in-groups by senior decision makers who select people that will support their priorities and strategies. Belonging to the dominant social in-group creates a sense of power which marginalises the views and status of the “outgroup” (Dunne, 2018). Finally, the invisibility of gendered power reflects the tendency of men to depict male-dominated structures as gender-neutral (O’Connor et al., 2019). In some cases, women may not be aware of these hidden power dynamics or they may become aware of them only when they move into leadership roles. They may be unable to find agency within them, since masculinities have to be repeatedly demonstrated to maintain the status quo and to keep the club ‘intact’, as highlighted by Burkinshaw’s (2015, p. 49) notion of communities of practice of masculinities in higher education.

3.4 *Impact on Women*

In traditionally male-dominated academia, women continue to struggle for equality and experience prejudice, stereotyping, barriers to success and unintentional silencing (Burkinshaw, 2015). However, they have often been found to use the strategies of silence in managing their careers in order to succeed and adapt to the prevailing culture in HE. Navigation through silence is a strategy that evokes the idea of power and agency that women faculty use in order to adjust to and in some ways resist the culture

of academia (Reinert, 2016). Research suggests that 'self-preservation' is a primary motivation for the strategic use of silence by women. Women faculty tend to use silence to avoid confronting situations that are perceived to be harmful to themselves or their career (Reinert, 2016). Different types of silence are experienced by women. For example, authoritative silence is enforced by the male-dominated structure of higher education, while protested silence is activated by the subordinate to "demonstrate deference to authority" (Acheson, 2008, p. 31) without risking the self. 'Deliberate silence', a form of resistant silence, is used to soften experiences of discrimination by not acknowledging them in the first place or by refusing to echo those in power (Acheson, 2008, p. 23). These various kinds of silence are illustrated in the case studies below.

4 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter we have used ethnography as our research approach, combining auto-ethnography for one case and a third-person ethnography for the second case.

Auto-ethnography allows the researcher to share their own personal stories, insights and perceptions based on their experiences in social and cultural contexts, thus creating a dual role of both researcher and researched. This approach provides personal reflection and dialogue within the social world and involves challenging our own assumptions and analysing our thinking. It is especially useful in obtaining a deeper understanding of ourselves and others (Selzer et al., 2017; O'Connor, 2019). An auto-ethnographic approach was used for case 1 in order to gain a unique perspective of an under-researched target group of women leaders in the UAE. The auto-ethnographer also faced a unique challenge of being a foreign expat leader working in an Emirati-led institution, thus offering additional cross-cultural observations. The auto-ethnographic first-person account is most appropriate when the researcher is a participant insider.

On the other hand, when the researcher is positioned as a detached observer from outside the unfolding events being described, it constitutes third-person ethnography (Emerson et al., 2001). A third-person ethnographic approach was adopted in relation to the experiences of women academics in India. As a third-person observer, the ethnographer provides an "omniscient point of view" assuming "privileged access to the characters' thoughts, feelings and actions" (Abrams, 1988, p. 145). She has the "privilege to describe actions and characters with an insight into prior

causes and ultimate outcomes” (Emerson et al., 2001, p. 360). While the researcher is a character in the narrative, she is not an actor in the events described.

The authors focused on common themes in these two different contexts: the UAE and India. Combining the first-person and third-person approach in this collaborative work was a methodological decision taken to harness the potential of these approaches. Both involve breaking out of a group even though the narrator is not a stranger to the group (Eriksson, 2010). In this chapter we have combined ‘participation’ and ‘observation’ to present the experience of women leaders. The focus on common themes in higher education across the two countries combines the inside and outside views. The personal reflections and outside observations of the researchers will be analysed in relation to the themes of male centralisation of power, performance metrics and hidden (or stealth) power structures that inhibit the progression of women in the UAE and India, by marginalising and silencing them. In order to maintain confidentiality, especially considering the sensitivity of the issues presented, the names of the two higher education institutions and the identity of the woman leader profiled in the third-person ethnography will not be disclosed.

The findings are presented as two distinct case studies following common themes both to reflect the slight difference in methodology (auto-ethnography and third-person ethnography) and to provide a narrative style that distinguishes the two cultural and organisational contexts. Thematic comparisons will be highlighted in the discussion section.

5 FINDINGS

5.1 *Case 1 UAE (Auto-ethnography)*

Context

I have worked as an educator for over 30 years in both Canada and the UAE. I worked as a foreign expat at Higher Education Institute X (HEIX) for 19 years, progressing after 8 years in a teaching role to a leadership role as Department Chair and then Associate Dean during the subsequent 11 years. My career at HEIX was extremely rewarding, creating some of the most memorable academic achievements as well as some of the most frustrating moments. I have since worked in other higher education roles allowing me to gain additional perspectives.

HEIX is a large federally funded institute providing practical higher education programs at the Diploma and Bachelor levels in a technically enhanced, student-focused environment. Students are all Emirati nationals and are taught in mostly gender-segregated campuses by international faculty members. The programs are delivered in English and differ across campuses, with some only available to male students and others only available to female students.

Male Centralisation of Power

During my time at HEIX, the institution became more focused on managerialism and neo-liberalism accompanied by an increasingly hierarchical and controlling environment. There were always men occupying the top leadership positions and very few women in other senior leadership roles. The Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors were always male and of the numerous college campuses (including several that catered exclusively for female students), only two were ever led by female campus directors during the 19 years I was employed there. The fact that the senior leaders were predominantly male was even more problematic, given the highly controlling and hierarchical power structure where decisions and strategies tended to be driven from the top.

The leader of the campus where I worked followed a highly autocratic, patriarchal approach, even referring to himself as a father figure to both the students and staff. He ruled the college campus with an iron fist and enjoyed striking fear into his direct reports. He often questioned my leadership style when a faculty member commented on how they liked working with me. This was considered a sign of weakness and an indication that I was not pushing the team hard enough.

The control of the institution was manifested through numerous meetings which took place at all levels of the organisation. Members of the management team were often put in the 'hot seat' in management meetings where their shortcomings were analysed with the purported intention of learning from mistakes, but which caused humiliation and distress. While the male managers did not enjoy being in the hot seat, it seemed to have a more profound psychological effect on the women. Managers often resorted to what Acheson (2008, p. 31) called protested silence in order to avoid confrontation. The women managers in the team formed a very strong support group where we would meet to debrief and revive one another after such encounters.

Performance Metrics

The performance appraisal system changed and developed throughout the time that I worked at HEIX, eventually resulting in a complex balanced scorecard for the college campus with highly defined key performance indicators and numerical targets and measures, consistent with the managerial and neo-liberal philosophy. While there were many benefits of this performance tool in terms of driving deliverable outcomes, there were significant elements that could not be captured or accurately measured using this approach. For example, professional development for faculty members was measured by the number of workshops attended, rather than the quality of the learning or the application of new ideas in teaching practice. Another example involved counting the number of events that had been organised rather than focusing on the impact of and relationships developed through each event.

I did not think that the use of a purely numerical approach recognised the qualitative aspects of performance that were very important to me as a female leader. I felt that achievements such as effective team building and faculty development were not given adequate recognition and my efforts in these areas were marginalised.

Stealth Power Structures

The agenda and participation in HEIX and its meetings purported to be gender-neutral, democratic and objectively focused; however, the true power mechanisms were far subtler and more complex.

Collegial Rhetoric: Toward the end of my time at HEIX, there was a significant effort to 'Emiratize' the UAE workforce in general and the organisation in particular. This initiative meant prioritising the employment of UAE citizens over ex-patriate workers and was most evident in clerical and senior management roles in HEIX; faculty positions were less affected due to a lack of qualified and motivated applicants for these posts.

However, one of the results was the use of the Arabic language in strategic meetings, even though it was known that not all participants could speak or understand Arabic. A lengthy discussion of 20–30 minutes could take place with a brief 5-minute English translation at the end for non-Arabic speakers. While the Arabic speaking participants were outwardly friendly and polite, for me the feeling of marginalisation was very clear and painful. The tactic of switching to an alternate language was also used as a mechanism to control the flow of the meetings, encourage silence from

non-Arabic speakers and reduce any room for dissenting contributions: a form of stealth power.

Special events such as graduations and certain guest speakers were also conducted in Arabic with very little or no translation. I had the distinct feeling of being marginalised from the dominant and preferred group. The use of the Arabic language was justified under the guise of the preservation of culture, making it difficult for non-Arabic speakers to argue against its use. The negative aspects of exclusion and disunity in the team were never discussed.

Agenda control: Many meetings were held at the HEIX involving a wide variety of teams. It was typical for middle managers to have at least three to four meetings each week. Most were very political and highly regulated. The content of the agendas was tightly controlled, usually by senior management, and circulated in advance. This apparent transparency hid the underlying reality that often an item for discussion on the agenda was presented as if there was an opportunity for meaningful negotiation when actually the decision had already been made. On one occasion, the management team were asked whether we should implement a 'house system' in the college to encourage school spirit. After a lengthy debate, the team concluded that it would not be well accepted by students so should not be implemented. At this point, the college director very angrily declared that the meeting was not about *whether* to implement this idea (that he favoured) but *how* to implement it. Had this been made clear at the beginning of the meeting, a far more fruitful discussion may have occurred.

Another feature of the politicised meetings was the 'pre-meeting' lobbying. Often this was done subtly behind the scenes with various attendees discussing agenda items and agreeing to support one another. One of the ways that key strategies were formulated was through 'majlis' meetings, where senior people with common interests would meet to discuss issues. The most influential of these gatherings would happen in the majlis of the Minister of Higher Education at his palace. While women were not specifically excluded, most invitations to these meetings were extended only to men and often only to Arabic men. High-level issues were debated at these meetings. But as they were informal, key thinking was not officially disseminated and could only be obtained via informal discussion that revealed just what the participants were willing to share. I was never included in these meetings and experienced frustration in not being a part of any strategic directional planning.

My personality is to be open and direct and I am perhaps a bit naïve as well; so I rarely got involved with these pre-meeting discussions, believing that the best place to air opposing views would be in the meeting itself. Consequently, I was sometimes blind-sided when people attending a meeting would have already decided on an issue before hearing the discussion or attendees would have made additional information available to a select few that they would present with a flourish in order to derail discussion. In particular, I remember attending a meeting to begin discussion about revising the curriculum where an entirely new model was presented that had been reviewed by a subset of meeting participants and not shared with the team as a whole. This approach of “pre-cooking” meetings has been experienced by women in other higher education contexts, albeit perhaps in a less extreme form (O’Connor et al., 2019). Men were more likely to engage in these tactics, gathering other men to support their proposals.

In-groups: Culture and gender in-grouping were also apparent in the ‘British Boys Club’, male academic managers from one campus who regularly met outside work on a collegial basis. This group had a very powerful influence, supporting one another’s decisions and priorities inside the college in formal decision-making forums. The few female academic managers were not part of this in-group and were thus excluded from the sense of camaraderie, belonging and power that was generated by being members of it. It was yet another manifestation of stealth power.

5.2 Case 2 India (*Third-Person Ethnography*)

Context

The higher education landscape in India has traditionally been masculine. Historically, HE leadership has been dominated by male professors, reinforced by the significant lack of women at professorial level. Although more women professors now are in top positions in HE institutions as Vice-Chancellors or directors, percentages continue to be low. For instance, in 2015 only 13 of India’s 431 universities (3%) had women Vice-Chancellors (Kumar, 2015) and only 54 out of 810 (6.67%) of all HEIs had a woman Vice-Chancellor or Director (Hindustan Times, 2015), with other sources suggesting that it reached 17% in 2016–17 (See Table 1.1 in Chap. 1).

I present a third-person ethnographic account through the reflections of a key informant of a premier public university in India (HEIY) that offers bachelor degrees, diplomas and post-graduate and doctoral

qualifications across all streams. The respondent was teaching at HEIY for more than 30 years during which time she also served in various administrative roles, which provides an insight into gender dynamics within HEIY and the evolution of women's representation in leadership roles over time.

The university is co-educational and promotes gender equality in access to higher education. However, some colleges at bachelor level are exclusively for female students. The system professes to be gender-neutral at the policy and praxis level, offering equal opportunity to all students and teachers. However, women have been systematically excluded when it comes to leadership positions. There is a lack of gender parity in professorial and senior leadership positions with women constituting only 25% of professors (Self-study report 2018)

Male Centralisation of Power

The management structure of HEIY has two top leadership positions, viz., the Vice-Chancellor and Pro Vice-Chancellor. With the creation of a second campus, a third position of Director was established. No woman has ever been appointed to these top posts. The position of university Proctor, responsible for maintaining discipline and law and order on campus, was traditionally held by a male professor but had been assigned to women professors for the last ten years. Moreover, women have held the position of dean of colleges, a senior management position, from 2000 to 2010. Other leadership positions such as deans of faculties and heads of departments have had women incumbents mostly since 2000. However, the number of women deans has increased only marginally, as has the proportion of women professors.

HEIY traditionally followed a collegial system where professors had direct access to the Vice-Chancellor. Since 2010, there has been a significant movement toward centralisation of power characterised by autocratic and hierarchical decision-making. This shift paralleled neo-liberal and managerialist pressures involving the global ranking of universities, competition, generation of funds and performance parameters characterising HE. Assigning women to senior leadership positions presented an image of the university as a non-discriminatory gender-neutral institution. The authoritative silence that was imposed on women and the protested silence they adopted played out as decision-making authority eluded them, since even when they were appointed to powerful portfolios they were expected to 'comply or exit'. The personal leadership style of

successive Vice-Chancellors since 2000 was an important determinant of the disempowerment or marginalisation of women academics in the power structure.

When the key informant was appointed a lecturer at HEIY she experienced gender role expectations in the male-dominated system. Women faculty then constituted only 15% of the total academic staff in her department. Gender norms were at play and she understood that women did not 'speak or argue'; their opinions were neither welcome nor relevant. Authoritative silencing of women faculty in the traditionally male-dominated system became apparent to her early on. Women faculty were silent in department meetings, reflecting and reinforcing their powerlessness in significant decisions impacting the future of the department. Protested silence was evident and served as a valuable tool for women academics in understanding when it was worth speaking out and when it would be more appropriate to maintain deliberate silence for self-preservation and continued success in their profession.

A woman academic who asserted herself risked being perceived as aggressive and non-cooperative by both male and female colleagues. Hence, instead of defying the system, she learnt not to question but to remain silent. Thus, she negotiated and perceived her academic career through the lens of expectations associated with appropriate behaviour for women—with assertion being seen as less desirable. The culture of academia characterised by authoritative silence enforced by the male-dominated structure ensured that she learnt the skill of protested silence.

The respondent was assigned a leadership role in the university administration after 18 years as an academic. She was the first woman to be appointed to this position. At this time, the contribution of academic staff to university administration was given due weight in performance assessment and promotions. Proximity to the top leadership provided her with a great opportunity to understand and learn administration. But her departmental colleagues found it difficult to accept that she had been chosen for this role. She had to work excessively hard to prove her worth.

Performance Metrics

Performance appraisal and promotion criteria for academic staff were transformed over the years. The introduction of new appraisal criteria in 2010 gave more weight to research publications, thereby reducing the role of service to the university in the performance score. The new performance metrics corporatised assessment of teachers without considering the uniqueness of academic jobs. For example, numerical scores were

assigned to the number of research papers published, while ignoring the quality of the journal. Contribution to university administration received lower weight, thus ignoring the total hours involved. The informant felt that her contribution to teaching and university service did not receive due recognition and her research publications were under-rated. She expressed apprehension that this new performance appraisal system would result in professors placing emphasis on personal academic achievements, would compromise the quality of research publications and would devalue academics' contribution to institutional life.

Stealth Power Structures

Agenda control: Major decisions relating to the department, for instance, offering new programs, admission criteria, teaching load distribution and funding were decided prior to departmental meetings which then became a practiced affair, indicative of agenda control and pre-cooking decisions (O'Connor et al., 2019).

One example of agenda control was the department recommending to the University a substantial increase in the fee for students pursuing the post-graduate program. The objective was to generate funds for upgrading infrastructure and academic resources and also to signal that HEIY was a quality education provider. Student fees are centrally collected by the university and apportioned among various departments as part of the annual budget allocation. Hence, the department depended on central administration for funding. The key informant believed that an increase in student fees was a governance and moral issue and would be justified only if these funds were allocated back to the department. If this could not be guaranteed, the fee should not be increased. However, two or three male teachers convinced the head of the department prior to the meeting that the fund allocation from the university could be easily managed. The key informant expressed her misgivings in a department meeting, but these were brushed aside. She therefore withdrew from department meetings where the fee increase was on the agenda to avoid being a party to this decision. She preferred to be a 'silent witness' in order to convey a certain message. The department recommended a substantial increase in student fees to the central university administration which was approved. However, even after two years, the department had not been allocated funds by the university for upgrading resources.

In-groups: At the university level, several forces such as networks, political affiliation, inter-departmental dynamics and administrative machinery played a role in power determination. Women faculty members wielded no

power and had to affiliate to one of the powerful camps in order to survive and to position themselves.

At the individual departmental level, however, the role of in-groups and stealth power was even more clearly evident. From the outset of her career the key respondent found that there were camps consisting of male colleagues which functioned as alternative power centres to the head of department. These groups had the power to alter outcomes for any one individual. Hence, if she wished to be nominated for a course funded by the university, she would have to affiliate with and work through the informal power system driven by one or the other group. Though the proportion of women teachers in the key respondent's department had increased to almost 50%, stealth power still affected most decisions which were still being driven by camps of male teachers who continued to exercise power. Women were excluded from most departmental decisions and were reduced to being mere followers. They maintained a deliberate silence in order to continue to be recognised as at least nominal members of the 'in-group'.

In the larger university system, even with the current increased number of women in leadership roles, the power of women faculty in driving the institution's strategic goals was still limited. Women faculty were required to play a fundamentally different 'game' to their male peers in academia (Cress & Hart, 2009).

6 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Despite an apparent disparity in cultural settings, the researchers found that higher education institutions in both the UAE and India created similar patterns of silencing and marginalising women's voices in academic leadership roles. These findings indicate that many factors experienced by researchers in other contexts are clearly at play in the lived experiences discussed in these two case studies. Three prevalent themes have emerged in both stories: male centralisation of power, performance metrics and stealth power dynamics.

Both institutions were characterised by a top-down, autocratic leadership approach where women's voices tended to be silenced. Both research informants felt the need to acquiesce in order to manage in this type of corporate culture, supporting similar findings in other cultural settings (Parker et al., 2018; Lipton, 2017). Universities are embedded within the socio-cultural systems of a nation. The gendered social fabric is reflected

in higher education systems that have been traditionally dominated by men in both countries. While there are no explicit policies preventing women from rising through the ranks, in both HEIX and HEIY, the highest leadership positions were almost exclusively filled by men.

Over time, both HEIX and HEIY developed performance appraisal systems that followed the managerial and neo-liberal style of focusing on quantitative key performance indicators that emphasised counting contributions; for example, to research journals for HEIY or professional development seminars undertaken in HEIX. In both cases, significant qualitative contributions made by women academics and leaders were not recognised and valued, resulting in a reduced level of motivation. This finding resonates with research highlighting the inhibiting effect of such performance appraisal systems (Yeh, 2018; Selzer et al., 2017). Our study also indicates an absence of role models and informal support systems for women academics, both of which play an important role in building reputation and status and gaining entry to the academic reward system (Adusah-Karikari, 2008). In a neo-liberal and managerial university culture, it is imperative to pay more attention to women academics' experiences of appraisal, since the academic environment effectively supports inequality in promotion opportunities and decision-making processes (Carli & Eagly, 2001) through such performance metrics.

Stealth power dynamics reflected in rhetorical collegiality, agenda control and in-group loyalty (O'Connor et al., 2019) were apparent. In HEIX, the veneer of collegiality hid an underlying lack of power for women, as well as for non-Emirati employees, adding a cultural element to this dimension. HEIY professed to be gender-neutral though the societal pattern was characterised by men in dominant decision-making positions. The leaders themselves were not consciously aware of this—reflecting the invisibility of gender (O'Connor et al., 2019).

Agenda control at HEIX was evident in politicking that took place prior to meetings, mostly by members of male in-groups, as well as a lack of transparency about the purpose of agenda items; for example, whether items were for discussion or implementation. At HEIY specific agenda items were also pre-decided, and concerns raised about them were rejected at the departmental meeting.

In-group loyalty at the HEIX of both male-dominated and culturally defined in-groups served to reduce agency for women leaders as well as create a sense of frustration and marginalisation. Similarly, at HEIY

male-dominated camps wielded significant power over decision-making, creating challenges for women leaders. The prevalence of ‘old boys’ networks functioned to exclude women from decision-making processes (Santos, 2016). In both cases, the embedded power structures operated to inhibit and frustrate women leaders who did not belong to or were unaware of the ‘in-group’ and lacked the savvy to manoeuvre in this system.

Competition, lowered collegiality, nasty political tactics and exclusion from networks in which important information and resources circulate are reasons why female academics feel marginalised (Fletcher et al., 2007; Morley, 1999; Gersick et al., 2000) and authoritatively silenced. Such practices tend to exclude women from the ‘structure of opportunity’ leading to their deliberate silence and subordination in the academic structure of opportunity and power (Kanter, 1993) and setting the stage for ‘slow growth’.

Authoritative silence was in some instances forced on women academics by the male-dominated higher education system. However, women also used deliberate silence to strategically and intentionally navigate their careers. Women academics clearly distinguished between moments when it was worth speaking out and moments when either protested silence or deliberate silence may be more appropriate (Keating, 2013). We may conclude that women academics used both of these silences as tools for self-preservation.

Overall, our study presents a unique insight into the internal, often subversive, forces that negatively impact on women leaders in higher education, suggesting that despite outward evidence of gender-neutral practices there are significant power structures at play that inhibit the meaningful participation of women. The patriarchal nature of the societies and of higher education and its movement toward neo-liberalism and managerialism with an emphasis on the values of competition, metrics, managerialism and centralisation of power serves to further heighten the silence theme in respect to women academics.

The case studies indicate that barriers to inclusion and influence of women in academia are strikingly similar across different geographies. The accounts of these two countries strongly suggest that specific measures at policy and practice levels are required to create a favourable gender balance in higher education systems. While universities profess to be gender-neutral, they continue to be highly gendered workplaces. It is imperative for university management to recognise that systematic gender discrimination and segregation exists. Universities are moving toward corporatisation. It is

important that they develop both formal and informal structures to support meaningful gender equality and inclusivity and to tackle practices that authoritatively silence and marginalise women. The implications are intended to guide higher education institutions to recognise, reorient and redirect efforts toward establishing a gender egalitarian system in order to optimise human potential and for women's voices to be heard.

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#MeToo in Professional Associations: Harassment, Gender, and Power

Kathrin Zippel

1 INTRODUCTION

Two years before the 2017 revival of the #MeToo hashtag in response to pervasive sexual abuse by powerful men in Hollywood, a high-profile astronomy professor, Geoffrey Marcy, faced a call for his resignation from students, early career researchers, and colleagues, even though the University of California at Berkeley did not take disciplinary action after finding him in violation of the university's policy on sexual harassment.¹ The list of accusations dated back 15 years, all the way to his prior institution. The American Astronomical Society's (AAA) Committee on the Status of Women in Astronomy mobilised, wrote statements, and organised a town hall meeting on 'Harassment in the Astronomical Sciences' at

¹<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/14/science/geoffrey-marcy-berkeley-astronomy-faculty-letter.html>.

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the 2016 AAA conference, calling for his removal from the academic professional community.

The #MeToo movement ushered in renewed awareness about gender and sexuality-based harassment and violence in colleges and universities in the United States and Europe, and professional associations have been a site of mobilisation and controversy as well. In 2019, a group of early career researchers called for a boycott of the annual meeting of the European Society for the Study of Human Evolution, asking the Society to remove then-president Jean-Jacques Hublin for alleged abuses of power.² Hublin, a French paleoanthropologist, has appointments in Germany and the Netherlands as Professor at the Max Planck Society, Leiden University, and the University of Leipzig. He is also founder and director of the Department of Human Evolution at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. Among other allegations, Hublin was accused of making sexual advances to women at conferences and pursuing a sexual relationship with a graduate student (without informing her that he was married).³ In an email to *The Scientist*, Hublin denied the charges, calling them a ‘toxic mix of half-truths, professional rivalry, and conspiracy theory propagated by people who have no clue of their background’. He insisted, ‘I do not and did not engage in any misconduct’, and he stated that the Max Planck Society concluded that the graduate student’s accusation was ‘a purely private issue with no evidence of misconduct’.⁴

As conferences and opportunities for research and collaboration expanded globally (at least prior to the COVID-19 pandemic), so have opportunities for serial perpetrators of sexual harassment to operate across national borders or to take academic positions abroad thereby increasing the risk of uncensored sexual misconduct. Indeed, individuals accused of harassment tend to leave universities before investigations conclude, often moving to the next university with or without their knowledge of the allegations, let alone any findings of wrongdoing or policy violations.

Though it is crucial for national and international institutions to take sexual harassment seriously, naming and recognising sexual harassment as a social problem embedded within organisational and (inter)national

² <https://www.the-scientist.com/news-opinion/scholars-boycott-meeting%2D%2Dciting-misconduct-accusations-66377>.

³ <https://medium.com/@ConferenceEshe/european-society-for-the-study-of-human-evolution-sexual-harassment-and-jean-jacques-hublin-cac082728a9>.

⁴ <https://www.the-scientist.com/news-opinion/scientific-societies-update-policies-to-address%2D%2Dmetoo%2D%2D66492>.

contexts is a political struggle in itself. While universities and research institutions have been prime targets for calls to recognise sexual harassment and implement systemwide change, secondary targets such as professional communities must be called on to act when academic institutions fail to investigate or provide sufficient support and/or resolution.

This chapter explores the role that professional associations can play in dealing with and preventing sexual harassment. Sexual harassment as a key organisational problem has gained visibility in professional associations in a variety of ways, most notably when violations occur at conference venues or when those victimised fear encountering their perpetrators in such settings. In the light of formal complaints against faculty or those serving in gatekeeping (leadership) positions (including as conference organisers or an association's journal editors), the problem becomes more acute as members and leadership alike face ethical dilemmas when those accused of unprofessional behaviour gain professional recognition, or awards and prizes. The key question addressed here is how can professional associations use their own particular spheres of influence to tackle abuses of (gender) power in their midst? And, what key constraints impede them from taking an active role in combatting sexual harassment?

The chapter argues that professional associations are embedded in, and reflect, the deeply gendered and racialised hierarchical structures of academia. As such, professional associations can either perpetuate abuses of power when they actively resist change through the protection of some members against complaints and/or disregard issues raised by more junior members. In doing so, these associations potentially contribute to the exclusion of women from the academy (NAS, 2018). Or, professional associations can take proactive approaches to addressing and resolving sexual harassment through awareness, setting (new) norms, dismantling structures of dependency, supporting change in organisational practices and cultures, and challenging power structures by supporting bystanders and victims of harassment, as well as appropriately sanctioning harassers. In short, professional associations can either support the status quo or play a major role as proactive drivers for change inside their academic communities.

Translating sexual harassment prevention into organisational practices is a challenge fraught with contradictions and potential pitfalls. Using a feminist institutionalist approach, the chapter considers sexual harassment to be profoundly rooted in gendered power within institutions, as a manifestation of (gender) power differences between individuals (Uggen &

Blackstone, 2004), and as an abuse of (gender) power (MacKinnon, 1976), and a dominance strategy used to undermine women's power (Tinkler and Zhao, 2020). The departments, universities, and professional associations each perpetuate systemic abuses of power through their formal and informal rules, as well as their silences. How these organisations handle gender equity, sexual self-determination, and sexual harassment offers insight into various facets of gendered power in academia (see Acker, 1990). For professional associations, their influence as organisations is circumscribed due to limited resources (as primarily voluntary membership organisations) and their positioning within academia (as peripheral, with more limited investigative power).

After a brief history of sexual harassment in academia, the chapter summarises organisational factors that fuel harassment and those that help to prevent it. Next, it explores policy approaches and the actions of selected professional associations on the forefront of innovations in gender equity. This chapter analyses documents including organisational statements, policies, and procedures to examine the potential (gendered) impact of varied frameworks, largely implicated by the scope and range of definitions of harassment. Finally, it discusses challenges for professional associations from a feminist institutionalist perspective: including power relationships, intimate relationships, professional events, awards nominations, gatekeeping positions, reporting, and investigations.

2 SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN ACADEMIA

The call for academia to act on issues of sexual harassment is hardly a new phenomenon. Many institutions developed organisational practices and policies to prevent harassment, even banning intimate relationships between faculty and students for decades. In the United States, universities (as employers) can be held accountable for preventing harassment under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and for providing equal opportunities for girls and women in education under Title IX (Reynolds, 2019). In the 1970s, feminist (legal) activism from Catharine MacKinnon and Lynn Farley defined sexual harassment as sex discrimination (Siegel, 2003, p. 8; Zippel, 2006), and the Supreme Court affirmed this legal definition in *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson*, 477 US 57 (1986). Thus, when Professor Anita Hill, in 1991, testified against Clarence Thomas at the United States Senate hearing for his confirmation to the Supreme Court, media coverage brought sexual harassment back into the public eye,

spurring a third round of adoption or revision of policies on harassment in US universities, along with a mandate to ‘learn’ from their implementation. Since the 1980s many US organisations have institutionalised policies, grievance procedures, and training programmes. Yet, they *have not eliminated* sexual harassment.

2.1 *Prevalence of Sexual Harassment in Academia*

Sexual harassment, as one of many types of gender-based violence, has varied features. The National Academies Report (NAS, 2018, p. 18) defines sexual harassment as a form of discrimination that is:

composed of three categories of behaviour: (1) gender harassment (verbal and nonverbal behaviors that convey hostility, objectification, exclusion, or second-class status about members of one gender), (2) unwanted sexual attention (verbal or physical unwelcome sexual advances, which can include assault), and (3) sexual coercion (when favorable professional or educational treatment is conditioned on sexual activity). Harassing behaviour can be either direct (targeted at an individual) or ambient (a general level of sexual harassment in an environment).

While gender harassment is most common, each category relegates women to the margins, and (long-term) harassment of any form can have severe consequences. Furthermore, categories of harassment are interlinked: unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion are more likely to occur in settings in which gender harassment is rampant, with broad-based perceptions that misconduct will be tolerated or overlooked. In particular, sex-segregated, male-dominated organisations characterised by toxic masculinity fuel a full array of harassing behaviours in addition to other unprofessional, unethical, and uncivil conduct. Thus, gender harassment feeds and breeds sexual harassment and gender-based violence in its many forms (see NAS, 2018).

In academia, institutional factors create a complex hierarchical structure of dependency and gendered subordination with the potential for abuses of positional power in gendered ways. Surveys show that more senior men as well as peers target early career women. Graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and junior faculty confront physical, verbal, and online harassment that can include advances from supervisors or professors seeking to engage in intimate relationships across academic

hierarchies. Research indicates that perpetrators who harass graduate students do so repeatedly. In over 300 publicised cases in which graduate students alleged being sexually harassed by faculty, more than half were serial harassment. In addition to verbal harassment, more than half of the cases involved ‘unwelcome physical contact dominated by groping, sexual assault, and domestic abuse-like behaviors’ (Cantalupo & Kidder, 2018, p. 1). The gendered power differential also sets up academic women (particularly women of colour) as targets of counter-power, revealed when students harass graduate students or faculty in myriad ways including online harassment.

The mobilisation around the Black Lives Matter movement with #ShutDownAcademia and #ShutDownSTEM has also highlighted the intersection of gender and racial harassment for women of colour. Indeed, students belonging to under-represented (minority) groups including lesbian, gay, bisexual, gender non-conforming, transgender, queer, intersex, or asexual women, and students of colour experience higher rates of harassment (Boyle & McKinzie, 2018; Clancy et al., 2017).⁵ They also feel less secure to seek support as sexual violence ‘maintains and creates power asymmetries’ (Armstrong et al., 2018). Thus, harassment as one form of abuse of power is fuelled by *intersectional inequalities*, including gender identities and race—as in the case of Anita Hill—but also sexual orientation, rank in academia, class, and so on, further reproducing an academic culture of sexual harassment based on multiple forms of discrimination.

Harassment is not isolated; it is widespread because it is an institutional, systemic, and cultural problem. The most recent US National Academies of Science (NAS) report (2018) estimates that faculty and staff sexually harass 20–33% of undergraduates, 40–50% of medical students, and 43% of graduate students in the United States. The report also finds that women report more harassment than men, but men represent the overwhelming majority of harassers of both women and men. Sexual harassment occurs throughout academia, and at academic conferences.

A recent survey of the American Political Science Association (APSA) asked members about their experiences at the last three annual meetings, and 11% of women and 3% of men reported experiences of the following kind: ‘unwanted sexual advances or touching, such as unwanted attempts to establish a sexual relationship despite efforts to discourage it, being

⁵ https://www.transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/resources/NTDS_Report.pdf.

touched by someone in a way that was uncomfortable, or experiencing bribes or threats associate with sexual advances’ (Sapiro & Campbell, 2018, p. 197). The authors concluded that while these percentages might seem ‘small’ to some, ‘29 of our members felt they had experienced threats of professional retaliation for not being sexually cooperative, and 44 felt they were being bribed with special professional rewards is, respectively, 29 and 44 people too many’ (Sapiro & Campbell, 2018, p. 197).

Harassment is associated with deleterious outcomes for the careers, mental health, and well-being of those victimised (NAS, 2018). Harassed academics face barriers to career mobility when they feel obliged to avoid one-on-one situations with peers or potential mentors, or change advisors, programmes, departments, or fields of study owing to the fear of (continued) harassment or retaliation (NAS, 2018). Academic leadership is often ill-prepared to take proactive measures, handle complaints, or deal with the aftermath of harassment investigations; a difficulty further complicated by insufficient evidence or disagreements on how to interpret the meaning and impact of certain behaviours. In addition to the personal impact of harassment on reputations, friendships, and futures, it damages the educational and scholarly integrity of departments and professional organisations embroiled in this ubiquitous form of discrimination.

Thus, the eradication of sexual harassment requires transforming academic institutions and their *culture* to promote a professional learning and working environment that is hostile to harassment in all its forms. Or, as Sapiro (2018) calls it: ‘Professions and organisations need to work to create cultures of communication—bolstered by effective structures of redress—that embody a collective ethic of antisubordination’. In this spirit, we should call upon professional associations to take responsibility for helping to solve the problem of sexual harassment. Because association members are part of academia, professional organisations often mirror the academy in terms of hierarchy and the preservation of unequal, frequently gendered contexts that obscure, breed, and legitimate harassment.

3 RESEARCH ON ORGANISATIONAL INTERVENTIONS

Research on harassment in US organisations over the past 30 years provides insight into the forms of harassment that occur and why, and organisational responses that appear to ameliorate the problem and, perhaps more importantly, those that do not. Much of this research points out the failure of institutions to curb harassment, in large part due to symbolic

compliance with laws and policies endorsed by the US courts and the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) (Edelman, 2016). Rather than addressing the causes of harassment, institutions have adopted policies and reporting procedures and trusted harassment training programmes to solve the problem superficially. Overall, US social science research is far less trusting of symbolic compliance and conventional responses that fail to stop harassment or, on the contrary, that actively reproduce gendered inequalities.

3.1 *Reporting Procedures and Policy Statements*

US universities repeatedly echo a 30-year-old credence that ‘if you do not report harassment, we cannot do anything about it’. The idea is that the problem of sexual harassment will be solved if people report it, their claims will be investigated, and institutions will take appropriate action. This widespread belief implies that universities, just like other organisations, can and will act to investigate, adjudicate, and protect against retaliation on a case-by-case basis. What’s more, it places the onus for initiating cultural change in the workplace on those victimised by a problem that extends far beyond individual behaviour and actions, and one that places targets of harassment at further risk.

There are no studies about how well universities handle harassment complaints; universities provide this information neither to the public nor to researchers. Very few cases of university harassment end up in court and get publicised (Cantalupo & Kidder, 2018),⁶ and most get no public attention at all (McDonald, 2012). When universities stop the behaviour, impose sanctions, and prevent retaliation, they do not inform campus communities, based on claims about protecting confidentiality (of both harasser and complainants). Keeping the outcomes of investigations quiet does not necessarily protect complainants from retaliation, nor does it engender confidence that universities will take complaints seriously and act appropriately. This lack of visibility fosters distrust among those who might otherwise report harassment.

Overall, victims of harassment and discrimination tend not to report the incidents (Albiston, 2010; Berrey et al., 2017; Bumiller, 1988; Marshall, 2005). Only 6% of graduate students reported harassment they

⁶ <https://theprofessorisin.com/2017/12/01/a-crowdsourced-survey-of-sexual-harassment-in-the-academy/>.

encountered. The low number of official reports compared to actual incidents suggests that victims of harassment do not trust institutions to handle complaints. Additionally, when gender-based discrimination is part of the fabric of one's social environment, the line of acceptable behaviour can blur. Fewer than 25% of women faculty and graduate and undergraduate students label behaviour formally defined as sexual harassment to *be* sexual harassment. Finally, reporting may be a last resort for fear of negative consequences. Victims of harassment routinely encounter disbelief, denial, or diminishment of their concerns. They often face negative personal consequences (such as being shunned, blamed, threatened, slighted, ignored, or criticised). And they risk accrual of job disadvantages (such as being fired, having contracts not renewed, or being removed from projects, papers, or grants). The EEOC receives high numbers of retaliation complaints, and while it is easier to 'win' such complaints (compared with harassment complaints), reporting puts excess burden on victims of harassment while ignoring their fears. Thus, reporting is a 'necessary but not sufficient' condition in addressing harassment allegations.

Without clear data on the outcome of university investigations, some researchers have examined the impact of policies on sexual harassment on gender equity more broadly. Dobbin and Kalev (2019) compared the adoption of various gender equity and diversity measures in US universities. Specifically, they evaluated the association between the adoption of sexual harassment grievance procedures and the percentage of women professors since 1993. Strikingly, it had at best no effect, and at worst a negative effect on the percentage of Hispanic and Asian women professors. They concluded that the grievance procedures led to retaliation, resulting in decreased representation of women in the academy. Clearly, policy statements alone do not reduce harassment. Institutional reporting mechanisms and policies (including penalties) need to address gender harassment more broadly instead of focusing too narrowly on behaviours such as unwanted sexual pursuit and coercion (NAS, 2018, p. 2).

3.2 *Training Programmes*

US workplaces adopted sexual harassment training programmes largely due to court decisions and human resource initiatives that assert their effectiveness (Edelman, 2016; Tinkler, 2018). Thus, these now 'classic' programmes are oriented to fulfilling legal obligations and are often

designed by legal experts and human resource personnel. On the one hand, some research demonstrates an association between training-based awareness and increased knowledge of sexual harassment (NAS, 2018), in addition to benefits stemming from the use of training as a symbolic gesture about the issue's institutional importance. On the other hand, some research finds that training either produces neutral effects (Tinkler, 2018) or, if *mandatory*, tends to create a 'blame the faculty' scenario that ultimately decreases gender equity (Dobbin & Kalev, 2019; Tinkler, 2018). By casting women as victims and men as perpetrators, training can 'activat[e] traditional gender stereotypes and reinforce negative attitudes about women' (Tinkler, 2018. p. 8). On the contrary, training programmes that function as bystander programmes in which managers serve as victims' allies yet have authority and effective intervention tools, do appear to increase the percentage of women in leadership positions (Dobbin & Kalev, 2019).

Higher numbers of women in leadership positions do seem to make a difference to gender equity; compared with men, women tend to take harassment more seriously (Dobbin & Kalev, 2019). More egalitarian workplace cultures enable women to feel more at ease to speak up and get help before lower level norm violations transform into higher level ones. Other workplaces in the US have experimented with proactive strategies aimed at longer term organisational and cultural change. A unique example involved a restaurant with a colour-coded alert system.⁷ Waiters simply said the word 'yellow, orange, or red' to alert management when customers displayed certain levels of harassment. Yellow was for a general creepy vibe, orange for borderline sexual harassment (e.g., 'Hey, I love your shirt'), and red was either for comments like 'Hey, you look super sexy in that' or physical contact. When notified, management acted immediately. This system addressed harassment at the lowest levels of norm violation, prior to their escalation, and incidents decreased over time. In the search for evidence-based models to address and rectify sexual harassment in academia, researchers may inquire how this and similar approaches might translate into different cultural, organisational, and legal settings.

⁷ <https://abcnews.go.com/US/News/california-restaurant-color-coded-system-staff-combat-sexual/story?id=54420861>.

4 PROMISING STEPS AND CHALLENGES FOR PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Laws and policies vary globally in how they hold universities, funding agencies, and professional associations accountable for gender-based discrimination. Sexual harassment may violate anti-discrimination policies or other employment or civil service laws. In some cases, students may file suit directly against universities for discrimination; in others, such as in Germany, students may only take legal action if employed by the university (CEWS, 2020). Some countries have established offices, complaint procedures, and training requirements' whereas others have not done so (ERAC SWG GRI, 2020). Yet when considering the continued high rates of gender harassment in the academy, and that women from racial and ethnic minority groups as well as gender non-conforming people are more likely to be targets of harassment and microaggressions, higher education has clearly fallen short of its equity goals. The US National Academies of Science Report (NAS, 2018) on 'Sexual Harassment of Women in the Academy' was in process long before the #MeToo movement gained renewed traction. Similarly, the European Union's Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation (ERAC SWG GRI, 2020) found that research on gender-based violence in academia is lacking and continues to be 'with a few exceptions ... an unrecognised and underdeveloped field of knowledge at the national level'.

Harassment has been framed as a violation of ethical norms set by professional associations and enforced by universities and funding agencies. Both the NAS (2018) and ERAC SWG GRI (2020) consider harassment to be a form of research misconduct, affecting the integrity of research. Understood in its broadest terms, the NAS (2018) incorporates intersectional-based discrimination (due to gender, race, ethnicity, or LGBTQ identity) into its understanding of sexual harassment with a proactive approach that integrates issues of microaggression into professional norms and focuses on promoting gender equity and professional behaviour, in addition to addressing unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion. By identifying evidence-based approaches to norm setting, the NAS framework aims to stop harassment from occurring in the first place. The NAS recommends the formation of taskforces and committees to promote gender equity, revise policies and procedures, and educate leaders at every level (especially with regard to bystander approaches). Finally, the NAS advises leadership to set clear norms for ethical and professional behaviour

that send a unified and unequivocal message of zero tolerance for abuse of power of any kind.

Professional associations across many disciplines are in a new phase of reviewing and improving formal and informal policies and procedures to respond to harassed individuals, bystanders, and/or department chairs seeking assistance. Their influence, however, is contingent upon organisational power which varies depending on their size (e.g., the American Geoscience Union (AGU) has 600,000 members, the American Sociological Association (ASA) only 11,500 members, and attendance at annual meetings of the American Political Science Association (APSA) is 7000); financial resources (from conferences, membership fees, and journal subscriptions); and reach (as volunteer-run organisations they do not rely on paid staff to provide membership outreach and services). Even so, international associations are uniquely positioned to address the higher harassment risks associated with worldwide mobility (see ERAC, 2020).

An important limitation is that professional associations are not typically employers. They are responsible for their (usually small) staff, but not necessarily their members, which do not have the same 'rights' or obligations as staff. What's more, professional associations have no jurisdiction in colleges and universities. They cannot officially request information about alleged harassers or those reporting harassment. They are unlikely to be able to protect against retaliation (aside from perhaps writing letters to call for fairness). They have fewer options than their employers to sanction members who are harassers, and most associations consider public shaming to be unethical. Yet professional associations may be called upon to act especially with regard to the 'pass-the-harasser' phenomenon, which occurs when universities (or even countries) expect the problem to go away 'naturally' when the person accused of harassment leaves the university. This, of course, does not solve the problem of harassment for academic communities, as serial harassment poses a special challenge beyond individual campuses.

Despite these limitations, professional associations can be powerful influencers. Membership-based organisations are responsible for what happens at the meetings they organise and in their day-to-day activities. As such, their organisational practices invigorate the appearance, perceptions, and realities of harassment (constructively or negatively) at association events. White women and minority groups, for example, have reported hostile environments and harassment at professional conferences (Sapiro & Campbell, 2018). In addition to other forms of gender harassment,

women report being dismissed or disrespected as colleagues and academic experts, and in discussions. Some men use conference spaces to signal that they are more interested in women as flirtations or random hook-ups than as professional peers. Conference arrangements that foster such environments contribute to confusion about personal and professional boundaries and fuel abuse of power.

Notwithstanding, some professional associations in the US have proactively developed strategies and policies to set clear expectations for conferences. The AGU's campaign SafeAGU offers support to members who 'feel harassed, threatened or unsafe' when participating in AGU meetings. Additionally, each conference participant acknowledges and agrees to AGU ground rules when registering for the conference online. As association membership is a privilege and not a right; professional associations have authority to create norms and expectations for members, including clear articulation about how harassment undermines the goals and values of their organisations and will not be tolerated. Professional associations are legally responsible for incidents that occur at their events and when employees or members act on their behalf, but statutory obligations are murkier for behaviour that occurs among members outside of these parameters. Professional associations have been hesitant to promise investigations beyond behaviour reported at official events, but they still have a role to play.

4.1 Raising Awareness, Setting a Tone

Organisational leaders shape narratives on violence and harassment and when leaders at all levels speak out against sexual harassment, they can change organisational culture (Hart et al., 2018). The American and German Associations of Political Science started an organisation-wide conversation on sexual harassment by surveying their membership about harassment at the APSA conference and at work. Other professional associations communicate policies and knowledge about sexual violence and harassment through email, newsletters, social media, and other communications. The ASA sent communications to its leadership and members setting a tone of respect, dignity, inclusiveness, and fairness, with a clear message that abuses of power in any form will **not** be condoned. Thirteen sections of the German Society of Music Research distanced themselves in public statements from the celebration of a colleague who had been convicted of four cases of sexual assault. They took exception since extolling

him and his work served to downplay the gravity and seriousness of the offences.⁸

The AGU took a leading role in combatting harassment in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. The association convened a task force, changed the code of ethics to recognise harassment as a violation of *research integrity*, implemented the SafeAGU programme for conferences, and promised to conduct investigations.⁹ The AGU Ethics and Equity Center (founded in 2019) serves as an information hub providing information and up-to-date resources from legal services to other forms of individual support.

As norm setting organisations, professional associations can also help to train and educate leadership and members at all levels in sexual harassment prevention. Associations have expanded training resources and begun to develop and provide resources to support victims and bystanders of harassment. These include self-defence and bystander training for individuals, departments, and department heads; committees that conduct on-campus visits for departmental reviews; working groups and task forces; conference panels; and town halls to raise awareness of sexual harassment and various forms of abuse of power. The pathbreaking ADVANCEGeo Partnership¹⁰ (funded by the US National Science Foundation) develops departmental workshops at colleges and universities to change the climate for white women and minorities in academia.

4.2 *Defining Sexual Harassment*

Norm setting also includes the establishment and validation of definitions. Professional associations have long treated and defined sexual harassment as unprofessional behaviour and violation of a code of ethics. The APSA defines harassment as ‘a serious form of professional misconduct’. The NAS (2018) report called for academia to address sexual harassment by tackling gender inequities and gender harassment. Yet many organisational statements simply reaffirm common principles that imply equity such as ‘professional and supportive cultures that value diversity and inclusiveness’. The Academy of Management (AOM) (2018) describes its goal

⁸ https://www.nmz.de/kiz/nachrichten/offizielle-stellungnahme-von-fachgruppen-der-gesellschaft-fuer-musikforschung-in-sach?fbclid=IwAR10EOa9Tt-mVP5mr3CpdIXqZp-Waot4u_WuVzI-CmXbuVDKjew4o3UZPqWU.

⁹ <https://harassment.agu.org/>.

¹⁰ <https://serc.carleton.edu/advancegeo/index.html>.

as '[t]o build a vibrant and supportive community of scholars by markedly expanding opportunities to connect and explore ideas. ... AOM seeks to cultivate a culture of mutual respect and inclusion.'

Indeed, policy definitions of harassment vary greatly among professional associations. Most recognise that different types of harassment exist and use the term broadly to encompass any or all of its forms. When organisations go beyond a narrow definition of unwanted behaviour, however, the broadening of the definition sometimes loses even the legal framing of harassment as a form of sex and gender discrimination. The feminist framing of sexual harassment as rooted in (organisational) gender power rarely surfaces. The AOM standards and procedures (2018), for example, 'mainstream' harassment to the extent that its policy statement does not include the word 'gender' at all.

With few exceptions, professional associations seldom acknowledge the *intersection* of inequalities in harassment. Both the APSA and LSA broadened existing legal definitions with inclusion of socioeconomic status as a factor associated with harassment. For example, graduate students from working-class backgrounds might not have financial alternatives to working as a research assistant and thus can be more vulnerable to abuses of power. The LSA policy is an outlier in its inclusion of intersectional language when describing harassment as 'not limited to actual or perceived sex, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, age, religion, national origin, citizenship status, criminal record, veteran status, or their **intersection**' (LSA Letter 2019, bold added by the author). Furthermore, the incorporation of gender, sexual, and non-sexual forms of harassment creates a clear link between harassment and discrimination that surpasses the scope of legislation which recognises only the most overt and egregious behaviour.

4.3 *Framing Sexual Harassment as Research Misconduct*

A promising redress within US funding agencies is the framing of sexual harassment under the umbrella of research misconduct. Such framing is a crucial move to hold individuals accountable, not only in regard to funding obligations as individuals act on behalf of funders at professional conferences and beyond, but also in what grantees do on campuses as collaborators, research supervisors, local experts, and so on. The NAS report used misconduct framing to centre harassment in terms of core scientific values and systemic consequences:

when sexual harassment occurs in research environments it can undermine core values of research integrity. The cumulative effect of sexual harassment is significant damage to research integrity and a costly loss of talent in academic sciences, engineering, and medicine. (NAS, 2018, p. 3)

The AGU's policy (also framing harassment as research misconduct) further reasons that 'scientific misconduct ... includes unethical and biased treatment of people. ... These actions violate AGU's commitment to a safe and professional environment required to learn, conduct, and communicate science.'¹¹ The AGU also allows anyone to file a harassment complaint regardless of where the incident occurred or whether the reporting individual was personally affected (e.g., a witness or casual bystander could file a report). And, the National Science Foundation defines research misconduct itself as 'fabrication, falsification, plagiarism' that also includes 'other serious deviations from accepted practices in proposing, carrying out or reporting results from activities funded by NSF' (45 CFR §689.1[a]).

The NSF policy enabled agency investigations of a range of inappropriate activities. Beginning in 2018, NSF requirements that universities report any (verified or potential) violations of university policies on sexual harassment by senior personnel working on NSF grants were heard loud and clear. Universities now discuss sexual harassment as part of their communication of compliance rules with NSF grant holders. This potentially powerful shift on the part of the NSF incorporates gender equity into existing accountability structures of research integrity and funder oversight. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) also enforced accountability measures when it replaced 14 principal investigators and 14 individuals from peer review due to harassment allegations.¹² Thus, funding agencies can limit the power of 'star' academics whose leverage derives from bringing financial backing from those agencies to their universities and reduce abuse of power in the long run.

Framing harassment in terms of research misconduct situates this form of gender discrimination as a violation of both professional ethics and the core mission of academia—knowledge production. In this way,

¹¹ <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/04/geophysics-society-hopes-define-sexual-harassment-scientific-misconduct>.

¹² <https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/who-we-are/nih-director/statements/update-nih-efforts-address-sexual-harassment-science>.

harassment is understood to be damaging to the integrity of education, research, scholarship, science, and the advancement of disciplines. Treating harassment like any other violation of professional integrity provides a framework for academic institutions to address it with similar authority:

Academic institutions should consider sexual harassment equally important as research misconduct in terms of its effect on the integrity of research, and thus should increase collaboration among offices that oversee the integrity of research (i.e., those that cover ethics, research misconduct, diversity, and harassment issues) and centralize resources, information, and expertise. (NAS, 2018, p. 3)

Universities and funding agencies reference these broader professional standards and codes of ethics to communicate values and norms. It remains unclear how existing mechanisms for handling allegations of such code violations can be specifically applied to harassment. Professional associations have largely found themselves ill prepared to apply existing ethics frameworks (such as those oriented towards plagiarism) to harassment cases that require different kinds of expertise, training, and resources to rectify.

4.4 *Reporting*

Several professional associations have developed protocols for handling harassment, particularly at conferences. Reporting has important limitations for any organisation, as argued previously, but as discussed here for professional associations in particular.

First, for organisations that rely on reporting procedures for violations of ethical codes, for example, the time limits for filing, prohibition of anonymity, and other restrictions (such as being limited to conferences) are not compatible with incidents of harassment. Second, as harassment often occurs in ‘private’ spaces, it may be difficult to find witnesses or other evidence needed for investigations. Third, the trauma, complicated feelings, self-doubt, and self-blame that often accompany harassment make it difficult for survivors to share their experiences with anyone sometimes for years or decades, let alone to submit a formal report. Fourth, the intensive resources and expertise required to conduct harassment investigations are added barriers for member-based associations to intervene. Fifth, these associations have little (formal) access to what happens at campuses, and

universities are under no obligation to ‘report’ the outcomes of investigations. Very few cases go to court and unless universities release the conclusions of their harassment investigations publicly, professional associations are hard pressed to obtain information they would need to act on allegations. Sixth, it is crucial for the points of contact to be trained and prepared to handle allegations and intervene successfully, another potential challenge for organisations with scarce resources.

Recognising the liminal position of professional associations that lack direct member oversight, the NAS is seeking ‘alternative and less formal ways to record information about an incident’ and also advises professional associations to provide greater assistance to members experiencing harassment, including ‘social services, health care, legal, and career/professional’ services ‘regardless of if a formal report is filed’ (2018, p. 7). The Geoscience Union now offers to pay for legal services for members victimised by harassment. Similar to unions, these measures may have to be extended to the accused as well, as the accused are more likely to pursue legal action (Zippel, 2006).

4.5 *Dealing with Sexual Harassment: The Ombudsperson Model*

Some professional associations have attempted to address harassment within Ombuds systems to provide a neutral, impartial, and confidential environment for members to voice concerns. For instance, a member of the German Political Science Association (DVPW) serves as a confidante for sexual harassment and sexualised violence. The US AOM refers sexual harassment victims to an Ethics Ombuds committee system. Beginning in 2018, APSA assigned two ombudspersons to be present at conferences as well as provide services beyond the meetings: an ombuds-trained APSA member and an ombudsperson from a local campus. The Law Society Association (LSA) created an ombuds system for conferences that consists of at least two ombuds-trained members to ‘assist ... confidentially, offer advice about options and how to proceed and if appropriate, may attempt conciliation’.¹³ And, a working group of the Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS) recommended that the association create an ‘ombuds committee’ for members who experience harassment in the context of ‘non-employment issues that may arise between members’. The broad charge of

¹³ <https://www.lawandsociety.org/docs/Letter%20to%20LSA%20Members%20policy.pdf>.

this committee would be to ‘mediate and address disputes, issues, or problems between SWS members. In relation to general issues or specific cases related to alleged violations of the SWS Code of Conduct, the Committee shall gather information and, when deemed appropriate, recommend actions to the SWS Executive Council.’

The confidentiality of the ombuds system may be appealing to victims of harassment who prefer anonymity. However, as mechanisms for addressing harassment, ombuds systems are problematic. First, harassment may fall outside of the ombuds jurisdiction as a neutral entity focused on problem solving and conflict resolution. While harassment is indeed a problem to be solved and individuals may benefit from talking through their concerns and possible options for redress, mediation and conciliation are not necessarily appropriate in harassment cases, and experts warn against such approaches especially for cases of sexual violence. Second, an ombudsperson cannot take sides and is not in a position to talk to or sanction a harasser. An ombudsperson trained in sexual harassment prevention and mitigation may be better positioned to help someone victimised by harassment to think through their experiences and refer them to a skilled professional for assistance.

4.6 *Curbing Sexual Harassment Within Nomination and Awards Systems*

Selection and nomination procedures for association offices and awards are another function within professional associations that have potential for creating and reinforcing professional norms to reduce sexual harassment. ASA reminds nominators that: ‘All ASA members are expected to meet the commonly held standards of professional ethics and scientific integrity articulated in our Code of Ethics’, and asks explicitly: ‘Do you have any concerns ... regarding the nominee satisfying this expectation?’ While this type of directive encourages a level of reflection on the ethical behaviour and integrity of potential awardees and association officers, professional colleagues are more likely to be familiar with their peers’ work than their ‘private’ affairs. Some groups have suggested using self-identification by nominees as a measure to promote ethical selection using a question such as ‘Have you ever been found in violation of university policies?’ But harassing individuals may not be likely to self-disclose to save their reputation or because they do not identify their behaviour as harassment. The SWS reserves the right to revoke or withhold awards of members found in breach of the organisation’s standards

if it determines, in its sole discretion, that a recipient has engaged in conduct that constitutes a substantial departure from SWS' core mission and/or commitment to transforming the academy through feminist leadership, undermines the credibility and integrity of the award, or violates generally accepted standards of public behaviour.¹⁴

Such policies have potential force since professional associations extend the privilege or honour of offices and awards to members, but they are not guaranteed or legally binding.

4.7 Preventing Sexual Harassment with a Diffusion of Power

The development of clear guidelines and models for power diffusion in academia is another domain in which professional associations may affect cultural change in ways that make academic settings averse to sexual harassment. The NAS report made a strong recommendation that institutions consider diffusing power that is otherwise concentrated, especially for graduate students. Power diffusion may include: shifting the single-advisor structure of thesis and dissertation committees to more team structures; and rethinking the role of recommendation letters (and whether they are written by current or past intimate partners) in hiring, promotion, and advancement.

Another important and controversial example is discouraging intimate relationships between graduate students and faculty that create power differentials. Even if universities will not take a stance on such relationships, professional associations can set standards urging their members to avoid hiring, writing letters of recommendation, and evaluating their intimate partners in any way. To curb power differentials, faculty may simply recuse themselves.

5 CONCLUSION

Until recently, professional associations have essentially overlooked sexual harassment within academia and their organisations. Some have gone as far as to protect powerful members against allegations. The subsequent silencing of sexual harassment victims reinforced a culture that is exclusionary to women and those from racial/ethnic and other minority groups.

¹⁴ <https://socwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Feb.27.19.AwardsPolicy.pdf>.

Although professional associations, as membership organisations, are less able than employers to monitor or investigate harassment incidents on campuses, they can exert influence on academic culture and institutions by: (1) shaping narratives on violence and harassment; (2) expanding the definition of sexual harassment to include intersectionality, making a clear link between harassment and discrimination, and considering harassment as a form of research misconduct; and (3) using alternative models for addressing sexual harassment such as revising reporting protocols, using bystander strategies, setting up and training ombudspersons in sexual harassment, revising procedures for nomination and selection of offices and awards, and creating guidelines for power diffusion in academic settings.

In addition, professional associations have the power to set ethical standards and rules for their own organisations. As such, they can withhold the privileges of conference attendance, committee participation, journal involvement, recognition, or even membership from any member in violation of association codes and ethics. Furthermore, professional associations have the capacity to provide resources to members experiencing sexual harassment, such as legal information and social support. Going a step further, these organisations might offer alternative dissertation examiners, colleagues willing to write letters of recommendation, and mentorship for all career stages beyond the graduate phase.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has changed the landscape of sexual harassment in academia (at least in the short term). The risks for physical harassment have decreased as many in-person meetings (including teaching, research collaborations, and conferences) are now virtual. That said, the expanded online environment is likely to increase online harassment for women and those from racial/ethnic and other minority groups who are already at increased risk.

As knowledge production and academia become even more global, professional organisations that operate nationally and internationally may be better positioned to address sexual harassment, particularly if they are able to develop strong standards that protect mobile academics (in a post-pandemic context) and prevent serial harassment (by passing harassers from institution to institution, and country to country). Academic communities such as professional associations that step up to these challenges can be powerful allies in rectifying sexual harassment and promoting an inclusionary academic culture for all.

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Re-visiting Gender Equality Policy and the Role of University Top Management

Anke Lipinsky and Angela Wroblewski

1 INTRODUCTION

It has often been claimed that realising gender parity in science is only a matter of time since equality between women and men in the workplace is enshrined in law at European Union and national levels. Women have accounted for more than half of university graduates since the end of the twentieth century. In 2001 they received around 55% of university degrees and gained slightly less than 40% of all doctoral degrees (European Commission, 2003). However, 20 years later we re-visit gender policy outcomes to explain the slow pace of institutional transformation in

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advancing gender equality. We explore the contributions of sex quotas and gender mainstreaming to the gender equality project in Austrian and German universities and highlight the role of university top managers.

The EU and its member states committed to the implementation of gender mainstreaming (GM) in 1997 (Sauer, 2018). In addition, some EU member states introduced positive action such as sex quotas in committee and management positions in universities (European Commission, 2011, 2019). Positive action is lawful in all EU member states based on the European framework of non-discrimination and equality between women and men.

The current turn in European gender equality policies known as ‘fixing the organisations’, supported by funding from the European research framework programme, introduces structural changes to advance gender equality in universities (European Commission, 2011, 2014). This approach acknowledges the role that organisational structures, including university procedures and processes, play in reproducing gender inequality. So far, less attention has been paid to whether structures and procedures empower gender equality institutions inside the organisation or whether top leaders possess the necessary competencies to bring about change processes so as to ultimately eliminate gender inequality in universities. We argue that prevailing arrangements are being used to maintain the status quo and that the empowerment of gender equality structures and the gender competence of top managers are prerequisites for achieving gender equality in higher education.

2 CONCEPTS AND APPROACH

Recent empirical studies of women and men in management positions show contradictory findings on the impact of women on gender equality in the academy and challenge the assumption that women in top management per se contribute to more gender equality (Benschop & van den Brink, 2014; Humbert et al., 2019; Wroblewski, 2019). The reasons for these findings are complex. The impact of formal institutional changes, for example the introduction of a quota of 40% for the underrepresented sex, is moderated by informal institutions (Mackay et al., 2010; Waylen, 2014). Waylen claims that ‘informal institutions cannot be looked at in isolation or as separate—they must be analysed alongside any formal institutions that they are linked to and with which they interact’ (Waylen, 2014, p. 213). And little is known about how gender equality policies contribute

to changing formal and informal ‘rules of the game’ (Kenny, 2014). What are the preconditions for formal institutional change projects like state-regulated gender equality policies such as sex quotas on boards and committees? We assume that sex quotas and gender mainstreaming are two different instruments which pursue various aspects of gender equality, but they are often confused. However, both lack the formal and informal powers and competencies to transform universities in such a way that they ultimately eliminate gender inequalities. But university rules, norms and practices cannot be changed easily. Informal institutions remain salient and invisible to outsiders.

Our assessment of the conditions under which sex quotas and gender mainstreaming impact on higher education top management focuses on policy outcomes. We ask how sex quotas and gender mainstreaming (GM) empower gender equality structures and discuss how gender competence can contribute to creating transformative gender equality mechanisms. We specifically pay attention to the role that gender competence and empowerment play in implementing sustainable university policy.

This analysis is based on the conceptual framework of feminist institutionalism (Kenny, 2014; Krook & Mackay, 2011; Mackay et al., 2010). The focus is on how sex quotas and gender mainstreaming, as currently implemented, challenge formal and informal institutions and thus help to maintain or change the existing status quo. Looking at institutions from a feminist standpoint helps us to better understand the politics and power at play in the implementation of change processes, including the gendered nature of outcomes. By questioning where existing rules remain ‘rules in form’ and which ones become ‘in use’ (Mackay et al., 2010), we identify the gaps in achieving change in university top management. Taking feminist institutionalism as a starting point, we analyse how the relationship between university top management and institutionalised gender equality is shaped and what factors contribute to it.

Knowing that there are many different sets of objectives attributed to gender mainstreaming (Verloo, 2005, 2007; Walby, 2005), we understand it as a process aimed at transforming an organisation through gender equality policy implementation and ultimately stopping the reproduction of inequalities in society and the workplace, by making visible the gendered nature of assumptions, processes and outcomes. But gender equality policies become subject to co-option and thus are more or less suited to challenging and transforming existing power structures in universities (Kreissl et al., 2015; Striedinger, 2017). Verloo (2005, p. 345) sees the

potential of gender mainstreaming as conditional, depending on power and strategic framing processes: ‘If institutional gender equality structures lack empowerment, e.g. through the need for consensual agreements, and leaving no space for oppositional politics—the praxis of gender mainstreaming has no transformative potential’. This suggests that gender perspectives may not contribute to organisational change if their critical potential remains unnoticed.

The combination of successfully establishing implementation structures, increasing the number of women in decision-making and the lack of cultural change (Wroblewski et al., 2014) could be interpreted as a paradox. To address this paradox, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research initiated a debate on gender competence in higher education in October 2016 by establishing a working group set up by the Austrian Universities Conference¹ which developed specific, action-oriented recommendations to raise gender competence among higher education institution (HEI) managers. The group prepared a total of 36 recommendations for increasing gender competence in management, administration, teaching and research. It also provided a definition of gender competence, following both the gender mainstreaming tradition and the pedagogical concept of competence (BMBWF, 2018):

Gender competence requires recognition of the relevance of gender attributes for one’s own field of work and responsibility. This recognition is combined with the willingness and ability to deal with these gender attributes in one’s own work context—if necessary, with the support of gender experts. Gender competence also requires the ability to act on the basis of this reflection and to set actions which tackle these gender attributes and their gendered consequences [translated by AW].

This chapter draws on these definitions of gender mainstreaming and gender competence. Based on desk research, we reviewed literature and regulations on sex quotas and gender mainstreaming. The chapter examines academic literature, research reports, statistics and monitoring reports to follow up on the reported implementation framework as well as the outcomes of sex quotas, paying special attention to the response of university management. Drawing on recent studies and reports from Germany

¹The Austrian Universities Conference (*Hochschulkonferenz*) is a consortium of all higher education institutions in Austria which aims at facilitating cooperation between institutions and formulating common positions on HE policy.

and Austria which provide evidence about policy outcomes and implementation frameworks, and contrasting policies on paper and their implementation, the chapter explains its findings from the perspective of gender equality experts in Austria and Germany, bearing in mind the work of Mieke Verloo on empowerment of gender mainstreaming and Angela Wroblewski on gender competence.

3 GENDER EQUALITY IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORKS IN AUSTRIAN AND GERMAN HIGHER EDUCATION

3.1 Academic Careers and State Governance

The higher education sector consists of 22 universities in Austria and around 100 in Germany and is dominated by state-funded universities in both countries that charge no or low tuition fees. Universities enjoy considerable autonomy, for example in budget distribution, governance and staffing. Budget and performance indicators are negotiated regularly between the state and the university and set out in performance contracts. Universities report annually to public authorities on their performance, based on the agreed sets of key indicators including for example the number of students and staff, courses offered, third-party funding or the proportion of women in professorships.

With the expansion of education in the 1960s, women enrolled in universities in increasing numbers. However, the representation of women decreases in higher status positions with the proportion of female professors remaining low. In Austria the share of women professors increased from 7% in 2000 to 23% in 2016; and in Germany from 8% to 19% (European Commission, 2003, 2019). In 2017, 18% of German and 26% of Austrian HEIs were headed by women.

Academic careers in both countries are structured along the typical pattern for the Humboldtian university which is based on the unity of teaching and research, and a strict hierarchical division between full professors and academics in the junior stages of their careers. The assessment of merit focuses on individuals rather than groups (Bagilhole, 2001; Münch, 2007). A successful academic career leads to a professorship. Until this is achieved, academics depend on the chair to which their position is assigned (Pechar & Andres, 2015).

Combined with broad patterns of female labour market participation, the Humboldtian university significantly limits prospects for equal career outcomes for women in academia. The typical conservative welfare state model supports a modified male breadwinner (Crompton, 1999) in which the tax system (in Germany) or family-related social benefits (in Austria) limit the attractiveness of a dual earner model with equal contributions to the household income. Another issue is the practice of fixed-term employment contracts for lecturers and postdocs working in universities (Gallas, 2018; Kehm & Teichler, 2012). Consequently, academic careers remain precarious until the professorial appointment and more academic women than men work part-time (cf. European Commission, 2019). Part-time work also limits women's career prospects in academia, due to the widespread assumption that it is not possible to work part-time in high-profile academic jobs. Women tend to postpone family planning to fit with the dynamics of academic careers, and they have on average fewer children compared to women outside academia (Beaujouan & Berghammer, 2019; Kreyenfeld, 2005).

3.2 *Commitment to Gender Mainstreaming*

Both countries formulated a legal commitment to implementing gender mainstreaming in universities about 20 years ago, an obligation which is implemented by all public higher education establishments under the conditions of various institutional autonomies. Implementation of gender mainstreaming in higher education started in the late 1990s and complemented positive action strategies to promote women in science (Dalhoff et al., 2015; Lipinsky, 2017; Ulrich, 2006). In the context of organisational reform, gender equality goals have been introduced in steering instruments in HEIs as well as in related monitoring instruments over the past two decades (European Commission, 2014; Wroblewski & Lipinsky, 2018). Austria and Germany are committed to the current gender equality goals set out in the European Research Area (ERA) and specified in the national ERA Roadmaps 2016–2020, including the objective to achieve gender balance in decision-making.

Despite commitment to a long-term process and the possibility for organisational transformation, implementation habitually focuses on quantifiable objectives and establishing structures for GM implementation and reporting. Given the autonomy of universities, it is unsurprising that the approaches to conceptualising and implementing gender equality

differ significantly across institutions (Tiefenthaler & Good, 2011). Feldmann et al. (2014) found that university rectors and gender equality officers both acknowledge the key role of gender action plans and target agreements for university management. Established instruments include personnel development measures, for example career-related training or mentoring for women, which are regarded as components of a mainstreaming strategy after successful institutional anchoring. Only a few universities in Germany and Austria implemented gender budgeting as a principle in university management. University management deals with gender equality when establishing performance agreements with departments (in house) as well as negotiating performance agreements with state authorities.

The autonomy of universities entails entrepreneurial and managerial reforms which coincide with the implementation of gender mainstreaming. An important element is the introduction of management by objectives in Austria and consideration of gender equality objectives in steering instruments which manage the interaction between state and higher education institutions. For example, the main steering instrument for Austrian higher education policy is the performance contract negotiated between the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) and each university. The contract defines the university's three-year budget and formulates its goals. Each university devises at least one gender equality measure and reports on its implementation annually. The focus on (numerical) measurable goals (e.g. increasing the share of women professors) and their representation in monitoring, in addition to the dominant concept of 'excellence', has been criticised for nurturing gender imbalance (Hark & Hofbauer, 2018). All universities established structures to strengthen the coordination and implementation of gender equality objectives as required by the university law UG 2002, article 19. These are the so-called coordination units (*Koordinationsstellen*) which support the rectorate in developing and implementing measures to strengthen the gender dimension in research and teaching, as well as developing and implementing gender equality measures. Another important structure for gender equality is the equal opportunities working party (UG 2002, article 42) which has a right of veto in appointment procedures in cases of suspected discrimination.

In Germany, 2006 marked a turning point in gender equality politics at the national level. On the one hand, the topic of gender equality was 'upgraded' by the stakeholder community of science policymakers through the linguistic entanglement of 'equality' and research 'excellence'. On the

other hand, the focus of policies shifted from funded measures for individuals to assigning the task of structuring gender equality work and implementing policy goals to HEI management. Establishing gender equality concepts at management level developed into a standard instrument for initiating structural change processes to advance gender equality, which influenced the introduction of performance agreements between universities and the states. Moreover, the need for tailor-made gender equality plans was stressed by the ‘excellence initiative’, the major competitive funding resource for universities over the past two decades, in which gender aspects were consistently emphasised by international experts during the evaluation of the awarding process. Also, the Women Professors Program (2008–2022) requires universities to submit tailor-made gender action plans as part of their funding application. Most state laws make such plans mandatory and the basis for performance evaluation of state-funded universities.

Universities are held accountable for the implementation of gender equality measures and the monitoring of sex ratios by the state which funds public universities. In Austrian and German universities officers for gender equality and ‘women’s advancement’ strategies are responsible for coordinating measures and documenting sex ratios throughout the institution.

3.3 *Sex Quotas in University Top Management*

Both countries developed policies to increase the share of women in decision-making, such as sex quotas on university governing boards and in committees, which have led to a significant increase in women’s representation in university top management. The main aim of a quota regulation is to improve women’s representation in decision-making. An increasing proportion of women is generally interpreted as an indication of removing structural barriers in women’s careers. However, there is often an implicit assumption linked to quotas that a ‘critical mass’ of women will initiate change inside the gendered organisation by setting priorities differently (compared to men) and using distinctive styles of decision-making. This hypothesis formulated by Moss Kanter (1977) has guided gender equality policies for decades.

Different forms of quotas have been introduced in university policies in Austria and Germany. In Austria, a legal quota for university bodies (rectorate, university council, senate and all senate commissions) was

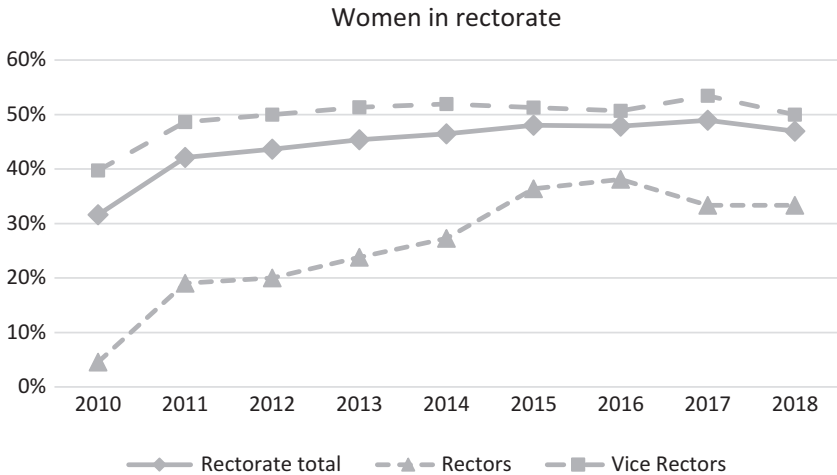


Fig. 8.1 Share of women in rectorates of Austrian universities 2010–2018 (head counts). (Source: Unidata, own calculation)

introduced in 2009. Initially it required that university bodies consist of at least 40% women; in 2015 this was increased to at least 50%. If a university body does not meet the quota, its composition is invalid as long as the university's equal opportunities working party explicitly agrees. If the working party raises an objection, all decisions made by the body are invalid (Schulev-Steindl, 2010). According to Guldvik (2011), this is a strong quota as the regulation implies sanctions for non-compliance. Almost from the outset, most rectorates fulfilled the quota (Fig. 8.1).

In Germany, the so-called cascade model, one form of a flexible sex quota, was introduced in 2009 as a voluntary steering instrument in order to increase the share of women at all levels of the academic hierarchy, including full professorships. For instance, the research-oriented standards on gender equality of the German Research Foundation formulate target quotas for women's representation at all levels of scientific careers (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), 2017a). The cascade model requires that the share of women among newly appointed professors be at least equivalent to the pool of potential applicants (i.e. the share of women among assistant professors in the discipline). The target quota represents a commitment by universities, but is not linked to any financial sanctions. The cascade model is an element in the gender equality reports that universities submit to the DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG),

2017b) and has helped them to define gender targets, but it does not affect the level of accountability with which these targets are implemented.

There is no nationwide fixed quota for positions in the university rectorate. The state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) introduced a fixed quota of 40% for women in public university committees in 1999 and added a flexible quota for professorial appointments in 2014. Both measures increased the share of women in professorships and thus indirectly contributed to greater representation of women in university rectorates. In universities based in NRW, the share of women in rectorates increased significantly from 23% in 2013 to 33% in 2016 and 35% in 2018 (Niegel & Herrmann, 2018), while the increase of the overall share of women in full professorship chairs (Grade A) which was 21% in 2018² is still moderate.

While the Austrian quota affects the composition of university bodies, the German cascade model addresses the appointment of full professors. Both forms of quotas force universities to actively search for qualified women. For a university body, those responsible for its composition must ask qualified women if they are willing to participate in the committee or to be listed on the election ballot. For appointment procedures, the head of the appointment commission must ensure that an active search for qualified candidates takes place.

4 CRITIQUE OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING BY UNIVERSITY TOP MANAGEMENT

In both countries, university top management has a central role in shaping the institutions' gender equality structures. However, the form of implementation varies significantly between universities which contributes to the persistence of inequality. As 'implementation is a battle for power' (Engeli & Mazur, 2018), gender mainstreaming interventions need to include elements which empower gender structures as crucial components for allowing opposition. The limitations of gender equality structures described below could be tackled by university top management. However, they do not provide the full picture of the reasons for slow progress towards gender equality.

²See CEWS statistics portal <https://www.gesis.org/cews/unser-angebot/information-sangebote/statistiken/thematische-suche/detailanzeige/article/frauenanteile-an-habilitionen-berufungen-professuren-und-c4-w3-professuren>

4.1 *Variation in Understanding Gender (In)Equality*

One limitation is gender equality which is reinforced by existing steering instruments. In most cases, this comprises quantitative and easily measurable goals, for example increasing the share of women professors or the share of women students in STEM. Even if mission statements or strategic documents formulate broader objectives, in implementation and monitoring quantitative objectives dominate. This also allows universities to interpret numerical sex parity as achieving gender equality.

Quantitative indicators which measure progress towards gender equality used in existing steering instruments support this confusion of substantive and numeric representation (Childs & Krook, 2008) and risk confusing ‘fixing the organisations’, that is organisational change to eliminate gender biases, with ‘fixing the numbers’ by reporting the proportion and number of women in high-level positions. Thus, the gender distribution in committees is not an adequate indicator of the presence or absence of gender equality in scientific careers.

Correspondingly, the consideration of gender inequality depends on the gender competence and priorities of members of the rectorate and on how the expertise of existing structures is used by university decision-makers. In most cases they may raise awareness of gender issues but it depends on their gender competence whether suggestions or reservations are considered.

4.2 *Window Dressing*

As an element of organisational development, universities publish mission statements to describe their organisational culture and goals. Gender equality is inscribed in these mission statements as a social component of organisational culture, similar to cohesion, participation, promotion and development of employees or teamwork (Müller, 2015). The focus here is more on the cooperation of university members and staff, and less on gender-biased discriminatory processes and practices.

As universities developed structures to support creating and implementing gender equality policies, Löther and Vollmer (2014) found positive effects regarding their institutional capacity to develop and resource gender equality. They observed no consistent correlation between the additional staff units (under the direction of university management) and indications of more promising outcomes of gender equality interventions

(Löther & Vollmer, 2014). Added to this, Zippel and Lipinsky (2017) found that gender and diversity became important for university managers as they helped create public images of modern, competitive, internationally oriented universities.

The outcomes of gender mainstreaming result from top-down strategies in parallel with affirmative action. Most universities established structures supporting strategic development and implementation of gender equality policies. However, these may remain on a pro forma implementation level, as long as gender issues are not rigorously addressed in steering and decision-making processes and equality is subordinated to other institutional goals. Currently, how competencies are assigned to gender structures remains a patchwork with limited executive powers.

If gender is not mainstreamed, there is no need to reflect on traditional practices and institutions to detect an inherent gender bias. Due to a lack of reflexivity, the dominant perception of excellence in university practices is not challenged either, for example in appointment procedures (Heintz, 2018; Wroblewski, 2014). For instance, the habilitation is no longer a compulsory criterion for a full professorship. The Austrian Universities Act states that a qualification equivalent to habilitation is required to apply for a professorship. However, habilitation is still considered an important element of excellence which is usually perceived as objective and gender-neutral, even though extensive research illustrates its inherent gender bias (Heintz, 2018).

4.3 Creating Structures with Little Potential for Opposition

In Germany, the federal and state laws require public universities to eliminate all types of discrimination and to actively promote gender equality. These two objectives are implemented in very different ways. The institutionalisation of gender equality officers representing women's needs and voicing women's concerns started in the mid-1980s in universities (Blome et al., 2014), and included responsibility for complaints of sexual harassment and the elimination of direct and indirect discrimination. The elected gender equality officer is not constrained by instructions from university management and enjoys the right of veto in staff selection processes. But while they can oppose management in staff selection processes (one of Verloo's preconditions for empowering gender mainstreaming), they lack this power in other areas of decision-making.

One outcome of the commitment to gender mainstreaming in Germany is incentive schemes launched by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the German DFG, for example the programme for women professors and research-oriented gender equality standards. Universities need to create gender equality plans to receive funding from each of these programmes. Due to their institutional autonomy, several universities established vice rectorates for gender equality and diversity as well as staff units which directly report to the rectorate and symbolise the positioning of responsibility for non-discrimination and gender equality in university management. Consequently, state laws define the tasks of university management and the relationship between gender equality officers and management. They require, for example, that the gender equality officer should be involved ‘in matters concerning her affairs’ by university top management but they do not require compulsory involvement by university top management. Some laws stipulate that the gender equality officer can be ‘appointed as a member of the university management in an advisory capacity’, which indicates the absence of decision-making powers. The state law of universities in Berlin also indicates an advisory and support role for the ‘women’s representative (...) in all matters concerning women’. Regardless of the establishment of internal units and their visible organisational anchoring, these regulations confirm the lack of empowerment of gender equality structures in universities.

In Austria, the role of university management (tasks and duties) was established in the Austrian Universities Act 2002 which instituted university autonomy in budgetary and personnel issues. According to article 2, equal opportunities is one of the main principles of a university. Furthermore, the law requires each university to enact a women’s advancement plan (*Frauenförderungsplan*) as well as a gender equality plan (*Gleichstellungsplan*), and establish an organisational unit responsible for coordination of activities relating to equal opportunities and gender research, and an equal opportunity working party. Hence, the law not only stipulates an explicit commitment to gender equality but also identifies supporting instruments. However, universities implement these instruments differently; for example regarding the resources and competencies allocated to institutions (Tiefenthaler & Good, 2011). A study of gender in appointment procedures for full professors demonstrated broad variation in the role rectors assign to the equal opportunities working party, ranging from requiring confirmation that the procedure is free from discrimination before starting negotiations with candidates on the final

list, to assuming that the working party will raise an objection if discrimination is identified (Wroblewski, 2014).

However, university management has autonomy in determining the relevant matters in which the gender equality officer should be involved or heard. In Austria, it is also possible for university managers to delegate responsibility for gender equality to these structures, for example the gender equality officers or coordination units, and by doing so assign the universities' responsibility mainly to women. Consequently, university management may not see itself as responsible for gender equality or support mainstreaming of gender equality (Wroblewski, 2019).

Structural transformation of organisations can be enabled and empowered if gender equality institutions can formulate, critique or oppose institutional politics and practices, so that co-option by other agendas including token implementation of gender mainstreaming and minimisation of gender equality objectives can be avoided (Kantola & Verloo, 2018). Striedinger (2017) argues that integration of feminist perspectives in university structures changes their critical potential. It is more difficult to challenge the organisational structure and the system when belonging to it.

5 CRITIQUE OF SEX QUOTAS IN UNIVERSITY TOP MANAGEMENT

The central role of university management in relation to gender equality raises the question of access to these positions and the required competencies. While we acknowledge that fixed sex quotas lead to women being underrepresented in formal decision-making processes, their impact on institutional mechanisms that re-enact discriminatory practices to disadvantage women remains random, as quotas ignore the experiences on the way into management as well as gender competence.

5.1 *Ignoring Classism on the Way into Management*

The quota regulation aims to increase women's participation in decision-making but ignores the fact that women and men in top management positions adapt to fit into the environment and to execute powers effectively. Women move into environments whose informal rules and interaction patterns historically have been developed by men. Furthermore, the quota places middle-class women into university management and thus

skips informal aspects which normally play a role in enlisting university decision-makers, for example institutional knowledge in academic self-administration committees. Leadership behaviour in management positions, which still has mostly male connotations, gives rise to just such ‘doing gender’ dynamics in which social background and gender identity play a decisive role. Informal and formal institutions stimulate learning and adaptation to what the local management community considers acceptable for their professional role and gender expression.

*Unspecified and Gender-Blind Competence Profile
of University Management*

University top management positions are loaded with symbolic and strategic decision-making powers. The rectors and vice rectors are essentially political positions. Interviews with university presidents indicated great variations in how they and rectors get into office (Bieletzki, 2018). In Germany, the formal qualification to be elected as a university rector or vice rector is a professorship, while most university presidents are recruited from inside the university. Women are more likely to be external appointments to university management. In Austria, a professorship is not a formal requirement for a rectorate position. Increasingly, members of rectorates have a managerial background. Only the vice rectorate for research still follows the logic of ‘primus inter pares’ assigned to a full professor (Wroblewski, 2019). Hence, the Austrian quota regulation supported the integration of women into rectorate positions. As they are still significantly underrepresented among full professors, the search for qualified women has been extended to other fields of expertise.

Since the introduction of fixed sex quotas, the representation of sexes in university decision-making bodies has lost its validity as an indication of discrimination against women in science. The feminisation of professorship chairs and university top management positions should not be confused with the achievement of gender equality in practice in the academy. There is no evidence of the extent to which sex quotas can help eliminate the causes and effects of gendered practices or even detect gender biases in seemingly gender-neutral management decisions. Nevertheless, sex quotas prove effective in closing the representation gap between women and men in positions of power. Irrespective of the degree of transparency of the recruitment process of university managers, the managerial skills required to effectively perform in decision-making remain beyond the scope of sex quota policies and are generally under-specified. Implementation skills,

knowledge and experience in gender change management could improve the quality of decision-making by men and women in management—a prerequisite for this is instituting a set of explicit skill requirements for them—and making gender competence one of them.

In order to ensure that the concerns of women are heard throughout the university, sex quotas need to be applied in all committees and all positions throughout the academic hierarchy as well as horizontally in all departments, including STEM fields. Again, there is no automatic way of strengthening gender equality through fixing the gap in representation. Gender competence of university staff is one requirement for detecting and effectively eliminating biased processes.

6 EMPOWERMENT OF STRUCTURES AND GENDER COMPETENCE: MUTUALLY SUPPORTING APPROACHES

In reflecting on existing gender equality policies and their implementation, we argue that their further development should focus simultaneously on their empowerment and gender competence. We assume that sustainable change in gendered practices in universities can only be achieved when powerful structures meet gender-competent stakeholders, which will open up room for reflexivity and support a gender equality discourse. Such room for reflexivity can be linked to different phases of development and implementation of gender equality policies and requires a discourse about which are the most pressing gender equality issues and how best to address them. For example, goals and ambitions of gender equality policies, including their practical implications for everyday routines of managers, need to be understood and accepted by all members of the university. Understanding unfair privilege and learning how to eliminate it at the microlevel has the potential to transform the formal and informal rules of the game.

Similarly, monitoring reports on gender equality which universities must submit to state authorities could be used for critical reflection on the status quo and development of gender equality. However, their potential depends on how university top management defines the task and role of gender experts in that process. The possible range covers a pro forma report which contains all required information, to a critical self-reflection on the status quo of gender inequality. Ideally, gender experts and relevant gender-competent university stakeholders (including university managers)

would engage in a discursive process linking feminist claims and interpretations of data with university strategies and objectives which would lead to the development of effective gender equality policies. In order to create ownership of these objectives and policies they should be shared by as many members of the university as possible. The implementation process should be inclusive and give voice to the concerns of stakeholders as well as gender experts, including how to measure their achievements.

Such a discursive and reflexive approach to gender equality supports the development of gender competence among relevant stakeholders involved in the implementation of university strategies as well as specific gender equality policies. It also supports a broader understanding of gender equality and therefore avoids interpreting gender parity as gender equality (Table 8.1).

In order to support transformational change, it is necessary to empower gender equality structures so that they can initiate a discourse about sex, gender and equality. University management has the responsibility for strengthening the role of gender equality in decision-making processes, for example by requiring that gender expertise is involved in processes; by requesting gender experts to gender-proof all university strategies; by supporting gender structures to self-govern with sufficient financial resources, and raising issues which have to be considered by management; and by encouraging the transfer of feminist knowledge and an inter-institutional discourse which is necessary to stimulate a broad understanding of inequalities and the purpose of measures. Through knowledge transfer and more empowerment of gender equality policies, gender competence among relevant stakeholders would increase because of the ongoing discourse inside and outside the university.

7 CONCLUSION

Despite the advances made in Austrian and German universities in creating a policy environment for gender balance and equality, gender bias prevails in university decision-making. This chapter highlights the difference between gender parity and gender equality in the assessment of gender equality policy outcomes. An increasing share of women should not be interpreted as an indication of successfully eliminating structural discrimination in the academy. The analysis emphasises that gender-competent top management and the empowerment of gender equality structures are prerequisites for designing effective university gender equality policies in the

Table 8.1 Potential contributions of sex quotas, empowerment and gender competence in university top management to transform the gendered university culture

<i>Status quo</i>	<i>Institutions to support transformation</i>	<i>Expected results of transformation</i>
Homosocial selection of peers: Men and women benefit from their professional networks and are invited (pushed and pulled) to become board members.	A balanced sex ratio is an explicit criterion for the composition of a board or committee. Gender competence is an explicit criterion for those eligible for nomination to a board or committee. Structures aiming at preventing discrimination in the composition of a board or committee are established.	Women are no longer perceived as tokens. Staff get recognition for their actions to counter inequality and for tackling gender bias—and are nominated to a board or committee based on this expertise. Members of boards or committees are aware of potential gender biases in decision-making, committed to tackling it and have know-how to approach this.
Emancipation and equality are considered the responsibilities of those affected by discrimination, for example women and gender minorities. There is no challenging or deconstructing of the existing (male-based) standards and norms.	Gender equality goals are formulated in strategic documents of the university. Gender equality structures hold decision-making powers. Structures ensure gender equality policies are established and implemented. University responsibility for reporting sex-disaggregated data to government.	Gender-competent university managers feel responsible and are held accountable for gender equality. They seek support of gender experts, use evidence and so on to initiate an institutional gender equality discourse; gender expertise is visible in the profile of university top managers. University managers monitor qualitative and quantitative indicators of inequalities and use indicators for institutional development.
Dominance of charismatic leadership styles. Full dedication to management position based on the assumption that women can only be successful if they behave like men.	Gender competence is a requirement for the recruitment of university managers.	Gender-competent university managers feel responsible for gender equality, are willing and know how to tackle gendered practices and informal institutions. Equality structures have executive powers and feminist interventions are welcome as drivers for institutional development.

future. The equal representation of sexes in university management does not automatically lead to decision-making processes which are free from gender bias. University decision-makers must acknowledge that gender inequalities are reproduced by structures and processes and that they need to embark on a learning track in order to fulfil their commitment to mainstreaming gender. A lack of empowerment of gender equality structures is a symptom of silencing feminist ideas. It becomes evident when introducing and institutionalising policies which advance the gender equality project that formal and informal causes of inequalities need to be addressed.

Practicing a critical feminist discourse, having gender competence as a job requirement for university managers, and building institutional learning into all components of decision-making are all preconditions for creating an empowering environment for gender mainstreaming in universities. The goals and rationales of gender equality, including their practical implications for everyday routines of university managers, need to be understood and accepted by all members of the university. It is vital that gender equality structures which are steered by university top managers address the causes and consequences of inequality, and not just deal with the symptoms. Building an empowering element into the university gender mainstreaming strategy is an essential step in effecting university decision-making in a transformative way. Empowerment, giving room to non-consensual voices and gender competence must become substantive components of steering instruments, for example institutional development plans, statutes and performance agreements with the state and funding institutions. In all these strategic steering instruments, universities must specify how gender mainstreaming and gender competence are considered by decision-makers and in decision-making. The problem remains, however, that gender expertise which comprises academic knowledge, practical knowledge and skills is only rarely consulted and included in decision-making processes of university managers.

In conclusion, the chapter argues that successful implementation of gender equality policies is not equivalent to the increased share of women in decision-making, the institutionalisation of equality structures which support universities in achieving their goals but with little influence in decisions, and the self-labelling of gender equality 'successes' inside an organisation. Instead of talking about the successful implementation of gender equality strategies, one should ask where does the university stand in terms of guaranteeing equality of outcomes, eradicating gender schemas, including gender diversity, valuing gender competence and

diversifying implicit and formal norms in all areas of governance and performance. To achieve this requires a substantive representation of women, the empowerment of gender equality structures, critical voices to be heard and the anchoring of gender competence among decision-makers.

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Power, Legitimizing Discourses and Institutional Resistance to Gender Equality in Higher Education

Pat O'Connor and Kate White

1 INTRODUCTION

The starting point for this book was the question about why the pace of change in promoting gender equality in higher education institutions (HEIs) has been so slow. Such institutions include universities as well as other third-level structures which educate students at undergraduate and even postgraduate level. This question was posed by Valian (1998) over 20 years ago in her seminal publication. The fact that it still needs to be asked is revealing. This slow pace of change has been recognised as an

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issue in many developed countries for more than 35 years, with gender equality being officially endorsed as a priority by the EU over 25 years ago (Linková & Mergaert, 2021) and reiterated in European Commission recommendations for the development of a new era for research (EC, 2020). Public HEIs have faced considerable pressure from the EU to promote gender equality in their structures and cultures rather than continuing to perpetuate the privileging of white, middle-class men. The EU has allocated resources to create and support change in individual organisations and organisational clusters. These developments have coincided with the increased participation of women in higher education. At the early career stages, women now make up almost half the PhD graduates in the EU (48%: EC, 2019); they tend to be the high achievers who could logically be expected to be future educational leaders.

However, the argument has been made continuously over the past 35 years that change will occur in the next five to ten years, always just over the horizon. The same arguments were made about ending inequality in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) forty years ago, but those patterns still persist. Sometimes they are framed as a 'pipeline' problem (whether of students or staff) which, it is suggested, will automatically be resolved leading to organisational transformation. Pipelines have emerged at undergraduate, PhD and academic staff level, but the much-promised organisational transformation has not ensued. It is difficult to see such blind optimism about the inevitability of change as anything other than perpetuating the status quo by making false promises, with implications for those institutions and the wider society in terms of social justice, role models and economic well-being (OECD, 2012).

There have been some changes. For example, except for a number of Eastern European countries, most public HEIs endorse the idea that they should 'do something' about the 'gender issue'. Focusing on increasing the number of women students in 'important' male-dominated areas such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), where student numbers are declining, has been an easy target. Even there the problem has been conveniently located in women. Thus, the question becomes how women can be persuaded/encouraged to do STEM in the national interest. The implication is that the power structures of higher education, the structure and culture of STEM disciplines and the stereotypes underpinning them are not a factor in the under-representation of women in these areas. Framing women and their lack of interest in STEM as the problem shifts the focus to parental guidance and teachers, and even

to biology and women's perceived inability to do STEM-related subjects. The advantage of the global perspective in this book is that it enables us to realise that patterns which are considered in some countries as immutable, reflecting biological essentialism, in fact vary cross-nationally. The focus on women as 'the problem' (Burkinshaw & White, 2017; O'Connor, 2014) is expedient for universities since it implies that they do not need to make changes to their structure or culture. At most, it requires them to 'fix' the women by providing training courses and mentoring to fit into these male-dominated, masculinist structures.

There has been a slow and gradual increase in both the proportion of women at full professor level in many countries over the past 20 years (see Chap. 1) and in women in senior management, although with some notable exceptions (such as Sweden) little change in the top position (i.e. Rector/President/Vice-Chancellor). For the most part, even when women are included in senior management, they are in more subordinate roles in circumstances where power is increasingly centralised in the Rector/President/Vice-Chancellor. Furthermore, it is striking that even in countries such as Sweden where there has been a move to gender parity at senior management level, there are still relatively low proportions of women at full professor level (see Chaps. 1 and 2). This implicitly suggests that there are limits to the current acceptance of gender equality.

The impact of managerialism and neoliberalism on the structure and culture of HEIs is key. While initially it seemed that the focus on key performance indicators (KPIs) might make some of women's unpaid work more visible, this has not happened. The pre-occupation with global rankings has strengthened a focus on research in many HEIs and devalued teaching, pastoral care and academic administration—all frequently allocated to women because, it is argued, they are especially suited to these tasks. The corporatisation of universities with its focus on image, public relations and rankings in international league tables has led to resources being allocated away from the core functions of teaching and even research. It has also led in some countries (such as the UK, US and Ireland) to the rapid growth of a large cadre of predominantly male, highly paid vice-presidents and senior administrators, none of whom are engaged in the core activities of teaching or research. At the same time, a sizeable proportion of front-line teachers and researchers in many countries are on precarious short-term contracts (Morrish, 2019; Strachan et al., 2016) and are therefore not structurally empowered to raise issues related to gender inequality.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted higher education globally, with online teaching from academics' homes partially or totally replacing face-to-face contact between students and teachers, and disrupting face-to-face communication between academic staff in HEIs in many countries. COVID-19 has had a substantial impact on the health of Black and Hispanic students and staff in the United States and on the emergence of the #Black Lives Matter movement. In many cases the pastoral care of such students has fallen disproportionately on Black and Hispanic staff—particularly women—perpetuating patterns of allocating invisible and devalued care work to marginalised groups within the academy. It is not clear what the long-term impact of the decline in international students will be on university finances, and if nation states will compensate for those losses. But already in Australia, Austria, New Zealand and the United States, HEIs are offering academic staff redundancies and requiring contract and other academic staff to take on increased workloads. The impact of COVID-19 on international research collaboration and publishing trends is also unclear. There will be increased pressure on public expenditure. Already this has led to Australia and the United States prioritising state funding for degrees in STEM rather than in humanities or parts of the social sciences where a critique of gender inequality is most likely to be found and where the proportion of women academics is highest. This will help ensure that little attention is paid to gendered power and gender inequality. At an individual level, given women's greater responsibility for child and elder care globally, there is evidence that online teaching from home, together with the closure of schools, crèches, child minding and day care centres and the heightened vulnerability and increased mortality of the elderly, will disproportionately impact on women's research output and academic careers, making gender parity in higher education even more difficult to achieve (Flaherty, 2020).

2 THE PROBLEM OF POWER, LEGITIMATING DISCOURSES AND RESISTANCE

Although power is a fundamental concept in social science (Clegg, 2002, 2010), its definition is contested. Weber (1947, p. 152) defined it as 'the probability that an actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which that probability rests'. This definition supports the assumption that power

is overt and comes into play when there are clearly opposing views, with the will of the most powerful person prevailing. However, the enactment of power is typically more subtle (Lukes, 1974, 2005). Leaders in positions of formal power have access to greater resources than the ‘carrots and sticks’ that individuals possess. Lawrence (2008, p. 174) argues for a more explicit focus on systemic power as an ‘automatic form of regulation that enforces compliance, without involving episodes of actions’. For Webb (2008) and Lukes (2005) a key issue involves the exercise of what the former calls ‘stealth power’, that is power which is hidden.

At cross-national levels such as the OECD and the EU there is pressure to challenge the white masculinist, male-dominated character of universities, and this has been reflected in popular movements such as #Me Too and in #Black Lives Matter. There are often tensions within different parts of the nation state—some of which are promoting gender equality, while others are resisting it (O’Connor, 2008). Equally, there may be countervailing forces within HEIs. However, the status quo is usually accepted by those in formal positions of power within such organisations, not least because of their own success in that system. Consequently, HEIs create and maintain structures and procedures which obscure gendered power (O’Connor et al., 2019, 2020) and demonstrate institutional resistance to promoting gender equality.

Universities are important and difficult sites for challenging gender inequality because they play a key role in legitimating what purports to be a meritocratic system valuing excellence (see Chap. 3). They also play a key role in legitimating hierarchical structures and validating particular kinds of elitist, masculinist, economically valued types of knowledge and expertise as opposed to more feminised, socially useful ones (e.g., engineering or information communications technology being considered more valuable than nursing or midwifery). Acker (1990, 2006) recognised that in their very structure and culture, organisations are gendered processes. Attempts to create change can be co-opted and undermined by, for example, gendered recruitment/advancement criteria, organisational processes and allocation of tasks. Frequently, a few concessions are made to gender parity by choosing women and men for leadership roles who are least likely to be ‘disruptive’ of the status quo and most likely to perpetuate gendered organisational cultures (Burkinshaw, 2015; O’Connor, 2014). Although symbolically important, gender equality needs to move beyond parity of representation to a more fundamental re-envisioning of the values, structure and culture of higher education.

Chapter 2 focuses on institutional resistance to gender equality. Agocs (1997, p. 918) defines it as involving 'patterns of organizational behaviour that decision makers or people in power positions employ to actively or passively deny, reject and refuse to implement, repress or even dismantle gender equality change proposals and initiatives'. Drawing on interviews with gender equality change agents in Sweden and Portugal, Chap. 2 explores how HEIs deny the legitimacy of the gender change agenda, and resist implementing criteria and procedures which facilitate gender equality or allocating resources for it. Thus, it highlights the various ways in which institutionalised resistance operates in HEIs, even in Sweden with their relatively rigorous institutional support for HEIs and in countries such as Portugal with their EU funding to implement the European Commission's gender equality agenda.

2.1 *Legitimizing Discourses and Resistance*

Legitimizing discourses are a crucial element in obscuring power and its gendered consequences. In the face of such discourses the space for individual resistance (O'Connor, 2001) is reduced and the structures and cultures which perpetuate inequality are normalised. The concept of legitimating ideologies was initially developed by Wright Mills in relation to state power. Legitimizing discourses 'provide normative justifications for existing policies and practices through which they are seen as appropriate, reasonable, and fair and are consequently, more readily accepted' (Tyler, 2005, p. 211). They are social constructions which implicitly legitimate the status quo and are typically gendered (Krook & Mackay, 2011; Mackay et al., 2010). Indeed, gender is frequently seen as a 'primary way of signifying (and naturalising) relations of power and hierarchy' (Mackay et al., 2010, p. 580). Universities globally increasingly endorse such legitimating discourses. They include excellence and choice which reinforce neoliberalism, obscure gendered power in higher education and have implications for gender parity and organisational transformation. Others include a revitalised biological essentialism, a depoliticised intersectional discourse and a gender neutral one which obscures gendered power and sexual harassment.

The legitimating discourse of excellence (Chap. 3) implies that women are not excellent enough to be appointed to senior positions or that excellent women are not interested in such positions. It therefore lays the blame for the lack of gender parity at an individual woman's feet. This discourse

is particularly relevant to universities which pride themselves on being ‘world class’, recruiting ‘the best’ and doing so in a transparent, objective fashion (assumptions that were shown to be highly problematic). Chapter 3 highlighted the vague, tautological character of excellence reflected in systemic documents and recruitment policies in the UK higher education sector. Drawing on qualitative data from an Irish HEI it suggested that excellence was a rationalising myth, with four micropolitical practices affecting gendered outcomes: procedural subversion; gendered devaluation and stereotypes; sponsorship; and local fit. Given that HEIs are hierarchically male-dominated and homosocial, all of these practices are likely to disadvantage women. They are not peculiar to an Irish context (Montes Lopez & O’Connor, 2019; O’Connor, 2020; O’Connor et al., 2020; Wolfram et al., 2015).

The discourse of choice (Chap. 4) is also widely used to explain the absence of gender parity, reflected in the under-representation of women in senior positions. It argues that women choose not to access well-paid permanent positions; that they choose to undertake long hours of under-paid and undervalued work often with poor pension entitlements; and that these choices are natural and gender appropriate. This discourse appears to recognise women’s agency but ignores structural realities related to social class and gender (as well as race/ethnicity, disability and gender orientation). Chapter 4 examined the impact of neoliberalism in societies that have undergone political regime change at the end of the twentieth century (South Africa, Turkey and the Czech Republic) and in which there are very rigid gender contracts, little public child care and a highly unbalanced division of labour in the home. It showed that the internalisation of gendered expectations by women academics in HEIs in these contexts affected the career choices they made; and that gendered expectations of leadership disqualified women from leadership positions—with choice being used by management as a legitimating discourse.

The third legitimating discourse is a distorted version of an intersectional discourse (Crenshaw, 1989) which fails to recognise the face of hegemonic power (i.e. predominantly white, male, middle class and able bodied). Chapter 5 argues that one of the strategies used to avoid facing structural sources of gender inequalities is displacing gender inequality by merging it with other initiatives. Drawing on responses from senior managers responsible for gender equality during COVID-19 and an analysis of strategic plans of all public universities in Australia and New Zealand, Chap. 5 found that there was an unresolved tension between the strong

commitment to gender equality in the managers' responses and gender policies being part of crowded 'inclusion' portfolios, with their mostly marginal presence in strategic plans. Consequently, attention was focused on 'fixing' intersectional groups of women rather than examining the mechanisms through which the status quo was maintained at the policy, procedural and practice level. The chapter concluded that the shifts needed for transformation required deep structural change and the foregrounding of strategic goal setting for gender equality.

The fourth legitimating discourse is a revitalised biological essentialist one which exists in India and the UAE (Chap. 6) and is beginning to emerge in Eastern Europe (Chap. 4). Rooted in a biological construction of gender it ignores the differential cultural valuation of stereotypically male versus female activities and the gendered allocation of time, money and position, and suggests that issues related to gender inequality are irrelevant since women are not considered unequal, just different. In Eastern Europe, this discourse is being aggressively reinforced by the state. In countries such as India and the UAE it is simply the taken-for-granted societal view. Chapter 6 explores its impact, combined with that of neoliberalism and managerialism, using both an ethnographic and autoethnographic approach. The authors present the lived-experiences of women academics in two case study universities, providing an intimate view of the issues facing women leaders. They focus on their experience of the male centralisation of power, performance metrics and stealth power dynamics (O'Connor et al., 2019) in the case study universities and the ways in which they marginalise and silence women, even those in leadership positions. There is a particular focus on their experience of authoritative, protested and deliberate silence and the implications for women's progression in higher education in the context of biological essentialist views of gender.

The fifth legitimating discourse is gender neutrality. It depicts gender as an irrelevant issue in HEIs and so obscures gender-based violence and sexual harassment. Chapter 7 demonstrates its existence in academia, on a continuum from microaggression to rape. This chapter critically evaluates the effectiveness of policies and training programmes to deal with such gender-based violence. It argues that more women in leadership positions can make a difference since women tend to take this issue more seriously. Its particular focus is on the part that professional associations can play through raising awareness, setting norms, defining sexual harassment, framing it as research misconduct and an ethical violation, and providing multiple avenues for accountability and support. It concludes that its

eradication requires the transformation of HEIs and their organisational culture and hierarchical structures.

These discourses legitimate gender inequality in universities. They present the status quo as ‘natural’, ‘inevitable’, ‘traditional’ and ‘fair’. Thus, the implementation of policies on gender equality can become a challenge for HEIs, not in fulfilling but in circumventing the task of promoting gender equality. In summary, this book has identified and challenged institutionalised resistance and the legitimating discourses which perpetuate the status quo in HEIs in relation to gender equality across a wide range of countries and contexts.

3 LESSONS LEARNED

Legitimizing discourses normalise existing organisational arrangements by locating the problem elsewhere (Bacchi, 2009), for example, in women’s abilities, priorities and ‘nature’. The arguments underpinning many of these discourses are not new. They were articulated in opposition to the First and the Second Women’s Movement where they were used to oppose giving women the vote and an education. They are key to understanding why the pace of change in promoting gender equality has been so slow. Challenging them is crucial and requires cross-national work to enable us to see them as rationalising myths.

Although women’s position in society was problematised in the nineteenth century, their access to and status in higher education did not for the most part become an issue until the mid- to late twentieth century. Given that most domestic and caring work is still disproportionately done by women in the ‘second shift’ (Hochschild, 1989), it is clear that the gender revolution is incomplete. Cross-national institutions such as the EU have been raising the issue of gender equality since the 1990s and effectively creating sites of activism in universities funded in and through various EU grants. The OECD and the EU are concerned about gender equality because of its positive impact on innovation and economic growth (EC, 2012; OECD, 2012). There are structures and movements which challenge at least some of these legitimating discourses globally, including an increasingly vociferous public discourse about equality. Yet individual universities and national higher educational systems resist gender equality. Moreover, individual men and women, reflecting wider gendered constructions, frequently collude with HEIs in regarding ‘the problem as women’ (Burkinshaw & White, 2017; Morley, 2014; O’Connor, 2014).

The external environment can facilitate but also inhibit gender equality in higher education. The most recent example is the COVID-19 pandemic which may impact differently on societies depending on their gender and welfare regimes and the reliance of universities on student fees (particularly from international students). Nevertheless, it seems likely to disproportionately affect women. Chapter 5 notes that senior HE managers responsible for gender equality considered that COVID-19 could significantly push back gender equality initiatives. Moreover, as indicated in Chap. 1, there is already evidence that the pandemic has affected women's research output. Even before COVID-19, Icelandic research indicated that working from home advantages men because it reproduces gendered use of time and traditional power relations (Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013). It is clear that COVID-19 will impact on our lives for a considerable time and may further inhibit the progress of gender equality in HEIs, with universities arguing that gender equality is not a priority in a time of economic and social uncertainty.

3.1 *The Role of the State*

Although universities are powerful and often relatively autonomous organisations, they are still part of wider systemic and institutional structures that can be vital levers for change. In many countries there has been a reluctance by the state to promote gender equality in higher education, particularly at staff level. Thus, for example, in the United States, Title IX focuses on students only and ensures that they are not discriminated against in activities that receive federal financial assistance. In other countries such as India and the UAE (see Chap. 6) a biological essentialist view of the sexes has negative implications for a national focus on gender equality.

Gender balance in decision-making in HEIs is a key objective in the European Research Area (ERA), for example, with roughly half of the EU countries endorsing recommendations related to gender equality. However, the only recommendation which was almost universally endorsed was collecting and publishing data on gender parity. This objective involves no commitment to action apart from the provision of 'adequate awareness-raising and training' (Huck et al., 2020, p. 12). On the other hand, the recommendation to include the proportion of women professors in institutional evaluations was endorsed by only a very small minority.

Wroblewski (2020) highlighted the importance of National Action Plans (NAPs) in the ERA roadmap to promote gender equality as an indicator of the state's commitment. At the very least, one would expect that such plans would define the nature and cause of gender equality, identify policy objectives and include structures to drive change and indicators to evaluate them. It was striking that although most EU countries had NAPs, less than one-third included a definition of gender equality in them, demonstrating little clarity about the nature and source of gender equality and implicitly encouraging a focus on women as 'the problem'. Only roughly one-third of them recommended integrating the gender dimension into research content or teaching. Thus, there seemed to be little attempt to move towards the organisational transformation of HEIs. Furthermore, in most countries gender equality was not seen as underpinning other national objectives.

Many public universities depend at some level on nation state funding. Linking national and/or EU funding to key indicators can create momentum for change. Chapter 8 showed that where legal, policy and/or state funding required a change in the gender profile of management or governance structures, these reforms were implemented. Particularly in Austria, considerable progress was made in altering the gender profile of management structures and some progress was made in achieving gender parity at professorial level. The actions of some Eastern European States such as the Czech Republic to de-legitimise gender/women studies challenge gender equality at an ideological level—a strategy which is directly opposed to EU policy—with potential implications for future EU funding. The state needs to commit to gender equality in order to act as a driver for change and to create structures to implement that change.

Ireland provides an example of action by the state in pushing forward a gender equality agenda. The Gender Equality Expert Report (HEA, 2016) challenged the discourse of gender neutrality. It included an online survey of almost 5000 higher education employees which revealed the pervasiveness of misogyny, discrimination and old boys' networks. It showed that men were much less likely to recognise the existence of gender inequality or to see it as extremely important (HEA, 2016), in much the same way that white people underestimate the extent and impact of racism. The Report made 61 recommendations targeting the main stakeholders and included: linking state funding in HEIs to the gender profile of those in senior academic and management positions; a quota of 40% of professors to be women by 2024; the introduction of the cascade model

(i.e. that the proportion of those at any level would reflect the proportion of those below); and participation in Athena SWAN, the then UK-based tool for promoting gender equality in HE and an institutional quality mark as an institutional pre-condition for research funding.

The purpose of these recommendations was 'to be disruptive of the status quo and to force the pace of change' (Quinlivan, 2017, p. 72). The main Irish research funding agencies ensured that only individuals from institutions with an Athena SWAN institutional award could apply for research funding. The Gender Inequality Taskforce (TF, 2018) reiterated the linking of state funding to gender equality performance; the implementation of the cascade model (which it showed was not being implemented at the critical senior lecturer threshold) and the creation of a Centre of Excellence for Gender Equality in the Higher Education Authority (HEA) as a driver for change. The Minister for Higher Education endorsed the earlier professorial quota and created 45 new professorships over a three-year period in areas where women were under-represented. The recommendations of both reports are included in the Performance Framework against which HEIs will be evaluated by the Higher Education Authority, and which will ultimately affect their funding. The pace of change in the professoriate has been slow but steady, while wider indicators of organisational change have yet to be evaluated (O'Connor & Irvine, 2020).

The new ERA agenda (EC, 2020, p. 16) proposes that member states from 2021 will be required to develop 'inclusive gender equality plans'. However, policy development although important is not sufficient to achieve gender equality. Unless structures and strategies are put in place at national level to implement these plans, rhetorical compliance will be legitimated.

3.2 *Organisational Levers of Change*

Universities have been shown globally to be unwilling to undertake organisational transformation and many resist strategies that may lead to greater representation of women in senior roles, not to mention more broadly based indicators of gender equality. Some are comfortable with creating a discourse supporting gender equality and are attracted to interventions such as Athena Swan (AS), which are more effective in assuaging male anxieties about the position of women in academia than in leading to sustainable cultural change and gender parity (Graves et al., 2019). The huge amount of work involved in getting AS awards is overwhelmingly done by

women, often at the expense of their own career progression (Buckingham, 2020). At the same time, it typically does not increase senior men's understanding of the problem, since they are usually only tangentially involved in the process. The widespread adoption of AS in the UK, Ireland, Canada and Australia illustrates a rhetorical acceptance of the problem but little real organisational change. At an individual level, the greatest agitators for change are typically women (Bendl & Schmidt, 2012; O'Connor, 2019; Wroblewski, 2019). However, even where women are in leadership positions and are committed to change, they are frequently exposed to attempts to silence and marginalise them. The autoethnographic and ethnographic accounts in Chap. 6 illustrate the difficulties that confront women leaders and which undermine their attempts to promote gender equality.

The experience in the University of Limerick in Ireland illustrates the importance of leadership in a context where the president chaired professorial appointment boards (O'Connor, 2017). Consequently, women as a proportion of full professors increased from zero in 1997 to 34% in 2012, at a time when roughly one-fifth of professors in Irish and EU universities were women, and in the absence of any dedicated funding or national intervention measures. Interestingly with change in the Presidency, the proportion of women in professorial positions at the University of Limerick fell, while the national trend has been on the increase (O'Connor & Irvine, 2020). Of course, changes in the gender profile of such positions do not necessarily mean there are more feminists in senior positions who can transform the organisation (Burkinshaw, 2015). However, since male dominance of these positions is an important element in perpetuating the existing structure, culture, procedures and practices, any interruption to this dominance can be seen as a 'small win' (Benschop & van den Brink, 2014; Correll, 2017).

Social structures inside and outside HEIs can be leveraged to provide support and/or create momentum. Chapter 7 explored the possibility of a frequently ignored structure—professional associations—as a possible lever in the very difficult area of sexual harassment (Bondestam and Lundqvist, 2020). Chapter 8 envisioned how wide-ranging transformational change could be achieved. It argued that gender competent leaders and the empowerment of gender equality structures could create real gender equality. However, it is unclear to what extent these are outcomes rather than causes (Peterson & Jordansson, 2017; van den Brink & Benschop, 2011, 2012; Wroblewski, 2017). There is a clear role here for

gender competent university management in requiring gender expertise to be integral in all its processes; empowering gender experts to 'gender-proof' all university strategies; and providing sufficient resources for gender structures to operate efficiently and with the autonomy to bring key issues to the attention of management.

4 GENDER INEQUALITY: A GLOBAL, INTRACTABLE, MULTI-LEVEL CHALLENGE

Gender inequality in higher education is a global, complex and intractable issue obscured by institutionalised resistance (Chap. 2), reflected in discourses that legitimate existing power structures which negatively impact on women's careers in universities (see Chaps. 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7). These discourses narrow the space for individual resistance (O'Connor, 2001), since they legitimate the existing structures and culture and depict them as 'inevitable', 'natural' and 'fair'.

HEIs are skilled at ensuring that change has little impact on their core structures, culture and purpose. Much EU attention has focused on gender parity at full professor and senior management level (Chap. 8). However, this falls far short of institutional transformation. Indeed, in some cases the women who potentially embody this 'new face' have been selected on the basis of their 'good behaviour' (Tiernan & O'Connor, 2020); that is, their assumed willingness to accept the limits of masculinist priorities, procedures and control (Burkinshaw, 2015). Frequently, limited power and authority are given to a few women to increase the perceived legitimacy of the system, but without altering its fundamental masculinist character (Carvalho & Machado-Taylor, 2017).

Gender inequality reflects a wider cultural problem which has been variously described as the undervaluing and misrecognition of women (Fraser, 2008); the symbolic negative co-efficient attached to women (Bourdieu, 2001); and men's privileging—a 'patriarchal dividend' for men in terms of 'honour, prestige or the right to command ... a material dividend' (Connell, 1995, p. 82). This is embedded in the structure and culture of HEIs (Acker, 1990, 2006). Even where gender inequality is identified as a problem, HEIs may define it as simply a human resource issue. Overwhelmingly, they do not see it as impacting on the overall purpose of universities, their strategic direction and their critical ranking in international league tables, with implications for the construction and valuing of

knowledge. Even if the argument for gender parity is accepted, universities may suggest that change will happen inevitably due to generational or cohort effects—evoking the discredited pipeline metaphor (Allen & Castleman, 2001) and implying that existing gendered power relations do not need to change. The arguments about the benefits of gender equality are typically dismissed because of the presumed unproblematic existence and importance of meritocracy as reflected in the excellence discourse (see Chap. 3). The business case and the contribution to economic growth are arguments that might be expected to gain traction, given the increasing dominance of neoliberalism and managerialism, but they do not. Social justice generates rhetorical assent but is not considered a priority and does not appear to motivate many university leaders. Consequently, much mainstream thinking and research on higher education tends to marginalise gender inequality.

While it is difficult to even envisage the shape of a feminist academy, it might be seen as an organisation where both teaching and research are valued as contributing to an inclusive and socially just world; one where difference is valued and where hierarchies are minimised; where neoliberal managerial prioritisation of metrics, corporatisation, image and the gap between management and front-line workers are reduced. It is not a nostalgic return to collegial structures, since these were dominated by a predominantly male professoriate. Because universities have always been funded by those involved in a wider societal project, if they are to be feminist organisations there will need to be a shift away from the patriarchal allocation of resources. It may be possible that a feminist university might emerge as a twenty-first-century virtual structure, but with similarities to the nineteenth-century Working Men's Colleges in the UK and Australia in its alternative vision of the nature and purpose of education.

It has been recognised that change can be driven by feminist activists (Bendl & Schmidt, 2012; O'Connor, 2019). Feminist institutionalism highlights the dangers of 'overtly structural accounts that underplay the role of women as agents who strategise in response to changing political structures' (Krook & Mackay, 2011, p 190). Meyerson and Scully (1995, p. 586) write about 'tempered radicals', that is 'individuals who identify with and are committed to their organizations, and are also committed to a cause, community or ideology that is fundamentally different from, and possibly at odds with, the dominant culture of their organization'. They are inside/outside, people who are ambitious for the organisation but also want it to change (Chappell & Mackay, 2020). They are potentially

key agents in promoting organisational transformation at the level of gender equality. Correll (2017, p. 745) saw 'small wins' in gender equality as 'the path to achieve our larger goal, which is the transformation of our organisations'. In facilitating such 'small wins' she stressed the importance of naming gender, identifying the location of bias and getting management buy in. Typically, feminist activists will not be in positions of power, but they may have access to those in power and be able to identify and work with gender advocates or champions at all levels in HEIs and in the state to create change. In this context, external agents such as the EU are vital. Their ongoing stress on gender balance in decision-making structures, on integrating gender/sex analysis into research content and linking gender equality plans to eligibility for research funding provide important leverage for feminists working to create change.

Creating change in organisations is difficult (By, 2005). Relatively little is known 'about the gendered nature of organisational change and intervention processes' (Parsons & Priola, 2013, p. 580). The purportedly gender neutral but in practice masculinised structure and culture of higher education and its legitimating discourses pose particular challenges for internal change agents such as feminist activists (Eveline, 2004) and these challenges intensify as they move into more senior roles (see Chap. 6; White & Bagilhole, 2013). The Women in Higher Education Management (WHEM) Network was created as a feminist research consortium (Bagilhole & White, 2011a) with a vision to analyse the challenges for women in university management and to develop strategies to empower them to apply for and succeed in senior management roles. Through research and publication over the past decade (see Bagilhole & White, 2011, 2013; White & O'Connor, 2017) it has provided both an intellectual context and a support structure for challenging existing structures and beginning to envisage alternatives (Bagilhole & White, 2011b). At an even more fundamental level it asserts the possibility of change and espouses best practices which reflect that change. It provides support and encouragement to feminist academics to find a voice, challenge structures, identify and disseminate small wins, and foster developments in their own and other countries, with the ultimate objective of institutional transformation.

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