Gender Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Academia

A Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Transformation

Edited by Melina Duarte, Katrin Losleben, and Kjersti Fjørtoft

ROUTLEDGE

GENDER DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN ACADEMIA

Institutional focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion affects all parts of higher education management. *Gender Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Academia: A Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Transformation* scrutinises the conceptual framework for diversity, equity, and inclusion actions in academia to facilitate research-based and critically reflected decisions in higher education management.

The book contains 24 chapters, each focused on one of 24 fundamental concepts that are essential for identifying, understanding, and implementing organisational changes and counteracting unjustified disadvantages faced by women and members of other gender minorities in academia, preceded by an introductory binding chapter. The book also discusses concepts directed towards solutions, such as affirmative action and feminist pedagogies, and overcomes the traditional binary approach on gender by incorporating specific challenges faced by LGBTQ+ and transgender staff and students.

Gender Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Academia will be key reading for academics in Gender Studies and Education Studies, while also serving as a vital resource for individual consumers working in or preparing to enter leadership positions in higher education.

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21.1 The *Balancinator* is a free and open access online tool that allows users to build generic plots by simply inserting Excel sheets. It makes use of a novel way to visualise numerical distributions of women and men by means of diverging pips. CC BY 4.0

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PREFACE

As in the rest of society, gender inequalities persist in academia. Women, LGBTQ+ persons and other historically marginalised groups are, for example, still exposed to wrongful discrimination with harmful consequences for their career development. They are most often underrepresented in top academic positions and in the most prestigious fields of inquiry, as well as subjected to various sorts of negative stereotypes and biases even when holding leadership positions. They are also accustomed to having their merits generally devalued on the grounds of their gender.

The persistence of severe gender inequalities in academia has been documented by various empirical studies over recent decades; this information is clearly not new. Most universities are by now usually well aware of the problem they still face. This is because when the backbone of the higher education system remains a meritocracy, it becomes unacceptable that members of some groups are unfairly disadvantaged on the grounds of their gender. A genuine meritocracy requires, at a minimum, that the rules of the game are fair to every player, taking into consideration their different conditions and starting points. Universities are thus required to counteract these unfair inequalities, and their commitment has become evident not only by the incorporation of a language of inclusion in statements and policies, but also by the implementation of some more concrete measures for change.

Many universities are, for example, required to have an action plan for their work on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). DEI considerations are expected to be accounted for in research applications, assessments as well as in recruitment, retention, and promotion processes. The hardest challenge, however, lies precisely in implementing concrete measures that, adapted to the context, *de facto* counteract unacceptable gender inequalities in an institution and do not merely appear to do so. There is a consensus that effective measures need to be research based, but the

starting point of this book is the assumption that the research that is accounted for must be more encompassing and interdisciplinary and reach decision-makers in academia. Empirical research is necessary to establish facts, but facts alone are not sufficient to promote a sustainable transformation towards inclusion. Broad and aggregated data at the organisational level, for example, does not reveal the reasons behind gender inequality across different fields, nor does it help us to understand how informal hierarchies of power create disadvantages for women and minorities in academia beyond the surface.

By focusing precisely on relationships of power, influence, and responsibility to make or affect decisions with DEI impact in academia, this book offers administrative staff and academic staff in administrative and managerial functions some analytical tools to rethink academia and become more aware of the consequences that their single actions play in sustaining a culture of exclusion that leads to the persistence of unfair gender inequalities in their organisations. This book is based on the understanding that a sustainable transformation of academia requires structural and cultural changes, but that these changes can only materialise if individuals who play a role in sustaining the structures and nourishing the academic culture become more reflective of their agential role and take responsibility for their single actions made at numerous points in academic life.

For an academic assuming administrative and managerial roles, e.g., in an assessment procedure, the book illuminates the double-sidedness of having power and responsibilities: first, they are scholars who evaluate the scientific qualities of a candidate/future colleague; and second, they are agents within human resources who contribute to equality at an institution. How those roles of power and responsibility overlap, and what the scope of one's agency is in these roles, are the main questions underlying the entire book.

This book connects the relevant scholarly literature and the specific practical situations faced by employees in academia in different roles. It bridges the gap of audiences by contextualising those key terms widely used in the DEI discourse and applying them to a broad range of practical settings in academia. Therefore, we expect the book to conduct our readers towards normative thinking and enable them to use theory for identifying challenges and analyse their own contexts more critically and more systematically. To facilitate a sustainable transformation of academia towards gender equality, we aim to empower the readers by providing the foundation for their theoretical and critical understanding of the DEI terminology and its surrounding concepts. From there, they will have the tools to discern complex situations in more nuanced ways, for communicating more precisely, and for reasoning with justifications for implementing new and more effective practices and policies. We expect these tools to encourage reflection that prompts steps of action that are suitable for our readers' respective institutions as the adequacy of the measures might vary according to different contexts.

The largest part of the book was developed during the first two years of the Covid pandemic. The process has not been easy, and it would not have been possible without Teams and Zoom. The contributors were located in different

countries, different cities, and were also differently affected by the pandemic. They have gotten sick, worked overtime at kitchen tables, and written with kids on their laps. Such experiences made writing on gender inequalities in academia much more vivid. We have held a range of online workshops for authors in very unusual times in order to adapt to the different time zones and family responsibilities, as well as had several individual online meetings catering for special needs. We, the editors, thank every contributor for their extra efforts dedicated to the completion of this book.

This book is the result of a joint effort by the research groups on Feminist Philosophy at the Department of Philosophy and Contemporary Gender Research at the Centre for Women's and Gender Research, UiT The Arctic University of Norway. We are grateful for the support from the BALANSE Program, Research Council of Norway in financing the IMPLISITT (2021–2023/321031) and PRESTIGE (2018–2023/281862) projects and enabling us to concretise this book project. Several persons have contributed to the book with insightful comments and suggestions who do not appear in the contributor's list. These are listed as follows: Johanna Hjertquist, Cathrine Felix, Siri Gerrard, Ann Therese Lotherington, Rudy Leon, Alexandra McGregor, Ezra Alexander, two anonymous reviewers from Routledge, and the audiences of our workshops and conferences between 2020 and 2022. Others have contributed to the IMPLISITT and PRESTIGE projects and indirectly affected some of the editorial choices we made in composing this book: Torill Nustad, Kenneth Ruud, Adriana Kochanska, Sarah Martiny, Lise Gulli Brokjøb, Malin Rönnblom, Torunn Berger, Ida Johannessen, Viktoriia Kuz, Dina Abdel-Fattah, Katrin H. Hopmann, Giuliana Panieri, and Abhik Ghosh. Members of the Latin American and Nordic networks for Gender Equality in Academia (NOS-HS Intersectional Gender Equality in Academia in the Artic North 2022-2023/123966) have also provided a rich forum for exchange in showing that despite cultural, political, and economic differences, many of our problems are common. While the robust politics for gender equality in the Nordic countries has offered a stronger protection for gender minorities against formal and direct discrimination in the workplace in relation to Latin America, many of the causes for the persistence of gender inequalities in academia are informal and indirect. Our work does not stop here.

INTRODUCTION

Melina Duarte, Katrin Losleben, and Kjersti Fjørtoft

Institutional focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) affects all parts of higher education management.[1] Most academic institutions are, for example, required to have a strategy for DEI, and DEI standards have become a yardstick for an institution's internal evaluation and external ranking. Consequently, the pressures to improve their own performance as well as gain competitive advantages over other institutions have sparked pressing needs for institutions to take concrete actions and obtain satisfactory results. While concrete actions have the power to transform an organisation's culture, they can also serve to mask the perpetuation of inequalities.[2] These actions are not contained to the overarching managerial levels at an institution and exclusively executed by members of designated DEI offices and committees. They are, in practice, implemented at many levels within an institution (e.g., organisational, intergroup, interpersonal) and are carried out by employees holding different positions (e.g., administrative and academic staff) and exercising different functions across an institution (e.g., leaders, DEI workers, programme directors, committee members, educators, supervisors). This means that employees are increasingly taking on roles through which they directly or indirectly decide and influence how DEI work materialises in concrete settings. Centred on gender, this book scrutinises the conceptual framework for DEI actions by applying contemporary theory into concrete contexts in academia. The book's main goals are to facilitate research-based and critically reflected decisions in the ongoing transformation of higher education management, thereby fostering more equitable relations in academia and contributing to the promotion of a fair and sustainable organisational culture for all.

A fair and sustainable organisational culture for all in academia is envisioned by us in this book as a culture that values the variety of inputs from academics and organisational staff and students from different backgrounds and enables constructive encounters among them in the joint process of producing, disseminating,

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and receiving knowledge. It is a culture in which the policies and norms regulating research communities no longer reproduce hierarchical gender structures translated into grades of human worth and no longer reinforce relationships of domination and oppression. Transformation starts with a vision.

This vision is intentionally captured and critically transferred, in this book, into the terminology of DEI, an acronym that has become a branding strategy in a neoliberal university landscape. Branding strategies are usually looked upon as suspicious by researchers – as they should be. They might come across as a mere marketisation of ideas that are both saturated with sophistry and in place merely to create the appearance of change in the competitive struggle of universities for students, external funding, and reputation.[3] By employing this terminology instead of rejecting it, we do not embrace neoliberalism or competition, but claim the terminology into a reflective sphere and aim at connecting research and administration. Through the articulation of power relations into the DEI terminology, we bring a dimension that has been overlooked in the neoliberal framework for boosting the possibilities of achieving not merely apparent changes but also a sustainable transformation of academia.

Dealing with DEI-related aspects are, in some places, a top-down policy, which interlaces all levels of local institutional policies. Gender equality has, for example, been a political top priority at the EU level sparking a myriad of policy changes at lower levels of governance. In European academia, this commitment to gender equality is also reflected in their funding framework where gender perspectives on the content level and equal representation within research teams are part of the eligibility criteria for funding distribution.[4] The consequences of this interlaced governance points in two directions.

First, as the example of the EU shows, policies implemented by supranational research funding agencies affect national funding strategies and impose considerations about the inclusion of diversity in research. These considerations, which can remain functional, focus primarily on the heterogeneity of the composition of participants on research teams and, when applicable, on the inclusion of diverse perspectives in research at the content level.[5] Whereas top-down policies can be the entrance point to innovative research engaging in a critical (re-)evaluation of research design and methods that not only cater to diversity, but are also shaped by diversity, their impact should move beyond the functional level. The focus on mere numeral equity in representation (e.g., on administration boards or research teams) can, for instance, lead to the legitimisation of the *status quo* under a new wrapping, as well as to tokenism.[6] The focus on the inclusion of diverse perspectives in research conditioned to relative applicability is also constrained by the background, interest, or ability of project leaders to impartially judge such applicability. A lack of knowledge or cross-cultural competences, wilful ignorance, and biases, can, for example, play a role in restricting such judgment if not constrained by practical guidance on how such inclusion can be incorporated.[7] In order to avoid these unwanted consequences, it is important that top-down policies lead to critical reflections of inclusion where the conditions for the participation of members from diverse groups in research can be evened out.

Second, student population and research funding are closely interlinked in the (inter-)national competition of universities. The latter influences the former as, e.g., global rankings of universities rely on research impact as a prominent indicator. In other words, implementing gender and diversity into research becomes of essential importance in the competition for funds, and from there for research outreach and citations, economic ranking positions and branding of universities. Moreover, gender equality can be seen as a part of a nation-branding strategy more prominent in the Nordic regions of Europe.[8] In such perspective, branding a university as Nordic, such as the UiO University of Oslo or UiT The Arctic University of Norway, makes equality seem like a matter of fact. Nevertheless, the *status quo* of gender perspectives, ethnic/racial diversity, gender distribution, variety of abilities in research, and representation in student enrolment and staff are less than ideal also in the Nordic regions. A variety of funding programmes have targeted the gender gap through incentivising tangible measures of equity work[9] but we have still a long way to go to achieve just conditions.[10]

Furthermore, more and more universities by now cite or subscribe to the United Nations SDGs as a roadmap for almost everything that universities promise to provide knowledge for in the nearest future, e.g., economic growth, decent work, clean water, energy, cities, food, good education, and social justice for all, including gender equality for women and girls. Here, gender equality as a women's issue (not a non-binary all-gender issue) is a goal, yet it swipes through most other purposes. International university rankings measure and position institutions concerning how they implement the SDGs and deliver another brick in the branding and promotion of universities. At the same time, immersed in the unprecedented medial discussion and power, potential students, students, and teaching bodies demand the just representation and participation of traditionally marginalised groups and a critical revision of persistent hegemonic learning contents. Universities are then squeezed between top-down and bottom-up demands, and the only way to satisfy these demands on both fronts is to make them coincide. Bridges need to be built. This book aims at building bridges between research/education and administration, theory and practice, as well as policy and action, by acknowledging the challenges of translation, implementation, and follow-up and filling the DEI terminology with negotiable content for further debates.

DEI debates in academia have moved from focusing on individuals to focusing on how social and cultural structures systematically place people in a disadvantaged position due to group-based prejudices.[11] Common to all chapters in the book is that they relate to a structural framework in which actions take place. The focus is not only on formal hindrances for carrier development, but also on the effects of the informal and structural features of the organisational culture. This means that the concepts relevant to DEI work and actions suggested and discussed in this book are to a greater or lesser extent discussed under the framework of structural injustice as they invite the readers to assume responsibilities for the transformation of academia according to the roles they play in shaping social structures.

A social structure can be defined as a system of formal and informal rules of behaviour and communication that defines power relations and how benefits and

burdens are distributed among persons and groups within an organisation and in society.[12] Structures are unjust when certain social groups are systematically disadvantaged due to the ways in which social, political, and economic institutions and practices are arranged. Structural injustice then takes place when social structures enable the systematic dominance of members of some groups by unjustifiably prioritising others. It is, in this sense, different from the kind of injustice that exists when someone is more explicitly discriminated against due to factors such as gender, race, or disability. Structural injustice is rather maintained and reproduced by formal and informal rules, cultural codes, group-based prejudices, patterns of communication and interpretation, and people who act within these structures, even when singular acts are not in themselves blameworthy. More precisely, structural injustice is reproduced by the way individuals act and interact within the culture. This kind of injustice is embedded in inherited and learned patterns of how we perceive and interpret other people. It is therefore often the case that there are no single individuals to blame for the injustice, hence the responsibility for change cannot easily emerge from the establishment of culpability links.

Under this framework, we contend that whereas structural injustices do need to be counteracted by the transformation of the structures itself, the responsibility for change cannot be passed onto a vague sense of organisational culture. These structures are nevertheless sustained by individual actions in an aggregative manner, and the responsibility for change emerges from the different roles we play in shaping such structures. Breaking the chain of structural injustices in academia requires then the active shift of communication and interpretation patterns between and among individuals as articulated in the scrutiny of concepts in this book. This means that, ultimately, the perspective that motivates this book is the one that sees individual academic actors within the administrative and research staff as those having the summative power and responsibility for transforming the culture of academia. For the purpose of propelling structural approaches forward, and supporting collective and individual responsibilities for change, the book's backbone challenges the way benefits and burdens are distributed in academia within institutional and social structures.

Most of the chapters follow variations of a methodology of applied philosophy in connecting theory with practice for normative thinking and rely primarily on conceptual distinctions to illuminate paths for action. Other chapters employ less prescriptive and more experience-based methodologies that incite critical thinking by the production of narrative accounts of particular instantiations of concepts extracted from the analysis of described experiences against relevant theoretical frameworks. Displaying this methodological diversity, the book has an intersectional format where concise chapters share a common blueprint. The chapters open with a brief definition of the concept in question, problematise the definition according to the main relevant theories, contextualise the concept into higher education settings, and finally connect practical cases back to the elicited theories for offering reflective guidance for action. In order to boost the applicability of the book, a summary of the main points with action steps is provided at the end of each chapter alongside questions for discussion and suggestions for further reading.

The book is written by scholars, mostly within fields of humanities and social sciences, who specialise in gender theory, feminist philosophy, post-colonial theory, political theory, ethics, law, minority rights, and theories of justice and equality. The authors share the ambition of making their research useful for people who are in a position to make decisions and influence processes relevant for how academia should be organised, and how knowledge production is done. This applies both to people in administration and academic staff in their capacity to exercise power and influence. There is no unanimity, however, about how the DEI terminology is understood among the authors. The terms composing the acronym might not have been used consistently across chapters throughout the book. Valuing the diversity of perspectives, we have chosen to preserve tensions and disagreements surrounding the concepts (diversity, equity, and inclusion) instead of streamlining the perspectives for the sake of conceptual consistency. We believe that only by engaging with these tensions and disagreements and making them salient are we able to really bring the DEI terminology from its usage in branding strategies into the reflective sphere at which we aim. In what follows, we summarise some of these tensions and disagreements that emerged in the joint-process of producing this book and evaluate strengths and weaknesses of conceptual choices: gender and diversity, equality and equity, and inclusion and transformation. In the final section, we provide an outline of the chapters.

Gender and diversity

In research, the relationship between diversity and gender has been explored both in terms of adversity and complementarity.[13] By integrating both approaches while centrally underpinning diversity as a gender category, we expect to counterbalance the risk that the gender-specific questions will dissipate within the broader framework of diversity, which could lead to the undermining of research that grounds concrete actions for combating gender discrimination in academia. Such a derivative interpretation of the diversity approach supports a complementary relation between them while not placing a more exclusive focus on gender equality as dispensable. The interplay between gender and diversity has lately been characterised as inevitable due to the severe consequences of treating them in isolation.[14]

As a result, in this book we do not commit to *gender and diversity* as exclusive categories; rather, we integrate them by emphasising their various links of complementarity in the different chapters. The problem with the exclusionary approach to these categories is that while *diversity* is too broad, *gender* seems to be too narrow for discussing broader intersections. Diversity is a wide term that encompasses a multitude of differences among individuals and groups, but that needs certain instantiation to enable practical reasoning. The most common way of understanding *diversity* in academia often relates to apparent traits, such as gender, ethnicity/race/nationality/culture, dis/abilities, and competences. These traits are relevant categories of diversity as they can be expected to reflect the demographic

diversity of the local setting wherein the institution is inserted (political level) and/or to reflect experience-based diversity and cognitive diversity that enable the boosting of knowledge development (epistemic level). If, however, diversity is thematised only or mainly generically and in demographic terms, there is a risk that, in tailoring or prioritising interventions to targeted demographic groups, these categories will appear in tension with each other. For example, privileging ethnicity/race/nationality/class in DEI work could come across as being at the expense of gender, even if the reason for the very marginalisation of members of these groups is shared. Several higher education institutions in Norway, for instance, assume that they do not need to promote diversity because they are already highly internationalised organisations.[15] Internationalisation, however, is not a synonym of diversity and especially not when the recruiting of diversity is not intersectional and follows a certain pattern that privileges persons from a similar cognitive, cultural, and background stream. From the managerial perspective, the diversity that counts is the diversity that can be measured, monitored, or seen, but the most relevant types of diversity are not easily reachable. Consequently, the intersections between these traits with cognitive, cultural, and background diversity have been heavily neglected at the managerial level. The lack of intersectional and inclusive approach to diversity could lead to social fragmentation by the framing of competing claims for inclusion in academia in the constrained settings in which positions are limited and interventions have a clear target group based on a measurable proxy of diversity. The incapacity to instantiate diversity without creating insurmountable adjudicative problems can also lead to the paralysis of interventions/inaction in DEI work, as if we could not think of them outside of a zero-sum game. Since strongly tailored measures that benefit the members of one category are often criticised for being insufficiently inclusive or encompassing, and since being sufficiently encompassing has no instantiation besides including every form of diversity, important DEI work halts, such as the promotion programmes dedicated to equalising women's access to professor positions, which are criticised for not including everyone.

Engaging generically with *diversity* has a rhetorical advantage of decreasing resistance and disempowering what is known as "gender fatigue". The term diversity becomes malleable and negotiable, and thus includes categories more explicitly in accordance with what a certain audience can accept. We want to make use of such an advantage because diversity is not a static concept. At the same time, our main content for diversity in this book is gender as a form of diversity at the intersection with other forms of diversity. This means that gender is then the focal point of the book but expanded to show the complementarity of gender with other dimensions of generic diversity. Cis/trans and LGBTQ+ are also diversity dimensions of a gendered nature that refer to groups that belong to a numerical minority in the social sense. Bridging these fronts together in research under the framework of gender diversity would prevent new research from supporting the reinforcement of the marginalisation of selected groups. The sustainable transformation of academia is not achieved if places are swapped in the gender hierarchy.

Equality and equity

In the DEI discourse and in an important body of the feminist literature, equity and equality have very different meanings. While equity is associated with tailored measures according to needs and fairness, equality is generally associated with impartiality and blind justice. Equity is also sometimes defined as a procedural concept, while equality is presented as the end goal. We contend, however, in this book that these concepts are only approachable through their differences and suggest that they are also approachable through the important overlaps between them. Cathrine Holst, for example, in a summary of political theory, has systematised that equality can be thematised in terms of sameness (identity), equal value (inherent worth and dignity of all people), or equal treatment.[16] In the sense of sameness or value, equality requires neutral/impartial treatment regardless of differences and can be seen, in this sense, as in opposition to equity. In the sense of equal treatment, however, equality has many overlaps with what is expressed through the concept of equity. For example, in DEI discourse, we often learn that in order to promote fair outcomes, it is required that people are treated in accordance with their different needs. This morphic element of equity implies that equals should be treated equally, but also that diverse people should be treated differently (a principle of proportionality traced back to Aristotle). In this sense, equity requires that we take individual and group-based differences into consideration precisely for the purpose of enabling equality. Conceived in strong opposition to equity, the concept of equality is, in this context, portrayed as requiring "identical treatment", but equality of treatment does not mean identical treatment. We do not treat children and adults, criminals and law-abiding citizens, healthy and ill, identically, and it would be an error to do so. We treat them differently because they are different, and we do so with the goal of achieving equality.[17]

In a body of feminist literature, distinguishing equity from equality plays an essential role in exposing how apparent neutrality and impartiality have significantly disadvantaged women and other minorities. This and other reasons make equity a fruitful concept in order to argue that justice requires not only formal equality, but also remedies aimed toward levelling out the effects of morally irrelevant differences. Equity can, for example, be used to justify claims for the recognition of differences, the unequal distribution of resources and the claim for special rights for disadvantaged minorities in a more direct way than equality. It can also appear as a more palpable concept that enables more refined analyses of alternative goals. Equality, on the other hand, is a more abstract concept that gains relevance to the justification of the claims mentioned above in the face of instances of inequality. Just like human rights gain relevance in the face of human rights violations, equality gains relevance in the face of the diagnosis of unfair inequalities. In addition, for conceptualising equality in more practical terms, we need to answer the questions "Equality of what?" (respect, resources, welfare, capabilities, among others) and "Equality for whom?"

This notwithstanding, favouring equity only as a distinct concept might bring some shortcomings that could be worth avoiding. First, by fully embracing the concept of equity in opposition to equality, we drop a term that has larger acceptance and reliability in a wider sense and is used in, e.g., human rights documents and the UN Sustainability Goals that lead, despite reasonable criticism, many national policies. Moreover, in ordinary language, the concept of equity is more controversial than equality because it is associated with differential treatment, which is often confused with unfair treatment. The focus on equality of outcomes stemming from equity raises questions about whether it is fair that people are treated accordingly if this means that the lazy and incompetent will receive the same rewards as the hard workers. Second, with regard to social justice, the meanings of equality and equity might overlap since social equality requires not only proportionality of treatment, but also equality of respect, irrespective of differences regarding gender, class, or ethnicity, in addition to a basic equality of social provisions (rights, liberties, and status).

Inclusion and transformation

The last component of the DEI acronym, which is "inclusion", is also a tricky one. As with the component "equity", we need to ask questions, like: "Who includes whom into what?" and, moreover, "Is this desirable?" The higher education sector has been criticised for continuously reproducing structures of patriarchy and whiteness by, for example, prioritising Western canonised knowledge produced by men.[18] Universities as an institution were built on an idea of education that may be traced back to monasteries or even Hellenistic schools,[19] and they were deeply bound to the educational performance of European Catholic monks. Neither of them is known for fostering diversity of genders, ethnicities, abilities, geographical backgrounds, or other minority identities, but mostly for being exclusive homosocial institutions, recruiting from privileged geographical, ethnic, and gendered positions. Despite the fact that, in most places, women and minorities theoretically have access to the institution and are allowed to teach, the structures have still changed too little, and the ghost of patriarchy haunts the halls in various new forms, as, e.g., in the marketisation of knowledge.[20]

As of today, an enormous body of scholarship shows past and persistent colonialisms of the mind. To transgress those, and discuss knowledges from the marginalised standpoints of the colonised, Indigenous people or People of Colour,[21] can result in being silenced[22] and marginalised. Nevertheless, as Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill state for the relation between white feminism and Native feminist theories, an inclusion of non-hegemonic standpoint epistemologies, methodologies, theories, and knowledges into existing canons is insufficient "because inclusion confers a preeminent hierarchy, and inclusion is central to hierarchical power".[23] When merely included, theories will be controlled instead of unleashing their potential to transform. This understanding is not only true for feminist theory in historically colonised places, but everywhere. Universities as democratic institutions must therefore dare to be transformed by the polyphony of standpoints; otherwise, they are just adding a

new twist to existing knowledge and power hierarchies. However, the transformation will not happen when heterogenous voices in academia are absent or muted.

Outline of chapters

The book assembles 24 concepts surrounding the terminology for gender diversity, equality, and inclusion with the goal of empowering decision-makers for counteracting unjustified disadvantages faced by women and members of other gender minorities in academia and promoting sustainable transformation in their organisations. These concepts are critically reviewed by a diverse group of researchers and provide analytical tools for articulating DEI in practice and approaching it as a common effort across groups. The concepts explored in this book target both internal norms used to regulate research communities and external social norms that contribute to reproducing existing gendered structures within academia. The chapters are analytically grouped into three thematic clusters that reflect the intricacy of structural frameworks: (1) Minorities and Group-Based Vulnerabilities in Academia, (2) Underlying Culture, Attitudes, and Practices, and (3) Inclusive Actions towards Transformation. They are anchored on a shared normative judgment in which vulnerabilities emerging from structural discrimination in academia need to be tackled from the roots, hence transformative actions should target both the academic culture from the inside, as well as biased structures outside academia in wider society. The three thematic clusters are underpinned by questions concerning justice and equality within a structural framework, and they explore, from different perspectives, how these values should be interpreted and applied within academia. The chapters are interdependent and can be read separately. The list of concepts displayed in the outline of chapters is by no means exhaustive. Important minorities in academia, such as racialised ones, are missing from Part 1; furthermore, important concepts such as power are missing from Part 2 and others such as decolonisation are missing from Part 3. We acknowledge the limitations of this book in providing a more extensive account over the DEI terminology but want to remark that even if these topics have not been thematised in separate chapters, they permeate the discussion of several chapters in the book.

1 Minorities and group-based vulnerabilities in academia

In "LGBTQ+", **Vitikainen** shows that the number of LGBTQ+ staff and students who continue to experience various forms of discrimination, harassment, and "chilly climates" in higher education institutions is alarmingly high in most countries. Vitikainen analyses the ethics and politics of LGBTQ+ policies in higher education in terms of *rights* and *recognition* and discusses possible solutions for improving the treatment of LGBTQ+ persons in the sector. In "Transgender Staff and Students", **Sagdahl** sheds light on the challenges that trans people face when manoeuvring academic life, including disruptive personal experiences while transitioning and continuous open discrimination from other parties. Based on a

combination between trans feminist theory and personal experiences, Sagdahl offers some practical recommendations for the improvement of this condition by making the higher education sector more inclusive and responsive to the well-being and academic functioning of trans people. Next, in "Underrepresentation of Women", **Schmidt** untangles possible causes for the numerical and participatory underrepresentation of women, particularly in the STEM fields and in philosophy. Schmidt resonates with global statistics, compares the situation of women in philosophy with the STEM fields, and argues that stereotypes, imposter syndrome, sexual harassment, sexism, glass ceilings, and bias are some of the challenges that disproportionately affect women in academia. By asserting the critical importance of promoting gender balance in higher education, Schmidt argues for the promotion of women's visibility in these fields not only for recruitment, but also for retention purposes. In "Canon", **Nilsen** focuses on unveiling gaps in the canon of the history of ideas in having neglected the contributions of women. Nilsen evaluates the concept of canon within philosophy, and advocates not for its abolition, but for its thorough transformation according to updated criteria of quality and inclusion, so that it will become more historically correct and reflect better the multitude of actors in the history of ideas. In "Motherhood", **da Silva** explores how restricted academic spaces are for parents and particularly for mothers. Articulating a rich body of literature on motherhood, da Silva shows how the social construction of motherhood translates into the precarious current situation of academic mothers, particularly in countries with weak family laws. Closing this thematic cluster, the attention is focused on the fact that every DEI worker and academic staff member is regularly involved in situations in which they experience power relations along the lines of race, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, cultural background, or language. Being aware of those power relations and naming them is crucial for DEI work, research, and assessment. With this background, in "Intersectionality", **Losleben & Musubika** approach the heterogenous topography of intersectionality by tracing back the lineages of the phenomenon. They recall the variety of scholars and movements of Latina, post-colonial, queer, and Indigenous activists and thinkers who have described the intersecting discrimination of power structures *avant-la-lettre* and accompany the readers back to the coining of the term in the 1990s by Black scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw. Following Crenshaw's argumentation, they encourage the reader to assess intersectionality as it works simultaneously in the structural, the political, and the representational dimension, and present the domains-of-power framework by Patricia Collins as a practical tool for analyses of and action against inequalities. Importantly, they emphasise the critical self-reflection of one's own privileges and oppressions and discuss how to undo power relations or use them to empower oneself and others in different situations.

2 Underlying culture, attitudes, and practices

In "Discrimination", **Lippert-Rasmussen** distinguishes between generic and moral discrimination, direct and indirect discrimination, and harm- and disrespect-based accounts of the wrong of discrimination. This enables DEI workers to make

a more nuanced diagnosis of wrongful types of discrimination in academia, particularly in recruitment processes. Lippert-Rasmussen evaluates the role that anti-discriminatory policies can play in either promoting or hindering diversity and equality of opportunities and shows how this impacts the justification for anti-discriminatory policies. In "Meritocracy", **Jackson-Cole & Goldmeier** demystify the meritocratic ideal by showing that despite its promise of delivering equality of opportunities, it does not lead to greater diversity in academia but rather privileges majoritarian groups. Jackson-Cole & Goldmeier conclude by presenting alternatives to meritocracy that are focused on the advancement of the common good without quality losses in research. As the term "excellence" has, in the academic context, been widely used to refer to outstanding research, **Maxwell** critically unpacks the term in "Excellence" and shows how this narrow understanding of research quality is not only virtually meaningless, but also fosters mono-disciplinary and low-risk research. Maxwell argues that "excellence" in those terms becomes a barrier to cross-disciplinary and high-risk research, which is precisely the kind of research that is needed to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Grand Challenges. Finally, the author suggests a more holistic approach to research assessment that includes a broader range of criteria that would be more appropriate than basing judgments on "excellence". In "Patriarchy", **Poyares** explains the intricate relation between universities and patriarchal systems and argues that patriarchy is only identifiable in a multiplicity of factual instances. Instead of giving recommendations that aim at making universities more friendly and fair to women and other gender minorities, Poyares shows how this path is self-defeating since it does not eliminate the binarism that feeds patriarchal systems. Poyares provides a thorough explanation and some examples of how patriarchy manifests itself in academia through binary structures. Moreover, by unveiling its sources, she illuminates the directions for counterbalancing it more effectively. Epistemic injustice occurs when certain groups are hindered from equal participation in knowledge practices by being excluded from contributing to discussions and research, not being believed, or believed less. In "Epistemic Injustice", **Reibold** demonstrates how unequal participation in knowledge practices can affect employment chances, equal democratic participation, and the individual's ability to defend themselves against mistreatment and injustice in academia. Reibold challenges universities as producers and transmitters of knowledge and as shapers of public discourse to call for the recognition of diverse groups as equal knowers. In "Self-Respect", **Tanyi** thus distinguishes three kinds of self-respect. He advocates that the institution of higher education needs to be aware of these to effectively reduce the confidence gap between genders. Tanyi demonstrates how higher education has an important role in empowering the development of self-respect beyond academia and in societies. Hence, in "Stereotype Threats", **Finholt** discusses the issue that women in academia are held back due to the accumulation of negative stereotypes attached to the gender. Finholt argues that it is possible to remove some of the damaging stereotypes and advocates for transformation through awareness. Nevertheless, much of current diversity and inclusion work in

higher education, although necessary, has failed to address implicit and micro-level forms of exclusion. In "Implicit Gender Bias", **Berndt Rasmussen** raises awareness of the ubiquity of implicit bias (racist and sexist attitudes) even among test subjects who explicitly disavow such attitudes. The author then unpacks the potential moral, political, and epistemic damage that implicit biases may cause, and offers strategies for counterbalancing those damages, e.g., by giving counter-stereotypic exemplars, perspective taking, increasing opportunities for contact, or stereotype replacement. In "Microaggressions", **Branlat** highlights statements and actions that are subtle and thinly veiled, but which convey hidden manifestations of racism, homophobia, sexism, and other prejudice. Branlat critically unveils the phenomenon's occurrence in situations with strong hierarchies and in well-intended feminist approaches to education and proves its importance for DEI work. Concluding this thematic cluster, **Antonsen** turns our attention to the most blatant type of aggression. In "Sexual Harassment", the author defines sexual harassment as the trade of sexual acts in exchange for goods such as grades, promotion, employment, or as sexualised acts and comments that cause the working environment to be experienced as unsafe, hostile, and intimidating. Sexual harassment cases are not only problematic in and of themselves, but also act as a barrier to equality and equity between men and women.

3 Inclusive actions towards transformation

A broader range of criteria for assessments is needed not only in research but also in hiring and educational settings in academia. In "Research Assessments", **Andreassen** reflects on the limitations of current evaluation systems in academia and expands them to other settings, describing how a broader range of evaluation criteria might look to meet reshaped excellence standards. Whilst the procedures of assessing higher education institutions, employees, and students are often presented and perceived as objective measures of quality, and thus neutral regarding human diversity, assessment tools are never neutral. Rather, as the purpose of all forms of evaluations is to distinguish between individuals, groups, and organisations, they unavoidably relate to structures of hierarchical difference. Against this backdrop, Andreassen argues that meaningful changes in the evaluation and assessment process in academia require a change in the academic's values and attitudes. In "Feminist Pedagogies", **Pugliese** introduces feminist pedagogy as a practice that enables the promotion of values and attitudes through the reinforcement of a shared commitment to the construction of a learning community. Classrooms are composed of professors and students in a power-sharing context where the individual's prior experiences and cultural background should be acknowledged and valued. Pugliese argues that when individuals are validated, the learning community becomes capable of addressing identity issues even when the content or the discipline at stake are not particularly related to identity and cultural problems. In "Dis-empowering Gender Stereotypes", **Porrone & Poto** argue that countering gender stereotypes in academia is a process that requires entering a collective continuum of thinking,

where all parties share knowledge, reflect on it, and connect it to other knowledge systems to support sense-making and co-created responses. The authors explore the association between disempowerment and gender stereotypes by engaging in critical storytelling as a methodology for interactions. In "Gendered Spaces and Practices", **Winther** articulates the importance of recognising gendered spaces and practices in higher education. She conceives *space* in literal and figurative senses. As space is where roles and power dynamics are shaped, Winther argues that the management of spaces offers opportunities to affirm and resist gender hierarchies. Winther provides suggestions for how to make academic spaces more inclusive to support individuals and promote the inclusion of diversity in their respective disciplines. In "Gender Balance", **Mittner** turns our attention to mechanisms for monitoring gender balance in academia and provides foundational differentiation for understanding DEI work. Mittner scrutinises the term "gender balance" at the conceptual level and at the implementation level and shows the limitations of this metric at both levels. At the conceptual level, measurements of gender balance say something about proportional distribution, but little about representational equality. At the implementation level, the metric has been restricted to binary approaches and is visualised in ways that shadow the very idea of balance in terms of equilibrium. In "Affirmative Action", **Duarte** equips DEI workers with the grounded reasoning required to navigate around the main controversies surrounding the understanding of affirmative action as a form of discrimination and for reflecting over its main frameworks of justification within the DEI discourse. The chapter empowers DEI workers to make use of this powerful tool for inclusion and transformation and decide whether and when affirmative action is needed, justified, and ultimately adequate for advancing the aspired institutional goals. In "Democratic Equality", **Fjørtoft** argues that university policies should aim at ensuring that people have equal access to the necessary means to realise their freedoms and to develop their talents and skills in accordance with their own level of functions. Democratic equality challenges meritocratic principles of equality of opportunity by viewing equality as a matter of social relations, not as a matter of what the one has compared to another. Concluding this cluster, in "Learning for Sustainable Transformation", **Losleben, Maric, & Gjærum** explore the relationship between sustainability and gender at large and in the academic context and argue that many of the challenges for achieving sustainable gender balance could be resolved by a change in power relations and culture.

Notes

1 Claeys-Kulik et al. 2019; Jeffries 2019
2 Scott 2020
3 Thompson & Zablotsky 2016
4 Riegraf & Weber 2017, 93
5 E.g., The Research Council of Norway 2022a; For more on national contexts, see European Institute for Gender Equality n.d.
6 Wright 2001

7 Hankivsky et al. 2018; for examples of such practical guidelines, see results from the H2020 funded project: RESET – Redesigning Equality and Scientific Excellence Together (EU 2021-2024/101006560), in particular: Heikkinen et al. 2022a and Heikkinen et al. 2022b
8 Larsen et al. 2021
9 The Research Council of Norway 2022b
10 Rosa & Clavero 2022
11 E.g., Burkinshaw & White 2017; Young 2013, 52; Morrissey & Schmidt 2008; for popular reading, see Bates 2022
12 Young 2013
13 Laufer 2009
14 Ashcraft 2009
15 Kifinfo n.d.
16 Holst 2013
17 See Lippert-Rasmussen, this volume
18 Ahmed 2014
19 Berg 2011
20 Connell 2019
21 E.g. Fanon 1952; Torres 2021; Spivak 1988; Collins 1990; hooks 1994; Ngũgĩ wa 1986; Minh-ha 1988; Mignolo 1993; Bhabha 1994; Smith 1999; Mbembe 2015
22 Arvin et al. 2013; Todd 2016
23 Arvin et al. 2013

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PART I

Minorities and group-based vulnerabilities in academia

1

LGBTQ+

Annamari Vitikainen

LGBTQ+ is a common abbreviation referring to a variety of non-heterosexual sexual orientations (typically lesbian, gay, and bi) and non-conforming (non-cis) gender identities (typically trans). Q (queer) is often used as a general category that can include both non-heterosexual sexual orientations and non-conforming gender identities (trans and non-binary), while the '+' is sometimes added as an expression of inclusiveness towards other sexuality/gender-based categories that LGBTQ may not encompass. Other commonly used abbreviations include LGBT(+), LGBTI(+) (where I refers to 'intersex') and LGBTQ2(+) (where 2 refers to 'two-spirited', an expression used especially among the indigenous communities in North America). The abbreviation SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity) is often used in legal contexts and policy documents, where, e.g., SOGI laws/policies regulate against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

In higher education contexts, LGBTQ+ persons – both students and staff alike – continue to experience various types of disadvantages ranging from outright discrimination to more subtle forms of exclusion, lack of representation, stereotyping, bias, etc. The first part of this chapter (Theories of LGBTQ+) provides a brief theoretical background to understanding the categories of LGBTQ+ and some of the main challenges and ethical issues relating to the treatment of LGBTQ+ persons in contemporary societies. The following part (LGBTQ+ in Higher Education) discusses the specific issues and concerns relating to LGBTQ+ in higher education, including discrimination, lack of knowledge, bias, and representation. The final section provides a brief summary of the main points, and some concrete suggestions for making higher education institutions more inclusive towards LGBTQ+ staff and students alike.

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Theories of LGBTQ+

The relevant theoretical questions relating to LGBTQ+ fall broadly within two categories: (1) ontological or metaphysical questions about the nature of (each) category; and (2) ethical and political questions relating to the treatment of LGBTQ+ persons in society. I discuss each in turn, with a focus on some of the practical implications of each section.

How to understand sexual orientation and gender identity

When theorising about the nature of LGBTQ+, it is important to remember that LGBTQ+ is a combination of several letters, each with its own characteristics. While the first three letters (lesbian, gay, bi) refer to sexual orientation – and to persons who are only, primarily (L, G) or also (B) sexually attracted to persons of the same sex/gender as themselves – the fourth letter (trans) refers to gender identity. That is, trans persons are persons whose gender-identity is different from the one they were assigned at birth. A trans woman, for example, is a person who was assigned the male gender at birth, but who identifies as female. A cis woman, on the other hand, is a person whose gender identity matches the category they were assigned at birth. Some persons are non-binary, i.e., they do not identify as male or female and reject the binary opposition, and mutually exclusive existence, of the two categories of gender.

Importantly, one's sexual orientation and gender identity are analytically – as well as in practice – separate categories. Thus, a trans person may be gay or straight, and homosexuality (that is, same-sex sexual attraction) need not – and often does not – have anything to do with a mismatch between one's assigned and experienced gender. It is also important to note that one's ways of expressing, or performing, gender (for example, 'drag' or 'cross-dressing') are not necessarily related to any particular sexual orientation or gender identity, but can be expressions of a variety of things, including purely artistic forms of performance. In the remainder of this chapter, my focus, and examples, mostly concentrates on sexual-orientation related concerns, although many of these are also relevant for trans people.[1]

As with most theories of gender, sex, and sexuality, the roots of theorising LGBTQ+ can be traced back to the classical feminist discussions on the nature of sex and gender. According to Simone de Beauvoir's classical work,[2] there is a clear distinction between one's biological sex and one's social gender: something that one's social surroundings – upbringing, education, cultural norms, and expectations – mould one to be. Later, queer-theoretical approaches[3] critically develop this distinction by showing how one's biological sex, social gender, and object of desire stand in very complex relations to one another, and how our cultural norms have come to constrain our understandings of these relations. According to Judith Butler's influential work *Gender Trouble*,[4] our societies are organised under heteronormative assumptions about biological sex, social gender, and heterosexual object of desire. Such heteronormative assumptions have profound effects on how we

relate to others and to ourselves. As a default, we tend to presume one's gender identity as conforming to one's assigned-at-birth sex, and we also tend to assume (unless otherwise stated) that one's life partner or object of intimate interest is a person of the opposite sex/gender. The act of 'coming out of the closet', i.e., declaring one's sexuality to others, and the recurrent need to 'come out' again and again in new situations with new acquaintances,[5] tells of the way in which one is presumed to be heterosexual, with one's homosexuality requiring public declaration. Such assumptions of people's sexuality as (by default) heterosexual may, in higher education as well as in other contexts, create exclusion, discomfort, and pressure to 'come out' or, in some cases, 'stay in' the closet. For example, if one's lectures (which can include examples or perhaps jokes aimed at lightening up the atmosphere) are filled with stories of heterosexual partnerships discussed in presumptively gendered language (e.g., husband/wife/boyfriend/girlfriend), there is a high likelihood that those who do not fit into such heteronormative presumptions will feel marginalised. Using inclusive language, and not presuming people's sexual orientations (or gender identities), is one of the first grassroots steps for LGBTQ+ inclusion also in higher education.

Ethics and politics of LGBTQ+

In addition to the ontological questions relating to LGBTQ+ issues (e.g., what is gender, sexuality; how are societies producing and constraining gender, sexuality, etc.), LGBTQ+ issues can also be approached from the perspective of ethics and politics (e.g., what are the prominent ethical questions relating to the treatment of LGBTQ+ persons; what kinds of rights should LGBTQ+ persons have). In this section, the ethics and politics of LGBTQ+ are analysed from two analytically separate, yet often intertwining, directions: *rights* and *recognition*. While many claims for rights (e.g., equal marriage) are often also claims for recognition (e.g., equal value of same-sex relationships), for the purposes of this section, these two aspects are discussed separately, with the rights-based perspective focusing mainly on the legal, and formal, elements of LGBTQ+ struggles, while the recognition-based perspective provides some of the much-needed background as to why such legal struggles, and the protection of equal rights, are needed.

From a *rights-based perspective*, the claims – as well as legal struggles – of LGBTQ+ persons have typically focused on the abolishment of LGBTQ+ discrimination and the attaining of equal rights for LGBTQ+ persons. Even in the late 20th century, many states viewed homosexuality as a crime (there are no common timelines of decriminalisation, although many western states, including the UK (1967), Canada (1968), and Norway (1972), completed the decriminalisation process in the 1960s and 1970s). As of 2020, there are still 67 countries in the world that criminalise same-sex sexual activity, and six states (or state regions) that uphold the death penalty as the maximum punishment for such crimes.[6] While most western states have now decriminalised homosexuality, in many cases, homosexuality remained classified as a mental disorder until later; e.g., the WHO replaced its categorisation of homosexuality as a mental

illness in 1990, and the abolishment of trans or 'Gender Incongruence' as a mental disorder only came into force in 2022.[7]

In the aftermath of decriminalisation and depathologisation, LGBTQ+ movements have been able to focus on laws banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, and on attaining equal rights and status before the law. In 2022, many (although not all) western countries acknowledge sexual orientation as one of the protected categories in anti-discrimination law, and many public institutions, including universities and other higher education institutions, explicitly mention sexual orientation in their equal treatment policies. With respect to equal rights and the status of LGBTQ+ persons, perhaps the most prominent recent development has been the relatively wide (in western countries at least) acknowledgement of equal marriage that grants same-sex married couples the same status and rights as non-same-sex married couples.[8]

The attainment of both protection against discrimination and equal status have resulted in largely positive – yet not always realised – implications for LGBTQ+ persons in higher education institutions. While the anti-discrimination policies provide formal protections to LGBTQ+ persons in higher education, the actual procedures for reporting and dealing with LGBTQ+ discrimination may not be adequate or sufficiently accessible. The formal anti-discrimination policies may also fail to tackle many of the more subtle forms of disadvantage, such as the effects of implicit bias,[9] lack of representation, or simple insensitivity to the kinds of struggles (bullying, jokes, fear of coming out, etc.) that LGBTQ+ persons may be subjected to, not only in higher education, but also in life in general. Despite substantive advancements in LGBTQ+ inclusion, alarmingly high numbers of LGBTQ+ staff and students continue to experience various forms of discrimination, harassment, and a 'chilly climate' in higher education institutions.[10]

With respect to equal status (e.g., equal marriage), this provides both students and staff with a number of associated benefits, such as housing, visas for LGBTQ+ spouses and family members, family insurance, and other social security benefits. In the internationalised student and job market, these benefits may not, however, be equally distributed. For example, families of LGBTQ+ staff and students from countries that do not recognise equal marriage (or adoption rights) may not be able to accompany their partners to their new place of work or study. These challenges often intersect with other global inequalities (e.g., differentiated visa requirements) and are exacerbated by other forms of both explicit and structural discrimination and disadvantage (e.g., ethnicity, gender, age). Moreover, LGBTQ+ staff and students hoping to work or study abroad (whether more permanently or via institutionalised international mobility programmes) may face a number of difficulties finding the support they need in other countries and institutions. In order to cater to equal treatment and opportunities for LGBTQ+ persons, it is essential that the higher education institutions take these challenges into account and provide information and support for LGBTQ+ persons and their families, not only within the framework of the home institution, but also in relation to broader public services, international exchange programmes, work practices, etc.

From a *recognition-based perspective*, it has sometimes been argued that it is not enough – for the equal treatment of historically disadvantaged groups – that they are given formal equal rights and opportunities, but that their distinctive contributions and worth *as members of these groups* must also be publicly, and positively, recognised.[11] Many historically disadvantaged groups – including women, ethnic minorities, and LGBTQ+ persons – have long been belittled and marginalised, including in higher education institutions that have, traditionally, been dominated by white, middle-class, able-bodied, and (at least presumptively) heterosexual men. In order to counter this dominance, and in order to provide positive role-models for other LGBTQ+ persons, it is essential that LGBTQ+ persons and their achievements are recognised,[12] and that the diversity of sexual orientations is put forth in a positive light. This may happen, for example, via an institution taking part in national LGBTQ+ Pride activities; however, it may also – and should – happen in the every-day organisation, curriculum development, and hiring decisions of higher education institutions. For example, LGBTQ+ issues and perspectives can, in many cases, be incorporated as inherent parts of the ordinary curriculum. The works of LGBTQ+ authors can be represented in reading lists, and the hiring processes can include moderate prioritisation of LGBTQ+ persons (along with other under-represented groups, such as women, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, disabled persons, etc.). Some resources already exist for the diversification of one's curriculum.[13] Moreover, in many countries, LGBTQ+ organisations also provide materials and training for LGBTQ+ inclusion in educational institutions (contact your national/local LGBTQ+ organisation for more information and materials for inclusion).

LGBTQ+ in higher education

Higher education institutions and their approaches to LGBTQ+ issues often follow (albeit not necessarily linearly) the general legal frameworks and attitudes of the surrounding society. Around the world, there is thus a vast variety of approaches to LGBTQ+ issues within higher education, ranging from the non-existent or explicitly hostile[14] to explicit policies of non-discrimination and active inclusion. My main focus here is on the challenges of LGBTQ+ persons in formally equal higher education environments – that is, in environments that are, or at least are claiming to be, non-discriminatory. My focus is also on state-sponsored public higher education institutions as opposed to privately funded institutions, while recognising that LGBTQ+ persons face many of the same, although also slightly different, challenges in different types of institutions. (In some cases, for example, in some strongly religious private institutions, the challenges of LGBTQ+ persons may be exacerbated due to the explicitly discriminatory practices, although my intention here is not to address such explicitly discriminatory institutions, nor to discuss the extent to which such institutions may, or may not, be permitted to uphold them.) I divide the challenges, and the discussed examples, into four categories: *LGBTQ+ discrimination, lack of knowledge, bias*, and *representation*. These categories are not

meant to be exhaustive nor, as will become clear, are the lines between different categories clearly fixed. On the contrary, many LGBTQ+-related issues in higher education can be characterised as including elements of several of the above categories, although some of the LGBTQ+ issues may be hidden, or incorporated into the broader rubrics of diversity and inclusion, and the different categories of discrimination, lack of knowledge, bias, and representation are also clearly intersectional.[15] This thus points towards the need to develop more complex, as well as context sensitive, solutions that address issues across these different categories.

LGBTQ+ discrimination

Even in institutions that do not uphold policies that would be explicitly discriminatory against LGBTQ+ persons, some policies, as well as *de facto* practices, may have discriminatory effects, some of which may be clearly identifiable with others continuing to be hidden.[16] Some apparently neutral policies – such as, for example, reserving family accommodation for married couples – may in fact treat people differently, based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.[17] Sometimes the simple offering (or non-offering) of information may be unbalanced. For example, if the student/staff health services have information readily available on contraception and sexual health tailored to those engaging in heterosexual sexual activities, it should also have adequate, and specific, information on sexual health for those engaging in homosexual sexual activities. Furthermore, the anti-discrimination and anti-sexual-harassment policies and procedures – typically designed to counter discrimination and harassment against women[18] – should also be expanded and adjusted to incorporate measures that counter the often rampant and underreported[19] discrimination and sexual harassment of LGBTQ+ persons.

Furthermore, while an institution may not be explicitly discriminatory, and may even have strict anti-discrimination policies to protect LGBTQ+ persons, this does not mean that all members of the institution (staff or students) will automatically follow these rules. Thus, a singular teacher's prejudice against LGBTQ+ persons may lead to unfair course assessments, or unequal treatment in the classroom, interviewing, or hiring processes. In order to counter such cases, clear procedures for both flagging and addressing such behaviour must be in place, and information about how to report such cases – without fear of retaliation, stigmatisation, or of being unwillingly 'outed' – should be readily available.

Lack of knowledge

As should be clear from the above, not all cases of LGBTQ+ discrimination necessarily have a discriminatory intent. In many cases, the institutional policies or procedures may simply be underdeveloped, or insensitive to the specific needs of LGBTQ+ persons, due to the lack of adequate knowledge on what these specific needs are or how to address them. The individual teachers, administrators, and student support services may struggle to identify, and address, the specific challenges of

LGBTQ+ persons in higher education, as they have not been accustomed, or trained, to recognise and address such challenges. Heteronormative assumptions (see Theories of LGBTQ+ above) play a large role in the underdevelopment of institutional policies, the lack of knowledge, and the often accompanying insensitivity towards LGBTQ+ issues by both individual staff and students. Heteronormative language, LGBTQ+ jokes, or addressing LGBTQ+ issues in common yet clumsy and stereotypical ways may all be well-intentioned – and nevertheless fail to provide an inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ persons. In order to address such a lack of knowledge, or an inability to respond to such knowledge, it is important that the higher education institutions do their part in including LGBTQ+ issues in their diversity training programmes. Many LGBTQ+ organisations already provide both materials and training in educational institutions,[20] and the consultation of LGBTQ+ organisations, including LGBTQ+ student organisations, should be standard during institutional policy development. While it is clear that LGBTQ+ inclusive diversity training can do much in countering the lack of knowledge on LGBTQ+ issues, it is also clear that knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues cannot be left solely to such training programmes. Thus, LGBTQ+ issues and perspectives should also be included in the core curriculum, and the existence of sexual and gender diversity should be recognised as part of everyday life in all areas of higher education.

Bias

Bias is often understood in terms of negative associations with a particular group of people (in this case, LGBTQ+) that have a detrimental impact on our initial assessments and responses to members of such groups. Biases can be both explicit[21] and implicit[22] – that is, often unconscious sets of attitudes that have small, yet non-negligible, effects on our responses to others. Again, the existence of such biases, and their effects on LGBTQ+ persons, may not indicate any malicious will from those holding such biases; they may simply be the products of long-lasting social conditioning, internalising of the (historically negative) stereotypes of LGBTQ+ persons, and the general effects of heteronormativity[23] in our society. For example, while an individual teacher, administrator, or student support worker may hold – explicitly – a view of LGBTQ+ persons as being of equal moral worth, equally as capable and deserving of equal rights and treatment as their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts, an implicit bias may nevertheless affect their behaviour and responses to LGBTQ+ persons in negative ways. They may, for example, not be equally prone to advise LGBTQ+ persons towards certain professions or educational careers; they may expect more from LGBTQ+ persons when judging their qualifications; or – and this applies especially to LGBTQ+ persons themselves – they may have skewed expectations and self-perceptions of themselves that affect their behaviour in educational settings. The implicit biases and stereotype threats for LGBTQ+ persons often go hand in hand, much in the same way as the bias and stereotype threat for women.[24]

Representation

As with most marginalised groups in society, LGBTQ+ persons have been, and still are, underrepresented in higher education. LGBTQ+ students have statistically higher drop-out rates, and while the number of openly LGBTQ+ researchers and teachers is increasing, the numbers are still relatively low. Unlike many other underrepresented groups – e.g., women and ethnic minorities – LGBTQ+ persons are not a necessarily visible minority. There are thus many LGBTQ+ persons (at least those who are white male LGBTQ+) who have occupied positions in higher education throughout history. This does not, however, mean that LGBTQ+ persons would have occupied these positions *as LGBTQ+*, and a visible presence of openly LGBTQ+ researchers, teachers, administrators, and students alike is a relatively new phenomenon.[25]

As with any marginalised group, the representation of LGBTQ+ persons in higher education matters. It matters for example for the normalisation of non-heterosexual and non-cis identities, for the providing of role models for other LGBTQ+ persons, and for a balanced representation of different perspectives and viewpoints in higher education. LGBTQ+ representation can be increased via various platforms and means. The work of LGBTQ+ scholars can be included in curriculums and reading lists; LGBTQ+ persons can be moderately prioritised in admission and hiring procedures (alongside other marginalised groups); LGBTQ+ staff and students can – *if they so wish* – flag their status as LGBTQ+, although it should be emphasised that no-one should be required to disclose their sexuality, nor should anyone be 'outed' by others against their will. Institutions can also develop policies that include LGBTQ+ representation in different committees and decision-making organs, although they should do so in ways that avoids the usage and negative effects of 'tokenism': that is, the appointing of 'token LGBTQ+ persons' in committees, etc., which tends to both undermine the actual competences of LGBTQ+ persons as well as create an increased administrative load for the few LGBTQ+ persons who may now need to operate as the token LGBTQ+ person in a number of committees, etc. However, while a carefully implemented inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons in committees, decision-making organs, etc., may increase the general diversity in such positions, it may not be enough to address the deeper issues of underrepresentation, bias, lack of knowledge, or discrimination of LGBTQ+ persons in higher education. Firstly, it should be clear that, while LGBTQ+ persons have certain knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues simply by virtue of being LGBTQ+, the experiences of LGBTQ+ persons vary tremendously, and one's status as LGBTQ+ does not in itself make one an overall expert on LGBTQ+ challenges, or possible solutions to these challenges. Secondly, LGBTQ+ persons are not in higher education institutions simply to address LGBTQ+ issues – typically, they are there to teach, study, and work – and requiring LGBTQ+ persons to be representatives, advocates, and knowledge providers on all LGBTQ+-related issues puts an undue burden on LGBTQ+ persons in the work and study environment. It is thus of immense importance that the inclusion of LGBTQ+ issues, and the addressing of

LGBTQ+ challenges in higher education institutions, is not left to the individual LGBTQ+ persons working or studying in these institutions but is a collaborative effort by everyone.

Summary

LGBTQ+ is a commonly used umbrella term for a variety of non-heterosexual sexual orientations and non-conforming (non-cis) gender identities. Despite many recent developments for LGBTQ+ equal rights, status, and recognition, LGBTQ+ persons continue to be underrepresented and face a variety of challenges and disadvantages *qua being LGBTQ+* in higher education. In order to improve the situation of LGBTQ+ persons in higher education, some general suggestions are provided. These suggestions, it should be emphasised, are not intended as conclusive, nor all-encompassing, but as relatively broad frameworks within which some avenues for LGBTQ+ inclusion could be made.

- The anti-discrimination (and anti-sexual harassment) policies and procedures should be extended to include LGBTQ+-based discrimination and sexual harassment, and also take the specifics of such discrimination and harassment into account (e.g., by providing avenues to report sexual harassment without the fear of being 'outed' in the work/study environment).
- General information and support for LGBTQ+ rights and equal treatment should be readily available. This also includes information and support for persons travelling from or to countries that do not have extensive LGBTQ+ protections. Such country-specific contexts, and support for LGBTQ+ persons, is also relevant for different staff and student exchange programmes.
- In order to counter bias, lack of knowledge and unintentional marginalisation (e.g., heteronormativity), information materials and diversity training should be provided. Many LGBTQ+ organisations already provide such materials and training and can be consulted – including in general policy/decision making.
- LGBTQ+ issues and perspectives can be more readily included in the curriculum, and the works of LGBTQ+ scholars can be sought for. (This, it should be emphasised, is not simply because it is the work by LGBTQ+ scholars, but rather because the work of marginalised groups is often – for a variety of reasons, such as implicit bias – not given equal attention.)
- LGBTQ+ persons can be given moderate prioritisation in admission and hiring processes (along with other underrepresented groups).
- LGBTQ+ persons should be included in different committees and decision-making organs – although such inclusion should not be used to 'outsource' the responsibility of LGBTQ+ inclusion to the LGBTQ+ persons themselves.
- The higher education institution, and its members, can also engage in a variety of acts of recognition (both symbolic and practical). For example, the institution can take part in LGBTQ+ Pride celebrations, recognise the contributions of LGBTQ+ staff and students, and promote awareness of the diversity of sexual

orientations and gender identities. Importantly, the institution, and its members, should include LGBTQ+ persons, and issues pertaining to the diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities, as inherent parts of the everyday life of the higher education institution.

Questions for discussion

- LGBTQ+ is an umbrella term for a variety of non-heterosexual sexual orientations and non-conforming (non-cis) gender identities. After reminding oneself of the meaning of each letter, critically discuss to what extent the ethical issues and challenges encountered by persons under each individual letter (L, G, B, T, Q) can be addressed jointly, and to what extent the different letters require different responses.[26]
- What does heteronormativity mean and in which ways is it manifested in higher education institutions? How can one counter heteronormativity – in everyday life, or in higher education policies and practices?
- Discuss some of the ways in which apparently non-discriminatory policies may nevertheless have discriminatory effects to LGBTQ+ persons.
- 'Underrepresentation' and 'tokenism' can be seen as two sides of a phenomenon that LGBTQ+ persons (along with other minorities) are often faced with in higher education. What do these two issues refer to, and how could one ensure a simultaneous increase of representation while avoiding the dangers of tokenism?
- How can I, as a leader/administrator/teacher/researcher, make sure that my actions (or policies, etc., that I am designing/implementing) cater to LGBTQ+ inclusion, or – at the very minimum – do not contribute to the marginalisation of LGBTQ+ persons in higher education?

Suggestions for further reading

Useful resources and examples of LGBTQ+ inclusion guides available online:

- Higher Education Today (2017) 'LGBTQ Students on Campus: Issues and Opportunities for Higher Education Leaders', www.higheredtoday.org/2017/04/10/lgbtq-students-higher-education/
- Stonewall (2017) 'Studying Abroad: A Guide to Supporting LGBT Students in Higher Education', www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/studying-abroad
- Stonewall (2019) 'Delivering LGBT Inclusive Higher Education: Academic Provision, Accommodation, Catering, Facilities, Induction, Recruitment, Registry, Societies, Sports and Student Services', www.ucl.ac.uk/womens-health/sites/womens-health/files/delivering_lgbt_inclusive_higher_education-2019.pdf
- University of Birmingham (2017) 'LGBTQ-Inclusivity in the Higher Education Curriculum: A Best Practise Guide', https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/teaching-academy/documents/public/lgbt-best-practice-guide.PDF

Notes

1 For specifically trans-related issues, see Sagdahl in this volume
2 de Beauvoir 2015 [1949]
3 E.g., Butler 1999 [1990]; Halberstam 1998
4 Butler's 1999 [1990]
5 Cf. Sedgwick 1990
6 ILGA World 2020
7 For a historical overview, see, e.g., Belmonte 2020
8 For country specific details, see ILGA World 2020
9 See Rasmussen, this volume
10 Rankin et al. 2010
11 See e.g., Taylor 1994; Appiah 2005
12 See Tanyi, this volume
13 See e.g., Diversifying Syllabi (https://diversifyingsyllabi.weebly.com/); APA Diversity and Inclusiveness Syllabus Collection (www.apaonline.org/members/group_content_view.asp?group=110430&id=380970)
14 See also ILGA World 2020 on LGBTQ+ criminalisation around the world
15 See Losleben & Musubika, this volume
16 See Lippert-Rasmussen, this volume
17 See also the section on the ethics and politics of LGBTQ+, this chapter
18 See Antonsen, this volume
19 E.g., TUC 2019
20 E.g., FRI Norge: Rosa kompetanse (www.foreningenfri.no/rosa-kompetanse)
21 See the section on prejudice and discrimination, this chapter
22 See Rasmussen, this volume
23 See the section on the understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity, this chapter
24 See Finholt, this volume
25 Bazarsky & Sanlo 2011
26 See also Sagdahl, this volume

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2

TRANSGENDER STAFF AND STUDENTS

Mathea Slåttholm Sagdahl

The term "transgender" generally came into use in the 1990s and refers to individuals whose gender identity differs from the gender they were assigned at birth.[1] This includes *trans women*, who were assigned male at birth, but identify themselves as female, and *trans men*, who were assigned female at birth, but identify themselves as male. The term is also used to include *non-binary* people, who identify themselves outside of the gender binary of male/female or not only within one of them. To be transgender is sometimes contrasted with being *cisgender*, a term which refers to people who are non-trans and who therefore identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. This includes *cis women* and *cis men*.

The term has in some contexts come to replace the term *transsexual*. This term has its roots in medical and psychiatric history, and to some trans people it can hold pathologising connotations. The term "transgender" is also more often used as an umbrella term to also include non-binary people. However, there are also many trans people who prefer the use of the term "transsexual" to "transgender" when describing themselves. This entry will only employ the term "transgender", or sometimes simply "trans", and both terms are used to include both binary and non-binary people who identify outside of the gender they were assigned at birth. It should be noted that terminology relating to trans people is contested and evolving and that there is no universally correct usage.

Many transgender people choose to *transition*. To transition is to change one's outward gender markers in order to make them accord with one's gender identity. There are two types of transitioning. To *socially transition* is to change the cultural signifiers one has which mark one as male or female. This can involve changing one's gender presentation, such as what clothing one chooses to wear, or how one styles one's body. It can also involve changing one's name and/or the linguistic pronouns one wishes to be referred to with. The other type of transition is *medical transition*, which involves medical interventions such as hormone replacement

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therapy and/or surgery in order to alter one's sexual characteristics. Not all trans people choose to or have the means to transition, and not all those who transition undergo both types of transitioning.

The term *trans** is sometimes used more broadly to also refer to people who cross-dress, engage in drag performance, or are otherwise gender non-conforming. Insofar as these individuals do not have a different gender identity other than that which was assigned to them at birth, this chapter does not explicitly discuss these groups, but many of the same points may apply to this additional group as well. It is also important to note that some cultures include specific gender categories beyond "man" and "woman" (e.g., people who are "two-spirit" in indigenous American cultures). These individuals should not necessarily be understood in terms of the concepts explained above, but some of them may face the same challenges as transgender people when situated in Western cultures where a binary view of gender tends to dominate.

Transgenderism and discrimination

Systemically and individually, transgender people have been argued to face oppression along several dimensions.[2] First, transgender people can be subjected to *transphobia*, meaning emotionally based aversions to transgender people. A second dimension is *cissexism*, which is the belief or attitude that trans people are less authentic than cis people. The "realness" of trans people's gender therefore tends to be contested.[3] Cissexism tends to be grounded in *oppositional sexism*, which is the belief or attitude that being male or female are, or should be, rigid, mutually exclusive categories based on non-overlapping gendered properties. Third, trans people can be subjected to *traditional sexism* or *misogyny*.[4] Traditional sexism consists in a devaluation of women and traits that are held to be feminine.[5] This has been argued to create an intersectional form of oppression often called *transmisogyny*, where a transgender person may be discriminated against for failing to uphold cissexist gender norms, but even more so if also displaying feminine traits.[6]

The type and degree to which transgender people are affected by these forms of discrimination may vary. Transgender people who are understood by their surroundings as being cisgender men or women can avoid some of these forms of oppression. For example, a trans man or who is read by his surroundings as a cis man may avoid many of the effects of these oppressions (as may a closeted trans woman). Nevertheless, trans women who are read by their surroundings as cis women will still be subjected to traditional sexism. While conforming to binary views of gender can help escape oppression, it should be noted that visibly gender non-conforming people (whether cis or trans) have more problems with securing employment than binary and visibly gender conforming trans or cis people.[7] This discrimination is arguably rooted in oppositional sexism.

While these gendered forms of discrimination can be attributed to individuals and described in terms of attitudes, they can also take structural forms.[8] We can talk about various parts of society being structurally or institutionally cissexist, when

institutions or practices are structured in such a way that it disadvantages transgender people. One can argue that the basic structure of societies displays such structural cissexism by the way it is organised around a gender binary that is mostly held to be mutually exclusive and solely determined by what genitals are observed at birth. This means that people are sorted into two different legal and social categories that determine legal rights and what social norms apply to them. Facts about what category one belongs to tend to be understood as determinate and immutable. Historical studies show how legal and social recognition for trans people has proved difficult to obtain, and to a large extent, it still is.[9]

It should also be clarified that the conditions for trans people vary to a significant degree from country to country – ranging from some countries that provide legal protections from discrimination based on gender identity to not having the right to express one's gender at all.[10] Attitudes towards transgender people similarly differ from country to country, with varying degrees of acceptance.[11] The rest of this article assumes a context in which there are no legal obstacles for promoting the welfare of transgender people in higher education, and where the challenge is instead that of forming good institutional policies for an inclusive environment for transgender people.

Challenges for the inclusion and welfare of transgender staff and students

The transgender population can be said to live on the margins of society in the sense that various legal, medical, and bureaucratic institutions tend to be unadapted to the identities and needs of transgender people.[12] This includes educational institutions. In addition to various practical problems, this can also lead to an experience of social exclusion. These problems can furthermore negatively affect the well-being of transgender people in serious ways and their functioning as academics or students.

It is important to know that trans people face high levels of discrimination and harassment both in general society and in arenas of higher education. In the US, trans people experience much higher degrees of harassment, discrimination, and unemployment than cis people, with trans women being more affected than trans men.[13] With respect to education, a recent Norwegian survey found that 44% of binary trans students (i.e., trans women and trans men) had experienced harassment by a teacher on campus and 52% by other students, compared with only 10% and 16%, respectively, for cis students.[14] A US survey of over 27,000 trans students found that 24% of those who were not closeted had experienced verbal, physical, or sexual harassment in college, and 16% of these had left college for that reason.[15] Grant et al. found that 35% of students experienced bullying by staff or other students and that students tend to come to higher education with experiences of even worse levels of harassment and bullying in lower education.[16] With respect to the campus climate, studies find that the more trans students are active on campus, the more negative their experience becomes.[17] This is the opposite tendency of

students in general, where greater campus involvement comes with a more positive student experience and a greater willingness to re-enrol.[18] Students also face other issues, such as difficulties with a lack of parental support, job discrimination, and finding housing. Such problems are not just practical, but also psychological stressors in trans lives affecting emotional health.[19] This problem is reflected in a Norwegian study, where transgender students reported significantly more psychosocial burdens across all measures.[20] In addition, an internal survey at the University of Oxford (where a majority of respondents were non-binary) found that nearly 3 in 5 trans students have been unable to do academic work due to emotional distress attributable to their being transgender.[21] Furthermore, nearly 2 in 3 had experiences of transphobia or discrimination. Almost a third of these reported to have experienced such incidents from academic or administrative staff. Only 1 in 5 reported feeling comfortable making a formal complaint. On a European level, 29% of trans students have experienced being discriminated against by university personnel.[22] Among the trans student population, in line with the phenomenon of transmisogyny, trans women tend to experience more harassment and exclusion and have a greater tendency to drop out of university.[23] The experience of hostile administrative procedures and the lack of inclusive spaces and facilities also leads to high student drop-out rates.[24] This is particularly the case with students who are trans women, a group more likely to experience discrimination.[25] Finally, it should be noted that trans students as a group report lower levels of academic self-esteem than other students.[26]

With respect to transgendered academics, Pitcher argues that they in general experience a variety of adverse events including microaggressions, hostility, and exclusion, although the level of such experiences depends on institutional culture and policies.[27] In addition, many trans academics experience feeling "out of place" or are made to become "professionally Other". Furthermore, trans academics can also experience the same form of discrimination in job markets that other trans workers do and may therefore struggle more to secure tenure or permanent positions.

Even without discriminatory attitudes, I would add that trans academics or students may experience additional difficulties with advancing their career or education. The process of transitioning gender, undertaken by many trans people, can potentially be disruptive for professional or educational tracks. Besides often dealing with difficulties in their private or social lives, the process of gaining access to and undergoing gender affirming health care can also require considerable time and effort, especially as such treatments tend to remain hard to attain in most countries.[28] For those who choose to undergo gender affirming surgery, work capacity can also be temporarily reduced. It can therefore be difficult for transgender staff or students to focus sufficiently on their careers or education while they are undergoing such forms of transitioning, hence their academic attainments are often compromised. This may put trans academics at a comparative disadvantage in applying for jobs. In countries with costly education, students may also have to choose between continuing education and costly gender affirming care.

Many of the challenges trans people face in the context of higher education depend on the individual trans person's stage of transitioning (insofar as they choose to transition), and these challenges can be of an administrative, social, and/or medical nature. Some trans individuals may remain closeted and have not disclosed their wish to transition. These individuals are hard to identify and to help specifically, but having a supportive and inclusive environment with good administrative policies may make it easier to come out as a transgender person, whether as staff or a student.

Issues and recommendations

Supporting transgender staff and students requires several institutional, cultural, and material adaptions. Effectively supporting trans staff and students requires learning, and those in charge of managing staff and student welfare should take care to have sufficient knowledge. Trans students are more likely to experience depression and mental health problems than cis students and are also more likely to seek out counselling at the institution.[29] If counsellors do not possess enough knowledge, queer organisations can often help provide training on these topics. Scientific staff who are trans are also likely to encounter mental health challenges. This is especially the case for those who participate in academic or public debates about trans identities, or who conduct research that concerns discrimination towards trans people. Being regularly confronted with public transphobia or with stories of trans discrimination can cause "secondary trauma" in the researcher.[30] Universities should be prepared to offer material and collegial support for such researchers, and especially for junior scholars who may be unprepared for emotionally distressing research.

Trans individuals who are beginning or in the midst of a transitioning process will tend to have many needs, and it is incumbent upon administrators or leaders to meet these. Both department culture and administrative efforts are important. On the practical side, trans individuals may require administrative aid in changing their name and gender markers on various university documents and websites. Some trans people may change their legal name and legal gender, in which case these documents will need to be updated. In other cases, individuals may be unable to make the desired legal changes, in particular because many countries (or federal states) make it difficult to receive legal recognition for this. In such cases, it may sometimes nevertheless be possible for academic institutions to implement these changes locally, which makes it possible for the trans student or member of staff to function without suffering from misnaming, misgendering, and having one's trans status constantly "outed". This latter term refers to an important distinction between the voluntary act of "coming out" and having one's trans (or LGBT+) status disclosed by others without one's consent. "Outing" someone can violate that person's privacy, and for trans people their medical history. It can also expose that person to becoming a target of discriminatory attitudes. Occurrences of "outing" can be understood as psychological harms that are detrimental to the trans

person's well-being and self-respect, which ought to be prevented.[31] To fully accommodate non-binary people, a third or unspecified gender option should also be provided in forms and documents.

The overall culture at the faculty or department level can be seen as realised through various microclimates, such as the classroom, seminars, meetings, etc. When such microclimates are experienced as hostile to a minority, faculty members of that minority will be more likely to disengage from the institution.[32] Beyond passive hostility, trans staff and students can also experience outright transphobia and harassment from non-trans students or staff. Developing clear institutional policies against discrimination based on gender identity and outlining unacceptable behaviour toward trans people may give official grounds for reprimanding those who contribute to hostility. While many colleges and universities have such policies, they are often not enforced.[33] To establish a consistent non-hostile climate, improper behaviour should be admonished – including when a trans person is not present. In addition, those who arrange and lead various academic activities where microclimates occur must ensure that these climates are safe, friendly, and inclusive. A particular concern of many trans people in these contexts is having their identity respected in terms of gender, name, and gendered pronouns. While staff may communicate their needs for recognition themselves, students may need to be surveyed in order to identify such needs. When enrolling students in courses and programmes, administrators should survey whether any students wish to be referred to by another name or pronoun than what is indicated by official documents.

Trans people also tend to be the subject of various political and academic debates. This can be a significant stressor for those whose lives are debated and may affect department culture negatively.[34] At higher education institutions, such conversations are difficult to regulate without infringing on academic freedom, but co-workers should speak up if they perceive that those who discuss trans and other minority issues are not sufficiently educated or do not sufficiently listen or attribute enough credibility to the voices of minority members.[35] Such ideals are especially important when conducted in the classroom, where academic staff hold a great deal of power with respect to shaping views and discussions. A policy where minority voices are included in the curriculum when minority issues are planned to be discussed may contribute to the local academic culture being perceived as fair and inclusive.

Professional disadvantages to trans academics should also be recognised. The time, energy, and effort needed to socially and medically transition can leave trans academics at a competitive disadvantage. This is to some extent similar to the problems faced by women with maternity.[36] In addition, trans people face general job market marginalisation. This is to some extent similar to discrimination faced by other minorities. Hiring committees should be aware of these phenomena and ensure that they do not suffer from discrimination on these grounds. This can be done by including trans people in minority and gender recruitment programmes. For those already in academic positions, leaders should also help facilitate the trans employee's transitioning, which may be crucial to that

employee's well-being and functioning. Benefits extended with respect to maternity may serve as a model.

A material issue is gendered facilities. It is obviously important for the functioning of any individual to not be excluded from using basic facilities, such as bathrooms. Forcing a trans person to use a bathroom of a particular gender may prevent them from being comfortable to use bathrooms altogether. If so, trans people are severely restricted in how long they have the ability to stay on campus. Survey data from the US show that 59% of trans people avoided using bathrooms for fear of confrontations and that 32% limited the amount they ate and drank in order to reduce their need for bathrooms.[37] Providing options for bathrooms can also be a matter of safety to the trans individual. While there have been debates in many countries about the danger to women of admitting trans women to women's bathroom facilities, such fears have little basis in empirical facts.[38] Studies instead show that it is trans people who are in greatest danger of harassment (including sexual assault) in such spaces, and that rates were higher where bathroom access was restricted.[39] It is therefore important to the well-being of trans people not to restrict the use of facilities where they feel safe and most comfortable, and to communicate inclusivity clearly and explicitly. Nevertheless, while clear policies may help signal and contribute to inclusivity, this may not always be effective in eliminating risks of harassment for trans people perceived as being where they do not belong. Providing facilities that are gender-neutral may help those trans individuals who feel unsafe in gendered bathrooms and are also more inclusive toward non-binary people, as well as having other general benefits.[40] In a study of 500 trans students, having easy access to gender-inclusive bathrooms was ranked as the most important trans-inclusive practice.[41]

Another issue that concerns access to basic facilities is student housing. Some universities provide student housing that is gender segregated along a binary understanding of gender, and living spaces are often assigned to students on the basis of their legal gender rather than gender identity. They also sometimes involve showers and bathrooms with limited privacy. If institutions do not take the gender identity of trans students seriously, it can have serious consequences for the capability of trans students to study in the location of the university. Transgender people already tend to face discrimination in the wider housing market, as well as less family support and greater economic marginalisation, which make their need for housing more precarious.[42] Being then forced to live in a gendered space where they do not feel safe or comfortable can mean that they do not in practice have access to housing. It is also essential for the mental health of trans students, as those who have experienced being denied access to gender-appropriate campus housing for being trans were 1.64 times more likely to have attempted suicide (similar numbers apply to being denied bathroom access) than those who were not.[43] In addition, access to student housing is important not only as a necessary living space, but also for students making meaningful connections with peers and being socialised into student culture.[44] As

with bathrooms, there is a need for inclusive policies when it comes to gendered housing, and having gender neutral options can also be beneficiary. Fostering an inclusive housing climate also matters to trans people's well-being and functioning.[45] Some measures to achieve this is for housing staff to help find welcoming roommates and to follow up on reports of harassment.

Summary of recommendations

- Provide necessary training to staff managers and university welfare providers.
- Ensure that local bureaucratic systems can accommodate social transitions and provide administrative support for name and gender change.
- Include non-binary gender options in forms and information systems.
- Have and enforce institutional policies against discrimination based on gender identity.
- Be aware of job market marginalisation for trans people when recruiting and compensate for competitive disadvantages that trans people can suffer.
- Provide mental health support for both trans students and trans staff.
- Ensure that trans and other minority voices are represented in curricula whenever they can be expected to be the topic of debate.
- Provide gender neutral facilities (such as bathrooms and student housing) and ensure that any gendered facilities are trans inclusive and that this is communicated clearly.

Questions for discussion

- "Transgender" is an umbrella term that contains multiple groups of people. What distinguishes them and how do their needs differ?
- Do you think trans people would suffer from transphobia or discrimination at your institution? Why or why not? What enables this discrimination?
- What do you think are the main challenges for implementing the normative recommendations provided in this chapter? How do you think these challenges may be overcome?

Suggestions for further reading

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Notes

1 Stryker 2017
2 Serrano 2016
3 Bettcher 2007
4 Manne 2018
5 See Finholt, this volume
6 See Losleben, this volume
7 Grant et al. 2011; James et al. 2016
8 See Duarte et al., this volume
9 Stryker 2017
10 Chiam et al. 2019
11 Ipsos 2018
12 Divan et al. 2016; Behrensen 2017
13 Schilt 2006; Grant et al 2011; Siegel 2019
14 Anderssen et al. 2021
15 James et al. 2016; Goldberg 2018
16 Grant et al. 2011
17 Goldberg et al. 2019
18 Beemyn 2021b
19 Stoltzenberg & Hughes 2017
20 Anderssen et al. 2020
21 Trans Report 2018
22 FRA 2014
23 Seelman 2016
24 Lawrence and Mckendry, 2019; Nicolazzo, 2017
25 Seelman 2016
26 Eagan et al. 2017; Goldberg 2018
27 Pittcher 2018
28 See e.g. ILGA – Europe 2021
29 Beemyn 2021a, 2021b
30 Pearce 2020
31 Kapusta 2016
32 Acklesberg et al. 2008
33 Goldberg 2018
34 Hughto et al. 2021
35 See Reibold, this volume
36 See Seixas da Silva, this volume
37 James et al. 2016
38 Hasenbush et al. 2019
39 Murchison et al. 2019
40 Bovens & Marcoci 2020
41 Goldberg et al. 2019
42 James et al. 2016
43 Seelman 2016
44 Jerman et al. 2021
45 Pryor & Hart 2016

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3

UNDERREPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

Ana Rieger Schmidt

The fact that women are the majority in several fields of academia (such as medicine, biology, psychology, linguistics, and social sciences) yet underrepresented in others (mathematics, physics, computer science, engineering, economics, and philosophy) is currently a widely debated issue. Worldwide, many women do not persist in these careers nor advance to leadership positions – not because they lack the talent, but because they face external barriers, such as gender bias, sexual harassment, absence of female peers, and unequal access to resources, among others. This lack of gender balance can be observed by comparing the different rates in majoring, publishing, grant awards, hiring, and tenure rates. We possess a wide range of data concerning the underrepresentation of women in higher education, and there are multiple organisations and initiatives trying to combat it. This chapter focuses on the underrepresentation of women in philosophy, although many of the problems addressed here also apply to other minorities underrepresented in the field. The chapter presents some of the data available in order to discuss its effects on students, professors, and researchers. It also raises some alleged causes for this problem and recommends practices for addressing it inside the university environment.

STEM gap and philosophy gap: Some data

Throughout the years, there has been a steady increase in the number of female academics that has been narrowing the gender gap amongst students, teachers and staff in higher education. In fact, women now comprise over 50% of university undergraduate students across most countries in the developed world or "Global North".[1] However, women are still underrepresented in the so-called STEM subjects of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. This issue has long been regarded as a serious problem. According to the UNESCO Institute for

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Statistics,[2] in 2019 women represent only 28% of the workforce in the STEM fields worldwide. The *She Figures* report from 2018[3] showed that in the EU, the gap between women and men in STEM fields is wider than for all fields of research and development considered together. As women move up the academic ladder, they become less represented. In this case, the gap between women and men is even wider in STEM: while women made up 37% of doctoral students and 39% of doctoral graduates, they held only 15% of top-ranked positions (grade A).

Even if data agencies show a reduction in the proportion of women from undergraduate to PhD levels in all subject areas, the decline is much more severe in STEM and philosophy. For the last two decades, studies have revealed that women are consistently more present in the arts and humanities fields, but the same does not apply to philosophy, which is particularly dominated by men. For example, the US National Center for Educational Statistics revealed in a report from 2000 that women make up 21% of full-time faculty in philosophy,[4] representing a much smaller percentage than other fields in the humanities. According to Higher Education Student Data provided by HESA,[5] only 35% of philosophy PhD students in the UK are female, compared to 61% in English literature and 53% in history.

Large-scale studies in the UK,[6] US,[7] Australia,[8] and Brazil[9] analysed the proportion of women to men at various stages of their academic careers. All identified a trending decline among women as they move further, with a significant drop-off point between introductory classes and a major degree in philosophy. As a consequence, women do not attain the same ranks within academia in proportion to their male counterparts. For instance, Paxton et al.[10] observed that in the UK "the proportion of females reliably decreases as one moves through each level in the academy, from introductory courses through the faculty population". Van Camp's[11] report concerning US doctoral programmes shows that only 22–24% of philosophers are female, while only 15% of women find themselves in tenured positions. Araújo[12] observes that the proportion of female students in philosophy in Brazil decreases by 48% before majoring, concluding that women have an approximately 2.5 times smaller chance than men to reach top academic positions. This holds true even in the Nordic countries, despite gender equality legislation and policy adopted since the 1980s. Although there is relative gender balance among men and women awarded a doctoral degree, the Nordic research community remains male dominated at the highest level.[13]

Additionally, it has been shown that female philosophers' rate of publications in top journals is less than expected given the percentage of women researchers. Wilhelm et al.[14] showed that although approximately 25% of philosophy faculty in the US are women, only 14–16% of the articles appearing in top journals are women authored.

Meena Krishnamurthy[15] explored specifically the underrepresentation of women in elite ethics journals, suggesting that reviewers' implicit gender biases (even when the evaluation process is supposed to be anonymous) might be affecting the rate of women-authored papers accepted for publication. Apart from objective surveys and statistics, there are personal accounts of women describing their experiences of

marginalisation, misrecognition, and sexual harassment,[16] helping to raise awareness of hostile conditions endured by women in philosophy. It is crucial, therefore, to ask for the reasons behind the underrepresentation of women in philosophy as a way to fight its vicious consequences.

The problem of underrepresentation

Stereotypes, imposter syndrome, sexual harassment, sexism, glass ceiling, and gender bias are some of the challenges that disproportionately affect women and can explain their underrepresentation in philosophy. The **stereotype threat** includes the general idea that men perform better than women in specific fields.[17] When exposed to stereotype threat, members of a group tend to underperform in stressful situations, like exams and job interviews. Their struggle results from their preoccupation, which unconsciously confirms the stereotype in question.[18] For instance, female philosophy students can underperform in logic (analogously as they can do in mathematics), since these fields are frequently stereotyped as male.[19] Furthermore, Saul[20] discusses several psychological studies in the US context showing that no one is free from **implicit bias** – including academics.[21] *Implicit bias* refers to unconscious associations between groups and intellectual qualities. Haslanger discusses, for instance, how the presence of a male or female name on a CV frequently has a strong effect on how that CV is evaluated. However, experimental studies conducted in Europe involving hiring for higher-level positions in academia find that female applicants are as successful as their male counterparts in being interviewed and hired, suggesting that the most important causes of underrepresentation occur before women apply for tenure-track positions.[22]

We do not possess large-scale data concerning the prevalence of **sexual harassment** in philosophy, but comprehensive international reports have been targeting the issue in higher education.[23] The *Sexual Harassment in Academia – An International Research Review* commissioned by the Swedish Research Council[24] showed that sexual harassment occurs in all disciplines in academia and is reported by all groups (students, teachers, and staff). The report concludes that the cumulative result of sexual harassment in the academic environment causes significant damage to women's presence. Other factors may also have a significant impact on female underrepresentation at all levels of the academic hierarchy, such as childbearing and household labour. Structural problems like these – especially in developing countries – make the academic environment increasingly "hostile" to women as one moves forward in one's career.[25]

What about the specificity of philosophy? What could be the main barriers pushing women out of this field? By observing the underrepresentation of women in philosophy as compared to other disciplines in the humanities, Marilyn Friedman reflects on the adversarial style of philosophy's method, which involves critical reflection and dialectical engagement. She says that the "the pervasiveness of this practice may well account for the relatively low numbers of women who find the field appealing".[26] Of course, not all teachers exploit such practices in class, so one

can wonder to what extent it affects female students. Friedman concludes that these features of traditional philosophy's methodology are merely a partial explanation of women's lesser engagement and participation throughout their academic career in this field, since not all female students will feel alienated by them. Haslanger[27] also points out some of the field's specific practices as possible causes. She considers several dichotomies present in analytic philosophy (such as rational/emotional, objective/subjective, mind/body) as **gender schemes** that can negatively affect women. Moreover, a good philosopher's qualities would be typically associated with masculinity: to be penetrating and rigorous; to attack and demolish an opponent. She concludes that the underrepresentation of women in philosophy is also the result of exposure to a hostile masculinised environment.

It is a widely known fact that many of the celebrated male thinkers in the history of philosophy – Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Kant, etc. – have explicitly claimed in their writings that women are naturally unfit to reason and do philosophy, since they are inferior to men. These misogynist ideas are heavily present in the canon and have surely contaminated the philosophical debate for centuries. In addition to that, as a result of a male-dominated historiography, women were systematically erased from the philosophy books.[28] Consequently, female students are not able to see other women as participating in intellectual history. Hutton[29] argues that the reception of philosophers of the past is not neutral; it changes and develops over time based on social, cultural, and political elements. Indeed, the history of philosophy in which students have been traditionally educated was itself submitted to misogynistic biases. Consequently, historians of philosophy are now critically acknowledging the influence of long-neglected female voices, aiming to include them in the historical canon.[30]

Social injustice and the contribution of women to philosophy

If women's underrepresentation in philosophy – or in any other field – is the outcome of gender bias and discrimination – either in history books or in academia's practices – then these are outright injustices, and every injustice should be confronted. They generate unequal workplaces that reproduce undesired systems of bias that push women out of their careers. External barriers end up preventing women from majoring and achieving positions in universities despite their personal aspirations, and as a result, female students are not encouraged to pursue their talents.

Besides the individual and social cost of underrepresentation, we can argue for its negative effects for philosophy itself. Several philosophical developments are the direct result of the female participation in the field. If we consider the possibility of gendered interpretations of philosophical concepts, and the idea that one's perspective can determine the way one interprets the world, then we can make a strong case for the contribution of female participation in philosophy. This means that increasing the proportion of women in philosophy would improve philosophy itself.

For instance, we can mention the developments of feminist epistemology to the comprehension of human knowledge and systems of justification;[31] it intends to show that male dominated fields can overlook crucial insights and that scientific knowledge can benefit from female participation in the debate. Also, the critical assessment of the research on moral development introduced new elements into the debate concerning moral action. Carol Gilligan[32] claims that a biased methodology in experimental psychology and a hegemonic male voice in traditional moral philosophy disregarded important conceptions for our understanding of morality, such as feelings and empathy. All these developments are largely the result of female professional presence in philosophy and show that a gendered standpoint can affect philosophical reflection. Therefore, it is important to encourage more women to enter professional philosophy and make the field more welcoming and respectful towards them.

Recommendations

Several recommendations can be put forward to promote gender balance in higher education in general and in philosophy in particular. First and foremost, we must acknowledge data collection (local and nationwide) as an essential tool in policy-making and measure its impact. Therefore, philosophy departments must promote regular surveys and discuss their results.

It is not easy to change perceptions and attitudes towards women colleagues and students. However, some initiatives can be put forward to promote awareness of gender biases and stereotypes. Taking as a paradigm the efforts made to overcome these issues in the STEM fields (see, for instance, the work by UNESCO's SAGA project[33]), we are able to organise specific proposals around two key topics: to promote the visibility of women in philosophy; and to promote the attraction and retention of women throughout their careers into higher education.

Promote the visibility of women in philosophy

A fundamental measure to help women see themselves as part of a welcoming field is for them to perceive women as peers and mentors. Therefore, it is important to help stimulate the visibility of women in philosophy, especially in high-ranked universities and research organisations. It is also important to think about ways to expose undergraduates to female role models and mentors. This can be done by proposing prizes or grants aimed at women philosophers, as well as publicly recognising departments that demonstrate they have taken concrete actions to address the underrepresentation of women. On a daily basis and as a more personal course of action, each professor or researcher in charge of an organisation committee can avoid all-male line-ups in conferences and stimulate the inclusion of women speakers.

Additionally, any professor can be careful to ensure women philosophers' presence in course syllabuses, granting their ideas will be discussed and their texts will

be read. Deeply connected to the inclusion of women philosophers in university curricula are the efforts to retrieve historical women's philosophical contributions and expand the canon. Today, historians of philosophy are looking for a critical review of the canon enabled by a feminist approach. All these measures allow women students to feel that philosophy, as a discipline and workplace, comprehends them.

Encourage the recruitment, retention, and promotion of women

Specific initiatives can promote access and attract women to fields where they are underrepresented, assisting them in their path to professorships (including master's and PhD degrees). Focused scholarships and awards are regarded as promoting this kind of assistance. Furthermore, it is crucial to prevent gender bias in admissions and hiring. A way of doing that is to ensure that teachers and university staff are trained in gender-aware administration and provide gender-aware mentoring and workshops. To prevent sexual harassment is a crucial step in order to stimulate retention of women in higher education at all levels. This problem must be systematically confronted within the institutional framework. In addition to that, faculties can promote a network of contact teachers to whom students can feel safe to report acts of gender discrimination or sexual harassment they have suffered or witnessed without fear of retaliation. Reporting should also be increasingly facilitated for and less demanding of victims. Also, it is important to promote childcare facilities for students, particularly in developing countries.

There have been a variety of initiatives in recent years addressing the underrepresentation of women in higher education and philosophy, including international conferences[34] and book series.[35] Governments have been implementing centres for collecting and analysing gender balance data within universities[36] and nationwide. Furthermore, many national networks and associations have been promoting gender balance in philosophy, facilitating the circulation of publications and activities developed by women philosophers, as well as promoting a space for exchange and solidarity.[37]

Questions for discussion

- Is the underrepresentation of women or other disadvantaged groups in academia an issue acknowledged at your institution?
- Do you think that the underrepresentation of women and other disadvantaged groups in some fields of inquiry affects your organisation? If yes, what do you think that the academic and social impacts of such underrepresentation at your organisation are?
- Does your university/institution/faculty implement measures to recruit and retain women or members of underrepresented groups and achieve a greater balance? Which? How do you evaluate these measures?

Suggestions for further reading

- Thorgeirsdottir, Sigridur and Hagengruber, Ruth (eds.) 2020. *Methodological Reflections on Women's Contribution and Influence in the History of Philosophy*. Cham: Springer.
- Duffy, Leigh, Katrina Hutchison, and Fiona Jenkins (eds.) 2013. *Women in Philosophy: What Needs to Change?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Notes

1 David 2015
2 UNESCO 2019
3 Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (European Commission) 2019
4 Paxton et al. 2012
5 The data comes from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (www.hesa.ac.uk/). Apud Beebee and Saul, 2011
6 Beebee and Saul 2011
7 Paxton et al. 2012
8 Goddard et al. 2008
9 Araújo 2019
10 Paxton et al. 2012, 952
11 Van Camp 2010
12 Araújo 2019
13 Bergman and Rustad 2013; Nielsen 2017
14 Wilhelm et al. 2018
15 Krishnamurthy 2017
16 Alcoff 2003
17 See Finholt, in this volume
18 Maass and Cadinu 2003
19 Haslanger 2008
20 Saul 2013
21 See Berndt Rasmussen, in this volume
22 See Ceci 2018; Nielsen 2017
23 See Antonsen, in this volume
24 Bondestam and Lundqvist 2018
25 It should be noted that recent papers (Vincent-Lamarre et al. 2020; Staniscuaski et al. 2021) show that the Covid-19 pandemic especially affected women's academic productivity (measured by the ability to submit papers and to meet deadlines). The authors suggest that this is an effect of unequal division of domestic labour between men and women, which was exacerbated during the pandemic.
26 Friedman 2013, 28
27 Haslanger 2008
28 Waithe 2015; Hagengruber 2015
29 Hutton 2020
30 See Nilsen, in this volume
31 Anderson, 1995a, 1995b
32 Gilligan 1993
33 STEM and Gender Advancement (SAGA) is a global UNESCO project supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Their recommendations can be found in the following document: http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/saga-sti-objectives-list-wp1-2016-en.pdf

34 Such as The British Society 2021 Conference on the History of Philosophy Women in the History of Philosophy hosted by the University of Durham (https://bshp.org.uk/site/assets/files/1029/2021conf_full_programme.pdf)
35 Take, for instance, the Springer Book Series: Women in the History of Philosophy and Sciences, edited by Ruth Hagengruber, Mary Ellen Waithe, and Gianenrico Paganini (https://historyofwomenphilosophers.org/study/springer-book-series-women-in-the-history-of-philosophy-and-sciences/)
36 This is the case for the PRESTIGE Project, hosted at the UiT The Arctic University of Norway (https://en.uit.no/research/prestige)
37 Many networks and associations can be named, and we do not intend to cover all of them here. Take the following instances: UNESCO's Network of Women Philosophers of Latin America (REDDEM) is an instance of network working at the international level (reddem.org/); nationwide, we can mention the American Philosophical Association, which hosts the Committee on the Status of Women (www.apaonline.org/group/women), as is the case with the Women in Philosophy Task Force from the Australasian Association of Philosophy (aap.org.au/womeninphilosophy/). In Brazil we recently created the Brazilian Network of Women Philosophers (www.filosofas.org)

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4

CANON[1]

Fredrik Nilsen

In philosophy, the concept of canonising refers to the process of constructing the body of figures and works which one must know, read, and teach to be considered educated and knowledgeable in the field.[2] The concept stems originally from the Roman Catholic Church where it refers to the official declaration of dead persons to be saints, as well as the selection of religious texts that comprise holy works. The crafting of the philosophical canon began in the first half of the nineteenth century in the wake of the modern chronological writing of history in the German tradition (Leopold von Ranke, Johann Gustav Droysen) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's historical approach to philosophy.[3] In the aftermath of the feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, many contemporary interpreters of the history of philosophy questioned the traditional male- and western-dominated philosophical canon. The goal of this critique is to encourage a recovering or rewriting of the canon to include more women and non-western thinkers and thus make the selection of thinkers more representative and gender balanced. To fulfil this goal, it is important to uncover the reasons that women philosophers and thinkers outside the western tradition were not included in the canon and thus highlight the reasons why changing the canon is necessary. In this chapter, the focus lies on the neglect of women philosophers, although many of the points and arguments pertain to non-western thinkers as well. The arguments are probably also relevant for other humanistic disciplines, such as history, pedagogy, art history, history of literature, and music.

The philosophical canon

The philosophical canon is male dominated, with Simone de Beauvoir and Hannah Arendt as the only exceptions to this "rule".[4] Nevertheless, the history of women philosophers is as long and manifold as the history of philosophy itself. In

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ancient times there were many women, especially among the Pythagoreans, developing theories on soul, harmony, and child caring; in the middle ages, many women mystics offered interesting interpretations of the Scripture; in early modern times, women contributed significantly to the development of both rationalism and empiricism through their many letters to and dialogues with the male protagonists in this debate; in modern times, most of the male contributors to the history of thinking were accompanied by independent thinking women philosophers, such as Harriet Taylor, Lou Andreas-Salomé, Edith Stein, Hedwig Conrad-Martius, Gerda Walter, Hannah Arendt, and Simone de Beauvoir. These contributions have been neglected in the writings of the history of philosophy, although many canonised male philosophers acknowledged contributions from women.[5] The traditional presentations and interpretations of this history therefore represent only half the story, as the criteria for quality and inclusion into the canon itself were established and developed inside the male-dominated tradition.[6] Therefore, we often see that only women who thought and wrote in the same or similar manner as the canonical male philosophers are included.

The reasons for the neglects are compound and to some extent individual for every woman philosopher. However, as Marcy P. Lascano teaches us, we can track four general explanations for the discrimination.[7] First, one explanation for the exclusion is the belief that women have not produced any original arguments. It is a fact that most women philosophers throughout history had some sort of relationship to canonised male philosophers. This holds for the Pythagorean women of antiquity; Sophie of Hannover, the close friend and interlocutor of Leibniz; Margaret Cavendish, the member of the Newcastle circle together with Hobbes and Descartes; Emilie du Châtelet, the collaborator of Voltaire and translator of Newton; Damaris Cudworth Masham, the close friend of Locke and daughter of the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth; Harriet Taylor, the wife of Mill; and Lou Andreas-Salomé, the close friend of Nietzsche, Rilke, and Freud. This "rule" even pertains to the two most famous women philosophers, Hannah Arendt, a student of Heidegger, and Simone de Beauvoir, partner and collaborator of Sartre. Because of these relationships, many interpreters treat the arguments of women philosophers as retellings of, or "footnotes" to, the arguments of their male partner or collaborator. Consequently, one can get the impression that their arguments do not appear as original and therefore do not deserve to be mentioned or referred to in works on the history of philosophy.[8] The woman is considered as the passive and the man as the active partner in the collaborations, and the possibility of mutual exchange of ideas normally seems unthinkable. This is undoubtedly an example of misogyny.

A second possible explanation for the exclusion of women from the canon is that women were not actively engaged in the public discussions of philosophical questions, so that their arguments fell outside the hearing of the philosophical community at large. Their arguments may have been interesting and original, but they do not fit properly into the discussions between the male protagonists. It is a fact that women historically have not had the same opportunities as men for

education and research, nor to write and publish their work.[9] Most women in the history of philosophy came from noble families and had access to private education, but they were, at least until Anna Maria van Schurman's brave fight with the University of Utrecht in the seventeenth century, prevented from higher public education. We also see that many women, such as Hildegard of Bingen and Elisabeth of Bohemia, among others, have used different genres than their male colleagues to express their ideas. Whereas men typically used scientifically appreciated genres like treatises, monographs, articles, and essays, women often wrote private letters, diaries, poems, novels, and religious prayers.[10] Major reasons for this difference are that women have been excluded from academia and not allowed to publish in the same way as men, so that the appreciated genres were not "available" to them. Another explanation can be that women simply preferred other genres. In addition, women typically write differently and more carefully than men.[11] On the one hand, this fact makes their texts more nuanced, but, on the other hand, men's texts often appear as sharper and more sophisticated. There are also examples of women philosophers, such as George Eliot, who wrote under male pseudonyms to be able to publish their work and ensure that they were taken seriously.[12]

A third explanation posited is that, although women philosophers may have contributed to the production of original arguments, there was a belief that their arguments were not sufficiently philosophically interesting. Women philosophers often highlight aspects of and perspectives on philosophical problems that men do not address. In our own times, we learn this from care ethicists and their critiques of the "male perspectives" on ethical issues in the dominant theories of utilitarianism and duty ethics. Another example can be found in feminist reactions to John Rawls' universal and impartial theory of justice in the works of Susan Moller Okin and Martha Nussbaum. A historical example is Elisabeth of Bohemia's and Anne Conway's critical remarks to the Cartesian dualism of mind and body, where they both highlight the relevance of the "female" experience of migraine as a close connection, and not an independent existence, between mind and body. Another historical instance is the Pythagorean women philosophers, who underline the importance of childcare and the economics of the "household" (*oikos*), not only the politics and economics of the "city state" (*polis*), for welfare and human flourishing.[13] These perspectives are obviously interesting and enriching from a philosophical point of view, but they have fallen outside the categories for inclusion in the male-dominated tradition.

A fourth possible explanation for the absence of women in the philosophical canon is simply that they were female. As Genevieve Lloyd teaches us, women have traditionally been associated with sensitivity and passivity, and men with rationality and activity.[14] One can retract this way of understanding the relationship between the genders to the practical philosophy of Aristotle. According to Aristotle, women are not suited for active political participation since their rationality is weak and they are not capable of correct deliberations, decisions, and actions. They should therefore realise their nature through domestic pursuits in the "household"

and not, as free men, through political deliberations and decisions in the "city state". Although the view on women's capacities has changed for the better through the centuries, at least over the last one, Aristotle's theory has, both consciously and unconsciously, continued to characterise the way women philosophers have been treated in the discipline. Women have not been taken as seriously as men, not because they are incapable of doing philosophy and stating sharp principles and arguments, but simply because they were females. Also, in academia today, research on women thinkers such as Heloise, Olympe de Gouges, and Mary Wollstonecraft is not valued and appreciated as much as research on canonical male figures such as Aristotle, Kant, and Hegel. In addition, such studies are often named "gender studies" or "culture studies" rather than "philosophy".

Re-writing the canon

There are several examples of the absence of women in the philosophical canon. First, in the major international works on the history of philosophy, the theories and systems of women philosophers are neglected. The two most famous works from the twentieth century, which are still standard works, are *A History of Philosophy* (originally nine volumes, 1946–1975, two volumes added posthumously in 2003) by John Copleston and *A History of Western Philosophy* (five volumes, 1969–1975) by W. T. Jones. In both works we find brilliant interpretations of the main figures in the philosophical canon, for example Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger.[15] Women philosophers, on the other hand, are absent, and the works therefore only represent half the story. As a reaction to the tradition, Mary Ellen Waithe edited a four-volume work on women philosophers, *A History of Women Philosophers*, between 1987 and 1995. This work has been influential, and many philosophers have been inspired to further research and rewriting of the canon from the reading of this work.[16] However, this work also represents only half the story, since male philosophers are absent. Consequently, we still lack an international work on the history of philosophy where both women and men's contributions are fully recognised.

On a national level, we find further male-dominated interpretations and presentations of the history of philosophy. The most famous work in Norwegian is Anfinn Stigen's *The History of Thinking* (two volumes, 1983). Despite the ambitious title, this work does not contain any portraits of women thinkers. In the other works on history of philosophy in Norwegian, the same tendency is present, although some of them mention Simone de Beauvoir, Hannah Arendt, or both, shortly.[17] There are some prominent exceptions to this tendency, namely Hilde Bondevik and Inga Bostad's work, *Pauses of Thought: Philosophy and Theory of Science*, from 2003, and Linda M. Rustad and Hilde Bondevik's work, *Gender Perspectives in The History of Philosophy*, from 1999, which both include portraits of important women and place their works into the male-dominated tradition. They also contain presentations and interpretations of gender perspectives of canonised male philosophers, something often, but not always, absent from traditional works on the history of philosophy.

A second problem is that syllabuses in philosophical courses at universities are normally extremely male-dominated. The examples stem from Norway, but they are probably familiar to universities in other countries as well. In the autumn of 2019 a new textbook in philosophy for the mandatory introduction course in philosophy in Norway, *examen philosophicum*, was published at NTNU – Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim.[18] The publication raised a large debate in the national media since, according to the tradition, it did not include presentations and discussions on women philosophers, with some minor exceptions, for example a short, mostly biographical, note on Elisabeth of Bohemia. The authors tried to defend their choice by referring to women philosophers' lack of "reception history" (*Wirkungsgeschichte*), which means that the way, and to what extent, a work has been interpreted and understood, and indeed our thinking in general, has changed through history because of these interpretations. This problem also holds for most of the other textbooks in Norwegian meant for the *examen philosophicum*, for example the work used at UiT – The Arctic University of Norway.[19] This textbook contains a five page discussion on care ethics, and it also shortly mentions that John Stuart Mill, in collaboration with Harriet Taylor, was an important feminist thinker. In addition, some of the feminist critics of John Rawls' theory of justice are mentioned. Apart from these minor exceptions, the work, even though it is contemporary and thematically, not historically and chronologically, organised, belongs to the traditional male-dominated presentation and interpretation of philosophy.

Syllabuses for courses at bachelor, master, and doctoral level are also male-dominated, with exceptions for courses in feminist philosophy, which, on the other hand, tend to be very female-dominated.[20] For example, the bachelor courses in the history of philosophy at UiT – The Arctic University of Norway normally contain only male philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche. In addition to excerpts from original works of these philosophers, the textbooks that traditionally have been used are the works of Jones and Copleston, already mentioned. This tendency holds for the other universities in Norway as well.[21] The students are therefore directed into the traditional monotonous and male-dominated paradigm. An example of the female-dominated courses in feminist philosophy is the syllabus for the mandatory bachelor course in feminist philosophy at UiT – The Arctic University of Norway, where normally only works and interpretations of women authors are included. This practice is likely to lead to the impression that the works of women philosophers represent an appendix to, and not an integrated part of, the philosophical canon.[22]

Third, a problem related to the male-dominated syllabuses is the fact that, although the situation slowly improves, fewer women philosophers have been translated than men philosophers. For example, translations into Norwegian of *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir, *The Vita Activa* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* by Hannah Arendt, and *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* by Mary Wollstonecraft are among the very few exceptions. A remarkable example of a work that has not

yet been translated is Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* from 1951. The same problem holds for the works on gender by canonised male philosophers: Translations of John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* first arrived in 2004 and Aristotle's *Politics* in 2007, whereas Immanuel Kant's *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* and Friedrich Engels' *The Origin of the Family* have not yet been translated. There are also several examples of women philosophers who have not been translated into English, the *lingua franca* of our time. For sure, this fact makes it difficult to include women philosophers on syllabuses.

The examples mentioned are illustrative of the neglect of women in works on the history of philosophy as well as in the curricula and syllabuses in philosophical courses. Nevertheless, why do we need to rewrite, extend, and change the history of philosophy? There are several reasons why it is important to change the canon.[23] First, an inclusion of women will contribute to a more correct presentation of the history of philosophy. The history of women philosophers is as long, manifold, and diverse as the history of men philosophers,[24] and is absolutely not, as many tend to think, restricted to discussions on gender and feminism.[25] A traditional presentation of the history of philosophy, which largely excludes women, therefore represents only half the story ("his-(s)tory of philosophy"). In recent decades we have seen some work being done on women in the history of philosophy ("her-story of philosophy"). The most impressive and famous example is the four-volume work *A History of Women Philosophers* already mentioned. This work was important for the improved awareness and acknowledgement of women philosophers, and it was decisive for the establishment of "The Centre for the History of Women Philosophers and Scientists" at Paderborn University in Germany, the leading institution for the study of the history of women philosophers in Europe, if not in the world, today. Other examples are Mary Warnock's *Women Philosophers*[26] and Jacqueline Broad's *Women Philosophers of Seventeenth Century England*.[27]

A problem with these works is that you can get the impression that the history of women philosophers only represents a compartment or an appendix to the traditional or "real" history of philosophy.[28] In the future, it will therefore be necessary to develop a synthesis of the male-dominated and the female-dominated writing ("his- and her-story of philosophy") to gain a fuller and more historically correct presentation of the history of philosophy.[29] As we learn from history, a discipline that has come further in the integration process than philosophy, it was necessary to write "the history of women" for a while and make the women in the history visible before the academic community was ready and acquired the courage to integrate "the heroines of the past" into the general story. The integration of women did not only add "women history" or "gender history" to the general history, it also introduced new, and strengthened already established, historical disciplines like social history, culture history, and history of medicine.[30] It is interesting that philosophy, a discipline with so many influential thinkers, both male and female, who have argued for the equality of gender, has taken more time to prepare for this transformation compared to history, the history of literature and art history, but there are good reasons to believe that the time finally has arrived for

"the women turn" in the history of philosophy. Such an integration, or rather transformation, should be possible. Nevertheless, at the same time, it is methodologically challenging, since one must change the criteria of inclusion and probably also the way one presents and discusses the canonised male philosophers. This notwithstanding, such a transformation will be important to making curricula and syllabuses in philosophical courses more representative and gender balanced.

The inclusion of women in the philosophical canon will undoubtedly multiply and make the history of philosophy richer. Many women philosophers use different genres than their male counterparts; they often highlight other perspectives to established philosophical questions, and they usually write in different and more nuanced manners. Gender is thus important to philosophy, not because women only discuss issues concerning their own gender and situation (something which is not true), but because they typically highlight other phenomena, perspectives, experiences, arguments, or evaluations than men.[31] An excellent example is Elisabeth of Bohemia, whose philosophy we know only through her letters to René Descartes, and not through a treatise, like most men philosophers. Elisabeth's inclusion in the discussion of physical and psychical illnesses to the Cartesian mind-body problem represents undoubtedly a new and fruitful perspective. To include women philosophers in philosophical works and on curriculums and syllabuses in philosophical courses in higher education institutions is important and will enrich the canon and discipline in many ways. Women have not only contributed to the establishment and development of feminist philosophy, but to all kinds of philosophical disciplines. They should therefore be included in curricula and syllabuses in all philosophical courses, not only in courses on feminist philosophy.[32]

Finally, the inclusion of women philosophers in the canon will offer girls and women role models so that they will choose to study philosophy and start a philosophical career. Today, departments of philosophy are normally male dominated, and philosophy is still usually regarded as a "masculine discipline".[33] It is indeed possible for girls and women to have male role models and for boys and men to have female role models, but there is a tendency to relate to persons of the same gender. Many girls and women can feel alienated in the traditional male-dominated writings. Therefore, the inclusion of "the founding mothers", in addition to "the founding fathers", in the philosophical canon has great potential, at least in the long run, to contribute to a better gender balance in philosophy.[34]

Summary and recommendations

The major works in the history of philosophy as well as the curricula and syllabuses at universities are all male-dominated. Many women in this history have used other genres and written philosophy in a different manner than their male counterparts. Since male thinkers dominate the history of philosophy, the genres they have used to present their theories and discuss philosophical questions are the appreciated ones in the academy. It is necessary to change the canon so that the contributions of women are included and fully acknowledged. There exist no obstacles apart

from our attitudes and mental barriers, but they are hard, although necessary, to overcome to include women and transform the history of philosophy. The inclusion of women thinkers will unquestionably transform the history of philosophy and make it more correct, representative, interesting, and manifold.

Questions for discussion

- Why and how should we improve the syllabuses at universities to make them more representative?
- Should students learn about women and non-western thinkers, although they do not have the same "reception history" (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) as their white male colleagues?
- Do you think the inclusion of women thinkers in the philosophical canon will lead to a larger recruitment of women into philosophy?
- Do women and men write philosophy differently?

Suggestions for further reading

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Notes

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2 Waithe 2015, 22
3 Owesen 2010, 225. Contrary to the modern tradition, we find several women philosophers on the many lists of philosophers from Antiquity (Diogenes Laertius, Plutarch, Stobeaus). See Waithe 2015, 25
4 Bostad & Pettersen 2015, 129
5 Nilsen 2020, 6–13
6 Pettersen 2011, 79–81; Waithe 1987, XII; Waithe 2015, 23
7 Lascano 2019, 24
8 Gordon-Roth & Kendrick 2019, 268–269
9 Berges 2015, 387
10 Berges 2015, 387–388; Gatens 2017, 17–18; Gardner 2000, 29
11 Coates 2013
12 Gatens 2017, 17
13 Waithe 1987, XX–XXI

14 Lloyd 1984, XI; Gatens 2017, 14; Owesen 2010, 229; Bostad & Pettersen 2015, 130
15 We find similar ways of presenting the history of philosophy in other "classical" works, such as Russell 1967. A more recent example is Irwin's three volume work on the history of ethics (Irwin 2007–09)
16 See e.g., Thorgeirsdottir & Hagengruber 2020
17 Cf. Skirbekk & Gilje 2007; Nafstad 1996; Dybvik & Dybvik 2003; Næss 2001; Eriksen 1993
18 Dybvik et al. 2019
19 Anfinsen & Christensen 2013
20 Vinje 2017; Bostad & Pettersen 2015, 138
21 Vinje 2018, 49; Vinje 2017; Pettersen 2011, 10
22 Gatens 2017, 15
23 Nilsen 2020
24 Hagengruber 2015, 35; Waithe 1987, XIII
25 Bostad & Pettersen 2015, 131; Berges 2015, 382
26 Warnock 1996
27 Broad 2019
28 Owesen 2010; Berges 2015, 390–391; Tyson 2014, 3–8
29 Tyson 2014, 2
30 Andersen et al. 2014, 2015
31 Bostad & Pettersen 2015, 131, 142, 145; Pettersen 2011, 10–11
32 Bostad & Pettersen 2015, 140
33 Felix 2010; Felix 2011; Bostad & Pettersen 2015, 129, 136–137
34 Gordon-Roth & Kendrick 2019, 280

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5

MOTHERHOOD

Mitieli Seixas da Silva

Motherhood is broadly defined as "the state of being a mother".[1] A *mother* is identified as a person who is (totally or partially) responsible for raising a child and capable of giving birth or has a feminine gender identification (or whose sex is identified as such). *Mother and parenthood are in this sense distinct*. While *parenthood* refers to anyone who has the (moral, political or juridical) responsibility to raise a child, *motherhood*, in particular, applies only to individuals whose sex or gender identity defines their social and economic action through the consequences of being identified as a *woman*. Understanding how the concept of motherhood plays out in higher educational institutions, and its implications for gender equality, requires looking at its social construction, complex relationships with feminisms and the specific conditions involved in academic contexts. The concept of motherhood will here be employed broadly and include neighbour concepts like maternity. Maternity is, more precisely, the state of being or becoming a mother related to pregnancy, and universities and enterprises need to contemplate these aspects in their policies.

Theories on motherhood

At present there is a consensus that the image of motherhood as a natural role for women within society, that of a diligent mother, was a social construction originated in the West.[2] Changes to the structure of medieval society due to industrialisation and capitalism[3] favoured a different approach to the status of the child and, consequently, the understanding of the family in the 17th and 18th centuries.[4] The consequence of this profound modification in the structure of society is that motherhood emerged in connection to the invention of childhood. Around the 18th century, an environment was created with individuals whose achievement in life directly depended on education, play and individualised care,[5] and since men

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had to work outside the house to provide for the family, then the women became *natural* mothers: the ones whose unconditional love towards their offspring guaranteed the unity of the household.

The mentality responsible for the social construction of motherhood is illustrated in Rousseau's *Emilio*: "[the mother] serves as the link between them and their father; she alone makes him love them and gives him the confidence to call them his own. How much tenderness and care are required to maintain the union of the whole family!"[6] Rousseau and other influential philosophers' view on motherhood as an essential part of a woman's nature made it seem as if motherhood was the natural condition for women. This is the theoretical basis from which philosophers and thinkers of the 18th and 19th century built the *persona* of the woman through motherhood: since it is based on the nature of women, maternal love is the immediate consequence of her natural character. Some ethnologists in the early 20th century incorporated this view when they claimed that a "sexual division of the labor" between women and men was "natural" in different societies.[7] This approach essentialises and idealises motherhood (where only diligence, unconditional love and affection are at play) as shaped by the nature of women. Consequently, all deviant experiences of real women are excluded (blamed or even punished) and all the work involved in childcare is nothing more than women's natural job.

In *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Mary Wollstonecraft does not question the premise that women have a (moral) duty, due to their nature, to care for children, and this is one of her arguments for granting women the right to education. However, she argues that, to fulfil this role, women should be able to develop reason.[8] Unlike Rousseau, for whom the perfect mother would have the traits of beauty and submission, for Wollstonecraft, to fully exercise the duties of motherhood, women should be freed from the tyranny that prevents them from using their reason. So, one argument Wollstonecraft used to challenge objectors was that ignorant women could not be good mothers, as much as ignorant men could not be good fathers: "I now only mean to insist, that unless the understanding of woman be enlarged, and her character rendered more firm, by being allowed to govern her own conduct, she will never have sufficient sense or command of temper to manage her children properly".[9]

Following this path, women were inspired by the defence of civil and political rights based on predecessors' arguments. This thread can partially explain why women did not question their assigned natural destiny linked to motherhood (of course, becoming a mother was a "natural destiny" for most women before the advent of efficient and easily accessible birth control, as it still is for most of the women in undeveloped countries). So, at the turn of the 19th to the 20th centuries some feminists took over and incorporated an essentialised view of motherhood into their language and work.[10] The idea behind that movement was that fighting for civil and political rights did not exclude the assumption of a *woman's nature*, where the care of infants and family is the common ground. This theoretical approach is known as *maternalism*, for which motherhood is "the woman citizen's most important right and duty".[11] In the 20th century, it is possible to see the influence of this approach, for example, in the development of care ethics.

More recently, the debate persists in the form of a dispute over the existence of the maternal instinct. While some thinkers argue that women have an instinct grounded in evolutionary reasons called "maternal love" that connects them to their children in a way that no one else is, others question the very existence of this instinct. Among the defenders of the inexistence of maternal love, the book *L'amour en plus* by Elisabeth Badinter stands out, in which she questions the existence of this feeling stating that it is neither universal nor equal in intensity throughout women's real experience of motherhood. Thus, Badinter affirms that, since an essentialised view of motherhood is a source of oppression of women by men (particularly in psychoanalytic and medical discourses), efforts to reduce women through a natural view of motherhood must be rejected.[12]

Simone de Beauvoir, an author whose influence is evident in the emergence of the second wave of feminism, declares that motherhood is an obstacle for women's citizenship development.[13] That statement is a frontal confrontation of the viewpoint behind the claims of earlier moments, where motherhood is the realisation of citizenship for women. That is why only in the 1960s and 1970s did feminists, following in de Beauvoir's footsteps, challenge the idea of a natural determinism in terms of how women's experience of motherhood is grounded. The main argument here appeals to a reconfiguration of the nature of women in terms of a cultural basis: instincts, feelings and experiences traditionally linked to womanhood are not founded in nature but in social and cultural practices.

In this context, all the fields of women's experience must be analysed, both in their public (economical, civil and political) and private expression. Concerning that topic, consensus has emerged that the private sphere of life is not immune to political implication, seeing that there is no natural experience of womanhood that all women are destined to achieve. If the "private is political", a well-known slogan from the 1960s, then topics like reproduction, abortion and marriage, all concepts linked to what was traditionally called the "private sphere of life", are in dispute. In these decades it was the identity of the women through motherhood that was in debate. For this reason, the refusal of motherhood as a natural destiny and the fight for reproductive rights were at the centre of the arena in that phase of feminism, especially in the United States and Europe.

Technological advancements, in particular the advent of the birth control pill (a cheap and non-invasive method), have allowed women to enjoy sexuality and plan for motherhood. The result was that the baby-boom, which marked the post-World War II era, lowering the age of marriage for women and increasing birth rates,[14] was replaced in the 1970s by a new generation of educated women who deliberately chose to postpone motherhood to pursue their personal goals. For this reason, some authors have identified motherhood, since then, no longer as a destiny, but as a dilemma.[15] If motherhood is not a destiny for women, it means that it is possible to choose other forms of personal realisation (educational objectives, professional goals, sexual realisation in non-binary or heteronormative norms, etc.) as well as to choose other forms of mothering (late motherhood, surrogate motherhood, adoption, solo maternity, etc.).

Not all women were represented in the issues raised by the feminist movement, however. Some thinkers have pointed out that the opposition between mandatory motherhood and contraceptive methods did not adequately circumscribe the problems that most women faced, especially for women who lived in contexts of poverty.[16] Black feminists have shown that if motherhood is seen, on the one hand, through specific stereotypes of black mothers, it is also seen, on the other, as an empowering concept for black women.[17] In *Plantation Memoires: Episodes of Everyday Racism*, the Portuguese intellectual Grada Kilomba explores stereotypes associated with black motherhood, showing how the figure of a super strong black mother is anchored in racism.[18] According to Kilomba, it is true that the political strategy of linking the idea of strength to the image of black women's experiences of motherhood was a response from black feminists from the 1970s to challenge the racist image of the weakness and negligence of black mothers towards their children. However, those images also confine black women into experiences that are not real practices, because they are idealised,[19] or, more significantly, because they tend to convey the racist-sexist stereotype of a black mother as a woman who absolutely should forget about herself in favour of those under their care, favouring a situation that legitimates oppression.[20]

The significance of motherhood for black women goes far beyond the consideration of their responsibility towards their offspring. Patricia Hill Collins explains how community-based childcare was possible as an important feature of African American communities in the United States, and how central the figure of othermothers was to their family configuration. Citing bell hooks, Collins shows that the kind of support that black women received from othermothers within the community was only possible in a cultural environment where the child was not seen as a "property" of his parents,[21] a characteristic that has its roots in African traditions. Following Collins, the very idea of a shared responsibility between blood-related mothers and othermothers (aunts, grandmothers, neighbours, etc.) makes the experience of motherhood for black women an experience that defies capitalism in its roots, because it is an experience that challenges the idea of the children as a property of their parents. So, for some black feminists, in this sense, motherhood is a revolutionary experience.

For women of the 21st century, conception itself is one of the main issues. On the one hand, late pregnancy is a statistical fact about the life of educated women, both in developed and underdeveloped countries.[22] The difficulty faced by women who delay their decision to become pregnant is that the later that decision is made, the more their own body is exposed to medicalisation and medical intervention. Fertility rates are linked with age.[23] Fertilisation clinics are a billion-dollar business and promise to bypass biological barriers. However, this does not happen without a physical and, mainly, psychological burden to the mother: the whole process – getting fertile, getting pregnant, giving birth – becomes a medical issue monitored to the smallest detail with consultations, tests, medications and interventions. The chain of causes and effects seems to follow a pattern: to be competitive in the academic job market, women must study and work harder and delay motherhood;

to delay motherhood, they must submit themselves to medical practices that put their own body completely beyond their control. In addition, when academics become mothers, they experience a gap in their production and in the quality of their work that will take years to overcome.[24] It is not difficult to see the perversity of a contest like this for women who choose late motherhood.

Furthermore, childbirth can also be a process that alienates mothers from their body. To give birth to a child is a practice that has profoundly changed over the last century. Advances in health care and hygiene are directly related to the decline in maternal and child mortality, and the assigned importance of breast-feeding (for mother and child) has increased. Breast-feeding is commonly viewed as a practice that bonds mother and child together.[25] From historians to psychologists, paediatricians to obstetricians, the discourse and incentive for a prolonged breast-feeding period is almost unanimous between specialists. Moreover, the image of a mother breast-feeding her child has personified the ideal of motherly care and love – at least, since the 18th century.[26] Likewise, accepting and facing the breastfeeding journey means, for some mothers, a return to a connection with their own body, a return that is also to our animal ancestry and that is anchored in centuries of the cultural legacy from our ancestors.[27] Demands for equality in the job market have pushed authorities, governments, institutions, funding agencies and companies around the world into changing their policy to favour mothers so they can extend the breastfeeding period beyond maternity leave.

However, like other key experiences in women's lives, breastfeeding is a practice that is caught in the dilemma between the pleasures of motherhood and the danger of confining women in certain gender roles.[28] First, it is easy to fall into a romanticised view of this practice, in such a way that all the social and economic circumstances for its full realisation are forgotten. For this reason, in almost every public policy aimed at increasing breastfeeding, the target is only the mother, assuming, in the beginning, that it is their choice and responsibility to make the breastfeeding happen. However, baby feeding, as well as other issues faced by parents, is also a social practice and should be treated as such.[29] To state that breastfeeding is a social practice is not to say that it is not important for babies and women, or that it should not be supported by public policies. On the contrary, it means that the *decision*, the *risks* and the *conditions* for breastfeeding must be shared by all those responsible for the child (parents, community, institutions, companies, universities, state). The rationale behind this thesis is that to not consider the social and economic conditions to make breastfeeding successful will lead to the discrimination of women. This oppression can occur in different ways: for women that do not have the material conditions which guarantee that they can stay at home to breastfeed their baby, it means that they do not have any choice at all; for women who have the material conditions, given by state policy or familiar arrangements, there are always risks involved in lowering their productivity at work outside the home; for all women there is always the expectation that feeding the baby is their responsibility. So, in any case, women's autonomy is not fully respected. In conclusion, to equalise the biological difference between men and

women in this aspect, it is necessary to consider breastfeeding not *only* as a personal decision of women, but as a social practice, which must be negotiated, shared and supported by all individuals and society.

Summary

The issues raised above bring to the feminist movement of the 21st century the centrality of the body, since it is the woman's body that undergoes the technological interventions to gestate, and the alienation of giving birth and the burden of breastfeeding, as they claim the social value of motherhood. However, how can we reconcile these demands without falling into an essentialist notion of womanhood? One way of doing so is to look at the proposal of a matricentric feminism, held by Andrea O'Reilly, according to which this theory "seeks to imagine and implement a maternal identity and practice that is empowering to mothers".[30] If a mother's identity empowers them, then it cannot be an identity forged in patriarchal values. On the contrary, an empowering identity of a mother must be freed from ideological assumptions of patriarchal motherhood, for example, from the idea that motherhood is the only social role a woman can have (essentialisation) and the idea that the care for the child is only the responsibility of the biological mother (individualisation).[31] Constructing a motherhood identity (or a *mothering*) free from patriarchal values must balance, therefore, the autonomy of woman with the valorisation of this social role by all individuals and institutions, giving conditions to women to exercise mothering in the fullness of their self, with lightness, imagination, companionship and love. This is no longer a dilemma, but a challenge for everyone involved in conducting changes for equality in society.

Understanding how the concept of motherhood was forged in our history and how it was influenced by women's movements around the world can help us understand the place of women in our society today. This is not just a theoretical issue, as it impacts all stages of academic mothers' lives. That is why it is necessary to move from the historical and philosophical approach to practice, looking at what can be done by individuals and institutions, especially universities, to improve the conditions of academic mothers. The next section will be occupied with this objective.

Challenges and recommendations

Public policies for motherhood:

- Expand the Nordic model for family laws to countries where different parenting roles, rights and benefits are given to women and men and that aggravate existing gender imbalances in the job market. This includes similar paternity leave for mothers and fathers, financial support for single mothers and childcare supported by the State.

Practices to minimise the effect of the decrease in production of students due to motherhood:

- Universities should consider a maternity leave for students. It is improbable that the university alone could subsidise that period financially, but it is desirable, at least, that scholarship could be preserved in order that students can finish their work.
- It is necessary to contemplate students who are facing motherhood differently from other students in performance evaluations (e.g. longer deadlines).
- A period of pause for maternal (or parental) leave should also be considered in evaluations for grants, scholarships and positions.
- Support programmes (childcare at university) and/or financial aid for students with children.

Practices to minimise the effect of the decrease in the production of professors due to motherhood:

- It is necessary that the period in which the professor is on maternal (and, eventually, parental) leave be considered in the performance evaluation for progression in one's university career.
- Also, it is important that universities maintain places, laboratories, titles and stability for mothers who are on maternity leave.
- The period of maternity leave should not be considered as a "black hole" on mothers' curriculum in order to equalise competition with their male peers.
- In order to minimise the gap of production in the (first) years of motherhood for academic mothers, it is possible to extend the period of evaluation for grants, scholarships and positions.
- In some cases, it is possible that the university could hire a substitute for a professor that is on maternity leave, so the research *in laboratories* may continue in the researcher's physical absence.

Practices to incentivise the international collaboration of mothers:

- Reduced costs in conferences for mothers, because they will have to travel, in some cases, with their babies.
- Organisers should consider contracting the service of a babysitter and/or recreation for kids and babies in conferences.
- Conference organisers should reconsider the practice of having guest lectures at night and should also not encourage networking events such as evening dinners, practices that exclude people with childcare responsibilities, especially mothers. A friendlier environment for mothers would involve concentrating all activities (academic, social, networking…) during the day.
- Financial aid to mothers who are travelling with kids and/or family.

Necessary changes to make universities a mother/child friendly space:

- Mothers deal with implicit biases (the so-called "maternal wall bias") that negatively impact their self-esteem and, therefore, are decisive in their decisions about whether to take new steps in their careers. Thus, universities need to fight against biases, with specific programmes to encourage the progression of mothers in academic life.
- To support breastfeeding, universities can create "breastfeeding places" on their campus, proportioning a safe and friendly place to breastfeed and to store breastmilk. Women breastfeeding can be objects of sexual or moral harassment, so it is important for their safety that they can have a safe place to breastfeed at the university.[32]
- Ensure flexible working hours, so that mothers can extend the breastfeeding period beyond maternity leave. For example: extended lunch hours, early departure at the end of the day, or breaks during working hours.

Recommendations to support students with children:[33]

- Support for students with children in finding adequate housing.
- Priority placement for work and internship programmes for students with children.
- Access to extracurricular activities for children of students.
- Subsidised childcare during – at least – class times.
- Financial aid for tuition and fees.

Questions for discussion

- How does your institution consider hiring women who are (or potentially will be) mothers? Is there a specific programme for this population? What actions could be prepared to welcome mothers into your staff?
- In your view, should mothers, especially babies and young children, have some kind of differentiated treatment to be able to remain competitive in academia? If yes, what kind of actions is your institution willing to take? If not, why?
- How does your institution view the entry and retention of students who are mothers? Have you ever considered looking for those numbers? How can the institution of higher education ensure that students who are mothers do not drop out of their studies?

Suggestions for further reading

- Relevant for understanding stereotypes associated with mothers: O'Reilly, Andrea. 2016. *Matricentric Feminism: Theory, Activism, and Practice*. Bradford: Demeter Press.
- Relevant for discussion about social practices associated with motherhood like breastfeeding: Blum, Linda M. 1995. "Babies, and Breast-Feeding in Late

Capitalist America: The Shifting Contexts of Feminist Theory". *Feminist Studies*, 19(2), 290–311.

- Relevant to considerations on the impact of motherhood on academic careers for women: De Kleijn, M., et al. 2020. *The Researcher Journey through a Gender Lens: An Examination of Research Participation, Career Progression and Perceptions across the Globe*. Amsterdam: Elsevier. www.elsevier.com/gender-report.

Notes

1 Cambridge Dictionary n.d.
2 Gardner 2006
3 Federici 2004
4 Ariès 1962
5 Allen 2005
6 Rousseau 1979, 361
7 Kergoat 2009
8 Wollstonecraft 2017, Chap. 10
9 Wollstonecraft 2017, 182
10 E.g., Allen 2005; Collin & Laborie 2009; Hirata et al. 2009
11 Allen 2005, 8
12 Badinter 1980
13 de Beauvoir 2011
14 Friedan 1997
15 Allen 2005
16 Ávila 2019
17 Gardner 2006
18 Kilomba 2010
19 Kilomba 2010
20 hooks 1999
21 Collins 2005
22 Machado et al. 2019
23 Delbaere et al. 2020
24 De Kleijn et al. 2020
25 Knibiehler 2001
26 Carter 1995
27 Carter 1995
28 Blum 1995
29 Law 2000
30 O'Reilly 2016, 7
31 O'Reilly 2016
32 An example of an initiative to transform the university into a child-mother friendly place: www.ufn.edu.br/site/detalhes-noticia/ufn-oferece-espaco-amamentacao-no-conjunto-iii
33 Best colleges for students with children in the US: www.bestcolleges.com/features/students-with-children/

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6

INTERSECTIONALITY

Katrin Losleben and Sarah Musubika

Coined by American civil rights advocate and leading scholar of critical race theory Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, intersectionality refers to the study of overlapping discriminations. Understanding the critical framework of intersectionality allows for an exploration of how, for example, racism, sexism, heteronormativity, misogyny, ableism, classism, trans- and homo-hate, and hostility towards other cultures, work together. The discriminations happen on several levels, often simultaneously; they are interrelated, and create, maintain, and build up systems of oppression.[1] Crenshaw posits that experiences of oppression cannot be understood independently but must be grasped in their interactions, where they frequently reinforce each other. It is important to note that intersectionality is not only about identity – how one identifies or is identified – but encompasses how structures help to oppress and privilege individuals or groups.

The origins of intersectionality are found early among Black, Aboriginal, and Indigenous feminisms where systems of oppression like racism or sexism are recognised as linked and constituting each other. The concept helps to understand how identities in their manifold composition can experience and create differently both opportunities and obstacles (including simultaneously) within what Collins calls a "matrix of domination".[2] Intersectionality is a framework to understand these moments and structures of opportunities and oppression within an ethos of social justice[3] and to transform those for the better.[4] For example, applied to white feminism, an intersectional approach would shed light on its colour blindness, hierarchies, hegemonies, and exclusivities.

Understanding intersectionality

As individuals living and working in universities, we are never seen simply as an "educator", "administrative staff member" or "student", but as complex beings

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with a profession or function and various identity markers like age, gender, sexuality, ability, ethnicity, skin colour, social background, language, religious beliefs, class, academic line, and so on. This "composition" changes over a lifetime depending on context, geography, time, experiences, the way we tell ourselves and others our story, and how others see and conceptualise us. The identity markers never mean anything by themselves; quite contrarily, we ascribe meanings to them. Despite or because of this fictive (sometimes authentic) character, these categories have very real consequences for individuals because of the structures of difference and discrimination that work along their lines.

Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw introduced the extremely successful term "intersectionality" and its metaphor of the crossroads[5] to theorise the "various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's employment experiences".[6] Subject to her analysis was the DeGraffenreid vs. General Motors court ruling, where five Black women sued General Motors, alleging that the employer's seniority system perpetuated the effects of past discrimination against Black women.[7] Crenshaw understood that Emma DeGraffenreid and her peers were discriminated against both as women and as Black people. However, the court did not understand that discrimination along the lines of race and gender here played together, or in other words, were intersecting. The employer was cleared of the allegation of discrimination because they factually did employ Black people (but only men) and women (but only white). By judging the case through the single-axis framework (race or gender), the court "theoretically erased" the Black women.[8] In this case, however, there was, besides the axes of race and gender, also that of class: "in race discrimination cases, discrimination tends to be viewed in terms of sex- or class-privileged Blacks; in sex discrimination cases, the focus is on race- and class-privileged women".[9] One could also say that being compared to those who had actually acquired a job was already a heavy misconception of the unemployed Black women. Here Crenshaw applied the concept of multidimensional experiences, which is rooted in Black feminist thought, and came to the following picture:

> The point is that Black women can experience discrimination in any number of ways and that the contradiction arises from our assumptions that their claims of exclusion must be unidirectional. Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in the intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination.[10]

Transferring the analogy to the university, one might imagine a Southeast Asian (read ciswoman) standing at the intersection of two hallways in the Department of Theoretical Physics of a University of the Global North. Busily, human resource employees and academics head through the hallway to a job interview. The

applicant has not been considered relevant for the job, despite having the qualifications. When litigating, she would receive the answer that there was no discrimination at work, proven by the fact that the department has previously hired women (but only White European and/or American) and Southeast Asians (but only men) – this means that the institution is supposedly not responsible for this specific problem. As a result, the Southeast Asian woman "falls between the cracks" – there is no acknowledgment that she is discriminated against because of her ethnicity and gender in combination, thus deeming the issue at hand irrelevant. As Crenshaw said later about Emma's case: "there was no name for this problem. And we all know that, where there's no name for a problem, you cannot see a problem, and when you cannot see a problem, you pretty much cannot solve it".[11]

What makes "the problem" even more difficult to grasp, using the analogy of the traffic intersection, is that there might be different cars that hit the person: sometimes it is race and gender, as Crenshaw showed; sometimes it is ability, sexuality, and gender; other times it is sexuality and ethnicity minus gender; and at yet other times it is all the cars at once. Having a name for the problem – intersectionality – is the necessary condition to begin addressing it. The notion of intersectionality sharpens the understanding of what an individual who differs from the dominant group experiences because of who they are/their identity markers. Moreover, it heightens the awareness of the "traffic" at a university: what cars you, as administration staff, might sit in; what obstacles the "traffic" might cause to people who are read as "different from the dominant group"; and that it might be important to slow down the cars to reflect on one's own and institutional practices. Intersectional thinking can be understood as a theoretical framework that helps to dissect situations thoroughly and choose measures accordingly relative to the specific case.

In resistance to patriarchy and white feminisms, the ideas behind intersectionality have been pronounced at different moments in US history, in South-Asian scholarship, or by Indigenous voices like Miri woman and Aboriginal activist Dulcie Flower in the 1950s. Already, roughly a century before that, an abolitionist, Sojourner Truth, famously asked: *Ain't I a woman?* With this, the former slave and then preacher pointed out that Black women were welcome neither in white women's movements nor in Black (male) anti-slavery movements – and their specific problems, thus, remained unaddressed. Another early treatise on what would later disembark under the term intersectionality was Anna Julia Cooper's (1891) *A Voice from the South*, where she has brought together the interdependences of race, gender, class, region, and nation. In the late 1960s and 1970s, Black women in the US allied with Chicanas, Latinas, Asian-American and Indigenous women,[12] Black liberation movements on the African continent, the African diaspora, and across geographies with anti-colonial struggles in general.[13] A decade later, the Black queer Combahee River Collective challenged the racism and heteronormativity of white feminist scholarship and activism which had sought and still seeks white women's liberation from the oppressive structures of the heteropatriarchal home through the exploitation of Black, Chicana, and Latina women, and women from the Global South and Global East. In that spirit, Crenshaw drives home her point

through a threefold description of intersectionality in her article "Mapping the Margins"[14]: *Structural intersectionality* (often evoked in the operationalisation of literature) refers to "ways in which the location of women of color at the intersection of race and gender, makes their actual experiences of domestic violence, rape, and remedial reform qualitatively different from that of white women".[15] *Political intersectionality* describes how, historically, feminist and anti-racist discourses in the US functioned in "tandem to marginalize experiences, needs, and political visions of women of color".[16] Crenshaw argues that women of colour are situated within at least two subordinate groups that pursue conflicting agendas with neither of them construed around their (women of colour) experiences; instead, anti-racism reproduces patriarchy, and feminism reproduces racism. To Crenshaw, ironically, women of colour are asked to choose between these two inadequate analyses, each of which "constitutes a denial of fundamental dimensions of their subordination".[17] *Representational intersectionality* thus relates to ways in which images of women of colour are produced, drawing on sexist and racist narratives and the ways in which critiques of those representations continually marginalise and reproduce the objectification of women of colour.[18]

Transferring intersectionality to the university: to understand how the different strands of discrimination work together and affect lives, one needs to analyse power relations among individuals in their respective contexts. Helpful here is the framework of the "domains of power".[19] With this framework, Patricia Collins developed a device with which intersecting systems of power can be understood in their situatedness. This is specifically helpful for analysing intersectional power relations in universities, where the circumstances inevitably differ around the globe. The framework encompasses the relevant levels that make a university: power is executed through the institution (so-called *structural domain of power*); through rules and regulations of everyday life and policies (*disciplinary domain of power*); through (non-) representations, ideas, and ideologies shaped by media and journalism, which are a part of academic and university life; or by curriculums that build the foundation of every programme and course (*cultural domains of power*). Finally, the *interpersonal domain of power* refers to the human interaction that brings every university system to life.[20] To understand how power is exerted and resisted in an institution, university, department, or centre, the domains can be analysed separately in terms of how they work together.

There has been some critical scholarship on intersectionality. A case in point is made by Delgado who presents a two-fold critique through a conversation with Rodrigo.[21] *Practical consequences*: Rodrigo critiques the intersectionality framework of identifying sub-groups within a category, yet, without an explicit practical solution. To Rodrigo, the best those in the subgroup get is more attention. Rodrigo, however, posits that the same attention could harm members of that very group because the formalism created can "invite in power, but can also show it the door".[22] The framework, therefore, cuts both ways, for example in the US, an intersectional group – children of undocumented parents – could end up being deported when authorities decide to send their parents back home.[23] He further

adds that the emergence of new subgroups and the demand for recognition, incidentally, create infinite divisibility in the sub-categories. To Rodrigo, this creates challenges for the legal system and political work, which naturally presupposes groups,[24] because there is no guarantee that emerging groups will not consider the operating frame of analysis as too broad. It then becomes a vicious cycle of accusations and subgroups that "paralyzes progressive work and thought".[25] *Conceptual incoherence*: Rodrigo also critiques the intersectionality framework of standing on a weak conceptual footing, presupposing essentialism, and being a social construction.[26] He argues that special treatment of intersectional categories should not presuppose that a "comparison group is better off, they may not be, at least not all of them".[27] He adds that members of subgroups could be misled to believe that they are endowed with a feature that justifies special treatment, yet nobody out there wears the label "intersectional person" or "person who occupies one category".[28]

Experiences of intersecting discrimination

Drawing on both Crenshaw's dimensions of intersectionality and Collins' framework of domains of power, which are seemingly at work in academia, we, with the following, elaborate some fictive examples in order to extract experiences of intersecting discrimination.

Example 1: N

N is a Black transgender woman (and has been using the pronouns "she/her" for three years now) who lives in a psychologically abusive relationship. As her financial situation is strained and she has earlier experienced open discrimination by potential landlords, she avoids moving out. N had been enrolled in an arts program at a college in a US city, but after having experienced everything from microaggressions[29] to blunt misogynoir, she has quit the programme and is now enrolled in a minor in gender studies. N likes the programme and engages in discussions, but when her teacher encourages her to contribute to the department's blog, she reacts with disbelief and paralysed inactivity. In assignments, she regularly faces writer's block and rarely submits on time. Because N approaches topics creatively and with mixed methods, because she is orally very articulate, and because she speaks from her massive experience, N has recently yielded to the plea of her teacher and finally joined a tutor team for a course in her programme. Here, she steadily learns to experience herself as an intersectional educator and as an important agent for the empowerment of others to understand and embrace their own and others' intersectional identities.[30] Pursuing a career in academia seems to be out of reach for her despite her talent and her intelligence. She is simply too different.

N lives "with three strikes" as a transgender activist and scholar.[31] With a subject position that experiences intersecting discriminations through racism, trans-hate,

and misogyny, her life is, literally, high risk,[32] and her academic future is insecure in a non-transformed university. Physical violence is likely to happen to her, and the fear of it alone will affect her body and thinking. Consequently, her (written) academic performances are fragile. It is the responsibility of administrative staff and teachers at the institution to use their disciplinary power to facilitate exams when needed or wished. On an interpersonal level, N is read as different by the heteronormatively socialised white majority of teachers and students which can hamper cooperation on academic subjects. On the level of the cultural domain of power, N explores and transforms the representation of trans issues in the curriculum if the teachers allow her – creativity is a strand in her academic thinking through which she explores alternative research methods like arts from her specific positionality. This not only empowers her but also diversifies the voices in the classroom. As such, her positionality is a strong asset in educational work that seeks to be powerful and transformative for both teachers and students.[33]

Example 2: O

Five years ago, O (21) migrated from Turkey and moved to a mid-sized city in Denmark, together with his family.[34] Here, the three siblings attended middle school, but in contrast to the sisters, P, and Q, who quickly found their way into the social and formal requirements and expectations of a Danish school, O did not "land". The other, mostly white ethnic, students of Danish nationality refer to him and his boys as "the Turks", as "the immigrants", or, in the worst moments, as the "sissies". When O and his friends try to defend their self-respect with scuffles, the teachers and head of school (white, non-racialised ethnic) interfere. Their overly strict handling of the boys and him confirms his perception that they, "the Turks", are seen and treated as inferior. At home, his parents fully trust the school system and the teachers. They are convinced that the teachers do their best for O and hardly follow up – neither when it comes to penalties nor to homework. They seldom check his presence at school, as his mother works at a major company before and after office hours and his father works in shifts and is often exhausted. A physical education teacher who has a Turkish background understands that O is a troubled young man and encourages him to attend some extracurricular sports activities. The two bond over a workout, and O's scholarly ambition flares up, but shortly after transitioning into 11th grade, O drops out of school. While his sister P has decided on an apprenticeship in administration, and Q pursues a bachelor's programme at a business school, O sends out applications to potential employers when forced to go to a job centre. He is rarely invited to interviews, and he doubts that he will fit into a white Danish workforce. Hanging with his boys is where he feels more complete.

O's school career is characterised by the intersectionality of sexism and racism, both on the interpersonal level as well as on the cultural one; this young man is othered based on his cultural background. He is teased in the schoolyard, and his perspectives based on his background play no role in the curriculum. The

representatives of the school hardly contextualise his reaction to the teasing and silencing, and consequently penalise him harshly, executing a formalised, stiff disciplinary power. For O, both on the disciplinary as well as on the interpersonal level, the ethnic and cultural discriminations intersect with those of gender. The developing masculinity of O is troubled.[35] His female siblings are seen as more conforming to the structures of the school system, and, consequently, will proceed to university and into the job market, although they might experience the intersection of (female) gender and ethnicity.[36] The short positive interpersonal relationship with a teacher (who has themselves obviously found a career but should not be used as proof of non-discriminatory practices at educational institutions) is too short and unsupported by the institution to make an impact on O's education. O is an example of a student who has never entered university due to intersecting discriminations earlier in school.

Example 3: S

S is a young *trawlwulwuy* woman who belongs to the *tebrakunna* country in Tasmania in the unceded land now called Australia; she is also a sociologist. The research she undertakes is guided by a commitment to social justice for her people and emerges from and benefits her community, as it puts her people's needs and interests to the fore.[37] Of course, her research unfolds from Indigenous knowledge and methodologies. Despite a growing body of Indigenous scholarship and its visibility, she experiences harsh headwinds at her institute: it is said that her research questions are of little relevance to greater audiences, and her methodology is subjective, even unscientific. In teaching, her suggestions to include Indigenous voices in the syllabus are silenced. Also, she had expected more support from her male (Indigenous) colleagues, but they seem indifferent at best, openly sceptical and disruptive at worst as she investigates from the standpoint of a racialised female Indigenous body. But how could she not? Taken together, plus her internal battle with how to be a part of an institution that resides on unceded lands and is driven by capitalist values, she does not see much of a future for herself in academia. There are less contested, more effective ways to benefit her people. What about working for an NGO?

As an Indigenous ciswoman, S is committed to her community's ontology, axiology, and epistemology[38] and stands at the intersection of institutional racism and sexism, and perhaps also ageism for being a young scholar, both on structural and cultural levels. Her positionality as an Indigenous scholar and her language competencies are both an asset as well as a burden[39] – from the perspective of institutional power, being non-white is an obstacle to entering institutions[40] and her research is often marginalised as irrelevant and unscientific within the mainstream academy. This happens both on a cultural level when receiving reviews of her submitted papers and on an interpersonal level during discussions in the lunchroom. The cultural power through the representation of her and other Indigenous voices in curricula is mostly blighted. In her specific field, however, her

research is novel, trans-disciplinary, and highly relevant for her community and beyond. In sum, she constantly negotiates the oppressor's system and values of the white patriarchal university and the benefits for her community. This tension is demanding on a personal level.

Oppression and privilege at work through an intersectional eye

Intersectionality is a powerful tool to understand how both oppression *and* privilege work. As institutions are "stable, valued, recurring patterns of behavior",[41] as a university staff member, as a teacher, and/or as a student, one needs to check from which (privileged) position one behaves and create a culture by these recurring actions where one's privileges lie, helping oneself. This can be used to support and care for (multiple) marginalised and oppressed subjects.[42] Studies show that in the US, the chances that an application will be successful shrinks if the applicant identifies as Black and female (in relation to the default white male applicant), and in Norway, the chance of be called in for an interview as a son of immigrants is lower than that of a daughter or one who bears a foreign-sounding name.[43] On an institutional level, and in the role of a decision-making employer or member of a committee, it is then important to ask where stereotypes and implicit biases influence a decision against a candidate and to counteract those biases. Moreover, you must ask how your attitude and decision contribute to (re-)producing the majority of the dominant social categories in this specific work environment. Those biases come seldomly as open racist testimonies and can be veiled, for example, as the "under complexity" of the theoretical approach, a "too personal" writing style in the papers, or a non-comprehensible swing in the curriculum vitae or similar. In cases where a candidate who does not resemble most colleagues chosen (in any department, not only departments for "gender and diversity"), it is not enough to have employed them but one must work constantly, self-reflecting on a transformation within all domains of power. What unimagined thoughts and ideas suffice with the new colleague? Be self-critical: do you feel resistance because these ideas question the institution's (and with that: your own) tradition?[44] Finally, a question to ask would always be who has not applied at all (also on the student level), why, and how one might reach out to those individuals.

Intersectionality is an essential analytical tool for facilitating the transformation of the academy, considering that we are part of it and hope to see others therein and those to come, leaving above the vices of social stratification. The academy consists of individuals with different capacities – students, employees, lecturers, and support staff who are faced on a daily basis with social, structural, political, disciplinary, interpersonal, and representational challenges rotating around power and oppression. Intersectionality becomes a term/perspective and a theoretical/methodological framework that facilitates a holistic comprehension of such challenges. Considering that academia ought to harness democracy, educational and administrative discourses should embrace multidimensional approaches that promote the same. Premises and parameters in educational spaces that tend to marginalise individuals, whose experiences cannot be described within tightly drawn parameters,

inadequately capture the facets of marginalisation in their totality. Moreover, frames of interpretation of disadvantaged people's experiences are equally part of the multi-dimensional intersections of their experiences. Ironically, our judgments of those experiences (as stakeholders in the academy) often consist of inherent biases emanating from our own situatedness. Contrary to the predominant ascriptions, like the uni-directional single-axis analysis framework that tends to shroud disadvantaged people's experiences and obstruct redress to their needs and claims, intersectionality engages and analyses intersecting systems of power based on situatedness, thereby giving impetus to social justice. These reflections should also influence curricula, syllabuses, and classroom interaction to not only facilitate a pedagogical transformation in the academy, but also the experiences of the individuals therein.

Summary

- Intersectionality is a concept for analysing social differences (and samenesses) and the multiple ways in which discriminations affect subjects along the axes of race, gender, sexuality, social class, socio-economic status, nationality, geographical position, and other lines of difference.
- Intersectionality is not necessarily about identity – how one identifies or is identified – but about how societal structures help to oppress and privilege individuals or groups.
- It is a concept, a scholarly theory, and a methodology for research across several disciplines; it is a lived reality; it is central in social movements and political activism, as well as a transformative approach in work-centred processes like university administration and pedagogical discourses.
- The concept of intersectionality with its predecessors puts words on the hierarchical heterogeneity of women and the inequality between them, and critiques white feminism's exclusion practices.
- In the first instance, researchers, students, and administrative staff need to be self-reflexive of their own situatedness and privileges, and use these privileges to change application processes, curricula, grading, and evaluation to be less discriminating.
- Privileges need to be unlearned.
- Understanding intersectional experiences and working for the disruption of a system that allows discrimination is messy and complicated. However, a system that builds on the disempowerment, violation, and exploitation of others cannot be called good enough or even excellent.
- Intersectionality always needs to be approached critically to set against identity politics and the emptiness of an overused term.

Questions for discussion

- What is my privilege?
- How is a person's situation shaped by discrimination?

- How do discriminations along several social axes (ethnicity, ability, gender, etc.) overlap and enforce each other?
- How is my perception of a situation shaped by cultural expectations, traditions, and stereotypes? Where are my biases?
- How can I let go of organisational short-cuts that hide behind "the system"? What is my agency in this institution?
- How far is my department/office/classroom aware of intersectional discrimination and how does it discuss and approach it?

Suggestions for further reading

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Notes

1 Crenshaw 1989
2 Collins 1990
3 Collins and Bilge 2016, 147
4 de los Reyes and Mulinari 2020, 185
5 For a recent critique of the crossroads metaphor, see Rodó-Zárate and Jorba 2022
6 Crenshaw 1989
7 Crenshaw 1989, 141–142
8 Crenshaw 1989
9 Crenshaw 1989, 140
10 Crenshaw 1989, 149
11 Crenshaw 2016; see also Antonsen, this volume
12 Collins and Bilge 2016, 65
13 Bilge 2020; see also: Davis 1981; Moraga 1983; Smith 1983; Spelman 1988; Higginbotham 1992; Collins 1990
14 Crenshaw 1991
15 Crenshaw 1991, 1245
16 Crenshaw 1991, 1252
17 Crenshaw 1991, 1252
18 Crenshaw 1991, 1283
19 Collins 2017
20 Collins 2017, 26
21 Delgado 2011
22 Delgado 2011, 1267
23 Delgado 2011, 1266
24 Delgado 2011, 1263–1264
25 Delgado 2011, 1264
26 Delgado 2011, 1268
27 Delgado 2011, 1269

28 Delgado 2011, 1269
29 See Branlat, this volume
30 See Lester 2018
31 Lester 2018
32 See National LGBTQ Task Force, n.d.
33 hooks 1994
34 See Staunæs 2003
35 Staunæs 2003
36 Chakrabarty 2000
37 Moreton-Robinson 2013
38 Moreton-Robinson 2013
39 Smith 2012
40 Midtbøen 2014; Quillian and Midtbøen2021
41 Huntington 1965
42 Gay 2014
43 Midtbøen 2014
44 Penner 2021

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PART II

Underlying culture, attitudes, and practices

7

DISCRIMINATION[1]

Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen

Compare:

> Non-Discrimination: A philosophy department seeks to hire a professor. One of the applicants – Brilliant – excels relative to all others in all dimensions listed in the call. Brilliant has far better teaching evaluations, superior administrative experience, far more high-quality research publications, much better collegial qualities, etc. The department hires Brilliant.
>
> Discrimination: Assume the details above under non-discrimination, except for the fact that Brilliant is a minority person and the hiring committee is worried that a minority person will not fit in. Also, members of the committee find it hard to see the many excellences of Brilliant – as Brilliant has published on topics that most members of the department are unfamiliar with. Hence, it is easier to be impressed with the qualities of some of the majority applicants – they have strong recommendations from other white, male, middle-aged philosophers, whose judgments the members of the committee trust. The department hires a not so well-qualified applicant, who is a white, middle-aged, man – like the members of the hiring committee.[2]

Many would say that in the first case there is no discrimination, whereas in the second there is. Many would add that what the department does under non-discrimination is not morally wrong – it is not wrong to hire the best qualified applicant – whereas what the department does under discrimination is morally wrong – it is wrong to discriminate.

This comparison illustrates an important point: discrimination, in the sense that people often object to, cannot simply consist of the differential treatment of individuals – what we might call *generic discrimination*. Both non-discrimination and discrimination involve such treatment. However, in the former case, the differential

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treatment is based on qualifications, and although any form of objectionable discrimination amounts to generic discrimination, it is a distinct subspecies of generic discrimination to which people object. One might suggest:

> Meritocratic Discrimination: Employer discriminates against applicant$_1$, if 1) there is another applicant, applicant$_2$, who is less well qualified than applicant$_1$, and yet 2) employer hires applicant$_2$.[3]

This notion of discrimination goes hand in hand with:

> Meritocratic Wrongness: What makes discrimination wrong is that it wrongs the best qualified applicant.

Call the conjunction of meritocratic discrimination and meritocratic wrongness the *meritocratic approach* to discrimination. Offhand, it seems appealing. However, it is not the only possible approach, and for reasons indicated below, it is probably not the best.

Different notions of discrimination

There are views besides meritocratic discrimination concerning what discrimination is that are equally adept at explaining why my two opening cases differ in terms of whether they amount to discrimination. Consider the first:

> Group-Based Discrimination: Employer discriminates against applicant$_1$, if 1) there is another applicant, applicant$_2$, who is a member of a socially salient group different from that of applicant$_1$, and 2) the employer hires applicant$_2$ and not applicant$_1$ for that reason.

A "socially salient group" is a group such that if one perceives another person to be a member of it, it makes a difference in a wide range of different social interactions.[4] In a sexist society, to perceive someone as a man or woman makes a significant difference in social interactions in a wide range of different contexts. However, to perceive someone as better qualified for a professor position does not make much of a difference to social interactions outside academia. Hence, in group-based discrimination it follows that discrimination occurs when, in the second version of my opening example, Brilliant is not hired because of Brilliant's perceived minority status. More needs to be said about the vague notion of social salience; nevertheless, offhand, typical lists of protected groups or traits in discrimination laws, e.g., gender, race, age, disability, and religion, include, or implicitly refer to, groups that clearly qualify as socially salient groups.[5]

One striking difference between meritocratic discrimination and group-based discrimination emerges if we imagine a third variant of our opening case. Suppose Brilliant (despite the name) is not the best qualified candidate, but is rejected

because of, say, her gender. Suppose the employer simply refrains from determining how her qualifications rank relative to those of other applicants. Under meritocratic discrimination, this would not qualify as a case of discrimination, but under group discrimination it does. This speaks in favour of group discrimination. An applicant who is rejected simply on account of her gender has a complaint about discrimination, even if she is not the best qualified.

Here is a second alternative to meritocratic discrimination:

> Moralised Discrimination: Employer discriminates against applicant$_1$, if 1) there is another applicant, applicant$_2$, whom the employer hires, and 2) it is morally wrong for the employer to choose applicant$_2$ instead of applicant$_1$.

Meritocratic and moralised discrimination both imply that, given that it is wrong not to hire the best qualified applicant in my opening pair of examples, the second case amounts to discrimination, while the first might not. Nevertheless, the two notions can be distinguished. Consider a case where the employer hires the best qualified applicant but hires the applicant *only because* the applicant has the favoured racial identity. Assuming that in such a case the rejected applicants have been wronged, it follows that this case involves moralised discrimination, but not meritocratic discrimination. Since, intuitively, this is a case of (wrongful) discrimination, it suggests, in one respect, that moralised discrimination captures better what we mean by discrimination.

The two notions of discrimination are also distinguishable in cases where an employer hires an applicant who is not best qualified but it does not seem morally problematic to do so. Suppose, for example, that as a part of a corporate social responsibility programme, a Ukrainian employer decides to give extra points to applicants who are disabled veterans, even though disability is a disadvantage in relation to the particular job functions at hand.[6] In such cases, it means that the employer does not hire the best qualified applicant; nevertheless, it is arguably not wrong to hire on this basis. This is something moralised discrimination can accommodate and meritocratic discrimination cannot. In the latter account, the Ukrainian employer discriminates against non-veterans, but under the meritocratic approach, the employer wrongs the better qualified, non-veteran applicants.[7]

It looks then as if there are at least two plausible competitors to meritocratic discrimination. In the next section, I shall argue that group-based discrimination is preferable to meritocratic discrimination. But before doing so, I would like to indicate why moralised discrimination is problematic. First, plausibly, there are wrongful forms of generic discrimination that are not best seen as discrimination in the relevant, narrower sense. Take nepotism as an example. Arguably, this amounts to wrongful, preferential treatment of friends and family members. However, few would classify nepotism as discrimination in a pertinent narrow sense against non-family members, etc. Second, if, by definition, discrimination is wrong, then to know whether something *is* discrimination, we first need to know whether it is wrong. Since people disagree about when differential treatment is wrongful, given

moralised discrimination, they should also differ on whether to classify something as discrimination. Moreover, because moralised discrimination insists by its definition that such discrimination is wrong, we cannot on that account say informatively that something is wrong *because* it is discrimination, as that would be like saying something is wrong because it is wrong.

Reaction qualifications

I now turn to the notion of qualifications. In many contexts, it is difficult to rank different candidates in terms of qualifications. One reason for this is that, as social psychology tells us, we are often biased in making such assessments.[8] Evaluators do not make such biased rankings consciously, however, and we can imagine various interventions to counteract such biases. One important point is that such interventions do not clash with the meritocratic approach. For example, suppose we know that evaluators generally underestimate the qualifications of female applicants by 30% and that to counteract this bias we boost the scores of female applicants to such an extent that, on average, this will perfectly counterbalance the bias of evaluators.[9] This might be the best way of trying to hire the best qualified applicants and thus avoid discrimination according to the meritocratic approach.

Presuming, unrealistically, that we have solved all problems regarding how evaluators are biased in their rankings does not mean that discrimination no longer influences who is considered the best qualified candidate. To see why, we need to introduce the notion of a *reaction qualification*, described as follows:

> A qualification, Q, is a reaction qualification if, and only if, 1) Q is a qualification; 2) and it is so because of how others, e.g., co-workers and customers react to people with Q.[10]

Consider the following illustration:

> Financial Advisor: A bank wants to hire a financial advisor. The best qualified female applicant is better qualified in terms of all relevant technical qualifications, but because customers have a sexist bias and prefer economic advice from a male, considering the best qualified male applicant's reaction qualifications, he is best qualified overall. The bank hires the male applicant.

In many jobs, reaction qualifications are crucial to performing the job well. Hence, from a meritocratic point of view, it is a non-starter to disregard reaction qualifications. However, if we include reaction qualifications when ranking applicants, then, under meritocratic discrimination, the example above involves no discrimination – the best qualified applicant is hired, but that, it seems, speaks against the meritocratic approach. This is because, presumably, many would say that, in this case, the bank engages in gender discrimination. Admittedly, the bank is not biased in its assessment of the applicants, but accurately estimates how hiring each

of the applicants will contribute to the bank's earnings. However, part of what makes its accurate assessments true are the sexist biases of its customers and, arguably, by indirectly basing its decision on these, the bank becomes complicit in gender discrimination when it does not hire the technically speaking better qualified female applicant. This, many would hold, is wrong.

When is discrimination wrong?

Why is it wrong for employers to discriminate? While the meritocratic approach's answer to this question is influential in public debates on the wrongness of discrimination, in the philosophical literature on discrimination, the focus lies elsewhere. Arguably, there the two main accounts of the wrongness of discrimination are the following:

> The Disrespect Account: Discrimination is wrong when it is disrespectful to those subjected to discrimination.
>
> The Harm-Based Account: Discrimination is wrong when it harms those subjected to discrimination.

These accounts simply provide a sufficient condition of discrimination being wrong. Hence, they are consistent with one another, and thus one could take the pluralist position that, as other kinds of acts, discrimination can both be wrong on account of its being harmful and on account of its being disrespectful. However, many contributions to the literature have tended to see the two theories as competitors. Moreover, both accounts say that discrimination is wrong *when* it is disrespectful or harmful, respectively. Thus, both are consistent with there being cases of discrimination that are neither harmful nor disrespectful and thus not wrong at all – say, age discrimination when it comes to the distribution of scarce, life-saving organs for the purpose of transplantation.

Since acts that are harmful are often also thought to be disrespectful, and because acts that are disrespectful are harmful, if for no other reason than because they involve dignitary harms, it can be difficult to offer examples of discrimination that illustrate the difference between the two accounts. Nevertheless, here is a modified example of non-harmful, disrespectful discrimination from the literature:

> An employer does not want to hire people with a certain racial identity. However, the employer is also careful to make sure that the applicants that he rejects on this ground get better jobs elsewhere such that, arguably, they end up better off than they would have been had they not been subjected to discrimination.[11]

Plausibly, by rejecting the applicants based on race, the employer disrespects the rejected applicants and thus wrongfully discriminates against them. To the extent that one shares this view, one must count this in favour of the disrespect account.

Here is an instance of harmful discrimination, which arguably is not disrespectful:

> Based on the output of a highly accurate algorithm, which suggests that women are considerably more likely than men to develop illnesses from working in a particular job, an employer declines to hire women. Some women, for whom it is very costly for the employer to identify *ex ante*, will not be harmed by working in the relevant job. For some reason, those women also find it difficult to find employment elsewhere.

In the above example, it is conceivable that when the employer refuses to hire the women in question, he harms them, but he does not treat them disrespectfully. He acts in what he has reason to believe is their best interest, and he might be strongly motivated by the morally laudable desire not to cause serious harm to his employees.

Such cases might give rise to questions about what harm and disrespect amount to. Here things become complicated once you start scratching the surface. Take harm, for instance. For one thing, a morally relevant notion of harm pertains to the loss of well-being. However, it is equally clear that when people complain about harmful discrimination, they do not necessarily think of harm (only) in terms of well-being, e.g., one is wrongfully discriminated against when one is rejected for a prestigious job on account of one's gender, even if the job involves 60–70 weekly working hours and one's life would be better well-being-wise with a less time-consuming job.[12]

Another issue in relation to harm is whether the relevant notion of harm is counterfactual. Suppose an employer discriminates against a female applicant denying her the job for which she is best qualified. As a result, she applies for a different job and ends up better off. If whether something is harmful depends on whether the actual outcome is worse than the outcome that would have resulted in the absence of the discriminatory act, then the employer did not harm the applicant. However, intuitively there is a respect in which the employer harmed the employee. After all, she applied for the job presumably because she wanted it yet did not get it because of the employer's discriminatory action.[13]

Moving on to respect, there are different accounts of what disrespect amounts to in the literature on discrimination. One view defended by the legal theorist Deborah Hellman is that discriminatory acts are disrespectful when their objective meaning is such that the equal moral status of the discriminatees is denied.[14] What matters to disrespect is not primarily what the discriminator believes or intends but how the discriminator's action can be reasonably interpreted by someone familiar with the relevant culture. Also, not just any kind of negative judgment regarding the discriminatee amounts to disrespect in Hellman's account, but only those that express the view that the discriminatee has a lower moral standing. What those judgments are, however, is tricky.

Another influential view of disrespect has been defended by Ben Eidelson.[15] According to Eidelson, disrespect is a matter of how the discriminatee figures into the discriminator's deliberations about what to do. Specifically, if the deliberator

fails to ascribe the appropriate weight to the discriminatee's interests, or if the deliberator does not consider how the discriminatee has autonomously shaped their life and will do so in the future, then the discriminator disrespects the discriminatee and, thus, acts wrongly. The autonomy-related aspect of disrespect is particularly relevant in relation to statistical discrimination, where Eidelson finds that in many contexts treating people disadvantageously based on statistical information about the groups of which they are members disrespects them.

Direct and indirect discrimination

Up until now I have focused on what we might call direct discrimination (or as it is called in a US context: disparate treatment). However, there is also what is commonly referred to as indirect discrimination (the US label: disparate impact). We can draw the distinction between direct and indirect discrimination for each of the notions of discrimination that I introduced above. Here I focus on group discrimination. In cases of direct group discrimination, let us say that what it means for the employer not to hire someone because the person is a member of a particular social group is grounded in the belief that the applicant is a member of the relevant socially salient group that is part of the employer's motivating reason for deciding not to hire the relevant applicant, or because the employer applies a rule that explicitly or in effect selects all and only members of the relevant socially salient group for disadvantageous treatment.[16]

Indirect discrimination can occur even if the employer is neither motivated by the belief that an applicant is a member of a particular socially salient group, nor hires based on any rules that explicitly or in effect select all and only members of the relevant socially salient group for disadvantageous treatment. In a classic US court case – *Griggs v. Duke Powers* – an employer was accused of discriminating against African American employees in relation to promotions.[17] Duke Powers made promotion dependent on seniority and the possession of a high-school degree. Because disproportionately few African Americans satisfied these criteria – mostly because of past unjust discrimination – very few African Americans would receive a promotion. While the court did not rule that Duke Powers intended this effect, and thus did not rule that Duke Powers engaged in direct discrimination, it found that its promotion rules resulted in disadvantages for African American employees, which were disproportionate relative to the benefits, if any, the company received by using these rules. We can define indirect discrimination as follows:

> Group-Based Discrimination: An employer indirectly discriminates against $applicant_1$, if 1) there is another applicant, $applicant_2$, who is a member of a socially salient group other than the one of which $applicant_1$ is a member; 2) the employer hires $applicant_2$ and not $applicant_1$ but not for any reason pertaining to group membership; and 3) the rule underlying the employer's hiring decision imposes disproportionate disadvantages on (relevant subgroups of) members of the socially salient group of which $applicant_1$ is a member.

Three points can be made here: The fact that there is indirect discrimination means that employers cannot dismiss charges of discrimination by correctly pointing to the fact that they harbour no intention, etc., to exclude or disadvantage members of the discriminated group. The employer can – perhaps innocently so – apply rules that systematically disadvantage certain groups in ways that cannot be justified by appeal to business necessity, etc.

Second, crucial to indirect discrimination is the notion of disproportionate disadvantages. There are many questions regarding what makes a disadvantage disproportionate. Is the relevant disadvantage comparative across groups, e.g., should we compare gaps between men and women? Or is it comparative across different states of affairs for the group in question, e.g., should we compare the advantages women enjoy concerning the rule in question with the level of advantages they would enjoy in the absence of the rule?

Third, how we resolve these issues is important. It determines what can make indirect discrimination, in the relevant sense, morally wrong. If the relevant disadvantage for determining proportionality is disadvantage across groups, then, plausibly, we cannot say that indirect discrimination is wrong because it imposes harm, in the counterfactual sense, on discriminatees. However, our view of what makes indirect discrimination wrong makes it easier for us to argue that indirect discrimination is wrong because of how it increases inequality between different groups.[18]

Anti-discrimination, diversity, and equality of opportunity

In many contexts, when people favour anti-discrimination policies, they see such policies as a means of promoting diversity and equality of opportunity.[19] Indeed, in many contexts the three aims of mitigating discrimination, increasing diversity, and reducing inequality of opportunity go hand in hand, e.g., when a male-dominated department has no female professors because of past discrimination, counteracting sexist biases in hiring processes will lead to more professors being hired and thus greater diversity and less inequality of opportunity. At the same time, however, it is important to note that sometimes anti-discrimination policies do not result in greater diversity and sometimes do not lessen the inequality of opportunity. Hence, in the light of such unusual cases, we need to say more about what is most important when the relevant concerns pull in different directions. However, to see the need for such weighting, I need to illustrate how the three concerns can come apart.

First, I consider anti-discrimination and diversity. In most notions of racial diversity, you have greater racial diversity if several racial groups are represented roughly equally in an institution's workforce than if one racial majority forms significantly more than half the workforce.[20] People can be racialised quite differently, but at least one common way of doing so in successful anti-discrimination policies would probably over time result in less racial diversity in workplaces in a country like South Africa, where roughly 80% of the population – black South Africans – form a majority racial group and other racial groups – whites,

Indians, etc. – form relatively small racial minorities. Thus, in the absence of unjust discrimination, whites and Indians would on average be small minorities in workplaces.

Next, I consider equality of opportunity. Generally, anti-discrimination initiatives provide better opportunities for groups of people who face worse opportunities than others, and thus generally promote equality of opportunity. However, this is not always so. Suppose that, on average, males enjoy better opportunities than women do, but that the differences between the most and the least privileged men and women opportunity-wise is greater than the differences between men and women who face average opportunities. Suppose also that part of the explanation of this difference is gender discrimination. Here an anti-discrimination policy that improves opportunities for the best-off women might increase the level of bad inequality of opportunity between individuals, since the number of pairs of individuals between whom there is a great gap opportunity-wise is now even greater.[21]

If my arguments above are sound, anti-discrimination policies can reduce diversity and increase inequality of opportunity. That is not to deny that it often does the reverse and thus does not claim that employers who are committed to diversity and equality of opportunity should abstain from implementing anti-discrimination policies. Nevertheless, it is to say that, on a theoretical level, the justification for anti-discrimination policies cannot just be that they promote diversity and equality of opportunity. Presumably, we would still find such policies justified in one respect even if they do the reverse. Also, and more practically, the arguments above can serve as an occasionally useful reminder to check whether in fact anti-discrimination policies promote diversity and equality of opportunity. Moreover, what I have said here does not speak to the question of which concern should win in the unusual cases where the three concerns pull in different directions.

Summary

Above I distinguished between generic discrimination on the one hand, and meritocratic discrimination, group discrimination, and discrimination in a moralised sense on the other. I criticised the meritocratic approach to discrimination. Based on the notion of group discrimination I then introduced harm- and respect-based accounts of why discrimination is wrong, suggesting that some instances of discrimination might be wrong because of harm, but not disrespect, and vice versa. I also distinguished between direct and indirect discrimination pointing to certain complexities regarding the notion of disproportionate disadvantages. Finally, I illustrated how anti-discrimination policies might tend to, but nevertheless not in all instances, promote diversity and reduce inequality of opportunity.

Questions for discussion

- What are the main forms of discrimination at play in your own domain of work?

- Can you give examples of forms of discrimination that are hard to classify as direct or indirect discrimination?
- Can discrimination be wrong for reasons other than disrespect, harm, inequality of opportunity, or lack of diversity?
- According to the definitions and accounts of the wrongness of discrimination offered in this chapter, is it possible, but rare, or impossible for majority persons to be subjected to wrongful discrimination?

Suggestions for further reading

- Accessible overview of central discrimination-related issues in moral philosophy and legal theory: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/discrimination/
- Overview of EU anti-discrimination laws: https://ec.europa.eu/social/home.jsp?langId=en
- A rich subordination-based account of the wrong of discrimination not covered in this chapter: Moreau, S. (2020) *Faces of Inequality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Notes

1 Acknowledgment: This work was funded by the Danish National Research Foundation (DNRF144)
2 On excellence, see also Maxwell, this volume
3 Employers can discriminate in other ways besides hiring decisions, e.g., they might discriminate in terms of how they promote employees, how they arrange working conditions, whom they sack, what wages they pay their workers, etc. For simplicity, I focus on hiring decisions, but my points coincide with other discriminatory decisions.
4 Lippert-Rasmussen 2013
5 https://ec.europa.eu/info/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-rights-eu/know-your-rights/equality/non-discrimination_en
6 Of course, on many occasions hiring disabled veterans is hiring the best qualified.
7 Anderson 2010
8 Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004; Koch et al. 2015; Moss-Racusin et al. 2012; see also Andreassen, this volume
9 Jönsson and Sjödahl 2017
10 Wertheimer 1983; see also Lippert-Rasmussen 2009 and Mason 2017
11 Slavny and Parr 2015
12 Lippert-Rasmussen 2013
13 Berndt Rasmussen 2019
14 Hellman 2008; see also Alexander 1992
15 Eidelson 2015
16 Cf. Dinur 2022; see also Cosette-Lefebvre 2020
17 https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/usrep/usrep401/usrep401424/usrep401424.pdf
18 Lippert-Rasmussen 2022
19 Securing equality of opportunity seems to secure at least much of what people care about when they care about inclusion. Hence, a point like the one I make here about diversity and equality of opportunity probably also applies to inclusion. On (democratic) equality, see Fjørtoft, this volume
20 Lippert-Rasmussen 2020

21 Arguably, the concern of equality of opportunity is a concern for equality of opportunity across different individuals, not across different groups as such. Hence, any concern with equality of opportunity across groups is instrumental relative to promoting equality of opportunity across individuals. Also, I set aside many complexities here regarding how one determines the level of bad inequality of opportunity across individuals.

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8

MERITOCRACY

Dominik Jackson-Cole and Gabriel Goldmeier

Meritocracy can be understood as a *system* and an *ideology* that stipulates that people should be selected to positions (of employment, education, government, positions of power, etc.) on the basis of their effort, talent and/or achievements. Meritocracy is confirmed by degrees, diplomas, certificates or relevant experience, which should translate into the capabilities needed for the position or office. The term meritocracy comes from Michael Young's book *The Rise of the Meritocracy* published in 1958.[1] The book was created as a critique of meritocracy and a warning against using it. Ironically, the word was adopted into the English language without the negative connotations.

Both the term and the idea of meritocracy have become cornerstones of discourses about how universities, governments, institutions and employers should run their organisations. While the exact idea of how meritocracy should be conceptualised may differ depending on one's political orientation, there seems to be an almost unchallengeable consensus on the need for meritocracy, in one form or another, across the entire political spectrum.

Given this imbalanced debate, the chapter will present only a few arguments in favour of meritocracy and instead concentrate on critiques, improvements and alternatives. We hope to offer food for thought to supporters of meritocracy. While some of these critiques may not completely deny meritocracy, they can be useful in the efforts to improve selection processes that are currently practised. Thus, our first aim is not only to *clarify*, but also to *rebalance*, the public debate on meritocracy. Secondly, we hope to help higher education practitioners to better understand, reshape and utilise meritocracy in their effort to improve gender diversity, equity and inclusion.

This chapter will firstly discuss the fundamentals of meritocracy and why the idea is so popular. It will then question the present hegemonic assumptions that support meritocratic processes, arguing that some of them hinder social justice

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instead of promoting it. After this overview, the chapter will examine how meritocracy is applied to the particular case of higher education. Finally, reflecting specifically on higher education, it will discuss how we can rethink the idea of merit and fairness, taking into consideration the societal role of higher education in the creation of the common good.

Fundamentals of meritocracy

In its most literal sense, meritocracy means governing by merit, with the word *merit* originating from Latin to mean 'deserving'. Thus, the basic understanding of meritocracy stipulates that only an individuals' merit should justify their choice for positions of influence. In other words, people should not be differentiated by any undue privilege in selection processes. Such selection is one of the fundamentals of the idea of *equality of opportunities*, and it is this notion that is supported, at least theoretically, by all sides of the political spectrum. However, its conceptualisation differs depending on the political inclination. The point, then, is not whether equality of opportunities is good or bad, but what it actually means and how it should be implemented.[2] In these debates, the intersections of privilege with talent, effort and achievements are often discussed and nuanced.

Undue advantage associated with family ties or social networks, i.e., nepotism, are the most obvious types of privilege that are usually, at least formally, forbidden. However, one may question if *social luck* should be seen as undue privilege – such as, for example, being raised in a wealthy family and receiving better formal education (i.e., achievements) or being gendered or racially identified in a society that considers one gender or race superior. Going further, one may question if *natural luck*, such as innate talents, should be seen as undue privilege. Those wanting to eliminate undue advantages stemming from social and natural luck may postulate that only effort should be considered as merit. However, basing selection on effort alone could lead to choosing people who put in considerable effort but are not actually good at their job. Thus, the idea of the needs of the position and, by extension, the needs of organisations and even the needs of society, given higher education's social role, comes into question.

The difference here is about whom we consider as the beneficiary of the selection process. Choosing someone based on their merit values how much they individually deserve that place. On the other hand, awarding the place to someone whom we expect to deliver better social impacts acknowledges that it is not the individual that deserves the place, but rather society that 'deserves' having them there.

This reflection demonstrates that it is not easy to define what merit is. Since we are not only thinking of rewarding individuals, but also considering the social gains in the processes of selection, these processes must take into consideration not only effort, but also individuals' possibilities of achievements for the common good. Later in the chapter, we will discuss how this can challenge the current ways in which we operationalise meritocracy.

Advantages of meritocracy

Until very recently – and, in practice, even today – people's right to hold positions of power was directly associated with their family ties and networks (social capital). However, as time progressed, this has been challenged. Ideas and policies supporting that people's *effort, talent* and/or *achievements* should define selection processes have become hegemonic. Thus, nepotism is no longer welcome, and meritocracy has taken centre stage.

Beyond nepotism, meritocracy also promises to be an antidote to other unfair biases in selection processes such as sexism, racism and buying or bribing a way into institutions. In this sense, meritocracy is a social evolution since it avoids praising someone solely for their connections and instead values their individual efforts.

Disadvantages of meritocracy

Our main critique of meritocracy, as it is conceptualised and practised today, is that it actually impedes efforts to achieve social justice and, thus, it does not improve gender diversity, equality and inclusion. We point out three arguments in particular. Firstly, meritocracy is most commonly based on a formal rather than substantive equality principle. Secondly, meritocracy is not objective; rather, merit is set by those in power, which it serves to maintain that power. Finally, meritocracy leads to a lack of solidarity.

Formal equality of opportunities

Adopting Rawls's[3] notions of formal and substantive equality of opportunity into the world of higher education, meritocracy normally considers that only talent, effort and achievement should be the basis for selection in the context of work (recruitment and promotions) and study (recruitment and assessment). That is to say, apart from affirmative action, people's background, such as gender, race, class and other characteristics, should not be a discriminatory factor concerning whether they are allowed to compete for work or study and how they are assessed.[4]

Formally, everyone has equal opportunities if they are equal (or similar) in all relevant aspects. However, in real life, gender, race, class, sexuality, dis/ability and other characteristics do impact our ability to acquire quality education, work experiences, quality health care, fair treatment in courts and so on. This means that, arriving at the point of selection for a job or opportunity to study at a university, we are not starting from the same point and/or some groups in society are more likely to reach the required merit first. Thus, by disregarding historically created inequalities, the formal equality principle, on which meritocracy normally stands, perpetuates these inequalities. Formal equality of opportunities in meritocracy is just that – formal.

Unobjective selection criteria and biased practice

The requirements for admissions, recruitment and assessments, that is, the merit that one must achieve, are presumed to be objective, with the (challengeable) assumption that objectivity is a virtue to be adhered to.[5] Meritocracy puts the emphasis on meeting the merit, rather than questioning how it became the merit. However, feminists and critical race theorists have pointed out that merits are in fact subjective, as they are selected and established by people belonging to majoritarian groups (e.g., white men) and, thus, serve to preserve their power and privilege.[6] Moreover, as we argue in the next section, meritocracy is not actually adhered to, with privileged/majoritarian groups often being treated more favourably. Hence, meritocracy is merely a discourse used to maintain and justify the *status quo* of extreme inequalities.

Lack of solidarity

The side effect of meritocracy and its discourses is that they stimulate an individual behaviour that can be very deleterious. Social justice depends on solidarity and empathy, with empathy being the key building block of solidarity. Societies in which individuals only think of and work for themselves and their families do not help to create conditions for the disadvantaged to improve their lives. This idea was the main thesis of Michael Young's original work on meritocracy.[7] A system based on merit in a society that is not equal will lead to the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. Those who meet the supposedly 'objective' merits are being rewarded accordingly and accumulate their privileges. For example, those who do well in school gain access to top universities, which in turn provides them with top resources, the best professors, the best learning environments, and the best industry links. Hence, they get better paid jobs and so on. In turn, the justification of such inequalities as supposedly fair – i.e., based on people meeting allegedly 'objective' merit – and thus, being rewarded accordingly leads to a lack of empathy and solidarity.

Meritocracy in practice in higher education

In this section, we discuss, with links to relevant theories, how meritocracy plays out in practice based on the three criticisms from the previous section.

Meritocracy, being based on the *formal* equality of opportunities, perpetuates historically embedded inequalities from wider society. This is evident when examining the demographics of staff and students, which show inequalities along the lines of gender, race, class and so on. For example, at British universities in 2021 the proportion of women who were professors was only 28.3% (as opposed to the 50% that we should expect) and for women of colour this was only 2.7%, which is lower than their proportion in British society as a whole at around 8%.[8] On the student side, black students are much less likely to attend Russell Group of universities (elite, research intensive institutions) than other institutions.[9] If we

assume that meritocracy is truly followed in these selection processes, then it ends up perpetuating wider societal inequalities, as opposed to improving social justice.

Meritocratic requirements are actually *subjective* and, therefore, favour certain groups. Vague concepts have been shown to be part of the meritocratic language, often without questioning why they are there or who put them there. For example, the concept of 'fit' is a common requirement in faculty recruitment in American universities, and yet this is a very subjective notion that opens the door to cloning bias, or *homophily*, resulting in recruiting people who resemble those hiring them, i.e., those from the already overrepresented gender, racial and class groups.[10] Another example may be that of admissions tutors for fashion programmes valuing more applicants presenting haute-couture portfolios over those with sports-wear portfolios.[11] Thus, the selection process favours those with upper-middle class values. Bourdieu explains this, providing a challenge to the notion of meritocracy, through his theorisation of *field* (a space, such as university, with unwritten rules), *cultural capital* (an individual's cultural practices, knowledges and competences, recognised in a particular field) and *habitus* (an individual's or institution's deeply embedded dispositions, norms and values).[12] Combining this with an intersectional framework, Jackson-Cole and Chadderton argued that the unwritten rules of the field of higher education recognise and privilege majoritarian groups based on gender, race, class and so on, deeming meritocracy merely a discourse, rather than an actual practice.[13]

Moreover, meritocracy is not actually always adhered to. That is, merit is not always required of those from majoritarian backgrounds. For example, in the UK, students from fee-paying schools are not just more likely to achieve higher grades and, consequently, more likely to apply to Oxbridge (Oxford and Cambridge Universities), they are also more likely to be accepted and are accepted even if they have a *lower* grade point average than applicants from state-funded schools.[14] This suggests that students from private schools, who are more likely to be white and from more affluent backgrounds, benefit not only from good education and better career advice, thus accumulating privileges, they are also less likely to be expected to meet the merit. Following a Bourdieusian analysis, it can be argued that this is because applicants' habitus and cultural capitals are similar to those of the admissions officers, who recognise them as fitting in with the unwritten rules of the field and, as gatekeepers, grant them access to the field.[15] This bending of admissions rules is also observable at the postgraduate level. Some universities in the UK, despite professing to be meritocratic, have been shown to lower admission standards (merit) for externally funded international PhD applicants, justifying this with their financial needs.[16] The same offer was not extended to students from less privileged backgrounds. This is to say that universities do not stick to meritocracy for privileged groups, particularly if this benefits the institutions. Academic faculty are also affected by the lack of meritocracy in practice, often linked to it being mitigated by what is referred to as *unconscious bias*. For example, women have been found much less likely to have their research proposals approved in order to gain access to the Hubble Space Telescope when the reviewers could identify the principal investigator as a woman, in contrast to when the applications were anonymised.[17]

Finally, meritocracy leads to a lack of *solidarity* towards the disenfranchised groups. This can be understood as two-fold. On an individual level meritocratic discourses lead to a lack of empathy for those who do not meet the supposedly 'objective' criteria. For example, Warikoo and Fuhr conducted 46 in-depth interviews with students from Oxford University, demonstrating their understanding of the inequalities in access to educational experiences that facilitate admissions to Oxbridge.[18] Despite this, the interviewees believed in the fairness of the recruitment processes (i.e., meritocracy) and were against any changes to make admissions more equitable. On a collectivist level, meritocracy leads to a lack of solidarity with the needs of society. For example, by prioritising individual merit in recruitment, meritocracy may shut off the possibility of hiring someone with a greater potential to contribute to the common good, especially when it can improve the lives of those most vulnerable.

Rethinking meritocracy

Meritocracy, that is to say, the act of setting certain requirements (merit), seems almost inevitable in higher education. However, how and what is set as merit can be questioned and changed. In this section we present some ideas for diversity, equity and inclusion practitioners to challenge meritocracy. We argue that the hegemonic assumptions of meritocracy can be unfollowed in order to help the efforts towards social justice and the common good.

Firstly, we suggest basing meritocracy on a fair (or substantive) equality of opportunities.[19] Proponents of substantive equality argue that in a society unequal according to gender, race and class, formal equality is not enough. As such, categories of difference that impact our chances of accessing quality education, housing, healthcare and more should be taken into consideration during the assessment of merit. One way that this could be done is through affirmative action.[20]

However, in many countries, some types of positive discrimination are not allowed, including in the UK where a practice of 'contextualised admissions' is common instead. Contextualised admissions means that when assessing applicants for study, their background is taken into consideration. This requires changing how we define and assess effort. Currently, assessment of effort is mostly understood as the achievement of a particular standard or grade. Nevertheless, we can define effort using the concept of 'journey travelled'. Take two individuals applying for university. Person one achieves a very good final grade after attending a school that provides quality education and where many pupils achieve very good grades, whereas person two achieves a good final grade after attending a school that does not boast a supportive learning environment and where few students achieve high grades. It can be argued that person two had to put in considerably more effort (i.e., longer journey travelled) to achieve a good grade than person one did. Therefore, it may be just to award person two with extra points during the admissions process.

Some readers may feel an immediate sense of scepticism, thinking that the above change would simply lead to a different form of injustice, i.e., a system that

penalises pupils for their privileged background. Therefore, we propose that within university settings, admissions, as well as faculty recruitment, cases should not be considered in isolation and purely individualistically, but rather collectively, with the common good in mind. Higher education, particularly public higher education, plays a significant role in knowledge production, which contributes to the advancement of society as a whole. Moreover, greater diversity (of gender, race, class, etc.) has been argued to bring societal benefits, such as diversity of thought (intellectual progress), greater productivity, bigger financial gains, social integration and more.[21] Therefore, university places (for staff and students) can be argued to be a public good that should be distributed in a way that guarantees benefit to most people, in particular those from the most disenfranchised groups.[22] Thus, admissions and recruitment systems that deal with each round of assessment in a collective way, with the common good and diversity as key elements of the equation, could guarantee a mix of all backgrounds entering higher education. This means that the socially and naturally lucky who can work for improving society would also have a chance of being selected, due to their potential for achieving socially desirable outcomes (common good). In that new system, some applicants from majoritarian (privileged) backgrounds would be disadvantaged compared to the current system (which presently disadvantages minoritised groups), but overall more people, and in particular more people from disenfranchised groups, would have better access to higher education. In turn, this would lead to greater fairness, as described by Rawls, social progress and common good. This idea has been tested in other fields, such as health care. For example, batch-recruitment for nursing positions has been shown to increase the diversity of successful applicants.[23]

In addition to challenging how we define effort to achieve merit, we can also question the merit itself, including its objectivity; the concept of fit for purpose; who set the merit to be what it is; why; and with what consequences. We postulate that the current conceptualisation of 'excellence' in higher education serves the purpose of maintaining the status quo of gendered, raced, classed (and so on) inequalities.[24] For example, education puts a huge emphasis on written forms of assessment, deeming oral forms of expression as secondary. While there are clear benefits to written text, the focus on it means that certain groups are disenfranchised, for example those stemming from non-Western, orally based traditions of knowledge production or people with dyslexia. The ability to write and read was for a long time reserved for the privileged few and accompanied by discourses of supposed intellectual superiority. Until today, access to quality education that allows for the development of good writing and reading skills is heavily dependent on one's background. Thus, the privileged few set the standard, or merit, in (higher) education as supposedly objective, but in reality it disenfranchises many groups.

Finally, we encourage practitioners to interrogate to what extent meritocracy is actually followed at their institutions. We suggest going beyond simple training on unconscious bias to examine how bias may play out in institutional data.[25] For example, are men more likely to receive professorial nominations despite having

fewer publications, fewer years of experience or even fewer degrees than women? Some studies suggest that may be the case.[26] Demonstrating how meritocracy functions as a discourse that protects the privileges of majoritarian groups, rather than an actual practice of equalising opportunities, can be a powerful impulse for institutions to rethink it.

We have argued that meritocracy, as it currently stands, contributes to reproducing historically embedded inequalities and impedes efforts towards achieving social justice, including greater gender diversity, equity and inclusion. We encourage practitioners to challenge meritocracy's assumptions around individual effort, achievements and talent with the common good in mind.

Questions for discussion

- How can a contextualised system of admissions be introduced at my institution?
- Can student admissions, staff recruitment and promotions be designed in a collective way, with a common good and diversity in mind?
- Who has set the merit, and why did they set it? Does it really serve the purpose it claims to serve, and what are its consequences?
- How can merit be re-imagined for greater common good?
- Does my institution stick to meritocracy for the privileged groups and/or use it as a barrier for disenfranchised groups?

Suggestions for further reading

- For more about privileges perpetuated by meritocracy: Jackson-Cole, D. and Chadderton, C., 2021. White supremacy in postgraduate education at elite universities in England: The role of the gatekeepers. *Whiteness and Education*, 1–19.
- For more about principles of justice: Rawls, J., 2001. *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*. Cambridge, MA, London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- For more about a foundational critique of meritocracy: Young, M., 1958. *The Rise of the Meritocracy*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Notes

1 Young 1958
2 Goldmeier 2018
3 Rawls 2001
4 See Duarte, this volume
5 See Andreassen, this volume
6 Gillborn 2008; Gillborn and Ladson-Billings 2009
7 Young 1958
8 Advance HE, 2021a; See also Schmidt, this volume
9 Advance HE, 2021b
10 White-Lewis, 2020
11 Burke and McManus, 2011

12 Bourdieu 1984, 1997
13 Jackson-Cole and Chadderton 2021
14 Montacute and Cullinane 2018
15 Jackson-Cole and Chadderton 2021
16 Jackson-Cole and Chadderton 2021
17 Johnson and Kirk 2020
18 Warikoo and Fuhr 2014
19 See Fjørtoft, this volume
20 See Duarte, this volume
21 McKinsey & Company 2020
22 Rawls 2001
23 Kline 2021
24 See Maxwell, this volume
25 See Berndt Rasmussen, this volume
26 E.g., Santos and Dang Van Phu 2019

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9

EXCELLENCE

Kate Maxwell

'Excellence' is a word we hear – and probably use – often, but rarely do we stop to think about what it actually means. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'excellence' as 'the quality of being outstanding or extremely good', and it is telling that it gives the example 'a centre of academic excellence'.[1] In academic discourses, the word is often used in contexts of competition and monitoring, such as the UK's 'Research Excellence Framework' (the REF), a national research quality assessment system, or for awarding prestigious research funding, such as the European Research Council's first criterion for assessing applications, entitled 'excellence'.

Everyone wants to be and should be good, and we can all always get better, right? That is the basic – and probably 'mostly harmless' (to quote Douglas Adams and *The Hitchhiker's Guide*) – premise behind the use of 'excellence' in academic environments. In an arena that is not only competitive, but in which there are many extremely good people/projects/institutions, the concept of 'excellence' quickly caught on politically and economically as a value marker for separating the 'truly excellent' from the merely 'very good'. Together with the much disputed idea of research metrics (and, to a lesser extent, teaching quality), as well as reduced funding for research in many countries, higher education institutions and different disciplines find themselves pitted against each other (and often against themselves) in the desire for them and their work to be considered, or officially recognised as, 'excellent'. This is an apparently neutral term that nevertheless tends to both favour prevailing norms in academia (and thus impede diversity), and benefit STEM disciplines to a greater extent than the arts, humanities, and social sciences.

This chapter makes no particular claim to excellence. This, in fact, is one way of countering the ubiquity of the paradigm, and, to a certain degree, combatting it from the inside. It is also written from a position of privilege: this is not an application for funding or tenure, nor does it need to fulfil any metrics criteria. Moreover, while the necessary amount of quality and professionalism is both desirable

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and aimed for, and peer review requirements must be met, it has proved impossible to keep either the tone or the contents entirely neutral. Although I do not go as far or into as much detail as Moore et al. (2017), I nevertheless follow their lead in treating a topic that has real and serious consequences (funding, hiring, promotion, metrics, diversity) with a certain light-heartedness that my privileged employment position allows. My basic premise in writing this chapter is that we, as people working and studying in academia, should use our critical thinking skills to question both the foundations and consequences of the concept of 'excellence'. It is my opinion that those of us in a position to do so should speak up so that a debate around the term can start and continue. 'Excellence' is not going to go away, and neither should our questioning of it; and if it did go away it would be replaced by something else, and we would question that too. Such is the nature of the 'killjoy': to cause disturbance, to challenge norms.[2]

Context and problematisation

'Excellence' plays an important part in international academic discourses surrounding peer review, research and teaching evaluation, research policy, public value, impact, metrics, hiring and promotion decisions, and novelty. It is therefore all the more surprising that, as a concept, 'excellence' is neither clearly defined nor universally understood. Even more importantly, the term 'excellence' is so ubiquitous as to be virtually meaningless,[3] and 'excellence' has been shown to limit both diversity and risk in research, rewarding – at least in the short term – research, academics, and institutions who perpetuate existing norms.[4] Stephan, Veugelers, and Wang argue that bibliometrics are 'imperfect measures' and 'engrained processes working against cherished goals',[5] and Chambers et al. demonstrate that a climate of metrics and 'excellence' perpetuates systematic barriers to diversity in research (discussed below).[6] 'Excellence' therefore poses a tangible danger for the creation of a diverse and equal academic community that can respond to the so-called 'Grand Challenges' (the challenges that society must overcome in the 21st century if it is to survive into the 22nd).

This problem is neither new nor discipline specific. It has been covered in health sciences, the humanities, science and engineering, peer review, funding, research assessment, and metrics, to name but a few,[7] and interest is increasing. As Chambers and co-authors put it:

> Policies and initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion in the research system can be undermined if the indicators used to define and measure success (in terms of 'quality', 'excellence', 'impact') reinforce existing inequalities and hierarchies. *Diversity in the choice and use of indicators is itself a priority*.[8]

Indeed, understandings of 'excellence' are at one and the same time discipline-specific and contradictory, and this impedes efforts towards cross-disciplinary research and evaluation (e.g., of funding applications).[9]

One of the appeals of 'excellence' as a term is its very familiarity. It is a word in common use in the English language, and as such it is a far cry from the ununderstandable jargon – or expensive, 'unintelligible gibberish' – sometimes associated with academic research, particularly humanities research.[10] It is, as a *Nature* Editorial puts it quite bluntly, 'what politicians and policymakers expect from scientists'.[11] Yet a putdown to the ubiquity of excellence can be found in Moore et al.'s pithy critique of what they call the 'fetishisation of excellence', or, paraphrasing the name of a now defunct toy retailer (although its fate is unlikely to be an omen for the term in question), 'Excellence R Us'.[12] As part of their multi-pronged attack, Moore et al. consider how the meaninglessness of the term as it is used in academic discourses contributes by its very nature to the ultra-competitive nature of the academic landscape:

> Could 'excellence' be, to speak bluntly, a linguistic signifier without any agreed upon referent whose value lies in an ability to capture cross-disciplinary value judgements and demonstrate the political desirability of public investment in research and research institutions? […] Because it lacks content, 'excellence' serves in the broadest sense solely as an (aspirational) claim of comparative success: that some thing, person, activity, or institution can be asserted in a hopefully convincing fashion to be 'better' or 'more important' than some other (often otherwise incomparable) thing, person, activity, or institution – and, crucially, that it is, as a result, more deserving of reward.[13]

This, of course, raises the question of what could be wrong with competition. Surely, in an area that uses so much public money, and where everyone is talented and hard-working, there needs to be some way of measuring success and rewarding – funding – those projects (or people, or institutions) that are the most deserving. Why not, then, use 'excellence' as a shorthand, an all-encompassing term to cover the myriad of possible ways of measuring and assessing research (and, increasingly, teaching)?

Case discussion

Diversity

In order to answer this, it is necessary to consider three specific examples. The first is that of diversity in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) disciplines. As readers of this guidebook will be aware, measuring diversity is a necessary step, even if it only provides part of the picture. A report commissioned and funded by The Wellcome Trust into diversity in health sciences research found that reviews of diversity, or interventions to promote diversity, tended to lack theoretical underpinnings and evaluation of their own effectiveness.[14] In addition, it found that such reviews and interventions that took place had a strong bias towards the USA, and towards gender and race/ethnicity. In other words, the

interventions were targeted to particular axes of diversity (e.g., race), rather than intersectionality (e.g., how race, gender, and disability interact together). It also found that, even within health sciences, the approaches were local and specific, rather than holistic and comparative, which also impedes general, transferable, diversity work.[15] What is particularly relevant for our purposes here, however, is the observation that most of the studies of diversity in the workforce relied on 'largely conventional indicators of academic performance such as publications written, citations, grants secured and positions obtained'. In other words, studies into diversity measured diversity in terms of 'excellence'. While Chambers et al. do not make the link explicit, the fact that their principal research question, 'does a more diverse and inclusive research community produce better biomedical and health research?'[16] remains unanswerable at the end of the report strongly implies that the studies they reviewed were not considering diversity in ways that were meaningful beyond the local contexts, partly because they were based on given – and unchallenged – notions of what makes worthwhile academics and research, that is, the unspoken notion of 'excellence'. Among its recommendations, the report calls for more comprehensive and comparable studies, a standardisation of indicators, and greater experimentation. These are precisely the kind of things that risky and collaborative cross-disciplinary research could provide, yet as we have already seen, the rhetoric of 'excellence' rewards low-risk research within established disciplines.[17] In this way, it contributes to closed-box thinking, reproducing the status quo, and impeding meaningful work on diversity.[18]

Metrics

This then leads to the second example, that of metrics, for it could reasonably be argued that the problems highlighted by Chambers et al. are caused by metrics rather than 'excellence'. The debate over research metrics is vigorous, and there is no space to do more than simply touch upon relevant aspects of it here. It is also important to point out that while metrics and 'excellence' are not one and the same thing, since metrics are often justified as means of measuring 'excellence', they are an important example of the rhetoric in action. A UK report from 2015 found that many researchers were suspicious of the use of metrics in research assessment and management.[19] Various criticisms of metrics note the ease with which they can be manipulated or 'gamed', misunderstood, and used for publicity purposes.[20] In addition, metrics have been shown to stifle cross-disciplinary research.[21] Alternative quantitative systems to assess research 'excellence' have been promoted, including altimetric and responsible metrics, all of which follow Wilsdon et al.'s recommendation that metrics be used to support, not supplant, qualitative evaluation. As a result, efforts have been made to divide metrics from assessment. (One of the most important of these is the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment, or DORA, that states that publishing metrics will not be taken into account in hiring decisions, only the contents of the publications themselves. I return to DORA below.) If 'excellence' is to be used as a criterion to

rank and reward research, then it must be measurable. While it is clear from reports such as that by Wilsdon et al. e/n that one size doesn't fit anybody, as long as there is 'so much science, so little time',[22] with 'excellence' taken unquestioningly as a yardstick, then the use and abuse of metrics will remain a fact of research life.

Cross-disciplinary research

My third and final example is cross-disciplinary research, and in particular engendering and funding the kind of cross-disciplinary research needed to overcome the so-called Grand Challenges and meet the UN sustainable development goals.[23] The fact that identifying and pursuing these goals and challenges is necessary is evidence that the system for generating and funding academic research, that has followed broadly mono-disciplinary norms and pathways for centuries, has so far not been up to one of its most fundamental jobs: ensuring the survival of the planet and the species that inhabit it. Most of us are trained from school age to think along and within disciplinary boundaries: maths is taught in the afternoon, music in the morning, and so on. Universities, research centres, and funding systems are structured along the same lines – often with good reason. After all, it would be difficult for a reviewer trained in health care to assess the feasibility of a project in linguistics. However, if the Grand Challenges and sustainable development goals are to be met, projects geared towards research questions such as how to educate people from oralate cultures in culturally appropriate first aid techniques would potentially require collaboration between linguists, health care experts, and anthropologists.[24] Despite this, various studies have shown that the rhetoric of 'excellence', as well as research evaluation metrics, rewards mono-disciplinary research along established lines.[25] The solutions to the Grand Challenges and sustainable development goals, assuming that there are any, need to be flexible, and they will be neither cheap nor quick. This stands in direct opposition to short-term, metrics-driven, 'excellence'-based methods of assessment. In other words, to instigate – and then fund – research geared towards the goals and challenges, funders, institutions, and researchers need to take steps to act against prevailing norms of 'excellence' and across disciplinary boundaries. Some steps have been taken in this direction already, such as the Nexus initiative in the UK and the idélab scheme in Norway (now discontinued in Norway but still in use in Poland).[26] What assessments of the projects generated by these initiatives have shown is that cross-disciplinary work requires willingness from individual researchers, flexibility, and time – time to generate projects with people from different areas, time to explain complex ideas to partners from unrelated disciplines, time to re-evaluate and sometimes entirely re-write research objectives, time to write and publish results that have themselves taken more time than mono-disciplinary research to produce.[27] While the resulting research might well stand up to measures of 'excellence', such research nevertheless carries a higher degree of risk than mono-disciplinary research. In an environment where the competition for 'excellence' is fast, fierce, and sometimes all-consuming, particularly for junior researchers, potentially sacrificing the careers of

untenured colleagues on the altar of cross-disciplinary research is obviously too high a price to pay.

Conclusion

What all the theories and examples put forward so far have in common is the so-called Matthew effect. Based on the conclusion of the parable of the talents in the Gospel of Matthew,[28] the Matthew effect states that whoever has more shall receive more, and whoever has little will see that little taken away: the rich get richer, and power becomes centred on a few. As mentioned earlier, one important effort to combat this is the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment, or DORA. This declaration, which at the time of writing boasts over 20,000 signatories, comprises 18 recommendations geared at researchers, institutions, funders, publishers, and metrics agencies. The first and overarching recommendation is to not use metrics 'as a surrogate for quality'.[29] Indeed, the word 'excellence' is entirely missing from the declaration, and the alternative 'quality' appears only in the first recommendation. Yet, a decade after the conference that gave rise to the DORA declaration, the debates and recommendations it entailed are still in the process of implementation, and as worthy as DORA may be, as long as it is not universally accepted as an alternative to metrics, it impedes researcher mobility.

'It matters what thoughts think thoughts'.[30] The term 'excellence', even when used as an intentionally meaningless shorthand, shapes the thoughts – including fields, industries, governments, and funding policies – that emerge from its basis. In particular, the rhetoric of 'excellence' and the metrics used to measure it are biased towards STEM disciplines. In this way, 'excellence' and metrics combine all too easily as a stick with which to beat the humanities, fine arts, and social sciences, the so-called 'soft' disciplines that do not always rely on accepted STEM norms such as experimentation, empiricism, and reproducibility of results, and that are already under pressure to prove their worth in an increasingly competitive, pressure-filled, and 'excellence'-based research environment. (Attentive readers will note that I have consistently used the inclusive term 'research' rather than the more exclusive 'science'.) Yet it is precisely these disciplines that can provide the tools for rethinking 'excellence'. Can we rescue 'excellence' from the clutches of metrics and capitalism, and reclaim it for a diverse and open research environment? It is, after all, a term that is easy to understand,[31] and it describes what researchers should be doing.[32] Given the recommendations, reports, and initiatives I have discussed (including DORA, Nexus, responsible metrics, as well as open research), there is perhaps reason to believe that the notion of 'excellence' can also be changed from within. Personally, however, I am not hopeful.

'If not excellence, then what?', asked a *Nature* editorial entitled 'Science needs to redefine excellence' in 2018. I would argue, however, this is not the right question. It is not a case of simply replacing one term with another. 'Excellence', together with the unquestioned yet inconsistent notions of what it constitutes, is part of a system that is designed in favour of English-language research that appeals

to expensive and high-profit (capitalist) publishers and institutions. 'Excellence' as a term is dangerous specifically because it cannot easily be argued with: it is, after all, what academics are supposed to do. Nevertheless, it is both a branding tool for marketing, selling, ranking, and rewarding; it can stand in the way of diversity initiatives, local research, and stop the very conception of potentially groundbreaking research, or research that could benefit the communities that need it most (e.g., local initiatives to combat illnesses that are largely under control in the West but still widespread in developing countries). Perhaps evaluations currently based on 'excellence' should take it as given that researchers are almost always good at what they do, and instead look at more holistic indicators of performance that are relevant to the research and the researcher, and demonstrate, for example, outreach work, societal benefit, diversity, risk taking, creativity, mentoring activities, support for junior colleagues, open access and open data, and so on. Initiatives such as DORA and the Leiden Manifesto are a start,[33] but until their recommendations are implemented internationally, and recognised and acted upon by stakeholders, including funding bodies and hiring/promotion committees, use of the term 'excellence' needs to be nuanced and aware of the signals it sends out. After all, to paraphrase and update the claim made by Stilgoe, 'excellence' still tells us far more about the *who* that decides what is 'excellent' and uses the term than about the *research* it is supposed to describe.[34]

Summary

- 'Excellence' is a term that is used widely, yet in practice is virtually meaningless.
- 'Excellence' impedes diversity.
- The desire to perform well in academic metrics – measurements of 'excellence' – encourages research that conforms to these metrics, that is, monodisciplinary and safe research. 'Excellence' is thus a barrier to cross-disciplinary risky research, particularly the kind of research that is needed to meet the UN sustainable development goals and the Grand Challenges.
- There is no simple alternative to 'excellence'. It is the author's opinion that a more holistic approach to research assessment that includes a broader range of criteria would be more appropriate than basing judgments on 'excellence'.

Questions for discussion

- How does your institution/faculty/discipline use the term 'excellence'?
- Can 'excellence' be reclaimed?
- What is the role of societal impact in discourses of 'excellence'?
- Open access publications are often ranked lower in metrics-based assessments of 'excellence'. Will 'Plan S' have a marked effect on this on an international level, or is the dominance of North American and English-language publishing too great?
- The competitive rhetoric of 'excellence' contributes to pressure on researchers. What does this mean for diversity in research and academia?

Suggestions for further reading

(Full citations in the reference list.)

- The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA 2012)
- The Leiden Manifesto (Hicks et al. 2015)
- '"Excellence R Us": University Research and the Fetishisation of Excellence' (Moore et al. 2017)
- *The Diversity Dividend* (Chambers et al. 2017)
- 'The Changing Role of Funders in Responsible Research Assessment' (Curry et al. 2020)
- *The Metric Tide* (Wilsdon et al. 2015)
- *The Impact and Future of Arts and Humanities Research* (Benneworth, Gulbrandsen, and Hazelcorn 2016)
- *How Professors Think* (Lamont 2009)

Notes

1 OED 2010
2 Ahmed 2010, 2017, 2021
3 Moore et al. 2017 ask at the very start of their article, 'does "excellence" actually mean anything?'
4 Chambers et al. 2017
5 Stephan, Veugelers, and Wang 2017
6 Chambers et al. 2017
7 Chambers et al. 2017; Benneworth, Gulbrandsen, and Hazelcorn 2016; Haine-Bennett et al. 2020; Lamont 2009; Couch and Whitting 2021; Curry et al. 2020; Wilsdon et al. 2015
8 Chambers et al. 2017, p. 2, my emphasis
9 Stephan, Veugelers, and Wang 2017
10 Benneworth, Gulbrandsen, and Hazelcorn 2016, p. 4
11 Nature Editorial 2018
12 Moore et al. 2017
13 Moore et al. 2017, p. 3
14 Chambers et al. 2017
15 Chambers et al. 2017, p. 4
16 Chambers et al. 2017, p. 1
17 Stephan, Veugelers, and Wang 2017
18 Haine-Bennett et al. 2020
19 Wilsdon et al. 2015
20 See, among others, Macilwain 2013, Martin 2016, and Nature Editorial 2013
21 Rafols et al. 2012
22 Wilsdon et al. 2015; Nature Editorial 2013
23 United Nations 2015
24 Although I made up this particular example, it was inspired by Wildfeuer 2021
25 See, among others, Lamont 2009, Rafols et al. 2012, Stephan, Veugelers, and Wang 2017
26 National Science Centre Poland 2022
27 Maxwell and Benneworth 2018; Wilsdon, Cairns, and O'Donovan 2017
28 Matthew 25:29
29 DORA 2012

30 Haraway 2016
31 Benneworth, Gulbrandsen, and Hazelcorn 2016
32 Nature Editorial 2018
33 Hicks et al. 2015
34 Stilgoe 2014

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10

PATRIARCHY

Marianna Poyares

The term "patriarchy" was originally coined by sociologists and anthropologists to describe societies where both the public and private spheres are organised following a gender-based hierarchy that privileges individuals identified as male. The traditional anthropological concept of patriarchal societies refers to communities where men, as a social category, enjoy a privileged position of power and status, both in the private and the public spheres, vis-à-vis non-male individuals. This male-centred organisation of domestic life is reflected in the organisation of the social life of the community as well. The anthropological notion of patriarchy opposes that of "matriarchy": societies where women hold dominant positions within the general social hierarchy.

Feminists have recovered the term and expanded it from a mostly functional description of social organisation to a normative one, highlighting that patriarchy is not only a gendered division of social functions but one that is fundamentally unequal and oppressive towards non-male individuals.[1] That is, the stratifications that constitute patriarchy establish relationships that are fundamentally unequal, where men enjoy a higher degree of freedom than others. A broader notion of "patriarchy" is one that understands it as a *system* of domination, of which gender binarism is a central feature. The identification between biological sex and male/female gender as a norm implies the pathologising of non-conforming genders and bodies. The male/female opposition established by gender binarism, however, is not an innocent one. After all, "the patriarchal construction of the difference between masculinity and femininity is the political difference between freedom and subjection".[2] Furthermore, it is crucial to understand that gender binarism is a crucial function of patriarchy, where male and female are opposed in their functions and dispositions.

Certainly, gender is not the only structuring element of social hierarchies. Social prestige or distinctions arising from class, wealth, citizenship, race, or disability are

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crucial elements for the differential distribution of authority. Therefore, patriarchy must always be considered in intersectional relation to other such social identities. This systematic approach has been particularly popular with radical feminists who understand that there is a mutually sustaining connection between the exertion of control over the female body, female productive and reproductive labour, and the establishment of private property.[3] Hence, they will understand patriarchy as separate, yet constitutive of capitalism itself – understood here in an expanded sense: not merely as an economic model but "as an institutionalized social order".[4] Furthermore, it is crucial to understand that gender binarism is a crucial function of patriarchy, whereas male and female are opposed in their functions and dispositions.

Patriarchy, a gendered system of social organisation and domination, often does not manifest itself *as such* (i.e., as the direct appeal to the presumed "fact" of the general superiority of men). Instead, it is actualised in multiple and varied instances that are identifiable as expressions of patriarchal attitudes or social orderings, not due to a specific underlying factual element, but due to a shared (hence, presumed to be accepted) normative formation. More than a mere sum of individual attitudes and beliefs, patriarchy is intimately linked with multiple forms of social reproduction and, therefore, shapes, and perpetuates itself through institutions, of which higher education is no exception. Therefore, instead of providing an extended conceptual description of patriarchy, in what follows, I will provide some examples of patriarchal domination in higher education, followed by a normative analysis that highlights the structures of domination at play.

Case discussion: Patriarchal domination in higher education

Example I: "Natural" qualities

The number of women in leadership positions in higher education has been increasing, even if gender balance is still far from a reality on the global level. Despite this rising inclusion, good leadership is usually portrayed by character traits associated with masculinity: assertiveness, decisive decision making, and the ability to command others. Femininity, on the other hand, is usually associated with mentorship, heightened self-awareness, flexibility, and conciliation. Analogously, there is a silent assumption that women are natural mentors, arbitrators, and communicators, while men are not inclined towards such activities. While those qualities presumed to be associated with femininity might be appropriately valued for strategic positions, they are regarded as only complementary to the ones associated with masculinity. What we have in this kind of scenario is a gender-based biological determinism foregrounding an implicit bias[5] that informs perceptions and intuitional decisions. Examples include the lack of recognition of non-male scholars' mentoring of students, considering that such work is nothing other than the exercise of their natural aptitude, or the surprise caused by an all-female university executive board, when no such surprise is extended to an all-male board.[6]

This example brings forward two problematic instances of patriarchal domination still present in higher education. First, a gender-based biological determinism of character traits indexed to masculinity or femininity, where good leadership, especially at the executive level, is understood as the exercise of "masculine" traits. While it may not be explicit that leadership roles should be occupied by men, it is clear that they must be occupied by those possessing distinctly masculine character traits. Therefore, women who are more assertive and decision-oriented, for instance, however they may be celebrated as good leaders, are also considered to be "denatured" or deviant from their "natural female predispositions" – a consideration that is equally embedded with moral judgment. This is not only an issue of misrecognition of their effective role, but above all, an issue of misrecognition that occurs precisely because the very description of the social function was fundamentally permeated by features associated with masculinity.

The second problematic aspect created by the same gender-based biological determinism creates a misperception that women who are good at mentoring, advising, or fostering collaboration are merely exercising their natural character traits in the workplace. None of these are interpreted as hard-won (or basically acquirable) skills, but as a natural predisposition that arises, ultimately, from the intrinsic aptitude of the female body, in its idealised version, for creating and nurturing life. This misperception generates a willingness to assume, for example, that it is not only easy for women to be sensitive members of a team but that men ought to be excused for their aloofness, unsociability, or monopolising of discussions on the basis of a mythical disposition of gender.

It is clear, then, that patriarchy works not only as a system of unequal, hierarchical distribution of social roles by gender, but that it is fundamentally gender binary, working with, and through, the opposition of male/female. Moreover, the split between male and female gender roles grounds itself in an equally dichotomic separation between those who are identified through biological sex as female and as male. With this, an order of social relations gains footing as a biological feature, a "natural" array of differentiated bodies,[7] that would amount to a number of distinct, and even sometimes oppositional or complementary, dispositions and aptitudes. According to this interpretation, women would be biologically "hard-wired" for being more gentle, comprehensive, passive, suited for community-bound and risk-averse positions, and men for more assertive, creative, risk-prone positions, which are understood to be desirable for individuals in a leadership position, be it administrative or in a research group. "Patriarchy" stands not only for a social order where men hold authority and power but, more precisely, where manhood and masculinity are, in general, the rule. It is, in this sense, a totalising system of the ordering and hierarchisation of social relations, be they private or public, where the standard, while seemingly neutral, is, in fact, indexed to what is conceived to be properly masculine. According to Simone de Beauvoir, in patriarchal societies, men model the default gender, meaning that womanhood is always defined negatively vis-à-vis manhood as well as that which is supposedly "neutral".

Recommendations

Patriarchy, a system of social organisation and domination, is a socio-historical construct. It is cyclically constituted within the system of domination that it engenders, reifying as given and natural those dispositions and traits that are not the expression of biological sex, but of different historical forms of socialisation associated with gender roles. Therefore, in the same way that it was engendered by historical processes, "it can be ended by historical process".[8]

Having the proposed example as a guideline, a few recommendations can be made in order to unsettle the gendered domination perpetuated by the presumption of gender-based biological determinism. First, higher education institutions should not rely on the valorisation of particular character traits but on skills, which break the cycle of biological determinism. This is valid for the whole university community: faculty, administration, and students. Such skills must first and foremost be acknowledged and valued as such, not excused as a mere "biological predisposition" or romanticised as love and virtue, as in the case of the disproportional mentoring work that is carried out by women and other gender minorities. Second, such skills must be also properly compensated within the schema of the institution, given the value such practices add to the institution's benefit.

Moreover, women with a long professional trajectory in unrecognised student mentoring, or of peer-arbitration, should be put, if they so wish, in a compensated position for skill transfer to colleagues, so they are not disproportionately burdened by this kind of work. In the classroom, faculty must be aware of the gendered contours for participation that are established in discussions and, in particular, they must pay specific attention to whether male students tend to have the floor. Noting that this ought to be conceived as a function of socialisation within patriarchal societies and not an innate natural disposition, it is recommended that, from as early as possible, gender minority students be encouraged to meaningfully participate in an active classroom and not become habituated to allowing men to represent their views.

Example II: Not a "women's issue" but a pervasive system of oppression

Within the past decade, institutions of higher education have been taking important steps towards gender inclusivity by increasing the number of women and other gender minorities in their ranks. While the inclusion of non-male individuals seeks to repair the harm of the historical exclusion of such individuals from academia, the inclusion of non-male individuals in academic leadership also has the goal of fostering a different culture in the masculinist academic system. The inclusion of non-male identifying individuals in decision-making positions within institutions of higher education, although of vital importance, should not be considered, in itself, and by itself, a challenge to patriarchal forms of domination. Using inclusion as a form of avoiding institutional reform is, in the end, a form of perpetuating a patriarchal institution.

Patriarchy fundamentally defines, constrains, and regulates both femininity and masculinity in tension with one another – and gender binarism forges the abnormality of all non-binary gender expressions. However, it is crucial to emphasise that male-identified individuals, while regulated in their gender roles and their gender identity, enjoy a privilege that is only possible at the expense of the subjugation of those identified as non-male. Men need not subjectively approve of this privilege for it to be effective, since the systemic thesis here implies that these privileges are not always within their individual control – they may be, for instance, present in the sedimented practices of institutions – nor are they necessarily present to their attention, since systemic social privilege may go unnoticed if one does not critically engage with it. A holistic, systemic notion of patriarchy understands that patriarchal domination is present not only in situations where men are intentionally exerting control over women; rather it tends to shape and permeate all social relations. These very forms of oppression may pass unquestioned *even* by non-male individuals, who take them simply as an expression of how things function. Such patriarchal relations are perpetrated and multiplied often without any full acknowledgement, on the part of their agents, of the harm they produce. Patriarchy, therefore, is not only "a women's issue", it is a systemic, social issue perpetrated by individuals across the gender spectrum.

The assumption that including women in positions of leadership, in and of itself, is sufficient to guarantee the overturning of institutional gender oppression is based on three misconceptions regarding the systemic nature of patriarchy. First, it is based on the misconception that non-male individuals are hard-wired to automatically identify all instantiations of patriarchal domination and that they, a second misconception, are exempt from replicating them. Understanding that patriarchy is a pervasive system of gender inequality means that, while non-male individuals are certainly in a "privileged" position for identifying forms of oppression that they themselves experience, they may still not do so and may even reproduce such inequality. This may occur for a number of reasons, such as the insistence of ideology, intersectional social identities that require the perseverance of patriarchy, or even by the pervasiveness and everydayness of such forms of inequality. Black feminists have longed argued, for instance, that white feminism does not address the specific forms of violence suffered by black women.[9] The third misconception, and quite crucial to our analysis, is that even if gender minorities identified institutional forms of gender inequality, they would automatically have the tools, and the institutional (or even their colleagues') support, for dismantling systems of oppression that are, we must remember, part of the institutional culture, and may not be experienced as oppressive by many.

Recommendations

The inclusion of non-male identifying individuals in decision-making positions within institutions of higher education, although of vital importance, should not be considered, in and of itself, a challenge to the field of power dynamics that operates

on social positions within patriarchal societies. "Fighting" gender-based oppression does not necessarily follow from inclusivity, even if inclusivity is necessary for disturbing traditional forms of gender-based oppression. In other words, inclusivity is necessary but not necessarily sufficient. Instead of a merely representational issue within the current composition of available roles, "fighting" patriarchal gender-based oppression requires a transformation of social relations. This is a far more transformative goal that higher education institutions generally avoid, preferring to simply include gender-minority individuals in their ranks than actually opening up to institutional change. This is a dangerous trade-off that could potentially result in reifying and solidifying patriarchal forms of domination.

If an institution is truly committed to fighting gender-based oppression, it must be open to a profound democratic transformation. For instance, in order to avoid the tokenisation of specific individuals, and to tackle the systematic and intersectional nature of patriarchy, universities could support open forums, led and composed by gender-minority individuals from all areas of the institution, where multiple aspects of the university's life are debated. The proposal of welcoming such forums comes precisely out of the understanding that one individual alone, no matter their gender, is not capable of assessing and changing all instances of gender-based inequality within a given institution: the diagnosis and the solutions proposed *must* be collective. The issues identified, the proposed changes, and, importantly, the structure of governance that arises out of these forums must be understood by the university leadership as a welcome contribution from the community to the community. Here we should emphasise that the proposed set of measures may deeply disturb the institutional *status quo* and may require long-term strategies and profound changes. This deep collective institutional reframing is exactly what is expected if institutions of higher education, well known for their historic exclusion of gender minorities, are seriously committed to finding gender oppression: for even with the inclusion of gender minorities, we must understand that to continue with "business as usual" in higher education, even with the recent increasing inclusion of gender minorities, is to reproduce those pervasive forms of patriarchal subjugation and inequality.

Example III: Intersectionality

Historically, universities have been accessible only to a small intellectual elite. Because of this legacy, institutions of higher education must interrogate possibilities for self-transformation into more inclusive environments. Therefore, we must be alert to the propagation or projection of a hierarchy of prestige pervasively across the institutional practices of universities. One must acknowledge the possibility that patriarchy permeates not only faculty relations but overall relations within the different categories that constitute the institution: faculty, students, staff, and administration. Despite being a crucial axis of institutional exclusion and oppression, gender-based forms of subordination can be linked with other dimensions of prestige and authority. Considering faculty–student relations, for instance, gender-

minority students are more likely to endure different forms of abusive behaviour from faculty and those working in administration; gender-minority students might feel in a particularly vulnerable position, scared of retaliation if they come forward against teachers or advisors. From within this group, other social identities, such as race, class, and even citizenship and religion might intersect, generating specific forms of institutional violence. Hence, female international students, for instance, still learning to navigate the local matters of etiquette and the proper institutional mechanisms, may be susceptible to enduring faculty abuse. Another example: while an all-male course syllabus may disengage and exclude gender minority students, students who are in an intersectional group of being gender-minorities and also racial or, say, religious minorities, may feel doubly alienated from their courses, and that the university itself is hostile to their presence.

Although the systemic character of patriarchy is usually broadly accepted within differing strands of feminist thinking, there is variance and disagreement concerning specific proposed solutions to the split between social reproduction and economic production. Liberal feminists argue that the slip can be overcome by the inclusion of social reproduction within the economic sphere: by remunerating and regularising reproductive labour. Radical feminists, on the other hand, use the term patriarchal capitalism to reinforce the mutual dependency of the two systems: without the alienation and exploitation of reproductive labour, capitalism could not exist.[10] Against the argument that expansion and inclusion within the economic sphere would be sufficient, radical feminists have argued that the mutual dependency is so basic that what may look like inclusion is, in fact, displacement. For instance, the inclusion of middle and upper-class women in the labour market in the second half of the 20th century, the great "female emancipation", was only possible at the expense of the (further) outsourcing of their reproductive labour to poorer, usually underpaid, women. This displacement of reproductive work carries within it not only a class marker, but also those of race and citizenship.

Black and peripheral feminists, alongside queer and trans theorists, have been fierce critics of liberal and Western feminism strategies for overturning patriarchal domination. While the aforementioned issue of the outsourcing of reproductive labour to poor, Global South, women of colour as the condition for the possibility of "liberating" white Western women is clearly problematic, other issues have been also identified. bell hooks, for instance, argued that, for women of colour, the family is a site of resistance and solidarity against racism, therefore it cannot have the same framework of subordination as it does for white women.[11] Lélia Gonzalez has called attention to the epistemological frameworks of patriarchal and racial domination that are internalised and perpetrated even by communities of women of colour who express a "desire for whiteness", not out of masochism, but precisely for understanding that white women, even in their gendered subjugation, hold a position of privilege vis-à-vis women of colour.[12] What these critiques, in their plurality, highlight is the heterogeneous character of systemic patriarchy. Cultural and historical variations of gender inequality, as well as intersectional oppression,[13] must also be accounted for.

In sum, gender inequality cannot be understood as a homogeneous exercise of oppression of men vis-à-vis women. Rather, gender inequality must be understood as an expression of patriarchy, a totalising system of oppression that *differentially* constrains all individuals. While the main axis of oppression operates through gender binarism, and the subsequent gender-based biological determinism it reinforces, patriarchy still operates differently depending on other intersectional identities at play. For instance, while the female-identified body is characteristically more sexualised than the male, black female bodies are often hypersexualised. Therefore, institutional solutions that may work for racially and culturally homogeneous self-enclosed communities will likely be ineffective for diverse populations. The risk of ignoring the multifaceted expressions of patriarchal violence that may be available for different intersectional identities in institutions of higher education is to focus on solutions that answer only to the issues faced by the gender-minority hegemonic group, further silencing and ostracising other groups and individuals. We should not mistake surface changes for a substantial alteration of the depths of a structure. We must not become habituated to what may be the expression of positions of privilege, since such privileges tend to be established on the oppression of others.

Recommendations

Coupled with the previous analyses and recommendations, a few recommendations can be made for addressing the intersectional nature of patriarchal injustice. First, it should be clear that an inclusive curriculum cannot merely be committed to supplementing a familiar narrative of history with a few texts from women and other gender minorities for the sake of parity. This would merely be a surface change. Educators must come to terms with what they understand to be the purpose and rationale behind inclusive gestures in their curricula. For instance, are women scholars only consulted when "women's issues" are being discussed (e.g., feminism)? Are male writers assumed to be in a position of providing a neutral voice? Most relevantly to this immediate discussion, educators should ask how often non-white women are featured in their syllabi, and administrators should provide faculty with the resources to have a meaningful conversation towards diversifying them.

Concerning institutional forms of discrimination, it is important that the university listens to its members and provides them with the appropriate channels in order to have their voices heard and make significant contributions to the institution. For instance, self-organised student, faculty, or staff groups (formed around any social identity category but also around academic interest) should be encouraged in order to create communities of exchange and, possibly, mutual support. These communities should be offered spaces where they can interact in matters concerning requests, complaints, or changes to institutional practices, and take their requests to the appropriate level of the administration. This holistic institutional management, however, should not occur at the expense of the uncompensated labour of the members of such community minority groups. Compensation and access to institutional resources are both necessary.

Finally, in order to prevent widespread individual abusive practices at all levels across the university (administration–faculty, faculty–student, faculty–staff, etc.), the creation of a multi-level ombudsman should be established, where those targeted could search for institutional support, anonymously if they so wish. Moreover, counsellors should provide not only mental and emotional health support, but also offer resources such as arbitration, conflict resolution, and, if necessary, mobilise other offices within the university, under the authority of Title IX (in the United States) or sex equality legislation (in the EU).

Questions for discussion

- What kind of gender stereotypes do institutions of higher education support and reinforce through their frameworks, policies, and practices?
- What forms of domination, and even of alienation, of gender minorities are specific to higher education institutions, considering their history of gender segregation?
- Is achieving gender balance a project that involves all gender minorities from all strata of the university or is it a project conceived and executed only by administrators? Are non-female gender minorities also included in such a project?
- What institutional pathways exist for vulnerable gender minorities to report abuse without fear of retaliation? How effective are such pathways?

Suggestions for further reading

For more about the persistence of patriarchy in different higher education scenarios:

- Cannella, G. and Perez, M. "Emboldened Patriarchy in Higher Education: Feminist Readings of Capitalism, Violencce and Power". *Cultural Studies, Critical Methodologies*, 12 (4), 2012. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708612446421
- Dlamini, E., and Adams, J. "Patriarchy: A Case of Women in Institutions of Higher Education", *Perspectives in Education*, 32, 2014, pp. 121–133.
- Verge, T., Ferrer-Fons, M., and González, M. J. "Resistance to Mainstreaming Gender into the Higher Education Curriculum". *The European Journal of Women's Studies*, 25 (1), 2017. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506816688237

For more about patriarchy, the creation of gender binarism, and the pathologising of non-males:

- Butler, J. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, [1990] 2006.
- Irigaray, L. *This Sex Which Is Not One*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Fausto-Sterling, A. *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories about Men and Women*. New York: Basic Books, 1992.

- Halberstam, J. *Trans: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability*. Oakland, CA: University of California University Press, 2018.
- Laqueur, T. "Destiny is Anatomy". In *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

For more about patriarchy and labour:

- Federici, S. *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*. New York: Autonomedia, 2004.
- Fraser, N. "Contradictions of Capital and Care", *New Left Review*, 100, 2016, pp. 99–117.
- Fraser, N. *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*. New York: Verso, 2013.

For more about the pervasiveness and everydayness of patriarchal domination:

- Garcia. M. *We Are Not Born Submissive: How Patriarchy Shapes Women's Lives*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021.
- Spade, D. *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015.

Notes

1 E.g., de Beauvoir, 1949
2 Pateman 1988, 207
3 Federici 2020
4 Fraser 2013, 52
5 See Berndt Rasmussen, this volume
6 See Finholt, this volume
7 It is crucial to note that this dichotomic biological differentiation leaves no space for bodies with variations in biological sex characteristics, such as intersex people.
8 Lerner 1987, 6. A number of studies have been conducted challenging gender-based biological determinism. For instance, historian Gerda Lerner wrote *The Creation of Patriarchy* which provides a vast array of archeological, legal, and literary evidence to support her arguments. In showing the historical roots of patriarchy, Lerner's argument poses a direct challenge to biologism by arguing that patriarchy, just like any other social order, can be undone.
9 Collins 2008
10 E.g., Young 1990; Mies 1999
11 hooks 2014
12 Gonzalez 2020
13 Crenshaw 1991; Losleben and Musubika, this volume

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Crenshaw, K. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color". *Stanford Law Review* 43 (6), 1991, pp. 1241–1299. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039.

de Beauvoir, S. *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage, [1949] 2001.

Federici, S. *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*. New York: PM Press, 2020.

Fraser, N. *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*. New York: Verso, 2013.

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11

EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

Kerstin Reibold

Knowledge is central to societal advancement and flourishing but also to our personal well-being. In most current societies, universities are the primary institutions that produce, gather, and transmit scientific knowledge. Two of their main tasks, teaching and research, are practices that rely on the accurate perception and communication of knowledge. Research aims at gaining knowledge about the world. Teaching aims at transmitting knowledge and training students in methods of attaining new knowledge. Therefore, universities should be especially careful to avoid practices that obscure or distort knowledge or make it in any other way inaccessible for researchers, students, and users. Each discipline has their own research methodologies and guidelines that are supposed to ensure good research practices. However, in recent years, increasing attention has been paid to individual and institutional features that impede knowledge gain and exchange even if the official research methodologies are followed well. One concept that describes such features is the concept of epistemic injustice.

Epistēmē is the Ancient Greek word for knowledge and in particular scientific knowledge. Epistemic injustice describes phenomena in which members of certain groups are unjustly excluded from gaining, communicating, or contributing to knowledge. According to Miranda Fricker,[1] epistemic injustice harms people in their capacity as knowers due to group-specific prejudices and power imbalances. Epistemic injustices produce primary and secondary harms, both of which are a concern in university settings. The primary harm is towards those people who are wrongfully excluded from participating in knowledge practices as equals. For example, they might be seen as unable to gain certain knowledge and thus be denied access to specific places of knowledge. Here you can think of women having been denied university admission for centuries. The secondary harm concerns the wider knowledge community. By excluding certain people, potentially important contributions to knowledge are also excluded. If women, or members of

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other minorities, are not seen as equals in their ability to have, gain, and express knowledge, a whole section of (potential) research and knowledge is wasted. Moreover, as epistemic injustices are group-based[2] and certain groups often have easier access to particular knowledge,[3] the exclusion of these groups from research makes knowledge inaccessible to the majority of people, and thereby accurate, in the sense of full, knowledge is prevented. For example, medical research has mostly focused on men's symptoms and illnesses. At the same time, women's reports of pain and symptoms have often been ignored or even dismissed as exaggerated. The denial of women's knowledge of their own bodies has led to serious gaps in how we understand the symptomatology, treatment, and causes of certain illnesses that manifest in gender-specific ways.[4]

The next section describes some, though not all, of the forms epistemic injustice can take in the university environment.[5] The hope is that these examples raise the sensitivity to the described as well as other kinds of epistemic injustice that harm the goals of and people at universities. Moreover, it is important to note that many forms of epistemic injustice are not committed on purpose and their ultimate causes can rarely be traced back to single agents. Instead, epistemic injustices often occur in the context of widespread prejudices, unreflected presuppositions, or ignorance. Therefore, even well-meaning members of the academic community might perpetuate such injustices. At the same time, one of the best cures for epistemic injustice seems to be a general awareness of the phenomenon, a willingness to question one's own stance towards other people as knowers, and an openness to register frictions between what we think we know and how others present themselves as knowers. All of these are general virtues in the field of knowledge gain. Epistemic justice only asks to extend and train these attitudes not just with respect to specific objects of research but also more widely with respect to our view of others with whom we teach, learn, work, and research.

Forms of epistemic injustice

The most general definition of epistemic injustice was given by Miranda Fricker who describes it as harming someone as a knower.[6] Even though Fricker introduced the term epistemic injustice, similar phenomena have been described for a long time by feminist and race scholars.[7] Since Fricker's coinage of the term, these discussions have started to specifically refer to the epistemic, that is knowledge-related, nature of the injustices, harms, and phenomena in question. Fricker herself distinguishes between hermeneutical and testimonial injustice. "Testimonial injustice occurs when prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word; hermeneutical injustice occurs at a prior stage, when a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences".[8] What does this mean in the academic environment?

Testimonial injustice can influence how we judge the contributions of a person who belongs to a group that often is seen as having less knowledge, being less rational, or more likely to be untruthful.[9] For example, students' information might be discounted too fast due to their assumed lower level of education. Here,

educators are asked to be open towards the possibility that a student also has profound knowledge due to their own studies or experiences. Thus, students' contributions should be as carefully listened to and considered as contributions by more established members of the academic community. Nevertheless, while not ideal, educators dismissing student knowledge might still be excused on the basis that the assumption that students have less knowledge is correct. Testimonial injustice is especially pernicious, however, when the underlying assumptions are based on prejudice; that is, widely held but false assumptions. An example here would be the credibility that is accorded to women reporting sexual harassment or discrimination.[10] Many women do not report harassment, discrimination, and abuse because they fear that they will not be believed.[11] These women are aware of the widespread belief that women often lie about having experienced abuse or "overreact", that is, falsely interpret and thus falsely report what has happened. While the numbers on rape and false rape allegations disprove these myths, they also show that they nevertheless have an impact on how reports by women on these issues are perceived.[12]

In such cases, testimonial injustice expresses itself in a variety of ways. Women's reports might not be taken seriously and thus never followed up. Women might also be asked to prove their claims in ways that are hardly realistic. It is often hard to provide material proof of sexual harassment as it happens subtly and often discreetly. On the other hand, in cases of severe trauma, e.g., through abuse or rape, victim accounts might be dismissed because of their seeming irrationality (Why did you not report immediately? Why did you not fight back more? etc.) and emotionality. Instead of seeing these behaviours as natural signs of trauma,[13] they are interpreted as signs of "typical female" behaviour and as reasons to discount the reports as untrue. Thus, if receiving reports about harassment, discrimination, or other undesirable behaviour, one should always be sensitive towards one's own first reactions when hearing such information. Is one immediately suspicious about what one hears? Does one feel mistrustful towards the one sharing this information? Why? Often it might be useful to suspend one's judgement of a certain report and delay critical questioning to a later point.

In the meantime, one can research what good indicators for verifying such a report are and what can and cannot be expected from the one reporting in terms of proof, knowledge, and behaviour. Such temporary suspension of judgment, self-reflection, and research allows one to react more appropriately and avoid testimonial injustice. It might be especially helpful to seek data about the likelihood and forms of discrimination, harassment, abuse, etc., as well as accounts of such experiences. Moreover, reflecting about who one trusts, regards as credible, and shares (or does not share) experiences with can also lead to anticipating some of the reactions one might have upon receiving such reports and might equip one to accord them the appropriate amount of credibility.[14] Such research also helps to prevent another kind of epistemic injustice, namely epistemic exploitation.

Epistemic exploitation refers to situations in which "privileged persons compel marginalized persons to educate them about the nature of their oppression".[15] It occurs, for example, when women do not just need to provide proof that sexual

harassment has happened but also need to explain what sexual harassment is and why it is harmful to them, and thereby the affected women are burdened twice. First, they encounter an injustice, sexual harassment, that affects them negatively. Secondly, they need to spend time and emotional resources to make others understand that an injustice has actually happened. For example, the women might have to explain why certain kinds of "attention" are not welcome by exposing how this behaviour affects them personally. They thus have to disclose intimate information which might make them feel highly uncomfortable. If, in contrast, the personnel in charge of receiving and filing harassment complaints already have a good understanding of the concept of sexual harassment, they will know why it is harmful even without requesting that women explain how it has affected them personally.

The first burden is imposed by the sexual harasser. The second burden, however, arises when people have not informed themselves about common injustices in their social environment and expect that those suffering the injustice provide all the information necessary to understand the situation. Therefore, an easy way to avoid epistemic exploitation is to actively seek out information about the kind of injustices marginalised people are likely to encounter. Ideally, such self-education happens even before an injustice has been brought to one's attention. Sometimes, one only becomes aware of the existence of an injustice once it is brought up. In such situations, it is important to remember that turning to the affected person for an explanation of the nature of that injustice might impose further burdens on them. Instead, one should seek alternative resources that can provide the same knowledge. For example, while one has to ask women reporting harassment what exactly has happened, one should not require them to explain why this constitutes harassment and is creating problems for her. Epistemic exploitation can also occur when representatives of certain marginalised groups are always called upon to explain the injustices that they suffer. For example, students of colour might be treated as the primary and best source for explaining racism in the classroom.[16] While it is important to believe such students if they decide to share their point of view and experiences, thus avoiding testimonial injustice, one should abstain from expecting them to provide such explanations if alternative sources of information are available. Epistemic exploitation presupposes that there are concepts and accessible information about the injustice in question. However, there might sometimes also be gaps in knowledge about such injustices due to hermeneutical injustice.

Hermeneutical injustice refers to situations in which people cannot interpret and communicate their experiences and knowledge because they or the people around them lack the concepts needed to articulate and understand them.[17] Hermeneutics is the study of interpretations that allow us to make sense of human experiences, intentions, and actions. The concept of hermeneutical injustice relies on the notion that there is a certain set of concepts that are widespread in a social community which members draw on to both make sense of their own experience and communicate it to others. Concepts allow us to put into words what we are feeling and experiencing – and if others share these concepts, we can easily make them

understand what we experience or know. For example, we all have a concept of love. Without that concept we could probably still describe what we feel towards our partner, child, parents, or friends. However, as love is different yet similar in all of these cases, and from person to person, we might struggle to make others understand what exactly it is we experience as there is no shared concept to draw on. Nevertheless, if we have the concept of love, everyone immediately understands what we mean when we say that we love someone. The concept bundles all the different experiences into something that everyone can understand even if they are not told the specifics. Concepts are so useful that it is difficult to articulate an experience for which there is not yet a (widespread) concept.

For example, women experiencing sexual harassment often struggle to put into words why they felt so uncomfortable with certain workplace interactions. After all, it was "just" a "man's joke" or "just" a "friendly" pat, etc. While some women were sure that these things were inappropriate but had difficulties explaining to others what exactly it was, others even doubted that their feelings in these situations were correct. However, once the concept of sexual harassment was coined, it had a three-fold effect. First, it bundled the experiences of many women and thereby assured them that what they experienced was real, and had certain features and causes. It gave them an explanation for what was happening to them. Second, it allowed them to introduce this concept into mainstream society. As more and more people became familiar with the concept, it became easier for women to talk about it and to communicate when they were sexually harassed. Third, as the concept of sexual harassment took hold, the image of women and their social position in the workplace also changed. Before, women were expected to tolerate sexual harassment and were seen as overreacting or uptight if they objected, but once lewd jokes and groping were not seen as normal or even benign anymore, it became acceptable for women to react negatively to this treatment. Thus, a lack of concepts does not just deprive everyone from understanding and being aware of specific phenomena. It is also an injustice insofar as it disadvantages a certain group and is caused by unjust exclusions or power relations.

Hermeneutical injustices disadvantage groups because they lack the resources to understand, articulate, and thereby challenge practices that harm them. At the same time, perpetrators are shielded from being called out on what they are doing, and this allows them to continue their harmful behaviour. The lack of certain concepts is also unjust insofar as it is caused by unjust exclusions or power relations in the social sphere. Hermeneutical resources are usually formed by social processes in which different actors shape and develop the concepts necessary to talk about the current social reality. Such processes often take place in the spheres of politics, law, academia, and public discourse. Some of the relevant actors that develop, spread, and legitimise new concepts are thus researchers, journalists, courts, and policy-makers. If certain groups have less access to these spheres, there is a danger that there will be no concepts and hermeneutical resources developed and introduced into public debate that pertain to this group's specific (social) experiences. The reasons why certain groups might be excluded from these spheres are manifold.

Material inequality or legal discrimination can be the cause, yet other more subtle causes like testimonial injustices also often play a role.

For example, women might be less likely to work in academia because they are still most often the primary caretakers for children and, together with a lack of childcare structures, might not be able to work full-time.[18] Moreover, they might also be kept from participating in academic research equally because there are still prejudices either towards women's ability to do good research or towards research that focuses on "women's topics".[19] In all these cases, women are excluded from shaping the conceptual and hermeneutical resources that are available in a society. Often such exclusion leads not just to an incomplete description and understanding of (social) reality for all, but also negatively impacts the well-being, equal opportunity, and freedom of the marginalised group. How then can such hermeneutical injustice be prevented in the university setting? A first step is to ensure that all groups have equal access to the places in which hermeneutical resources are created. This means that material and legal obstacles as well as epistemic injustices must be removed. Once members of such groups have entered the academic system, it is equally important to ensure that they and their work are equally included and respected.[20] For example, while the percentage of women in academia is on the rise, they are still not equally represented in conferences, publications, and as recipients of research funding[21] – yet these are exactly the venues in which research is communicated and new research directions and concepts are brought forward.

Thus, it is important to enable equal representation and participation on all levels of academia to counter hermeneutical injustice. Another important step in reducing hermeneutic injustice lies in providing access to hermeneutical resources about their own experiences to members of marginalised groups. The concept of epistemic injustice can serve as an example. While the experience of unjustly being accorded lower credibility (testimonial injustice) or not being able to draw on existent concepts to explain one's experience (hermeneutical injustice) has been discussed in feminism and race theory, the concept of "epistemic injustice" has been coined only recently. Before this coinage, texts that discussed the phenomena in question were usually missing from research debates and syllabi. Thus, students and researchers experiencing epistemic injustice did not have access to the texts that would have been important to their understanding and interpreting of what happened to them, unless they had studied feminism or critical race theory. By now, epistemic injustice has become a well-known concept in the humanities and social sciences. Thus, the topic is found in many syllabi, and it is becoming more accessible to students and researchers for whom it has not just academic, but also personal value. Nevertheless, this access would have been possible even earlier through a diversification of the syllabi. Diverse syllabi include work by members of marginalised communities and from disciplines that themselves have been marginalised because of representing these communities. They thereby not only combat the testimonial injustice that often keeps this research from receiving attention, but also hermeneutic injustice as they give marginalised groups more resources to draw on and interpret their own situation.

Wilful or motivated ignorance is a concept that focuses on one specific cause for epistemic injustices, namely the preservation of advantages. It describes the unwillingness to become aware of or learn about injustices – even if information is easily accessible – because it is advantageous for oneself to remain ignorant.[22] "Ignorance protects us from painful truths, insulates us from responsibility for our actions, and sustains the relationships that we depend upon for meaning and belonging".[23] For example, remaining ignorant about sexual harassment, implicit bias, or epistemic injustice might protect one's self-image as a good and just person. It might also allow one to continue practices that are beneficial to oneself or one's social group, e.g., lowering competition for jobs by excluding certain groups from the academic discourse, or ensuring one's good standing in one's primary community. For instance, if reports about discrimination are taken seriously, it necessitates a reaction that might produce conflict with one's colleagues. Thus, it might be more advantageous to remain ignorant of all but the most egregious forms of discrimination and thus avoid having to confront one's colleagues. Wilful ignorance often is driven by unconscious urges that are not immediately visible to us and that we might have no interest in further examining. Nevertheless, to avoid epistemic injustice – be it in the name of justice or in the name of participating in knowledge-building instead of knowledge-obscuring practices – it is important to question how one might benefit from not seeking more detailed knowledge about certain justice-related concepts or from discounting the testimony and concerns of a certain group of people.

Summary and recommendations

Epistemic injustice occurs when certain groups are hindered from equally participating in knowledge practices. Two prominent forms of epistemic injustice are testimonial and hermeneutical injustice. Testimonial injustice describes cases in which someone is unjustly assigned low credibility because of their group membership. They are thereby excluded from contributing to discussions and research or, if they are admitted, are not believed or believed less. Hermeneutical injustice refers to a lack of interpretational resources, e.g., in the form of concepts, which keep certain groups from understanding part of their own experiences as well as from making themselves understood by articulating these experiences with reference to shared concepts and meanings. Epistemic injustices are often systemic, that is, they appear in many, if not all, spheres of a person's life. For example, if women's statements are believed to be less credible, it impacts their chances to participate in research (academic sphere). Moreover, it will make them less likely to be interviewed about their opinions and experiences (public sphere) and give their word in court less weight (legal sphere). Correspondingly, the harms of epistemic injustice often go beyond the direct harm of not being recognised as an equal knower. They also affect employment chances, equal democratic participation, and the possibility to defend oneself against mistreatment and injustice.

The academic environment should be especially concerned with epistemic injustice for a variety of reasons. First, universities are a core institution in the production and

transmission of knowledge. Epistemic injustices in such institutions do not just harm the persons experiencing them but also keep universities from fulfilling their primary tasks well. Epistemic injustices obscure certain fields of knowledge and thereby distort how we understand the world, ourselves, and our place in it. Second, epistemic injustices are especially harmful in universities as they are institutions of knowledge. Thus, inequalities in access to knowledge and shaping that knowledge permeate every aspect of academic life and often also have external effects, e.g., by shaping public discourse. Third, universities are often still characterised by hierarchies. Such power imbalances tend to exaggerate epistemic injustices or might even cause them. Unless people in leadership functions are aware of epistemic injustices and actively work to eradicate them, it is hard for the concerned to even bring up their complaints as they are literally neither heard nor understood. Therefore, it is imperative that universities strive to create a diverse and equal environment that is characterised by epistemic virtues such as openness, respect, and sensitivity towards prejudices. This chapter has provided some suggestions for how this can be achieved. Ultimately, however, it lies in the hands of all university members to identify where they might be susceptible to committing epistemic injustices and to reflect on ways to treat all as equals, including with respect to epistemic matters.

Questions for discussion

- About which groups of people do you hold certain beliefs about what they know, how good their knowledge is, how reliable their testimony is, etc.? What leads you to have these beliefs and are they verifiable beliefs?
- Which groups are underrepresented in your work environment? How might this affect the kind of questions that are asked and topics that are considered important?
- Can you think of an example of an epistemic injustice in your field of work that was identified and overcome? What led to the successful recognition and eradication of this injustice?
- Which social groups do you know little about? How might this affect how you (fail to) understand certain contributions by members of that group?
- How might epistemic injustices affect how contributions by members of marginalised groups are evaluated, e.g., in the form of scientific excellence, teaching assessments, etc.?

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Notes

1 Fricker 2007
2 In the following, examples will mainly draw upon the situation of women in academia. However, the phenomena described as well as the suggestions as to how to counter epistemic injustices equally apply to other marginalised groups such as members of the LGBTQ+ community or ethnic minorities. For more information, the suggestions for further reading contain articles that specifically discuss these cases. See also Vitikainen, this volume, and Sagdahl, this volume
3 Halpern 2019; Toole 2019; Anderson 2020; Pohlhaus 2012
4 Ventura-Clapier et al. 2017; Jackson 2019; Dusenbery 2018
5 Cf. Pohlhaus 2017
6 Fricker 2007
7 The Combahee River Collective 2012; MacKinnon 1982; Fanon 2001; Du Bois 2016; Tuana 2017
8 Fricker 2007, 1
9 Fricker 2007, Ch.1
10 See Antonsen, this volume
11 Murphy-Oikonen et al. 2020; Sable et al. 2006
12 Hänel 2021
13 Herman 2015
14 Cf. Frost-Arnold 2020
15 Berenstain 2016, 569
16 Davis 2016
17 Fricker 2007, Ch.7
18 Ansel 2016; Parker 2015; Goulden, Mason, and Frasch 2011
19 Cislak, Formanowicz, and Saguy 2018; Knobloch-Westerwick, Glynn, and Huge 2013; Murrar et al. 2021
20 Bhakuni and Abimbola 2021
21 Ferber and Teiman 1980; Preidt 2019; Dion, Sumner, and Mitchell 2018
22 Williams 2020
23 Williams 2021

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12

SELF-RESPECT[1]

Attila Tanyi

In a 2014 story in *The Atlantic* ("The Confidence Gap"), authors Katty Kay and Claire Shipman[2] report on their research concerning the surprising phenomenon that many successful women, all accomplished and highly competent, exhibit high degrees of self-doubt. Their focus is on working professionals, but they also cite examples from education. Here is one:

> David Dunning, the Cornell psychologist, offered the following case in point: In Cornell's math PhD program, he's observed, there's a particular course during which the going inevitably gets tough. Dunning has noticed that male students typically recognize the hurdle for what it is, and respond to their lower grades by saying, "Wow, this is a tough class". That's what's known as external attribution, and in a situation like this, it's usually a healthy sign of resilience. Women tend to respond differently. When the course gets hard, Dunning told us, their reaction is more likely to be "You see, I knew I wasn't good enough". That's internal attribution, and it can be debilitating.

Kay and Shipman then ask the question: where does it all start? On the "nurture" side, they focus on three formative places: the elementary-school classroom, the playground, and the sports field. They are no doubt right about this. However, *higher education* is also an important factor. Although by its nature it is certainly not where the negative processes begin, it is undoubtedly one of the major venues where they continue and, potentially, gather further force. Or so I shall argue in the present chapter by focusing on the role *self-respect* plays in higher education.

Here is how I will proceed. In the next section (1), I will clarify the main concepts that are relevant for gaining a clear view of the notion of self-respect: different kinds of self-respect and the connection to the notion of self-esteem will be discussed. After this, in section 2, I will move on to the main theoretical positions

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that have historically put self-respect at the centre of their theorising. The story starts with Immanuel Kant, continues with John Rawls, and ends with the influential accounts of Axel Honneth, Avishai Margalit, and several feminist thinkers. Having covered the theoretical and conceptual landscape, I finally connect self-respect to higher education on both the systematic as well as the more applied level of thinking (in section 3). I then wrap up the entry by connecting back to *The Atlantic* story we started with, and make suggestions for further reading for those with a deeper interest in the topic.

Concepts: Varieties of self-respect and self-esteem

The notion of self-respect appears in many literary works as well as in real life. Here is a literary example cited by Robin Dillon from George Bernard Shaw's play *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1894):[3]

> When her daughter, Vivie, challenges Mrs. Warren's life in the world's oldest profession, Mrs. Warren defends her path as better than the "respectable" options that were open to her as a poor girl: working as a scullery maid or scrubbing floors for a few shillings a week "with nothing to look forward to but the workhouse infirmary", working in the factory until she died of lead poisoning, or marrying a laborer, who'd likely turn to drink, and struggling to feed his children. These options were, she insists, not just more miserable than the path she chose but morally worse: "How could you keep your self-respect in such starvation and slavery? And what's a woman worth? What's life worth? Without self-respect!"

Of course, we do not have to agree with Mrs. Warren regarding her work as a prostitute. For one, her daughter, Vivie, does not agree, nor do many others including Dillon herself (she brings further examples of people who disagree with Mrs. Warren). Still, Mrs Warren does not misuse the concept of self-respect, and this is what is important for us. It helps us understand what "self-respect" exactly stands for in our thinking and emotional life.

Here is how Dillon defines self-respect: "Self-respect is an appropriate and engaged appreciation from a moral point of view on oneself as having morally significant worth… self-respect is *due* respect for oneself, *proper* regard for one's dignity; to say that a person respects herself is to say that her self-regard is morally appropriate".[4] Self-respect is thus a moral notion, a self-reflective moral attitude that is also evaluative in nature. But exactly what form does this evaluation take? What is it that we evaluate and how? Here, we find an important distinction that permeates the philosophical literature on the notion starting, perhaps, with Darwall in 1977.

Recognition self-respect involves an "understanding of oneself as having intrinsic worth and moral status just in virtue of being a person, and of the moral constraints that personhood entails".[5] In short, this kind of self-respect focuses our self-worth

on our identity as persons. It is a complicated matter, however, as it involves the question of what makes us persons. Personhood has intrinsic worth, at least in the Western tradition, in virtue of three features: equality, agency, and individuality. We are morally equal and thus demand equal moral recognition: we are persons of equal dignity and we resent it when this dignity is violated. Or, in the language of rights: we share the same set of human rights. The other aspects of personhood concern manifesting this dignity by living in a way that respects the norms that arise from one's worth as a person. Thereby, we avoid a certain form of shame arising from the fact "that one's worth and identity are threatened by failure (real or apparent) to live up to one's standards and expectations as a person (agent, individual)".

While recognition self-respect focuses our self-worth on our identity as persons, *evaluative self-respect* does the same with regard to our character. This stance consists of a certain normative self-conception, as evaluative self-respect expresses our confidence in our merit based on this self-conception. Here is Dillon again: "Evaluative self-respect contains the judgment that one is or is becoming the kind of person one thinks one should be or wants to be, or more significantly, that one is not or is not in danger of becoming the sort of person one thinks one should not be or wants not to be".[6]

Many would consider this an overly broad account of evaluative self-respect, one that would identify this form of self-respect with *self-esteem*: a feeling of self-worth, a positive form of self-appraisal rooted in the perceived excellences of one's person. Importantly, however, self-esteem is a much thinner and non-moral notion when compared to evaluative self-respect. Take the following—all too familiar—example:

> Consider, for example, someone who has a favourable attitude toward himself based on having amassed great wealth and power through business deals that involved bribery, fraud, brutal elimination of rivals, and other manifestly immoral activities. It is easy to see this as someone who values winning and having the guts to get what he wants and thinks he deserves, who thinks that scrupulous people are just sapless suckers and wimps, and who esteems himself for living powerfully and profitably.[7]

Without a doubt we can say that self-esteem manifests itself in this case in the form of pride. We might think this pride is misconceived; but we would hardly question the fact of feeling self-worth. Nevertheless, would we also say that this person has self-respect? That they can hold their head high, that they live a worthy life, a life worthy of a person with dignity? Most probably we would not, and this is because evaluative self-respect is grounded not merely in any odd normative self-conception, but in a moral ideal: in the norms that are entailed by our worth as persons. That is, evaluative self-respect builds on *recognition self-respect*. Those who have the latter strive to live by these moral norms, whereas those who have the former strive to become the kind of person who lives by such norms. Unlike the billionaire in

our example, Mrs. Warren is one of those persons. She chooses to be a prostitute because she thinks that other alternatives are degrading for her as a person, and while she is no doubt proud of herself for what she has achieved (to provide a good life for her daughter), her positive self-appraisal goes beyond this: she thinks she has lived a worthy life, a life of dignity and integrity. She has, she thinks, no reason to feel ashamed, to feel self-contempt or self-loathing—emotions we can associate with the lack of evaluative self-respect.

Recently, some have argued that the above distinction is not enough to fully characterise the importance and depth of self-respect in our mental economy. In particular, they point out that there is a deeper level that underlies both kinds of self-respect above. Robin Dillon coins the term *basal self-respect* to refer to this phenomenon. Basal self-respect is crucial: at its heart is "our most profound valuing of ourselves".[8] As Dillon puts it, "Whereas recognition self-respect expresses, 'I matter because I am a person', and evaluative self-respect expresses, 'I matter because I have merit', basal self-respect expresses simply, 'I matter'".[9] If our basal self-respect is secure and positive, we have faith in ourselves; we have confidence in ourselves; we are secure of our worth. However, when it is damaged, "basal valuing is incessant whispering below the threshold of awareness: 'you're not good enough, you're nothing'".[10] Since this is the base, when it is gone or just partially eradicated, the effects are psychologically, even morally, debilitating: such a person experientially understands herself as (near) nothing, as (near) worthless. "Damaged basal self-respect", writes Dillon, "creates a damaged self".[11]

Here is an example of an instance of what is often called *impostor syndrome*:[12]

> my program/major is perceived to be "the best" with the highest-quality students enrolled in it. On numerous occasions, the girls in my program constitution have been told we're "so bright and outstanding" by professors, advisors, etc. Many feel only the brightest students make it into the program and by being here, it proves our intelligence and character. They assume we're all responsible, organized, hard-working, dedicated students. However, that's not the case… I felt ashamed. I was with 2 dozen girls who were bright and great people and I felt like I didn't measure up to them. Like I shouldn't be here and I'm probably wasting somebody's time.

Of course, the student in the example could be right: that she in fact does not "measure up" to the other students, that it is a mere fluke, or worse, even cheating that she is in the programme. But this is not the case. The student did not get into the programme as a result of cheating or by some kind of accident. She is there because she deserves to be there and, deep down, perhaps she also knows this. Then we have a complex emotional syndrome on our hands.[13] For, in this case, the student has all the reason to respect as well as to esteem herself; still, she is incapable of this. She might even feel shame at what she considers to be her failure to not be proud of her achievements (getting into the programme and staying in it). What is more, this is not likely to be an episodic phenomenon for the student:

the incongruity between her emotional response and her beliefs does not go away; it is "persistent, even recalcitrant, impervious to rational criticism, argument, and reconceptualization".[14] What the student is lacking is basal self-respect, and without it, her thoughts and emotions are built on what are at best shaky foundations.

Theories: From Kant through Rawls to feminism

Historically, the most influential theorist to place self-respect in his moral philosophy was the German enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant. To do so, Kant used a controversial "device": duties to self. He argued that we have duties not only to other beings, but also to ourselves. In particular, we have a duty to respect our own dignity as rational beings and thus we should not act in ways that abase, degrade, defile, or disavow our rational nature. In short, we have a duty of recognition towards self-respect.[15] In his *The Metaphysics of Morals*,[16] Kant argued that many specific duties follow from this general duty: the duty not to commit suicide, not to misuse our sexual powers, to avoid drunkenness and other forms of self-indulgence, the duty not to lie, the duty to avoid self-deception, and so on. He also argued that the general duty is basic: without it we cannot have duties to others either. Kant also discusses evaluative self-respect as a positive motivational force, especially in his *The Critique of Practical Reason*[17] and in his *Lectures on Ethics*.[18] For him this form of self-respect appears as a combination of noble pride (in our morally worthy achievements) and humility (the realisation that we nevertheless fall short of perfect morality).[19]

Kant focuses on duties to self, but self-respect clearly has an entitlement dimension as well: others also have a duty to not act in ways that impede or disrupt one's development of self-respect. In short, we have a right to self-respect. Among contemporary philosophers, the American philosopher John Rawls has made this entitlement dimension of self-respect a cornerstone of his philosophical system in his *A Theory of Justice*[20] and subsequent works. According to Rawls, the social bases of self-respect determine both our capacity to pursue our conception of the good life as well as our confidence to carry out this pursuit. As Rawls puts it: "Without [self-respect] nothing may seem worth doing, or if some things have value for us, we lack the will to strive for them".[21] It is not clear whether Rawls understands self-respect along recognition or evaluative lines; still, his message is clear: the provision of self-respect becomes a matter of justice, and social institutions can be judged on the basis of whether they sustain self-respect. Rawls primarily uses the appeal to self-respect to argue for an extensive system of basic rights and liberties. Recently, many have extended the use of self-respect to argue for further redistributive policies such as, for example, a universal basic income scheme.[22]

Self-respect also plays an important role in other contemporary theories. In his *The Decent Society*, Avishai Margalit[23] argues that a "decent society" "is one whose institutions do not humiliate people, that is, give people good reason to consider their self-respect to be injured".[24] Axel Honneth's influential recognition theory in his *The Struggle for Recognition* and subsequent works pictures social and moral

progress as a "struggle for recognition".[25] He distinguishes three stages based on three main forms of mutual recognition. The first is universal respect that is unconditional regarding merits, desert, or other particularities; the second is love, or care that is similarly unconditional; the third is esteem, which is conditional on merits, desert, or other particularities. The corresponding attitudes toward the self are (recognition) self-respect, self-confidence, and self-esteem. These self-relations concern oneself "as an autonomous agent who is equal amongst others (self-respect), or as a singular being whose needs matter and who needs to be loved (self-confidence), and as a bearer of abilities or traits that others can value (self-esteem)".[26]

These are all general, comprehensive theories that are somewhat removed from everyday reality. However, starting perhaps with Boxill,[27] self-respect has been used directly to theorise about real-world struggles against oppression, or stigmatisation against different groups of marginalised, vulnerable people via institutions, images, and actions. There is also a steadily growing feminist literature that aims to re-conceptualise the concept of self-respect and connect it to the still ongoing suppression of women and, more broadly, gender inequality as well as LGBTQ +-related challenges. This part of the literature often brings into focus the connection of self-respect to other notions, be they epistemic, concerning, for example, access to knowledge including self-knowledge or morality, or, in particular, concerning certain virtues and vices related to self-respect.[28] Lastly, the concept of basal self-respect, as we saw, is used to explicate and analyse important psychological phenomena often connected to the struggles of vulnerable, oppressed groups, such as those with impostor syndrome or battered wife syndrome (e.g., women living in abusive relationships).

Higher education: Challenges and responses

From a systemic point of view, there is clear interconnection between self-respect in its various forms and education. The connection, moreover, concerns our entire educational system, hence separating out the institutions of higher education is not easy, if not impossible. There are many ways of conceiving of the aim of (higher) education. Recently, three such conceptions have been influential.[29] In one view, the aim of education (especially higher education) is producing and transmitting marketable skills: the focus is on selectivity, individualised assessment, and the encouragement of competitive behaviour. In another view, education—starting already at the primary school level—is about developing individual autonomy: to teach students to be free and independent, to encourage and habituate them to put forward their own ideas and proposals. In a third view, education is democracy oriented. Here the idea is to look at pupils and students as future citizens of a democratic republic: to teach them ways of working together and producing knowledge together via a shared process of learning and problem solving. Students can thus be prepared for their future role of being citizens: to participate in the public legitimation of their own choices without fear and shame. Again, this starts

already at the primary school level: education, in this view, is a process of empowerment and emancipation that often takes the form of acquiring practical habits at the earliest stage of upbringing and socialisation.[30]

The market-based view of education has little space for self-respect and even self-esteem. After all, the emphasis is on statistically measurable skills and other results, and this has a positive connection to one's self-conception only if it shares its evaluative ideal with the market, as it were. That is, if students do not share the prevailing view of market-related individual merits (how much one is "worth" on the annual *Forbes* list), a system that is built around this ideal can hardly help them to respect and esteem themselves. Of course, the marketised view of education does have a significant role for the "student experience". Since students are taken to be consumers who pay for a particular educational service and therefore are entitled to expect an educational product in return, significant efforts are made in today's higher education to attract them and then to retain them. One way of doing this is to use education to boost their self-esteem: to make them feel good about themselves. However, such an instrumental and indiscriminate attempt is likely to turn out to be counterproductive; moreover, as decades of psychological research shows, making everyone feel good about themselves is no panacea to all our social and psychological ills. While no one doubts the motivational force of self-esteem, and that low self-esteem can cause problems in education,[31] we no longer think that high self-esteem is necessarily good. In fact, there is plenty of psychological research that connects it to vulnerability, aggression, violence, prejudice, and other psychological and social problems.[32]

The other two models have more place for *self-trust* (and corresponding *self-confidence*), which in turn connects intimately to self-respect as well as to self-esteem. Take the second model: autonomy. Autonomy is a complex and disputed concept, but at least in a procedural understanding of it, autonomy requires controlling one's own life, which in turn requires competence in discovering one's talents, beliefs, and values.[33] Of course, there are situations when one has reason to question oneself. In fact, we teach our students to be critical and questioning and, of course, this also involves their own views. However, the kind of self-trust concerned here is more basic—what it rules out is a sort of fundamental self-doubt: "to lack general confidence in one's own ability to observe and interpret events, to remember and recount, to deliberate and act generally… a lack of any sense that one is fundamentally a worthy and competent person".[34] If one doubts oneself on this fundamental level, one cannot function as a person. Without trusting, in this way, one's own memory, interpretation, motivation, one will constantly question one's own idea of what has happened to one and/or to others. Without this form of trust, one is not able to depend on oneself to carry through decisions and act on one's own values in difficult situations.

Many phenomena that are much discussed these days connect in here. *Gaslighting* is a form of psychological manipulation in which a person sows seeds of doubt in another person regarding their memory, intentions, perceptions, and so on. The *battered woman syndrome* is also partially dependent on self-doubt ultimately leading

to the conviction, on the woman's part, that she deserves the abuse. Furthermore, self-doubt is also a core characteristic of the already discussed *impostor syndrome* when one, often a woman, believes that one is not as competent as others perceive one to be (one is a phony, as it were), and so the list continues.

In many of these cases, the suffering subject lacks or only possesses damaged autonomy; this much is clear. It is also clear that the subject possesses no or little self-respect and self-esteem. Why is this? The important point is that institutional systems, not only individual relations, can have such detrimental effects. In fact, even going beyond this, the informal organisation of society, for example society's male-dominated relations through the family and other institutions, can also significantly contribute to making matters worse. And, of course, education belongs to these formal and informal structures; hence it is not surprising that both aforementioned models of education lay a heavy emphasis on promoting self-trust and self-confidence from the early stages of education.

In the third model, this is also connected to democracy and democratic citizenship. As venues of shared learning and problem-solving, schools are miniature democracies in this view; universities, as centres of higher learning, are—or should be—even more so. Modern democracies are designed to treat people as equals (even if theory does not always translate into practice). In addition to freedom, equality is standardly considered to be what makes democracy valuable in itself, but this does not only mean interpersonal respect for others as equals, but also *intra*-personal respect—one needs self-respect and self-esteem coupled with or based on self-trust to be—and feel to be—in the position to participate in republican self-legislation as an equal among equals. No wonder that several of the theorists mentioned previously—Rawls and Honneth in particular—place self-respect centre stage in their own moral theorising.

What does this require in down-to-earth educational terms? Many things can be said here. On the organisational level, an increased level of *workplace democracy* might be warranted,[35] abolishing as much as is possible hierarchical structures; involving students in decision-making; putting an end to the artificial separation of administration and the rest of the university; and viewing the university as a community of scholars and students. We can also learn a considerable amount from the much-admired Finnish education system. In Finnish primary and secondary schools, pupils from different educational backgrounds remain in the same schools together as long as possible; tests and examinations are reduced to a bare minimum; communicative responsibility and mutual trust are given much greater weight than individual attributability; and choices regarding teaching methods are made by the professionally trained teachers themselves in cooperation with student representatives.[36]

Although the context and nature of higher education is different, many of these ideas can be implemented at universities and other higher education institutions. Perhaps even more so since higher education institutions have more means at their disposal: through formal sets of structures and activities (lecture, seminar, tutorial, workshop, private study, assessed work) and a socially loose framework, which offers a curious variety of opportunities where intimacy, distance, collaboration and

isolation, power and transformation, self-respect as well as respect for others can be effectively promoted.[37] This is a process of *self-other recognition* in which one's intrapersonal recognitional attitude—self-respect, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-trust—develops through the establishment of interpersonal recognition—respect, esteem, confidence, trust. Axel Honneth's[38] theory builds almost exclusively on this process and higher education plays a crucial role in it.

Digitalisation of education is another area where challenges and opportunities co-exist. The use of virtual public spheres (discussion forums, digital roundtables, videoconferencing, and so on) as well as the use of social media can be important means of engagement and involvement boosting participants' self-respect and self-esteem. However, as is well-known from everyday life and the media, using these products of the "digital revolution" also has its negative side. Although we hope our present predicament will not—at least in the near future—repeat itself, the dangers of these technologies are all the more apparent in today's pandemic-riven, divided world.

Another challenge is *multiculturalism*: the heterogeneity of the students in the classroom as well as of staff in the institution. Regarding students, Honneth takes a positive tone:

> the less a pupil is treated as an isolated subject meant to deliver a certain performance, and the more he or she is approached as a member of a cooperative learning community, the more likely is the emergence of forms of communication that allow not only for a playful acceptance of cultural differences but that positively conceive of such differences as opportunities for mutual enrichment.[39]

What are the main dangers from the point of view of self-respect? *Stigmatisation* appears to be an obvious candidate: no one should be considered a secondary member, citizen, student, or staff member just because of who they are (because of any particular individual trait, for example).[40] *Marginalisation* is also crucial to avoid: the already existing marginalisation in society (by skin colour, sex, and so on) should not be reinforced and as much as possible should be resisted. Vulnerable groups should be protected in educational systems by all means possible, and as is evident from the above, steps have to be taken to boost women's and other marginalised and vulnerable groups' self-trust and self-confidence.

Summary and recommendations

Let us return to the case we started with. After presenting theoretical findings about women's loss of self-confidence and self-trust and discussing the role primary education plays in the process, Kay and Shipman go on to propose ways of reducing the confidence gap. They claim that "Confidence is not, as we once believed, just feeling good about yourself". This is a reference to the once central role self-esteem had been believed to play in this area. And, of course, they are right about

this: I have noted this myself. However, then they claim that *action* is the crucial factor: "So confidence accumulates—through hard work, through success, and even through failure". But if what I have written has any grain of truth to it, the problem is nowhere near this simple. For why would someone lacking confidence *ever* act and thus accumulate confidence? Self-confidence and self-trust are multi-faceted phenomena. They relate not just to self-esteem (the arguably most superficial level), but to the three kinds of self-respect I have distinguished in the conceptual part of this chapter. Institutional systems, including those of higher education, must be clear on which of these "layers" of self-respect they are best at targeting before they devise methods of reducing the confidence gap. In general, as demonstrated, higher education has an important role in empowering the development of self-respect in our societies.

Questions for discussion

- What is self-respect and how does it differ from self-esteem?
- How does self-respect appear in philosophical theorising? What is the practical relevance of this theorising?
- What are the main models of higher education and how does promoting self-respect relate to them?
- Why is self-respect important for feminist and social theorising? What are the main areas of interest and why?

Suggestions for further reading

The literature on self-esteem is dominated by psychological research; the literature on self-respect is almost entirely philosophical. With this in mind, here are some recommendations for further reading.

On the connection between self-esteem and education:

- Ferkany, Matt. 2008. "The Educational Importance of Self-Esteem". *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 42 (1): 119–32. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9752.2008.00610.x.

On the connection between self-respect and education:

- Kramer, M.H. 1998. "Self-Respect, *Megalopsychia*, and Moral Education". *Journal of Moral Education* 27: 5–17.
- Strike, K. 1980. "Education, Justice, and Self-Respect: A School for Rodney Dangerfield". *Philosophy of Education* 35: 41–9.
- Worsfold, V.L. 1988. "Educating for Self-Respect" *Philosophy of Education* 44: 258–69.

Notes

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2 Kay and Shipman 2014
3 Dillon 2004, 47
4 Dillon 2013, 4776
5 Dillon 2001, 66
6 Dillon 2001, 67
7 Dillon 2004, 61
8 Dillon 1997, 241
9 Dillon 2001, 68n45
10 Dillon 1997, 242
11 Dillon 1997, 243
12 Bortolan 2018, 62–3 quoting McElwee and Yurak 2010, 188–9
13 See Dillon 1997, 232–3 for more worked out, albeit not real-life, examples
14 Dillon 1997, 234
15 Dillon 2018, 49
16 Kant 1996b (1797)
17 Kant 1996a (1788)
18 Kant 1997 (1779)
19 Dillon 2018, 50
20 Rawls 1971
21 Rawls 1971, 440
22 McKinnon 2003; Schemmel 2019
23 Margalit 1998
24 Dillon 2018, 51
25 Honneth 1996
26 Laitinen 2015, 59
27 Boxill 1976
28 Borgwald 2012; Dillon 2018
29 Honneth 2015
30 Jørgensen 2015
31 E.g. Ferradás et al. 2020
32 E.g. Baumeister et al. 2003; Hallsten et al. 2012
33 Meyers 1995
34 Govier 1993, 108
35 Frega, Herzog, and Neuhäuser 2019
36 Sahlberg 2012
37 Cf. de Souza et al. 2012
38 Honneth 1996, 2015
39 Honneth 2015, 31–2
40 See Finholt, this volume

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13

STEREOTYPE THREATS[1]

Hege Cathrine Finholt

"Americans are good at small talk", "Norwegians love the outdoors", "women are not as smart as men", and "Muslims are terrorists" are stereotypes that are alive and well in our societies. The first two are rather harmless, whereas the latter two are damaging, especially to women and Muslims, respectively. These kinds of stereotypes are what the social psychologist Claude Steele calls "stereotype threat"[2] and they cause members of the stigmatised group to underperform: "Victims of stereotype threat underperform on the relevant tasks because they are unconsciously preoccupied by fears of confirming the stereotypes about their group".[3] Stereotype threats are often not verbalised or conscious, but they "hover" in the air.[4] They are damaging because victims of stereotype threat spend considerable time proving the stereotype wrong. This, as research shows, can be so exhausting that it gets in the way of a person's ability to perform according to their potential.

The research on stereotype threat supports the claim that women in academia are held back due to stereotypes such as "women are not as smart as men". The good news is that the research on stereotype threat also makes it clear that it is possible to remove some of the damaging stereotypes. What is needed is an awareness of what stereotype threats are and a willingness to take concrete measures aimed at minimising, and perhaps removing, the stereotype threats "hovering" in the air. That they are hovering in the air means that they are not necessarily verbalised but rather a part of the unspoken culture that affects our way of perceiving the world.

The state of affairs

Women have for a long time been stigmatised as being less capable of academic work than men, probably because, according to this stigma, they are of less intelligence. This, as it turns out, is not true, and yet it is a stereotype that is still at play

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in society, even in a place like Norway, which according to some measurements is one of those countries in the world with an excellent gender balance in many societal sectors. Statistics show, however, that among those who applied for a postdoctoral position at Norwegian academic institutions in the timeframe 2016–2018, only 29 percent were women. For PhD positions and professorships, the number is 33 percent, whereas it is 50 percent for associate professors and 60 percent for teaching positions (lecturer).[5] In 2019, women held only 32 percent of the full professorships, although 48 percent of the associate professorships were held by women. The good news is that there has in fact been an increase of female professors, but the rate of increase is slow. It is reasonable to claim that the number should have been higher given the high number of female students; and, most importantly, among completed PhDs there has been almost a 50–50 balance between men and women since 2012.[6] Given what we know about stereotype threat, it is likely that this is one factor that plays a role with regard to the poor gender balance among faculty in higher education. There are likely several different gender-role stereotypes that are part of the explanation. However, in this chapter, the stereotype in focus is, as mentioned above, the claim that women are less capable than men in performing academic work because they are less intelligent.

Social identity and stereotype threat

Feminist thinkers have for a long time argued that autonomy should be understood in relational terms because human beings are embedded in relationships.[7] Our identity is not something that develops and unfolds in a vacuum, but in context: we have a social identity. This means that our relationships and our surroundings affect how we think about ourselves, the choices we make, our aspirations, and our ways of life. Simone de Beauvoir captures this when she claims "*One is not born a woman, one becomes one*".[8]

Research in social psychology has picked up on this insight and conducted a number of experiments that can tell us something about the ways social identities affect performance. In a convincing way, Steele shows that these experiments strongly suggest that there are parts of our social identities that are contingent upon certain stereotypes, and these stereotypes will at times threaten our ability to perform according to our potential. The reason for this is that proving the stereotype wrong will take up so much cognitive and emotional power that it gets in the way of the real task, such as doing a math test under pressure, and this is a threat to performance. Jennifer Saul explains it as follows: "Victims of stereotype threat underperform on the relevant tasks because they are unconsciously preoccupied by fears of confirming the stereotypes about their group".[9] Stereotypes influence us in deep-rooted ways, and a cognitive awareness of them does not necessarily help, at least not in isolation from other factors. To tell a person who is a victim of a stereotype threat that they should not care about the stereotype is not helpful. This is because stereotypes affect our self-identity in non-cognitive ways.[10]

By drawing on several studies in social psychology Steele shows that by understanding what stereotype threats are and how they affect performance it is in fact

possible to change a culture by removing stereotype threats that are, as Steele puts it, "hovering in the air".[11] A study conducted by Geoffrey Cohen and Lee Ross illustrates the importance of removing stereotypes that are hovering in the air.[12] In this study, a group of black and white students were asked to write an essay, and they were told that if the essay was good enough it would be published in a campus magazine on teaching. Having submitted their essay, the students came back two days later to get feedback. The researchers designed three strategies for giving feedback, aimed at measuring which strategy would best motivate the student to edit their essay based on the feedback, polishing it for publication. The stereotype threat that the researchers were interested in removing was the stereotype that black people are not as smart as white people. They found that the first two strategies, namely (1) prefacing the feedback positively and (2) neutral feedback, did not motivate the black students to keep working on their essay. The third way of giving feedback, however, was a great motivator for both black and white students. This strategy consisted of explaining to the student that the feedback was given based on high standards for this kind of essay and pointing out that if the student can successfully edit the essay in line with the feedback it is likely that the essay will be published.[13]

In discussing why the third strategy was effective in motivating the black students to keep working, Steele argues: "It told them they weren't being seen in terms of the bad stereotype about their group's intellectual abilities, since the feedback giver used high intellectual standards and believed they could meet them. They could feel less jeopardy. The motivation they had always had was released".[14] One might wonder why the first two strategies did not have this effect. The interpretation offered by Steele is that, although there was nothing wrong with the feedback in the first two strategies, it was not given in such a way that any ambiguity of how racial stereotypes might affect the feedback was removed, i.e., the social contingencies were not removed; they were still hovering in the air. The students did not fully trust the feedback as they could not be certain whether racial stereotypes played a role. It did not matter whether racial stereotypes played a role or not, the point is that the students could not fully trust that they did not.

The results of studies designed to measure the effect of stereotype threat are telling: negative stereotypes are a threat to one's identity, and they threaten performance (both individually and as a group) in such a way that the results are not in accordance with the potential of the individual. Understanding the force stereotype threats have, especially with regard to stigmatised groups, is necessary to be able to make changes.[15]

Do I belong?

On a cognitive level, most people realise that the stereotype about women's low intelligence is false, and yet, as Steele points out, a cognitive awareness of this kind of stigmatisation does not remove the stigma. Stereotypes, he argues, are "social contingencies" that are hovering in the air. Most people, especially when entering

a new place, ask themselves the question: Do I belong here? Starting a new job, starting a graduate programme at a university, and going to a party without knowing many people are situations where this question lingers in one's head. Without even thinking about it, one starts to look for clues that affirm or disaffirm belongingness. In other words, the social contingencies that are lingering in the air are interpreted as expressions as to whether one belongs. As members of a minority group, as women in academia are for the most part, the question of belongingness has great force, even if one is not cognitively aware of it. The worry of failing, of proving the stereotype right, might take up so much space in one's life that it gets in the way of the ability to do what is necessary to succeed. Steele calls this a cognitive overload.[16]

One way to improve gender balance in academia is to change the academic culture by removing the social contingencies that are at play. By academic culture I refer to, among other things, the patterns of thought, verbal and nonverbal communication, and patterns of behaviour that can be said to characterise academia. The task of changing the culture must not be given solely to the targets of stereotype threat, in this case women, but to the institution, and particularly to those who are leaders and those who hold key positions in the institution.

Recommendations

Taking measures to remove stereotype threats means changing the culture of the institution where these stereotypes are at play. At an academic institution one should strive towards having a cultural framework where faculty members perform according to their potential. To succeed, it is of crucial importance to have leaders who are able to see a person's potential, understand the extent to which stereotype threats are present at one's particular institution, and do what it takes to remove the stereotype threat. To succeed in making such a change is no small task, and it requires strategic thinking and planning, as well as prudence in the interpretation and application of the legal framework. It requires an understanding of *when* action is needed, and what *kind* of action is needed, and an understanding of both the formal and the informal ways in which gendered stereotypes are expressed. This is of crucial importance with regard to hiring procedures, and with regard to nurturing the academic potential of faculty members. In the remainder of this chapter, I propose two important areas where measures should be taken to remove stereotype threats, namely hiring procedures, and nurturing the potential of faculty members.

When and what kind: Job ads and hiring committees

It is realistic to strive for gender balance, given the fact that there is a gender balance in completed PhDs (at least in Norway). Despite this, we know that there are fewer women than men who apply for faculty positions (not counting solely teaching positions) in academic institutions, and fewer women than men who

apply for full professorships. Based on this, higher education leadership need to ask themselves: How can we get women to apply for permanent positions? One solution would be to use affirmative action and earmark one or more positions for women only. Although this might at times be fruitful, it is nevertheless problematic simply because it indirectly confirms the stereotype that one is trying to remove, namely that women are less capable than men to do academic work, and in a competition with men they will not win.[17] Learning from the research on stereotype threat it becomes clear that one needs to focus on *removing* stereotype threats and not work around them, and this must also be done with regard to the recruitment process itself.

The first step to take is to craft job ads and job descriptions that are welcoming to both men and women, not only to men. Research shows that the wording of a job ad is of crucial importance regarding possible candidates. For instance, gender neutral language (such as the use of he/she/they) is more welcoming than the use of gendered language.[18] Also, the use of words and expressions that are associated with the masculine, such as *leader, dominant, competitive*, have less appeal to women, whereas words that are associated with the feminine, such as *support* and *interpersonal*, appeal to both women and men.[19]

Thoughtfully appointing members to the hiring committee is another step. Research shows that rules holding that there should be both men and women on the hiring committee do not increase gender balance.[20] It would not be surprising if one reason is because such quotas work around stereotype threats instead of removing them. The focus should instead be on drafting clear criteria that the committee should look for, and it is in the establishment of these criteria that one has the possibility to remove stereotype threats. Here, I suggest taking seriously the recommendations given in the DORA declaration.[21] The point is not to move away from documented academic work, but rather to broaden the criteria of what is considered the "best" candidate. There is not necessarily a need to change the legal framework of academic institutions, but there is a need for interpreting the framework in ways that are conducive to removing stereotype threats. This can best be done by making clear guidelines that the hiring committee must respect, implementing the DORA declaration in the guidelines.[22]

When and what kind: Putting the potential to use

A number of academic institutions have programmes aimed at assisting junior scholars (post-docs and associate professors) to qualify for permanent positions and professorships. Despite there being differences between how such programmes are organised, it is plausible to argue that they are successful insofar as they manage to help remove stereotype threats. This can be done nicely by implementing the insights from, for instance, the above mentioned study by Cohen and Ross. By this I mean that the programme must clarify what the academic standards are and, most importantly, treat each participant as someone who has the intellectual abilities to meet the standards. As such, stereotypes hovering in the air will to a certain extent

be removed so that both women and men in the programme can focus on their academic work without, consciously or unconsciously, having to worry about whether they have the resources to succeed. Those leading the programme should express to the participants something like the following: "You are here, you have a PhD, thus you can become a professor if you want to, at your own pace. If you feel that you are not good enough, you are simply wrong". Another important aspect is that if a person decides that they do not want to become a full professor, they are still considered equally smart, and a valued colleague. Succeeding in becoming a professor should, to a certain degree, be looked upon first and foremost as a choice concerning how to spend one's time and a willingness to contribute to moving one's field forward, and not as something that proves one's intelligence. Of course, the institution must grant the necessary resources – such as time, money, and research-based teaching – for those who decide to work towards becoming a professor.

It is not obvious that women, at a group level, need a programme like this more than men, but it is likely that they do, not because women by nature need more help to do academic work than men, but because women have for a long time been dealing with the stereotype threat holding that they are less capable of academic work than men. Being part of a programme where efforts are made to remove this very stereotype is for many women a liberating experience, which in and of itself makes it easier to focus on academic work.

To instil a culture that is focused on removing stereotype threats, one needs leaders who have a sensitivity towards others and their surroundings in such a way that people can perform according to their potential. Having a cultural framework at an academic institution that is characterised by validating its employees as full persons – i.e., as persons with cognitive abilities, bodies, feelings, and the kind of experiences that come with living a life – makes them capable of achieving their academic goals, which is the key to releasing their potential for high-quality academic work. It is likely that such a culture will help improve the gender balance as women in academia are very often victims of stereotype threat.

Summary

Improving gender balance in academic institutions is a complex task. I have shown that one important aspect of reaching a better gender balance is to take seriously the fact that stereotype threat gets in the way of performance, and that this is true for women in academia. By understanding that stereotype threats are social and cultural contingencies that are "hovering in the air", it is possible to take action to remove these contingencies. An awareness of this dynamic should inform the ways in which academic institutions recruit faculty members, and the ways in which the faculty members are treated. One important factor in this regard is to make changes in the interpretation of the legal framework so that more women are hired and given the possibility to perform according to their potential.

Questions for discussion

- What are the stereotypes we need to remove?
- What are the clues hanging in the air at our institution that signal belonging or the lack thereof to our faculty members?
- How do we interpret our commitment to the DORA declaration, and how is this implemented in the criteria used by our hiring committees?

Suggestions for further reading and listening

Relevant for understanding stereotype threats:

- Interview with Claude Steele on the podcast Hidden Brain: https://hiddenbrain.org/podcast/how-they-see-us/
- Steele, Claude M. 2011. *Whistling Vivaldi: And Other Clues to How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do*. New York: Norton.

Relevant for how the brain works, especially while under pressure:

- Interview with professor Sian Beilock on the podcast Hidden Brain: https://hiddenbrain.org/podcast/stage-fright/
- Relevant for removing stereotype threats in students, also relevant for faculty members: www.brown.edu/sheridan/teaching-learning-resources/inclusive-teaching/stereotype-threat

Notes

1 Thanks to the participants in the workshop discussing this and other entries, especially thanks to Kjersti Fjørtoft, Melina Duarte, and Katrin Losleben. Thanks also to Monica Roland, Frøydis Gammelsæter, Stine Holte, and the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable input.
2 Steele 2011
3 Saul 2013
4 Steele 2011, 209
5 NIFU 2021
6 Kifinfo 2021; See also Schmidt, this volume
7 Gilligan 1993; Friedman 2003
8 De Beauvoir et al. 2011
9 Saul 2013, 3
10 Steele 2011, Ch. 7. For an explanation of how stereotype threats affect the brain, see Beilock 2011
11 Steele 2011, 209
12 Steele 2011, 161–4
13 Steele 2011, 162
14 Steele 2011, 163
15 See also Porrone and Poto, this volume
16 Steele 2011, Ch. 7

17 See Duarte, this volume
18 Sczesny et al. 2016
19 Gaucher et al. 2011
20 Reisz 2015; Woolston, 2019
21 The DORA declaration is a worldwide initiative aimed at recognising the need to improve the ways in which the output of scholarly research is evaluated, see DORA 2013
22 What is more, guidelines and instructions will also help remove "noise", which is an important threat to fair decisions, see Kahneman et al. 2021

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14

IMPLICIT GENDER BIAS[1]

Katharina Berndt Rasmussen

In the 1990s, researchers in psychology began to study a phenomenon that is now widely known as implicit bias.[2] Using tests such as the Implicit Association Test (IAT), they found evidence of racist and sexist attitudes – even among test subjects who explicitly disavowed such attitudes.[3] In contrast to *direct* measures, which rely on self-reports, the IAT and other *indirect* measures infer attitudes from the test subjects' performance on categorisation or reaction tasks.

One concrete example is the Gender–Science IAT: a web-based application designed to test associations of science (STEM-fields) and liberal arts, respectively, with male and female. It presents the user randomly with male or female coded terms ("grandpa", "wife"), on the one hand, and science or liberal arts subfields ("engineering", "literature") on the other. The user is required to sort any such item, as fast and accurately as possible, into categories. The twist is that these categories are disjunctive, e.g., "male *or* science" and "female *or* liberal arts". It turns out that a majority of users is faster, and makes fewer mistakes, when they sort the items into these exact categories, as compared to when they sort the items into the reverse categories: "male *or* liberal arts" and "female *or* science". This performance differential is then taken as evidence of a mental association of male with science and female with liberal arts. We can compare this inference to how Vera Rubin and her team in the 1970s observed the strange rotational patterns of distant spiral galaxies and took these as evidence for black matter – an astrophysical phenomenon that is unobservable in itself, the existence of which can only be inferred from its gravitational effects on the surrounding matter.

Another example is the Gender–Career IAT: it provides evidence that a majority of users associate family with female and career with male. For both tests, however, when asked directly, most users deny having these gendered associative patterns.

One way to deal with the discrepancy between test subjects' inferred associations and their explicit denial would be to question the credibility of their explicit statements. Behind a thin varnish of etiquette or enlightenment, the idea goes,

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deep down many people simply *are* sexist; they are just not honest about it. Supporting this explanation, studies show that social desirability issues affect survey results: many people hesitate, even on conditions of anonymity, to deviate from social norms on politically or morally sensitive questions.[4] Accordingly, the IAT simply reveals their "true" convictions by forcing them to answer quickly, preventing cover-up attempts. While this may sometimes be plausible, there is an alternative explanation, allowing that at least *some(times)* people truthfully report their convictions. According to this picture, the IAT reveals certain mental states that are automatic, typically beyond introspection and direct control – and potentially in conflict with other mental states, such as deeply held beliefs.

There are many different proposals for how to understand implicit bias.[5] Here, I bracket the question of what implicit biases *are* in order to focus on moral, political, and epistemological issues regarding their *effects* – and potential *remedies*. I merely rely on three core features of implicit biases as mental states. These are as follows:

1. *Alien* to their hosts (perceived as not truly one's own, unendorsed, and unconnected to one's behaviour).
2. *Valenced* (value-laden in some sense, e.g., connected to positive or negative evaluations or to hierarchies of social status).
3. Related to *social categories* (connected to, and activated by cues from, social group membership).

Tracing these features, my functional definition of implicit bias reads:

> Implicit biases are whatever alien, valenced mental states, related to social categories, that influence our perceptions, judgements, or actions.

A further assumption is that implicit biases, thus understood, can be measured by tests such as the IAT (just as features of black matter can be measured by astrophysical observations).

Should we worry about implicit bias?

Whether we should worry about implicit biases will depend on what their effects are. If individual biases lead to, e.g., discriminating behaviour or injustice, this gives us something to worry about.

Wrongful discrimination, social injustice

Do implicit biases cause discrimination? On an individual level, the answer seems no: individual IAT-scores are not a good predictor of discriminating behaviour. Admittedly, studies have shown that variation in IAT-scores predicts variation in *micro*-behaviour: behaviour that is near-unnoticeable and seemingly inconsequential, such as smiling, talking time, or eye contact.[6] Nevertheless, such

behaviour does not obviously merit the label "discrimination", given the following rough definition:

> An individual, let's call them Alex, discriminates against another, let's call them Billie, if and only if Alex treats Billie worse because of Billie's social group membership (e.g., being female), than would be the case were Billie no such member.[7]

It is at least debatable whether decreased smiling, talking time, or eye contact in themselves qualify as "worse treatment". On the other hand, clearly noticeable or consequential *macro*-behaviour that is obviously discriminating, such as the dismissal of a qualified female job applicant, is only weakly correlated to IAT-scores.[8] So, are implicit biases just a marginal phenomenon in the big picture of discrimination and resulting social injustices?

We should not be so quick to dismiss the relevance of implicit bias micro-behaviour entirely.[9] Repeated failures to smile and other small-scale reactions can add up – over time, or over many "non-smilers" – and contribute to a hostile work/study environment, which may have considerable impact on the victim's performance, self-respect, etc.[10] Likewise, when it comes to macro-behaviour: even weak correlations between an employer's bias scores and the dismissal of a qualified female applicant may have large-scale consequences.[11] E.g., for a hierarchical organisation with equal numbers of male and female employees, and repeated rounds of upward promotion, even a very slight gender bias in evaluations results in rapidly increasing gender inequity, for each step up the hierarchical ladder.[12] Overall, this amounts to both reduced promotion opportunities and lower average wages for female employees: inequalities we surely should worry about.

Moreover, recent studies show that on a population (regional or national) level, average IAT-scores are *strongly* correlated with social inequalities. E.g., a much-cited comparison of 34 countries found that higher average scores on the Science–Gender IAT correlate with larger gender-based achievement gaps in science and math among 8th graders.[13]

Such findings, in combination with findings such as that average group-level IAT-scores are very stable, while individual scores vary significantly over time,[14] have prompted a shift in recent implicit bias models: from individualistic-leaning towards more structural ones.[15] The "bias of crowds" model suggests that individual IAT-scores reflect the accessibility of shared cultural concepts – such as stereotypes – which can become activated by, e.g., gender cues. On an individual level, such concept accessibility will vary with circumstances (alertness, stress, recent experiences, etc.), resulting in low test-retest reliability. However, on a societal level, such shared concepts are part of a more stable culture, which is reflected in average IAT-scores that cancel out individual variations.[16]

In this model, pointing to an individual's implicit biases in isolation in order to explain why she discriminates against someone is like pointing to an individual

football fan's innate propensity to stand or sit in order to explain how she becomes part of a "wave" in a packed stadium. In both cases, a good explanation needs to consider the structural whole, comprising shared concepts, norms, social dynamics, etc. However, individual factors matter, too: consider "wave" cases where the football fan is unable or unwilling to stand up. A combined explanatory picture (e.g., individual implicit biases as proximal/immediate factors, and structural features as prior/distant factors) is probably called for.[17]

The above-mentioned study, concerning gendered achievement gaps for science and math, furthermore suggests that implicit biases can be tied to differences in processes and outcomes of knowledge production across social groups. This points beyond the problem of *social injustice* – concerning the distribution of material resources, opportunities, rights and freedoms and the "social bases of self-respect"[18] – to a further, distinct problem: *epistemic injustice*.[19]

Epistemic injustice, knowledge deficits

Epistemic injustice is connected to our epistemic practices: how we come to know things.[20] The key insight is that these practices are *social*: we rely on other people's testimony and contribute with our own, as well as operate on shared norms, use shared concepts, etc. But this means that these practices can be affected by power dynamics of social relations – with repercussions on *who* is credited as a knower, as well as on *how* and eventually *what* we come to know.

Being a knower is an integral part of being human. Epistemic injustice occurs when individuals are *wronged as knowers* due to their group membership, and this may sometimes be due to implicit bias. Here are some examples.

- *Testimonial injustice* occurs when a speaker is given less credibility than they deserve, due to their group membership. An obvious example is a sexual assault trial where the female victim's looks and manners are utilised to discredit her own words. Such credibility deficits can arise from the denial that someone is knowledgeable (a capable knower), or trustworthy (a sincere knowledge transmitter). There is evidence that, e.g., for student course evaluations, male professors are rated as more knowledgeable than their female counterparts,[21] and judgments of trustworthiness have been shown to correlate with implicit race attitudes.[22] Implicit biases may thus affect the degree of credibility ascribed to marginalised groups.
- *Hermeneutical injustice* occurs when there is a lack of shared concepts for understanding and communicating the social experiences of marginalised groups. The standard example concerns the concept of sexual harassment, which originated in separatist women's groups in the 1960s and allowed for a new understanding of the shared patterns – and immense scope – of myriads of individual "nuisances" in varying contexts. The concept of implicit bias itself is another example: understanding these "alien" mental processes can facilitate recognising discrimination and social injustice even within groups of well-

intentioned people. However, there is an insidious connection to the problem of testimonial injustice here: marginalised groups have called out such discrimination and injustice for a long time; nevertheless, it took the testimony of high-status academics, and a fancy new concept, for a wider audience to acknowledge these problems.[23]

- *Epistemic appropriation* occurs when it is not the knowledge contributor, but someone else, who receives credit for an epistemic contribution, where this is connected to social group membership. Think of meetings where a passed-over comment by a female participant is repeated by a man and *only then* given consideration and credit ("he-peating"). Or think of stories of men, at length explaining theories they just read about, *to the female experts* on these theories ("mansplaining"). Implicit gender biases, e.g., associating women with liberal arts rather than STEM fields, may contribute to such behaviour. Moreover, the overall results of Gender–Science IATs may be read as a sign of collective epistemic appropriation, reflecting that the contributions of women to STEM-related areas (think of early computer or aeronautic engineering) have too long been unacknowledged.[24]
- *Stereotype threat* occurs when one's epistemic performance is thwarted due to the activation of stereotypes about one's own group. E.g., when gender stereotypes such as "women are bad at math" are activated prior to a math test, women tend to underperform. This may be due to increased anxiety – about one's own mathematical aptitude *and* about confirming the stereotype, should one do poorly on the test. Stereotype activation can be overt (stated out loud) or covert (one finds oneself as the only woman in the room) and may target one's own explicit prejudices or implicit biases (such as measured by the Science–Gender IAT).[25]

There is, moreover, a growing debate about implicit biases' effects on what we (can) know, e.g., whether implicit biases necessarily distort our understanding of the world, thus generating *knowledge deficits*.[26] Consider, e.g., the abovementioned course-evaluation study, which found a gender gap in the perceived competence of professors. First, this suggests that implicit biases can lead to false beliefs about the teachers: students underrate female professors' – or overrate male professors' – actual competence. Second, such false beliefs in turn can affect student motivation, knowledge transfer, and thus eventually indirectly inhibit student knowledge.

On the other hand, sometimes implicit biases might work rather like useful generalisations – or like "fast-thinking" heuristics – thus promoting knowledge. In such cases, there might arise a normative conflict between fairness considerations (e.g., not to judge someone on the basis of their gender) and epistemic considerations (condoning the use of gender as a proxy, at least when one's biases accurately reflect gendered social patterns). The question is then whether and how such conflict can be resolved.[27]

Given the potential – moral, political, and epistemic – damage that implicit biases may cause, what should we do? In the next section, I will look at interventions and other ways to address implicit gender biases and provide examples that are relevant within a higher education context.

Implicit gender bias in higher education: Using interventions, monitoring injustice

Psychologists have studied whether interventions such as the following can *reduce* individual implicit biases (IAT-scores) by breaking the links between valence and social categories:[28]

- *Counter-stereotypic exemplars*: noticing and thinking about counter-stereotypic others (e.g., renowned female STEM scientists).
- *Perspective taking*: engaging with narratives from underrepresented group members' perspectives on the world (e.g., blog posts, autobiographies).
- *Increasing opportunities for contact*: seeking encounters and positive interactions with underrepresented group members.
- *Stereotype replacement*: identifying and reflecting on one's own biased responses towards underrepresented group members, aiming to replace them with unbiased responses.

However, as single one-shot interventions, the effects of these and similar measures are short-lived, lasting less than 24 hours.[29] An eight-week training programme, repeating several of these strategies, admittedly showed IAT-score reductions even eight weeks after completion, suggesting that increasing effort could improve effect.[30] It should be noted, however, that these results are based on laboratory studies, with self-recruited college students, and that there are reasons to doubt that they generalise to real workplace settings.[31] A further discouraging finding is that, even when IAT-scores are changed by interventions, this in turn does not effect measurable changes in *behaviour*.[32]

All this serves to remind us that the actual benefits – and risks – of individual interventions are still poorly understood. One should therefore be cautious concerning marketed intervention programmes promising "quick fixes".

An alternative, structural approach for dealing with the potential damage from implicit biases aims to (re)design our institutions and practices so as to *prevent the activation* of individual implicit biases.

Anonymising: removing cues of social categories in evaluation and selection processes, thereby sidestepping implicit biases altogether.[33]

Clear, predefined evaluation criteria: formulating criteria explicitly and in advance of the evaluation process (e.g., based on the actual job description or intended student learning outcome), thereby making implicit biases less pertinent. Occasionally, these criteria should be re-evaluated in the light of generated outcomes.

Both these measures can be applied, e.g., when:

- assessing applications for positions, promotions, funding
- grading student exams
- peer reviewing.

Environmental signs of belonging: changing cues that activate implicit biases, thereby preventing activation of stereotype threat and related underperformance in underrepresented group members. E.g.:

- Removing the portrait collection of one's discipline's all-male historical figures from the classroom wall.
- Avoiding having only one "token woman" on an otherwise all-male discussion panel.[34]

Enabling counter-stereotypic exemplars: reflecting on the effects of one's organisation's modus operandi on underrepresented group members. E.g.:

- Avoiding overburdening underrepresented group members, thus allowing opportunities for their professional development, media participation, etc.
- Reflecting on (under)representation in the course literature, or in undergraduate teaching staff.[35]
- Actively moderating the list of speakers in Q&A-sessions: moving up a female participant to ask the first question, making sure there is enough time for questions.[36]

A further venue for combatting the effects of implicit biases is to monitor the specific forms of epistemic injustices to which they can contribute, and to reflect on possible remedies.

Monitoring epistemic injustices: reflecting, on an institutional level, on gendered patterns of how we treat others as knowers and knowledge contributors. E.g.:

- Keeping a critical eye on student evaluations: are there gender gaps? How do they come about?
- Reflecting on testimonial injustice when dealing with workplace suggestions and complaints: are there gendered patterns in judgments of credibility?
- Reflecting on testimonial injustice when managing participation in meetings, seminars, lectures: are there gendered patterns in speaking time and acknowledgements?
- Reflecting on impacts on underrepresented groups when issuing calls for positions, funding, etc.: selecting eligibility criteria and suitable communication channels; issuing directed calls to reach underrepresented groups; reflecting on the pros and cons of affirmative action (e.g., might gender be a qualifying criterion for a position, or within the larger organisation?).

Finally, an even more comprehensive structural approach calls for large-scale social change by actively and directly targeting status hierarchies and inequalities. If individual implicit biases not only shape but also reflect social reality, then by changing social reality we can *indirectly change* them.

Such a comprehensive approach may, ultimately, be necessary to thoroughly and permanently change our associations and attitudes, including the "alien" mental

processes we call implicit bias. It does call on us, as individuals, to pursue change – yet not primarily of ourselves, but rather of the shared practices and institutions that make up our societies.

Summary

In this entry, I have introduced the phenomenon of implicit bias: mental states that connect social categories with evaluations that are "alien" to their hosts, and which can be measured by, e.g., the IAT. I examined why we should worry about the phenomenon. Sketching its connections to social and epistemic injustices, as well as knowledge deficits, I discussed possible remedies. Individual interventions that aim at reducing individual implicit bias have not been shown to be efficient in real-life workplace settings. Structural interventions, aiming to set up specific social practices and institutions so as to sidestep implicit bias, or more ambitiously to change their social bases – existing social hierarchies and inequalities – are more promising, but also more demanding. Finally, I specified some such structural interventions in a higher education context.

Questions for discussion

- Which gendered stereotypes exist concerning your own domain of work?
- How do such stereotypes reflect – or diverge from – actual gendered patterns in this domain in general, or in your specific workplace?
- Can you think of contexts or tasks in your own work domain where implicit gender bias might play a role?
- Can you think of contexts or tasks where epistemic injustices may occur?
- Which counter-measures might be useful in these contexts or tasks? What could be their possible drawbacks?

Suggestions for further reading

- Beeghly, E. & A. Madva (eds.) 2020. *An Introduction to Implicit Bias: Knowledge, Justice, and the Social Mind*, New York & London: Routledge. www.routledge.com/An-Introduction-to-Implicit-Bias-Knowledge-Justice-and-the-Social-Mind/Beeghly-Madva/p/book/9781138092235. Accessible and thorough anthology, introduces key philosophical aspects of implicit bias; excellent source of further references to empirical studies and philosophical debates.
- https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/implicit-bias/. Overview of work on metaphysical, epistemological and ethical questions raised by the phenomenon of implicit bias; excellent source of further references to the philosophical debates.
- https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/. Web-based application of the IAT.
- www.ncase.me/polygons/. Pedagogical web-based simulation of large-scale segregation from slight biases.

Notes

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2 Greenwald & Banaji 1995; Greenwald et al. 1998
3 The IAT for, e.g., gender, race, age, disability, is available at https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/. Here, I focus exclusively on gender. For a critical review of the critique against the IAT, see Brownstein et al. 2020
4 Greenwald & Banaji 1995
5 For useful overviews, see Johnson 2020; Brownstein 2019, §2
6 Dovidio et al. 1997
7 See also Lippert-Rasmussen, this volume
8 Oswald et al. 2013
9 See Berndt Rasmussen 2020; see also Branlat, this volume
10 Spanierman et al. 2021; see also Tanyi, this volume
11 Greenwald et al. 2015
12 Martell et al. 1996
13 Nosek et al. 2009; further studies referenced in Payne et al. 2017
14 Gawronski et al. 2017
15 Cf. Ayala-López & Beeghly 2020
16 Payne et al. 2017
17 Ayala-López & Beeghly 2020
18 Rawls 1971
19 See Fricker 2007; cf. Grasswick 2018, §4.1
20 See Reibold, this volume
21 Boring 2017
22 Charbonneau et al. 2020
23 Puddifoot & Holroyd 2020
24 Puddifoot & Holroyd 2020
25 See Greene 2020; see also Finholt, this volume
26 Beeghly 2020; Siegel 2020
27 See Basu 2020
28 Lai et al. 2014; cf. Madva 2020
29 Lai et al. 2016
30 Devine et al. 2012
31 For an accessible seminar on a recent such attempt to generalise, see: www.iffs.se/en/calendar/iffs-play/is-it-possible-to-reduce-individual-implicit-bias-in-organizational-settings/
32 Forscher et al. 2019
33 The classic example is the observed increase in the proportion of female orchestra musicians, after the introduction of "behind screen" auditions (Goldin & Rouse 2000). For an insightful discussion of the potential and limits of anonymising, see Krause et al. 2012
34 For reasons why invited "token women" nonetheless should consider seizing such opportunities, see Gheaus 2015
35 Dasgupta & Asgari 2004 show that high exposure to female instructors reduces stereotypes on gender and leadership in undergraduate women.
36 Carter et al. 2018 show that women asked proportionally fewer questions when a man asked the first question, or when Q&A was shorter.

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15

MICROAGGRESSIONS

Jennifer Branlat

Microaggressions are defined as 'everyday, verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile or derogatory, or negative messages' to individuals based on their belonging to a marginalised group.[1] Such displays of prejudice are often fleeting and subtle, yet their cumulative effect over time has been shown to have negative psychological effects on individuals' sense of self-worth and sense of belonging in academia. The concept, initially theorised based on empirical research carried out in psychology, has since been taken up in public debate and used outside of academia.

The first wave of scholarship on microaggressions emerged during the post-civil rights era in the US concerning the need to understand the emergence of 'subtle' forms of racism. This 'new racism' – or 'colour-blind racism' as it is often called – is characterised by the covert nature of its discourse and enactments.[2] Microaggressions, as one of its principle manifestations, demonstrate that systemic racism and other forms of discrimination are still prevalent, but their mechanisms are more difficult to discern than in the past. They may take the form of comments that reflect the perpetrator's worldview of certain groups as inferior or 'overly sensitive' such as, 'You speak English really well' to an American-born Latino or a rolling of the eyes when a racialised person speaks about lived experiences with race or gender in the classroom.

Western institutions of higher education, as perpetuators of systemic injustice,[3] have provided fertile empirical terrain for the examination of microaggressions, and there are currently three types that have been identified through empirical investigation: microassault, microinsult, and microinvalidation.[4] A *microassault* is a deliberate verbal, nonverbal or environmental aggression that communicates a perpetrator's prejudicial attitudes. This type of microaggression, because it is intentional, is closest to traditional forms of racism as it has a clear message to the

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recipient. Examples include using ethnic slurs or engaging in explicitly biased hiring practices that select men as managers and women as support staff. *Microinsults* are defined as unintentional acts or statements that degrade an individual based on their gender, religion, cultural heritage, ability, or body morphology. In the case of a microinsult, a meta-level commentary or hidden message is conveyed. For example, when a Latino woman professor is mistaken for a member of the cleaning staff (hidden message: Latino women do not belong in academia) or when a disabled college student is praised for being 'so inspirational' (hidden message: I see your personhood as limited to opening the minds of able-bodied people). Finally, *microinvalidations* are acts or comments that deny the lived experiences or reality of a marginalised group. A common example is 'colour-blindness', which exposes the belief that racism no longer exists.

In the example below, the poet and writer Claudia Rankine, whose *Citizen: An American Lyric* came as a sharp and meditative portrait of racism in the 21st century, presents a poignant microaggression that comes from higher education:

> You are in the dark, in the car, watching the black-tarred street being swallowed by speed, he tells you his dean is making him hire a person of color when there are so many great writers out there.
>
> You think maybe this is an experiment and you are being tested or retroactively insulted or you have done something that communicates this is an okay conversation to be having.
>
> Why do you feel comfortable saying this to me? You wish the light would turn red or a police siren would go off so you could slam on the brakes, slam into the car ahead of you, fly forward so quickly both your faces would suddenly be exposed to the wind.[5]

The microaggression described by Rankine illuminates two particularly important dimensions of 'new racism': the perpetrator is presumably unaware, and the statement has the potential to trigger feelings of deep uncertainty and distress (What just happened? What are you saying? Should I report this and if so, what will the repercussions be? Why does this keep happening to me?). If the recipient attempts to expose the statement as a microaggression, they may be met by an attempt to lessen the experience: 'you know what I mean'.

The phenomenon of microaggressions has been more recently extended to describe offensive behaviour motivated by identity markers other than race such as gender, social class,[6] differently-abled bodies, sexuality, and body morphology. The increased scholarly understanding of microaggressions and their gatekeeping role in the academy at all levels has secured the concept an important place in the current inclusion and diversity initiatives in higher education. Although many attempts have been made to increase awareness of microaggressions and the negative impact they have on staff and students, much work remains to be done in terms of how to best address the problem.

Microaggressions in the higher education sector

Institutions of higher education around the world are experiencing a significant diversification of their student body and academic staff but have largely failed in creating an inclusive environment.

However, simply changing the representation of various groups does not in and of itself ensure that the experiences of racial/ethnic minority and women students are as positive as those of their white and male counterparts. In order to know whether and how there are differences, it is necessary to ascertain students' perceptions about the degree to which their campus experiences suggest that equity has been achieved. Since institutional change tends to be slow, one cannot assume that increases in the numbers of students of colour have been accompanied by adequate changes in what has been called the 'chilly climate' for students of colour and women in undergraduate populations at PWIs.[7]

Efforts to protect marginalised individuals within higher education have also increased. From mentoring programmes to the establishment of women's networks, the building of 'communities of care', and initiatives to scaffold the trajectories of early-career faculty, such diversity work may buffer the effects of the most blatant instances of systemic injustice, but they remain insufficient.[8] Such diversity and inclusion initiatives, which are often allocated significant resources, fail to reform an institutional framework that allows for microaggressions and other instances of symbolic violence to go unrecognised.

Microaggressions also reveal the paradoxical condition imposed on marginalised individuals in the academy: that of being simultaneously 'visible' and 'invisible'.[9] On one hand, they are potentially scrutinised for behaviour and personal displays that deviate from the 'norm', or are required to speak on behalf of their race or culture. On the other hand, their opinions, perspectives, and lived experiences remain unrecognised in academic knowledge hierarchies.

The literature also reveals that microaggressions are highly context dependent. What is perceived as a microaggression in one context may not be perceived as such in another. This high degree of context dependence makes microaggressions very difficult to investigate empirically. It also suggests that specific academic communities (department or research-group level) need to give serious consideration to the contexts in which they are likely to be produced. It is perhaps through local, context-driven understandings that microaggressions may be lessened, but more research is needed to confirm this hypothesis. Literature and testimonials generated in the context of empirical studies suggest that another striking and common attribute of microaggressions is that they are often attributed to the ignorance and indifference that characterise the perpetrator's perspective. Moving forward, both an exploration of context and the perpetrator perspective will be key to advancing knowledge of these phenomena.

In the wake of the first ten years of scholarly literature, several compelling critiques have been raised regarding microaggression research and its application in training programmes. In mainstream discourse, proponents of microaggression

research have been accused of unduly politicising campus life and promoting a culture of victimisation.[10] Lilienfeld, one of the most vocal critics, further challenges the idea that 'microaggressions are operationalized with sufficient clarity and consensus to afford rigorous scientific investigation'.[11] As such, the term remains too loosely defined and constitutes a misnomer for exclusion phenomena that may be more aptly named 'inadvertent racial slights'.[12] Finally, he cautions the premature adoption of microaggression training programmes in higher education until a more robust scientific framework is developed.

There nonetheless remains the question of how to deal with the 'chilly' and 'hostile' climate in higher education for women and minority groups. Hence, in another potential direction, scholars have pointed out the clear need for insight into micro-affirmations and micro-kindness[13] for the sake of mitigating the negative effects of microaggressions. A few studies of microaggressions also hypothesise subtle actions of encouragement as a means to counter negative interactions by building relationships and fostering inclusion in the form of so-called 'micro-affirmations'. Laugther argues that in some of the microaggression studies there are also traces of micro-kindness experienced, for example, through mentions of friendship.[14] However, the highly contextual nature of microaggressions suggests that acts of micro-kindness risk being perceived as patronising gestures towards marginalised individuals.

The question remains: How can higher education diversity initiatives best address micro-exclusion phenomena, and by doing so engage in more 'genuine' inclusion work that acknowledges systemic inequality at all levels, from macro to micro?

Case discussion: Initiating cultural change in pedagogical training courses

In order to answer this, it is useful to consider two examples that may offer a starting point for initiating cultural change in pedagogical training courses.

Classroom teaching microaggressions

Modern democratic ideals of 'coming together in difference' prevail in educational discourse at all levels.[15] The inspiration for this vignette comes from Alison Jones' problematisation of the use of 'dialogue' as a pedagogical tool in classrooms composed of students with both marginalised (Maori, indigenous New Zealander) and non-marginalised identities (Pakeha, white New Zealander).[16] It is based on her experience teaching a course on 'feminist perspectives in education'. In her text, Jones calls our attention to the white educator's genuinely benevolent desire to engage students in exchange across race and cultures:

> Most pressingly, as a teacher I ask, What if 'togetherness' and dialogue-across-difference fail to hold a compellingly positive meaning for subordinate ethnic groups? What if the 'other' fails to find interesting the idea

> of their empathetic understanding of the powerful, which is theoretically demanded by dialogic encounters?[17]

Jones receives feedback from Maori colleagues that the 'words, assumptions, and interests of the Pakeha students and lecturer continued to dominate', despite her attempts to facilitate an open classroom.[18] In what follows, I use Jones' work to show how a well-intended teacher unintentionally sets up a microaggression situation in which certain students are rendered visible and put in a position of 'speaking for their race'.

The event is a lecture in a bachelor-level course on gender equality and diversity at a public university. The student body is composed of predominantly white, middle-class students. The lecturer describes herself as a feminist critical educator and values dialogue as a means to destabilise the teacher–student hierarchy and engage students in the co-production of knowledge. In this lecture, she attempts to connect the course content to student's lived experiences in order to reinforce the idea that such experiences are a valid source of knowledge in feminist epistemology. She also hopes to help students connect the course concepts to their own lives.

The teaching objective for this particular day asks students to come to an understanding about the ways in which long-standing social disparities have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The teacher gives a presentation and then takes care to put students in groups that reflect the 'visible' diversity of the classroom. She gives the following instructions: in groups of four, reflect on the ways in which your lived experiences resonate with, challenge or complicate the theoretical understanding of social inequality presented in today's required reading. The students reluctantly retreat into groups, and the lecturer notes superficial discussion throughout the exercise.

First, the teacher chooses groups in the interest of giving students access to a diverse range of perspectives and in facilitating cross-cultural dialogue. But as she does this, she prioritises the creation of an 'open' classroom over a consideration for the feelings of students of colour, who may not want to be attributed the burden of opening up to share their lived experiences of difference with the white students in the group. A mood of discomfort and silence reigns for the duration of class time. The pedagogical encounter described above therefore leads to several possible microaggressions towards students of colour and a handful of indigenous students whose lighter skin renders their marginalised identity invisible to the lecturer.

These potential microaggressions fall in line with much that we know about such phenomena from the existing literature: they are carried out unintentionally by a caring lecturer; they are fleeting; they are enabled by an institutional context that upholds power differences between teacher and students and marginalised and non-marginalised students; and they ultimately lead to a murky situation in which students of colour are left wondering whether they are 'being too sensitive', whether they should say anything to the teacher (if so, how?), and whether objecting is worth risking the consequences, which may include heightened visibility and

reactions from peers. These microaggressions might even trigger further negative reflection and self-doubt. This situation also highlights a particular type of micro-aggression, the *microinsult*, but shows that there may also be more micro forms of exclusion at play.

Research environment microaggressions

The following incident takes place in the hallway of a large research university in Norway. It involves a brief yet tense interaction between a recently arrived female post-doctoral fellow from Greece (Eleni) and a senior male professor from Norway (Jan). The shortage of space in the department has led to an online scheduling system whereby employees must reserve meeting rooms in advance. The system, which is in pilot mode, fails and allows two people to reserve the same room at the same time. Eleni has booked the room for a networking lunch organised for gender researchers at the university while Jan intends to use the meeting room for a European project consortium meeting. Eleni has started laying out coffee cups on the table when Jan bursts in, visibly stressed.

ELENI: Hi Jan, how are you?
JAN: I've booked this room for 12:30. You'll need to find another room.
ELENI: Oh, I think there might be a misunderstanding, you see, I booked this room ages ago for a networking lunch. I'm expecting 25 people.
JAN: That's just not possible. I've got an *important* consortium meeting, so you'll have to go elsewhere. It's probably a change for you, all these protocols. We like things to be orderly in Norway.

The interaction between Eleni and Jan lasts only 42 seconds yet triggers in Eleni a series of reflections: Was Jan suggesting that the networking event was not as important as his consortium meeting? Is this an example of gender research being devalued? Does he mean to suggest something about being from Southern Europe or even Greece? Since she is unsure about what exactly happened, she is reluctant to take it up with Jan directly or with her supervisor.

In this example, Eleni ends up conceding the room to Jan but the memory of the experience stays with her in a deeply embodied way for the rest of the day and resurfaces during encounters with Jan in future interactions. Part of this experience for her involves the coming together of a stunning number of dimensions (individual, hierarchy of academic fields, local versus European and the different levels of prestige granted to different academic activities). She continues to try and interpret the event over and over again, always with uncertainty as to what 'really' happened.

Micro events, macro consequences?

In light of the current microaggression literature, we see much to suggest that microaggressions have macro-consequences for a person's well-being and a sense of

belonging for marginalised groups in higher education. As such, it is imperative that they are addressed as an important part of current diversity and inclusion work in higher education. Empirical research is just beginning to emerge about the success of initiatives like by-stander workshops,[19] the implementation of micro-aggression prohibition lists on campuses, consciousness-raising tools adapted from Sue et al.'s typology,[20] and the use of videos and vignettes to expose injustice in a non-confrontational manner. Rather than calling for a complete suspension of microaggression training programmes due to the points raised by critics, it may be useful to develop solutions based on local knowledge through case studies and vignettes.

Summary

The conceptualisation of micro-level exclusion phenomena has served to create an awareness of the ways in which institutional racism and coloniality continue to surface in daily life – seemingly trivial events that have devastating consequences for marginalised scholars and students at Western universities. Importing research knowledge from an American context should be done with caution. Local knowledge and institutional structures should be foregrounded and addressed in attempts to address microaggressions.

- 'Microaggressions' are subtle, thinly veiled, everyday manifestations of racism, homophobia, sexism and other harmful forms of prejudice.
- Much of the current diversity and inclusion work in higher education, although necessary, fails to successfully address micro-level exclusion phenomena.
- There are numerous challenges to advancing research knowledge on micro-aggressions: the openness of the concept, the highly contextualised nature of the phenomena, and the diversification of methods to investigate them have all been raised by critics.
- There is no simple solution for the elimination of microaggressions, and current intervention programmes have not been sufficiently evaluated. This does not mean, however, that those in a position of academic leadership should not take steps towards raising awareness in local contexts. This can be done by using vignettes as a basis for discussion.

Questions for discussion

- Have you ever experienced a microaggression? In which context did it occur? Did your experience fit within the three types of microaggressions identified in the literature?
- How does current diversity and inclusion work address micro-level exclusion phenomena? What data is available about the prevalence of such phenomena?
- Is some form of microaggression awareness built into pedagogy courses so that educators can effectively respond to microaggressions in teaching spaces?

- Does the fact that 'microaggression' is a highly open, malleable concept make it too difficult to instrumentalise it in higher education?
- Will microaggressions naturally be reduced as institutions work toward the elimination of systemic inequality? What is the relationship between the macro and micro?

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Notes

1 Sue et al. 2007
2 Bonilla-Silva, 2001
3 See e.g. Reibold, this volume
4 Sue et al., 2007; Torino et al., 2019
5 Rankine 2014, 16
6 Cook & O'Hara 2020
7 Caplan & Ford, 2014, 35–6
8 See for example, Archer, 2007; Ahmed, 2012; Hughes, 2015; Fjørtoft, this volume; Duarte, this volume
9 Caplan & Ford 2014, 35–6
10 Campbell & Manning, 2014; MacDonald, 2019
11 Lilienfeld 2017, 159
12 Lilienfeld 2017, 161
13 Estrada et al., 2018
14 Laugther 2014
15 See Fjørtoft, this volume
16 Jones 1999
17 Jones 1999, 299
18 Jones 1999, 299
19 Banks et al. 2020
20 Sue et al. 2007

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16

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Trine Antonsen

Sexual harassment is unwelcome and inappropriate sexual behaviour, in visual, verbal or written forms, or as physical advances. It is a social and cultural phenomenon that brings a sexual dynamic into the workplace and contributes to gender imbalance and employment discrimination. It may occur as a single event or a series of incidents. The impact on the individual victims includes impaired performance and satisfaction, as well as mental and physical health effects such as anxiety and stress.

This chapter focuses on sexual harassment in the workplace and specifically in the academe. Sexual harassment in public places (or elsewhere) will not be discussed. The chapter presents theoretical arguments for why it is wrong and elaborates on its causes. It suggests practical advice to support a workplace culture that ensures the safety and equal treatment of employees and students, but it does not go into detail concerning legal remedies and policy implications.

Origin and legal frame

The social understanding of sexual behaviour varies by culture, and the legal context of sexual harassment varies accordingly. The United Nations General Assembly included sexual harassment as part of The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in 1993.[1] In the United States, sexual harassment was recognised by the Supreme Court in 1986 as a violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Acts with the Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson case.[2] Furthermore, in directive 2002/73/EC, the European Union includes sexual harassment as related to sex discrimination, i.e., to equal treatment and access.[3] In Norway, the Working Environment Act protects the employee from any kind of harassment, including the sexual kind.[4] In addition, harassment based on sex and gender falls under the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act.[5]

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Two types of sexual harassment have been identified (in United States law): (1) *Quid Pro Con* sexual harassment, which involves cases where a person in authority demands sexual acts from a subordinate in exchange for employment, promotion, good grades, etc., or when a subordinate is denied these when refusing to engage in such sexual activities; and (2) hostile-environment sexual harassment, which is when verbal or physical sexual behaviour has the purpose or consequence of impairing the victim's work performance or their psychological well-being.

In 2017, sexual harassment arose as a topic of public debate with the global #metoo campaign. However, the origin of the concept is in 1970s feminist activist groups and is often associated with Professor of Law, Catharine A MacKinnon. In 1979, she published the ground-breaking book *Sexual Harassment of Working Women*. In the book, MacKinnon makes the legal claim that sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination, a claim later acknowledged in the EU directive of 2002 (above). MacKinnon criticises a workplace culture where sexual harassment of women is "widely practiced and largely ignored".[6] The book states that the phenomenon is "sufficiently pervasive in American society as to be nearly invisible".[7]

Nearly four decades on, the #metoo campaign has been successful in making sexual harassment visible. The campaign took off with the many sexual harassment and abuse allegations against American film producer Harvey Weinstein, which brought the prevalence of women's experiences of sexual harassment to public attention. What began as a social media campaign, or "hashtag-activism", started a wave of media attention and critique of a diverse range of businesses and areas of work life. Examples include the music and film industry, universities and education, media, the food industry, politics, religious communities, finance, etc. Women across the globe have used the hashtag to signalise their experiences of sexual harassment, and many have also shared their stories. At the time of writing, it is still an active movement.

Since 2017 – and confirming the stories shared within the #metoo campaign – the prevalence of sexual harassment in the academe has been documented in several reports world-wide. In the United States, The National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine's report on sexual harassment maps the scope of the problem and its impact on women in science.[8] The report includes a discussion of the reasons why the academe has been incapable of dealing with harassment. The report also raises the issue of whether sexual harassment is scientific misconduct, as it compromises the integrity of the research process. In a national survey in Norway in 2019, 2.2% of female respondents said they had experienced sexual harassment in the 12 months prior to the survey. The younger respondents and the PhD fellows had most frequently experienced sexual harassment.[9] This indicated the interconnectedness of sexual harassment and institutional power relations.

The conceptualisation of sexual harassment

The early uses and understanding of the concept "sexual harassment" were gendered. For MacKinnon, sexual harassment is a manifestation of the power distribution that exists in (or in the dominant narratives of) a culture: sexual harassment is an instance of

sex discrimination. This means that women experience sexual harassment *because* they are women. This analysis paved the way for the legal status of harassment, as seen above in the cases of US and Norwegian law.

MacKinnon made the further claim that sexual harassment is causally connected to how sexuality is understood and practiced in Western societies. In her analyses, sexual harassment brings a sexual power dynamic of male dominance and female subordination into the workplace. MacKinnon, perhaps controversially, based her analyses of sexuality on how it is manifested in pornography as well as on the assumed effects of the typical presentation of dominance and subordination in pornography, i.e., where women are the object of male desire and the presence of violence directed at women, such as rape, etc., is prevalent.

However, regardless of how we perceive the sexual power dynamic, we can accept that the presence of a sexual dynamic inhibits workplace performance and may create different standards for men and women. That is, in addition to the regular aspects of performing according to one's role and position at the workplace, e.g., fulfilling duties, completing tasks and behaving according to a standard of good conduct, employees must "balance" the power dynamics based on their gender and perceived sexual status.

With this background, the paradigmatic cases (in the legal context) are when the victim is female and the perpetrator is male. Recent theoretical discussions, empirical findings and a variety of legal cases suggest that this is too simple an understanding of people's experiences of sexual harassment. Both men and women, as well as transgendered persons, are victims and perpetrators. Furthermore, the initial definition seemingly assumed the male perpetrator to be heterosexual. This may be due to a conflation of sexual harassment and sexual interest or desire, yet people experience harassment in non-heteronormative ways.[10]

As we have seen, in the legal context, the understanding of sexual harassment as instances of sex discrimination has been useful. What is more, an analysis in terms of sex discrimination and the gender roles in a culture is also explanatory for a normative evaluation, even when it does not fully cover all cases. Its focus on power and sexual harassment as group harm is helpful in explaining the cause of the behaviour and criticism of it.

The development of the concept and its relaunch with the global #metoo campaign demonstrates how feminist concept development has contributed to an improved understanding of women's experiences in the workplace (and elsewhere). For example, the practices of sharing experiences of sexual harassment in the #metoo campaign have been analysed[11] and connected to linguistic oppression and epistemic injustice.[12] This is thus a testimony to the significance of feminist activism and theory to justify criticism and motivate change.

Examples

1. *Quid Pro Con* sexual harassment: When a teacher, supervisor, examiner or other senior person who stands in a higher rank at the institution demands that a student, a junior employee, a candidate, etc. (someone of a lower rank)

engage in a sexual relationship or act as a condition (and in exchange) for good grades, letters of recommendation, entry to a study programme, a job, etc., or when the person in the subordinate position is punished with the withdrawal of these goods for refusing to satisfy such sexual demands.

2. Hostile-environment sexual harassment includes a broad range of acts and events. The list below covers common and often-shared experiences. The list is not meant to be exhaustive, however. Other incidents may also count as sexual harassment.

    - Exposure to pornography, such as objectifying representations of women in meeting rooms, offices, teaching materials like PowerPoint presentations, or digital and physical classrooms.
    - Discussions of women and female appearance as sexual objects, such as striptease, or the sexual attractiveness of other professionals in the field, or which colleagues or students would make attractive sexual partners.
    - Sexual jokes, banter, and flirtation, including describing proposals and papers, new thoughts and ideas, etc., as sexy, hot or with other concepts from a sexual discourse, and teasing in sexually explicit ways.
    - Eyeing or ogling, that is, to look at a person in a way that is provocative or reveals sexual attention or interest.
    - Comments on looks, especially in a context where this comes instead of recognition of one's work, such as being described as sexy, cute or pretty after an oral exam or presentation in class.
    - Rumours and gossip about colleagues', students', or professors' sexual lives, such as prominent cases discussed in the history of philosophy, from Hypatia to Simone de Beauvoir's and Hannah Arendt's relationships.
    - Witnessing sexual harassment.

Discussion

Sexual harassment in higher education (as in other workplaces) is problematic because it creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment. Experiences of sexual harassment create a burden for the victims as they affect their safety, self-regard, focus and attention. When harassed, the victim spends resources (time, effort) to recover or reconcile. It is an employment injustice because it hinders one from engaging in the work or study tasks one wants or is expected to do, and thus impairs workplace performance and satisfaction. In *Quid Pro Con* sexual harassment cases, it can also stand in the way of a person's freedom to continue their professional lives. As a consequence, it may also negatively influence economic equality,[13] and sexual harassment can cause long-term psychological damage and trauma by increasing stress and anxiety and undermining the person's sense of safety and self-worth.

The harm of hostile-environment sexual harassment overlaps with and can be explained as micro-behaviour or micro-aggressions.[14] As the examples above show,

the events and acts that can count as sexual harassment of this kind are in and of themselves minor incidents. A pornographic picture on the wall during supervision does not qualify for legal action, and a joke or comment made can be subtle and often unconsciously on the part of the perpetrator. Sometimes it is even hard for the victim to identify, i.e., the victim can experience the discomfort of such incidents without being able to identify it as sexual harassment contributing to a hostile environment. As with micro-behaviour and micro-aggressions, the totality of such experiences and incidents adds up to constitute the harm. Mary Rowe calls such acts micro-inequities,[15] and it has been shown that one's ability to identify sexual harassment is also affected by one's ethical ideology.[16]

Sexual harassment has sometimes been excused as an expression of sexual interest. Of course, the perpetrator may have a sexual interest or desire of the victim, but this need not always be the case. This is clear from the examples of hostile-environment sexual harassment. Excusing sexual harassment as flirting or failed attempts at seduction is flawed and problematic when considering the effect on the victim. This is a significant point in avoiding the heteronormative assumption that only a heterosexual man can be a perpetrator. In order to criticise acts of sexual harassment, no assumptions or examinations of the sexual preferences of the perpetrator are needed. Sexual harassment is wrong because it intends to harm *or* because it as a consequence does. We need not examine the intention behind the events, for as stated above, these are often unconscious behaviours with their origin in workplace and broader societal culture, as well as in the inequality of men and women. Rather than connecting sexual harassment to sexual desire, it ought to be understood as having its origin in gendered power relations.

MacKinnon situates sexual harassment as a phenomenon at the very centre of sex discrimination when she takes the sexual power dynamic in Western societies to be the causal origin of sex discrimination. In her view, sexual harassment is a manifestation and expression of the general male dominance in society. The male dominance has cultural and historical origins and persists as structural tendencies. Other sexual conducts have their origin in this structural inequality too, such as rape, assault, prostitution and pornography. Women, MacKinnon argues, are seen as sexually subordinate in our culture, and sexual harassment is at the same time an expression of this subordination as it is a means for keeping women in the subordinate status. In this sense, the function or "logic" of sexual harassment is much the same as the logic of misogyny, as analysed by Kate Manne.[17] In her timely 2018 book *Down Girl*, Manne elaborates how misogyny enforces gender norms. In her analyses, misogyny is the "police force" of sexist ideology.

When we understand sexual harassment as acts of oppression, it helps us understand that the inequalities between men and women – independent of their institutional status – explain the origin and scope of this phenomenon. MacKinnon's point that the sexual dynamic is the causal origin is debated and also tested empirically.[18] However, critique of sexual harassment does not rely on a strong causal connection between the sexual power dynamic in a culture and the phenomenon itself.

Following MacKinnon, the reason why sexual harassment is wrong is that it is part of a systemic injustice (sex discrimination of women) rather than *merely* a harm to an individual's dignity or autonomy. However, Anderson discusses three alternative theories of capturing the wrongs of sexual harassment, based in individuals' dignity, autonomy, and equality. Anderson finds all these efforts as relevant to understanding why sexual harassment is morally wrong and captures important aspects and incidents. This leads her to conclude that sexual harassment must be seen as a complex rather than unified phenomenon. Within a moral context, we have good reason to accept this claim, as it gives a fuller understanding of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, Anderson makes a convincing point that legally securing a person's autonomy and dignity can offer more coherent and comprehensive remedies than taking it as constituting sex discrimination.[19] This may form the basis for a rethink of the legal remedies against sexual harassment.

Recommendations

Law and policies only go so far in changing a cultural and systemic injustice such as sexual harassment. Institutional policy to raise awareness and knowledge about sexual harassment is thus essential for helping victims. We have seen that some cases of sexual harassment can be unconscious on the part of the perpetrator and hard to identify for the victims. A legal framework is important but protects employees only to a certain degree when (as we have seen) many of the experiences are (in and of themselves) too minor to be prosecuted. Increased knowledge and consciousness raising concerning hostile-environment sexual harassment is crucial. The impact of the #metoo campaign, where many thousands of people have shared their lived experiences with harassment, is that women's stories are known and listened to. As part of their institutional action against harassment, institutions should include the sharing of such stories from their own field. People of power must avoid being complicit, perpetuating a culture that tolerates harassment. Practical training of intervention is as important as making safe procedures for reporting (and making them known). Institutions must avoid a lack of reporting due to fears of retaliation and career damage. Awareness of sexual harassment experiences, effects, and remedies should also be included as a part of the professional ethics and training in all disciplines, as part of what makes good scientific and educational conduct.[20]

Summary

Sexual harassment is the trade of sexual acts for goods such as grades, promotion and employment, or sexualised acts and comments that makes the working environment unsafe, hostile and intimidating. It impairs the victims' performance in the workplace. When analysed as sex discrimination, we not only take sexual harassment to be problematic in and of itself, but also as standing in the way of equality and equity between men and women.

Questions for discussion

- Are the sexual power dynamics in contemporary cultures such that the concept should be reserved for cases when the victim is a woman?
- Should the concept of sexual harassment include acts of gender harassment? Such as when one experiences "policing" with regard to one's gender identity, how one fits with the norms and expectations of masculinity and femininity, or with regard to the gendered expectations in one's profession (e.g., male nurses, female philosophers)?
- Are individuals blameworthy for sexual harassment if we take it to be a systemic and structural problem?

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Notes

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2 US Supreme Court 1986
3 EU 2002
4 Norwegian Government LOV-2005-06-17-62, Lov om arbeidsmiljø, arbeidstid og stillingsvern mv. (Arbeidsmiljøloven/Working Environment Act). https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2005-06-17-62
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6 Mackinnon 1979, 1
7 Mackinnon 1979, 1
8 The 500 Women Scientists Leadership 2018
9 Ipsos/UiA 2019
10 Anderson 2006; Solomon 2021
11 Hänel 2021; Alcoff 2021
12 McGowan 2018; see also Reibold, this volume
13 Anderson 2006, 290
14 Rowe 1974; see also Branlat, this volume
15 Rowe 1974

16 Keyton and Rhodes 1997
17 Manne 2018; see also Poyares, this volume
18 E.g. Anderson 2006; Uggen and Blackstone 2004
19 Anderson 2006
20 Feldblum and Lipnic 2016; Roehling and Huang 2018; Tippett 2018

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PART III

Inclusive actions towards transformation

17

RESEARCH ASSESSMENTS

Hege K. Andreassen

Higher education institutions are assessed on international ranking lists and by designated national bodies overseeing the outcomes and content of their research and education programmes. On the individual level, employees present their CVs and previous work achievements to hiring committees when applying for work, and continue to be assessed by publications, funding, collaborations and teaching performance throughout their career. Students are assessed by exams and other performances that are graded by representatives of their disciplinary community.

Over recent decades, the procedures for assessing research outcomes have become increasingly standardised. Typical measures currently deployed across all academic disciplines are the number of publications, the ranking of a researcher's or research community's preferred journals and publishers, and the amount of external research funding they receive. The over-arching development is that such easily quantifiable measures are collected more and more often and given more weight in internal selection and ranking processes, thus underpinning status hierarchies in academia. The development can be explained in relation to neoliberal trends and new public management regimes in higher education institutions.[1] These changes are contested and debated in the academic community.

Whilst the procedures of assessing higher education institutions, employees and students are often presented and perceived as objective measures of quality, and thus neutral to human diversity, this is never the case. There is no such thing as a neutral assessment tool. Rather, as the purpose of all forms of evaluations is to distinguish between individuals, groups and organisations, it is unavoidable that they relate to structures of hierarchical difference. In a vivid and constantly developing academic community there will always exist parallel interpretations of what research is and how it best can be practised. Nevertheless, contemporary assessment tools seem to favour some research practices and understandings over others. When discussing assessment in higher education from a gender perspective, there is one

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aspect that stands out as particularly problematic: empirical research indicates that contemporary standardised assessment tools in higher education far from comprise the "one size fits all" system they are sometimes presented to be.[2] On the contrary, current assessment regimes have been accused of strengthening more than challenging gendered power structures where men and men's work gain higher status than women's. In this chapter, I will discuss these conditions and show how the explanations are complex and multi-layered. My normative point of departure is to support academic organisations who want to succeed with gender balance.

Assessments, bureaucracy and autonomy: Arguments and intentions

In the daily practice of higher education institutions, as well as in the research literature on gender and organisations, several, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives on the relation between assessment mechanisms and gender exist in parallel. When aiming to understand the paradoxes and dilemmas of assessment in higher education, it can be useful to distinguish arguments along (at least) two dimensions: their concern with micro vs macro benefits; and how their logic relates to the tension between liberalist vs (post)structuralist approaches.

Disparity micro-macro benefits

A paradox facing all who are concerned with the discussion of assessment in academia is that assessment tools can act as unjust disciplining mechanisms for individuals, whilst at the same time perform the internal symbolic power needed to create a much-wanted autonomy for higher education institutions on a societal level. With a reference to Foucault's governmentality concept,[3] Raaper discusses student assessments and underlines how assessments are always technologies of government.[4] She elaborates on the role of assessments in contemporary universities as opposed to previous eras and concludes that "power affecting academics in a new type of university is fluid and difficult to track". She further underlines that "this seems to be especially characteristic of neoliberalism and its technologies that encourage people to govern themselves".[5] Raaper's study is an example of an empirical analysis that centres around self-governing *individuals* and draws our attention to power asymmetries and the disciplining of individual subjects on a micro level. Such an angle of analysis can be used to underline the element of domination between the assessor and the assessed.

However, when we move our discussion of assessment procedures from the individual to an organisational or societal level, the concept of self-evaluation also holds other connotations and appears in another discourse, namely that of higher education and research autonomy. A good example of an empirical analysis where this perspective is displayed is Bourdieu's field analysis of higher education.[6] In his conceptual framework, the degree of a field's autonomy (in our case: higher education) is dependent on "the capacity it has gained, in the course of its development, to insulate

itself from external influences and to uphold its own criteria of evaluation over and against those of neighbouring or intruding fields".[7] On a societal level, internal procedures of assessing research are linked to questions of legitimating the existence and status of traditional universities and other kinds of research institutes in the meeting with other fields like politics, religion or state economics. The topic of higher education *institutions'* autonomy is thus unavoidable when discussing assessments. An important point in the critique of contemporary changes in assessment mechanisms is that the changes go in the direction of a less independent sector, more and more governed from a capitalist logic of economic gain. Thus, in contemporary administration operating from neoliberal ideals, the challenge of higher education autonomy from the neighbouring fields of innovation and economics seems especially relevant. Sticking to Bourdieu's vocabulary, we can say that the field of higher education needs to stand strong against these other fields, and to do so, the internal quality definitions of the field need to appear consistent. In the discourse on gender equality, this logic is challenging, as from such a point of departure, heteronormativity could be said to challenge autonomy. Without venturing further into the theoretical debates on the applicability of Bourdieu and field theory to feminist analysis, the point to make here is that the perspective of assessments as guardians of field autonomy exists in contemporary debate, and this is a challenge when working with standards for inclusion and equality. Facing this paradox is a lived experience for researchers and other higher education employees aiming for assessment tools and procedures that can support and carry an equal and diverse academia.

Liberalist vs (post)structuralist approaches

Assessments are bureaucratic procedures foundational to all formal organisations in contemporary society, including higher education. In the feminist theory of gender and organisation, the critique of bureaucratic rationality and power has long since become a core topic. This critique is also relevant to a discussion on assessment systems. As shown by Halford,[8] feminist analysis of bureaucracy is divided. In short, we can say that feminists taking a liberalist stance tend to underline the potential of bureaucratic values of neutrality and objectivity to pave the way for less gender bias and thus more equal opportunities for men and women, whilst analysis from a structural and post-structural approach are used to highlight how gendered structures and discourses already underpin the very idea of bureaucracy and that this organisational culture can therefore be labelled as male power and tends to favour men and typical masculine behaviours over women and typical feminine behaviours. For our discussion of assessment tools, this is interesting. As these tools are part of bureaucratic organisational culture, they too can be discussed along the same lines: as potential neutralisers of gender bias; as procedures mirroring and reinforcing existing gendered power structures and patriarchy; or as technologies of governance. In fact, the tensions between these different perspectives can explain many of the controversies concerning assessment procedures. In the following, I will look at assessment practices from a performative perspective, i.e., look into their practical consequences instead of the intentions behind them.

Current assessment regimes and gender: Practical consequences

Gender and assessment of research outcomes

In discussions of research assessment, a concern is often expressed that measuring the "number of publications" amongst academics is in turn transferring the power to define academic quality to the business-led journal industry, where academic texts are published. As part of their marketing strategy, some of the main publishing houses have developed so-called impact factors for their journals, to indicate the average number of readers of their articles. Originally, these impact factors were developed to encourage libraries and other interested buyers of journals to purchase them. Once in place, however, they ended up doing much more. Individual researchers and research communities soon started look to the impact factors to decide where to publish, to such an extent that publishing in high-impact journals can now be considered a central feature in the construction of the "ideal academic".[9]

The opposition to transferring the power to define what should count as high-quality research away from academic disciplinary communities and over to commercially funded journals and publishing houses has been formulated in various ways. The DORA declaration (the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment) is one expression of this opposition that has gained much attention and support world-wide, as well as across disciplines. The declaration formulates a series of recommendations of practices in research assessment to avoid the journal impact factors becoming surrogate measures of the quality of individual research articles and individual scientists' contributions and thereby applied in hiring, promotion or funding decisions.[10] On their web page we can read that, to date, they have 17,930 individual and 2297 organisational signatures.[11] In Norway, the declaration has been signed by the national research council and the universities. As a joint agreement of opposing the business models of contemporary academic publishing, the DORA declaration is indeed interesting, and its value can be said to speak for itself in that it unites so many academics and academic organisations. We could ask, however, if the alternatives listed are detailed enough when they do not cause more controversy. Examples of recommendations listed in the declaration are "shift towards assessment on the scientific content of an article rather than publication metrics", "consider the value of all research outputs (including datasets and software) in addition to research publications and consider a broad range of impact measures including qualitative indicators of research impact, such as influence on policy and practice".[12]

The challenge is that assessing, i.e., "research impact and influence on policy and practice" is not straightforward either. Whilst some research outputs are surely applicable to practice at once, this is not the case, or even the goal, for all academic projects. Furthermore, the problem is not only the actual measures but that there is a desire to develop general standards in the first place. In her study of women academics, Lund finds that whilst the contemporary standardised ideals of

publishing are difficult for anyone to live up to, they are nevertheless difficult in different ways for men and women.[13] This is related to the gendered division of labour, where women more often than men combine research activities with heavy teaching loads and care for young children. Morley also highlights assessment shortcomings considering the gendered division of labour.[14] She describes how women in the British academic sector are well represented as reviewers and managers of teaching quality but are under-represented both as producers and reviewers of research quality.[15]

In a discussion of gender balance and assessment, it is key to understand that all assessment measures will favour some projects, methods, and disciplines over others. The work needed to achieve any standard, whether that be a publication index or a proof of impact, will not be the same for all. Working towards standard assessment measures will necessarily affect different gendered disciplinary communities and gendered individuals in different ways. One way to oppose unjust gendered power structures in academia is to oppose the neoliberal discourse where the use of standards for assessment is a core element, and where the number of publications is the main indicator when calculating the distribution of state funds to the various higher education institutions. Indeed, the critique of neoliberal academia is firm and constantly growing.[16]

Nevertheless, whilst it is crucial to formulate and lead this opposition on a discursive level, individual academics doing their practical day-to-day academic work need to relate to the system that is currently playing out. Moving yourself too far away from "the ideal academic" could render you invisible and leave you without a voice to formulate your critique. Furthermore, publishing is a necessary core activity in research, and the texts we produce should indeed be assessed, only in addition to and not as a supplement for all other research outcomes. What we should work for, in practice, is to display and include more of our research work into the presentations we do of ourselves. Instead of only listing the finalised peer-reviewed publications, we should start to display the complex work leading up to the publications as well. Protocols, datasets, questionnaires and interview guides, presentations of preliminary analysis, and not least, all the dissemination work such as producing textbooks and other teaching material, mass or social media posts, and participation in disciplinary and policy discussions are examples of other research outputs. In the current Norwegian system, none of these "products" will give your institution any publication points and thus they cannot be linked directly to state income either, which is, of course, why the administration is not ordered to count them. Nevertheless, this should not hinder academics themselves from sharing and displaying more parts of their work to promote a culture change away from metric assessments alone. A personal strategy worth mentioning in this context is that of Princeton professor Haushofer, who proudly published his "CV of failures" back in 2016, listing the degree programmes he had not been admitted to and the positions he had applied for but never received.[17] His refusal to stick to the success criteria of "normal" CVs and decision to instead tell the story of all the hard work and failures experienced in academic careers is thought provoking, and the critique

implicit in this move is highly relevant for a discussion of inclusion and equality in higher education institutions.

Gender and assessment of candidates for higher education employment

Based on the ongoing academic discussions and the empirical examples given, it seems clear that the one-sided emphasis on journal publications is no passable road if gender balance is the goal. When assessing individual academics for employment in the higher education sector, as in any other sector, the employer aims to predict the candidate's potential for future contributions based in their previous achievements. There are no guarantees in recruitment work; one can only aim to use the best evaluation procedures available. Unfortunately, from a gender perspective, historically, many of the procedures used have turned out better for men than for women.[18] By targeting recruitment procedures in gender equality work, the aim is to punctuate the often-repeated myth that "we only end up with men because there are no women candidates".[19]

Madaus and O`Dwyer`s historical work of performance assessments shows how examinations were used as policy mechanisms as early as during the Han dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD), where they developed detailed procedures to assess candidates and identify those suitable for governmental services.[20] Today, most countries have implemented legislation that makes it illegal to announce positions for only one gender, and questions about pregnancy or family planning are not allowed during interviews. This has been done to promote gender balance and equal opportunities for men and women. Still, feminist researchers have also shown how other ordinary, seemingly neutral requirements for employment or promotion are gendered. Halford, for example, lists a series of typical requirements that will favour men over women: first, stating in the job advert that you will assess "length of experience" will oblige the employer to give advantage to people who have never had career breaks due to child care; second, adverts looking for "young and ambitious researchers" may result in fewer women applicants (as many women might be in a comparable position to men at a slightly later age due to career breaks); and third, including "exchange stays at international universities" into the job description may hinder women who have children from both applying for and getting the job.[21]

It is evident that *avoiding* such practices as those described above is an important part of work for gender equality. But furthermore, we should also introduce new practices that actively *promote* diversity, equality and inclusion. In recruitment, one of the more common strategies to ensure gender equality has been to explicitly encourage candidates from "the underrepresented gender" to apply in formal job adverts. This practice should continue to be used, but it is important to underline that such strategies are far from enough.[22] As discussed in the previous paragraph, the text in the job advert; the form and content of the interview; and not least the requirements for promotion and career development that exist in a job will all affect the gender balance in the group of applicants as well as the evaluation committee's assessment of candidates. Whilst the academic achievements required for a

job are most often clearly defined, the collegial practices of collaboration and care for peers and students are often not listed as clear requirements but expected to be assessed as part of the very vague requirement of "personal suitability for the position", leaving it to the hiring committee to define what is meant. When relevant, a clearer definition of the expectations of academic collegiality and student and collegial care could well be included in job descriptions. This could help visualise and make explicit the competence of applicants who have spent much of their time teaching, doing peer reviews and other collegial tasks. As of now this kind of competence in collegial care, and the work it is associated with, often remains invisible work – although it is at the core of research communities' success in the competitive structures of contemporary higher education.[23]

Further practical strategies that have been implemented in higher education recruitment are gender balanced evaluation and hiring committees. As many of the entries in this book illustrate, however, practical day-to-day discrimination is just as often performed by women as by men. When targeting hiring committees as a strategy to achieve gender balance, it is important not only to ensure gender balance in the committees, but also provide training in reflection on inclusion and equality.[24]

A recent mapping at my institution, the UiT Arctic University of Norway, shows that, overall, one can claim that the gender gap in the institution is closing, not only among students but also among employees.[25] In 2021, 40% of the professors at this higher education institution were female, as compared to only 9% in 2000. Still, the "scissors"-effect[26] – the progressive decrease of female researchers as candidates advancing from undergraduate to professorship level – is also present at UiT, and even more so at other universities in Norway. Furthermore, there are significant differences across units, reflecting the gendered structure of disciplines. Thus, improving procedures for the recruitment and assessment of candidates for academic positions is one area to work on.

Gender and research quality

Assessments need to be *of* something, and in higher education this something is the *quality* of research or teaching. It is a challenge that when operationalising quality into a series of easy to measure quantifiable components, there is a risk of losing touch with the profound and holistic meaning of the concept, as well as its intersection with other dimensions, like gendered power. Louise Morley expresses this as follows: "Audit has produced a culture of measurement that is reductive and incompatible with the complex ways in which gendered power is relayed. There is very little attention paid to the sociology of gender in relation to quality in higher education".[27] Her analysis from Britain further shows that the quality and equality movements in higher education appear to have developed on two separate trajectories. An important goal of the quality "movement" has been to avoid subjective bias, leading to skewed research results. Nevertheless, as we have discussed in the previous paragraphs of this chapter, the weight – and belief – that is currently

placed on objective measures can be argued to create an appearance of neutrality that stands in the way of a thorough and critical discussion of the consequences of contemporary assessment regimes, as well as their association to the gendered power dynamics in higher education. For example, Morley points out: "quality accolades do not necessarily coincide with equity achievements. Some of the most elite research organisations in Britain, with consistently high scores in the UK Research Assessment Exercises (RAE), also have the worst record on gender equity".[28]

When quality assessments are limited to certain features of research work, like, e. g., the channel of publications and its popularity among readers, the assessments in themselves are part of a discourse where quality is reduced to only bibliometric outcome indicators. Even though there is a need for predictable assessment criteria, this reductionist practice poses a problem for all academics concerned with quality, but especially for critical scholars aiming to reveal hidden truths about the workings of power structures and injustice.[29] The dilemma has also been discussed with insight and depth in studies of higher arts education, where the concept of quality is perhaps even harder to formalise than in other disciplinary sectors.[30]

Still, when discussing the complex relation between gender and assessment, it is important to underline that the challenge is not limited to a practical level of formulating new quality criteria. In fact, in contemporary policy and politics the tension is more profound and linked to two co-existing but partly conflicting discourses: one on diversity, equality and inclusion, on the one hand, and one on outstanding talent and innovative progress on the other.[31] The diversity, equality and inclusion discourse carries the argument that a higher education sector offering opportunity for all citizens and groups to acquire more powerful positions in society is indeed a quality mark. However, in the discourse on promoting outstanding talent and innovations, higher education is part of the solution to save the world and the humans in it, through distinguishing between mediocre and outstanding talent. It is in this latter discourse that quality comes to equal excellence and filters out diversity as an unintended consequence. Higher education fits into both, and even embraces both. In practical assessment work, however, the tensions between should not be ignored. The fact that contemporary higher education discourse tends to commit to the language of inclusion without committing to the logic of equality has been well demonstrated in the works of Sara Ahmed.[32]

Summary

The relation between research assessment and gender is multi-layered. This chapter has touched upon the usefulness of some actual assessment measures on a practical level, but also aimed to go beyond the practical discussions and illuminate how the field of higher education is characterised by several conflicting discourses existing in parallel. These cause paradoxes and dilemmas in the everyday work of academics and administration aiming to formulate assessment criteria that support equality and inclusion and work against the underrepresentation of women and other gender

minorities in several fields and leadership positions. Accordingly, it also works against non-diverse academic staff and students. There is no quick fix to these constant tensions; rather, increased awareness and ongoing discussions that can highlight these challenges and their practical appearance in a constantly changing sector will continue to be necessary.

Questions for discussion

- How can we better recognise and assess collegial care in academia?
- Do you know of examples where the ideals "excellence" and "inclusion" conflicted with practical assessment work, e.g., in hiring processes or project prioritising?
- Are current CV templates fair and neutral tools for the assessment of academic work? Why/why not?

Suggestions for further reading

- For an introduction to ideas on gender and organisations: Halford, S. (2001). *Gender, power and organisations: An introduction*. Macmillan International Higher Education.
- On neoliberalism and standardised measurements: Cannizzo, F. (2018). Tactical evaluations: Everyday neoliberalism in academia. *Journal of Sociology*, 54 (1): 77–91.
- In-depth analysis of assessment procedures effects on the individual academic: Lund, R. (2012). Publishing to become an "ideal academic": An institutional ethnography and a feminist critique. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 28 (3): 218–228.

Notes

1 Cannizzo 2018
2 Heijstra et al. 2015; Steinþórsdóttir et al. 2020
3 Foucault 1979
4 Raaper 2016
5 Raaper 2016, 188
6 Bourdieu 1998
7 Wacquant 2007, 269
8 Halford 2001
9 Lund 2012
10 DORA 2021
11 DORA 2021
12 DORA 2021
13 Lund 2012
14 Morley 2007
15 See also da Silva, this volume
16 For some recent contributions, see e.g. Brunila 2016; Cannizzo 2018; Richter & Hostettler 2015
17 Guardian Staff, 2016
18 See Schmidt, this volume
19 Holgersson et al. 2004, 200

20 Madaus & O'Dwyer's 1999
21 Halford 2001
22 See Duarte, this volume
23 See Maxwell, this volume
24 See Jackson-Cole & Goldmeier, this volume; Lippert-Rasmussen, this volume
25 Duarte et al. 2020
26 UNESCO 2007
27 Morley 2007, 53
28 Morley 2007, 53
29 Özkazanc-Pan 2012
30 Blix et al. 2019; see also Maxwell, this volume
31 Bathmaker 2015
32 See Ahmed 2012, 2016

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18

FEMINIST PEDAGOGIES

Nastassja Pugliese

Feminist pedagogy is a practical approach to teaching and learning processes and is also a theory about knowledge sharing, building and development that takes into account the social-historical context of knowledge production. Two underlying principles in feminist pedagogy are that women should have the same rights as men to access the best possible education and educational opportunities, and the idea that gender power dynamics influence the classroom environment and knowledge acquisition.[1] As a practice that is attentive to the cultural expectations that impact learning processes, it pays attention to the ways in which knowledge and epistemic authority in the classroom environment are related to culturally determined gender roles. Through the collective construction of a common consciousness about historical and present processes related to how gender defines one's identity and one's academic experience, the goal of feminist pedagogies is to promote equal learning opportunities in the classroom setting and throughout the academic culture. Since feminism and pedagogy are concepts in dispute that can each encompass various kinds of practices and beliefs, it is best if we talk in terms of feminist pedagogies instead of feminist pedagogy as there is no unique way of implementing this approach to teaching practices. When we talk about feminist pedagogies, we are indicating a cluster of practices that attempt to construct an educational experience that is both epistemically reliable and liberatory. In this sense, feminist pedagogies direct their efforts to not only the recognition of women's role as knowledge producers and the strengthening of women's epistemic roles but also to a deflation of males' centrality and single responsibility in knowledge construction. That is, feminist pedagogies are concerned with gender as a social construction that creates a system of social privileges that affects both men and women in their ability to act as knowers and agents in their communities. To this end, feminist pedagogies are intended to be a liberatory experience, not only for women, but also for men who also suffer the noxious effects of patriarchal structure. This process is grounded on

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in-depth reflections over the role of gender in the fostering or prevention of a sense of belonging for students with respect to the specific learning communities in which they are inserted. In this chapter, I will give examples of a feminist pedagogy agenda and show that the goals spring from historical debates that offered philosophical foundations for these practices.

Examples of the agenda of feminist pedagogies

A concise description of the agenda of feminist pedagogies can be found in the United Nations' working paper series produced by their Women Training Centre. Considering it as an instrument for practicing gender equality, feminist pedagogies are "characterised by four key aspects or principles: participatory learning, validation of personal experience, encouragement of social justice, activism and accountability; and development of critical thinking and open-mindedness".[2] In this second volume of the series, *Feminist Pedagogies in Training for Gender Equality*, Ferguson[3] conceives of feminist pedagogies as methodological and epistemological approaches to the learning process. The conception describes the general aim as stimulating critical thinking and responsible rationality while taking into account the differences in positions of privilege with respect to gender. The UN working paper on training for gender equality is based on the findings of Hoffmann & Stake,[4] who offer empirical data on professors that consider themselves practitioners of feminist pedagogies. They discovered that most of these professors are committed to four pedagogical facets: the creation of participatory classroom communities, the validation of personal experience, the encouragement of social understanding and activism towards social justice, and the development of critical thinking skills.

Shrewsbury[5] sees feminist pedagogy as envisioning a classroom in which teachers and students act as subjects, not as objects. In the classical paper "What is Feminist Pedagogy?", Shrewsbury defines it as a practice that aims to construct a "liberatory classroom in which members learn to respect each other's differences rather than fear them", where the classroom becomes "an important place to connect to our roots, our past, and to envision the future".[6] She claims that one central concept of feminist pedagogy is empowerment, a gain in one's capacity of action given favourable conditions such as acknowledgement of one's perspectives through participatory learning and the development of one's capacity to describe and understand their own situation in historical and economical terms. The concept of empowerment ties feminist teaching practices to Paulo Freire's works. Feminist pedagogies, then, building on Freirean critique of conventional education in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,[7] depend on the recognition of power relations in traditional academic settings and the limitations of banking-like education. According to Freire, in the *Pedagogy of Autonomy*,[8] teaching is not a mere transferring of information but a way of transforming the world through the exercise and stimulation of freedom.

This educational practice is also concerned with the influences of other identity markers such as class, race and local culture in the learning process and the

constitution of the academic environment. It is bell hooks, on *Teaching to Transgress*,[9] who turned contemporary theoretical discussions on feminist pedagogies into an intersectional theory that integrates gender inequality concerns with racial and class injustices. Even in the face of feminist critiques of Freire's works, hooks recognised in Freire a precursor of her anti-racist, feminist and radically democratic view of education. Freire's ideas are, for her, an eye-opening theory with respect to the biases related to considering the economically privileged the natural bearers of epistemic authority. Freire highlights the importance of recognising epistemic biases coming from economic differences between students and professors or between students and their academic community. Freirean teaching practices demand class awareness inside the classroom power dynamics so as to prevent economic disparities becoming a bias against the student's learning processes. bell hooks' reflections on education constitute what can be called black feminist pedagogy, a practice that is also explicitly anti-racist. Anti-racist institutional actions are, by definition, reparatory practices. Reparatory practices are policies put in place to actively counter the noxious effects of historic injustices.[10] The philosopher of education Sueli Carneiro, for example, defends the establishment of a system of quotas based on race. She argues that quotas are necessary because they are reparatory instruments that fix historical injustices that are still present in educational institutions.[11] Anti-racist institutional actions are part of feminist pedagogies insofar as they better define the demands of women's rights. Feminist pedagogies that are also anti-racist and anti-class are intersectional, in the way that they criticise the idea that women are part of the same category and, for this reason, naturally share the same political goals. Intersectional feminist pedagogies further develop classroom practices by looking closely at the differences among women. One of the purposes of intersectionality is to start from these differences and, from them, build a collective consciousness about race, class, and gender in order to develop a classroom community grounded in sorority among women coming from distinct historical, social and personal backgrounds.[12] The ultimate goal is to create a learning environment where gender, racial and class power dynamics are neither reproduced nor reinforced. In a multicultural classroom guided by these principles, actors respect each other's differences and take them to be opportunities for learning and developing shared moral values based on respect and equality.

A historical agenda

Although an important and valued topic today, the problematisation of women's access to education and the quality of the education they receive did not start in the 20th century but has a long historical tradition. In the beginning of the 17th century, various women wrote treatises defending their right to formal scientific education. There were authors such as Gabrielle Suchon (1632–1703) and Françoise d'Aubigné (Madame de Maintenon, 1635–1719) who, following the pre-feminist discussions of authors such as François Poulain de la Barre (1647–1723), argued for the rational ability of females and their equal capacity to reason and do

science to defend their access to higher education institutions. Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678), considered to be the first female university student in Europe, wrote one such treatise: "The Learned Maid, or Whether a Maid may be a Scholar. A Logik exercise" (1659). In the 18th and 19th century, respectively, Wollstonecraft and Nísia Floresta wrote similar works defending the political rights of women using arguments based on their right to formal higher education and the acknowledgment of the perfection of women's rational capacities. These works are important because – as Floresta herself argues – the state of education, and especially that of women's education, indicates a given culture's level of social justice at a particular time.[13] The lesson from history that is still of value today is that gender equality in education is a good criterion for deciding whether a culture is truly democratic and egalitarian. When taking the educational level of women and the level of their public impact as an index of gender justice, administrators and professors can, today, consciously employ educational practices to change a culture and better their values. A conscious change in educational policies and practices for the sake of gender justice and a fairer gender experience in society is integral to the agenda of feminist pedagogies.

Describing the common background and the philosophical origins of the application of feminist principles to classroom practices is possible because of the work that is being done on retrieving the contribution of women philosophers from the past.[14] The project of recovering women's intellectual contributions is influenced by, and influences, contemporary feminist educational practices. This is the case because in organising, for example, the history of philosophy from the point of view of women's productions and philosophical interests, a variety of common questions emerge such as the problem on the nature of women's rationality, the problem of the difference between the sexes, the difference between sex and gender, the dispute over women's right to access all levels of formal education, and others. When looking to the history of women's contributions and making a conscious effort to publicly recognise them, it has already been noted that the way to ensure that this change in the traditional stories is more permanent is to integrate the research on women intellectuals with the teaching of this material.[15]

Even though contemporary education, higher education and universities are mixed and for everyone, this does not mean that men and women hold the same epistemic authority in academic settings, hence the need for educational practices where the goal is to recover women's epistemic authority in the classroom, the academic community and knowledge processes in general. There are various fronts on which to act to address this problem of epistemic injustice,[16] which is also at the root of the so-called pipeline problem[17] in the structure of higher education. Maintaining women in academia and allowing opportunities for them to occupy the highest positions in educational settings is still a challenge. In order to better the numbers of women in academia,[18] it is important to ameliorate the environment (in the local academic culture) and the expectations with respect to what they can or should do (in the sciences in general). It is about creating changes that are everlasting and not merely pro-forma.

Developing the current academic environment

Creating a classroom environment that connects with the experience of the students, so as to transform the classroom into a space for the construction of a commonly shared learning experience based on social justice and human rights values, is key for women's development in academia. This is important because, as of today, there are still disciplines in which women do not feel welcome due to sexism and gender expectations. When it comes to logic, for example, a core skill for academic success, women still feel out of place since they are told it is a discipline that is not for them. As Pugliese & Secco argue, "much of the oppressive atmosphere experienced by women within the discipline is a consequence of teaching practices in a non-conducive classroom environment generating unsettling learning experiences".[19] A strong critique on gendered knowledge is expected in courses in which women have been historically underrepresented. The class should be able to unlearn prejudices that have a negative impact on the intellectual growth of women in those fields. When it comes to disciplines where women are the majority or are overrepresented (for example, in early childhood education), one must evaluate whether these students are susceptible to the pipeline problem[20] and whether they are able to access good quality jobs after their formative years, including high administrative positions or research positions at universities. Also, cases of overrepresentation of women are usually an index of work rights vulnerability and the absence of prestige for workers in those professions that lack gender balance and equality.[21] The degree of gender equality among the different levels of the academic ladder differs widely internationally, but the fact that gender equality is a balance to be kept demands constant research and data collection on the gender distribution for continuous accountability, solidity and improvement.

In conclusion, the goal of feminist pedagogies is to approach education as a transformative process aiming to change the individual's beliefs and attitudes by shared values such as gender equality and social justice. As a pedagogical practice, it is committed to the construction of a learning community in the classroom, composed by professors and students in a power sharing context where the individual's prior experiences and cultural background is acknowledged and valued. The learning community should be able to address identity issues even when the content or the discipline at stake is not particularly related to identity and cultural problems. The goal is to construct an environment that is as free as possible from gendered knowledge expectations or at least conscious of the different cultural pressures that are gender related, addressing them either directly or indirectly. As a theory about teaching and learning processes, feminist pedagogy is an open-ended proposal where each successful experience has the potential to contribute to its very theoretical constitution. This self-feeding mechanism is in line with the practice of participatory learning, given that participatory learning entails collective construction of knowledge. Since there are various approaches to feminism, and given that feminism does not offer a single narrative of women's history and rights, there are and should be various kinds of liberatory teaching practices that advance gender equality.

Thinking further

Feminist pedagogies pose challenges for higher education practices and projects. The history of the arguments in favour of women's education and the historical fact of the late acceptance of women in institutions of higher education constitute an important background to motivate the employment of strategies that recognise gender disparities. One strategy is to use gender as a key to interpret the curriculum, the course syllabi, and the gender discourses in local academic culture. By constructing a community that is aware of the historical and present inequalities, institutions can be held accountable and act to consciously develop strategies to welcome and retain women in academia. In stating that this is a community issue, feminist pedagogies such as those proposed by hooks assume that the problems addressed are not "women's problems" and concern them alone.[22] Rather, these are problems that should concern men as well. This is not simply because they benefit from the status quo produced in a patriarchal culture and are more likely to reproduce gender power relations,[23] but because they are key agents of the needed transformation. Gender injustice as a community problem should then be tackled with solutions that create a better environment for everyone. By transforming the patriarchal gender roles into an egalitarian space for gender expression, the expectations of masculinity also change. As hooks says, men are not oppressors by nature; men are part of the problem of gender inequality, and as part of it, they are in a special position to change the situation.[24] The anonymous Sophia, reproducing an argument from Poulain de la Barre in her pamphlet *Women not Inferior to Man*, argues that in issues concerning gender differences there is no neutral judge as the judging will always be made by a member of a given gender, which indicates partiality. This predicament indicates that the solutions should be negotiated with gender equality and a fairer academic environment as a common – and collective – goal.

Some simple changes that can be made by men and women alike are related to the approach to one's own teaching. By taking one's own teaching as a process of discovery similar to those in theoretical investigations, that is, by considering teaching as a kind of research, teaching practices can be improved when taking gender as a dimension to be developed. Having gender equality as a connecting threat in curriculum or syllabus narratives naturally generates topics to be further explored. There are three moments during a course that should not be faced mechanically: course preparation, the first classes and the end of the course. During course preparation, it is important that the professor actively searches for content that is representative of women's contribution to the field, avoiding having a syllabus with only male sources. During the first days of class, it helps to explain the rationale of the syllabus and to listen to student's expectations so as to stimulate their engagement. Similarly, at the end of the course, asking students what worked and what did not can bring new insights for further development of feminist pedagogy strategies in future courses. Consequently, it is also the duty of administrators to support these initiatives, offering opportunities for continued training and research, holding them accountable for the fairness of the academic environment.

Finally, a problem to ponder further is how to address gender issues in contexts that are not obviously about or related to gender. How can participants of an academic community become conscious of gender power relations when they are immersed in power relations of some other kind that are also structuring the interpersonal dynamics? How can one distinguish between the different kinds of power relations and, more specifically, the power relations that must be dissolved, as well as those – if any – that are important to maintain in academic settings? For example, professors can be on an equal footing with students with respect to the goals of a learning community, but they hold power over students (i.e., in giving grades, passing or failing a course, writing letters of support) and this position is part of their role as professors. How, then, can one exercise this power without reproducing gender dynamics that negatively affect the student's learning processes? This is a reflection that should accompany professors so as to guide them in their interactions and help administrators to organise policies that will protect everyone involved by fostering a fair environment. One's commitment to equality and social justice is expressed and seen in small actions that are pursued and performed on a daily basis. For this reason, scholars and administrative staff should turn a personal commitment to justice into an institutional commitment with equal opportunities. Feminist pedagogies show us that no university can maintain its mission of excellence without being committed to a culturally diverse academic environment, with equal opportunities and gender inclusiveness.

Questions for discussion

- How can feminism inform pedagogical practices?
- What are the relationships between gender and academic success?
- In what ways can pedagogical practices contribute to diminishing the gender gap in academia?

Suggestions for further reading

- For more information on the topic, I suggest bell hooks' trilogy on teaching (*Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom, Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* and *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom*) and Paulo Freire's pedagogical works (*Pedagogy of Freedom, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Pedagogy in Process: The Letters to Guinea-Bissau, Pedagogy of Hope*).
- With respect to the historical works, they are all available online in open-source databases: Anna Maria van Schurman wrote the *The Learned Maid, or whether a Maid may be a Scholar. A Logick Exercise in* 1659, François Poulain de la Barre wrote *De L'Égalité des deux sexes, discours physique et moral où l'on voit l'importance de se défaire des préjugés* in 1679, [Sophia] – the anonymous – wrote pamphlets in 1739, the most important of which is *Women not Inferior to Man: or a Short and Modest Vindication of the Natural Right of the Fair-Sex to a Perfect Equality of Power, Dignity, and Esteem, with the Men*.

- Mary Wollstonecraft has various writings but the one that best illustrates what has been described is *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787). I also suggest the works of the Brazilian philosopher of education Nísia Floresta, especially the works *Direitos das Mulheres e as Injustiças dos Homens* (1832), a translation into Portuguese of the feminist pamphlet of the anonymous Sophia, and the *Opúsculo Humanitário* (1853), her main work.

Notes

1 Ferguson 2019; Hoffman & Stake 1998; hooks 1996
2 Ferguson 2019, 4
3 Ferguson 2019
4 Hoffmann & Stake 1998
5 Shrewsbury 1987
6 Shrewsbury 1987, 6
7 Freire 2013
8 Freire 2011
9 hooks 1996
10 See also Duarte, this volume
11 Carneiro 2019, 295
12 See also Losleben & Musubika, this volume
13 Floresta 1853
14 See Nilsen, this volume
15 Shapiro 2016
16 See Reibold, this volume
17 Haslanger 2008
18 Beebee & Saul 2021
19 Pugliese & Secco, forthcoming
20 Haslanger 2008
21 Powell & Jacobs 1984; Cacouault-Bitaud 2001
22 hooks 2000
23 See Poyares, this volume
24 hooks 2000

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19

DIS-EMPOWERING GENDER STEREOTYPES

Arianna Porrone and Margherita Paola Poto[1]

This chapter aims to analyse and discuss the importance of dis-empowering gender stereotypes in Western academic environments through storytelling and critical role-playing to provide professional support for both administrative staff and leaders.[2] Through this methodological approach, stories become the basis for collective discussions on the origins of gender stereotypes, contributing to the co-creation of new knowledge and the empowerment of the persons involved in the process. Storytelling helps to reflect on role-playing and to abandon hardwired and constrained thinking. In other words, in our approach, storytelling contributes to "dis-empowering gender stereotypes" and intends to encourage critical reflections on assigned gender roles (i.e., stereotypes) through a collective and co-created effort. The starting point develops from a story based on a participatory approach where members of the academic community and higher education (HE) institutions in general, both academic and administrative staff, can be involved in reflective activities, workshops, and conversations on their role in decision-making processes. The process of dis-empowering gender stereotypes through role-playing and interactive activities is based on the values of mutual respect, care, and appreciation for each other's contributions and reflections. Ultimately, through storytelling, gender stereotypes are disempowered and the personal role of each community member is empowered and strengthened.

The first section illustrates the importance of connecting theory and practice in the HE context to address gender-based inequalities and contribute to creating gender-equal workplaces by engaging with illustrated storytelling. In our experience, illustrated storytelling is used as a methodology to facilitate role-playing and the dis-empowerment of stereotypes linked to gender. The second section situates, problematises, and assesses how the concepts of empowering/dis-empowering have been theorised by scholars. The third section provides the experiential viewpoint of empowering/dis-empowering, sharing the experience of illustrated storytelling

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applied in academic communities. The method can be applied to participants of any age, and with due language adjustments it can be extended to the administrative staff and even small groups beyond the academic environment.[3] The target audience is formed by young researchers in global studies, and undergraduate and postgraduate students in law and economics, who are asked to reflect on a specific research question. A predetermined number of individuals form the groups (ideally 4–5 students or researchers gathered in small groups, comprising around 20 voices per experience). The work is organised in the following steps: (1) setting up the scene, by briefly illustrating the theme of the lesson; (2) reading the story; (3) asking the participants to provide comments on the story in relation to the theme; and (4) re-reading the story. The participants engaged with the research question become part of the same observation process; they are immersed in the setting, hearing, seeing, and experiencing of their reality with the illustrated story. Participants are involved in the practice of telling and re-telling the story, role-playing, and imagining scenarios alternative to the ones narrated in the story. The fourth section briefly summarises the main points of the research, while the fifth and the sixth sections are respectively dedicated to questions for discussion and suggestions for further reading.

The perks of connecting theory and practice in the HE context

The relevance of role-playing is crucial in defining gender stereotypes because gender stereotypes can be studied in their connection to the role assigned to women and men since time immemorial.[4] According to a study conducted by UNESCO in 2002, in HE, psychosocial and organisational factors, as well as gender-imposed roles, prevent women from crashing through the glass ceiling into the top positions.[5] On top of that, women's leadership styles, both within administration and teaching, are presumed to be different from those of men.[6] Women's standpoints are marginalised, excluded, or not listened to because they do not correspond to the norm, represented by the masculine behaviours of competitiveness, measurability, and individuality.[7] As long as women continue to be underrepresented as role models and gender bias reinforces performance reviews, HE institutions risk losing women from the sector, as well as the chance to dismantle a system of oppression that jeopardises freedom and opportunities for all in the workplace. Thus, there is a need to engage in social dialogue to make workplaces gender responsive.

According to an ILO Report,[8] social dialogue between workers and employers enables gender-based inequalities to be addressed and contributes to creating a gender-equal workplace. Social dialogue, facilitated through participatory training based on role-playing, can help eradicate wrongful essentialisation based on gender differences and prompt rich perceptions of leadership styles that go beyond competitiveness, with an inclination to explore multiple solutions and flexible paths to respond to complex challenges.[9] In this vein, a participatory approach applying role-playing techniques offers the chance to leverage a change in the dominant

narrative. Restoring and restorying the dynamics of role-playing is the first step that can trigger the change and intervene to uproot internalised stereotypes in HE (such as, for instance, the stereotypic dimension applied to women positing that "competent" and "friendly" are bipolar opposites on a single trait dimension[10]). This is expressed by Rosemarie Tong in her study on gender roles:

> Eliminating all vestiges of gender identities and roles would require rewriting human history, a formidable task that may prove largely undesirable in the end. Still, the injustices and limitations that have accompanied gender roles and identities in the past can be eliminated now by any society that fully respects all persons' rights to equal freedom and liberty within the constraints of living peaceably with each other.[11]

To overcome the problem of gender stereotypes in academia, we suggest combining empowering/dis-empowering theory and practice through illustrated storytelling. In the following section, we clarify the concepts of empowering/dis-empowering and the link to role-playing, from our situated and privileged position as Western legal researchers.

Dis-empowering gender stereotypes in legal studies: The role of participatory methods

The empowerment/dis-empowerment of gender stereotypes and the link to role-playing has been thematised by many. We hereby report three relevant studies that allow us to advance practical solutions to a permanent problem.

The first study on these terms is related to their notoriety as worn-out buzzwords, as critically observed by Anne H. Toomey in her study on community development practice.[12] While agreeing with the author's sentiment that there has been an over-exaggeration of the meaning and overuse of the terms, we appreciate the approach that she adopts by associating them to specific roles in the community development practice rather than with an empty rhetorical formula. In particular, Toomey identifies four traditional and four alternative roles where empowering/dis-empowering exerts an effect. One can be a rescuer, a provider, a moderniser, and a liberator in the former classification, in addition to a catalyst, a facilitator, an ally, and an advocate of gender stereotypes in the latter one. This way, the (dis) empowerment is related to specific human actions and reactions and produces certain effects.

Such an understanding of the concept as related to certain characteristics of a given role is carried out in the narrative of empowering/dis-empowering related to interpersonal and gender-based violence and stereotyping.

In the second study conducted by Delker,[13] empowering/dis-empowering passes through role-playing and the relevant qualities of the story characters. The authors observe how through empowering/dis-empowering violence victims can shift from survivors to advocates.

Here again, the focus of the empowering is placed on the role played by the parties involved in a story, and on the transformation that such a role can go through. For example, the authors show how, through public self-identification as trauma survivors, persons can heal and empower themselves and others.

In the third study on transformative social innovation, which echoes philosopher Mary Parker Follett's principle of "integration" in power-sharing,[14] empowering/dis-empowering is related to a multi-actor, dialectical-continual-cyclical process.[15] This is related to the fact that the perspective and contribution of the organisational members of a relational circle are at the same time (1) a bridge between the dis-empowered party and each situation, and thus (2) may prompt a change in both the situation and the party, which translates into empowering.

The combined analysis of these three studies shows how empowering/dis-empowering seems to form an oxymoron (one being the opposite or the negation of the other), and at the same time develop into a binomial dialectic, characterised by a continuum of dynamic and transformative role-playing along the lines of re-shifting power relations. Thus, an ally and supporter of action can simultaneously empower a community or act as constituent power that dis-empowers a constituted power or institution. Such dynamics reflect and unveil the complex and multifaceted dimension of power that enhances and corrupts, has a bright and a dark side, and an almost imperceptible tipping point.

We learn from Rosemarie Tong that eliminating stereotypes is a process that entails respect for all persons' rights and freedoms.[16] In a law dimension, such respect has a theoretical and a practical component.

The theoretical component lies in the strength of a positivistic approach to law, where such protection is affirmed and where the consequences of the violation are clearly stated in an authoritative act.[17] Depending on the legal order we are referring to, such a protection can be shaped as a formal binding act or agreement (respectively, a law passed by the legislature, or an international declaration signed by parties) or as a written or oral legal tradition (a story told by elders). These approaches, stemming respectively but not exclusively from Western-based and indigenous legal orders,[18] are just two examples of the numerous possibilities where law plays a key role in the elimination of stereotypes.

The practical component of the dis-empowering process through law develops from the interpretation of the legal principles expressed in the law. In the Western setting, such interpretation is in the hands of the legal operators, notably judges, practitioners, and scholars. In a non-necessarily Western setting, for instance an indigenous one, the interpretation comes from the narrators of the story and from the community at large that participates in that narrative. Looking for interpretations within stories allows one to freely engage in collective reflections that take into account diversity in viewpoints, plural imaginaries, ontologies, and opinions.

Theory and practice in law play a pivotal role in the eradication, and ultimately the dis-empowerment, of the stereotypes, hence the key importance of affirming, writing, consolidating, and interpreting laws and stories.

The theoretical framework needs to be tested through participatory sessions (training, seminars, and workshops) that expose characters and the interpretation of plots to constantly changing audiences, and therefore to a constantly fluid scenario where the gender stereotype is eradicated because its grounding soil is never the same.

Examples of dis-empowering gender stereotypes: The experience of restorying through storytelling

Since mid-2020 we have been applying an action method in law and global studies, through a series of seminars and academic lectures in HE, based on different activities that encompass illustrated storytelling, listening, re-telling, role-playing, and self-reflection. This work investigates and gains insights into a given topic, through the analysis of the group reactions and the elaboration of collaboratively constructed solutions. Our teaching materials are generally constituted by a story and a few reflection activities developed around it. The learning toolkit developed by the Indigenous Law Research Unit[19] and our handbook[20] constitute two examples of the story sources.

Together with our audience, we look into stories, often drawn from indigenous legal traditions. We search for old and new meanings, aware that this is an interactive, situated, and yet delocalised thought-provoking process. We empathise with participants and searchers, and put ourselves into the roles of the characters, participating in the experience of role-changing, creating, re-creating, and ultimately questioning common places, clichés, and stereotypes. We tend to initiate our sessions by following a protocol that has care and gratitude at its core. We thank the audience, the territory that embraces us (especially in cases of occupied lands), and the virtual space that hosts our meeting. At times, we initiate the conversation by reading the story out loud, respecting breaks and silences in the text to slowly accompany readers into the new setting. Reading a story aloud is a fully engaging exercise where all the energy of the reader-narrator is put into the task without any distraction. It is a multisensory activity (engaging voice, hearing, sight) that builds a strong connection between the mind and voice of the reader, and between the voice and mind of the listeners. The spoken word helps strengthen our minds and take ownership of our ideas. It fills the room with sound and meaning. It builds bridges and connects listeners. Some other times, due to time constraints or different settings (for example in the case of audiences of more than 100 listeners), we summarise the story's main points, indulging in the observations of the physical and psychological characteristics of the animals and their role in the story.

Our next step after the story reading or telling consists of reporting back preliminary impressions (potential common themes, summaries of previous experiences with the same story) before initiating a deeper conversation around the subject matter. Before, during, and after the sessions, participants are encouraged to provide written answers, as well as engage with creativity (by doodling, drawing, colouring, or concept-mapping). Multisensory experiences are part of the learning

process and a proactive way to respond to the sequence of questions designed specifically for each story. The work contributes to spurring new conversations and allows for a discussion on the key issues in greater depth, elevating the richness and complexity of mutual understanding. Through these continued conversations, the key underlying principles forming a common conceptual framework of gender-sensitive thematic are re-identified and re-scrutinised.

One example of an awareness-raising activity was organised as a virtual roundtable and 30 days of reflection in November and December 2020, on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, at the UiT The Arctic University of Norway.[21] An indigenous story from the West Coast of Canada[22] guided our meditation on violence against women (VAW) with a group of students and researchers. The activity aimed to develop a reflection on VAW in academia through story-retelling and restoration, in that process that indigenous scholars refer to as *restorying*.[23] Our activity steps followed the protocol earlier described. After the scene-setting (step 1) followed the story-reading (step 2), then the sharing session (step 3), and finally the re-reading (step 4).[24]

This multi-step collective activity led to the reflection of the systemic instrumentalisation of VAW. The *restorying* lens revealed the dimension of VAW as a misleading narrative that empowers gender stereotypes rather than focuses on responsibilities and power imbalances. In this framework, storytelling represented an exceptional force for change, by disentangling women's role from the stereotype of being unvoiced and passive receivers of violence.

Summary

Our experience illustrates how dis-empowering a gender stereotype can be developed through a relational knowledge co-creation practice, where the parties involved engage in a continuous dialogue, and through the analysis of the role-playing of stories characters come to an understanding of how gendered power dynamics shape the interpretation of a story. The result of this practice of relational knowledge co-creation is that the parties challenge some of their biased ideas and revisit gendered assumptions. Workshops and training based on storytelling and role-playing are of key relevance to enhancing the dialogue between academic and non-academic staff in HE institutions.

Questions for discussion

The collective process of *restorying* expands beyond our theoretical and practical approaches and suggests that the dis-empowering of gender stereotypes is a collective and restorative activity relevant for HE (including both academic and administrative staff) and society at large. Further research (both theoretical and participative) could focus on the exploration of the following questions, starting from the collection of the most common stereotypes in a HE institution.

- What are the short- and long-term impacts of *restorying* in society, and specifically in HE?
- How does the dynamic aspect of *restorying* relate to the rigidity of stereotypes?
- How can we apply the narrative of dis-empowerment to the relationship between different roles in HE (for example, between academic and administrative staff)?

Suggestions for further reading

- On gender stereotypes: A suggested reading along the lines of gender stereotypes in managerial positions is the article of Tabassum, Naznin, and Nayak, Bhabani S. 2021. Gender Stereotypes and Their Impact on Women's Career Progressions from a Managerial Perspective. *IIM Kozhikode Society & Management Review*, 10(2): 192–208. doi:10.1177/2277975220975513.
- For a complete overview of gender stereotypes and hierarchies from the perspective of social psychology see: Faniko, Klea, Lorenzi-Cioldi, Fabio, Sarrasin, Oriane, and Mayor, Eric (eds.). 2015. *Gender and Social Hierarchies: Perspectives from Social Psychology*. Routledge.
- On participatory research: For a comparative reflection on the adoption of participatory methods to address inequalities (applied to health but transferrable to education) see Wallerstein, Nina B., and Duran, Bonnie. 2006. Using Community-Based Participatory Research to Address Health Disparities. *Health Promotion Practice*, 7(3): 312–323.

Notes

1 Arianna Porrone wrote the first section, Margherita Paola Poto the second section; both authors equally contributed to write the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth sections, as well as the abstract.
2 See Finholt, this volume
3 Porrone and Poto 2021; Poto and Porrone 2021b
4 Tong 2011
5 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2002
6 Peterson 2016
7 Peterson 2016
8 ILO, UN Women 2020
9 Airini et al. 2010
10 Madden 2011
11 Tong 2011
12 Toomey 2011
13 Delker et al. 2020
14 Follett 1919
15 Eylon 1998
16 Tong 2011
17 See Duarte, this volume
18 Napoleon 2013
19 ILRU, University of Victoria, Canada
20 Porrone and Poto 2021; Poto and Porrone 2022

21 Losleben et al. 2021
22 "Story of porcupine", from ILRU 2016
23 See for instance Voyageur et al. 2014
24 Porrone and Poto 2021a

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20

GENDERED SPACES AND PRACTICES[1]

Hannah Winther

"A room of one's own"

The concept of "space" in this chapter refers to literal and figurative sites where social roles and power dynamics are shaped. The dynamics of such spaces are complex, and their significance in higher education is perhaps best introduced by means of a story. In the 1940s, four women who would later go on to become great philosophers (and lifelong friends) met in Oxford, where they had just embarked upon their studies. These women were Iris Murdoch, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgley, and Elizabeth Anscombe. In the history of philosophy, such a cohort of prominent female philosophers, which today has started to gain recognition as a philosophical school, is rarely heard of. How was it possible? This was a question Jonathan Wolff asked in *The Guardian* in 2013. Wolff noted that they all came to Oxford at the outbreak of the Second World War, at a time when much of the male faculty and students had disappeared from campus to contribute to the war effort. The group, which is often dubbed The Wartime Quartet, pretty much had the university to themselves, along with the undivided attention of the remaining faculty. Wolff asked: What would the history of these thinkers look like had it not been for these unusual circumstances? Would they have succeeded in establishing themselves as philosophers had they arrived at an earlier or later moment in time?[2]

Wolff's question was answered in an open letter Midgley published in the same newspaper two days later. Midgley's conclusion is clear: if she and her friends were successful, this was indeed because there were fewer men about.[3] This view is echoed in her autobiography. There, she writes that their absence had the effect that it made it easier for women to be heard in discussion: "Sheer loudness of voice has a lot to do with the difficulty, but there is also a temperamental difference about confidence—about the amount of work that one thinks is needed to make

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one's opinion worth hearing".[4] With most of the male student body absent, the members of the Quartet could take the floor and develop their own original ideas, challenging and often directly opposing the reigning philosophical views at the time.[5]

When I use this story as a backdrop for writing about gendered spaces and practices in higher education, it is because it illustrates the significance of having it. Briefly put, it shows how gendered spaces and practices in higher education affect opportunities. The concept of "space" refers both to the arrangement and materiality of space—the mere fact of having access to a room in which to work, as Virginia Woolf writes in *A Room of One's Own*—and to the social structures within shared spaces. Spaces can both affirm and offer resistance to gender hierarchies, and understanding how this happens can help subvert the power dynamics within them. In the following, I give a brief overview of some conceptualisations of space that can be useful for thinking about gendered spaces and practices in academia today. I also argue that academic spaces should become more inclusive and diverse, and that this is important not only for the individuals concerned, but also for the development of academic disciplines and institutions. Finally, I offer some suggestions for how this can be achieved.

Conceptualisations of space

In recent decades, the concept of space has been used to an increasing extent in different fields as a lens for understanding how environments, both physical and social, affect and shape power, historical development, and identity. This development has its origins in the "new cultural geography" which emerged in the 1980s and sought to investigate the relationship between space, identity, and culture. The "spatial turn", as it is often referred to, involved a shift from place as a static, geographical location, to the notion of dynamic, constructed, and contested spaces.[6] One factor that explains this development is that globalisation, modern transportation, and information technology have changed the way we live in and perceive space.[7] The world has both shrunk and expanded as new sites for interaction have been made possible. Accordingly, attention has turned to the social dynamics of space. This way of thinking about space was also informed by postmodernism and poststructuralism, which called attention to the fact that space is "never neutral but always discursively constructed, ideologically marked, and shaped by the dominant power structures and forms of knowledge", as Wrede writes.[8] In other words, space is socially and culturally mediated. This understanding has come to inform a perspective on space as a site where issues of sexuality, race, class, and gender are created and negotiated.

Among the thinkers that have informed this understanding are Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, and Edward Soja. Lefebvre's contribution was to challenge the dominant approach to human geography, which distinguished between material and mappable things in space on the one hand, and our representations of those spaces on the other.[9] This gives a limited understanding of the ways in which we

use and live in space, he argued. In addition to these two established modes of space, which he termed *spatial practice* and *representations of space* respectively,[10] he introduced the notion of *representational spaces*, or the actual experience of living in space. Lefebvre writes that it is "*lived* through its associated images and symbols" and is a space that "the imagination seeks to change and appropriate".[11]

Some places are imbued with meaning: think, for instance, of the Twin Towers, Camino de Santiago, or Utøya, places that we recognise as significant beyond ourselves. Our relationships to such places depend on where we stand: a single-family home neighbourhood, for example, can be taken to represent order and safety by some, while others think of them as culturally rigid and exclusive.[12] However, whatever meanings they hold for the individual or a society, these can be challenged and changed, Lefebvre argues.

Foucault also argued that the traditional two-mode understanding of space was insufficient for understanding human life and societal development. The concept of space is an important theme in much of his work. Throughout his life, Foucault wrote extensively on urban planning and argued that space can serve governing functions. For example, he showed how madhouses, hospitals, and prisons work as exclusionary spaces and serve to construct notions of madness, illness, and penalty. In a later article, he introduced the concept of heterotopia and argued for the breaking down of spatial hierarchies. While utopias are unreal spaces that do not exist, heterotopias, for Foucault, are "places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted".[13] Cemeteries, asylums, ships, and gardens are some of the examples Foucault provides. These spaces affirm the difference that has created them in the first place—consider, for example, how retirement homes or political meetings are their own worlds, mirroring the structures of the outside, yet operating according to their own logic. Foucault's argument is that society should strive to have many heterotopias, both in order to affirm and make room for difference, but also in order to escape authoritarianism and repression.

Soja follows suit on these reflections with his concept of *Thirdspace*, a term that he uses to refer to how we think about and refer to socially produced space.[14] Like Lefebvre's representational spaces, *Thirdspace* refers to lived space. Soja offers both feminist and postcolonial interpretations of this concept when arguing for the disruption and disordering of identity and binary categorisation. He writes that he wants to "open up our spatial imaginaries to ways of thinking and acting politically that respond to all binarisms, to any attempt to confine thought and political action to only two alternatives, by interjecting an-Other set of choices".[15] What Soja does is to offer a critical analysis of space that calls out the hierarchies and power structures that sustain oppressiveness and exploitation.[16]

The concept of space has also been important in feminist studies. For feminist scholars working in fields such as history, sociology, anthropology, and geography, space became a useful heuristic for examining how homes, workplaces, suburbs,

and cities are profoundly gendered.[17] Feminist thinkers writing about the role of space have pointed out that our public spaces are regulated by powerful norms, that these norms are often implicit and taken for granted, and that this is precisely what gives them their force.[18] Notable examples are geographers Doreen Massey and Gillian Rose. One of Massey's contributions is her extensive and various demonstrations of the imbrication of the political and the spatial. In Massey's view, space is the product of interrelations and interactions; it is fundamentally heterogeneous and multiple, and it is always under construction.[19] Massey shows this through her examinations of the spatial division of labour, urban development, and industrial reorganisation, to give just a few examples. She also coined the term "power geometry" to point to the ways in which space is imbued with and is a product of relations of power.[20] Rose, on her end, argues that geography and the discourse on spatiality are fundamentally androcentric, leading to primacy being given to spaces that are perceived as men's spaces.[21]

Another thinker I would like to draw attention to is bell hooks, who writes about "living on the margins of space".[22] Taking as her point of departure her own experience as an African-American growing up in a working class family in Kentucky, hooks writes about how she always had to push against the oppressive boundaries of her environment, whether they were white, male, or middle or upper class. "I am located at the margin", hooks writes.[23] We can find ourselves at the margin because oppressive structures push us there, but hooks' more important point is that the margin is also a site of resistance, creativity, and power, and may offer a location from which we can articulate and make sense of our being in the world.

Space can have contradictory significances for women. On the one hand, it can mean confinement and limitation. Female characters in fairy tales, for instance, are often confined to their respective homes and castles, which they try to escape in a quest for freedom. Cinderella and Rapunzel are two examples that come to mind, and we can make what we want of the fact that they escape their respective confinements only to find themselves by the end of the fairy tale in castles. Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Doris Lessing's *To Room Nineteen*, and Deborah Levy's *Real Estate* all make use of spatial metaphors to explore themes of female independence and autonomy. Such metaphors can signify barriers and obstacles—in the opening pages of *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf describes how she was refused entry into a library on account of being a woman[24]—but as McDermott has pointed out, there are also many examples of writers who attempt to re-imagine space to push past these barriers.[25] There is, for example, a rich tradition of utopian fiction by women writers, such as Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Miller Gearhart's *The Wanderground*,[26] or Gerd Brantenberg's *Egalia's Daughters*. In other words, spatiality is not only a key notion to understand our current situation, but also a helpful tool to re-imagine what we want our society to be like.

Safe spaces and inclusive spaces

Much has changed since the days of the Wartime Quartet. At that time, it was uncommon for universities to even grant degrees to women—the University of

Oxford started doing so in 1920. Today, women are no longer a minority at universities. Since the 1990s, female participation in higher education has increased so that the gender imbalance has been reversed, with women making up the majority of the student body.[27] However, there are large disparities between disciplines, and the fact that there are more women at universities does not mean that they have the same opportunities or face the same odds to get ahead. Many fields have what is commonly referred to as *leaky pipelines*—the women they attract in the first place tend to disappear the higher up the echelons of academia we look, choosing instead to pursue alternate career paths. While many fields may attract female rather than male students on an undergraduate level, the gender distribution tends to change after the graduate level.[28]

More research is needed to understand the depth of the challenges women and other marginalised groups meet in academia. Here, I will merely make two suggestions for measures that can be implemented to counter the leaky pipeline: I argue for the importance of establishing women's groups and support networks, and I make some suggestions for how the spaces that are shared can become more inclusive. First, however, I want to say something about why this is important.

Inclusivity and diversity have effects beyond that of making sure that individuals who wish to pursue an academic career receive better chances to do so; it is also important for the development of the disciplines these individuals are a part of. The essay "Concrete Flowers: Contemplating the Profession of Philosophy" by Kristie Dotson offers a good account of why this is so. Dotson writes about how the dominant conceptions of what academic philosophy should be like and what topics it should engage with can marginalise the concerns and interests of people with questions that do not fit this agenda. Thinking that the established canon of thinkers, topics, and methods is representative for the entirety of the field when it only describes a small part of it means that we are privileging a set of epistemic assumptions and practices over others. Often, ideas that challenge canonical questions and methods are simply dismissed as not being academic at all.[29]

We can find an example of this if we return to our Quartet and consider the philosophical reception of Murdoch specifically.[30] Contrary to the other members of the group, Murdoch eventually abandoned an academic philosophy career altogether. There might be several reasons for this—for one, she had already established herself as a successful writer of fiction and wanted to pursue this full-time. However, she increasingly felt herself to be at odds with the contemporary philosophical scene and came to doubt that what she was doing was "real philosophy". Murdoch's biographer Conradi writes that she was thought to be "'exotic' in the sense of unassimilated",[31] not fitting the common conception of what a philosopher should do and be like.

Recent years have seen a shift in the attention to Murdoch's philosophy and an increasing recognition of her originality and insight. The lesson to be learned, however, is that if we do not make room for diverse voices, who can often challenge existing conceptions and raise new questions, we enforce the dominant positions and marginalise ideas that do not fit the disciplinary agenda. Not only

may we lose talented individuals; it can also cause our thinking to become stale and less relevant.

Recommendations

A remark on terminology is in order. There is an ongoing debate at universities across the world concerning "safe spaces", and a hot topic is the claim that such spaces threaten free speech. I will not discuss that debate here, but merely note that one of the reasons why it is difficult to have productive conversations about safe spaces is that it is a term that has multiple definitions. Moira Kenney traces the origins of the concept back to gay bars in the mid-1960s. With the development of the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s, the term came to signify "not only a physical space but a space created by the coming together of women searching for community".[32] Today, however, the term has increasingly come to refer to how shared spaces can become more inclusive. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, for example, defines a safe space as "a place (as on a college campus) intended to be free of bias, conflict, criticism, or potentially threatening actions, ideas, or conversations".[33] To make this distinction, I have opted to use the terms "support networks" and "inclusive spaces" to designate groups for marginalised people and communal spaces respectively.

Support networks

Calls for "women only" spaces are often met with hostility or astonishment at the fact that such spaces are still needed, Lewis et al. have noted.[34] However, testimonies from women who have participated in such groups attest to their importance. Writing about their own experience, Macoun and Miller argue that such groups succeed in supporting and enabling women and emerging feminist scholars in academia.[35] They create communities of "belonging and resistance, providing women with personal validation, information and material support, as well as intellectual and political resources to understand and resist our position within the often hostile spaces of the University".[36]

Such groups can take many forms: they can be organised within a department or institution, or they can have a national or international basis. To give a few examples—again from the field of philosophy—The University of Bergen, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, and The Norwegian University of Science and Technology all have their own networks for women in philosophy. Denmark has a national network for women and non-binary people in philosophy.[37] The Society for Women in Philosophy, which dates back to 1972, is an example of an international network, with branches in several countries, among them Sweden, the UK, Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands. A more intersectional group is Minorities and Philosophy (MAP), which aims to address and examine issues of minority participation in academic philosophy.[38] Such groups can serve important social functions in that they bring people who are underrepresented in their field together to discuss and share their experiences, but they can also serve more critical

functions, for instance through writing hearings on syllabuses and departmental policies, sharing job postings, and offering opportunities for informal mentoring. In addition to such formally established groups, unofficial reading groups and informal peer support networks can also be important for community-building and a valuable resource.[39] Online spaces can also be used to offer mentoring and collective support, as Bayfield et al. have shown.[40] The importance of online spaces was clearly demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to many people having to work from home.

What can be done at an institutional level is to initiate and facilitate the establishing of support networks, although their management should be left to the individuals who take part in them. Including such groups in departmental processes can contribute to democratising and legitimising them. While philosophy has served as an example above, support networks need not be discipline-specific, but can be cross-departmental and have a broader disciplinary focus, for instance in the STEM fields. Here, my concern has been fields where women are underrepresented, but they may be equally important for other marginalised groups, and may also serve important functions in groups where underrepresentation is not an issue.

Inclusive spaces

If we believe the issue is solved by establishing groups outside of the main space, we forget two things. First, even within women's groups, established social dynamics may not be inclusive to all those who are marginalised. The concerns of women of colour or non-binary people, for instance, may not be reflected in these groups. Second, if we focus on establishing groups outside of the main space, we implicitly concede that space as being a male space. It is therefore important to ensure that the spaces that are shared become more inclusive.

Measures that can be taken to achieve this include:

- More diverse readings on the syllabus.
- Diverse faculty in hiring and evaluation committees.
- Mentorship programmes for female early career researchers.
- Raising awareness about implicit bias.[41]
- Collectively deciding on norms for interaction and giving feedback during internal seminars, reading groups, and similar arenas.
- Acknowledging that each group has its own structure, culture, and history that will impact what is required to make shared spaces safe and inclusive.

Questions for discussion

- Can you find examples of practices in your own workplace or scientific community that contribute to making it an inclusive space?
- Can you find examples in your own workplace or scientific community that make it more difficult for you or others to participate?

- Does your workplace have a women-only group or similar networks, and if so, how does it impact the workplace?

Suggestions for further reading

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Notes

1 I am grateful to the three anonymous reviewers, Melina Duarte, Sara Toffanin, Oda Davanger, and the participants of the Guidebook's writers' workshop for comments and feedback that have significantly improved this chapter.
2 Wolff 2013
3 Midgley 2013
4 Midgley 2007, 123
5 I write more about this in Winther 2021, 154–65
6 Beebe et al. 2012, 524
7 Wrede 2015, 11
8 Wrede 2015, 11
9 Borch 2002, 113
10 Borch 2002, 113
11 Lefebvre 1991, 39
12 Carp 2008, 135–6
13 Foucault and Miskowiec 1986, 24
14 Borch 2002, 113
15 Soja 1996, 5
16 Wrede 2015, 12
17 Gunn 2001, 5
18 Gunn 2001, 8
19 Massey 2005, 9
20 Massey 2005
21 Wrede 2015, 13
22 hooks 2013, 80–5
23 hooks 2013, 23
24 Woolf 1929
25 McDermott 2005, 221
26 McDermott 2005, 221
27 Vincent-Lancrin 2008, 266
28 For updated figures in Europe, see European Commission 2021, 181
29 Dotson 2011, 406
30 For more on Murdoch as an example of Dotson's argument, see Altorf 2020, 201–20 and Winther 2021
31 Conradi 2010, 552
32 Kenney 2001, 24

33 Merriam-Webster Dictionary n.d.
34 Lewis et al. 2015, 1.1
35 Macoun and Miller 2014, 287–301
36 Macoun and Miller 2014
37 NKNIF
38 See also Losleben and Musubika, this volume
39 Macoun and Miller 2014
40 Bayfield et al. 2020, 415–35; see also Porrone and Poto, this volume
41 See, for example, IMPLISITT (RCN 2020–2023/321031)

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21

GENDER BALANCE

Lilli Mittner

Gender balance is commonly defined as the equal participation of women and men.[1] It allows the monitoring of human resources across sectors and over time and thus provides data to support arguments for the implementation of gender equality measures. Gender balance can be achieved both vertically and horizontally within an organisation.[2] Vertical gender balance means an equal proportion of women and men in ranked positions of power while horizontal gender balance means equal proportions of women and men across different fields of practices.[3] This chapter unpacks the concept of gender balance and articulates its functions and limitations. It situates the concept within a broader theoretical framework and gives some short examples of how the concept is implemented in higher education (HE) in Norway. It closes with a discussion of some limitations of the concept.

On a structural level gender balance refers to the numerical distribution of women and men in an organisation or unit. In recent years the discourse on gender balance in academia has shifted from moral-based arguments connected to democratic values of fairness and towards more performance-based arguments: it is assumed that more gender balanced working environments use all talents, become more creative, include more perspectives, and thus enhance credibility, relevance, innovation and quality of research.[4] Those arguments, however, connect to a major dilemma: what if a gender balanced working environment does not increase output and production?

Balance can be broadly defined as the drive to equalize in weight, number or proportion. Based on a binary understanding of gender, gender balance commonly relates to numbers, bodies, and human resources as men and women. However, since weight can also be interpreted as influence or power exercised in relations, the concept connects to participation and recognition.

Organisational studies have developed various models to explain the processes that lead to gender imbalance the top levels in academia, such as those described by

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the well-known metaphors 'leaky pipeline', 'glass ceiling', or 'sticky floor'. Leaky pipeline refers to the 'drop out' of women from the academic career ladder.[5] This phenomenon is at play when women comprise the majority of the student population but remain unrepresented in top academic positions. In comparison, the glass ceiling metaphor refers to structural and cultural barriers and points towards the existence of visible or invisible obstacles for women in power and decision-making positions'.[6] The notion of barriers that prevent the ascension of women has further been nurtured by the concept of a 'sticky floor', which describes the forces that tend to maintain women at the lowest levels in the organisational pyramid.[7] What these explanatory models have in common is that they all focus on women. The 'lack of women' as a central problem representation[8] has led to research designs, the development of gender equality measures, policy recommendations, and data visualisation primarily designed within the gender frame 'fixing the women'.[9] Measures to promote gender balance in academia (such as mentoring programmes, promotion, writing retreats, and more time for research) are further designed on the individual level to help women to succeed in a working environment that is built on male premises.[10] Although some of this attention might be beneficial, the overwhelming focus on women can, however, be counterproductive for both women and men and the relation between them. It can further lead to persistent victimisation, marginalisation, and othering.

The term 'gender balance' is widely used in the Nordic countries and indicates a goal to aim for. Statistics have previously been framed within terminology that shows a problem that needs to be solved (such as gender segregation, gender discrimination, or gender gap). In 2022, for example, the Global Gender Gap report showed by means of visualising proportion of women and men that the COVID pandemic had reopened gaps when it comes to the division of labour that had previously been closed. Whereas terms like 'gap' and 'segregation' picture a static condition, the term balance evokes the imagination of the activity of distributing power so that an equilibrium comes into being. The term 'gender balance' has further a more positive connotation and invites action, namely, to balance representation, participation, influence, and power.

It is telling that the concept has made it into a variety of initiatives driven by research and policy in the Nordic Countries since 2013, the year when the Nordic Council of Ministers published the report *The Nordic Region – A Step Closer to Gender Balance in Research? Joint Nordic Strategies and Measures to Promote Gender Balance among Researchers in Academia*.[11] In Norway, the concept of gender balance is broadly implemented in the HE sector and promoted by funding institutions. It is moreover legally legitimated by the Ministry of Education, which appoints the 'Committee for Gender Balance and Diversity in Research' which 'provides support and recommendations on measures contributing to gender balance and diversity in the Norwegian research sector'.[12] The committee changed its name from the 'Committee for Mainstreaming – Women in Science' (2004) to the 'Committee for Gender Balance in Research' (2010) to the 'Committee for Gender Balance and Diversity in Research' (2014). These changes indicate a general shift in policymaking from the 'women in science question' towards a broader

focus on diversity which brings ethnicity, race, sexuality, age, ability, religion, social and economic background, and other markers of difference into the metrics. A further indicator for a changing discourse is that the word 'women' is replaced with the term 'the underrepresented gender'.

HE institutions in Norway are requested by law to provide statistics on gender balance that are made openly accessible by the Database for Statics in Higher Education and the Nordic Institute for Studies of Innovation, Research, and Education. This accessibility of data on gender balance is exemplary worldwide and has been a source for applied statistics in building innovative gender balance measures such as the *BalanceXplorer.*[13] Since all HE institutions in Norway are monitored and evaluated by the Ministry of Education and Research according to their gender balance index, institutions with large gender imbalance are expected to implement effective gender equality measures. The recognition has so far been a major incentive for gender balance and gender balance has become a prestigious marker within the HE sector that strives for excellence.[14]

Besides the national efforts in collecting quantitative data, the Research Council of Norway has initiated the BALANSE programme specifically tailored for research and intervention projects. This programme is a worldwide unique funding programme that aims at promoting gender equality and gender balance in Norwegian Research.[15] Between 2012 and 2022, the programme funded 37 projects to develop new knowledge, learning and innovative measures.[16]

There are many ways to visualise the ratio of women and men, but only a few have so far been applied in gender equality work. A team of researchers at UiT The Arctic University of Norway has conducted creative experiments with innovative data visualisations that resulted in the *Balancinator.*[17] This is a free and open online tool which visualises gender balance by means of diverging pips (Figure 21.1) and allows one to ground percentages in absolute numbers.[18] Visualising vertical gender balance by means of diverging pips indicates the total number and hence the bigger picture. Other innovative measures are the BalanceXplorer[19] or the GENDIM toolbox.[20]

Numerical measures for gender representation allow one to detect gender segregated working places. Although they cannot map discrimination and unequal treatment, having the numbers can help deliver the arguments to counter these. Mapping the ratio of men and women in a given context displays relevant disparities and enables cross-comparisons of accumulated data and rankings that matter in competitive systems. A major advantage of implementing the concept of gender balance in DEI work is that it allows for the establishment of measurable goals, and the setting of specific targets. Annually updated statistics on gender balance can help policymakers to priorities effective policies.

Increased monitoring of gender balance in HE needs a discussion of what the concept can accomplish, and what it cannot. A major limitation of the concept is that it builds on a binary understanding of gender and hence cannot map the representation of non-binary people. In times of a broadening of the gender spectrum, this is a challenge for those who work with the concept. Since statistics are a powerful tool that impact thinking practices and actions, they need to be

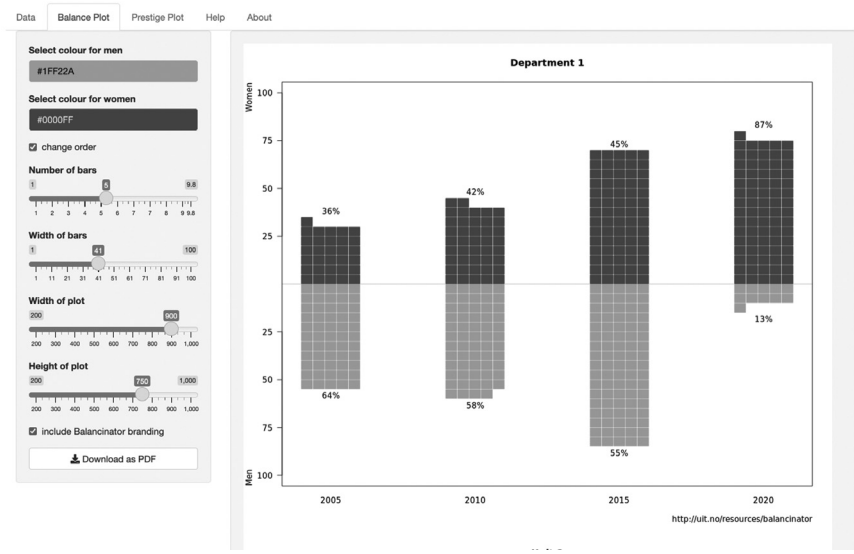

FIGURE 21.1 The *Balancinator* is a free and open access online tool that allows users to build generic plots by simply inserting Excel sheets. It makes use of a novel way to visualise numerical distributions of women and men by means of diverging pips. CC BY 4.0

complemented by qualitative data and critical reflection.[21] DEI workers need to be cautious of the increasing measurement obsession that does not automatically lead to changes of the gender order. Feminist critique has shown that balanced representation does not necessarily lead to a redistribution of power.[22]

Those who work with the concept need to keep in mind that even though a specific target is reached, statistics should not be used to make people stop speaking about ongoing discrimination, inequality, or violence against women, non-binary people, or other minorities in higher education. Thinking of gender balance in the broader sense as an equilibrium (such as the power balance of a curling humming-top) bears the potential to fundamentally rethink the 'balancing act'[23] itself. More relational approaches can turn the attention of gender balance work towards values, qualities, and differences beyond identity politics. Here, the arts and humanities can play a central role in developing innovative tools that attend to the multiplicity of identities and gender expressions. Finally, in order to lead to sustainable gender equality there is a need to scrutinise mechanisms that perpetuate gendered power relations.[24]

Summary

- Gender balance is defined as the equal participation of women and men.
- Gender balance can be achieved both vertically and horizontally within an organisation. Vertical gender balance is defined as the equal proportion of

women and men in ranked positions of power. Horizontal gender balance is defined as the equal proportion of women and men across different fields of practices.

- Aiming for gender balance in academia can be one pathway towards more equal, diverse, and inclusive societies.
- Innovative measures to improve gender balance in academia have recently been developed in Norway (e.g. *Balancinator, BalanceXplorer, GENDIM toolbox*).
- A major limitation of visualisations of gender balance is that it builds on a binary understanding of gender which leads to statistical data handling that does not take gender diversity into account.

Questions for discussion

- How is gender balance conceptualised, measured, visualised, monitored, and discussed within your organisation?
- Which measures has your organisation implemented to balance the field?
- Who is responsible for the 'balancing act' in your organisation?

Suggestions for further reading

- For a discussion of the term gender imbalance: Bradshaw, C. 2021. Gender Imbalance in Academic Careers. In W. Leal Filho, A. Marisa Azul, L. Brandli, A. Lange Salvia, and T. Wall (eds.), *Gender Equality*. Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95687-9_57
- For critical perspectives on monitoring gender representations: Liebowitz, D. J., and Zwingel, S. 2014. Gender equality oversimplified: Using CEDAW to counter the measurement obsession. *International Studies Review*, 16(3), 362–389. https://doi.org/10.1111/misr.12139.
- For feminist perspectives: David, M. E. 2009. Social diversity and democracy in higher education in the 21st century: Towards a feminist critique. *Higher Education Policy, 22(1)*, 61–79. https://doi.org/10.1057/hep.2008.25.

Notes

1 EIGE 2022
2 Meulders et al. 2010
3 Silander et al. 2013
4 Loarne-Lemaire et al. 2021
5 Xu 2008; see also Schmidt, this volume
6 Barreto et al. 2009
7 Meulders et al. 2010
8 Bacchi 2009
9 Ely and Meyerson 2000; Nielsen 2016
10 Connell 2019
11 Nordic Council of Ministers 2013
12 Kifinfo 2022

13 Mittner and Mittner 2022
14 See Maxwell, this volume
15 The Research Council of Norway 2017
16 Prosjektbanken 2022
17 Mittner and Mittner 2020
18 Duarte et al. 2020; Mittner and Blix 2010
19 https://shiny.uit.no/norgeibalanse/
20 https://likestilling-frontend.vercel.app/en
21 Bradshaw 2021
22 Liebowitz and Zwingel 2014; Ahmed 2017, 103
23 Mittner et al. 2018
24 Mittner et al. 2022

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22

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION[1]

Melina Duarte

Affirmative action is both a powerful tool for DEI work and a controversial transformative measure. Broadly speaking, affirmative action refers to all kinds of policies, practices, and positive measures targeting members of marginalised groups for inclusion into mainstream institutions.[2] Inclusion, in this sense, entails the active promotion of the representation and participation of members of marginalised groups such as women, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, racialised people, and immigrants in institutions such as conventional public and private contractors, and cultural and educational organisations.

As both a contractor and educational organisation, universities have principial and instrumental reasons for striving for the inclusion of marginalised groups among their staff and students. Whether universities are seeking to become more just or more democratic institutions, improve their performance or the quality of the work environment, or are even just responding to external pressures, concrete measures are set in place for securing results. While there is relatively widespread agreement concerning the importance of DEI as a matter of policy at these institutions, affirmative action remains controversial.

The main aim of this chapter is to equip DEI workers in academia with a grounding reasoning for navigating the main controversies surrounding the meaning and significance of affirmative action, with a focus on its justification. The relevance of this aim is extracted from the assumption that the cultural and structural changes targeted by DEI workers can only materialise if corrective and transformative measures are taken by individuals that play a role in shaping these structures. Although affirmative action can be challenged for increasing the numerical representation of members of targeted groups while preserving the structures of oppression, without affirmative action as a resource to enact inclusion, DEI work risks being merely diagnostic, symbolic, or dismissive to the interests of the current generation. This means that in promoting concrete changes in

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academia, DEI workers benefit from being able to justify the measures they seek to implement and react to criticisms instead of refraining from employing these measures in order to avoid controversies. While some forms of affirmative action conflict with national and supranational legislations and should therefore be avoided or resisted, other forms of affirmative action are not only legal, they are also needed to secure the inclusion of underrepresented and marginalised groups into academia.

The first section explores the concept of affirmative action and clarifies its meaning against common misunderstandings related to its being a form of discrimination. The second section outlines the three main cases for the justification of DEI work – legal, moral, and business – and articulates these cases into the framing of affirmative action. The third section summarises the main points raised in the previous sections and concludes with two connected recommendations for DEI workers: that they should seek to moderate controversies surrounding affirmative action and integrate considerations from the legal, moral, and business cases in deciding whether, when, and which type of affirmative action is the most adequate approach for both reflecting the institution's social role and effectively advancing its goals. The chapter also includes some questions for discussion and suggestions for further reading.

Exploring the concept of affirmative action as a form of discrimination

Although often called *reverse* or *positive* discrimination,[3] affirmative action differs fundamentally from forms of favouritism since it tackles the particular settings in which the underrepresentation or misrecognition of members of certain groups results from unjust conditions.[4] The acknowledgement of not only unfortunate, but also unjust, conditions that shape and perpetuate the very marginalisation of these groups, such as systemic aporophobia (rejection of the poor), racism, and sexism, is what grounds the need for a common commitment to take positive steps against these types of group-based discrimination and correct its negative effects. Important common commitments against these types of group-based discrimination are formulated in the Human Rights Conventions, such as the 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education (CADE), the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

In these conventions the term *discrimination* is explicitly reserved for cases in which group membership (e.g., class, race, and gender) serves as a basis for the impairment of either equal treatment or the recognition of members of these groups as bearers of equal rights and freedoms. Equal treatment, however, does not mean identical treatment. We do not treat children and adults, healthy and ill, law-abiding citizens and criminals identically, but rather treat them accordingly *because* we want to achieve equality.[5] Restating then the commitment to the principle of equality for all by including members of particular disadvantaged groups and

reasserting the need to secure the principle's implementation implies a recognition of these group members' unequal conditions in relation to dominant groups. Members of dominant groups might not, for example, suffer from direct disadvantages resulting from aporophobia, racism, or sexism. Thus, securing the implementation of the principle of equality for all entails the consideration of people's unequal conditions and the application of an idea of proportionality as already articulated by Aristotle: under unequal conditions, treating people equally requires treating them differently.[6] This idea of proportionality is also typically employed in European Community law (EC law) and permitted in the face of demonstrable inequalities. In DEI jargon, proportional equality has been conceived as equity. The tensions between equality in the sense of identical and proportional treatment has been a topic of substantial debate in part with respect to feminist and social justice literature.

Hence, *discrimination*, in the sense employed by the above-named conventions, is then more precisely conceived as a violation of principles of the equality of rights and respect for human dignity and as a barrier for the enjoyment and exercise of rights, such as the right to education[7] and employment. This means that, in this sense, it is not differential (or proportional) treatment that makes discrimination wrong, but differential treatment with the purpose or effect of impairing equality instead of promoting it. There is thus a relevant difference between actions that conserve existing barriers for marginalised groups while neglecting inequality of conditions and those that, by considering such inequalities, have the purpose or effect of removing these barriers. The former is wrongly discriminatory, while the latter is not. Considering this, affirmative action can be more precisely understood as the special measures that aim at actively nullifying some of the negative effects of unjust discriminatory conditions that hinder members of marginalised groups from equally enjoying rights and freedoms in the concrete contexts that impair them from partaking of equal footing in mainstream institutions. Affirmative action is not non-discriminatory if it is rather tailored to "everyone" instead of targeting members of particular disadvantaged groups, as often suggested by critics; affirmative action is partial in its essence. While there are schemes for universal or more general distribution of benefits that supposedly serve everyone, affirmative action emerges precisely from the diagnosis of gaps in mainstream laws and policies in promoting *de facto* equality for members of marginalised groups.

There are different forms of affirmative action, and it can either be result- or condition-oriented. While result-oriented forms of affirmative action focus on the achievement of outcomes, condition-oriented ones focus on improving the surrounding circumstances to increase the chances of achieving the desired outcomes. Condition-oriented forms of affirmative action are usually less controversial than result-oriented ones because they do not interfere with meritocratic processes.[8] Quotas and the earmarking of vacant positions for members of certain disadvantaged groups such as women or indigenous peoples are clear examples of result-oriented forms of affirmative action. Search-committees aiming at increasing the number of applicants from targeted disadvantaged groups for vacant positions,

and selective mentoring initiatives that intend to decrease certain career gaps, are examples of condition-oriented forms of affirmative action. While some forms of result-oriented affirmative action have, in some countries (also in the EU) been banned in cases where the policy/practice conflicts with the individual rights of non-targeted group members (e.g., quotas that give automatic access to positions without other candidates being assessed), condition-oriented forms of affirmative action cannot be dismissed on the same grounds. If affirmative action is based on legitimate and demonstrable inequalities and aims at equalising opportunities in recruitment and promotion processes for members of all groups, this is not immoral or illegal, even if it implies special considerations for members of disadvantaged groups. Although the most paradigmatic examples of affirmative action take place in recruitment and promotion processes, affirmative action is applicable to retention processes as well. Less intuitively called affirmative action are small measures that aim at improving the work environment by targeting the acceptance of employees/students from marginalised groups into the larger group, such as the establishment of formalised support groups and the creation of safe spaces.

Different contexts call for different types of affirmative action. Numerical exclusion or low representation of members of certain groups in academia might call for affirmative action that aims at boosting their proportion in certain academic positions. Misrecognition of existing members of these groups in academia, on the other hand, might call for affirmative action that aims at boosting the conditions for their participation in certain academic roles by reinforcing their standing as epistemic equals[9] or as equally worthy of self-respect.[10] Although both exclusion/underrepresentation and misrecognition are usually entangled in the shaping of imbalances, they might require specific counter-acting measures. This means that affirmative action can be employed with the goal of increasing the proportion of underrepresented groups' members among the population of students or staff or their recognition in determined roles of status. Measures for tackling exclusion/underrepresentation are more easily accounted for but might not be sufficient to achieve equality among dominant and non-dominant groups. Ultimately, affirmative action can be a means for the inclusion and integration of members of marginalised groups in academia and benefit from intersectional approaches in their design and implementation.

The legal, moral, and business cases for affirmative action: Strengths and weaknesses

Historically, affirmative action was introduced in the USA through the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Executive Order with the goal of preventing public contractors from hindering members of marginalised groups in gaining employment due to wrongful group-based discriminatory hiring.[11] It was not until the 1970s that the implementation of the Executive Order started to affect universities, which is when affirmative action both as a tool for DEI work and as a normative subject entered academia. DEI work emerged as a propelled reaction to anti-discriminatory

laws, but its justification was already marked by a discourse on the need for better exploiting talent among marginalised groups that were underrepresented or excluded from academia. Action plans containing goals and timetables were implemented targeting particularly women and racial minorities such as African-Americans and Hispanics.[12] In a context very much affected by the struggle of the Civil Rights Movements and the Vietnam War, affirmative action also became a topic for contentious public debate and gained the attention of a new generation of political philosophers, namely normative philosophers.[13] The debate accordingly became centred on the justification for/against affirmative action, more precisely developed in terms of the moral permissibility/impermissibility of its translation into preferential hiring.

In the DEI discourse, there are three core frameworks in which the inclusion of members of marginalised groups has sought justification: these are the (1) legal, (2) moral, and (3) business cases.

The legal case

The legal case is anchored in existing anti-discriminatory laws and the need for institutional compliance. Under this framework, institutions are required to ensure they abide by anti-discriminatory laws. When, however, anti-discriminatory laws are in place but have no or minimal impact in mitigating the negative effects of group-based discrimination, it can be argued that institutions should be permitted to advance positive measures that will serve this goal.[14] Although providing a solid grounding for some types of affirmative action, the legal case suffers from shortcomings that emerge from the conflation of jurisdictions at the international, regional, and domestic levels and their different provisions for equality norms. While CEDAW (art. 4) and ICERD (art. 1.4) precisely state that the positive affirmation of the principle of equality might temporarily require *special measures*, and that these types of actions benefiting marginalised groups on the grounds of sex or race are not to be deemed as discriminatory, EC law, although evolving, contends that such special measures are only permitted if they do not violate the individual right to equal treatment. The social reality of the exclusion, underrepresentation, or clustering of marginalised groups justifies the institutional adoption of some types of affirmative action, but the preference can neither be unconditional nor exclude members of other groups from objective assessment. This issue is well illustrated by the EFTA Court Case (E-1/02) that ruled against the right of the University of Oslo in Norway to earmark positions for women.[15]

The moral case

The moral case is anchored in values and the need for acting by principles that reflect these values, such as the principle of equality and respect for human dignity and its conversion to the non-discrimination principle. Two important models of affirmative action that come under the umbrella of the moral case are the

compensatory and the social utility models. In the compensatory model,[16] affirmative action is entangled as a requirement of reparative justice: harms resulting from past discrimination entitles the victims to reparation. If then past harms are established as the cause for the exclusion or limited access of members of certain groups into mainstream institutions, affirmative action aiming to include them in these institutions would become not only permissible, but in some cases also required. The demanding aspect of the compensatory model, however, lies precisely in the challenges of establishing the causal link between the current social reality and past injustices when there is a mismatch between the agents and patients of past injustice and the cost bearers and beneficiaries of affirmative action today. While this demanding aspect is in no way fatal to the argument, it might yet pose additional challenges to the members of target groups. A possible negative impact can emerge from a discourse centred on group-based victimisation in reinforcing culpability-links that call for defence or denial instead of the acceptance and embracement of positive actions to redress past injustices. The compensatory framework can, however, be empowered by structural and forward-looking approaches to the long-lasting effects of past injustices that focus on responsibilities adapted by social roles instead of culpability.[17]

In the social utility model, favouring members of disadvantaged groups is desirable if its effects are overall positive for society as a whole, for example if it improves the conditions of members of both disadvantaged and privileged groups by increasing social justice. Social justice requires tackling injustices and discriminatory practices preventing people from gaining access to resources, opportunities, and privileges on equal footing with others. It implies that, if a parcel of society has been unjustifiably obstructed from academia in virtue of their group membership, or heavily clustered/segregated in particular fields that feed on group-based stereotypes, this obstruction is morally wrong and must be tackled to achieve social justice. In this sense, the inclusion of diversity in academia is not immediately instrumental to institutions but a requirement of justice. Universities are just one of the many sites for justice. Exclusion/obstruction or the clustering of members of disadvantaged groups in academia also has democratic implications because this means that a parcel of the population has not been equally able to participate in knowledge and academic artistic production and affect academic outcomes in the form of goods, resources, or products that they will consume. The social utility model has many variants emerging from the social goods that the mitigation of discrimination and reduction of inequality of opportunities might bring[18] to more ambitious approaches that emerge from the need to integrate segregated minority groups for the building of better democracies.[19]

An ideal of social justice grounds the moral case for affirmative action. Moral/democratic-based arguments might defend the permissibility or requirement of affirmative action even when the results are not expected to be immediately beneficial for the institution. This aspect that was supposed to work as the main strength of the moral case, has, however, turned out to be its main weakness: grounding affirmative action on vague moral principles without evidence of

direct benefits for the institution might be too demanding for universities in the neo-liberal context.

The business case

The business case frames the inclusion of diverse groups within the need of institutions to better exploit human capital to improve their scores. Although articulated since the 1970s in the shape of talent exploitation, the business case has taken precedence over the other cases since at least the 1990s, which is the period that coincides with the beginning of the neo-liberalisation of universities.[20]

Arguments in favour of affirmative action based on the benefits of fully exploiting talent and cognitive diversity are part of a cluster of arguments that ground the moral permissibility of affirmative action on the benefits that diversity brings, more specifically to institutions either by increasing the pool for recruiting the best heads or, more directly, by increasing productivity through group heterogeneity. Since talent is considered an individual resource, and since universities benefit or are even, can we say, dependent on recruiting and retaining the best heads to fulfil their task as knowledge-producers, then at least some forms of affirmative action that aim at finding talent and are not unfairly costly for the dominant group are not only permissible but also desirable. Similarly, cognitive diversity is also seen as a resource. The value of cognitive diversity relies on empirical evidence showing that diverse groups are more productive than homogeneous groups. Among other benefits, empirical studies have shown that diverse and inclusive groups tend to: (1) demonstrate a higher ability to develop new research questions, and methodological and analytical approaches better adapted to grasp the nuances of the phenomena; (2) demonstrate more accurate group thinking and better decision-making; (3) outperform homogeneous groups in problem-solving; (4) lead to more innovation; and (5) publish more and receive more citations per article.[21] This means that without attracting the best minds and without possessing cognitive diversity as a resource, universities will underfunction in cases where members of diverse groups do not gain real access to universities by ordinary means. When data show that at least locally situated members of diverse groups are excluded or underrepresented in academia, this implies that they might lack real access by ordinary means and that the use of special measures for achieving inclusion can become justifiable.

The positive aspect of this argument is that it emphasises that members of marginalised groups can also have talents and that their background experiences are epistemically valuable. This positive aspect might come across as obvious for many, but such a reminder is still helpful in dismantling the conviction that the inclusion of members of such groups will compromise the quality of knowledge production at universities. As a reminder, affirmative action does not and cannot aim at including persons in academia who are not qualified for the vacant positions. While it might be the case that the restriction of access to top-quality education for members of disadvantaged groups affects their surplus qualifications (we might as well discuss what counts and

what should count as a qualification),[22] if they are talented and their background experiences are epistemically valuable, it is still bad for business to keep restricting them from accessing academia because they have been restricted before.

While, however, performance-based arguments have the power to spark strong concrete measures for advancing DEI efforts at universities, it is much less clear that universities should commit to implementing these concrete measures merely to become more productive. It could be argued that, unlike businesses, universities have a stronger social responsibility to distribute equitably the privileges of education, research, and innovation. By relying on an idea of profit to extract a conclusion on the moral permissibility of affirmative action aiming to include members of disadvantaged groups into academia, universities neglect their social role as employers and educational institutions. Affirmative action is, in the business case, only permissible if it can be shown that the inclusion of members of these groups (will) improve performance and increase productivity, i.e., benefit the institution. This imposes unreasonable pressure on members of these groups since the justification for their inclusion can already be questioned if the overall productivity of heterogeneous groups remains the same as more homogeneous ones. In other words, this approach seems to require members of disadvantaged groups to overperform in order to justify their own inclusion.

The grounding of affirmative action on the business case is circumstantial and problematic when decontextualised from the moral and legal cases. The business case rationale has, for example, been recently shown to better reflect the preferences and privileges of the outcomes of a majority group in American universities.[23] This suggests that DEI work operating solely under this framework, while being directed by empirical evidence supporting the benefits of diversity for designing goal timetables and positive measures, risks being unreflective about the responsibilities and agential role of universities in promoting social justice.

Summary and recommendations

The point of this chapter was not to defend a claim that affirmative action can solve all the problems of exclusion/clustering, nor that it is the only way or even the best way to promote inclusion in every situation. The point was rather to empower DEI workers with a basic rationale for navigating around the most fundamental controversies regarding the understanding of the concept of affirmative action as a form of discrimination as well as for reflecting systematically on the strengths and weaknesses of its main justificatory frameworks. By showing that the reliance on differential and partial measures does not make affirmative action either morally wrong or illegal on the grounds of it being discriminatory by default, and by presenting alternative frameworks for justification and arguing for their integration, I have aimed to contribute to enabling DEI workers to make the most of this powerful tool for inclusion. Differential treatment is not wrongfully discriminatory/illegal when it promotes equality under unequal conditions instead of impairing it, and neither is partiality when it addresses gaps left by mainstreaming policies in promoting *de facto* inclusion.

A first important recommendation that can be extracted from this chapter is that the controversies surrounding affirmative action should not be a reason for refraining from it in DEI work. First, this is because a larger acceptance towards affirmative action can be achieved through its justification on already largely accepted grounds. Under conventional circumstances, no one can hold sound reasons for wanting to breach anti-discriminatory laws, act immorally, or boycott knowledge development. This means that the goal of affirmative action is not easily objected to. Spelling out such justifications can help decrease resistance, especially when anchored in robust demonstrations of the persistent negative effects of inequalities in unfairly hindering opportunities for members of disadvantaged groups. Affirmative action in DEI work can be justified on different grounds according to the legal, moral, and business frameworks. In such frameworks, affirmative action is grounded on the need to comply with anti-discriminatory laws and act to promote the removal of *de facto* discrimination that results in demonstrably unfair inequalities (legal); to act according to moral principles of equality and respect for human dignity (moral); and to improve knowledge development through the inclusion of diverse perspectives (business). A second important recommendation that can be extracted from this chapter is that to fully account for the different roles that universities have in society (educational and research institutions and employers), DEI workers should combine the frameworks of justification for affirmative action in their considerations and not be solely guided by the business framework.

Resistance might still emerge from objections against affirmative action as a means to achieve common goals. Affirmative action can, for example, be charged with reinforcing stereotypes (a matter to be settled empirically), preserving the structure of the status quo under a new wrapping or benefiting only some individuals (often based on unfounded either-or assumptions such as "either make a small change here and now or make great systemic changes", but neither are exclusive). There are alternatives to affirmative action such as the compensation (perhaps financial) of members of disadvantaged groups for the unfair exclusion from higher education institutions or a stronger enforcement of anti-discriminatory law permeating the structures of the university. As a matter of policy, however, both alternatives seem to be much more demanding than affirmative action. Despite all controversies emerging primarily from an interpretation of affirmative action as a form of discrimination, both result- and condition-oriented forms of affirmative action should be deployed if anchored in demonstrable inequalities accepted as needing to be redressed and narrowly tailored to the goal of reducing or eliminating precisely such inequalities.

Questions for discussion

- Irrespective of your personal positions on affirmative action, in which situations could affirmative action be legally justified for increasing the representation and participation of members of disadvantaged groups in academia, and in which situations could it not?

- Which of the three main cases for the inclusion of members of diverse groups (legal, moral, business) corresponds better to the rationale used at your organisation? Which rationale would you like your organisation to have?
- In your view, does the business case offer sufficient reasons for supporting positive DEI measures in higher education institutions? What if the empirical evidence showing that heterogeneous groups are more productive then homogeneous ones is contested? Would higher education institutions still have a reason to strive for the equitable inclusion of members of diverse groups?
- How do you perceive the general expectations about the performance of members of disadvantaged groups at your organisation? Are they expected to overperform?

Suggestions for further reading

- Relevant to considerations on staff's population: Henningsen, L., Horvath, L. K., and Jonas, K. (2022). Affirmative Action Policies in Academic Job Advertisements: Do They Facilitate or Hinder Gender Discrimination in Hiring Processes for Professorships? *Sex Roles, 86*, 34–48. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-021-01251-4.
- Relevant to considerations on student's population: Strauss, V. (2022). Why Race-Based Affirmative Action Is Still Needed in College Admissions. *The Washington Post*, 30 January. Available at: www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/01/30/needed-affirmative-action-in-college-admissions/
- Relevant for the justification for diversity: Haacker, R., Burt, M., and Vara, M. (2022). Moving Beyond the Business Case for Diversity. *Eos, 103*. https://doi.org/10.1029/2022EO220080.

Notes

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2 See other definitions of affirmative action in: Lippert-Rasmussen 2020, 12; Anderson 2013, 135; Beauchamp 1998, 143–58

3 *Positive discrimination* might evoke either generic or pejorative interpretations of the term "discrimination". If we interpret *discrimination* in the generic sense of *selection/differentiation*, the term does not have any moral properties and *positive discrimination* is to be understood in a neutral sense. If, however, the word "discrimination" already raises the red flag for implying unjust selection, or unjust differential treatment, the word discrimination employed in the term "positive discrimination" loads it with wrongful moral content. In the generic sense, not all forms of discrimination are, however, morally wrong and some philosophers have taken up the task of investigating what makes discrimination wrong. See e.g. Lippert-Rasmussen 2013 (harms); Hellman 2008 (disrespect)

4 See Suk 2017: 394–406. See also Lippert-Rasmussen, this volume

5 See more about this discussion at Lippert-Rasmussen 2020, 162

6 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1130b–1132b; cf. Plato, *Laws*, VI.757b–c; see also: Dworkin 1985, 190

7 See UNESCO's "Say No to Discrimination in Education – #RightToEducation" campaign, UNESCO 2020
8 See Jackson-Cole and Goldmeier, this volume
9 See Reibold, this volume
10 See Tanyi, this volume
11 Fullinwider 2018
12 Graham 1990, 413
13 Fullinwider 2018
14 See Beauchamp 1998, 143–58 for a more detailed account within contemporary political philosophy
15 Efta Surveillance Authority v. The Kingdom of Norway (Case E-1/02)
16 Thomson 1973
17 See Young 2013
18 Lippert-Rasmussen 2020, 255
19 Anderson 2013, 148–53
20 Fraser and Taylor 2016, 2–60
21 Swartz et al. 2019, 33–41; Herring 2009, 208–24
22 See Andreassen, this volume
23 Starck et al. 2021

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23

DEMOCRATIC EQUALITY

Kjersti Fjørtoft

In academia, there is an increasing focus on gender equality. Research institutions and universities are implementing gender and equality plans that should promote equality in scientific careers and decision-making processes. The European Commission requires that all organisations that apply for research funding, including their partners, need to have a gender equality plan that is approved by the top management. Accordingly, equality is a core value for most academic institutions. Equality entails rules and procedures that ensure that students are assessed in accordance with standards that apply equally for all. In other words, people should be hired for academic positions in accordance with their academic merits, not factors such as social background, gender or ethnicity, and resources such as time and money should be distributed fairly.

However, equality requires more than formal rules to ensure that values such as impartiality and fairness are applied; it also requires an increased focus on how informal power structures, social networks and group-based prejudices play a role in people's opportunity to advance in the system. The slogan today is that gender equality requires a shift from fixing the women to changing the culture. Changing the culture implies measures targeted at changing informal power relations that are maintained by unwritten norms and expectations. Working for gender balance and gender equality calls for an increased focus on how informal norms, practices and power relations create social hierarchies that often place women and minorities in a disadvantaged position. It is precisely because cultural norms and expectations often unconsciously affect how we think, act and assess other people's thinking and actions that changing the culture is so profoundly challenging.

The purpose of this chapter is to show that justice in academia requires an increased focus on how social structures and cultural codes create obstacles to equality. Justice is often considered as the just distribution of resources and goods. Conceptions of distributive justice have, however, been criticised for not hitting

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the target when it comes to injustice rooted in social structures and cultural norms. Drawing on Elizabeth Anderson's conception of "democratic equality", which is a relational concept of equality, I argue that remedies for justice in academia should be directed toward cultural and structural features that place women and minorities in a disadvantaged position vis-à-vis men. It is, however, important to note that 'equal' is not a synonym for 'identical'. To treat someone equally may involve treating people differently. For that reason, I am not making any substantial distinction between equality and equity.

The first section gives a short definition of the concept of "democratic equality" as a relational concept of equality. Egalitarians who defend a relational approach argue that equality is a matter of equal status in social and political relations. From a relational perspective, gender inequality is seen as a status differentiation rooted in the schemes of interpretation and evaluation, such as, for instance, when cultural codes associated with masculinity are considered as more weighty and significant than cultural codes associated with femininity.[1]

The second section gives an account of the principle of "equality of opportunity", which is a principle for distribution. I explain some of the most important differences between the opportunity account and the relational account. Conceptions of equality are entangled with conceptions of justice. This means that the way we define "equality" is most often defined in line with how justice is conceptualised. If justice is conceptualised as a matter of redistribution, equality is then defined with regard to how sharable goods (e.g., resources or opportunities) should be distributed fairly. If justice is defined as equal status in social relations, equality is then defined in line with moral values that should govern social interactions.

The third section explains the concept of democratic equality. In doing this, I discuss how this account is better suited to counteract structural injustice than the equality of opportunity account. A relational perspective on equality focuses on structural injustice, where injustices are rooted in social status hierarchies. Structural injustice is rooted in formal and informal rules that define power relations and the distribution of resources among groups. It is a matter of norms and habits embedded in our everyday life and therefore different from obvious oppression and discrimination where one group intentionally exploits another.[2] Structural injustice is maintained by people who act within the structure, but the injustice springs out of how the structure works and is therefore not necessarily desired by the people who act within it. I argue that a relational approach is a beneficial approach because it forces us to draw attention to how inequality is structurally anchored and therefore requires remedies that make us able to analyse how formal and informal rules and procedures may reproduce unjustifiable inequalities. Democratic equality is not compatible with social structures that place people in a disadvantaged position due to their group identity and will therefore require a relational perspective on equality. The chapter concludes with a recommendation for DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) workers to integrate both relational and distributive considerations when designing and implementing remedies for promoting equality at the workplace.

Short definition of democratic equality

A society of equals is a society in which people are recognised as equal participants in the major institutions of society, including workplaces.[3] Democratic equality is a relational concept of equality specified by moral values that should govern social interaction. Following Richard Arneson, a relational conception of equality consists of three ideals: *moral equality, equal democratic citizenship* and *justice as adequacy*.[4] Moral equality requires that everyone should be treated with equal moral respect. The ideal *equal democratic citizenship* refers to people's status in social interaction. Status equality exists when we recognise each other's equal right to participate in and influence decisions concerning oneself. Equality also entails that we recognise and accept that our actions, decisions and proposals should be justified in reasons and principles acceptable to others.[5] *Justice as adequacy* claims that every citizen should have the resources needed to participate in social and political life.[6] This means that the redistribution of social and economic resources and goods should occur at the level where every citizen has what they need in order to realise themselves as equal citizens and develop their own talents and skills according to their own level of function and conceptions of the good.[7] In the academic context, justice as adequacy could mean that resources should be distributed in order to bring everyone above a threshold that makes them able to qualify for any position, influence decision-making processes, or promote new methodological approaches or research questions in the production of knowledge. In other words, adequacy requires that people are equal when it comes to the opportunity to conduct research, teach and influence political and administrative decisions. Furthermore, it also means that no one should be hindered by stereotypes, prejudices or informal power hierarchies.

Democratic equality versus equality of opportunity

Equality of opportunity

Within egalitarian liberal theories, there has been an ongoing debate of whether *equality of opportunity* or *democratic equality* should be the yardstick for justice. Very roughly, the principle of "equality of opportunity" states that everyone should have equal opportunities regardless of morally arbitrary properties such as gender, ethnicity, class, race, disabilities or geographic location. Proponents of the principle of democratic equality argue that the effect of such factors cannot be reduced through redistribution only, but also by actions aimed towards reducing the effect of structural features caused by, for instance, stereotypes and implicit bias.

Most defenders of the principle of the equality of opportunities admit that mere anti-discrimination laws do not sufficiently protect people from being discriminated against on the basis on such properties. As John Rawls noticed in *A Theory of Justice*, "fair equality of opportunity" requires more than a position being formally open to all.[8] In Rawls' own words: "the principle holds that in order to treat all

persons equally, to provide genuine equality of opportunity, society must give more attention to those with fewer native assets and to those born into the less favorable social positions".[9]

Several studies of social inequality show that inequalities are reproduced along axes of social class and ethnicity.[10] It is, for example, more likely that a child of parents with higher education completes a college degree than a child from the working class. Rawls and the post-Rawls egalitarians therefore claim that fair equality of opportunity entails policies for the redistribution of social and economic goods that aim toward reducing the impact that unchosen circumstances may have on people's life and future prospects.[11]

Adapted to academia, the principle of fair equality of opportunity can be applied as a meritocratic principle that claims that people's prospects for an academic career should not be influenced by their social or cultural background, gender or ethnicity, but by their academic merits combined with effort and talent.[12] Without a concern for the different starting points and opportunities that people have in life, and the unspoken norms that nurture inequalities, the meritocratic system will contribute to reinforcing inequalities and could not be justified as fair.

The equality of opportunity approach is often associated with the family of egalitarian theories categorised as "luck egalitarianism". The core idea in these theories is that the distribution of social and economic goods should as far as possible eliminate the effect of unchosen and morally arbitrary factors as gender, ethnicity and disability. Such factors are a matter of chance and not of choice. On the other hand, people have no reason to complain if they are worse off than others due to circumstances for which they are responsible, such as bad decisions.[13]

In academia, the advancement of careers is slower for women than for men.[14] This inequality can be explained with reference to how gender schemes work for both men and women. In academia, as in most workplaces, the distribution and division of labour reflect gendered norms and social expectations. As a result, women still tend, for example, to do more teaching and administrative work than their male colleagues do. This will in turn promote men's careers because they will have more time to do work that is meritorious for advancement. If it is the case that schemes of gendered norms and expectations impede women's careers, it is bad luck to be a woman in academia. A luck egalitarian's potential solution to the problem would be to provide extra resources in order to equalise men and women's opportunity to advance and thereby compensate for the bad luck of being a woman. Several Norwegian universities have implemented special promotion programmes for women who are about to qualify for full professorship. The programmes vary between institutions, but in most cases, they are about giving women extra research time, mentoring and other incentives that are necessary for promotion. Such interventions are mainly justified in the institution's need for gender balance. It makes a quantitative difference on the institutional level, and a qualitative difference on the individual level, but it does not necessarily change the culture. Moreover, special programmes for women can be criticised for missing the target in that they reflect what is commonly referred to as the "fixing the women" approach.[15]

The question why there are fewer women in top positions in academia has been the subject of several studies and discussions for about two decades. Women are still underrepresented at the top, especially in professor positions, and the culture is relatively homogeneous, consisting of mostly white people from the middle class. Gender inequality in academia is often explained by reference to metaphors such as the "glass ceiling" or the "sticky floor". The glass ceiling metaphor points at the influence of invisible barriers for women's progression in academia. The obstacles are invisible partly because the formal rules and procedures that promise equal opportunities for men and women are counteracted by informal rules and practices. The "sticky floor" metaphor represents the clustering of women in forms of tasks and work at the bottom of the academic hierarchy, for instance teaching and administrative work that is usually considered less prestigious than research and does not promote one's career in the same way as research does.[16]

It is, however, important to notice that the equality of opportunity approach in fact provides us with good reasons for why identified hindrances to educational opportunities, choice of career, and positions of power are unjust. Factors such as gender, ethnicity, sexual preferences, race, class and disabilities should not have any effect on these opportunities, and hiring a man for an academic position if he is the best qualified is not unfair. However, it is not always easy to make a clear-cut distinction between chosen and unchosen factors. Redistribution of research time to compensate for the bad luck of being a woman is justified only if we recognise and accept that gendered norms and expectations disadvantage women. If we do not accept this insight, we could argue that it is unfair to give special treatment to women just because they have chosen to take on more responsibility for teaching and administration.[17] It may, however, also be the case that people have chosen not to go for promotion due to their own preferences. Hence, the point is that it is not always easy to make a clear-cut distinction between chosen and unchosen factors. If we understand that almost all inequality is a result of unchosen factors, such as gender, socioeconomic background or culture, we are running the risk of paternalism and undermining people's rights to make choices due to their own conceptions of the good life.[18] On the other hand, if we understand too many inequalities due to choices, we are running the risk of ignoring how sociocultural factors and socialisation have an impact on what we do and become. Ignoring the effect of sociocultural factors will in turn reproduce cultural stereotypes and group-based prejudices that affect people's opportunities when it comes to education and careers.

Democratic equality – a relational approach

The equality of opportunity approach has been criticised for placing too narrow a focus on the distribution of dividable material goods, thereby neglecting inequalities rooted and reproduced in structural and cultural patterns in society.[19] A relational approach is considered better when it comes to identifying injustice that is not the result of unfair distribution but structural in the sense that it is rooted in

how the system of rules, norms and expectations disadvantage some groups vis-a-vis others and transmit inequality from one sector to another.

In the ground-breaking article "What Is the Point of Equality?" from 1999, Elizabeth Anderson claims that luck egalitarians have missed the point of equality. According to her, equality is not a matter of what one person has compared to another or compensating persons for bad luck, but a matter of what all persons need in order to be granted equal status as citizens in the political and social life of society.[20] Thus, the aim of egalitarianism is the creation of a society where people are not subject to oppression but positioned equally in relation to one another in the major institutions of that society.[21] A relational concept of equality is incompatible with social hierarchies based on ideas concerning the nature of different genders, classes or ethnicities. A society in which some people, in virtue of their sex, gender, ethnicity or socioeconomic status, have privileged access to positions that give them political power and control is not a society of equals.[22]

Anderson reminds us of the aim of egalitarianism with reference to Iris Marion Young's "faces of oppression", which includes marginalisation, status hierarchies, domination, exploitation and cultural imperialism.[23] Although all of these faces are different from each other, they have in common that they are related to groups and that they involve issues of justice beyond distribution.[24] Young does not focus on obvious oppression, such as those cases where one person enslaves another. Her main concern is the kind of oppression that is structural, rather than the result of particular individual actions. Structural oppression is caused by norms, habits and symbols embedded in the social norms and institutional praxis and "the collective consequences of following these norms".[25] This means that single actors or single actions do not cause this kind of injustice; it is often caused by the aggregated result of many single actions that in themselves are not unjust. Overcoming structural injustice requires changing ideologies, as well as social practices, in which such ideologies are learned and reproduced.[26]

How to overcome structural injustice?

Claims for democratic equality are not only claims for a more just distribution of divisible goods. They are claims for measures that can counteract structural injustices, for instance measures that can reduce the effect of stereotypes,[27] implicit bias[28] and epistemic injustice.[29] For example, stereotypes are embedded in social structures as reflections of historical patterns of oppression, which still affect current relations between groups.[30] Stereotypes lead to reproducing inequalities that make the advantaged multiply their advantage, and the disadvantaged multiply their disadvantage.[31] Stereotypes work when we make judgments on people, based on prejudices about the identity of people who belong to certain groups. The idea that women are not suited for the hard sciences is a stereotype that may affect the gender balance in STEM fields. The effect of stereotypes could be reduced by, for instance, using female scientists in the field as role models or creating contexts that value women's contributions. The institution should also facilitate activity that can

contribute to critical thinking of how structural injustice works and how our own biases contribute to maintaining it. As mentioned in the introduction, changing the culture is not an easy task; given the nature of structural injustice, it is important not to blame individuals for the injustice, but to facilitate actions that encourage people to take collective responsibility for the changes. This cannot be done without a critical scrutiny of how the organisation's formal and informal rules and procedures contribute to reproducing unjust gender inequality or exclusion. It is not enough to have a gender equality plan without at the same time focusing on how informal power relations can make it difficult to follow it in practice. This does not mean that individuals are not responsible; each of us should ask how we, in virtue of our positions, contribute to upholding a system that causes injustice and exclusion.

Summary and recommendations

A society of equals is a society in which each person has the right and the necessary resources to participate in political processes and run for positions that give power to influence laws and public policies.[32] Democratic equality, in the sense that Anderson defines it, forces us to pay attention to how structural injustice systematically reinforces stereotypes that implicitly legitimise discrimination towards women and minorities. The advantage of a relational approach to equality is that it addresses the effect that culture, institutions and policies have on people's opportunities.[33] It forces us to question how we treat others and if our judgments of the works of students and colleges are based on group-based prejudices.

In the case of academia, claims for democratic inequality force us to question policies and formal rules, as well as cultural schemas in which some subjects, research questions or methods are defined as more prestigious than others. If there are many more men than women in a field, for example, we must ask why it is so. We must ask if there are structural features in the academic culture that impede women's access to the discipline and the possibility to assert themselves in the discipline.

The two principles, equality of opportunity and democratic equality, share the aim of eliminating arbitrary conditions for inequality. While luck egalitarians focus on redistribution and compensation for unchosen factors that can affect how one fares, relational egalitarians focus on how injustice is reproduced by social structures in which certain social positions more or less automatically benefit some more than others. Within education (and within academia) equality is most often defined in luck egalitarian terms, particularly because it is relatively easy to adapt to a meritocratic system. People should be assessed on the basis of merits, not arbitrary factors such as gender, class or ethnicity, and relational egalitarians would agree with this. However, relational equality asserts that everyone should have enough resources to realise themselves as equal citizens. This is not possible without the redistribution of material goods, but it does not mean that material goods should be equalised first and status after. These processes are two sides of the same coin.

In my view, it is not necessary to choose between democratic equality and equality of opportunity. Justice needs measures that address both redistribution and cultural changes. In many cases, cultural changes are not possible without spending extra resources on groups that have been marginalised from the so-called majority culture, but spending more money does not necessarily solve the problem; we also need measures aimed towards making different voices equal.

Questions for discussion

- Discuss if and how justice and meritocracy are compatible.
- What kinds of changes are necessary if we accept democratic equality as a value in academia?
- Discuss how the principles of equality of opportunity and democratic equality are useful in order to develop plans for equality and diversity work in academia.

Suggestions for further reading

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Notes

1 Fraser 2003
2 Parekh 2011, 676
3 Anderson 2007, 629
4 Arneson 2010
5 Anderson 1999, 313
6 Arneson 2010, 25
7 Anderson 1999, 312
8 Sachs, 2012, 323
9 Rawls 1999, 86
10 United Nations 2020
11 Rawls is using the concept "democratic equality" to explain what equality of opportunities means. Elizabeth Anderson claims that her interpretation of the concept of equality is closer to Rawls than luck egalitarian principles (Anderson 1999; Rawls 1999).
12 Calvert 2014, 72
13 Gheaus 2016, 54
14 Virgina Valian argues that well-documented statistics show that women's advancement in academia compared to men's is slower (Valian 2005, 198).
15 Laursen and Austeen, 2020

16 Clavero and Galligan 2019, 1115–16
17 See Anderson 1999, 297 for a discussion of how women who tend to be poor because they are taking care of children and dependents can be blamed as responsible for their poverty.
18 Anderson 1999
19 Anderson 1999, 2007; Young 2006
20 Anderson 1999, 313
21 Anderson 2007, 620
22 Anderson 2007
23 Anderson 1999, ; Young 2006
24 Young 2006, 4
25 Young 2006, 5
26 Haslanger 2008, 4
27 See Finholt, this volume
28 See Berdt-Rasmussen, this volume
29 See Reibold, this volume
30 Anderson 2007, 605
31 Anderson 2007, 601–2
32 Arneson 2010, 25
33 Gheaus 2016

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24

LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION

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Learning for sustainable transformation is an encompassing approach to research, learning, and administration that brings together critical, feminist, and anti-colonial theories and pedagogies. It is transdisciplinary and transsectorial in its essence and aims at developing capacities to imagine desirable futures and create less destructive forces for the planet. Learning for sustainable transformation invests in unmasking in/justice and oppression, cultivating solidarity, nourishing mutually beneficial modes of living together, and renewing itself through the constant learning of all actors.[1]

In this chapter, we critically explore the concept of sustainability to draw out its socio-political correlates and expose fear and contempt for other people, species, and places, among other things, as the root problems underlying today's social and environmental issues. We then argue that the actors in academia self-reflectively scrutinise the manifestations of those root problems in their organisations.[2] To do so daily, in detail, is crucial, as anti-discriminatory, anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-ableist, and anti-exploitative action will create a better place to work and study.[3] Also, in a diverse, equal, and finally transformed space, students will be able to "cultivate with each other in every way imaginable epochs to come that can replenish refuge".[4] In other words, grounded in learning for sustainability transformations, universities will be the place where better futures are built, and the paths to those can be imagined in wholesome conditions.

Sustainability in academia

Despite its ubiquitous dominance in public, political, and academic discourses, the concept of *sustainability* is deeply problematic. Well beyond its ecological origins, the term generously envelops everything it seems to get in touch with, from social issues, economics, and healthcare, to tourism, building materials, and laundry detergent;[5] but what does it really mean?

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Sustainability has found its claim to fame in the pivotal publication of the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development report *Our Common Future*.[6] Here, *sustainability* was powerfully and momentously conjoined with economic growth and development, defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".[7] On this basis, the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development cemented the international foray of *sustainability* in its formulation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) "for people, planet and prosperity".[8] Yet, four decades later, amidst escalating ecological disasters, the UN has neither clearly defined what sustainability is supposed to mean in the SDGs[9] nor have they detached "sustainability" from the idea of economic growth.

Another point of critique is that the SDGs do not seek to spare the planet and its ecological diversity as a goal in itself. Rather, *sustainability*, in the sense of preserving resources *ad infinitum*, aims at ensuring future generations' economic growth *qua* development. Environmental issues are addressed in the SDGs, but the goals that have environmental issues at their core appear relatively late in the enumeration (goals 13, 14, and 15) and are incompatible with other goals.[10] Contextualised in this way, nature has value "only because, and insofar as, it directly or indirectly serves human interests".[11] This utilitarian approach nullifies the millennia-old knowledge of many Indigenous traditions as well as (eco-)feminist understandings of the connectedness of beings.[12] According to these latter views, the exploitation of non-human nature is part of a system of inequality that seeks to sustain its own conditions while using and, in the long term, recklessly destroying other forms of life and its foundations. Among other issues then, these systems of oppression have led to the ongoing social and environmental crises.[13]

When "Man's Others" (such as women, LGBTQ+, postcolonial, racialised, Black, Jewish, Muslim, Indigenous, Disabled) situated and amenable knowledge[14] is neglected, oppressed, or treated as a troublesome question of mere numeral representation in learning, research, and administration, any attempt to address climate change on the root level will fail. Such teaching and research will reproduce unjust power relations.[15] To counteract this pitfall that the SDGs have built into themselves, we envision education for sustainable transformation as an approach to the workings of higher education that is explicitly and resolutely focused on *transformation*. This transformation is *social*, because it aims at transforming, precisely, those ways of being and doing on this planet that perpetuate "business as usual" and are characterised by the suppression and exploitation of people and the planet, in fear and contempt of all that is other.

As an approach to higher education, learning for sustainable transformation builds on critical, feminist, anti-colonial, traditional, and Indigenous thought[16] that has long fought against the exploitation of women, Indigenous people, other-than-humans, ecosystems, etc., while highlighting their distinguished potential for driving deep transformation. Grounded in these theories and their corresponding pedagogies, education for sustainable transformation centres on two pivotal elements. First, detecting and highlighting injustice, oppression, exploitation, and contempt of the other in all systems, structures, and sectors of society, including institutions, organisations, services,

etc., by always setting out from the places where learning meets the worlds it might transform, that is, the private and public spaces, parks, organisations, schools, playgrounds, businesses, governments, hospital wards, etc., that constitute the worlds in which we live and share. Second, cultivating just, equitable, and life-enhancing social structures, systems, places, organisations, etc., that are resolutely oriented toward solidarity and mutually beneficial modes of coexistence.[17]

This is the dilemma we need to overcome in higher education if we are to succeed at "transforming our world", as the UN Agenda 2030 calls for: subscribing to and implementing an agenda across education, research, and administration that is focused on perpetuating untenable forms of human life and social organisation that are harmful on an individual, structural, and institutional level. It keeps exploiting staff and knowers outside academia, yet under the premises of an urgent climate crisis that quickly needs "solutions". Corresponding education for sustainability or sustainable development – predominantly in the sense of durability – is therefore unsurprisingly focused on technological "solutions" that ensure the enduring and even intensification of established growth and development patterns.[18] These, in turn, usually come from traditionally male-dominated domains like engineering, policymaking, and industry, which exclude the Other (women, LGBTQ+, migrant, poor, decolonial, diasporic, or disabled) subject "whose 'minor' or nomadic knowledge is the breeding ground for possible futures".[19] The resulting perpetuation of existing structures then negates existing efforts of developing competence *to change with climate change*, biodiversity loss, social injustice, etc.

Transformative forces exist, and the efforts of posthuman feminism or ecofeminism are just some of their many expressions. Both are "outside of the rock-star arenas of Euro-Western thought"[20] and often heavily marginalised in academia and/or unauthorisedly appropriated and misused by Western scholars.[21] Nevertheless, there are numerous Indigenous women and men "leading movements, nations, organizations, campaigns, universities, and communities, as theorist-activists, scholar-activists, spiritual leaders, seed keepers, botanists, chefs, lawyers, and poets, while being informed by tribally specific Indigenous values and the intelligence of their lands and waters".[22] As Nelson writes, "Indigenous peoples hold access to forms of knowledge and ways of learning that are critically important to the survival of humanity and other threatened life forms".[23] Dangerously, the SDGs, and also the UNDRIP,[24] yield the rights of Indigenous peoples to nation-state interests and maintain existing power relations between the institutions of the settler-state and Indigenous peoples.[25] Therefore, it is potentially detrimental to aim for "including" Indigenous knowledge in any kind of existing (academic) structure.

Sustainable transformation happens through the unlearning of hierarchies in knowledge production together with the active performing of diverse, multi-voiced conglomerations of webs of knowledges. What we suggest is to aim for an ongoing transformation of these systems. In this way, it is the act of transforming that is constantly renewed, or, for that matter, sustained. This requires having "meaningful conversations"[26] and collaborations across disciplines, societies, and groups, questioning structures that have excluded and silenced the "Other".

Initiatives, movements, and programmes

As Connell points out, there are many forms of transformative action in the world, from small units within universities and grass-root educational initiatives to academic/activist movements like feminism.[27] We will here present three programmes and concepts that implement what corresponds to sustainable transformation. These examples have in common that they transgress existing boundaries and hierarchies and aim for transformative imageries of the planet's future. They produce and perform new knowledge by building a bridge between research, learning, knowledge types, and societal action.[28] Gender and feminist critique are covered in all these programmes. They encourage one to think and learn across sectors, fields of knowledge, and disciplines, and work with Indigenous researchers and peoples and non-Indigenous knowledge forms across all disciplines from STEM to humanities and arts and other sectors. Transformation happens then not only across disciplines, but also in ongoing and on-the-ground democratic interaction between the universities and the environments in which the knowledge they co-create is implemented.[29]

1. Interested in alternative business models and responsible management learning, but speaking from a Western standpoint, Senior Lecturer in Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the University of Manchester Oliver Laasch and his colleagues ask their readers to imagine what it would be like if future managers had to "unlearn some of the most basic tenets and practices of business and management to become responsible"; that is, if they had to learn "to manage in circular demand-supply networks", "to harmonize the value created for a network of heterogeneous stakeholders", and "to manage for the integral wellbeing of human beings, as opposed to managing people as a readily available human resource", which would involve learning various management philosophies including biomimetic and Indigenous management.

Fully aware that a truly transdisciplinary approach to responsible management learning is still to come, they outline its framework as follows: "Collaborative transdisciplinarity practices [that] integrate disciplinary knowledge (interdisciplinarity) and sectoral knowledge (intersectorality) for solving shared complex overarching problems".[30] What is critical about this programme is that it transgresses existing boundaries between research, education, and professional practices. Laasch and colleagues suggest not only a radical crossing of horizontal boundaries between disciplines, but also a vertical integration across sectors with the goal of "a melting pot in which disciplines and sectors integrate what they have to contribute".[31] Power hierarchies in existing academic practice impede such transformations for collaboration. Thus, a "major challenge necessary for such disciplinary integration will be to abandon the disciplinary turf wars for dominance of one or another discipline, for instance, the ones between the ethics, responsibility, and sustainability disciplines".[32]

2. Trent University, on the treaty and traditional territory of the Mississauga Anishinaabeg, offers a variety of cross-disciplinary programmes, including an Indigenous Environmental Studies and Sciences programme. Its course listing is promising as it deconstructs the concept of sustainability as situated ethically in local

and Indigenous frameworks, and has the question of social equity, distributive justice, and alternative forms of economic organisation as a continuous thread. With their Indigenous Environmental Studies and Sciences programme, Trent University brings together Western and Indigenous perspectives for addressing the complexity of climate change.[33]

3. Within the law context, the Indigenous Law Research Unit (ILRU) at the University of Victoria's Faculty of Law, led by Rebecca Johnson and Val Napoleon, dedicates its research to Indigenous law and governance. The leading axiom is that "Indigenous laws need to be taken seriously as laws"[34] and therefore used, researched, taught, and theorised on the same levels as other legal traditions. In cooperation with Indigenous communities, this unit works on articulating Indigenous laws in the communities' terminology that reflect their "needs and goals". They develop in these collaborations, upon invitation, toolkits that are used as resources in academic and public educational settings, among other things. The active training of students is a critical part of the programme, alongside close cooperation with various Indigenous communities and the development of learning resources. As legal issues pervade all aspects of life, the unit provides resources for not only "the art of being related" in accordance with the Anishinaabeg Kinship-centred Governance and Family law, but also, e.g., the Secwepémc laws relating to land and resources, or texts on future environmental governance based on Indigenous laws.

Recommendations and conclusion

This transformative endeavour demands bravery. In her 2019 book *The Good University*, feminist thinker Raewyn Connell suggested that universities need to provide "real equity in access, creative teaching, consistent truthfulness, and tangible social engagement"[35] to answer to their societal responsibility in the face of climate change. Connell calls on the HE sectors to take responsibility for planetary survival as a primary concern, and to do so by "walking the talk". To date, universities are spaces[36] whose organisational forms serve and suffer under economic principles, and consequently, burn the human resources they rely on. Connell thus calls for institutional change towards less exploitation, employee workforce security, and supportive working conditions. She sees important endeavours towards institutional and – from there – social transformation through breaking down the Northern knowledge hegemony that rules the academic globe and providing a centre stage position for postcolonial critique, Indigenous knowledge, Southern theory, and a feminist agenda.[37] Inspirational examples of programmes or universities that Connell gives offer peer-led learning and work with citizen research. Moreover, they attempt to distance themselves from global capitalist models and are community-oriented and creative.[38]

Explicitly, Connell does not place the responsibility on the teachers and researchers alone but emphasises the role of administrative staff in this endeavour. This means first creating more equal working conditions among all university workers; it means less outsourcing of services, less managerialism, less market orientation, less internal control by digital systems, and less commodification of research findings.[39] Among other

things, Connell calls on the universities to dare to leave the well-trodden paths in education and administration and to take the necessary risks.[40]

Such "sustainable" universities can grow, where growth is understood as "to flourish as an organization over the long run".[41] A university that does not destroy its resources and dares to abandon exclusion, inequality, competitiveness, economic pressure, or neoliberal governance tilts the field for imaginative futures. When institutional structures are bravely questioned and transformed, there is a chance to not only keep the institution's staff healthy, but also fearlessly allow the complexity of thought across backgrounds, disciplines, and spaces. This is the only answer to the unrighteous past and present times, of which climate change is one symptom.

(Learning for) sustainable transformation addresses the deeper cultural layer that underpins the interconnectedness of social and environmental crises, such as hatred of the other, with its interlinked power structures like sexism, imperialism, racism, heteropatriarchy, extractivism, and human exceptionalism. Universities are embedded in society, and we also find symptoms and the reproduction of long-persisting root problems in academia: exclusion, inequality, competitiveness, economic pressure, and neoliberal governance. Learning at universities, however, has a major influence on how the planet's future will be. We see that concerns over escalating environmental changes make universities strive to renew their strategies. Among others, subscribing to the UN's SDGs seems like a pertinent technoscientific sanction. Nevertheless, individual, institutional, social, or planetary wellbeing is not merely accomplished through scientific and technological approaches reproducing business "as usual with a green twist" but through a profound transformation at institutional, structural, and disciplinary levels. The key objective of learning for sustainable transformation is to foster the cultivation of more just, equitable, and wholesome forms of coexistence, social organisation, institutions, habits, and cultures.

Summary

- There is a strong push for education concerning sustainable development supported by international efforts working towards the UN's Agenda 2030 SDGs.
- Critique of the SDGs and related education efforts highlight that the concepts and practices of sustainability and development perpetuate the socio-cultural causes that have brought about today's social, environmental, and health crises.
- Environmental degradation, climate change, social injustice, health inequity, and related challenges are unequivocally caused by cultures of fear and contempt for the other. Throughout the history of humanity, this fear and hatred have been expressed as human exceptionalism, racism, colonialism, imperialism, heteropatriarchy, capitalism, and related systems of social organisation that perpetuate these.
- Learning must aim at sustainable transformation to meet today's challenges at their roots.
- Research, learning, and administrating for sustainable transformation seek to enable the actors to (1) detect harmful patterns of fear and contempt in systems,

structures, and practices at all levels of society, and (2) cultivate just, equitable and life-enhancing ways of living, being, and dying together.

- For this purpose, sustainable transformation is:
  a focused on where learning meets the worlds it might transform, the private and public spaces, parks, organisations, schools, playgrounds, businesses, governments, hospital wards, etc., that constitute the worlds we live in and share
  b grounded in transformative theories and pedagogies with a keen eye for in/justice, dominance, and oppression, with a focus on cultivating solidarity and mutually beneficial modes of coexistence.

Questions for discussion

- Where does your institution perpetuate the domination of people, places, plants, planets, and other beings?
- How can you foster education for social transformation within your institution?
- How does your institution's research, teaching, and administration enact care and concern for the world?
- Who can you partner with to support diverse knowledges and wholesome forms of social organisation?

Suggestions for further readings

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Notes

1 Braidotti 2017; Connell 2019; Laasch et al. 2020; Kopnina 2020; Van Poeck et al. 2019; Steele and Rickards 2021
2 Bina and Pereira 2020
3 See e.g., hooks 1994
4 Haraway 2016
5 Alaimo 2012
6 Brundtland 1987

7 Brundtland 1987
8 UN 2015
9 For an overview of the lack of a solid definition for better or worse, see Ramsey 2015
10 Swain 2017
11 McShane 2007
12 Mies and Shiva 1993
13 Davis and Todd 2017
14 Harding 1986; Haraway 1988; Hill Collins 1991
15 For more on power relations between genders and climate change, see e.g. MacGregor 2009
16 See e.g., Merchant 1992; Mies and Shiva 1993; Plumwood 1993; Kheel 2000; Todd 2016a; Haraway 2016; Alaimo 2016; Whyte 2017; Braidotti 2017; Hamilton and Neimanis 2018; for more on SDGs in higher education, see e.g. Connell 2019; Steele and Rickards 2021
17 See e.g., Wilson and Mukhopadhyaya 2020
18 Le Loarne-Lemaire et al. 2021
19 Braidotti 2017; see also MacGregor 2009
20 Todd 2016b
21 Watts 2013; Todd 2016b
22 Such as e.g. Cutcha Risling Baldy, Katsi Cook, Sakej Henderson, Robin Kimmerer, Winona LaDuke, Leanne Simpson, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Kim TallBear, Zoe Todd, Eve Tuck, K. Wayne Yang, Melanie Yazzie and many more; see also Nelson 2019
23 Nelson 2019
24 UNDRIP 2007; for more on the implementation of the UNDRIP, see e.g., Borrows et al. 2019
25 Smith 2014
26 Barron et al. 2020
27 Connell 2019 with more examples for initiatives
28 O'Brien et al. 2013; Cornell et al. 2013; Holm et al. 2013; Jahn et al. 2012
29 Offergaard 2020
30 Laasch et al. 2020
31 Laasch et al. 2020
32 Laasch et al. 2020
33 Trent University 2022
34 ILRU 2022
35 Connell 2019
36 See Winther, this volume
37 See also Mies and Shiva 1993
38 Connell 2019
39 Connell 2019
40 Connell 2019
41 Connell 2019

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