

Edited by Anna CohenMiller, Tamsin Hinton-Smith,
Fawzia Haeri Mazanderani and Nupur Samuel

Leading Change in Gender and Diversity in Higher Education from Margins to Mainstream




ROUTLEDGE

“This volume is an important read for all who care about improving gender equality and social justice in higher education. It sheds useful light on the gendered experiences of students, staff, and faculty with various intersecting aspects of identity in particular cultural contexts. Individually and collectively, the chapters amplify the voices of individuals who are too often marginalized or overlooked in higher education and offer useful insights for higher education leaders, policymakers, researchers, and students who seek to better appreciate diverse perspectives and create inclusive environments where all people can thrive.”

Laura Perna, *Vice Provost for Faculty, GSE Centennial Presidential Professor of Education, Executive Director, Penn AHEAD, University of Pennsylvania*

“A necessary, timely, and indispensable book! The collection fills a crucial gap in research on gender and leadership in higher education by first imparting perceptive and original research across a diverse range of perspectives and disciplines, and then by applying this knowledge to lived contexts to show how gender equity may be achieved in academe. The book is essential reading for university educators and administrators committed to reimagining and leading change to achieve diversity, equity, inclusion and access, social justice, and sustainability in higher education institutions.”

Andrea O’Reilly, *Professor, School of Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies, York University, Canada. Author of Matricentric Feminism: Theory, Activism, Practice (2021)*

“This is a gem of a book – a huge diversity of scholars tackling the complex issues of inequity of higher education from a range of perspectives and approaches, with intersectionality and post/decolonisation of higher education cultures and practices at the forefront.”

Barbara Read, *Reader, Gender and Social Inequalities School of Education, University of Glasgow*

“*Leading Change in Gender and Diversity in Higher Education from Margins to Mainstream* offers a much-needed contribution to the scholarship on gender equity in higher education. Its main strength is the diversity of perspectives and countries represented; from Australia to Cambodia and from Nigeria to India, the chapter authors each consider how gender is reproduced and sometimes resisted in different contexts. In doing so, the authors contribute to the book’s overarching goal: to consider how social justice and gender equity might be furthered in creating space for marginalized groups’ empowerment.”

Margaret Sallee, *Associate Professor, Educational Leadership and Policy, Graduate School of Education, University of Buffalo*



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Leading Change in Gender and Diversity in Higher Education from Margins to Mainstream

This edited book provides international insights and recommendations around topics of gender and diversity in higher education linking to larger societal goals of improving equality.

Within each of the four sections – *student recruitment and retention, student experience, faculty/staff experience, and higher education cultures of teaching and research* – topics unpack and speak to gender and diversity, equity, inclusion and access, social justice, and leadership and sustainability in higher education institutions (HEIs). Incorporating innovative processes and methods, the researchers address how the experiences of groups who have been subordinated and marginalized can be heard, proposing a re-imagining of empowerment and leadership within higher education and best practices for the benefit of ongoing higher education development.

This book is ideal reading for higher education leaders, students in higher education courses, leadership courses, gender in education, as well as researchers, practitioners, and for topics of gender and diversity, equity, inclusion and access, social justice, leadership and sustainability in HEIs.

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**Dedicated to the many voices that need to be heard;
to the voices from the margins.**



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Introduction

Reimagining Higher Education Leadership through Envisioning Spaces for Agency

*Anna CohenMiller, Tamsin Hinton-Smith,
Fawzia Haeri Mazanderani and Nupur Samuel*

Over the last four decades, gender equality and diversity have become a central part of mainstream higher education discourse and agendas. However, many individuals and communities have been excluded from this discussion. In this edited volume, we position the relevance of gender equality not only to higher education for effective leadership but also to wider equality goals. Central to this is drawing from voices across diverse international and disciplinary perspectives as experts.

These sets of chapters seek to provide insight for leading change in higher education by addressing the equitable inclusion of diverse populations within the academe. We examine the ways in which gender intersects with other aspects of identity, such as social class, caste, age, disability, race, ethnicity and sexual identity, in shaping experiences of higher education (HE) in international contexts. Contributions in this edited volume interrogate the ways in which gender works alongside other elements in limiting or giving rise to particular experiences of inclusion and equity within higher education.

The intention of this book is to assert the relationship between gender and social justice more broadly. In recognition of recent calls to ‘decolonise higher education’ (Bhambra et al., 2018), this volume is interested in the extent to which colonial patriarchy and heteronormativity are present within higher education and to explore who is made marginalised because of this. In doing so, we explore ways in which gender for instance is reproduced and/or resisted within different country HE institutional contexts, as well as how gender can be re-imagined within these institutional, political and cultural environments. While recognising that terms such as ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment’ have become ‘buzzwords’ (Cornwall, 2007), we are interested in reimagining empowerment within higher education, considering how groups who have been subordinated and marginalised can speak their voice and be heard, and sharing good practices for the benefit of ongoing higher education development.

The purpose of this text is to have international appeal as central to the idea of moving from margins to mainstream for leading gender and diversity

in higher education. The editors' countries of origin and current academic appointment as international academics include India, Kazakhstan, the United Kingdom, United States and South Africa, and the contributors write about experiences and insights in higher education across multiple countries and continents. The book is intended as a hands-on book providing solutions for those interested in leadership development and higher education social justice. Within the following parts, we focus on five key themes as associated with higher education:

- Equity, inclusion and access,
- Social justice,
- Leadership and sustainability,
- Decolonisation and
- Recommendations for leaders in higher education institutions.

Expanding upon other books relating to this topic, we highlight voices often marginalised or overlooked, with the intention to support leading change with regard to gender, equality and diversity in higher education. Specifically, we incorporate three innovative approaches:

- 1 **Linking gender and diversity in higher education to larger societal goals of improving equality.** As such, this strategic collection of insights can provide broad appeal and gender literacy. We integrate and address gender equity and diversity in higher education from international and decolonising perspectives, positioning feminist academic thought as central to mainstream higher education development to contextualise an institutional caring framework, or what Isgro and Castenada (2015) refer to as a 'culture of care'.
- 2 **Incorporating a novel editorial approach to create spaces for reflexivity and participatory spaces** for contributing authors to reflect upon their work in dialogue with the editors. Consistent with feminist and decolonial approaches in research and scholarship, an aim of this book is to facilitate 'voice', while recognising its multiple and partial nature (Jackson & Mazzei, 2008). As such, integrating an 'in-dialogue' editorial after each part will allow for a co-produced conversation between authors and editors, engaging deeper into the scholarship related to each chapter. Outcomes of the innovative framework and novel editorial approach will offer practical steps for leaders in higher education.
- 3 **Articulating insights from gender and equality for higher education specialists across disciplines and countries to inform leadership development approaches.** Providing opportunities to learn from marginal groups within higher education offers the potential to *reimagine leadership* through envisioning spaces for agency that are not always associated with leadership. In this way, we suggest an effective direction of leading change and equality for cultures of staff, faculty and students

which is not only focused on those who are already in power. Instead, we recognise and emphasise the potential of leadership within individuals working on their own and collectively to understand international, interdisciplinary perspectives in higher education.

This edited volume is aimed at those interested in leadership or those currently in leadership positions, educators/pedagogues, policymakers and course developers. In this regard, the book is an effective text for graduate students studying leadership (e.g., business, higher education leadership) as well as senior administrators/staff and academics with a particular interest in equality, diversity and inclusion within higher education. It will also be of interest to academics who hope to develop to become leaders in higher education and for those who have responsibility over small elements of leadership. Central to this book's ethos is a commitment to the importance that leading change for equality in higher education should not be restricted to the few, but a space in which there are places for the contributions of many. It is through this that we can work to ensure that leadership and change represent diverse and marginalised experiences and agendas rather than only those of a privileged and less heterogeneous minority.

The book is appropriate for a postgraduate student audience as well as higher education administrators, faculty and staff across academic disciplines internationally. It has appeal for all levels, from established senior leaders through to aspiring leaders for the future. The text is written in an academically rigorous yet accessible style in order to be of broad appeal across wide disciplinary and international readerships and at different career stages. This includes providing definitions for key terms and explaining all international contexts and methodologies. While the book can be read from the beginning to end, it also offers useful stand-alone chapters for higher education leaders, practitioners, researchers and students. While each chapter speaks about a particular cultural context(s), the insights, reflections and recommendations are transferable internationally. The book includes 14 chapters organised by 4 major themes:

- Student recruitment and retention,
- Student experience,
- Faculty/staff experience and
- Higher education cultures of teaching and research.

Each theme is led by one of the editorials and is followed by an 'in-dialogue' editorial conversation in collaboration and co-produced with authors. Under the editorial lead of Tamsin Hinton-Smith, Part 1 brings together three chapters around experiences of accessing and participating in higher education for groups marginalised within Nigeria and Australia. Then guided by the editorial lead of Fawzia Haeri Mazanderani. Part 2 concentrates on how culturally sanctioned stereotypes and misconceptions influence the

higher education experiences of minoritised groups in Nigeria, Tanzania and Ghana. Following this, led by Anna CohenMiller, Part 3 uncovers invisibility of faculty, staff and students in the United States, Western/Central Europe and Asia, articulating ways to improve equity, inclusion and access through purposeful creation of collaboration, cooperation and collegiality. Simple awareness, such as to the exclusionary nature of academic conferences (CohenMiller et al., 2022), offer insight to changes that can be made for the improvement of higher education institutions and all involved. Lastly, under the editorial direction of Nupur Samuel, Part 4 emphasises holistic equitable and gender inclusive practices at higher education institutions requiring beginning with an awareness that disparities exist which require leadership to come from all levels and everywhere in order to collaborate and co-decolonise. These findings draw from India, Cambodia, the United States and international partnerships highlighting how only a culture of public questioning about gender, about family and the roles each one of us play in higher education institutions can begin to bring about change.

Our collection offers important insights in the context of a world that has continued to experience seismic shifts. Not only has the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted higher education, gender and equality, there published, but also continuing sociopolitical and environmental crises (e.g., war in Ukraine) which continue to effect teaching, learning and leadership in higher education. Ultimately, by purposefully foregrounding a decolonial approach, this book offers insights to leadership broadly defined to equalise and facilitate success throughout academia through international insights and practical recommendations.

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Part 1

Student Recruitment and Retention



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1 De/Centring Gender in Higher Education Access Policy

Lived Experiences of Admission Practices in Nigeria

Jennifer Jomafuwwe Agbaire

Introduction

This chapter presents a gender analysis of higher education (HE) admission practices and outcomes, drawing on a study of HE access in Nigeria. It focuses on young women's conditions and describes their experiences in relation to three key findings of the study. First is the use of sexual activity as a relevant "capital" for HE access although this framed women as "beneficiaries" rather than victims of sex-for-admission. Second, there is the interface of the admission processes with the social expectation of marriage. Participants in the study highlighted the pressure to get married within a socially acceptable time frame and the ways that persistent unsuccessful attempts at HE access intensified this pressure and produced a further barrier for young women in low socioeconomic status (SES) groups. Third, deeply entrenched patriarchal values surfaced as a potent factor that mediates different forms of agency for women in the study from different parts of Nigeria.

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, global attention to gender inequalities has intensified because of growing evidence of the links between gender and development. Present-day development discourses have constantly foregrounded concerns for gender equity (Dunne, 2007). International policy frameworks, from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), have included the need to eradicate gender inequalities in societies (United Nations 2000, 2015). Despite being highlighted for policy action, many contemporary feminist scholars are pessimistic about the potential of modern equity discourses to disrupt the status quo of gender relations, embedded as these discourses are often within the constraints of patriarchal rationality (Morley, 2006). This is more so as there is the argument that "little sustained attention globally" has been paid "to the role that HE plays in challenging and reproducing gender privileges and disadvantages" (Morley, 2005, p.209). This chapter develops this argument and addresses the concern of how HE access policy and processes contribute to widening gender inequalities in Nigeria.

Gender is not considered in Nigeria's national quota-based policy for equitable HE admissions even though there are strong indications that this is an important domain of inequalities. The discussions in this chapter are against this backdrop of an explicit absence of a gender category in the country's HE admissions policy. In this chapter, I explore gender intersections and distinct access choices and experiences among women in the study. I further examine the women's responses to discrimination and their expressions of agency. The chapter thus problematises the policy's silence to persistent gendered patterns of HE access, demonstrating that this silence often intersects with institutionalised processes and entrenched practices within the admission system. It argues that this in turn produces discrimination, advances gender-based exclusions and sustains access inequalities. In light of these, the chapter identifies gender as an important social category deserving a reconceived policy and practice attention specifically in relation to equitable access to HE.

Context

Nigeria is estimated to have a population of 193 million people (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2018), making it to rank in the top ten of the world's most populous countries. Most of the population live in poverty despite the country's large economy (Central Intelligence Agency, 2019). There are over 250 identified ethnicities with over 500 indigenous languages (Kraxberger, 2005; Suberu, 2001) practicing various denominations of Christianity, Islam and traditional African religion. It is the country's rich linguistic, ethnic, cultural and religious diversity that perhaps constitutes one of its most significant features in addition to its colonial history, contentious post-independence politics and persistent inter-group tensions and often-violent conflicts (Kraxberger, 2005; Mustapha, 2007).

Geographically segmented into two broad regions (North and South), distinctions are often drawn along these lines in terms of widely differing value systems. This includes that Islam is much more predominant in the northern region (Nwaoga et al., 2014) than in the south which has a greater number of practicing Christians. These differences in religious composition are easily apparent in the everyday aspects of life in communities in these regions and in institutions. For example, the dress code is significantly different and more seriously enforced in institutions including universities, in the north, with women required to cover most body parts. The differences between both regions are additionally often represented by significant inequalities in educational participation, with national records historically showing higher rates for the south (Fafunwa, 1968; Mustapha, 2007). This disparity has persisted across all levels of education in the country, fuelling existing tensions. With regard to HE in particular, it has strongly contributed to the introduction of a national quota-based policy for admissions to public institutions which includes location-based quotas.

One of these quotas is for applicants from 21 of the 36 states in the country which have been categorised as educationally disadvantaged. All 19 states of the northern Nigerian region are included in this category (Imhabekhai, 2006; Musari, 2016).

Further to regional disparities, however, are high levels of gender differences in university access across both regions of the country (Agboola & Ofoegbu, 2010). Figure 1.1 is a portrayal of the percentage of male and female admissions between 2011 and 2015. It reveals that each year, access of female applicants was correspondingly lower than those of male.

This gender gap exists in the context of various indications of gender as a significant space for social inequality in the country, including national HE admission statistics that continues to reflect unequal gendered patterns of access (see Table 1.1) and reports that issues around gender norms are culturally ingrained in the society (Onwuameze, 2013).

Northern Nigeria is particularly noted to have higher levels of gender inequality in university participation, and this has been claimed to be perhaps consequent of more restrictive religious and cultural values generally held in the region (Biraimah, 1994; Ololube et al., 2013). However, it is also notable that the gender situation applies to over 90% of all the universities in the country (JAMB, 2018). Especially in science-based institutions such as the Federal Universities of Technology, northern and southern Nigeria do not seem to vary widely in terms of gender access disparities. Table 1.2 presents admission information of selected science-based universities in the country to illustrate this point. This suggests that there remains a great gender imbalance in terms of disciplinary destinations and supports the observation that

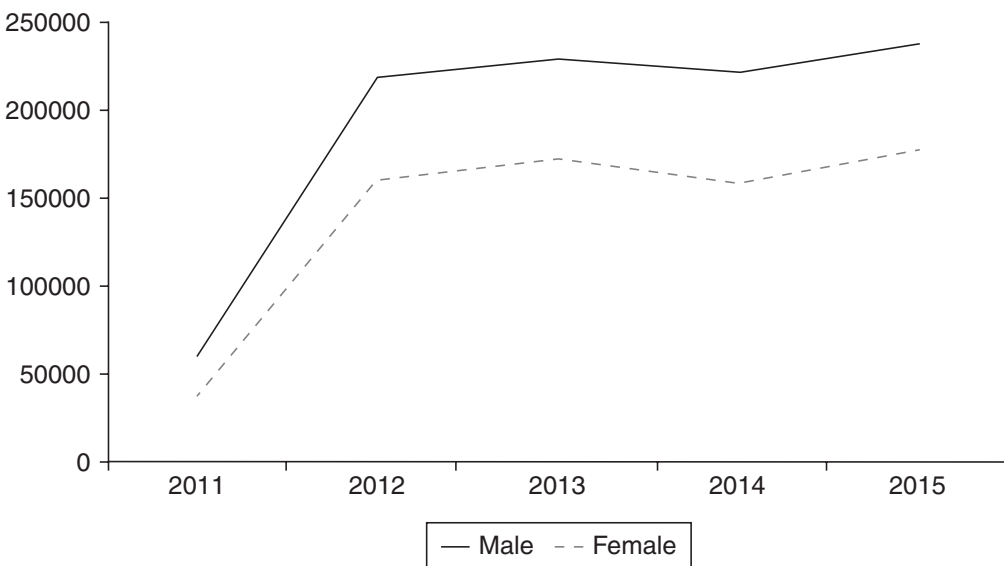


Figure 1.1 Gender Gap in University Access across Nigeria.

Source: Adapted from JAMB (2018).

Table 1.1 Higher education gross enrolment rate by gender in Nigeria

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total Admissions</i>	<i>Proportion of Male Admissions</i>	<i>Proportion of Female Admissions</i>
2017	566,719	315,678 55.7%	251,041 44.3%
2018	549,763	302,183 55.0%	247,580 45.0%

Source: Adapted from National Bureau of Statistics, NBS (2019).

Table 1.2 Admissions by gender in selected Nigerian science-based universities (2014)

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Approximate Percentage of Total Admissions</i>	
		<i>Male (%)</i>	<i>Female (%)</i>
Federal University of Technology, Akure	South-West	77	23
Federal University of Technology, Owerri	South-East	76	24
Federal University of Technology, Minna	North-Central	77	23
Federal University of Technology, Yola	North-East	77	23

Source: Adapted from JAMB (2018).

many more women nationwide are taking up spaces in “less valued” courses than males and vice versa (Adeyemi & Akpotu, 2004; Mukoro, 2014).

It has been argued that gender affects both university access and students’ aspirations once admitted to the university in Nigeria (Biraimah, 1994). The unequal access patterns highlighted above make it even more striking that gender is totally absent from the national policy framework for equitable admissions. Echoing this and observing significant gender gaps in the nation’s university enrolments, Adeyemi and Akpotu (2004, p.366) had asserted that it is disheartening that despite several quotas to ensure fair representation, the national admissions policy does not include any special consideration for women who they describe as “culturally and religiously constrained”.

Understanding Gender in Education

“Young” people are typically referred to as “girls” or “boys” in Nigeria, particularly when they are students and unmarried. Indeed, “women” is often

conventionally reserved in this context for those that are either married or “clearly” middle-aged if unmarried. I have opted to use “female” or “women” in this chapter to move away from such rather presumptuous “othering”. However, I use the term “gender” with an appreciation of different feminist standpoints, and in my understanding of the term, I use group identity markers such as “female” or “women” for example, with a sense of their own limitations (Spivak, 1987).

The discussion of gender inequities in this chapter focuses on the conditions of women essentially because in Nigeria as elsewhere, women have historically, culturally and statistically been marginalised within both educational and wider social practices (Adeyemi & Akpotu, 2004). My analysis employs feminist thinking on the socially constructed nature of gender (Thomas, 1990; Butler 1993, 1995). It locates this in a post-colonial context and recognises the heterogeneity of women’s conditions (hooks, 1990; Mohanty, 1991; Oyěwùmí, 1997; Spivak, 1987) and multiple differences in their responses to those and their sense of agency (Mahmood, 2005). Feminist theory offers an important critical lens on the linkage between sex and power in society and in education (Beasley, 1999; Dunne, 2007; Thomas 1990; Weedon, 1999). At the same time, it highlights the need to conceptualise and explore the differences *among* women, especially in such contexts as Nigeria with wide ethnic, religious, economic and other social diversities. This is supported by an anti-essentialist position which also acknowledges the meaning of gender as always related to other terms in context (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Mama, 2001). As Mohanty puts it,

To define feminism purely in gendered terms assumes that our consciousness of being “women” has nothing to do with race, class, nation, or sexuality, just with gender. But no one “becomes a woman” ... purely because they are female. Ideologies of womanhood have as much to do with class and race as they have to do with sex.

(1991, pp.12–13)

My experience of the Nigerian context is that “womanhood” inescapably remains a huge aspect of people’s sense of social identity in this “modern” world. Yet, “[f]emininity’ is constantly devalued” (Thomas 1990, p.20) not just in the wider society in general but also particularly in education systems. From stereotypical and distorted discourses by education practitioners (Bernstein 1996; Rasool & Morley, 2000), sexist assumptions in curricula and biased classroom practices (Dunne et al., 2005; Thomas, 1990) to misrecognition in education policy (Tsolidis, 1996), the potential of education to build and maintain hierarchical gender relations has been evidenced in a range of academic scholarship. Stereotypical notions of the male and female genders do not only shape students’ schooling experiences but influence their HE trajectories and choices (Morley 1997; Thomas, 1990). My concern in

this chapter about the inattention to gender in the Nigerian access policy is thus not just about the production of hierarchical gender identities but also of associated learner identities.

The subsequent analysis in this chapter explores how women aspiring to HE may experience conflict between personal goal and societal expectation through HE access policy and practices. This is important for understanding the dimensions of agency and for mapping mainstream equity policy directions. Such analysis is particularly relevant for the Nigerian context where the social expectations of femininity are more generally reported to mostly include passivity, submission and “marriageability” (Onwuameze, 2013). The thrust of my argument in this chapter about the absence of gender in the Nigerian HE policy aligns with the need to reverse the traditional hierarchy of (masculine) social privilege by revaluing the feminine (Beasley, 2005). However, it is also about appreciating the potential error in hinging gender equity struggles on the “sameness” of all women. I argue that recognising context-specific – economic, religious, ethnic and intra-national or international – experiences that might account for important differences among women would equally provide valuable insights to gendered conditions.

Research Design

The research study from which this chapter draws was predominantly qualitative and informed by an interpretive tradition that emphasises subjectivity, reflexivity and contextualisation in procedure and findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Whitley, 2012). A key aim of the study was to understand the operation of gender in the Nigerian University admission system and to explore how gender is included in access within this context.

Employing an embedded case study design (Yin, 1989), the study included current students and applicants in two federal universities respectively located in the south and north regions of Nigeria and henceforth referred to as Southern University and Northern University. Gender was a criteria for the selection of participants. This was not just because it is a key axis of equity policy globally but also because this reflected my initial reviews of national HE data. Gender as a key selection criteria also reflected my personal experience and professional observations as a lecturer in a Nigerian University for several years. Location was also a key selection criteria as both regions embody major opposites in Nigeria’s social and political terrain. Communal identities and cultural values within the south-west widely differ from those of the north-west. These influence the features and preoccupations of social categories like gender and family background and indicate that a region-specific exploration was important as a useful way of understanding whether people under contrasting regional conditions might have similar admission experiences and how these conditions might also relate to different patterns of gendered access.

A total of 12 applicants were interviewed while 29 current students participated in focus groups. Of the 41 participants, 20 were female and 21 were male. The current students were mostly in their first year of university and the applicants had all previously undergone the university application process at least once without gaining admission. The participants were all aged 18 or above, and several steps such as informed consent, freedom to withdraw, confidentiality and anonymity were taken to ensure an ethical research practice. The focus groups were regionally homogenous and gender-specific to protect participants from harm that may arise from gender or other conflict and tensions. The research was considered to be ethically low-risk and with sufficient ethical provisions by the University of Sussex's ethics committee after review.

I approached the interviews and focus groups using a feminist framework, exploring participants' lived experiences with a view to representing the often-silenced voices of those that feel excluded or marginalised (DeVault & Gross, 2006). I also took a view to actively co-producing knowledge together with the participants (Hesse-Biber, 2007).

University Access Experiences as Gendered – Unpacking the Evidence from Nigeria

Evidence from the research shows that university admission experiences in Nigeria are highly gendered. Through three key findings related to sexual activity, marriage and agency, gender emerged as significant to exclusionary HE admission experiences and access inequalities, underscoring the need for policy and practice attention. I will proceed to expand on these findings.

“They Want to Sleep with Me” – Sex as Capital?

The accounts of the research participants indicate that economic and social capitals (Bourdieu, 1986) in the form of money and connections are crucial in the admission process to the highly sought-after federal universities in Nigeria. This manifests through unaccountable practices and conventions that result in favouritism, discrimination and exclusion. Connected to this are narratives of sexual activity and favour which featured prominently in participants' accounts as a “capital” to be used for university access. Several female students across the sample shared personal stories about their experience of demands from lecturers for sexual favours in return for “guaranteed” admission:

all the people I met ... they cannot help me. They want to sleep with me. That's all they want ... They would want to sleep with a girl first before they help. They ask me to go and meet them in a hotel before they can be of help.

(Maimuna, aspiring to Northern University)

the man ... that wanted to help me, he's asking me out. He thinks if he can help me with admission, I would give in to him and since I wasn't "playing ball" and giving him assurance, he decided I wasn't important.
(Faith, aspiring to Southern University)

Wide-ranging literatures (Bagihole & Woodward, 1995; Bajpai, 1999; Bakari & Leach, 2007; Britwum & Anokye, 2006; Chan et al., 1999; Kaplan, 2006; Omale, 2002; Shumba & Matina, 2002; Morley, 2011; Nwadiuwe, 2007) have examined sexual harassment and transactional sex in the Nigerian HE system and in various other country contexts. However, how this might be involved in admissions and what implications there are for access policy have often not been critically interrogated. All the female participants in my study voiced at least three separate issues in the operation of transactional sex. These concerned the elaborate and money-intensive nature of the application process, the poor accountability in admission decisions and the intersection with SES. These three features of the admission system leave women vulnerable.

In this regard, an important cause-and-effect connection between money-for-higher-grades and sex-for-admission was described. This indicated that women's exposure to sexual harassment is often a result of the workings of economic capital. Widespread entrance examination malpractices in Nigeria (Orji et al., 2017) support subscribers to achieve higher scores for university access. These are, however, only available to those who are financially solvent. Given the fixed number of university places, this works to the detriment of those who cannot afford these services. This includes women from a less advantaged background. The exclusion based on finances is compounded by the challenges of sexual advances. Indeed, transactional sex could be viewed as an access alternative "forced" on women who have no material resources or connections.

I know some people that can hardly spell their names but they are now in the university because they know big people or they agreed to sleep with one lecturer. But me who puts in all my effort to read my books from morning to night, I've got nothing from there. Only what they want is ... my money that I didn't even have and to sleep with me ... I'm tired!

(Maimuna)

This illustrates how different capitals work together in complex ways but also how gender becomes a heightened factor within these exclusions. In Maimuna's case above, her SES intersects with her gender in a complicated way. In her full narrative, she explained that she had done menial jobs to raise money for a bribe but because her family had no relevant social connections, even her bribe money had not been effective. Instead, she was defrauded. Like several participants, she added that finding the money for a

bribe is one thing and getting a positive outcome is another. This is because strong social connections are also very important. With no relevant social capital to combine with some economic capital, sex as capital was her only other alternative. She was frustrated by her admission predicament as her refusal to use sex as capital has left her outside the university after two applications in two years.

The forms of exclusion voiced by the participants are troubling. Because of the pervasiveness of sexual advances, some female participants expressed that they felt excluded even before they applied. They never even attempted to apply to certain universities as a result:

I don't have anybody in that university. No connection ... and the money for bribe is much. The next thing, they would want to sleep with me first and I don't want to use my body for such. God forbids! So, I did not just bother to apply.

(Joy, aspiring to Southern University)

These narratives resurface questions around the admission policy's contribution to an application process that appears not to reflect a nuanced consideration of complex intersections – in this case, that of SES and gender – in affecting access. The narratives are important because not only is sexual harassment evidenced to be widespread, but it is also portrayed as contributing to stratification among women themselves. For example, Maimuna had observed above that some applicants might perform poorly in the entrance examinations yet gain access through gratifying the sexual demands of lecturers that can influence admissions. Another story echoed this when the lecturer involved stated that female applicants who succumbed to his request for sex did not need to do well in the entrance examinations:

This thing is very rampant! My friend went to [name of a university] to write the PUTME [Post Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination.]. She didn't know anybody there. So, someone directed her to one lecturer to stay with. She said the lecturer kept telling her that her admission is sure as long as she gives him what he wants. He said she didn't need to score high – that all she needed to do was give him her body ... that he has helped some of her mates like that. Hmm! He did not help her because she refused ... She even ran out of his house. Now, we are applying together again.

(Faith)

The operation of gender is even more important in a context where sexual harassment and transactional sex might be framed as an advantage or *help* to women rather than as a disadvantageous product of male domination. Because it may lead to access for some, sex-for-admission was quite a controversial issue among participants. Various students held different but

equally strong views about whether sexual appeal could be regarded as a gender advantage or not. For instance, some male participants expressed indignation to the claim that women are less advantaged than men in university access. This contrasted with those female participants that recounted their experience of sexual demands and described themselves as victims in the process. Many male participants were reluctant to classify women as victims of sexual harassment in this regard – women were rather seen as “beneficiaries”:

I think if I were a female, I could have been given admission in the university of my choice more easily. The reason is that I had many opportunities of meeting many male lecturers in the department and if I were a female, there would have been means of seducing them ... Seduction would have worked – it’s common in this country – and I wouldn’t have had to apply again.

(Famous, Northern University student)

In the above comment for instance, Famous voiced a direct objection to the idea that young women who apply to university often stand a lower chance of getting in. For him, the opposite is the case as women can “take advantage” of their “sexual appeal” to men. Curiously, this was not viewed from the perspective of women being vulnerable victims but as a case of them using all their “capitals” (which the male applicants do not have) to get what they want. Similarly, other male participants had mapped the notion of gender as an advantage by reflecting on how women might become better prepared for university admission processes than men:

if I were a girl, I would have got into university earlier ... because when I was attending [preparatory] tutorial, I had these friends ... they were girls. The head of the tutorial was always coming to help them with stuff on their admission and I would be like, “Sir, what about me? I’m a human being!” He would say, “Okay, I will help you” but he never really came because of course, I cannot give him any sexual gratification. Those girls, they got the courses they wanted and got admitted that first year too. I wouldn’t want to say it’s because they are girls but it definitely crossed my mind that they must have attracted such help because they are girls.

(John, Southern University student)

The above reflection includes the assumption that female students get more attention and support because male staff get sexually attracted to them – suggesting that male students do not get an equivalent treatment. It also implied that women may do better because of this male attention and not necessarily because they can. This is evocative of Morley’s (2011) observation that women’s academic successes might be positioned as resulting

from transactional sex even when they are not. Through such discourses, the serious issue of making women use their bodies in illicit ways to gain university access is framed either as a desirable thing or an acceptable norm. Especially in a male-dominated society, failure to address them may reinforce hegemonic conditions of gender (mis)representation and misrecognition where even women themselves may consider sex-for-access as an advantage. In this connection, a female participant had also agreed with the male participants' position that sexual demands benefitted women:

Yes, the girls are at an advantage. Whoever is handling the admission can just say, "Let's just push her in because she's a lady. She has something to offer". Then, there is the aspect of the men saying to the lady, "Use your body to pay me" and [*pause*] well, the lady gets in!

(Daisy, Southern University student)

For Daisy above, the end justified the means. She considered being made to "pay" with "your body" not as an abuse of power by men but as a development that puts girls at an advantage. Her acceptance of this is perhaps an indication of how hegemonic discourses around circumstances of application and admission might shift policy focus from unfavourable access conditions that they embed. This is essential because women's vulnerability in these conditions is misrecognised. Ultimately, this echoes feminist thinking that socially constructed gendered processes advance male privileges, suppress women and produce specific ways of being in education (Thomas, 1990; Butler 1993, 1995).

"I will Go and Marry" – Women's Responses to Pressure and Experience

The research data shows that when gender intersects with patriarchal values as well as SES, university access challenges almost certainly result in unsuccessful access attempts for some female applicants. This sustains social exclusion. The data further indicates that this is not only because some women might be pushed to give in to sexual demands from male admission officers. An added issue is that when they constantly face admission hurdles, others might give up their aspiration to university altogether. They rather settle for the role of a wife as socially prescribed for women in the society:

Yes, I have to get married! Most of my friends are already thinking of it too and saying it's better to get married ... and just forget about studying further.

(Talatu, aspiring to Northern University)

Talatu, for instance, had bitterly complained about her application experience while telling her story. Caught up in socio-cultural norms, she quite decided on simply getting married soon and entirely abandoning her pursuit

of a university education like many of her friends. This was the stance especially of female participants who thought that they were living in the context of stricter stereotypical religious and cultural understandings of gender. For example, like Talatu, Maimuna had also been quite certain about quitting if the challenges persist in her next attempt:

Honestly, if my application fails again, I'll go and marry. I have a fiancé but it's not like I'm the type of girl that doesn't want to further her education. I love to go to university but I don't want to lose my opportunity [to marry] because soon people here would start saying maybe this girl is "walking up and down" and before you know it, people have said so much bad about you.

In her above remark, Maimuna alluded to the idea that women who fail to marry early enough by Nigerian society's standards are often assumed to be involved with multiple sex partners or "sleeping around" – something Nigerian society frowns at for women. She remained constrained by difficult application processes that have contributed to unsuccessful admission attempts. These experiences have intensified the pressure to quit and marry.

The operation of gender in these access circumstances cannot be overemphasised. The decision to marry by Talatu and Maimuna can be linked not just to the social expectations from women but also to the absence of institutional support to alleviate the pressure of such expectations – for example, through gender-specific policy criteria and gender-sensitive policy processes. For people like Talatu and Maimuna, the marital clock is ticking, and every year they attempt and fail to gain access to university, they are trading their opportunity to fulfil the social expectation or obligation (as it were) to "settle down" in marriage, start a family and be admitted into the social circle of "decent, responsible Nigerian women". The longer they remain single in pursuit of an education that they are even uncertain of accessing, the lesser their chance of getting married. Their non-traditional status of singlehood at a certain age would be interpreted by society to mean they are living indecent lives. This can in turn mean further exclusion, especially among ethno-religious groups in northern Nigeria where such ideologies appear to be more prevalent (Onwuameze, 2013).

All the female participants' accounts indicate that undoubtedly access experiences represent a lot of different shades of exclusion to and for different vulnerable groups of women in Nigeria. To emphasise this, for instance, both North and South participants pointed out that essentially because of marital expectations, the financial status of the family becomes an even bigger barrier to women's access to university in the context of unaffordable application processes. For example, Betty in the south recounted,

My daddy does not have a problem with me going to university anyway but he said no money to pursue admission for me again because he has

to focus on my brothers. Me, I'm a woman. Last, last, I will get married but they are men. So, they need it more.

This strikingly resembles Maimuna's story in the north:

It has not been easy for me at all. Sometimes, my daddy will tell me he doesn't have money because he has to pay for my brothers. So, sometimes, my friends or my fiancé help me. But even now that I insist I must get admission, my fiancée refused to help me because he thinks that if he gives me the money, it's a waste. Nobody wants to give me money for [the entrance] exam again ... Ah, I feel very sad! Now, I just wish they would just admit me anyhow to any course. Otherwise, I have to just go and marry.

Both Betty and Maimuna had previously mentioned that they thought of themselves as lucky to have a father and fiancée respectively that let them pursue their dream to study at university at all. But they explained that such luck is often unstable and short-lived because of daunting and expensive application processes that have ultimately yielded negative outcomes. At the time of this research, they had become no longer so concerned about studying their choice course but more interested in at least getting into university, irrespective of whatever course they were offered. They were aware that as women, time was fast running out. There were no financial means to keep trying as every failure had made it more difficult to convince anyone to help fund the process over again. All of these further implicate policy processes and silence on gender in the resultant exclusions.

Performing Gender – Agency in Context

The research participants' stories largely show that gendered patterns of access relate to complex connections between socio-cultural values, including stereotypical notions of gender roles and economic conditions. Against this background, there was the expression of some resistance by women:

People are saying, "You should go and get married soon" because you know, the decent woman thing ... but I will not stop my application ...! I believe that my ambition and destiny are tied to education, not marriage. So, no matter the rubbish they are saying – plus the stress and everything – I believe my passion and zeal will remain.

(Joy, aspiring to Southern University)

The stratification such that when you're in certain professions as a woman, there's a way people look at you like you shouldn't be there, I resent it! The fact that you are a boy and people think that you can do

something better than me shouldn't stop me from doing what I want to do.

(Essy, Southern University student)

Female students from both south and north constantly referred to gender social norms and their efforts or intent to circumvent these:

You know, our men, they don't care. All they want is to marry many wives and have children ... As a female, it is very good to be educated. After I finish university, I could find a good job and be supporting myself and my children from the pay even if my husband is not there.

(Maimuna)

You know, people don't kind of believe in the female child as such. So, I have to like – not only me – we female children, we have to like prove them wrong and do what we really want. We have to show our parents and the whole society that male children are not better than us. Then we can also talk where men are talking and people will value us more.

(Faith)

Illustratively, Maimuna in the above comment challenges the idea that a husband can and will provide for the family. Faith above strongly expressed the need to trouble entrenched gender hierarchies. For several participants like Faith, their pursuit of university access was more explicitly rooted in an ambition to change the dominant social perspectives about women and improve their relative standing with men. They argued that to do this, they must succeed in accessing and possibly surpassing males in male-dominated courses and beyond.

Many, however, continued to reproduce stereotypes in their agency. These participants clearly expressed no intention to access traditionally male academic spaces:

To say the truth, I still look at myself as not very good academically – that is, to do all those hard courses. It's just normal for girls to be Arts students and so on. So, when I applied to university, I just wanted something that would be easier for me to gain admission. Later, I thought that maybe if I had tried harder to get into a harder course, I may have gotten in but I was also then thinking about how I would have struggled to cope with the course academically all through my years of studying it. So, no way.

(Habibah, Southern University student)

Their agency operated within some acceptance of the confines of the age-long patriarchal definition of women as often powerless and intellectually

subordinate compared to men (Haslam & Whelan, 2008; Sayers 1982). This was more explicit in some responses where agency was primarily expressed in terms of obtaining economic independence and mostly to “survive” women’s lower social positioning:

As far as you are going to give birth to children ... you need to go to university as a woman. I can’t fight with my husband because he’s the man but at least, I can use the job I get to take care of myself and my children.
(Maimuna)

Maimuna had challenged the notion of husband-as-provider, but she accepts her role as “respectful” (in the sense of no intent to “fight” male “superiority”) future wife and mother. She seeks to overcome the effect of this kind of gender “profiling” by obtaining a university degree. For her, the degree is not to contest the inherent hierarchy but to hopefully more “progressively” adapt to it by gaining more economic capital from better-paid employment.

While the different expressions of agency highlight the heterogeneity of women within different socio-religious contexts (Mahmood, 2005; Oyěwùmí, 1997), they also re-echo the power of patriarchal discursive formations to continuously shape women’s notions of their subjectivity (Dunne et al., 2017; Weedon, 1997). Put differently, the distinct ways that the female participants responded to gender discrimination and expressed their agency remind us of Mahmood’s (2005) argument for women’s voices as crucial for deeper insights into gender-based subjugation and a nuanced understanding of resistance. This also connects with the significance of context in the performance of gender and agency (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Mama, 2001; Oyěwùmí, 1997). Across the research’s sample, assumptions about family, culture, religion and dressing within context made a difference in applying to university as well as to specific disciplines/courses. For example, many female participants in Northern University did not like to study a course like Theatre Arts because they considered that it exposed them to too much physical contact with males and to a career in the quite public entertainment industry:

as a girl born and bred in this part of the country, I don’t think I can participate in most of the dancing and drama they do in the course. And even all the other stuff in the profession. That’s why I want to study something else.

(Rahmah, Muslim aspiring to Northern University)

The same course was considered a very high-demand one by female participants in Southern University, with many in the Humanities wishing that they were studying it because it is one of the relatively prestigious ones:

if I had the chance to apply again, I would certainly go for Theatre Arts. It's highly rated here by girls because at least, it is a leading Arts course.
(Daisy, Christian Southern University)

The participants' viewpoints and contrasting preferences are consistent with national enrolment statistics (JAMB, 2018) that suggest that while male students generally out-numbered female students across Nigerian universities, more females from southern Nigeria are participating in university and in specific courses than those from the north. The differing preferences of female participants in the research are striking as these speak to feminist arguments that the meaning or enactment of "womanhood" has as much to do with other aspects of identity like race (or in this case, region and perhaps, religion) as it has to do with sex (Mohanty 1991, 2003).

In addition to similarities in access experiences, the female participants referred to important differences in their accounts that they assumed to be region- and/or religion-related. Some concerned simple references to appearance such as dressing:

There are cultural and religious differences between most of us here and girls in the north. My mum actually went to university in the north and she used to tell us you couldn't wear these kinds of clothes I'm wearing now to many places there and all that stuff. All of these did not make me even think about going to university there at all because for one, I love sleeveless clothes and I don't like to be restricted in that way. I don't think it's indecent.

(Essy, Christian in Southern University)

Others involved a complicated distinction between religion and culture, showing how region is crucial in the way that they intersect and impact on views and women's education differently in both regions:

The mistake we always make is mixing religion with culture. Actually, Islam would not say the girl-child should not be educated. It is the northern culture that feels the girl should be restricted. Islam says, "Train a girl child and you train a nation". Unlike the south, most people in the north are Muslims. That's why there is the idea that not training the girl child is an Islamic thing.

(Habibah, Muslim in Southern University)

These female participants' comments suggest that responses to similar access challenges or admission conditions may vary among young women in Nigeria depending on wider issues of context related to (the intensity of) their specific religious and/or socio-regional values. They also reveal the complexity of gender-based exclusions and agency.

The potency of regional context to shape assumptions was demonstrated in the below excerpt from one female focus group discussion comprising both Muslim and Christian students at Northern University. Noteworthy is that during the discussion, I had to keep probing because my identity – not just as a woman from southern Nigeria but as one born, bred and living in the south – clearly seemed to make the participants hesitant to be more specific and detailed about their view:

AMINATU: You know all those stories of how if you go to the south, you'd just change [*General laughter. Crosstalk*]

ME: Tell me about it. [*Laughter. Pause*]

HALIMAH: It's easy to see ... Their life there is so kind of different. [*Crosstalk*]

ME: Is it that they are not as good or decent or ...? [*Pause*] You can tell me.

GRACE: Well, even when you watch all these Nigerian films, you'd see how maybe a village girl or one from the north that left for let's say Lagos now ... She would just come back very different!

HALIMAH: Exactly.

ME: How?

AMINATU: Over exposed. And ... ready to do anything.

ME: Okay. Too exposed. How?

GRACE: Like the way I'm dressed now covered up and decent, it's very different from how they dress there. And the way they behave – they are more, you know, disrespectful of the rules and even their religion more than we are over here.

In this discussion, Grace referred to dressing which Essy had mentioned in her earlier comment above although they clearly expressed opposite views about what “decent” dressing should be. Yet, Grace and Essy are both Christians. A key difference between them is that they are from northern and southern Nigeria, respectively. On the other hand, Grace agreed with Aminatu and Halimah who are both Muslims but also from the north like her. This appears to indicate that regional culture strongly influences how religion is enacted. It also seems to indicate that this intersection impacts gendered actions and reactions to conditions of university access differently. Grace suggested this in her comment that women in the south tend to be more inclined to resisting prescribed gender social norms than those in the north. Aminatu's comment that the former group of women are “ready to do anything” can be read in the Nigerian context as an insinuation that they are more open to “alternative” ways of pursuing university access, such as transactional sex. These insinuations may be mere “perception”. Nevertheless, they add to the argument that while gender is essentially an important factor for policy consideration, gendered experiences and women's reactions need to be investigated from differing ethnic, regional and religious standpoints.

Implications and Conclusion

This chapter has undertaken a gender analysis of the important gaps missed by policy in/attention to unequal HE access, drawing on evidence from a study in the Nigerian context. It has set the scene by outlining a conceptualisation of gender inequalities that uses a poststructural feminist approach which allows for plurality and applies to a “range of theoretical positions” (Weedon, 1997, p.19).

The evidence in the chapter portrays that women are constantly excluded from access because of admission processes that contribute to their vulnerability and policy absences that appear to normalise their conditions. Complex gender dimensions and intersectionality underscore the veracity of the issues. These indicate that admissions for women applicants remain inhibited even despite mobilisation of considerable individual agency, because the admission system does not explicitly address process challenges nor recognise gender differences and discrimination. My analysis suggests that it cannot be assumed that gender-based access challenges will be adequately covered within other policy categories – access policy must specifically and actively include gender parity in its agenda for fairness. When evidenced gender gaps and intersections are not addressed in policy and gender is not considered as a key category for fair access, the gaps are sustained and gender hierarchies are consistently reproduced.

For policy reform, the analysis in this chapter further suggests however that simply instituting a gender admission quota is also not enough as this is likely to remain located within entrenched patriarchal discourses (Morley, 1997). With reference to the Nigerian case, for instance, it is imperative to constantly monitor and investigate the operation of any gender quota and to enforce clear-cut strategies that would encourage and support female applicants to access the available places. For example, the application and admission processes should be more gender-sensitive in such ways that women applicants benefit without intimidation or victimisation. One important step towards this is to incorporate effective reporting and sanctioning mechanisms for cases of sexual harassment and transactional sex. Policy strategies will also need to clearly direct how discourses that circulate around sex or sexual appeal and gender constitute the subjects, particularly the victims of abuse. Gender inequalities training for HE staff and enforcement action where positions are abused are further recommended useful strategies.

Further research is also needed. Specific projects may, for example, more extensively explore the impact of patriarchal structures on female students’ agency. One criticism of Western feminism is its “oversimplified theorisations” in which complex gender relations and differentiation among women are not fully unpacked (Humphreys et al., 2008, p.7). This criticism is more often with comparative reference to the contexts of African women and those in the West. Evidence from the study in this chapter

suggests that even among African women and within national boundaries, experiences of and responses to gender norms might vary according to distinct permutations involving region (linkable to ethnicity), religion, SES and so on. Building on the discussions in this chapter, further research should pay greater attention to the varying ways that gender is experienced and performed in such different micro contexts and what comparative implications there are for HE participation and for development. In the specific case of Nigeria, this chapter has evidenced that women's responses differ, but there remain questions to explore. Future research should give closer attention to exploring what contextual differences and conditions are most significant to women's responses to discrimination and why, as well as how these intersect in complex ways to impact women's expression of agency.

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2 Marginalized Masculinities in Australian Higher Education

Gendered Subjectivities, Discursive Spaces and First-in-Family Men *Being* and *Becoming* at University

Garth Stahl and Sarah McDonald

Introduction

Young men from low socio-economic backgrounds are the least likely to attend university in Australia (Lamb et al., 2015), and the select few who do attend are at a higher risk of attrition. Like other students from non-traditional backgrounds, many will struggle to feel a sense of belonging. Given their low participation rates, it is imperative that we document how young men from non-traditional backgrounds experience university life in order to develop more effective strategies to foster more inclusive environments and improve their chances of success. In researching the experiences of first-in-family males, we are interested in how their change in subjectivities is reflective of a shifting picture in terms of the widening participation agenda, as well as of societal discourses of gender and class.

We understand that the ‘neoliberal university is persistently gendered’ in ways that may ‘favour particular types of men’ more aligned with middle-class and elite forms of masculinities (see Lund et al., 2018, p. 1389). Investigating the subjectivities and discursive spaces of working-class men who may often be unfamiliar with higher education and what it entails, we focus on the identity work involved in negotiating the institutional discourses of higher education and how this identity work informs their motivation to do well. In their research on what they refer to as ‘matriculating masculinities,’ Harris and Harper (2015) note how research on the life experiences of men in higher education remains quite limited.

In this chapter, we draw on the *First-in-Family Males Project* documenting the gendered transition of first-in-family males (n = 42) from high school into university over a three-year period (Stahl & McDonald, 2022). In the last twenty years, Australia’s widening participation agenda continues to be more robust with a larger percentage of the population attending university than ever before. We recognize that the common languages used in studies of widening participation – such as ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment’ – are

problematic as ‘buzzwords’ which conceal more than they reveal (see Cornwall, 2007). We are interested in moving beyond the rhetoric of widening participation, to see how young people, specifically young people from working-class backgrounds, actually experience their university education. In this chapter, we foreground the ways in which boys from working-class (and working-poor) backgrounds describe how they adapt their identity to align with the university context (Stahl, 2022). Therefore, we are interested in how the acclimatization to university – as a discursive space of *being* and *becoming* – is informed by their gendered and classed subjectivities.

Theorizing Contemporary Working-Class Masculinities and Social Change

Philosopher Harry Brod (1987) in *The Making of Masculinities* laid the foundation for theorizing masculinity as a product of social norms and values which, naturally, change over time. Following this period, prominent theorists such as Connell, Kimmel and Hearn argued for understanding masculinity to be ‘a social construction that is a product of social forces, with specific forms of masculinity being idealized to the extent that they serve to support social order’ (Heasley, 2011, p. 238). This constructionist approach foregrounds how it is through everyday experiences of the social (e.g. work, education, families and peers) that masculinities are continually structured by rituals, ceremonies and practices (see Connell, 2005; Kimmel & Davis, 2011). As Morgan (2005) astutely notes, the intersection of masculinity, social class and lived experience remains largely underdeveloped though this is beginning to change with attention to working-class/working-poor masculinities (Nixon, 2018), middle-class masculinities (Lund et al., 2018) and elite masculinities (Gruys & Munsch, 2020). Furthermore, we have seen attention to socially mobile masculinities (Giazitzoglu, 2014), specifically with reference to how working-class masculinities are performed in elite spaces (Stahl & McDonald, 2019). Increasingly we are seeing the attention to intersectional identity processes (e.g. race/ethnicity, class and gender) and the role these play in boys’ academic success where, arguably, engagement with intersectionality ‘has the capacity to complicate isolated representations of boys’ school experiences and unearth new or overlooked dimensions of boys’ identities’ (see Nelson et al., 2015, p. 172).

Working-class masculinities and their experiences of disadvantage remain an area of interest to researchers from a diversity of fields including sociology, sociology of education, geography and critical studies of men and masculinities. More recent scholarship has focused on how working-class masculinities have been arguably reconstituted through a period of social and economic change where masculinities remain constrained by normative understandings of what it means to be male as well as the expectation to change these understandings (see Giazitzoglu, 2018; Stahl, 2017). Theoretical approaches have been multifaceted with researchers

expanding beyond Marxist analyses of working-class boys (Humphries, 1981; Willis, 1977) to highlight the complexities of working-class masculinities (Jeffrey & McDowell 2004; Kenway et al., 2006; McDowell, 2012). Current approaches to studies of working-class masculinities, particularly with respect to their relationship to higher education, tend towards feminist theories such as post-structuralism and intersectionality to interrogate the production of masculinities through multiple and overlapping contexts (Burke, 2009; Warin & Dempster, 2007; Woodin & Burke, 2007). Laurie et al. (2021) assert that studies of ‘vertical relations – power, labor, emotional relations, symbolism – enables a decentering of the “masculinity” in masculinity studies; or at the very least, a reframing of questions of identity in relation to questions of capacities and class-based hierarchies’ (p. 82). Research that considers the constructions of identities of men and boys through engagement with feminist theories can avoid static explanations of masculinities (Laurie et al. 2021).

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, scholars in masculinity studies have examined how economic and gendered shifts in society have led to fragmented rites of passage (employment and marriage), leading to an apparent ‘crisis of masculinity.’ This ‘crisis,’ which is often conflated with working-class masculinity, draws on the rhetoric of loss such as the ‘loss of essential male’ or ‘loss of manhood.’ It must be noted that there is some concern amongst scholars that this rhetoric serves to justify, rather than explain, certain contemporary masculinity identity practices (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998). Kimmel and Davis (2011, p. 13) assert that ‘young men are coming of age in an era with no road maps, no blueprints, and no primers to tell them what a man is or how to become one.’ While school to employment transitions for the working-class male during the industrial era was generally certain (Willis 1977), today, young working-class and disadvantaged men contend with changed and changing economic and social structures. Documenting a rural Australian masculinity in post-industrial times, Kenway, Kraack and Hickey-Moody (2006) write how ‘earning an income and financially supporting the family are local masculine imperatives’ where employment is ‘connected to self-respect, while lacking one is shameful and attracts disdain’ (p. 125). These changed social structures mean young men are required to negotiate new gendered patterns within rapidly changing discourses of aspiration and masculinity (Mac an Ghaill, 1994, 2000). Within these times of turbulent social change, working-class boys may often feel a ‘loyalty to self’ (Stahl, 2014) or, more specifically, a desire to reaffirm aspects of the traditional working-class masculinities they see as being transgressed by social change (see Stahl, 2017).

While foregrounding the changing social conditions and the consequences of how masculinities are constructed, researchers have highlighted the persistence of certain discourses about what it means to be a man. After all, social understandings of masculinities are embodied, particularly in relation to the perception of masculine power which Whitehead and Barrett (2001)

suggest is ‘largely exercised through self-regulation and self-discipline’ (p. 17). Furthermore, as these discursive social understandings become embodied, particular masculinities are continually reproduced, especially those which are imbued with domination and power. For example, the image of ‘the breadwinner’ remains pervasive irrespective of backgrounds such as social class, race and culture (McDowell, 2004; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). Kimmel (2008) argues that ideals of masculinities are reproduced, in part, through the desire for male validation, where boys and young men ‘hear the voices of the men in their lives – fathers, coaches, brothers, grandfathers, uncles, priests – to inform their ideas of masculinity’ (p. 47). Therefore, *becoming* and *being* men is a process of ‘incorporating ideals of dominant masculinity into their own gender schema’ (Adams & Coltrane, 2005, p. 232), where aspects of the self are continually reaffirmed and rearticulated.

As a final point, education structures within western societies have taken up neoliberal discourses of self-improvement, and this is particularly true within the field of higher education, where there is a pervasive expectation that young people *consume* education in order to expand their opportunities. The shift to neoliberalism during the 1990s made way for a new discourse of aspirations which values competition, economy and status – over time, young people have taken up neoliberal discourses of aspiration as they construct their subjectivities. The study of formations of working-class masculinities during a period of social change and how these masculinities are performed in the context of differing social spaces and conditions remains an ongoing and important project (Miles et al., 2011; Stahl, 2022). Drawing on intersectional theorizing that engages both structural and cultural perspectives and therefore has the potential to disrupt narrow, binary conceptions of class and gender disadvantage, we contend that we need to think critically regarding how men who are first-in-family enter the discursive space of the university and how they come to understand their own positionality within the space; such an investigation we argue highlights the intersectional nature of their journeys as well as the relationship between neoliberalism, subjectivities and masculinities (see Cornwall et al., 2016; Stahl et al., 2017).

Masculinities in Higher Education

The transition to higher education for students from working-class backgrounds is precarious. Reay (1998, p. 520) writes how students continue to ‘negotiate increasingly complex, differentiated educational fields in which they have widely disparate access to the range of resources necessary to decode the field.’ This can also be a struggle with belonging. While individuals move ‘in and out of different identity positions’ (Reay et al. 2009, p. 1115), working-class students may feel like what Bourdieu calls a ‘fish out of water’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127), strangers to both themselves and to others. Scanlon et al. (2020) write of how, in the

first few months of university, students from non-traditional backgrounds will experience feelings of isolation and what they call ‘class-cultural discontinuities.’ For men from working-class backgrounds – many of whom struggled with school or were surrounded by other working-class boys who did – education is often associated with a feeling of disempowerment. To nuance this further, in theorizing the complex and contradictory patterns of urban masculinities in the United Kingdom, Archer et al. (2001) note that working-class men recognize that further education could improve their long-term prospects but that pursuing the pathway entailed “‘giving up” strong working-class identities’ (p. 443). We accept that as we analyse the ways in which working-class masculinities are subjugated, masculinity – particularly White masculinity – does have certain privileges ascribed to it, though these are heavily mediated by class.

As stated in the previous section, scholars continue to draw attention to the influence of massive economic transformation on gender participation and relations (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Weis, 2003) which have framed the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Within these shifts, many scholars have documented how young working-class men renounce the ‘mental’ for the ‘manual’ (see Swain, 2005 for a full listing of this research). In renouncing the cerebral, Swain (2005, p. 167) calls attention to how there exists a degree of class antagonism – a bourgeoisie-proletariat dichotomy at play. Documenting the rise in globalization and what this may mean for working-class masculinities – and more specifically working-class employment opportunities – Kenway et al. (2006) claim that we are increasingly witnessing to ‘melancholic masculinities’ infused with a sense of nostalgia for a bygone era of industrial labour. In a knowledge economy, working-class men have been required to adapt where education and training have come to mean something very different. In Australia, this has been overt in terms of robust marketing around the importance of university study and TAFE, but also more subtle with a substantial rise in micro-credentialing for all trade work.

We now focus on theorizing masculinities in higher education. Critical to our understanding of the journey of first-in-family males is how, when they engage in pathways which dissociate themselves from (manual) work, they are often compelled to find new ways to produce their masculine subjectivities, and this is often in relation to middle-class forms of masculinity (Stahl, 2022). As identities are multiple, fluid and shifting, the research of Archer et al. (2001) calls attention to how some discourses of masculinity may exercise greater power and dominance than other forms, contributing to the production of subjectivities. Such gendered hierarchies contribute to how young men come to experience the space of the university and how they marshal resources in order to ensure their success. In what is described as the ‘struggle for discursive control of the symbols of masculinity,’ the men in Archer et al.’s (2001) study ‘drew on racialised, classed patriarchal discourses and hegemonic masculine identities, with which HE was positioned as incompatible (e.g., as not “cool” or as contradicting

the “breadwinner” or “manual worker” identity demands)’ (p. 441). This highlights the complexity of the identity negotiations involved for upwardly mobile working-class young men.

In her research on men in higher education, Burke (2009, p. 84) writes: ‘Masculine subjectivity as a concept helps to understand the ways that individual men construct their identities as situated subjects within complex social and cultural networks and sites, such as schools and colleges.’ A diversity of masculinities are enacted and experienced as young men shift from their secondary schools into university study and the labour force. Adding another dimension to how we understand masculinities and identity negotiations in higher education, Kimmel and Davis (2011) highlight how discourses of masculinity can often lead to men engaging in self-destructive forms of masculine behaviour at university. This has been echoed in other work on masculinities in higher education, particularly regarding the relationship between excessive drinking and emotional management (Capraro, 2000), and sexual misconduct (Phipps, 2015). Underpinning how we come to understand these behaviours are theories associated with shame, homosociality, masculine gender-role stress and depression. Capraro (2000) focuses on the paradox of masculinity where men are both powerful and powerless as they transition to university life and begin to understand themselves within powerful gendered discourses. Kimmel and Davis (2011) call attention to what they call the ‘Guy Code’ which comes to the fore in higher education and serves as a barrier to the expression of ‘feelings of hurt or anything resembling weakness,’ as well as certain violations of the gendered regulations (p. 11). To understand how to counteract these unhealthy behaviours effectively, Kimmel and Davis (2011) highlight how we need to ‘accurately understand the socio-cultural construction of masculinities’ (p. 10) so that boys and men can ‘be vulnerable, honest, and open with each other and learn how to become men’ (p. 13).

The First-in-Family Males Project

The *First-in-Family Males Project* explored the transition of first-in-family males (n = 42) from high school into university over a three-year period. The project did not only focus on the boys’ aspirations in terms of their education and future employment, but we also spoke about their values and motivation, their interests and hobbies, as well as their peers, romantic relationships and familial responsibilities. Participants were recruited from two urban low-socioeconomic areas, the northern suburbs of Adelaide and the western suburbs of Sydney. Using recorded data across school sites in areas of severe socio-economic disadvantage, we worked closely with secondary school leadership teams to identify potential first-in-family males within cohorts where few students went on to university. Follow-up interviews were then conducted every six months for the two following

years regardless of whether the participants were able to make university work for them.

Where possible, throughout the research, we drew on feminist methodologies to reduce power inequalities between ourselves and the participants with the aim of a collaborative and mutually constituting relationship between researcher and subject. Specifically, we considered the research relationship as ‘mutually enriching, dialogic, and vigilant of obstructive cultural assumptions’ (see Powell & Takayoshi, 2003, p. 401). It was important to find ways, however small, to break down the traditional ‘experimenter’ and ‘subject’ relationship (Fine, 1992). Not only were we delicate in asking the participants sensitive questions regarding poverty and social disadvantage, but we also feel the garnered data was only possible through forming powerful trusting relationships. We invested heavily in rapport building and establishing a relaxed atmosphere over the course of three years.

In focusing on the identity negotiations of working-class boys, this chapter considers some of the identity practices and performativities within the discursive spaces of higher education. We work from the assumption that university is a space where there is both a narrowing and opening up of repertoires of gendered identity practices (see Stahl & McDonald 2022; Stahl et al., 2020). The transition to university requires young people from non-traditional backgrounds to reflect on their own positionality as they become exposed to those from entirely different class backgrounds. For the young first-in-family males in this study, the majority did not know other people their age going to university and there was a lot of misinformation about what university entailed (see Stahl, 2022). In mapping the identity practices of first-in-family males we consider how, as a group, they negotiate experiences with subordination and marginalization and how their negotiations are not uniform. As Harper (2004) notes, there is a ‘paucity of research regarding masculine variability’ in men from non-traditional backgrounds attending university (p. 94). The present study seeks to fill this void. Exploring and understanding gender as discursively constructed, we focus on how the identities of first-in-family young men change as they adapt to the university space. Such adaptations are not only underpinned by gendered and classed norms which contribute to the formation of their subjectivities but also entail what Archer et al. (2001) refer to as ‘the identity risks’ (p. 445) and reformulating foundational aspects of their working-class identity in order to become socially mobile.

Findings

Becoming Themselves: Acclimatizing to University Life

Robust within the sociology of education is documenting how difficult the transition to higher education is for students from working-class

backgrounds, largely in terms of forging social relationships (Archer et al, 2000; Crozier et al., 2019; MacFarlane, 2018). Scanlon et al. (2020) and others have called attention to the honeymoon period where students from non-traditional backgrounds are initially excited to be at university and feel a sense of authentic achievement. This honeymoon period is a liminal time where the focus is on acclimation both socially and academically. Yet, research continues to show there is a sense of anxiety underneath the excitement as students work at aligning themselves with authentic university student identities.

Yeah, I definitely feel as if there is a minimum standard that you have to uphold in terms of identity, it's like, I don't know, it's just the whole culture of first year university, everyone is so defensive, worried, concerned, so they're really just – put a sort of mask on, sort of thing, but comparing to now, I just don't really care. I'll just do me.

(Campbell)

Campbell, who was attending a university in Sydney's central business district, made adaptations to his identity during the first few weeks of university but then, once he felt comfortable, scaled back his investment on wanting to fit in and let the 'mask' slip. He describes the acclimation period as one that is highly affective – a time of anxiety not only about fitting in but also about meeting a particular standard in terms of identity – yet in downplaying these feelings, he also calls attention to how the first year of university is an affective experience for 'everyone.' Tobias, similarly, felt that it took time for him to show his true personality as he worked to conform in the initial weeks of university.

Well I reckon, well especially for me, I reckon it takes a bit of time to, like show off my personality, and stuff like that, like I'm very – like I'll be very introverted in the fact that I'll keep to myself until I can get a bit more comfortable in the group, like I know, like most people would ... Yeah, so I find, like yeah, probably it's kind of like that, sort of thing, like I mean, like conforming your identity, is like, oh, for the first couple of weeks it was like, 'oh, he's a bit quiet or stuff like that,' and then, whack, probably like afterwards, it's like, 'oh, yeah, a bit better, a bit better person to talk to and stuff like that.'

(Tobias)

For both Tobias and Campbell, there is a sense of both watching and conforming to the ways in which they see other students behave before they feel comfortable to 'remove the mask' and be themselves. Their words suggest an awareness of conforming to certain normalized expectations around university student subjectivities.

Another prominent theme in the study of students from non-traditional backgrounds is their lack of access to the full university experience. For the most part, the young men in the *First-in-Family Males Project* did not pursue clubs and societies as many found the costs prohibitive and had quite long commutes to the university itself. Levi here describes how his attendance at university events happened in the second semester of his first year.

I definitely feel like it was more towards the second semester after I settled in after – like I tried to get myself involved in uni activities as well. I went to uni games and did other stuff on campuses and like events and stuff, so I definitely put all that into the spectrum. I definitely think more towards the second semester I’ve sort of started that. But I definitely think there’s still more to come in terms of finishing my degree and doing all the activities. So definitely first semester was still settling in and – but as I got to second semester, I sort of started coming out and I definitely think it ...

(Levi)

We see how Levi needed time to become comfortable with the university before he was able to engage in campus culture, and he projected that as the university continued his involvement would grow. Higher education is a future-focused place; by its very nature, it compels students to be agentic and to make the best of it. Furthermore, for the participants in the study, the discursive space of higher education was largely one of employability. Many spoke of the competitive culture in their courses (see Stahl, 2022). We would argue this is at odds with traditional notions of Australian working-class masculinities, such as the amiable and easy-going ‘Aussie “bloke” identity,’ as ‘aspirational markers of doing manhood’ (Whitman, 2013, p. 61). Nichols and Stahl’s (2017) research with young mainly middle-class men in Australia highlighted the need to perform an ‘easy-going’ and ‘going with the flow’ masculinity and the difficulties in acclimating to a competitive university context. For Isaac, he found it difficult to navigate the tension of, on the one hand being a proactive and studious university student and, on the other hand, projecting the identity of being what he calls ‘approachable.’ When we spoke to Isaac after his first few weeks of university study, he said:

I felt like I probably should have known more than I did. I don’t know. I felt like because I’m at uni now I should probably know more because others around me, you know, you see them get better marks than you, you think, well, that sucks ... There’s new faces and stuff, so probably [it is a bit] I wouldn’t say intimidating, but someone who knows what they’re talking about confidently rather than sitting back. I don’t know really know. I was a bit ... Yeah. You just wanted to come across like ... Well, for myself I wanted to come across approachable and

stuff, but I think, like you said, the first few days when everyone sees, everyone's almost judging people ... What you're wearing, what you're doing because obviously, new people.

(Isaac)

Here we not only see the tension between social and institutional acceptance, but that Isaac wants to be taken seriously and feels insecure about not measuring up to the standards he has set for himself (e.g. 'I probably should have known more than I did'). Furthermore, Isaac suggests he was a high achiever in the working-class secondary school context but at university, he struggles when surrounded by a critical mass of high achievers. Here his feelings are not simply about academic ability, but more about the identity he performs. Furthermore, in considering the role of gender, the masculine subjectivity he performed at secondary school may not carry the same currency in highly academic university settings (see Stahl, 2022).

Despite the increase in marketing around higher education and the jubilant atmosphere around Orientation Week, for the most part the participants saw university as a serious space and did not treat their university experience casually. Lucas, who was studying at an elite university, commented on how he perceived the space as having a high degree of professionalism.

I think it was a bit more of a professional environment sort of thing. There was this, ooh, it's university sort of thing. You've got to be professional. I remember I was wearing a buttoned-up shirt going to uni for the first few weeks, being this professional person, that sort of thing. But I kind of realized that's not what university's just about. Professionalism is a big part of it and you're making friends that you have interests with, that you share common principles, beliefs, that sort of thing. And so you're kind of ... It kind of became part of the perceived need to take that out. Very quickly, you realize yeah, no you don't. You be yourself and it's the best thing to do, sort of thing.

(Lucas)

For Lucas, whose father is a self-employed concreter and mother worked as a part-time secretary, his idea of what 'professionalism' entailed was tied to his experiences in Youth Parliament and images of people working in 'the professions,' or white-collar jobs (see Stahl & McDonald, 2019 for more detail). After his initial weeks at university, Lucas came to recognize new-to-him elements of 'professionalism' that are not necessarily, in terms of masculinity, about wearing specific clothing such as button-up shirts. Lucas comes to recognize how, within the domain of his elite university, professionalism also entails networking in terms of joining social groups/making friends, and authenticity (see Stahl & McDonald, 2019). Overall, for the young men in our study, there was an aspect of watching and getting the lay of the land

in those early weeks and months at university as they worked to understand where they fit. Pollard and Filer (2007, p. 448) write how ‘discourses provide viable “ways to be” (subjectivities), and the construction of pupil identities is seen as a process of struggle and of negotiation, rejection, acceptance and ambivalence.’ As the young men in our study entered higher education, they were presented with new discourses (for example, around professionalism and authenticity) and the initial period of university then became about coming to understand their place within this new discourse.

Being Themselves: Connecting at University

As previously mentioned, research continues to show how working-class students struggle to fit in and belong at university. However, for some this struggle is not so pronounced. Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009) found that working-class students in one elite university actually felt a strong sense of belonging to the higher education space which contrasted greatly with their working-class secondary schools where they ‘had been mocked for working hard’ (p. 1111). For young men, specifically working-class young men, a studious identity can place them outside what is acceptable in terms of gender. Given societal messages around masculinity and strength, there is a struggle with becoming both masculine and academically successful (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Francis, 2006; Stahl, 2022). We too also found this theme apparent in our data. When we asked the young men if they felt a pressure to construct a different sort of identity in the university environment, many said that it was the university where they felt more like themselves.

Not really. I feel like if anything I’m more myself at uni.

(Johnny)

No. I feel like I could be more myself in university rather than at school. So, I guess I didn’t have to construct a new identity. It was just showing my real identity. (Adam)

I don’t think so because I actually feel comfortable being myself at uni and I think that’s what attracts people to me. I’m myself. I don’t seem fake; I come off as someone else.

(Samuel)

For Manny, who was from a Pacific Islander background and enrolled in an engineering course, his response to the question was more nuanced where he drew comparisons to his learner identity at university as well as the change in identities he saw in his friends from secondary school:

MANNY: No, I was straight into being me.

RESEARCHER: That’s good because a lot of people do feel pressure.

MANNY: No, I can tell, I've seen some of my mates, they kind of changed a bit since high school and I'm like okay, okay and then there's me still being me from high school.

RESEARCHER: Okay, which is your comfort zone.

MANNY: Yeah, I'm just loud and proud and laughing super loud, making jokes with random people I don't even know.

While Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009) assert that the high-achieving working-class students were confident in their 'ability to successfully move across two very different fields?' where the versatility began to develop in early schooling' (p. 1105), previous research on working-class boyhood has noted how young men can present a subjectivity around 'loyalty to self' (Stahl, 2014) where they had a strong disposition towards trying to not act like something they were not. Manny's loyalty to self – his 'loud and proud' performance – does, we assume, make him appear confident and authentic (which we saw was important to other participants, namely Isaac and Tobias). However, we do not know what currency these dispositions necessarily carried at university beyond the honeymoon period. Kinsley too speaks of having confidence, specifically the confidence to adapt to the new environment:

I think I was kind of like ... Yeah, that's a good question as well because I'm definitely, I was definitely different to high school, but I think that was more because I just didn't have people around me to talk to. Like I did, but I didn't really think, oh you know, in all these [university] classes I'll be enthusiastic but I won't, like you know, when we walk in and just be like 'Hey everyone on the table, my name's Kinsley,' I'll just go with the flow kind of. So I think I definitely had like a separate kind of identity, but I feel like it's just more truer to myself, kind of, as in like ... 'Cause in high school, like in class I didn't talk much, but around everyone else, like I was very cheerful – and I am still very cheerful – but I like just listening to music and being quiet and just walking around, just appreciating like the sun on my face and the wind going through my clothes and stuff.'

(Kinsley)

Kinsley's words highlight some of the isolation of secondary school ('I just didn't have people around me to talk to') where he did not really feel a connection with the other students. Importantly, Kinsley feels more authentic at university ('truer to myself') suggesting he feels a bit more confident in making purposeful connections. There is also a suggestion that Kinsley feels less pressure towards the social at university – the less structured aspect of university life may mean there is no pressure to socialize with students at set times and not stand out for being alone.

Experiences with Class Prejudice

For the most part, the boys in the *First-in-Family Males Project* did not verbalize feelings of class prejudice, though where there was evidence of class prejudice was with the boys who attended elite institutions where they interacted with more affluent students (Stahl, 2022).

RESEARCHER: When you first came to university, did you feel you had to construct a new identity for yourself?

TOBIAS: Yes and no. I feel like the big stigma is being from the northern suburbs that's for sure, because everyone, most people are from down south, because they're like it's easier to go to the uni. But it's like very where-you-from sort of thing. That's a big one. It's like if I say [Eyre Park], they'll be like, 'Where's that?' 'Near Elizabeth.' 'Where's that?' 'Elizabeth.' And like, 'Eyre Park, what?' And disregard kind of like there's this kind of weird stigma around that sort of thing.

While Tobias saw this geographical prejudice as a barrier, he did not let it deter him from progressing at university. For the most part, his words suggest he was just aware of it though clearly the experience compelled him to reflect on his personal history and his aspirations.

TOBIAS: Yeah, but I feel like people do, do feel like stereotypes for sure. They are like, 'Yeah, why do you live there?' Sort of thing, which is I feel like it was hard to try and get around. But I feel like now it's not as bad ... yeah, for sure, no, so yeah, which is good. But I feel like, no, that's for sure. It's kind of like a big stigma. Probably still is. It probably still will be for [awhile].

When the other students do not recognize his suburb, or the suburbs surrounding it, this demonstrates for Tobias that this is a place where these students do not go. Tobias recognizes that there is a stigma about where he lives, which also means there are assumptions made about him. According to Davies (1982), the self is: 'exposed to competing discourses, so we are positioned in different ways and have the opportunity to see ourselves in different ways' (p. 238). This creates a fragility of self and requires, according to Davies, constant maintenance work on the self (Davies 1982). As Tobias replies 'yes and no' when asked if he constructed a new identity, we see how his sense of self experiences some fragility as he moves into higher education. In acknowledging the stigma and stereotypes attached to where he lives, Tobias recognizes that while he has not constructed a new identity for himself, in this elite space, a new identity is constructed for him so that being from the northern suburbs becomes part of who he is within this new space.

Discussion and Recommendations

We are interested in the ways in which boys from working-class and working-poor backgrounds describe how they adapt their identity to align with the university; as we understand gender to be discursively constructed, we are interested in the degrees of adaptation. While we have explored trends in the cohort and delineated two different themes (e.g. acclimatizing and connecting), the data suggests there are significant variations in masculine performances even within these themes. Within studies of masculinities, Anderson (2012), Christensen and Jensen (2014) as well as Stahl and Loeser (2018) argue that understanding the experiences and consequences of social and economic change requires new tools. We have seen a broadening of what is meant by masculinities as well as an uncoupling of masculinities from male bodies. In this uncoupling, the power of discourse to contribute to the construction of subjectivities is at the forefront of how we understand masculinities. With this in mind, our analysis must consider how working-class masculine subjectivities are changing often in relation to wider social change (Stahl, 2022), each in a mutually informing dialectic. Furthermore, in terms of variation, in his study of African-American men in predominantly White higher education institutions, Harper (2004) documents a diversity of identity practices, performativities and different modes of masculinity as well as a versatility to change in accordance with what is expected. These variations and versatility highlight some of the dimensions involved with becoming upwardly mobile and contrast with previous empirical work on working-class males which draws on certain historically validated dispositions to resist new societal expectations (Stahl, 2017).

In terms of policy recommendation, we draw here on international research, specifically the strategy of sending non-traditional students to university in small groups to guard against the risk of social isolation. Evidence suggests that such an approach guards against university withdrawal and, by promoting a collective spirit, it can serve as a buffer for students from non-traditional backgrounds who may struggle to feel like they belong. Davis et al. (2011) describe how male bonding ‘can become congruent with inclusive, pro-social, and healthy masculinities’ because young men ‘need a place where they can feel vulnerable, honest, and open with each other’ (pp. 150, 159). Drawing on theories of masculinities and ‘affective sociality,’ we contend that young men value spaces where there is, drawing on the words of Loeser (2014) ‘active engagement with the care of the self at the same time as caring for others’ (p. 194). Our data suggests this as an important leverage point as, after all, an integral aspect of belonging is the opportunity to care for others. Given what we know about the discursive construction of masculinities and how masculinities are enacted and performed during the transition to university, the purposeful and strategic fostering of relational connections between young men who are first-in-family seems logical. Such connections could aid in how they come to adapt their identities.

Conclusion

Research focused on how young men perform and maintain masculine identities and how this is done in relation to social change and the expectations of institutions remains a fascinating and important area of study. In conducting our research, the aim was to try and capture aspects of upwardly mobile working-class masculinities within a certain time and place. We hoped to highlight the diversity of experiences, including those where working-class young men experience higher education as an opportunity to engage in masculine identities less available to them during compulsory schooling. It is our hope that our analysis extends analytical work regarding what Morgan (2005) calls the ‘masculinities of class’ or ‘the class of masculinity’ as the boys in the study are both gendered and classed but their understandings of both are undergoing change. Finally, clearly the journeys of these young men are shaped by a variety of intersectional identity vectors and, in focusing primarily on gender and class, do not dispute the salience of race/ethnicity, disability, mental health and geographical location. It is our hope that the study of students from non-traditional backgrounds continues to focus on intersectional identity vectors in order to inform more nuanced forms of support as well as more inclusive spaces.

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3 Gendered Precarity, Intersectionality and Barriers to Higher Education for Women Seeking Asylum in Australia

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Introduction

The United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated in 2021 that only 5 per cent of refugees have access to higher education, compared with 39 per cent of the global population (UNHCR, 2021). Without access to higher education, refugees and people seeking asylum (PSA) are denied opportunities to develop the capacities and knowledge to sustain their livelihoods and to contribute to their communities and host societies. While there are many more opportunities to engage in education in resettlement contexts, barriers persist with regard to accessing higher education. In the Australian context, as discussed in this chapter, these barriers differ depending on visa status: for permanent protection holders (refugees)—who are able to access domestic places and fee-deferral packages—the challenges are more tacit, with cultural and system-level assumptions leading to unintended exclusion (Stevenson & Baker, 2018), resulting in high levels of attrition (Molla, 2019). In contrast, for people who are on bridging visas or have been given temporary protection (PSA), the barriers are greater. If PSA are deemed eligible for protection in Australia because of their application onshore (as opposed to being offered resettlement via the “offshore program” in countries of asylum), the Department of Home Affairs issues them with one of two temporary visas: a three-year Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) or a five-year Safe Haven Enterprise Visa (SHEV), and pathways to permanent protection are extremely limited (Refugee Council of Australia, 2021). This hostile policy forces asylum seekers into precarity, with limited employment and education rights and a sense of hopelessness from the unlikelihood of permanency inhibiting “resettlement” or self-determining the future.

This hostile policy is highly significant for higher education, as universities are forced to recognise them as full-fee-paying international students. Thus, the temporary protection classification has created a sub-class of refugee students who are excluded from full participation in Australia by

virtue of their visa status, unless they can secure one of the small numbers of fee-waiving scholarships available (Refugee Education Special Interest Group, 2021). The primary driver for these challenges is their ineligibility for domestic places and their exclusion from federal government income support programs or supports designed to assist students with financing higher study and concession rates. Accordingly, they are generally required to pay international student fees in order to attend tertiary education (comprising Vocational Education and Training and university) in Australia which is financially prohibitive for most PSA. As such, PSA may successfully complete secondary schooling in Australia and qualify for entry into university but are then prohibited from continuing their education because of the high fees (Hirsch & Maylea, 2016). In addition to their ineligibility for student income support, there is also a lack of access to alternative pathway courses and government-funded English language courses (Hartley et al., 2018).

While the impacts of this situation on students, institutions (staff members) and refugee advocates have been reported (Hartley et al., 2019) and critiqued (Hirsch & Maylea, 2016; White, 2017), the gendered implications of access to higher education in these contexts have not yet been explored. Moreover, the implications of precarity on access to higher education for PSA are underexplored. Drawing on Flores Garrido's (2020) work on precarity from a feminist perspective, which highlights the lens of intersectionality as critical to fostering a more nuanced understanding of the lived experience of precarity, we understand precarity as denoting experiences characterised by uncertainty and instability, with the challenges of temporariness a key constituent of this. We use this understanding to develop a rich understanding of the key factors and processes that render access to higher education inaccessible to many women seeking asylum (WSA), particularly those who have already gained tertiary qualifications in their home countries and want to continue their professional careers in the resettlement context. As such, we respond to our research questions:

- RQ1. How do WSA experience higher education in their home country, and hope for access to higher education in Australia?
- RQ2. How can Flores Garrido's (2020) work on precarity from a feminist perspective help us to understand the impact of gender on experiences of accessing, and understanding barriers to accessing higher education as a WSA?

Gendered Precarity and Intersectionality

Precarity

Precarity is a condition that results in a “vulnerability to suffering” through our exposure to others whose actions can impact us (Lobo, 2020, 6). In this sense, precarity is something that all humans potentially face, although

the extent that we experience it can depend on how we in particular are treated by others. Indeed, precarity is a condition that is often unequally distributed, reflecting that the dominant values where we are situated will determine whose lives are to be protected and nurtured and whose are not (Butler, 2012).

Precarity is commonly understood in reference to marginal and casualised or contingent work in association with post-welfare states, especially in Europe and North America (Ettlinger, 2007; Waite, 2009). While this understanding of precarity emphasises a generalised condition of vulnerable employment, our chapter extends accounts of precarity beyond specific understandings of labour regimes to recognise both the conditions and ambiguities of precarity in the migration context. In the Australian context, van Kooy and Bowman (2019) explore precarity in relation to people from asylum-seeking backgrounds in Australia and highlight in particular the insecurity and alienation experienced by PSA in relation to employment. They observe that,

people seeking asylum expend their energies on individual coping and survival strategies, such as “keeping quiet” to preserve employment relationships and attempting to avoid recognition as asylum seekers.
(2019, p. 705)

This is contrary to how some others have considered precarity, seeing it as “both a condition and a possible point of mobilisation among those experiencing precarity” (Waite 2009, p. 413). Key themes from van Kooy and Bowman’s (2019) work are similarly reflected in Canefe’s (2018) research with women refugees from Syria, who argues that precarity is seen as a selectively applied strategy by states to people who lack “status” or who are unable to benefit from “membership rights”.

Despite the growing scholarly interest in precarity, conceptualising how gender interacts with experiences of precarity remains underexplored. Feminist and gender scholarship, though, offer some insights. Judith Butler (2009, p. ii) argues “precarity is, of course, directly linked with gender norms, since we know that those who do not live their genders in intelligible ways are at heightened risk for harassment and violence”. In the context of employment, it has been shown that gendered division of labour often actively constructs jobs for women as inferior and, therefore, more prone to precarity (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2014; Young, 2010). Historically, the bodies of women have been less valued and understood as dependent on the protection of men for their vital subsistence (Flores Garrido, 2020). In this context, authors like Gutiérrez-Rodríguez (2014) propose the term precarity of feminisation to visualise the degradation of every social activity culturally associated with the identity of women, which results in precarity. This is especially the case with regard to childbirth, child-rearing and workers through domestic and care work, activities that have been historically

devalued, unpaid and not seen as having economic value (Fraser, 2016). This particular account of precarity and gender, while important, does not take into how gender may interact with other markers of identity to shape experiences of precarity. For example, for WSA navigating life in a resettlement context, identity markers such as age, dis/ability, religion, class and length of displacement intersect to create a diversity of experiences within the category of “woman” (Yacob-Haliso, 2016). In short, current accounts of gendered precarity do not meaningfully account for intersectionality.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality, first identified by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), acknowledges that “people’s social identities can overlap, creating compounding experiences of discrimination” (UN Women, 2020). This approach accounts for lived experiences of “overlapping, concurrent forms of oppression” (Crenshaw in UN Women, 2020) as WSA seek to participate in higher education in resettlement contexts. Holvino’s (2010) asserts that intersectionality:

attends to the ways in which race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation are not just about a personal and individual identity, but about the social and institutional processes that determine opportunities, which also produce and reproduce racial, gender, class, and other social differences.
(p. 587)

Following this, Flores Garrido’s (2020) argument that the category of woman has a different meaning and designates a different lived experience for different women is particularly illuminating for understanding the gendered experiences of WSA, because gender relations are never constructed and performed in isolation: they are always interacting with other axes of oppression like race, ethnicity, class, geographical belonging, among others. She argues that a rich understanding of precarity needs to move beyond the dichotomous of “precarious” and “non-precarious” to “a complex reality and lived experience in which precarity is understood like a continuum” (p. 587).

Gender

A rich understanding of gender needs to move beyond the dichotomous binary of “woman” and “man”. In this chapter, we use the gender identity of “woman” given this was the category that our collaborators use and identify with. However, we see the category of women and gender identity as contingent, depending upon a material context and a set of cultural and ideological forces that are constantly negotiated by social subjects. For example, in the Western context gender identities are less rigid than they were when being a “woman” was focused primarily on unpaid domestic and

care work. Despite this, new opportunities for women to access employment and higher education occur in the context of widespread precarity, in which it is more and more difficult to survive and fulfil the notion of “success” and of having a job that is rewarding, interesting and that provides enough financial freedom and independence. As argued by Flores Garrido (2020), this fantasy works as a technology of gender that promotes new ways of doing gender, ways in which precarity is lived not only as a material condition but also as a lived, embodied experience, in which women negotiate their experiences through difficult contradictions and deep attachments to their work, as precarious as this is.

How does this understanding of gender and precarity help us understand the experiences of WSA who have been forced to migrate to Australia due to a pervasive and violent precarity in their home countries? We argue that including the concept of intersectionality and methodology that can capture this is critical. An intersectional methodology calls for “systemic critiques of oppression... and exploitation as collective, systematic processes and institutions of rule that are gendered and raced” (Mohanty, 2013). We explore this gendered, intersectional precarity of three WSA and their experience of higher education in their home country and in Australia.

Background of the Study

Growing awareness of the multiple layers of disadvantages impacting PSA has driven increased research into educational inclusion for this population. As discussed in the introduction, studies reveal the compounded pressures facing people on temporary visas in Australia, who are ineligible for government-subsidised university places and are therefore required to pay international student fees (Burke et al., 2020; Hartley et al., 2018, 2019). In Perth, Western Australia, where the current research was undertaken, only two universities offer full fee-waving scholarships to PSA on temporary visas. This limits the options available to people who are living with a bridging visa until their asylum application has been finalised.

In addition to these challenges facing people with temporary visa status, there are gender-specific obstacles to higher education for many people who identify as women. Yet gender issues remain underexplored within displacement research. Through completing a scoping study, we found that there was limited literature that engages with the experience of WSA who wish to access higher education. The unique position of temporary visas is either not addressed or accounted for, and/or the experiences of PSA are conflated with women who have permanent residency. This perpetuates the barriers for this group as the gaps in policy and support provision are not identified and addressed. With this in mind, we developed a participatory study to explore higher education access for people who identify as women and are living in the Australian community with a bridging visa or TPV/SHEV.

Methodology

A collaborative, participatory approach underpinned this research, in which we sought to engage with all team members, including participants with lived experiences of displacement, as “agents, stakeholders and co-researchers” (Liamputtong et al., 2016, p. 401). The WSA volunteered themselves to participate after a call was put out to various community networks about the research project. More women were interested in collaborating but were unable to do due to time commitments. Two guided discussion sessions were conducted over a period of four months with three women with lived experience seeking asylum in Australia and two Perth-based members of the research team. We also had an initial meeting when we jointly negotiated the parameters of the enquiry and refined the interview questions to better reflect the participants’/co-researchers’ goals and experiences. This meeting was pivotal to breaking down the “researcher”/“researched” power dynamic and provide an opportunity to discuss the focus group approach. All three co-researchers with lived experiences of displacement were also involved in the data analysis and in the writing process for the purposes of this chapter.

Co-Researchers – Women Seeking Asylum

In full acknowledgement of our privilege—as a team of four Western, English-speaking, higher educated, white women—we seek to privilege the experiences and voices of the three co-researchers from asylum-seeking backgrounds: Atefeh, Mrs Babar and Fatema. These women live in Perth, Western Australia. All three were professionals with tertiary qualifications in their country of origin. Two of them, Mrs Babar and Fatema, are married with children who are all living in Perth. At the time of interviewing, only Atefeh had their asylum application claim processed and held a temporary SHEV. Mrs Babar and Fatema were living in the community on temporary bridging visas.

Guided Conversations and Collaborative Analysis

The findings presented in this chapter emerged from two guided conversations between three of the four academic researchers and the WSA. This method draws on guided conversation approaches (Fleay et al., 2021), as researchers led the conversation with a list of open-ended and semi-structured questions, which were negotiated in a first conversation with the four researchers and three WSA. In the subsequent conversation, Lisa, Bec, Atefeh, Mrs Babar and Fatema met again to respond to the questions and then undertake collaborative data analysis, which yielded a further depth of understanding of the themes as we all had time to reflect on what came up during the first conversation and had established stronger relationships as a group.

Gendered Precarity among Women Seeking Asylum

The following themes emerged from collaborative thematic analysis of the two guided discussions with Atefeh, Mrs Babar and Fatema. We argue that four forms of precarity underscore the women's experience of accessing higher education in their home country and their hope for access to higher education in Australia. We demonstrate that these forms of precarity are interconnected and are impacted by gendered, cultural and socio-political factors which act as barriers to educational inclusion. In their home countries, precarity surrounding the women's bodily and spatial existence is demonstrated through the challenging experiences of studying male-dominated degrees while living in countries where gender norms make it extremely precarious to exist as a woman outside of traditional gender norms. This precarity is compounded by political instability and conflict. In the resettlement context, the barriers facing WSA accessing higher education can be understood as intersecting between their gender identity and their precarious legal status which precludes them from accessing affordable higher education and a range of supports. This precarity was further compounded by challenges relating to traditional cultural gender role/expectations which were key to all of these women's past, present and future experiences of education and employment. Finally, the precarity of time is demonstrated by the ways in which social and cultural expectations of their womanhood compromised the time available to forge pathways to higher education and meaningful work in Australia.

Existence

This overarching theme denotes how the unstable and hostile socio-political environments that each of the women faced in their homelands negatively impacted their experiences of studying at university. Atefeh, Mrs Babar and Fatema shared their motivations for wanting to access higher education both in their homelands and in their settlement country of Australia. Each discussed how being a woman shaped their experiences of higher education in their homelands of Iran, Pakistan and Iraq. At the same time, their motivation to access higher education was precisely because they were women, holding a deep desire to break down patriarchal norms which often exclude women from higher education, or to particular disciplines and/or professions.

Atefeh discussed growing up in one of the biggest cities in Iran as "a very masculine [city], like, women were not able to do much ... although [the men] were not drinking but they are so aggressive, like, they shout, they yell, they hit women. A lot of violence". Although her family life was free from such violence, she described how growing up in this male-dominated, hostile, socio-political environment was the catalyst for her wanting to study higher education:

[T]he feminisms inside me were building up, it comes up the point that I couldn't even stand any men, you know, I couldn't handle them, I couldn't be with them in a safe environment ... the passion of being someone important, someone useful, it was always inside me ... I was thinking only by studying I can reach to that point. I was thinking, like, if I study well, if I get, you know, I can get a good position in life, or this sort of thing. Since I was a child, it was on my mind.

In a similar way, Mrs Babar's motivation to study higher education and to become a lawyer in northwest Pakistan was derived from her experience witnessing the devastating and pervasive impacts of domestic violence against women in her community. She described witnessing her maid come to her house with bruises on her face:

I ask for my dad, "How can I help, like, these women?" Then my dad told me that if you want to do something you have to become a lawyer, and then fight for them. And that was from the childhood I want to become a lawyer ... my ambition was that to do something for these women, not for myself.

Fatema grew up in Baghdad in Iraq and discussed the oppressive impact that ongoing conflicts had on the mentality of people in her community, describing how people were "very tired, angry, irritated, and aggressive ... it's hard to have childhood in such area" which also resulted in particular expectations of women and what they can contribute to. She discussed how in Iraq women either:

get married or you study and do something. And for me, I wanted myself to be educated, to study and maybe see the world from this point ... So I choose engineering. Although my grade allow me to go medical field, which is preferred by families in our community, much more than engineering, especially for women. They just say, "Oh, engineering, what are you thinking? you won't get job, it's hard, you won't manage with men".

Not only did the women's experience of gender inequality and injustice influence their decision to want to study at university in the first place, the unstable and hostile political environments that each woman faced in their homelands significantly impacted their experiences studying at university. Atefeh described the extreme precarity while studying for an undergraduate physics degree at a university in Tehran in Iran. She recounted feeling unsafe to fully express herself due to the control of Iranian regime, which was compounded by her gender identity as a woman:

Studying in university ... you have to pass security check every time you went into the university, and it's only for women, not for the boys ...

Every day I was going to university I was just, like, giving myself, like, swearing to myself, like, “Why, why do they have to do this to us?” ... You don’t feel safe, you don’t feel safe at all. For example, they can easily arrest you because your dress is short ... you were not allowed to wear anything, make-up, when you want to go. You have nail polish, they give you the things to remove it.

Fatema reflected on Atefeh’s experience and identified the insecurity and fear that followed her as she studied for her engineering undergraduate degree in Iraq. In contrast to Atefeh’s experience where her dress was strictly regulated by the Iranian regime, Fatema discussed that while how a woman chooses to dress isn’t against the law, “they reject you when you don’t wear [the hijab]. You are not welcome anywhere, you hear still, you hear these words, ‘you are not welcome’, wherever you go ... you cannot live normally”.

Fatema’s gender identity as a woman also intersected with her religious identity which compounded the precarity of space she occupied while studying aeronautical engineering degree at a university in Iraq:

[T]he religion I came from a group, it’s a small group in Iraq, and the people also talk and say, “Oh, you came from this, you don’t wear Hijab, you study something different than what women used to do”, so always was hard ... Just I want to be something, but always used to be not easy, in that environment.

As argued by Flores Garrido (2020), this highlights the importance of unpacking how gender intersects with other axes of oppression like race, ethnicity and religion. It also speaks to the importance of understanding precarity as existing on a continuum, also existing on different axes.

Status

While the women were able to participate in higher education in their homelands, their experiences were marked with extreme forms of instability and unsafety—speaking to what we refer to as the precarity of existence. In this section, we discuss the resettlement context of Australia and explore how all three women’s inability to access higher education can be understood as intersecting between their gender identity as women and their precarious legal status which precludes them from accessing affordable higher education and a range of supports. For example, Mrs Babar described how the bridging visa prevented her from both being able to afford the fees and being eligible for a scholarship/fee waiver:

I was thinking I want to do something in my field, but just as you say, they do the Visa restrictions, because we don’t have much money to spend, because it’s not just \$10,000 or \$20,000, it’s lots of money. Even

yesterday my husband asked for complete his education, and I ring the college to how much for the Visa—\$64,000. Last year actually, there is some scholarship for the refugee in [one university in Perth] so I did apply, but simply because we are on a bridging Visa, for the refugee bridging Visa, so I am not allowed. Unless I have got the [SHEV] Visa. So until that, I can't even study in university.

As WSA continued to discuss their circumstances, they reflected on the significance of their visa precarity in terms of access to education. Atefeh has been living in the community for eight years and has held an SHEV visa for over two years. This has enabled her to access a scholarship and study in her field of interest, although only after two years of living in Australia. In contrast, Mrs Babar and Fatema had also both been living in Australia for years but continue to be unable to access higher education. However, despite a less precarious status and access to higher education, Atefeh shared feeling exhausted and discouraged:

It is really, really hard. Really challenge. I feel tired, exhausted, all the time. I don't have any day off, like, it's been two years, seven days, um, I worked, studied ... I feel exhausted from life.

There were also differences between how Atefeh and Mrs Babar and Fatema felt about the future of their legal status in Australia, including any federal policy changes, and whether this appeared to offer some hope. This was clear when speaking about recommendations for policy change in relation to accessing higher education. Fatema suggested the Australian federal government should provide more support for people to access higher education prior to them receiving permanent residency, "This kind of support for people who are seeking higher education, it would be really beneficial instead of losing this and maybe in the future, I need to do it again".

In response, Atefeh stated, "I don't have any hope that we get permanent residency at all". This speaks to the differing views about the government and the future. It also speaks to van Kooy and Bowman's (2019) exploration of precarity in relation to people from asylum-seeking backgrounds in Australia and the energy that individuals invest in coping and survival strategies to deal with the impacts of a precarious legal status. Atefeh spoke about hopes being dashed during the 2019 election when the current conservative federal government was re-elected, "I was just very disappointed and disappointed from this, this government. And I know how harsh they are. They don't have any sympathy for anyone. Just, I don't feel like, they are very tough".

It is important to note that Atefeh has also spent the previous few years involved in various collective advocacy efforts to try and bring about policy change at the state and federal government levels in relation to asylum seeker policy. This included visiting Members of Parliament. Discouragingly, there

has been little change at the federal government level where the legal status determining the supports and entitlements afforded to PSA is determined, with some policy shifts at the local (state government) level (see Fleay et al., 2021, for a discussion of these efforts). This lack of change at a federal level, despite her active involvement, had certainly contributed to Atefeh's discouraging view of the future political environment.

Having already overcome significant obstacles to engage in higher education in their home countries, as evidenced in the various experiences of precarity of space and embodied discrimination recounted previously, Atefeh, Fatema and Mrs Babar's continued exclusion from ongoing studies in Australia, a result of their precarity of status, illustrates the continued suffering encountered by people who are forced to seek asylum. The punitive treatment of people who seek asylum via enforced precarity of status means that they exist on the margins with differential rights and access to resources such as tertiary education which can be vital for rebuilding their lives. As argued by scholars such as van Kooy and Bowman (2019) and Canefe (2018), such precarity of status is selectively applied by states to people who are unable to benefit from "membership rights".

Gender Roles: "[There is] Still a Man Behind"

Cultural gender role/expectations are key to all of these women's past, present and future experiences of education and employment. Their position as a woman is pivotal. Atefeh shared her reflections from the first meeting:

I've realized that as well, like the common thing between all three of us like, we had a supportive father that, um, who has gotten the background of no differences between boys and girls and then encouraged us to do our best. Like my father was always asking me to change the tyre. Like you know, do the boys stuff that, um, normally like doing boxing or the sort of things that even sometimes even boys don't want it to do it. [Yeah.] And my father was very, um, you know, uh, supportive and encouraged me to do that and never stopped me of whatever I wanted to do. So, still a man behind. [laughs]

This highlighted that it was a struggle to access higher education in the country of origin but it also revealed that their access to higher education may have been dependent on that support from the most significant man in their life at the time. This is not limited to the father or the access to higher education. As Mrs Babar shared: "when I got married, I asked from my husband, 'can I do something in my field?'", he said 'yes, you can do'".

Putting aside the precarious socio-political environments in both their homelands and in Australia, what was interesting for all three of the women was their ability to access and participate in higher education was influenced by having a male figure in their life who was willing to deconstruct and

challenge the traditional gender division of labour and public/private life. Yet at the same time, this “freedom” is also dependent on the protection of men in the way that Flores Garrido (2020) describes the bodies of women as traditionally being dependent on the protection of men.

Time

Through our discussions it also became apparent that in the Australian context, gender roles and cultural expectations depleted Atefeh, Mrs Babar and Fatema’s mental and physical capacity to try and build pathways to accessing higher education or meaningful employment. We refer to this as the precarity of time and note that this form of precarity is compounded and reinforced by other factors, including precarity of status.

Family Responsibilities: Extra Burden on Women

Commitments to family appear to be a gendered barrier as Mrs Babar and Fatema shared that they had child-caring responsibilities while their husbands worked full-time. This was exacerbated by their exclusion from the government’s childcare subsidy, as Mrs Babar noted:

[T]he female want someone who, uh, look after their kids ... If we sent them to the creches or of them to the, um, uh, [Participant 3: day care] day care, yeah. So then you have to pay ... My husband say, “Whatever you are getting you will pay for the kids, where should we leave the kids?”.

Access to affordable childcare was a significant barrier for Mrs Babar who had a child who was not old enough to attend school. PSA on temporary visas are unable to access government-funded childcare subsidies meaning that to access childcare, one would pay in excess of \$150 per day for care. However, these carer responsibilities were not just regarding children but also parents or siblings, some of whom may need support regarding English. As Atefeh described “So everything is it’s on me ... I have to do everything, like, for them”.

This isolation due to women being seen as the exclusive caretakers for the family was seen as an additional burden on the women. As Fatema explained:

This is extra burden on women. More than men. They are already confident enough. ... we more maybe dependent than they think maybe we think we are independent, but actually there is many things. Yeah. We rely on men to support.

The various ways in which the women disproportionately assume carer responsibilities—what Mezzadri (2020) terms “care inequalities”

(n.p.)—made time available for building educational and employment pathways in Australia even more precarious. These experiences are reflective of key findings in other research regarding the educational participation of women with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds (see Harris et al., 2013; Klenk, 2017; Sharifian, et al., 2020).

Mental Load: “My Husband Has The Same Problems, But He Sleeps!”

All three women also discussed what they saw as differences in the way that men and women deal with the enormous stress of being a person seeking asylum with a prolonged precarious legal status in Australia. Fatema discussed the degree to which she worried about not only her but her children’s future, which detracted from efforts to build meaningful pathways to education and employment:

My husband, he speaks little bit about our problem a bit, and he just go and do things ... I tried to get this idea from my head, but still I think about my kids, I cannot stop thinking about them all the time ...

Interestingly Mrs Babar attributed these worries to not having other pre-occupations, but Fatema responded by saying that she still worries even though she works. Further to this, the women suggested that women feel the psychological impacts of policy/exclusion/barriers to higher education more than men. As Mrs Babar described: “Because [women] are sensitive more than even men, so they take things really, very sensitively, yeah ... like I want to sleep, I cannot. My husband has the same problems, but he sleeps. I just look at him, he’s asleep!”

Precarity of time is also evident in the women’s experiences waiting for the processing of their applications. The notoriously extended durations of time taken by various government departments to respond to applications for asylum is both well-documented and understandably identified by many as a punitive measure. Each of the women with lived experiences of seeking asylum recounted various ways in which the lengthy periods of instability impact their health and well-being as they continue to wait for government pronouncements regarding their status.

Summary

In response to RQ1, we argue that while well-qualified and highly motivated women, Atefeh, Mrs Babar and Fatema’s hopes for more positive experiences in Australia were met with varied and complex barriers to accessing higher education. Despite their strong desire to contribute to their communities in their homeland and in Australia through further study and meaningful work aligned to their experience and interests, our conversations captured their sense that their gender identity negatively impacted their experiences

of higher education in their homeland and their access to university in Australia. Their identity as women and their legal status as PSA intersect to prevent them from contributing their considerable expertise to the Australian economy and broader society.

In response to RQ2, we argue that Flores Garrido's work on precarity from a feminist perspective provides a compelling lens through which to understand how different forms of precarity, including precarity related to unstable and hostile socio-political environments, temporary visa status and traditional gender norms, intersect and compound the experiences of WSA in accessing and understanding barriers to accessing higher education. This gendered and intersectional approach highlights similarities between the three WSA's experiences, particularly relating to the precarity of living on a temporary visa in Australia resulting in limited education rights and a sense of hopelessness with the near impossibility of permanency making it difficult to "resettle" or plan for a self-determining future. Importantly, this approach also highlights and recognises differences between WSA, illuminating how different systems of oppression interact and give rise to different ways of doing gender. For example, Fatema's religious identity which meant she did not wear the hijab meant that she faced additional barriers of exclusion while studying in her home country of Iraq. This recognition of similarity and differences is important only for having a more nuanced understanding of social reality, but for having a more accurate understanding of how power relations are constructed and sustained in society, and how these might be resisted.

Recommendations for Higher Education Institutions

Given there is relatively little literature on the gendered precarities that women asylum seekers face when seeking to access higher education, it is perhaps unsurprising that very few—if any—Australian universities specifically respond to their needs, and this evidently warrants further advocacy. When making the following recommendations to universities, we recognise that their hands are tied in terms of the legal barriers that impose the international category on PSA. However, more can be done to respond to the inequitable, intersectional and complex forms of disadvantage that WSA face with regard to accessing higher education:

- All universities should commence, if they have not already, and then expand the number of fee-waiver scholarships offered to PSA;
- Universities should include targeted scholarship for WSA;
- Universities should provide an additional stipend to cover costs associated with childcare for any student-parents who are also asylum seekers;
- Universities should gather data on all PSA and refugees who are currently enrolled, including information about prior education and professional experience;

- Universities should offer targeted additional supports that are based on intersectional understanding of compound disadvantage and precarity;
- Universities should adopt a case-work model to ensure consistency in communication and facilitating the building of trusting relationships;
- Universities should ensure that support staff represent a mix of genders, language backgrounds and ethnicities, and ideally employ people who have experience of forced migration;
- Universities should encourage their educators to draw on the various experience in the room for refugees with professional experience;
- Universities should offer bespoke career guidance and networking opportunities for WSA to enable women to return to the workforce, including advocacy with employers, that takes on board challenges of childcare (time, cost);
- Universities should advocate to the federal government to cease temporary protection and move all refugees on TPV and SHEV visas onto permanent visas.

Conclusion

This chapter offers a rich understanding of the key factors and processes that render access to higher education inaccessible to many WSA, particularly those who have already gained tertiary qualifications in their home countries and want to continue their professional careers in the resettlement context. The lens of precarity from a feminist perspective highlights how gender (in terms of cultural expectations and structural limitations) and other markers of identity, including religion and ethnicity, can exacerbate the barriers that WSA already face. Australia offers an acute case of the ways in which systemic structures reinforce these individual markers of precarity. The impact of Australia's restrictive government policies is noteworthy for what it exposes about precarity when it is viewed not as a one-dimensional category of analysis but as comprising of diverse and often complementary and challenging forms. Although our chapter highlights particularly challenging forms of precarity facing WSA, this is not without resistance. Since this project was undertaken, one of the co-researchers, Mrs Babar, has mobilised a network of professional women from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds with the aim to address the barriers to pathways to professional employment (including higher education) as a community-led collective. This reinforces the need to “listen to the voices of women, and to understand their particular experience as precarious, [which should] guide our collective efforts towards a less oppressive future for everyone” (Flores Garrido, 2020, pp. 582–583). The network that Mrs Babar has created aims to work collectively with other professional refugee women to advocate for WSA to have less precarious and more enriched lives. In these efforts, intersectionality is critical not only in understanding the individual experience of precarity but how to envisage collective struggle that can depart from it.

Note

- 1 A pseudonym has been used for the purpose of her safety in a hostile political environment for people seeking asylum.

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In-Dialogue Editorial for Chapters 1–3

Student Recruitment and Retention – Problematizing Student Access and Participation in International Contexts: Intersectional Identities, Capitals, Prejudice and Risks

Tamsin Hinton-Smith

The chapters in this section set out to understand the experiences of accessing and participating in higher education (HE) for groups marginalised within HE in Nigeria and Australia. The common thread of gender unifies these identities occupying precarious, liminal spaces in relation to HE, relating to women’s experiences accessing Nigerian HE (Chapter 1); working-class masculinity in HE for young Australians (Chapter 2); and HE experiences of women seeking asylum in Australia (Chapter 3). Chapter authors identify the importance of intersectionality, available capitals in students’ journeys as precariously positioned aspirant students and prejudices experienced. The extent to which a university is a place of welcome and safety, or risk, for these students emerged as central.

In “De/centring Gender in Higher Education Access Policy: Lived Experiences of Admission Practices in Nigeria”, Jennifer Jomafuvwe Agbaire focuses on young women trying to access HE. This is contextualised by Nigerian universities’ perceived silence around gender in access policies, despite persistent gendered inequality. Agbaire’s qualitative investigation of admission practices and outcomes gives voice to young women’s lived experiences, tackling the reality of sexual exploitation as an outcome of unfair processes, and in which young women students in Nigeria are often positioned as being “beneficiaries” of transactional sex.

Garth Stahl and Sarah McDonald explore social class background in “Marginalized Masculinities in Australian Higher Education: Gendered Subjectivities, Discursive Spaces and First-in-Family Men *Being* and *Becoming* at university”. Young men in Australia from low SES backgrounds are the least likely to attend university and more likely to drop out. Stahl and McDonald give space to how these young men experience universities as domains favouring particular models of elite masculinity that often contrast sharply with their own understandings, resulting in a lack of connection and struggle to “fit in”.

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“Gendered Precarity, Intersectionality and Barriers to Higher Education for Women Seeking Asylum in Australia” is authored by Lisa Hartley, Rebecca Field, Mrs Babar*, Fatema*, Atefeh, Rachel Burke and Sally Baker as a collaboration of academic researchers and the women seeking asylum in Australia. The chapter identifies the complex barriers faced by PSA accessing HE in Australia, with a lack of targeted support leaving them liable for high international student fees. Hartley et al. explore the under-researched dimension of gendered implications of this, also reflecting on the methodological journey of women as co-researchers together.

In terms of intersectional identities, Stahl and McDonald identify the importance of a traditional male “Breadwinner” model for their working-class male students, and how university can offer their first respite from highly gendered expectations. For Agbaire, the male Breadwinner expectation is important in informing family decision-making around investing financial resources in the education of boys rather than girls. Hartley et al.’s participants had all worked hard to overcome gender stereotypes in their own countries. Now as PSA in Australia they face new challenges aligned with other aspects of their identity as PSA status impacted HE access, including high international course fees.

Stahl and McDonald’s working-class Australian boys are seen as lacking *the right sort of capital* and disadvantaged in HE because “you can only operationalise the capital, if you understand the rules or the logic of that particular field right”. These boys’ social class is seen as being pathologised in HE. In the Nigerian context, Agbaire places importance on the intersection of capitals including economic resources, geographical region, social connections and ethnicity; in that any of these capitals alone are often insufficient to successfully negotiate unspoken conventions in HE. Key to Agbaire’s research is that in the absence of other capitals, young women students are vulnerable to transactional sex. Hartley et al.’s participants describe countries of origin with traditional gender expectations but having been able to access HE with the support of families encouraging them to challenge these expectations.

The authors here identify the prejudices their participants experience in accessing HE, from home, and the university. In both chapters focusing on Australia, this centres around experienced stigma about where participants come from. One of Stahl and McDonald’s young working-class men pretends to live in an adjacent suburb carrying less social stigma; while one of Hartley et al.’s participants feels the stigma of having arrived in Australia as a PSA by boat. For Agbaire’s participants, there is also prejudice from home, in assumptions that as women they are intellectually inferior, undermining family investment in their education.

Authors also identify the extent to which universities are a safe or risky space for these marginalised groups. For Stahl and McDonald, a key risk for young working-class men in Australian HE is that of leaving HE with a debt for a degree that may not open the graduate opportunities they hope

for. Hartley et al. identify a perceived lack of adequate financial support for PSA entering Australian HE to pose a real threat to the ability of individuals to provide basic support for their families. Meanwhile, Agbaire perceives a lack of attention to physical *safety* in admissions processes and on campuses in Nigerian HE to have an exclusionary impact including relating to gender and religion.

Authors identify recommendations for HE policy and practice that emphasise the importance of establishing comprehensive approaches to outreach and information that draw in diverse students and their engagement needs. All of our authors emphasise the importance of universities not making assumptions about what students know, but making necessary information easily accessible to all. Support through practical institutional strategies should continue throughout the student's lifecycle, with Stahl and McDonald emphasising the importance of quality career counselling. Hartley et al. identify the importance of support staff to signpost equity groups to entitlements, while Agbaire signals the need for these staff to be well trained to provide students with adequate support. Perhaps most poignantly, Hartley et al. identify that the overarching aim of policy development should be to make universities a place of welcome, where socially vulnerable groups feel included. This, they argue, has the power to mitigate against exclusions in wider society.

Part 2

Student Experience



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4 Responding to the Needs of Women Students with Caring Responsibilities in Nigeria

*Charlotte Morris, Rachel Masika,
Chinyere Nwajiuba, Chinwe Victoria Ogunji
and Zibah Nwako*

Introduction

This chapter shares insights into responding to the needs of women students in Nigerian higher education (HE), particularly in relation to those with parenting and other caring responsibilities. While we focussed primarily on student mothers, we are aware that many students might also be caring for elderly parents or other family or community members. Intersecting identities as women and carers – and in some cases financial deprivation – present students with particular experiences of marginalisation and exclusion, requiring well-considered empowerment and inclusivity strategies that warrant further attention. Recent literature reveals a need to better support student mothers in HE (Ukpokolo, 2010; Potokri, 2012; Taukeni, 2014; Vyskocil, 2018); however, this is currently a neglected area of research in this context. Our collaboration aimed to outline key challenges women students face in HE and ways to support, enhance experiences and facilitate inclusion and full participation as this is a relevant but relatively under-researched area across the globe. This chapter indicates potential good practice directions for university and sector leaders.

There are recognised gender disparities in relation to participation in HE in this context (National Universities Commission (NUC, 2018)) including access, retention, learning and employment pathways. Here we identify a need for robust support infrastructures and targeted resource allocation, recognising that many women, particularly those with children, are especially vulnerable to socio-economic deprivation due to continuing gender inequalities (Nigeria Voluntary National Review, 2020). Women may present with specific support needs. For example, they may come to university having experienced gender-based violence (GBV) or trauma from conflict; there are frequent pregnancies and high proportions of student mothers and carers in some contexts. Our analysis identified interlocking material, cultural, emotional and academic challenges alongside suggestions for furthering equitable participation for women. Wide-ranging factors

can lead to women dropping out or not achieving their full potential with implications for them and their families' futures, for wider communities, society and broader gender equity goals. It is therefore imperative that HE leaders prioritise ways in which they can meet the needs of diverse women students (who are often also carers) and ensure their retention and progression in order to maximise multiple societal benefits of participation.

In 2019, Nigeria's National Universities Commission (NUC) indicated that there were 170 universities in Nigeria: 43 Federal, 48 State and 79 Private (NUC, 2020). While there are regional differences in enrolment numbers, there was an overall gender ratio for both undergraduate and postgraduate students of 42% female to 58% male in 2017 (NUC, 2018). Further to this disparity in access, gender-intensified material, cultural, emotional and academic challenges also contribute to women student carers' experiences of marginalisation and exclusion in HE (Morris et al., 2020).

Addressing gender inequality in HE, which includes building gender inclusivity and empowering women in HE, is a much-stated goal receiving attention globally (Morley, 2010; 2007; Morley and Lugg, 2009) and to some degree in Nigeria. Here we define gender as intersecting with other axes of inequality, 'gender+' (Lombardo et al., 2017), but for the purpose of this research we focus on the intersections of women and carer categories as these are often overlooked in HE studies. Inclusivity in general broadly denotes ongoing and transformative processes of improving HE systems to meet the needs of all, particularly those of marginalised groups. Gender inclusivity attends to actions, practices and policies that meet gender needs and address gender disadvantage, barriers and challenges. Such challenges are attributed to socio-cultural norms, material inequalities, gendered academic experiences and colonial policy legacies (Enyioko, 2021; Mukoro, 2014; Ogbogu, 2011). For many women, everyday multi-layered challenges in studying and working in academia are exacerbated by caring responsibilities. Lynch (2010) frames this as 'carelessness'; whereby care is not always recognised or valued in HE contexts. This is due to histories of exclusion of women from higher learning and assumptions that ideal academics (Bourdieu, 1988) are autonomous (male) care-free subjects. 'Empowerment' in the context of women and carer categories, while a highly contested term, may be regarded as a process through which women student carers gain power and control over their lives and acquire the ability to make strategic choices over their learning experiences, enabled through equitable learning environments. This entails leaders recognising and understanding the implications of caring (Folbre, 2006) for women and national economies.

Despite increased interest in gender equality, including gender inclusivity and empowerment facets, there remain concerns about the extent to which HE leaders are creating inclusive environments and spaces that support gender equality. While the Nigerian government has no explicit gender equality/equity HE education policies, gender inequality initiatives have been adopted in some Nigerian universities with identified best practices

that include enabling environments, structures, mechanisms and processes (Aina, 2014; Aina et al., 2015). Nevertheless, the process of achieving gender equality and empowerment through transformative processes remains slow and uneven and greater attention is required for women student carers in Nigerian universities as well as other global contexts.

Literature Review

The challenges faced by women students are categorised into four interconnected thematic areas, namely, socio-cultural, emotional, material and academic. The main issue covered by the socio-cultural theme is gender equality and includes the equitable distribution of resources between men and women students, stereotyping, bias and GBV. Reeves and Baden (2000) define gender equality as ‘women having the same opportunities in life as men, including the ability to participate in the public sphere’ (p. 2). As of 2015, Nigeria had not met Millennium Development Goal number 3 (gender equality is now Sustainable Development Goal 5) – the promotion of gender equality at all educational levels and in women’s empowerment. This inequality persists not only in relation to gaps in student enrolment or other gender discriminatory practices but also in the provision of equitable opportunities (Aina et al., 2015; MDG Monitor, 2015; Nigeria Voluntary National Review, 2020).

It has been suggested that gender stereotyping and bias against women students is rife in Nigerian HE institutional culture since it is influenced by traditional, societal and colonial beliefs that stem from patriarchy (Aina, 2014), that is, male domination over women. For example, marriage and parenthood constitute more cultural barriers for women students as they are expected to carry the responsibility of being the main caregiver in families (Ogbogu, 2011). Another reflection of patriarchal practices is that women students are treated unfairly in areas of political participation and representation (Anele, 2010; Ezedike, 2016). University authorities can perpetuate gender injustice and imbalances through practices such as nepotism, whereby those with powerful influences tend to favour and support male students. For instance, data from Nwako’s (2020) study of female undergraduate students’ well-being shows that due to underlying institutional power dynamics, they are not allowed to vie for top leadership roles such as the presidency of the Student Union Government (SUG) or even as faculty or course representatives. This reflects wider gender disparities in relation to power and leadership roles (National Voluntary Review, 2020).

The emotional theme encompasses mental well-being, capabilities and agency of women students. Gospel-Tony et al. (2018) assert that student nursing mothers may have additional psychosocial challenges such as anxiety, low self-esteem, postnatal depression and lack of support from family and friends and isolation. Nwako (2020) identified that the capabilities of women students are devalued when their agency is denied. Robeyns (2011)

refers to capabilities as the freedoms or opportunities that people have, to do what they value. For women students, this encompasses the ability to be safe from victimisation or to access gender-related counselling services. A World Development Report asserts that in all cultures, a gendered distinction can be observed between the ways in which men and women make choices, which is inevitably harmful to women (The World Bank, 2011). This distinction is important because without freedom, women's autonomy and agency is affected – potentially impacting their emotional well-being.

Physical health, welfare, environmental and economic constraints comprise the material aspect of women students' experiences in Nigerian HE institutions (HEIs). Linked to health is the provision of medical care for general ailments and support for women-specific needs such as safe disposal of sanitary waste and hygiene management during menstruation, advice on safe sex, teenage or unwanted pregnancy, ante-natal services for potential student mothers and care for new mothers and their infants. In relation to sanitation, women students face greater environmental risks from a lack of access to clean toilets, poor water supply, water-borne diseases and contamination from floods and blocked drainage systems during the rainy season, resulting in illnesses such as urinary tract infections or reproductive health problems (Ajibade et al., 2013; Sultana, 2010; WHO Africa, 2017; UNESCO, 2019; Nigeria Voluntary National Review, 2020). However, many women students lack confidence in the campus health clinics due to poor infrastructure, inadequate numbers of staff and a shortage of modern, working equipment (Nwako, 2020). In addition, GBV is a prevalent occurrence across Nigerian universities and has been extensively researched (Anele, 2010; Denga & Denga, 2004; Ladebo, 2003; Iliyasu et al., 2011; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2019; Okoroafor et al., 2014; Onokala, 2007). Forms of violence include physical, emotional, verbal abuse, sexual harassment and victimisation of women students.

Economic concerns for women HE students involve limited funds for tuition fees, purchase of other academic resources and living expenses, accommodation and access to campuses. The latter raises implications for women with dependents and caring responsibilities. Some women students invest time and capital on small business ideas, while others may rely on transactional sex (Tade & Adekoya, 2012).

Such multi-layered factors lead to academic challenges as women's performance and learning outcomes are generally lower than that of their male peers, reflecting broader inequalities (Potokri, 2012; UNICEF, 2019). Furthermore, studies show that gender stereotypes are continually perpetuated in HEIs from patriarchal beliefs that women achieve better results in the Arts and Humanities while men fare better in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects. As a result, there is a lack of role models for women students to follow (Fapohunda, 2012); also considering that as of 2017, there were less than 22% of women academic staff across all the universities in Nigeria (NUC, 2018). According

to Nabbuye (2018), gender stereotyping and prejudice also occur in the classroom where gender-sensitive pedagogies are lacking, such as the language used by lecturers in addressing male students as superior to their peers. Married women and student mothers (especially if they are single parenting) manage multiple responsibilities, time, financial and health constraints, as well as isolation, that impact negatively on their progress, prevent equitable participation and sometimes lead to them dropping out of their studies (Potokri, 2012; Taukeni, 2014; Ukpokolo, 2010; Vyskocil, 2018).

These challenges underscore the need for attending to female students' empowerment in HE, in our case student carers. Regarded as making women's lives better (Connell, 2010), expanding their ability to make strategic life choices (Kabeer, 1999a) and gaining power and control over their lives, 'empowerment' encapsulates processes that involve women's agency, resources and favourable outcomes (Kabeer, 1999a, 1999b) in HE. This requires enabling institutional mechanisms (Cornwall & Edwards, 2010) such as strong HE leadership, training, infrastructure and policies to support these processes. Empowerment has been the subject of much debate and theorising but is mainly considered to entail individual and collective journeys and support of those journeys (Cornwall, 2016). Effective strategies require an awareness of how individual lives are shaped in relationships and communities affected by local, national and global factors (Koggel, 2010), and how additional social constraints that student carers face may be overcome. This centres on the advancement of active, autonomous and self-reflective women students in HE, with some control over transformation towards self-determined goals (Morgan & Coombes, 2013) through addressing and mitigating the gendered challenges they face. Problematising gender inequalities in access and experience of HE is useful in explaining how HE benefits some and excludes others, enhancing and limiting strategic choices. A focus on women student carers' needs provides a window into those areas where women may be supported in their own empowerment within HE contexts.

Methodology

Our team undertook surveys of academic staff and students to gain insights into the needs of women in HE, including those with caring responsibilities, and here we draw on their voices, perspectives and concerns in making a case for change. Our study received ethical approval from the two lead institutions (University of Portsmouth and Alex Ekwuame Federal University), which attended to factors of informed consent, confidentiality and data protection. We firstly conducted interviews with 115 women student participants across four universities in South-East Nigeria to gain their perspectives on support needs and challenges. We then surveyed 90 academics, who identified as men and women, drawn from across Nigeria to gain their perspectives on the challenges facing women students, their role in providing support and further resources needed.

Through purposive selection, 34 undergraduate student mothers were included in the first data set, and their data is drawn on here. The ages of the students ranged between 20 and 34. The survey included open-ended questions for respondents to record more detailed answers and included questions to gauge perceptions, attitudes and aspirations of respondents. The student survey was followed by an online survey for university staff. This was similarly designed to elicit both quantitative data in the form of frequencies of response and qualitative data, through the use of open-text responses. The survey was distributed to the project team's contacts with support for distribution provided by the NUC.

We undertook a survey in order to have a wider reach and attract a variety of responses from different contexts across Nigeria. This was collaboratively designed and distributed by the research team. This survey attracted 90 responses in total (the response rate may have been affected by strikes and the coronavirus pandemic); 92% of respondents were members of academic staff and 8% were staff members in different roles with some responsibility for supporting students such as counselling, advice, tutoring or mentoring; 60% of respondents were women and 40% were men. Male academics tend to outnumber female academics and so these responses are unrepresentative (Olaogun et al., 2015). Indeed, a National Bureau of Statistics report (2019) finds that 75.9% of academics are male and 63.7% are non-academic staff. This may reflect socio-cultural perceptions that issues connected to supporting women students are more of a concern for women, and it may have attracted those who are already taking an interest in this area. It is also possible that the positionality of the researchers as women may have influenced responses. Respondents were from all parts of Nigeria, although the best response rate was from the South-East region, likely reflecting the location of the lead institution. Around 66% of responses came from federal universities, 18% from State universities and 17% from private universities. We now move on to discussing findings firstly from the interview data with student mothers before focussing on staff survey responses.

Findings: Student Perspectives

Student responses indicated multiple interrelated factors that create challenges for women carers (and mothers in particular). Practical, material and socio-cultural barriers to participation were identified with consequences of academic work suffering; stress placed on individuals and families and emotional distress, and continuation of studies at risk. This situation reflects wider gender inequalities and strong socio-cultural expectations for women to get married and have children at as young an age as possible and to take on the responsibilities of the care of children and family members. There were strong intersections between economic status and income, as sometimes students indicated they had married out of necessity for income and economic stability, sometimes under considerable pressure from families.

Those whose families were struggling economically needed to take up additional paid work and many spoke of the need to juggle multiple responsibilities creating profound time constraints. This echoes wider international literature in relation to parents and carers in HE (e.g., Hinton-Smith, 2012), although such challenges are likely to be exacerbated in contexts where there is less access to social support and resources. Their experiences also may have reflected particular institution types, as public universities in this context do not always have the same support infrastructures, facilities and resources for the benefit of student carers as private institutions.

Student participants often conveyed ambivalence about their experience of juggling studies with marriage and children. There were many expressions of how the opportunity to study was highly valued and gave them hope for their and their families' futures. In turn, participants spoke of their determination to succeed despite the many challenges they faced in their day-to-day lives. Those who were being sponsored felt beholden to their sponsors and under pressure not to let them down, and motivation levels among participants were high. While some expressed feelings of guilt at studying and therefore having less time for their husbands, children and other family members, which may attract judgement from others, they nevertheless felt it was necessary to continue for the potential long-term benefits for their families. Yet, in some cases there was a lack of support from family members for their studies and high levels of expectation on them to fully perform duties in their households, reflecting gendered expectations of wives and mothers – as indicated in Ifeoma's account:

Well, I don't feel bad that I am schooling and already have children. I may not be finding it very easy because I would have to combine my studies with other responsibilities I have in the house. It takes so much from me juggling the two at the same time. The children, my husband, other family issues and my studies. To worsen it is that sometimes, the assistance, concern and support you expect from loved ones [is not forthcoming]. My joy is that I am determined to pull through it all whether good or bad.

(Ifeoma)

Amaka similarly reflected on the joys of being a wife and mother which nevertheless came into conflict with her studies due to the high demands and pressures this role invoked. Her description of the 'enormity' of attending to caring and domestic responsibilities, alongside trying to meet academic requirements, evokes the notion of 'greedy institutions' (Hinton-Smith, 2012) with seemingly unending and impossible demands on time and energy. This is exacerbated for those without adequate or stable incomes as they are unable to afford childcare and, due to gendered expectations, are expected to manage their household with limited help. The consequences in this case are that Amaka's confidence in her academic ability is undermined

and she lacks the time, financial and emotional resources necessary to meet her potential. Yet she asserts that she remains hopeful and determined to continue despite the odds:

Yes, being married is beautiful, it is nice but when it comes to combining it with studies, sometimes you may begin to wonder how you would cope considering the enormity of both functions. In fact it is not just easy ... cos I have assignments from my lecturers and I have my little child to attend to. I don't have a nanny to help me here in the school, so I do my things all alone. At the end of the day, it does not allow me to devote much time to my academics. I give shared attention to both. It affects my academic grades in school. I know I use to be a bright student, but now eh hh ... Be that as it may, I will not give up cos I know it is for my better tomorrow.

(Amaka)

Olanna similarly conveyed the sense of ambivalence about their studies that pervaded many accounts – illuminating how marriage accords women with a status that can attract respect from peers. Alongside the time constraints that follow from a lack of familial support in many cases, concentration on studies can be affected by anxieties about whether children are being adequately cared for in their absence as main caregivers. One possible way forward could be the provision of on-campus work opportunities or guidance on entrepreneurship, as indicated in the following extract:

To be married while in school is good, nice experience, worth having if you have the opportunity. It earns you some sort of respect from your peers and fellow students.

But the troubles are very challenging sometimes. I feel we need more family support in terms of helping us to take care of the children while we go to school. It will allow you to pay more attention in the class cos you know that someone is taking care of them for you.

Because of the financial challenges which we student mothers face sometimes, it makes me feel that women should be entrepreneurial ... to make a little money to support themselves in the school and not wait for husbands always. It may go a long way to ease our financial burdens.

(Olanna)

Unsurprisingly, attendance was often affected due to these competing pressures and responsibilities, as elucidated by Mariama who also occasionally misses lectures due to ante-natal care appointments, highlighting the additional challenges for pregnant students. The understandable exhaustion she is experiencing is tangible in the following extract and further affects her ability to engage and attend meetings. In the absence of adequate support mechanisms and resources, her coping strategy is to copy friends' lecture

notes. This raises questions regarding how academics and university leaders might better meet the needs of women students in this predicament.

MARIAMA: It is so stressful; it has been a trying period for me since I acquired this new status. I am in my final year now. With my present condition, I have to tread with care and caution. Sometimes, I become so lazy and tired that meeting up with my lectures becomes a problem. When I have hospital appointment, I will leave my lectures and go for Ante-natal care. Oh I wish this journey will end soon.

INTERVIEWER: So, what happens when you miss your classes?

MARIAMA: What I usually do is that I pick notes from my friends to copy what they jotted down in the lecture. That's how I have been coping.

There was a frequent interplay of financial, academic, familial and emotional dimensions in shaping these students' experiences. Ginika explained how she had needed to marry, partly for financial reasons, to continue with her studies in the light of financial difficulties experienced by her parents. However, her gratitude to her husband for supporting her in continuing with her studies placed an additional pressure on her to work as hard as possible, gain employment and contribute practically and financially to the family. She highlighted the high fee levels, placing pressure on sponsors which in turn affected students' stress levels and potentially their ability to continue their studies. The imposition of penalty fees potentially created further stress on sponsors, students, and families – where students are attempting to study in a challenging economic climate this is viewed as unfair and indeed, is likely to exacerbate existing inequalities:

I got married in my 2nd year. I needed to continue with my education and cos my parents were not really buoyant financially to continue, I had to get married. I am grateful to my husband who has continued to support me in this.

I put in all effort to ensure that this investment on me would not be in vain. At least when I graduate and get a job, I will be able to support him maximally in the family. Bearing this at the back of my mind makes me to work extra hard though it is very difficult.

I will not complain cos I know that nothing good is easy to come by. What I am only praying for is that our school fees be reduced so that it would be easy for our sponsors who also have other responsibilities to struggle with.

Even the issue of penalty fee attached to non-payment of school fees within a stipulated time should be scrapped cos times are hard.

(Ginika)

Kambili illuminated a further dimension affecting student carers, that of the social aspects of studying which, due to time and financial constraints

compounded by poor access to childcare, were often missing from their experience. This could potentially create isolation, leaving student carers even less supported and less able to make the most of their time at university, enjoy a holistic educational experience, gain additional competencies and skills and meet their potential at university and beyond. There are gender equality implications to not being able to engage in social and extra-curricular activities in relation to full access to educational opportunities and preparation for employment. Kambili stresses the importance of childcare provision – ideally part of the university offering – to enable this participation:

Being a student mother is in fact not an envious status... . This is because while others enjoy and have fun, you are different. No time for enjoyment or fun. No dull moment, you are busy 24/7, either doing one thing or another. If it is not your child, it is your assignment, or another family issue.

My worry is that I don't feel comfortable carrying my child to the classroom.

Sometimes ... he can begin to cry and it will be embarrassing.

If the school can provide a University Creche, it will enable few of us to keep the babies under the care of the nannies there, come around, attend to them within intervals of hours and concentrate on our lectures. Well, let us see how it goes... while we keep praying.

(Kambili)

These combined pressures and the importance and necessity of completing their education can have dire consequences in the light of ongoing economic needs and gender power disparities. Some participants spoke of the need to engage in survival sex work while Onyeka (below) indicates how financial need can create vulnerabilities to sexual abuse, violence, harassment and exploitation, in some cases being targeted by predatory male professors. This highlights the precariousness of women students' situations and reflects international concerns about gendered power disparities and abuse in academic settings, a subject of scholarship and discussion in the Nigerian context (Aina 2005; Aina et al., 2015).

It is really an enormous task, coping with studies, family and work. I work and school to enable me to make a little money to address my financial needs. Sometimes the lecturer wants to abuse us cos of our financial incapability. So that is why I struggle to school and work in addition to my family responsibilities, all to run away from anything that will subject me to their traps. This does not go without a price anyway ... cos I miss my classes on few occasions cos I went to work.

As much as I know, there is no effective form of support from our university so we need to work harder to survive. If the school can provide

any form of work and study programme, that will be great as it will give you opportunity to attend your classes fully and go to do your work when you are free. In this case, your studies will not suffer cos your work schedule will be fixed to fit your lecture timetable since you are working from within.

(Onyeka)

While some students reported not having received any support, those who did suggest that this came in the form of financial support, supportive domestic arrangements such as home help as well as from academic advisers and guidance and counselling services, peers, health and well-being services and academic staff. Where creches were available, this was considered a much-needed support mechanism for student mothers. A range of areas for potential support was proffered by the research participants, underscoring the importance of recognising the socio-cultural, emotional, material and academic challenges women students face. Academic support strategies identified included special considerations in relation to academic work and assessment and a stronger emphasis on skills acquisition, employment and postgraduate opportunities. Linked to socio-cultural dimensions was increased support from family members and reinforcing the need to treat women, including mothers, with respect in educational settings. Meeting material needs encompassed accessing financial support, access to improved hostel accommodation for student mothers and provision of subsidised childcare. Also considered important was better campus security and mechanisms enabling women to speak up and receive support for GBV/sexual harassment. Better access to contraception and sex education for those lacking in knowledge was viewed as essential. Participants hoped to see improved student-lecturer relationships, particularly in terms of the gender power dynamic; more flexibility for completing their studies; provision of health services and greater enrolment of women into HEIs.

Findings: Staff Perspectives

Staff supported women students in a variety of ways: academic staff often provided general support and pastoral care, including counselling, supervision, mentoring and advice. For most, this was an intrinsic part of their academic role although some indicated that while it was not strictly part of their role, they felt it was important to provide support where possible. Notably, data indicated that this often fell to women academics and so this gender imbalance in relation to care is one that university leaders could usefully address. Individual staff were clearly passionate about their pastoral care roles and their contributions to gender equality. Beyond individual support, one mentioned being a member of a Student Services committee and some were involved in developing curricula, for example on gender sensitivity. Many supported women students in their career development,

for example by signposting students to vacancies, encouraging them to further their studies and enabling access to research materials. There were occasions where staff went above and beyond their role including hosting students in their homes and giving or lending them funds, reflecting poor access to resources for some students. This can be encapsulated by what one participant mentioned acting as 'loco parentis', while another staff member indicated that they worked closely with students' parents in offering support. Provision of education was seen sometimes as extending beyond the university campus and took place in local communities, for example, in a church. While these individual efforts are commendable, such responses often indicated the need for more infrastructure, resource allocation and policies to be in place so that they were not reliant on their own personal resources and time (with potential implications for the furtherance of their own careers).

Staff were asked an open question about what kinds of challenges student mothers specifically faced, and these reflected findings from the student data. The most frequent response (40%) pertained to work-life-study balance issues and time constraints creating difficulties for managing academic studies. Several mentioned a lack of ability to engage in social activities. A total of 15.5% of responses stated that student mothers faced problems in their families, including lack of support for their studies, thus creating additional pressures and reflecting wider socio-cultural expectations that child-care and domestic work should be undertaken by women (Nigeria Voluntary National Review, 2020). Some comments related to GBV, including instances of domestic violence. However, 15.5% of respondents felt that the issue was the students' individual capacities to cope, manage their time or show enough commitment and motivation for their studies. This possibly indicates a need for wider awareness of challenges student mothers and carers may face, and how they might be supported in their studies.

Health issues including stress arising from such pressures were indicated in 12% of responses; these would potentially further adversely impact studies and reflect broader infrastructural challenges around access to quality healthcare – especially for women (Nigeria Voluntary National Review, 2020; UNICEF, 2019). An additional 12% of responses specifically mentioned pregnancy, maternity and breastfeeding. While some students were unable to bring children onto campus, others faced challenges with breastfeeding during lectures. It was reported that some pregnant or nursing mothers were unable to access adequate health facilities and advice and some did not have adequate facilities for nursing. Poor access to childcare was present in many responses. This interrelated closely with financial issues with some students unable to afford childcare without free or low-cost options. Some also had to work alongside their studies and family responsibilities. These combined factors had a negative impact on attendance and consequently studies. Several students, according to respondents, were unable to

afford or access suitable accommodation on or near their campus which further affected participation.

Some responses suggested that women students faced discrimination due to their status as mothers, indicating a need for further investigation of this. One male lecturer reported that mothers were not admitted into the institution, and pregnant students in particular faced sanctions: 'No student mother is admitted. No student mother emerges during the study programme. Sanctions, including expulsion, are in force for any form of immorality, including pregnancy while still undergoing programme of study'. Lack of access for student carers is clearly an area that needs addressing. It appears that material and socio-cultural factors were interconnected in creating barriers for some student mothers and carers to pursue and complete their studies, participate in student life and reach their potential, and in some contexts there were barriers to being able to access HE at all. One male participant mentioned they were unaware of student mothers at their institution, possibly reflecting their absence or low numbers in that context, reflecting barriers to participation. This absence of recognition may also reflect gendered power imbalances men as women staff can be perceived as more approachable. It is possible that gender discrimination came into play in some responses. Another responded, 'Not too familiar with such category of students', indicating a need for more awareness of such students and their needs among all staff.

Staff were asked what support was currently available for student carers and the most common response was that there was none (57%) or that they were not aware of any. About 12% stated that childcare was provided at their institutions (including a day-care centre currently being built) and several spoke of special accommodation on campus or priority being given to student mothers. A further 12% mentioned counselling and guidance services available to all students while several explained that support was left to pastoral care provided by academic staff. Findings suggest that there is inconsistency regarding support and facilities – it is likely to be context-bound and linked to the availability of funds and resources for individual institutions.

Responses indicated that women staff were able to identify with their students and so were highly motivated to support them. For example, one woman staff member expressed that, 'I was once in their shoes and I know how it feels. I am always ready to assist any woman student to the best of my ability'. Some women participants spoke of the attributes they have such as confidence and an ability to listen which enables them to effectively support women students while others spoke of the benefits for the students and their academic achievement when they were well supported. It was clear that these staff played a vital role in the progression and retention of student mothers and carers. As one participant stated, 'I have no discrimination against student mothers and encourage them not to drop out'. Women staff

participants often advocated for student mothers: 'I have grown up children like them and I can speak to the school authorities on their behalf'. Those who were mothers themselves provided role models for their students in similar situations, as indicated in this selection of quotes from several survey participants: 'I am also a student mother and a bit knowledgeable. So from my experience I talk the girls into making good choices'; 'I had the experience of coping with motherhood and studies, and successfully pulled through'; and 'By acting as a role model I am confident I have many who look up to me'.

One woman respondent mentioned that their support – due to their role as a manager – was at the policy level, ensuring the most favourable policy frameworks for women students. Another indicated that with the policy and infrastructure challenges they faced at their institution, it meant they had to step in and support students themselves. It was suggested that there was a need for more political will to make the profound ongoing changes needed for supporting women's full participation in HE and gender equality, one female staff member stating, 'This so because gender biases is crippling our economy as female best brains are put back to kitchen and babysitting'.

As with student participants, staff suggested a range of resources needed at their institution, especially in relation to financial support and family-friendly accommodation. Enhanced campus facilities – ensuring security and safety – were considered paramount, alongside quality childcare facilities. Staff participants also specified a need for specialist health services, including specialist GBV services. It was further suggested that better information, communication and awareness about existing services were needed. In terms of academic environments and resources, including enhanced e-learning and online opportunities, technological equipment and support were identified as an area for development. The importance of flexibility of provision, for example providing extra time where needed and enabling studying from home, was stressed. Other comments related to the importance of empowering women students and the need to tackle institutional and societal gender inequities. Such comments underlined the importance of attending to broader socio-cultural issues of gender equity both in institutions and wider society, for example through challenging misogynistic attitudes and encouraging families and communities to support women through their studies.

There was a strong sense that supporting and enhancing women's education translates into healthier communities, more equal societies and more productive national economies. Responses suggest potential good practices, strategies and resource implications for HE leaders in working towards the empowerment of student women (and mothers/carers in particular), addressing structural inequalities, and they indicate the essential role of education in this: 'It's unquantifiable. It translates to a better and healthier society'.

Conclusions

This study corresponds with previous research in this area, identifying interconnected themes of material, socio-cultural, academic and emotional barriers to accessing appropriate support and full participation in HE for women – pertinent to numerous global contexts. Support was often undertaken by academic staff who saw this as a vital aspect of their role in which they took pride and – in most cases – felt confident. However, comments suggested that not all staff are as committed to this role and with an over-representation of women respondents, it may be gendered in terms of women staff doing the majority of this work.

Leadership is needed in developing more consistent, systematic, substantial and sustainable inclusive support policies and practices that address marginalisation and exclusion experiences of women and student carers in HE to help them achieve their full potential and contribute to sustainable development. Political will, underpinned by an ethics of care, on the part of HE leaders, to develop robust support infrastructures and targeted resource allocation, is much needed. Access to financial support and childcare would make a significant difference in participation, recognising how material, socio-cultural, academic and emotional factors intertwine to disadvantage and disempower women.

The interplay of financial, academic, familial and emotional dimensions in shaping women student carers' experiences, as evidenced by the student voices, illustrates the combined pressures of providing care, family responsibilities, need for additional income and inability to fully engage in academic and social activities of university life as well as preparing for employment. Juggling care and university can hinder students from gaining power and control over their lives; to become empowered learners they need resources that will enable them to make strategic choices over their learning experiences and future prospects.

Empowerment and inclusivity strategies adopted by leadership can go a long way in redressing women's marginalisation and exclusion in HE. Addressing gender disadvantage, barriers and challenges in HE in particular requires some attention to practical strategies that include flexibility, assessment of special considerations, skills acquisition, respect for mothers, space for their voices to be heard, support for GBV/sexual harassment, access to reproductive health services and family-friendly accommodation. Support for academic and administrative staff working on the frontline in providing advice and support can both empower staff and the students with whom they engage.

While our study focuses on Nigeria, many of the issues highlighted are faced by student mothers and may be relevant in other contexts, globally. Our research identifies the need to develop strong and consistent infrastructures of support building on the current provision in some universities. It

demonstrates how signposting students to services and information and helping them access resources are ways to assist student mothers, but that this should not be left to individual women staff. Attending to broader gender equality issues at structural and socio-cultural levels alongside institutional levels in coordinated ways through policy development, gender-inclusive messaging from university leaders, investment in staff and training, gender-sensitive curricula and practices can go a long way in addressing barriers and moving towards greater empowerment for women students in HE.

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5 Resources and Support Services for Students with Albinism in Tanzanian Higher Education

Rose Rutagemwa Kiishweko

Introduction

People with albinism often experience oppression and dehumanisation as in some African countries their body parts are used as aphrodisiacs, sources of wealth and prosperity, as well as a remedy to prevent cheating in sexual relationships (Ntinda, 2015). A United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) report, for example, revealed that for a period of five years there were a total of 340 attacks on people with albinism and 134 murders within 25 countries (2015:5). The report also elaborated that, in Tanzania, since the year 2000 there have been 151 violent cases on this respective group, of which 74 were fatal. The attacks were mentioned as violent, involving grievous body harm and mutilation. Besides potentially experiencing violence, people with albinism in sub-Saharan Africa are often seen as bad omens, curses, sources of disasters and contagious diseases (Baker et al., 2010; Brocco, 2015).

The oppression, stigmatisation and ill-treatment of people with albinism in sub-Saharan Africa, including Tanzania, have been widely reported in the media globally, but albinism remains under-researched and under-theorised, while regarded within Tanzania as a ‘disability’ that impacts peoples’ life experiences and opportunities. A number of literature in Tanzania and globally have provided insights into the factors that constrain and enable ‘disabled’ students to participate in higher education (HE) (Tinklin & Hall, 2006; Riddell et al., 2005; Mumba, 2009, Fuller et al., 2010; Morley & Croft, 2011; Mwaipopo et al., 2011, Opini, 2012; Tuomi et al., 2015). However, there is limited knowledge on albinism, particularly regarding how it impacts transitions into and experiences of HE. Given the limited knowledge about albinism specifically in HE, this chapter focuses on albinism within the Tanzanian context.

This chapter, which draws from my PhD feminist research (*Albinism in Tanzanian Higher Education: A Case Study*), aims to make the experiences of people with albinism better known. It looks specifically at challenges related to their inclusion in various opportunity sectors, including HE in Tanzania. Although we need to avoid assuming a global homogenising

position on HE, there are aspects in this study which have relevance in other country contexts, including those of the global north, which I will further elucidate later in my chapter.

Disability is defined differently across country contexts. In Tanzania, albinism is categorised as a disability. When, the country was developing its initial National Disability Policy in 2004, due to various social, cultural, medical and environmental risks often faced by people with albinism, the Association of People with Albinism (APA) in Tanzania asked the government to categorise people with albinism as disabled. Such categorisation allowed the APA to join the Tanzania Federation of Disabled People's Organisations which is a main mouthpiece on matters pertaining to disabled people in Tanzania.

Albinism is a worldwide phenomenon with a prevalence rate estimated at one in every 17,000 people worldwide (Burstall, 2012); whereas, in Tanzania, the frequency rate is estimated at one in every 1,400 people (Lapidos, 2012, *Under the Same Sun*, 2014). In other countries like Fiji, the frequency is reported to be one in every 700 people while the rate in Kuna and Zuni people in Panama, it is estimated at one in every 70 people (Nestel, 2016). It is a condition that affects people of all social groups, genders, social classes, ethnicities and races. It is scientifically understood as a lack of melanin pigment in a skin meant to produce skin colour (Hong et al., 2006; Luande, 2009). Given that Tanzania is a tropical country and most of its population have a dark skin colour, people with albinism who lack melanin pigmentation tend to stand out. Albinism is a genetic condition originating from both parents carrying a gene that does not produce melanin pigmentation. Although albinism derives from both parents, the condition has been seen as women's fault as some myths associate the birth of children with albinism with mothers having sexual relationships with evil spirits or being promiscuous (Lynch & Lund, 2011). This way albinism is gendered, not only for women with albinism but also for mothers of children with albinism.

Besides people with albinism experiencing discrimination and ill-treatment, they also face medical and environmental risks. Among such risks is the absence of melanin pigment that protects the skin by blocking ultraviolet radiation deriving from the sun. The lack of melanin particularly for those living in sunny tropical climates like Tanzania increases the risks of acquiring fatal skin cancer, having severe sun-damaged skin, marks and lesions, as well as having damaged skin at a young age (Luande, 2009). This group of people often need special sunscreen lotion to overcome these environmental challenges.

Another medical risk of albinism is the way the eyes of people with albinism are connected to the brain (Luande, 2009). Luande (2009) argues that the eyes of people with albinism are often connected differently to the brain which affect their vision and cause some of them to have uncontrollable eye movements. Such connection makes some people with albinism require specific supportive devices, like magnifiers or monocular, to see

clearly. In the absence of such devices, these people, particularly students, are likely to experience learning challenges.

Given the socio-cultural and environmental structures mentioned above often experienced by people with albinism, this chapter adds knowledge on how emotions and misogyny can constrain the inclusion of disabled students in HE. It also provides lessons on how reflexivity and internal conversations are useful resources in enabling students to participate in HE. Such understanding may provide HE leaders with new knowledge that can enhance their effective leadership practices which in turn may lead to positive changes in gender and diversity practices.

Methodology

In this research, the key participants were not only people with albinism who experience ill-treatment and marginalisation but also students who were at least 25 years younger than myself. In Tanzania, young people often have less power than elders. In this case, as an older researcher, my dilemma was choosing a methodology that would not only prevent exploitation of my participants but also ensure good rapport and consequently minimise possible power imbalances.

I studied various social research methodological approaches and found that the values and principles embedded in feminism distinguished feminist research from other approaches (Wilkinson and Morton, 2007). I therefore drew upon feminist research as my intention was to investigate power relations and gender. My approach here acknowledges social differences and calls for good rapport, respect towards participants and a recognition of power dynamics within the research process (Reinharz, 1992).

By drawing upon feminist research, I position myself with the feminist views of Letherby (2003) and Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002). The former views feminist research to concern itself with the position of the researcher within the research, the questions asked, research purpose and theories used. The latter characterise feminist research as that which is embedded with political, theoretical and ethical concerns. This research matches the characteristics of both the former and latter, as my research explores gender power relations, and my intention is to bring positive changes in the lives of disabled students, such as those with albinism in HE. The research was guided by the ethical principles stated in the 2011 ESRC Research Ethics Guidebook and was reviewed and ethically cleared by my university ethics committee.

As mentioned, knowledge about albinism in HE is limited. Yin (2013) suggests that when there is limited knowledge about a phenomenon, then case study research is appropriate as it generates in-depth data on the case under study, which was the aim of my own research. Some scholars such as Miles (1979) and Daft and Lewin (1990) question the rigour of case study research while Diamond (1996) cited by Flyvbjerg (2006:3) raises concerns

about the generalisation of findings of such studies. Nevertheless, Flyvbjerg (2006) and Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest that we can generalise case study findings by using multiple data collection methods or different data sources. Although my intention was not to generalise the findings of this research but to allow readers to decide upon the transferability of the study in other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I used multiple qualitative data collection methods and different data sources. This way I used semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to collect data from 35 participants in Tanzania from eight different groups.

I conducted 19 face-to-face semi-structured interviews with six current students, three teachers, four Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) officials responsible for people with albinism issues and four officials working for a government ministry responsible for education, including the education of disabled people. Because I intended to investigate the support parents can offer and the constraints that they face in supporting their children's inclusion in HE, I had a face-to-face semi-structured interview with a parent of someone with albinism. Another face-to-face interview was with a student's reader who took notes for a student with albinism. Additionally, I had one semi-structured interview with a current student with albinism via Skype.

In this research, I also had three focus group discussions. Kitzinger (1994) argues that focus groups are suitable for researching marginalised people because it makes them feel comfortable in a group study. This seemed appropriate given that I was researching people who were not only marginalised but also were under fatal attacks. One of the focus group discussions involved seven graduates with albinism, who in this research are also referred to as students with albinism. These participants had attended and graduated from five different universities. Another focus group interview was with four HE support staff and the other interview was with three teachers.

Considering that at the time of my data collection a number of people with albinism were being attacked and killed for their body parts, it was important that I positioned my focus groups as a space where people would feel comfortable, secure and safe. The students found the focus groups as an opportunity to satisfy their wishes to tell their stories which had been silenced for a long time (Phoenix, 1994). For example, one of them said 'can I say something because if I don't say it, I won't be comfortable'. In this case, the focus groups made the students relaxed. They went beyond the planned 90 minutes which was an indication of good rapport. Going beyond the planned 90 minutes challenged my earlier assumption that students with albinism might be reluctant to freely participate in the research or answer some questions due to the dehumanisation and oppression they often experience. My decision to go beyond 90 minutes was also influenced by Amina Mama (1995), an African feminist from Nigeria, who suggests that as researchers we can modify research methods to fit our local contexts.

Having collected the data, I thematically analysed the transcribed data of 21 individual interviews and three focus group interviews. Here, I applied

a verbatim transcription method and only included interview aspects that were relevant to the study. Thereafter, I adopted a fully hands-on manual data analysis approach by deeply going through the transcripts several times and identifying themes, namely emotions, misogyny, structures and agency. These themes were then grouped together with sub-themes deriving from the data. Participants' own words were then quoted and matched with each sub-theme. I selected quotations and interpreted them drawing upon theories mentioned in the theoretical framework below. My decision to use quotations was not only meant to meet my intention of allowing readers to draw conclusions from the data but also to enable participants to feel that their views were valued (Corden & Sainsbury, 2005).

Theoretical Framework

This chapter analyses the social reality of students with albinism in HE. Various literature suggests that there are two aspects of social reality. They name them as: social structures and agency (Giddens, 1984; Archer, 2000; King 2012). While sociologists agree about the aspects of social reality, they define them differently (Giddens, 1984; Archer, 2000). In this study, I draw upon Archer's (2000) definitions of social structures and agency. In Archer's terms social structures are 'sets of properties and powers that belong to the part of society and agency are those that belong to people' (2000:1). This way, we would say that the lives of students with albinism in this study are embedded with various social, cultural and environmental structures and human agency. This embedment makes the life experiences of these students complex to study.

To explore and understand better the experiences of students in this study, I used various theories rather than rely on a single approach. In this case, I draw upon four notions which are Sarah Ahmed's (2004a) notion of affect, the notion of misogyny theorised by prominent earliest and contemporary feminists such as de Beauvoir (2011 [1949]) and Morley (2011a, 2011b) and as well as Archer's (2000, 2003) notion of reflexivity and internal conversation.

Ahmed's (2004a) notion of affect derives from her theoretical approach to fear of difference and affective economies. In her notion of affect, Ahmed (2004a) believes people are often discriminated and marginalised because societies often elicit emotions that circulate and stick to certain social groups. The notion of affect in this study explains how and why disabled students, in particular students with albinism, were often excluded in societies and consequently in social spaces such as HE. Here I look at emotions such as hate, fear, disgust and ambivalence which often circulate and stick-on albinism and exclude students with the condition in HE.

Emotions are theorised differently across academic disciplines. Psychologists, for example, theorise emotions by associating them with a person's psychological phenomenon such as temperament, personality,

mood and motivation. Sociologists and anthropologists see emotions as deriving from social and cultural relations or practices (Hochschild, 1983; Lutz and Abu-Lughod, 1990; White 1993). Likewise, emotions in Ahmed's (2004a) terms are cultural phenomena deriving from society. This argument makes theorising of cultural structures such as mythical beliefs important for understanding emotions that often circulate and 'stick' on albinism.

Mythical beliefs are traditional stories that talk about ways of living and being in societies (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). This therefore means that myths can construct a way of being in societies and consequently formulate norms and values. In the case of albinism, myths in Tanzanian context circulate negative beliefs as mentioned earlier. These beliefs activate emotions such as hate, fear, shame, pain and even ambivalence which often 'stick' to the condition of albinism. From such emotions, people with albinism are seen as different from the norm of the society and consequently they are excluded in society and social and learning environments such as HE.

Besides constructing norms and deviants, Ahmed (2004b) sees emotions as also capable of aligning people in societies and in social spaces like HE. As such, they bring together some groups of people and exclude others. By so doing, she believes emotions establish dominant groups and subordinate ones. In the case of albinism, emotions have collectively aligned those without albinism and made them the dominant group and consequently made people with albinism 'others'. Such power relations have made students with albinism in Tanzanian HE space to be seen as 'others'.

Misogyny is another notion that we draw upon in this study to explore the experiences of disabled students such as those with albinism. Misogyny as a notion originated from the Medieval Greek word 'misiengune'. 'Misien' in ancient Greek language means to hate and 'gune' means women; therefore, misogyny means hatred of women. The notion of misogyny emerged because in ancient days a number of written texts, poems, myths, beliefs and practices portrayed the hatred of women (de Beauvoir, 2011 [1949]).

Misogyny-like emotions also align people into norms and non-norms, whereby women are positioned as 'other'. This has relevance for my research where I am interested in how albinism intersects with gender and the misogynistic views towards women in particular. This is an important area to study to provide HE leaders with insight into the factors which are specifically affecting the inclusion of female disabled students in HE. Here, they can formulate gender and diversity strategies that aim to eliminate affecting factors.

However, in the case of albinism misogyny does not only affect the lives of women with albinism but also their men counterparts. Studies reveal that children with albinism are sometimes rejected by their fathers and therefore are brought up by lone mothers (Kiishweko, 2016). By giving birth to a child with albinism, mothers are often seen as promiscuous or having had sexual relationship with 'ghosts' (Baker et al., 2010; Lynch & Lund, 2011). Generally, mothers as parents have a role to play in the education of

their children (Wairimu et al., 2016), but when they are harassed, labelled and blamed, they can struggle to be adequately involved in the education of their children which in turn may affect their children's learning process (Kiishweko, 2016). In this case, misogyny in this study does not only enable us to understand how female disabled students are included or excluded in HE but also the support that parents, particularly mothers, can provide for the inclusion of their children in HE, given the role of parents in the education of their children.

I have mentioned elsewhere that no single theory could adequately explain the complex life experiences of students with albinism. To explore the lives of this social group, I also drew upon Archer's (2000) notions of reflexivity and internal conversations. In this study, these notions explain how students with albinism negotiate their inclusion in HE amidst the socio-cultural structures of emotions and broader misogynistic structures. Archer (2003) sees people's reflexivity as the most distinctive human property and power. To her, it is through reflexivity that people have internal conversations with themselves, which are only known by the respective people themselves. She sees these properties as being prompted by peoples' ultimate concerns, such as: self-worth, performative competency and physical well-being. In this study, for example, students' ultimate concerns were to gain respect, be valuable and to be economically independent.

Archer (2000) sees ultimate concerns as what enable people to plan life projects, which they formulate through their memories, emotions, feelings, thoughts and desires. There are various life projects such as building a house, getting married and so on. In this study, one of the students' life projects was to enter and complete HE. To achieve our projects, we make decisions. These decisions, according to Archer (2000) are made in four different modes which are: autonomous reflexivity mode of decision making, communicative reflexivity, meta-reflexivity and fractured modes of decision making.

According to Archer (2003), the autonomous reflexivity mode of decision making is present in people who embark on life projects with limited influence of other people, thus making independent decisions. In relation to the communicative reflexivity mode, this mode usually occurs in people whose decision making is often influenced by significant others. The meta-reflexivity mode exists in people who are led by thought and desires to assist other people. Lastly, the fractured reflexivity mode comes about when a person is distressed and disoriented and therefore decides not to make any action (Archer, 2003). These modes enabled this research to understand structures that can affect students' decisions to achieve their specific desires. Such understanding provided insights on how to support students to address such effects.

Analysing Albinism in Tanzanian Higher Education

In my analysis, I will provide insight into the life experiences of students with albinism in Tanzanian HE, who to some extent may represent other

disabled students worldwide. Here, participants talk about discrimination, prejudice, abuses and harassment often experienced by students with albinism and, in terms of enablers, they talk about aspirations and motivation. These experiences do not differ greatly from experiences of disabled students in HE revealed by other studies (Mumba, 2009; Fuller et al., 2010; Morley & Croft, 2011; Tuomi et al., 2015). One key difference, however, is encapsulated through the quote below:

(p)eople with albinism are being hunted down not because they are a curse, but because people want to use their body parts in order to enrich themselves and be successful because that is what the witchdoctors have told them to do.

(A NGO official)

Such experiences threatened the lives of people with albinism, thus some of them had to be in hiding (Laing, 2015; Odula, 2009; Lapidos, 2012) and those not in hiding lived in fear of being attacked. To protect students with albinism and ensure their security and safety, students in this study were allocated campus accommodation by their respective universities. While these students considered such accommodation as security and safety assurance, to them it was also a sign of acceptance, inclusion and being valued. They believed that people protect what they value, thus implying that their universities valued them.

Besides the unique experience of people with albinism discussed above, this group of people have another unique experience that other disabled people might not experience. For example:

(i)f someone has a baby with albinism the whole society thinks it will be cursed. [So] if there were droughts they would blame them on the person with albinism in the society. Floods or any natural disaster [they would say] it has happened because there was or there is a person with albinism.

(An NGO official)

Participants talked about societal fears regarding albinism. Ahmed (2004a) believes that fear makes people associate other people with 'fearsome objects'. Most of us fear curses and natural disasters because they are life threatening and sometimes difficult to contain, particularly in less economically developed countries like Tanzania. Fear can activate hate, as according to Ahmed (2004a) fear can sometimes slide into hate. In the case of Tanzania, natural disasters are often feared, thus when people see albinism as the cause of these disasters, this impacts how people with albinism are regarded.

As noted by Ahmed, emotions are capable of doing things (2004a; 2004b). Therefore, emotions of fear or hate circulating in relation to albinism work to isolate people with albinism. This is reflected in the following quotation:

(w)hen I would try to befriend some students in my course programme, they would

indicate that they don't want you because they are not willing. Like as if I am disgusting, but what can you do. I would just be with them just like that.

(Female undergraduate student with albinism)

Here a student with albinism clearly indicates how emotions of fear and hate can isolate them from other students thus creating a boundary in HE whereby students with albinism are excluded. Ahmed (2014) informs us that when people exclude others from social spaces, those people often assume they are the rightful occupants of the boundary or space. This way, students without albinism might have assumed the legal right of occupancy of HE boundaries. Here they may have assumed that by engaging in friendships with students with albinism their legal rights would be threatened, thus they may try to avoid those students. Students without albinism might have distanced themselves from those with the condition because as seemingly 'legal occupants' of HE they considered the latter to have no such rights. When people have no right of occupancy, it means they are considered outsiders who do not belong (Ahmed, 2014).

When people are considered as not belonging to certain spaces, the possibilities of being omitted from various plans are high. None of the students in this study were provided with any supportive devices. Given their poor vision and the data of this research revealing that the teaching did not adequately cater to their special needs, the students largely depended on peer support to learn. When peers avoided the students, they could not adequately prepare for assignments and examinations and consequently they often lived with fears of failing their examinations. Several of the students in this study failed their examinations and had to sit for supplementary examinations to continue with their studies. Ahmed (2006) says when systems exclude people, they sometimes neglect them. The experiences of students with albinism imply exactly that. The students lacked adequate support from peers, teachers and the university, in general, to enable them to have a smooth learning process.

Riddell et al. (2005) argue that teaching and learning in UK HE is often widely designed with the assumption of homogeneity. This can mean that some UK universities discriminate some students as they do not consider some of their special needs. Likewise, this study reveals various assumptions of homogeneity in the Tanzania HE system, particularly in teaching practices which do not always recognise the needs of some students. In some cases, teaching practices can be a result of a lack of teaching skills. In this study, none of the six teachers had specialised or had basic training to teach students who may have special requirements, such as students with albinism.

In this study, the system of students' readers was seen as a possible remedy to any weaknesses in teaching practices. However, in some cases, the system

was faced with some challenges. Here some students in this study could not always sit next to their students' readers also known as note takers due to crowded classrooms. Students' readers sometimes had limited time to adequately support the students as the readers were themselves students and therefore also needed time to attend to their own studies. Despite such challenges, the students found the students' reader system a supportive resource that enabled them to have close friends who they could share with not only academic issues but also personal ones. This can imply that a reader system in HE can enable the inclusion of disabled students, such as those with albinism, into the student community.

While we have discussed some unique experiences in the lives of students with albinism in general, there are experiences in the lives of women with albinism which differentiate them from men with albinism as well as from other disabled women particularly because of:

(b)eliefs that women with albinism are either free from HIV/AIDS or can cure HIV/AIDS which has sometimes led to rapes and subsequent HIV infection to women with albinism.

(An NGO official)

This very belief has been subjecting women with albinism to sexual advances, HIV/AIDS infections and even rapes. For example, Baker et al. (2010) in their study, reveal that women with albinism in Zimbabwe had been raped by men with HIV/AIDS and some of them had been infected with the disease. In the case of this study:

(c)laims that women with albinism cure HIV/AIDS were a challenge to the attendance and retention of our girls in schools particularly in villages, where they sometimes have to walk long distances and even sometimes alone or with other children who themselves are helpless.

(A government official)

The association of women with albinism with a cure for HIV/AIDS has not only threatened their safety but also largely restricted women's presence in public spaces, consequently affecting the attendance and retention of girls with albinism in HE. As identified by De Beauvoir (2011 [1949]), sometimes men can use sexual harassment or abuse as a tactic to retain women in the private rather than public aspects of society. In Tanzania, such a tactic has not only retained women in the private spaces but has also resulted in the suicide of a female student in HE who according to Sall (2000) in her study on 'African Women in Academia' committed suicide because of sexual harassment.

While there is a high possibility that women with albinism may be subjected to rape, none of the female students with albinism in my study talked about this explicitly. That said, I did not assume its absence, as we

are also told that violence often shames the victim (Dworkin, 2000) and in some African traditions, it is a taboo for women to disclose gender violence (Morley, 2011a). Letherby, in her book *Feminist Research in Theory and Practice*, reminds researchers that ‘silence is as important as noise in research and the interpretation of silence is as important as the interpretation of what is being said’ (2003: 109). For these reasons, I believe that what happens to some women with albinism in Zimbabwe, as discussed above, can also happen to female students with the condition in Tanzania, but because of shame and prevailing taboos, the students might have chosen to remain silent.

While the topic of rape did not explicitly emerge, female students talked about gender-based violence by some male teachers and students. Gender-based violence can also impede women’s free movement and inclusion in social spaces as they threaten their security and safety. By female students talking about intimidation, harassment and provocation, this research gave them a platform to share their grievances (Phoenix, 1994). This is particularly meaningful given that neither the female students nor their male counterparts in this study had access to university-managed counselling services.

While female students talked about sexual harassment and intimidation, none of the male students talked about such experiences. This can imply that sexual harassment, intimidation and provocation experiences in Tanzanian HE context were mainly women’s experiences, or that, due to social norms, male students felt unable or uncomfortable to disclose such experiences. Some male students in this study also related such experiences specifically to female students. One student shared the following experience:

(T)he lecturer replied ‘how come you have glasses’ and he said nasty words to the female students. So that student lost control and went out of the examination room crying. When the student left the room, the male lecturer considered it as a lack of respect so he destroyed her examination paper and said ‘we will meet in the department’.

(Male undergraduate student with albinism)

Here a male student talks about an incident where a female student was sitting for an examination and found her examination paper printed in small fonts. She then asked for a paper with large prints and as a result she was discriminated against by a male teacher. As mentioned earlier, patriarchal norms often restrict women from entering public spaces, and even when they enter public spaces, their actions may still be controlled (de Beauvoir, 2011 [1949]). Patriarchal systems, which do not provide female students with safe spaces to articulate their needs, can have negative impacts on female students, for example in this case, where the student ‘went out of the examination room crying’. This is made even more significant for female students with disabilities such as albinism and whereby specific adjustments

and support may be required for the students to progress and succeed with their studies.

Reflecting further on their experiences as female students in HE, some of them talked about the implications of sexual advances and the outcomes when they did not respond to the male teachers' intentions. As one student stated, when discussing her treatment from a male teacher who had made advances on her that she had refused:

(h)e entered the class[room] and saw me sitting in the front desk and told me to get out of the class[room]. I cannot think anybody can frustrate somebody like that. I cannot imagine somebody in his right mind can do something like that. Other students saw what that teacher did to me. This in one way or another affected me because I had to go home.

(Female undergraduate student with albinism)

Molla and Cuthbert (2014), who conducted a study in some universities in Ethiopia, found that some female students were being victimised by male teachers and given low grades when they rejected their sexual advances. Again, a Tanzanian feminist, Yahya-Othman (2000), when focusing on engendering academic freedom in Tanzania revealed that sexual harassment was deeply embedded within HE culture. In this case, it is also possible that the student in this study was rudely removed from the classroom because of rejecting the teacher's sexual advances. We are told that sexual advances in HE are spreading widely, and they are largely threatening women's learning and inclusion in the sub-sector (Molla and Cuthbert, 2014; Morley, 2011b). In my study, the act of removing a female student from the classroom in the presence of other students, including other female students, can be a tactic of the male teacher to exert dominance and control over the female student with albinism, which in this case may have been associated with a rejection of sexual advances.

Having analysed the life experiences of people with albinism, we find that there are misogynistic structures and emotional experiences that particularly impact the lives of students with albinism. Given this, it is meaningful to consider how students with albinism, despite the contexts of adversity they face, have entered and remained in HE. As one student informed me:

(I) began to be inspired to undertake HE during my O level education. Here, when the results were released and I heard someone has passed to go for high school I would be jealous and I would say to myself, I also want to go to high school. Why shouldn't I go to Form Five? I would ask myself.

(Female graduate with albinism)

Here the students talk about the reflection and internal conversations she had with herself to formulate her life project to enter HE. According to

Archer (2003), reflections and internal conversations were human properties which often enable people to navigate through socio-cultural structures like those experienced by people with albinism. In this case, I would say that the student's desire such as 'I also want to go to high school' and the internal self-questioning such as 'why shouldn't I go to Form Five?' as well as encouragement, acceptance and respect that she says was accorded to her by community members, teachers and fellow students enabled the student to navigate HE. Acceptance and respect experienced by this very student is an indication that albinism is not always excluded in society or institutional settings. There are times when people with albinism are included.

The very students and ten other students in this study were from low socioeconomic status families and first-generation HE students (Thomas & Quinn 2006). Although the 11 students had no family members to emulate or inspire them to access HE, they say they were inspired to enter HE by teachers, community members and the media. For my research, I argue that reflexivity and internal conversations are individual resources and important enablers, for students' participation in HE, especially for first-generation HE students and those from less affluent family backgrounds like the 11 students in this study. These students had a particular reflexivity and internal conversation that pushed them to prove themselves within educational environments, given how they are positioned as 'other'.

Three students in this study had parents or siblings who had completed HE and by Tanzanian standards were categorised as from middle-class families. These students confirmed how they had financial and parental or sibling support when making decisions to pursue HE, and thus do not reflect the experiences of students with albinism from less affluent backgrounds. According to a male postgraduate student, he formulated his life project to enter HE because he 'felt like HE was a norm of his family'. Reay et al. (2005) inform us that when students enter HE because it was a natural progression of the family, it could mean that their choice for HE was not made on the basis of their own interest but rather because it was a family norm. However, Archer (2000) suggests that such people can use a *sifting process* to decide what they really desire. The three middle-class students in this study might have used a supportive *sifting process* to decide on their exact preferences. For example, two of the three students chose Social Sciences related programmes contrary to Sciences related programmes preferred by their family members. The other student chose a different Science related programme contrary to what their family members had suggested. In this way, the students were particularly motivated in pursuing future aspirations of their own choosing besides reflecting on HE as a natural progression of the family.

In deciding to enter HE, the 11 students from less affluent families seem to have used autonomous reflexivity mode of decision making, while three students with middle-class backgrounds seem to have used a communicative mode. However, all students in this study talked about undertaking HE

because they intended to enable people with albinism to be included and accepted in societies and in social spaces, including HE. In other words, they collectively had desires to remove the social and cultural structures that often circulate and ‘stick’ to albinism (Ahmed, 2004a). Such collective alignments composed by marginalised groups like people with albinism are important human resources in motivating and retaining such groups in HE, therefore they need to be encouraged and strengthened in different marginalised groups through advocacy programmes.

As analysed above, people with albinism are an oppressed social group, and gender intersects with albinism in creating particular challenges for students in HE. Matsuda (1993) tells us that oppressed people often experience physiological symptoms and emotional distress. Stressful experiences can easily lead to fracture reflexivity and result in people being inactive and unable to engage with or thrive in HE institutions. Drawing upon Archer (2000), we can identify that people have *pathos* and *logos* as agencies that potentially work together to produce integrity that may prevent mistreated people from being inactive. Considering the socio-cultural structures in the lives of students with albinism, we would say that *pathos* and *logos* might have been the individual resources and support which enabled the students to remain and complete HE. Using *pathos* and *logos* agencies, some students in this study adopted creative actions to overcome emotional and misogynistic structures in their lives. For example, to overcome the experience of poor teaching practice structures, some students opted to teach other students and embark on peer-led learning and support. Through engaging in this process, they felt more accepted and included in discussion groups, which had positive academic and social consequences.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter provided insights into the experiences of students with albinism in Tanzanian HE. It revealed that besides these students experiencing various social and cultural structures like many other disabled groups, people with albinism have unique experiences that differ from other disabled students. One of the differences is that people with albinism are hunted and killed for their body parts. Due to such acts, some people with albinism lived in hiding which sometimes affected their inclusion in education. Even those not in hiding like students in this study were often worried about their security and safety. Given such experiences, it is obvious that universities need to re-examine and improve their gender and diversity programmes. As leaders in HE are expected to lead universities in the right direction, they have moral responsibilities to guide their institutions to promote positive change with regard to gender and diversity.

As some structures in the lives of female students and students with albinism are socio-cultural, HE leaders in Tanzania need to initiate and promote awareness programmes that intersect gender and disability. These

programmes should aim to change the mind-set of the university community as well as society members who discriminate against and negatively label women and disabled people. This requires dismantling and discrediting beliefs in myths that portray albinism as bad omens, curses, sources of wealth or prosperity and so on.

To ensure the security and safety of students with albinism, universities in Tanzania have provided students with campus accommodation. Such support does not only provide security and safety to students with albinism but also a sense of inclusion and self-worth. In this case, university leaders globally need to promote and encourage the provision of campus accommodation for disabled students and other marginalised students to enable them to formulate a sense of belonging in HE.

This study reveals that emotions of fear and hate that circulate with regard to albinism construct people with albinism as fearsome. Fear and hate which are embedded in society have on occasion made other students distance themselves from students with albinism. This way, the expected peer support is often affected. In the absence of such support, students with albinism often find academic life frustrating and stressful. To minimise such stressful learning experiences and to enable students with albinism and other disabled students to successfully complete HE, leaders need to firstly initiate the development of peer support programmes for disabled students including those with albinism. Secondly, leaders need to mobilise resources and ensure that universities provide students with relevant information, adequate and up-to-date learning resources, as well as technology and physical support to minimise the dependence of disabled students on other students.

To further enhance diversity, HE leaders need to also ensure that teachers have adequate teaching skills and techniques as well as regular training to cater to disabled students' specific needs. Likewise, leaders need to ensure that universities provide counselling programmes (when not present) or to resource these better so as to be able to engage with the unique experiences of their disabled students. Here counselling programmes should include techniques and therapies which address the specific experiences associated with people with albinism.

My research indicates that the students' reader system can be a meaningful way to support and include students with albinism. I recommend that HE leaders, both globally and within Tanzania specifically, need to introduce or strengthen these systems, including where relevant, providing further peer support and mentorship schemes. In strengthening such systems leaders need to guide universities to employ at least two readers for each student with low vision where one of the student readers should not be a student. With such an arrangement, non-student readers would support students when peer readers have academic issues to attend to.

While women with albinism also experienced ill-treatment and discrimination, their life experiences were found to be worse off than their men

counterparts. These women were found to be easily subjected to sexual advances and sometimes even rapes. Such experiences call for gender and diversity programmes designed to challenge the patriarchal mind-set often embedded in some HEIs cultures (Yahya-Othman, 2000). Here leaders need to initiate and promote regular awareness and sensitisation programmes as well as ensuring successful implementation of gender and grievance policies through evaluation and monitoring procedures. Again, as we are informed that sexual abuses and advances in HE were spreading (Molla and Cuthbert, 2014), counselling services that specifically intersect gender and disability need to be introduced where they are absent and strengthened where they exist.

With widening HE participation programmes in Tanzania and globally, universities are likely to enrol students from diversified backgrounds, including students with albinism entering as home, foreign, immigrant or refugee students. Here HE leaders need to lead their institutions to internationalise their systems and practices by integrating global, international and intercultural aspects into university's education delivery processes and practices (Knight, 2004). Likewise, with increased widening participation agendas at HEIs globally, it is important for leaders to plan for gender and diversity strategies for the inclusion of students from diversified backgrounds and experiences. The strategies also need to address weaknesses in areas of teaching and learning, assessment and support service so as to meet the unique needs of a diversified student population. The strategies need to support and encourage individual resources, to promote the extraordinary human agency already existing in students with albinism and other marginalised social groups.

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6 Gender and Higher Education in Nursing

Experiences of Male Nursing Trainees in Ghana

Isaac Mensah Boafo and Sylvia Esther Gyan

Introduction

In this chapter, we are interested in how gender operates as a social construct which influences people's statuses, roles, and career choices. Our focus of discussion is on the gendered experiences of students training to be nurses in Ghana. Before sharing some of the insights obtained from our research in this area, it is important that we clarify what is meant by 'gender' for the purpose of our research. Giddens and Sutton (2021) distinguish between sex and gender by referring to sex as the physical characteristics that separate men and women. Thus, sex is usually thought of as a biological term referring to ascribed genetic, anatomical, and hormonal differences between males and females. Shaw and Lee (2009, p. 113), on the other hand, refer to gender as 'the way society creates patterns and rewards people's understandings of femininity and masculinity or the process by which roles and appropriate behaviours are attributed to women and men'. It refers to the way members of the two sexes are perceived, evaluated, and expected to behave.

Gender is therefore socially constructed, and individuals learn appropriate gender behaviours through the process of socialization. Positive and negative reinforcements aid this process of gender socialization as individuals are considered deviants if they do not exhibit behaviours considered appropriate for their sex (Giddens & Sutton, 2021). Historically, within the Ghanaian context, and indeed in other contexts elsewhere, women are thought of as gentle, caring, nurturing, and emotional. In contrast, men are thought of as aggressive, risk-taking, objective, and the 'dominant' sex. In his study of the Akans of Ghana, Amoah (1991) noted that gender-specific behaviours are inculcated and internalized from early childhood. The Ghanaian female is socialized to be modest, obedient, submissive, conforming, caring, kind, generous and dependent, and quarrelsome, among other traits. In contrast, male characteristics include virility, strength, power, authority, leadership, ability to offer protection and sustenance, ability to endure emotional and physical pain, and exhibition of intelligence, among others. Consequently,

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females may see men as stronger and more responsible, whereas males are often socialized to lead and control women. Females perceived to be too aggressive and exhibit 'mental toughness' are referred to as '*babesia-kokonin*', meaning female-male. Conversely, males who deviate from the prescribed male characteristics such as showing strength, power, and virility risk being called '*banyin-besia*', literally meaning male-female [effeminate] (Amoah, 1991). Amoah (1991) cites several Ghanaian proverbs that describe and reinforce stereotypes about females and males and consequently help in perpetuating the domination of females by males. For instance:

'A woman sells garden eggs and not gun powder'
'The hen also knows that it is dawn, but it allows the cock to announce it'
'If the gun lets out bullets, it is the man who receives them on his chest'

The prescribed gender roles invariably put women in a subordinate position.

Several issues can be deduced from the proverbs cited above. The first proverb shows that certain tasks are deemed inappropriate for a particular gender. The second one also reveals that despite the immense capacity of women to be leaders, leadership roles are often reserved for males. In the third proverb, certain qualities such as bravery, risk-taking, and aggression are often ascribed to men. It also reiterates gender norms that often ascribe leadership roles to males irrespective of the fact that a woman may be able to execute these roles. Proverbs such as these are often used in everyday interactions within Ghana, reinforcing entrenched gendered positions. In this chapter, we show how gender prescriptions impact students' experiences in higher education institutions. Like other forms of interaction, the experiences of males in the so-called feminine occupation of nursing are influenced by traditional gender roles and expectations.

We employed a qualitative approach to explore how the training programs and policies of training colleges influence the experiences of students in Ghana. This approach allowed us to answer questions about male students' experiences, their meanings, and their perspective on nursing education. Our approach involved conducting in-depth interviews with 16 purposively selected male nursing trainees. This provided detailed and subjective views of the experiences of male nursing trainees in Ghana which a quantitative method could not have generated, given the rich textual data required to understand how gender constructions influence the experiences of male nursing students.

Gender and Nursing

Globally, there are more female nurses than male nurses, and this is often attributed to the traditional perception that nursing is a female profession. As a minority group in the nursing training institutions, male nursing trainees

might have similar experiences to other minorities, such as discrimination during training or practice, both at the individual and institutional level (Sedgwick et al., 2014; Graham et al., 2016). Male trainee nurses experience active discrimination against them within institutions because of their sex and the perception that nursing is a female profession (Kronsberg et al., 2018). This gender imbalance, whether at the training college or at work, presents a problem since it deprives the profession of diversity which, as Kirk et al. (2013) argue, is crucial in the nursing workforce.

In the past few decades and with the coming into force of the 1992 constitution of Ghana, there has been improved access to formal education for women, and by law they can enter any occupation. However, traditional gender role expectations still influence entry into occupations such as the military, carpentry, and nursing. According to Böhmig (2010), typical female occupations in contemporary Ghanaian society are catering, hairdressing, dressmaking, secretarial and administrative work, nursing, and teaching. Globally, nursing is seen as a female occupation, the popular image of a nurse being female (Williams, 1992). Females are still reputed to have that 'natural' inclination for caring and nurturing, while male nurses have been considered 'the others', anomalies, and 'a matter out of place' (Douglass, 1966 cited in Hollup, 2014). Florence Nightingale is reported to have stated that the 'horny hands' of males were harmful to caring (David, 2018).

This situation has the potential to produce different experiences for male and female nursing trainees. Indeed, studies from other countries such as the United Kingdom [UK] (McLaughlin, Muldoon, & Moutray, 2010), Australia (Stott, 2007), and Iran (Valizadeh et al., 2014) have shown that males are more likely than females to leave their nursing course due to prevalent stereotypes and gender bias in nursing education which makes it uncomfortable for male students. In Ghana, studies conducted on the nursing profession have largely focused on qualified nurses and their working conditions. In this paper, we examine how the social construction of gender within the Ghanaian context and existing policy frameworks regarding nursing education combine to influence the experiences of male nursing trainees. It aims at uncovering gender bias against males in nursing education and to recommend measures for higher education leaders, to ensure that nursing education is equally open to everyone, regardless of their gendered identifications.

An Overview of Gender and Nursing in Ghana

The popular image of a nurse is female. Kisseih (1968, p. 205) noted that in Ghanaian society,

the care of the sick had been the prerogative of the elderly female members of the community before the advent of the professional nurse. Their skill was not acquired in any school of nursing but through long

years of housekeeping and child-bearing and practical experience gained in the care of former sick relatives.

However, nursing in Ghana has undergone some changes with males taking up the profession, as well as nurses requiring professional training. This contrasts to what Kisseih (1968, p. 205) reported in her seminal work on developments in nursing in Ghana.

The history of professional nursing in Ghana is different from that of many countries. Whereas nursing started in Britain and in many other countries in the 1850s as an occupation for women, in Ghana nursing started in the late 1870s as a male-dominated profession due to the culture and the social construction of gender in the country (Böhmig, 2010). Traditionally, women were seen as dependent. Prior to marriage, they were dependent on their fathers and after marriage on their husbands. In the words of Nukunya (2013, p. 46), 'in many Ghanaian societies, the traditional position is that women are never wholly independent. A woman must always be under the guardianship of a man'. This dependence was ensured through their restricted access to economic resources. Historically, the man is the head and breadwinner of the family. The man was therefore the one expected to work for income to take care of his family. Women, on the other hand, were occupied with domestic responsibilities. They were not expected to leave the home for work with the exception of subsistence farming and petty trading, both of which were low-paying and low-status jobs (Nwezeh, 2009). However, a few women did occupy powerful positions within the society. For instance, there were wealthy traditional female merchants and leaders, especially among the Ashantis (Abotchie, 2008; Nukunya, 2013).

With the advent of formal classroom education, more emphasis was placed on the education of the male child. It was generally believed that a woman's primary role was housekeeping (Abotchie, 2008). Males, therefore, had greater employment opportunities than females. The recruitment of males into nursing can therefore be explained by three main reasons. First, as indicated earlier, men were the breadwinners and those expected to work for income. Second, although caring work was seen as a female role, it was deemed inappropriate for the female to care for people who were not relatives and to undertake caring work outside the home and for income. According to Sumani (2005, cited in Böhmig, 2010), parents prevented their daughters from caring for strangers as this was seen as unacceptable behaviour. Third, because males were the ones who had formal classroom education, they were the ones who were trainable for nursing jobs at that time (Addae, 1996).

However, the nursing profession in general had a low status. Dealing with blood, naked bodies, faecal matter, and the like was seen as menial (Addae, 1996). In view of the low status of nursing at the time, many male nurses moved to the job of pharmaceutical dispenser, another supporting profession at the hospitals, since that had a higher status than that of the nurses. Others

moved to the expanding cocoa and mining industries, thereby creating a shortage of nurses in the existing hospitals in the early part of the 20th century. This together with the gradual enrolment of females into formal education during this period led to the admission of females into nursing.

From 1928, women were given three years of training to work in the maternity wards in the hospitals. Formal nursing training began in 1945 with the establishment of the first state registered nursing school, Korle Bu Nursing Training School. Arguably, the low pay associated with nursing ensured that there were no conflicts with regard to the existing gender power relations. Since nursing had low pay and low status, men moved away into higher paying jobs where they earned more than women, thus maintaining the status quo (Twumasi, 1975). The situation in contemporary Ghanaian society is vastly different. There is improved access to formal education by women that has expanded their opportunities, and women by law can enter any occupation. However, traditional gender role expectations still influence entry into occupations such as the military and nursing among others (Böhmgig, 2010). In Ghana, nursing currently is regarded as a female occupation because it is considered an extension of the domestic role of caring.

Theoretical Perspective

This study is informed by a symbolic interactionist perspective. The interactionist perspective is at the centre of sociological analyses of social interaction at the micro level. Interactionism focuses on people's behaviour in face-to-face social settings and explains social interaction as a dynamic process in which people continually modify their behaviour as a result of the interaction itself. It places more emphasis on the social context within which individuals interact rather than focusing on the individuals *per se*. The basic tenet of this perspective is that it assumes human behaviour is a function of how people interpret and give meaning to their social world. The social world includes other participants in the setting, as well as the environment within which the interaction takes place.

Herbert Blumer coined the term symbolic interactionism in 1937 and asserted that people do not respond to the world around them in a direct stimulus-response manner, but rather to the meanings they bring to it (Blumer, 1969). In other words, the way in which people behave towards things is based on the meanings attributed to those things, and these meanings are created through social interaction and modified through interpretation (Kuwabara & Yamaguchi, 2013). As such, it could be deduced that people interact according to how they perceive a situation; how they understand the social encounter and the meanings they bring to it (Lindsey, 2020). Interactionist perspectives emphasize the fluidity of human behaviour. Lindsey's (2020) concept of 'end point fallacy' explains this fluidity by arguing that the negotiation of social reality is a never-ending cycle where new definitions produce new behaviours. Although this perspective

is a micro level one, it takes into consideration the fact that cultural norms have an influence on one's behaviour. Additionally, it considers the context of the interaction as a key determinant of behaviour or role performance as these norms usually provide general guidelines for behaviour. This perspective presumes a range of possibilities from which individuals choose their responses to different occasions with varying degrees of consciousness (Wharton, 2012). According to Kuwabara and Yamaguchi (2013), during interaction, an actor engages in a process of interpretation or 'self-interaction' before behaving or acting in any particular way.

The social interactionist perspective thus views social categorization as crucial in social interaction. Social categorization refers to the idea that individuals classify themselves and others as belonging to specific groups or social categories such as sex, age, race, ethnicity, abilities, and so on (Wharton, 2012). One important outcome of social categorization is the production of gender differences, hence our interest in this approach for the purposes of our study.

An understanding of status characteristics theory (Miles & Clenney, 2010) is particularly important for understanding how gender and other social categories influence the experiences of male trainee nurses. The status characteristics theory examines the ways through which social categories form the basis of people's expectations of the competence of others. According to Ridgeway (1997), sex categorization sets into motion gender stereotypes, which lead people to expect certain kinds of behaviours and responses from others based on their assumed sex. The idea of 'status characteristic' explains how gender categorization produces stereotypes and gender expectations. A status characteristic is a personal attribute that is associated in a society with widely held beliefs – with some states of the attribute accorded greater esteem and worthiness than others (e.g., male and female) (Ridgeway, 1997). Although gender is a status characteristic in most contemporary societies, it is not the only basis for assigning status and power (Wharton, 2012). However, once a characteristic has status value, it begins to shape expectations and form the basis for stereotypes. Multiple status characteristics may be in force at any given time, and people form their expectations about the competence of others by deciding on which status characteristic is more relevant. This weighing process, according to Wharton (2012), may not be conscious or precise but tends to disadvantage those with lower status values, for example, male trainee nurses in the case of gender. This process invariably influences how much value is attached to people's contribution in the work setting.

Furthermore, the relative proportions of social categories found within the workplace also influence the experiences of members of these social categories. In her theory of tokenism, Kanter (1977) argued that the relative proportions of different social types in a group influence members' social relations. As these proportions change, so do their social experiences. Kanter (1977) found that women in high positions in male-dominated occupations

were subject to gossip, questioning, and scrutiny among others due to their visibility. Moreover, the behaviours of such women were often attributed to their social category rather than to their unique qualities. Going by these arguments, we expected that stereotypical male characteristics such as the belief that men are physically stronger than women, and intellectually superior to them, would put some pressure on male trainee nurses to act in ways that their female colleagues, tutors, and other members of their social category expected. This may take the form of working hard to excel in class (especially in courses perceived to be masculine such as ICT) and performing more ‘masculine’ tasks during clinicals. For instance, in a study by Powers et al. (2018), they observed that during clinicals, male trainee nurses were treated differently. Male trainee nurses were often called upon to assist with lifting heavy patients or to provide care to violent patients. Kiekkas et al. (2016) also report in a study conducted in the Nursing Department of the Technological Educational Institute of Southwestern Greece that with regard to assessment, there was gender bias in favour of females in the written examination evaluation of nursing students. They concluded that this unequal treatment may prevent the retention of males in nursing studies.

Applying the interactionist approach to the current study meant that, based on gender stereotypes and expectations, male nursing trainees would be seen as more competent or suitable to practice in certain areas of training than others. The expectations of both male and female healthcare staff and the general public would influence male trainee nurses to engage in more ‘masculine’ tasks such as manual handling of patients, dealing with patients with mental disorders, working in the theatre, and so on (Jamieson et al., 2019). In a study in South Africa, Kalemba (2020) similarly found that male nurses specialized in fields such as trauma, orthopaedic, and oncology allowed them to display stereotypical masculine behaviours. Existing research also indicates that males may be more ambitious in occupying administrative and supervisory positions (Santry et al., 2010).

Data and Methodology

The data reported in this chapter involves 16 in-depth interviews with male trainee nurses receiving their education in the Volta Region of Ghana. The study reported here is part of a broader study that employed a mixed-method approach to explore the challenges and problems faced by nurses in Ghana. The larger study included six key informant interviews, 24 and 26 semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with qualified nurses and trainee nurses respectively, and 592 cross-sectional questionnaire surveys. Participants were drawn from two teaching hospitals, five regional and five district hospitals in Ghana. The nurses were selected through purposive sampling techniques. One-on-one interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide and each interview spanned 45 minutes on average. Some of the questions the interviews sought to explore included

challenges faced by nurses during their training, experiences with patients on the ward, and experiences with other health professionals such as doctors. As alluded to earlier in this chapter, 16 in-depth interviews with male trainee nurses were purposively selected from the bigger study and analysed. Nurses who had completed their nursing training and practicing nursing were excluded because the focus of this chapter is on the experiences of current male trainee nurses. We focused on this group because we are interested in how gender norms are embedded from the start of training in nursing, which forms a core part and strength of this chapter.

All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the interviewees. The audio-recorded tapes were transcribed verbatim for analyses. We followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step model, hence the analysis started with data familiarization. The transcripts were thoroughly read to gain insight into the entire interview. Through this process of reading and re-reading, the authors became familiar with all aspects of the data, and ideas for coding were noted on each transcript, which helped organize the data according to the broad topics explored in the study, such as 'challenges of male trainee nurses created by gender norms and values', 'discrimination against male trainee nurses', 'challenges of male trainee nurses at school', and 'challenges of male trainee nurses during clinicals at the hospitals'. After the 'familiarization tour' of the data, actual coding of the data began. The codes were identified from the data extracts, and all data extracts were organized under the relevant codes. The codes were generated by highlighting interesting and recurrent features from the data in a systematic manner. As far as possible, every data item was given equal attention, and multiple codes were created.

The third phase of the analysis involved collating the codes into themes. The development of the themes was theory-driven as they were created with specific research questions in mind. After organizing the codes into themes, the initial themes were further reviewed and refined, thereby generating main themes and sub-themes. The final main themes were selected by utilizing the two levels suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 91), where on level one, the 'candidate themes formed a coherent pattern', and on the second level, the candidate themes reflected 'the meanings evident in the data set as a whole'. The themes were defined and refined to ensure that each theme was distinct in the story it told. Three main themes are discussed in this chapter: perceptions on nursing being a female profession, gender prejudices against male nursing trainees, and interactional challenges male nursing trainees encounter.

The Edith Cowan University Human Research Ethics Committee approved this research in July 2013. The Ghana Health Service Ethics Review Committee also provided ethical clearance in January 2014. Additionally, permission was sought from hospital administrations of all the hospitals included in the study. The respondents were informed about the study and its objectives, as well as their rights as respondents. For the sake of member checking, the names and contact information of interviewees were taken.

However, aliases were used throughout the analysis to ensure confidentiality of the participants.

We drew on our positions as lecturers at the University of Ghana to reach out to our colleagues at nursing training colleges to facilitate access to participants, while making clear the voluntary nature of their participation. We anticipated that our own gendered identities could influence the extent of openness with which the participants discussed their issues. For this reason, the data collection was done by both authors (who identify with different genders). Comparison of the data collected by the authors showed no significant differences in the information derived from the interviews. The first author's position as a nursing researcher and the second author's experience as well as knowledge on gender issues also meant that we had some experiential and expert knowledge on the issue of gender and nursing in Ghana. We were fully aware of this and the potential bias that this can introduce in our data collection and analysis. For this reason, we engaged the ethical principle of bracketing in qualitative research, to bracket all personal and professional views on the subject to mitigate the effect of personal positionality (Sorsa et al., 2015).

Findings

Perceptions on Nursing Being a Female Profession

Although about 80% of nurses in Ghana are females (Boafo, 2016), when male trainee nurses were asked about their opinion on whether they perceived the nursing profession as a female profession, many of them were of the view that the profession is not a female one. They pointed to the fact that many of the tasks involved in nursing are 'masculine tasks', and for that matter, they did not see nursing as a feminine occupation. As one interviewee explained:

I don't see nursing to be a female's job, ... when it comes to the performing of certain things, the female students always push it to the males. Things like cleaning a patient's wound, ... the females are empathetic and are not able to do procedures such as dislocation of a joint, they just call us[males] to help.

(Junior, 3rd-year student)

Junior's comment that females are empathetic, however, did not mean that male nurses do not share the feelings of their patients or cannot put themselves in the shoes of their patients. Rather he was affirming the notion that females are emotional and are usually unable to watch others or put others through physical pain. The procedures that Junior referenced involve putting the patient through a temporary severe pain in order for the patient

to get better. The view that nursing is not a feminine occupation was also echoed by other participants:

I went for clinicals with a female colleague, and she was asked to perform the last service for a patient who had just died ... my female colleague just run out to call me to perform the task, she said, this is a man's duty, I cannot do it. ... If males are in the profession, there are some things that the male can do because of his socialization.

(Kakra, 3rd-year student)

When working with a bedridden patient, you need someone who is physically strong, the females will say they cannot carry such a patient and invite you to come in and help.

(Lambert, 1st-year student)

On the contrary, those who subscribed to the view that nursing is a female occupation also pointed to the discomfort involved in performing certain activities by virtue of the fact that they are males. For instance, they were of the view that it was okay for a female nurse to bathe a male patient; however, they expressed the opinion that it was uncomfortable for a male nurse to bathe a female (and even male) patient. Other activities such as serving bedpans and inserting catheters for female patients were all seen to be in opposition to their masculine identities. This view was expressed by Moses when he narrated:

it's a female job honestly, because what we do here basically ... a female can do something better than a male, sometimes the kind of things we do I don't think any of the males is comfortable with it, serving bedpan to a patient on the female ward, that is male nurse in a female ward changing the pampers of a female patient for instance...There is no problem with a female doing these things for a male patient.

(Moses, 3rd-year student)

The comments above illuminate the fact that gender socialization and expectations form the bases of describing certain tasks in nursing as either 'masculine' or 'feminine'. In his study of the Akans of Ghana, Amoah (1991) noted that gender-specific behaviours are inculcated and internalized from early childhood. The Ghanaian female is socialized to be modest, obedient, submissive, conforming, caring, kind, generous and dependent, and quarrelsome, among other traits. In contrast, male characteristics include virility, strength, power, authority, leadership, ability to offer protection and sustenance, ability to endure emotional and physical pain, and exhibition of intelligence, among others. According to Ampofo (2001), children learn these roles by observing and helping their parents and significant

adults. Consequently, females may see men as stronger and more responsible, whereas males are socialized to lead and control women. Females perceived to be too aggressive and exhibit ‘mental toughness’ are referred to as ‘*babesia-kokonin*’, meaning female-male. Conversely, males who deviate from the prescribed male characteristics such as showing strength, power, and virility risk being called ‘*banyin-besia*’, literally meaning male-female (effeminate). It was therefore not surprising that participants in our study referred to the performance of certain tasks as feminine or masculine.

However, it will be wrong to assume that these age-long gender norms are not changing within the Ghanaian society. Economic exigencies coupled with global trends have impacted some of these gender prescriptions. Indeed, the fact that many men can now reconsider nursing as a career choice is an indication of changes in gender norms. Even though males and females are gradually moving into atypical gender occupations, some of these occupations or aspects of them continue to be defined as either masculine or feminine thus producing different experiences for males and females who cross their ‘boundaries’.

Changing Gender Norms, Unchanging Structures and Conventions

Ghanaian society through socialization over time has defined the roles as well as expectations for males and females. This socialization extends to career choices of both male and female, hence some careers being seen as the preserve of a particular gender. However, despite this disaggregation, we find both genders crossing over or veering into careers that hitherto were classified as a male or female’s job. Despite the increasing number of males enrolling in the nursing program, the original policy in these institutions has a posture that suggests that male nurses are more of an afterthought. This is reflected in various forms such as the lack of infrastructure to accommodate male nurse trainees on the campuses. According to some male trainee nurses, their training colleges had limited accommodation, and these are reserved for female students. When asked why the limited accommodations were not shared among both male and female students, a respondent explained that they were told by their school’s principal that men were tough and could manage to commute from town to the campus.

Females are harboured on the campus and the males are asked to go out into the community to find accommodation. ...They only provide accommodation in the school for the females ... the excuse is that the rooms are not enough.

(Kakra, 3rd-year student)

It is very stressful for male trainee nurses, due to lack of accommodation for male students on the campus, it tends to drain our financial resources. It also affects our studies, there are times we may want to stay

on campus to do some work, however, we must leave after school due to the distance. Because of the distance, I wake up early in the morning and set off for campus, I wake up at 1:00 am and prepare for class, sometimes I get to the roadside and there is no vehicle to transport me to school. There are days that I have to wait for as long as 30 minutes, and I find it very stressful.

(Abdul, 2nd-year student)

A male student who expressed a lack of security due to lack of accommodation on campus for male students explained:

Coming to class on time is difficult. When there is an impromptu class, you may miss part of the class. Coming to class or leaving after studies is a threat to our lives, there are times that some of my colleagues were attacked by the armed robbers.

(Ken, 2nd-year student)

Giving female students accommodation at the neglect of male trainee nurses was justified by some utterances of the principal of the training college according to a male student. He explained:

There are times they [school authorities] use words like, ‘as for the male students they can fight for themselves’ ... in terms of security. I remember once my principal during a gathering expressed – ‘for the females your security is paramount to me’.

(Ken, 2nd-year student)

This is in consonance with the status characteristics theory (Ridgeway, 1997). In this case, the sex of students and gender stereotype that males are stronger and can protect themselves as well as find their own accommodation is reflected in the quotes above. The general perception of men’s ability to overcome challenges is reflected in the provision of accommodation for students in the training colleges, where females are given preference when it comes to accommodation on campus. Although men are enrolling in nursing programs, the institutional structures seem to support female students more than male students. Thus, where there is insufficient accommodation for students, preference is given to female students, to the detriment of their male counterparts.

Issues with Uniforms

Status symbols play an important role, especially with regard to the identification of a person’s position in a given context. Nurse trainees are identified by their uniforms which indicates the number of years they have gone through training. The wearing of uniforms continues even after

training during professional practice. In Ghana, female nurse trainees are identified by their green uniform and the number of white stripes on the sleeves of their uniform. On the contrary, male students are identified with their white shirts and khaki trousers which does not distinguish first-year students from either second- or third-year students. This means that male students are provided with the same uniform throughout their training program, whereas it is easy to tell the number of years a female student has spent in a training college. Furthermore, some male trainee nurses indicated that the issue of uniform defining one's position in the nursing field extends even to qualified practicing nurses. For female nurses, after their three-year training, the white stripes on their sleeves change and they have a new uniform which signifies that they have completed their training. However, for male nurses, they continue to wear the same uniform even after completing their training, that is, khaki trouser and a white shirt. This brings up a lot of issues with identification on the ward since the uniform does not differentiate between qualified male nurses and trainees, and among the trainees, it does not distinguish between first, second, and third-year students. This is reflected through the views of two students shared below:

Our females have a sign that indicate their level in the training and even in their profession. In the training colleges when they [female trainee nurses] are to move to the next class, they change their bands, from one white band around the arm to two, then three as they progress, but for the males, there is nothing like that.

(Junior, 3rd-year student)

We wear white shirt and brown khaki trouser, whether you are a male student nurse or a practicing male nurse. We all came together, and you [male nurse trainee] are giving an indication showing that the other person [female trainee nurse] is progressing, what about me?

(Kakra, 3rd-year student)

Our male nurse participants also noted that in nursing there are various rankings, and these rankings are distinguished based on the colour of the nurse's uniform. Unfortunately, male nurses do not have this privilege of displaying their promotion through their uniform, which remains the same throughout their training to the end of their career.

Interactional Challenges

Aside from the inequitable distribution of the limited accommodation for both male and female nurse trainees, another observation that was made was the constant reminder that the nursing profession is meant for females and not males. These were unwritten rules which new entrants in the training colleges were socialized to imbibe. One such practice was the use of the title

‘sister’ for all female students and ‘tutors’ and ‘brother’ for all male nurses. However, male students sometimes ended up being referred to as ‘sister’ (inadvertently), which according to some students was demeaning to them. Some students shared their experiences on the issue:

There are times tutors call us sister, our language in school is that every female is called a sister and every male a brother, but you will hear people calling you sister, I find this to be embarrassing, I am not wearing a green straight dress and you refer to me as a sister. At our orientation we were told that everybody is called a sister.

(Ben, 1st-year student)

This finding has been observed by several studies that noted that the female pronoun has been used almost exclusively when referring to nurses in nursing schools (Coleman, 2008; Wolfenden, 2011). Such discrimination may influence male trainee nurses’ sense of self as explained in the above quote.

Performance Expectations

As posited by the status characteristics theory, men and women have ‘scripts’, which they act according to, during their interactions with others; scripts are acquired through the process of socialization. These scripts produce gender stereotypes that lead people to expect certain kinds of behaviour from others based on their gender. They provide social shorthand, which forms the basis of people’s expectations of the competencies of others (Wharton, 2012). In as much as there are no written rules dictating or discriminating against male trainees, respondents noted that faculty members sometimes picked on them because of their sex and the expectations of society about the ability of their sex. As noted by our participants:

The tutors sometimes have this perception that, once you are male, you should know and understand some aspects of the courses such as issues with technology. I remember we were to do indexing; a male student asked a question, and she [tutor] was like, you males are supposed to know more about ICT.

(Kwasi, 2nd-year student)

Our tutors often sympathize with the females compared with the male, there is a tag on you as a male nurse, thus some tutors expect more from us as male students compared to our female counterparts.

(Junior, 3rd-year student)

When we go for practical lessons and you make a mistake, the tutors will pick on you because you are male and you are expected to do better

than the female students, they [tutor] reprimand you for making a mistake. This puts some pressure on you to meet the expectations.

(Kwasi, 3rd-year student)

The data indicates that male students faced the pressure of being seen as more knowledgeable on certain topics than their female counterparts. According to participants in the study, male students are sometimes neglected or not given the needed attention when they have challenges understanding something in class or are not able to meet the expectations of their tutors. According to some participants, some tutors made derogatory remarks about them when they were not able to answer or solve or grasp something in class. Similar observations were made by Stott (2007) in a study among nursing students in a university in Australia.

Aside from the challenges experienced with tutors, senior colleagues, and female nursing students, what also came to the fore was the different receptions male nurse trainees received from patients under their care when they go for clinicals. Some male nurse trainees explained how although patients of both sexes were comfortable with female nurses attending to their needs, male students were generally not preferred, especially when it came to attending to some female patients. Some students shared some of their experiences on the ward with patients during clinicals:

Most patients, especially the females, do not allow you to work on them. Male patients are okay with us, female patients do not have a problem with male nurses turning against them.

(Andy, 3rd-year student)

When we go for clinicals, there may be a procedure to be performed on a female patient and she would object your stay in the room for the procedure to be done on her. In such a case, you may miss out on an opportunity to learn as a male nurse. I have personally experienced this several times. It makes your skill in that aspect difficult. It makes your skill in that aspect questionable since you will only have the theoretical knowledge and not the practical. However, once in a while, you will come across a female patient who may not object to your presence and thus you can catch up.

(John, 3rd-year student)

Similar observations were reported by Hawke (1998) two decades ago, where a male nurse trainee was told that 'he couldn't work for the female patients because he was male' (p. 58). The gendered expectations of the sexes and the dominant belief that nurses must be female tend to even influence patients' attitude towards male nurses. Female patients' refusal of allowing male trainee nurses the opportunity to participate in their care affects the quality of training they receive during their clinicals, which constitute a

core part of their training program. It also has the tendency of pushing male nurses from choosing a career pathway in areas where they are sure they will have encounters with hostile female patients. Although, the status characteristics theory examines the ways through which social categories form the basis of people's expectations of the competence of others. In this study, we observed that female patients' refusal for male nurses to attend to their healthcare needs was not based on their competence but more due to their being more comfortable being nursed by someone appearing to have the same sex as themselves. These experiences are also triggered by the fact that they are trainee nurses; thus male trainee nurses have to grapple with their status as trainee nurses as well as their gender that is being male in a female-dominated profession or profession widely regarded as meant for women.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explored the influence of gender on the experiences of male trainee nurses. We found several internalized and enacted gender-based factors which created somewhat unfriendly and uncomfortable environments for these male trainees. We argue that their status as males created particular expectations for them. Most of these expectations seem to act to portray a discord between their identity as men and their chosen profession. We found both systemic and interactional factors combined to portray male trainees as playing a secondary or subservient role within the nursing profession. This is seen in how institutional heads or policies address issues concerning students. In the allocation of limited residential facilities to students, the limited on-site accommodations are all reserved for females. In the classroom, males were expected to have a natural propensity to do better in some courses, and their concerns and challenges as far as these courses are concerned were either ignored or not given sufficient attention.

Findings of this study must be seen in light of some limitations. Being a qualitative study, the small sample size makes the findings difficult to generalize. Despite this limitation, some of the findings bordered on the structures and policies that cut across nursing training colleges and therefore our findings are applicable to all trainee nurses in Ghana. This is especially relevant when considering the issue of uniforms both in school and at the workplace. Although we did not capture the voices of female trainee nurses, we hope future studies will compare the experiences of both males and females to ascertain if indeed we are not overstretching the experiences of male trainee nurses.

The findings highlighted so far suggest that whereas more males are seeking higher education in the nursing profession, they are confronted with challenges associated with the relationship between male nursing trainees and their tutors and preceptors on the wards, and patients and their relatives. Furthermore, biased performance expectations where male nursing trainees

are expected to do better than their female counterparts in certain courses and with certain tasks on the wards as well as unchanging structures and conventions in the nursing training institutions may hinder their progression into the nursing profession. We therefore recommend that nursing tutors undergo pedagogical training on how to be gender sensitive in a field that is dominated by females. It is also imperative that the government and nursing training institutions undertake policy and infrastructure changes to make the teaching and learning environment more welcoming to male students.

Higher education leaders should put in place measures to ensure that minority groups in their institutions are treated fairly and equally. To encourage and increase the number of male nurses, we believe that higher education leaders should consciously employ a quota system that gives specific allocation of places to male applicants into nursing training programs. Such strategies should be extended to the provision of infrastructure such as accommodation for male nursing students. It should also include more pastoral support to be available to both male and female trainees, should they confront challenging gendered expectations and stereotypes during their studies. It is our hope that our research into this topic will create more awareness, especially among leaders and staff dealing with the training of nurses in higher education, to allow for greater sensitivity to how to approach students equally within this sector, regardless of their gender.

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In-Dialogue Editorial for Chapters 4–6

Student Experience in Higher Education

Fawzia Haeri Mazanderani

By exploring the experiences of students within higher education (HE), the following three chapters are concerned with how culturally sanctioned stereotypes and misconceptions influence the HE experiences of minoritized groups. Each chapter asks the question of who has been deemed the ideal HE candidate within different contexts. They consider how certain types of students are made to feel excluded within this landscape, with implications for academic attainment and progression.

Each chapter focuses on how particular social identifications impact different student groups, recognizing both the intersectional and socially constructed nature of these descriptors. Chapter 4 is concerned with the experiences of students who identify as ‘women’ in Nigeria, particularly those with caring responsibilities. Chapter 5 considers the experiences of students with albinism, regarded as a ‘disability’ in Tanzania, recognizing how gender and ‘disability’ intersect and inform engagement in HE. In Chapter 6, Boafo and Gyan focus on the prejudices and misconceptions experienced by male trainee nurses in Ghana, examining the historically entrenched nature of gendered norms and the everyday ways gender stereotypes are reproduced within this context.

Morris and colleagues begin their section by reflecting on how the challenges of academic study are exacerbated for female students with caring responsibilities. These are often unrecognized by higher education institutions (HEIs), which continue to perpetuate assumptions that ideal academics are autonomous (often male) care-free subjects (Lynch, 2010). Gender stereotyping is similarly evident in Boafo and Gyan’s work, although their focus is on male trainee nurses who, due to ingrained cultural notions of the role of ‘strong’ men in society, face pressures to perform roles not expected of their female counterparts.

In the context of Nigeria, Morris and colleagues urge HE leaders to challenge patriarchal and colonial beliefs which position women primarily as ‘care-givers’ in society (Ogbogu, 2011). They identify the resources and support services required for student carers, recognizing how their juggling of different responsibilities impacts them being able to work to the best of their abilities and to fully participate in university life. This has potential

implications for them and their families' futures, for wider communities, society, and broader gender equity goals.

Kiishweko's research on the experiences of students with albinism within Tanzanian HE similarly reflects how misogynistic views attach themselves to women with albinism in particular, due to mythical beliefs that associate albinism with mothers who are promiscuous (Lynch & Lund, 2011), as well as myths which connect women with albinism to HIV. Kiishweko draws upon Ahmed's (2004) work on affective economies to explore how certain emotions circulate and 'stick' to particular social groups, with implications for how people can feel included or excluded within certain spaces. Emotions of 'hate' and 'fear', among others, have attached themselves to students with albinism, reflecting widespread misconceptions that people with albinism in sub-Saharan Africa are bad omens, curses, and sources of disasters and diseases. The experience of students with albinism as being 'othered' within HEIs has resonance with the experiences of female student carers mentioned above, as well as with that of male trainee nurses explored by Boafo and Gyan.

Within Ghana, and indeed across global contexts, nursing is deemed a female profession, with female nurses regarded as having a 'natural' inclination towards 'caring' work. In contrast, male nurses are deemed 'other', with implications on how they feel able to belong within this career and how they contribute to this work. Boafo and Gyan provide insightful details into how, within the nursing profession, gendered socialization and expectations create some tasks as 'masculine' and some as 'feminine', with stereotypical notions that male nurses are 'tougher' as well as more academically capable than female nurses. In addition to receiving different treatment from their tutors, male trainee nurses have found patients expressing a preference for female nurses who they feel fulfill their traditional conceptions of how a nurse should appear. This demonstrates how HEIs represent broader socio-cultural landscapes, reflecting norms related to gender and ability. The contexts of Nigeria, Tanzania, and Ghana each demonstrate the need to attend to these broader socio-cultural issues of gender equity prevalent within wider society.

Each chapter challenges normative assumptions around who constitutes a rightful occupant of HE, urging for greater institutional support for students who do not represent the status quo, so that they can feel comfortable within this space and able to express their needs, without fear of isolation or judgement. The chapters are aligned in recognizing the ways that gender, as a social construct, intersects with other identity characteristics to impact the affective dimension of student experience. Each author also raises how, while providing access to HE for minority groups is commendable, enduring support services are key to enabling successful experiences for more diverse groups of students.

While all three chapters are concerned with HE within Africa, their findings are relevant to global educators and leaders. Across each chapter,

we identified the following recommendations that, while requiring tailoring for specific contexts, have broad relevance:

1. HE staff and management require ongoing training around gender sensitivity, particularly within subject areas that may have a stronger presence of some gendered identifications over others. It is important that this training is not left solely to women staff and that a commitment to gender inclusivity comes from university leaders.
2. Efforts should be made to welcome minoritized students on campus, with safe, family-friendly accommodation, and childcare services made available to these groups.
3. Institutions should provide access to reproductive health services and counselling services. Where possible, they should hire staff with expertise regarding gender-based violence, among other inclusivity and equity concerns such as how to support students with specific disabilities.
4. HEI, if not doing so already, should have a system that reviews special considerations and provides adaptability with assessments, recognizing the varied circumstances of their student body.
5. E-learning and online opportunities require further development, particularly in the context of African HEIs, as a means of generating wider engagement.
6. In addition to professional support, peer support and mentorship is an area to develop, with student ‘readers’ and helpers having a potentially meaningful role to play in supporting students with specific learning needs.

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7 Outsiders Reflecting on Invisible Institutional Gender Norms

Nettie Boivin, Judit Háhn and Shomaila Sadaf

Introduction

Globalization and neoliberal practices have impacted higher education institutions (HEIs) around the world. Globalization has created an academic system that views knowledge as a measurable commodity and therefore personnel as components of the system rather than as human capital (Mignolo, 2007). Even in Nordic countries, where social equality is foregrounded in most regulations, laws and policies, women in higher education (HE) still feel the impact of embedded normative practices. As Elomäki (2015) points out, women are unfairly marginalized, due to the capitalistic, patriarchal and normative practices in HE. This is reflected, for example, in the economics of gendered budgets as well as funding (Elomäki, 2015). Additionally, other components that marginalize women in all of HE, but in particular being examined in this Nordic context, are the stressors of time, the hidden subjectivity of tenure criteria, microaggressive communication practices, gender-based assumptions and stereotypes (Attell et al., 2017; Torino et al., 2019; Wright & Shore 2017).

Our study argues that gender inequality requires a deeper understanding of a variety of factors and aspects intersecting women's lives playing a role in the work reality of academia including research, work-life balance in HE, mobility and teaching. In particular women of colour, immigrants and those with children face a greater degree of marginalization. In HE, especially in countries viewed as socially equal, often there are embedded, normative institutional practices (Elomäki, 2015; Ylöstalo, 2020). However, these normative practices are overlooked in academia, especially in HEIs located in a society that emphasizes social equity (Ylöstalo, 2020). Often as researchers state, in Finnish academic culture, women tend not to complain as they feel less burdened by their academic colleagues in socially more equitable countries (Malin, 2018). Moreover, women feel as if criticizing or voicing criticism of gender inequality is viewed as “man-bashing” (statement from a colleague during a meeting Nov. 2021). This raises two intersecting issues: (1) how the perception of a Nordic social justice national ideology and policies do not translate into a reality for all in HE (women in

particular) and (2) how seemingly social equitable Nordic countries contain invisible threads of gendered institutional coloniality of power, which affects women and non-local/transnational women to a greater degree.

Drawing on Schiller's definition (1998), we utilize the term "transnational" to indicate women from outside of Finland who have immigrated to work in HE and maintain social, familial and cultural connections to their prior home country. These women are essentially immigrants or economic migrants. Our team has transnational researchers who come from a variety of countries and is situated in differing socioeconomic status (doctoral researcher, permanent associate professor and university lecturer), but our commonality is being a national outsider and perceived as an outsider of the local academic (HE) context. It should be noted that doctoral researcher is the term applied for what some term PhD student. Our study is unique as the concepts of coloniality of power (Mignolo, 2007) and gender usually have been investigated in colonized (Asia, Americas) or colonial (UK, Germany) countries. However, our research context is in HE in Finland, a Nordic country.

Finland has a muddled historical past as it was occupied (prior to independence) by Sweden and for a short time by Russia (post-Communism). Yet, concurrently Finland has been viewed as not fully colonizing but at least implementing policies of coloniality of power onto the Sami peoples (Nyyssönen, 2013). Historically, Finland is not a colonial country, but as the study will highlight, the institutions have covertly embedded coloniality within the institutional academic practices. Coloniality refers to the "long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 244). Moreover, Finland is perceived to be a socially equal country but in reality has embedded inequity in institutionalized normative practices. Thus, our study argues that gender equality requires a deeper understanding of a variety of factors and aspects intersecting women's lives that play a role in the work reality of HE academia. As researchers of gender note, there are several factors that illustrate how "intersectionality, the interaction of social identities including gender, ethnicity, sexuality and class, can be used to understand how different social identities affect an individual's experiences" (Warner, 2008; Sang, 2018, p. 193).

This study extends from other HE gender researchers who argued that gender equity is dependent on the needs of each individual, which are shaped by socioeconomic status, social and family status, community identity (perception of belonging) and ethnic inclusion (Sang, 2018). We highlight the gender identity and roles affecting one's beliefs, feelings and normative expectations of what is and is not acceptable. The study aims to investigate a multi-perspective (administrative, teaching, research, student) and transnational view of gender inequality through our own subjective positionings. We examine how from these perspectives the areas of home-work balance,

family expectations and needs, and voice in the process of employment trajectory can be overlooked by HE. Finally, the objective is to collaboratively reflect and create strategies to overcome these challenges. This leads to examining the following overarching thematic research questions:

1. To what extent do unspoken gendered normative practices in HE affect transnational women's lived realities?
2. What are the factors and aspects intersecting expectations and beliefs of gender roles and practices that highlight how coloniality seeps into even perceived HEIs in social equality countries?

The chapter begins by outlining gender inequality in academia, leading to a discussion of the experience of transnational women academics. The methods utilize multi-perspective focus groups (Sang, 2018, p. 192) with women academics in Finland. Our study illustrates the challenges existing in gendered working norms, which marginalize women within universities (Hart, 2002; Parsons & Priola, 2013). However, we will be presenting future recommendations stemming from the data results. Marginalization is taken to refer to women's involuntarily reduced opportunities to participate fully in academic life (Andersen & Jensen, 2002). Often research investigates gender or race or the intersection but rarely investigates this as a group of transnational immigrants. Our chapter unpacks and defines coloniality, globalization neoliberal practices embedded in HEIs, Nordic gender practices and mobility, and hidden social inequality.

Literature Review

Coloniality

Academic institutions have embedded institutional practices. Research, administration, evaluation of HE practices and success are all embedded with coloniality of power (which will be later unpacked). This stems from the globalization of academic knowledge as becoming a competitive, commodified product that is sold rather than seen as fluid and interactional (Lund, 2020; Malin, 2018; Sang, 2018). Globalization in the present era can be understood as Larner (2003) suggests as a rhetorical device, deployed in support of a specific (neoliberal) political agenda. Therefore, in this chapter we refer to globalization of academic institutions as a form of "coloniality of power" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007).

Our study views neoliberal globalization practices and coloniality of power practices to be intertwined. Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such a nation an empire (Mignolo, 2007). Our study utilizes the term coloniality of power in reference to long-standing patterns of power emerging as a result of colonialism.

The term coloniality of power defines culture, labour, intersubjective relations and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). In HEs “coloniality of power” is how Western academic institutions force other non-Western HEs to copy, apply and implement the same regulations, evaluation protocols, administration and assessment of incoming and outgoing students (Lund, 2021; Maldonado-Torres, 2007). These are all invisibly connected to the notion of the commodification of knowledge in HE (Connell, 2011; Lund, 2020).

Normative Practices of Coloniality

Increased marketization of academia has blurred lines between profit and knowledge-seeking pursuits in universities, especially where research funding and tenure track are concerned (Wright & Shore, 2017). Emerging female academics discuss how they considered “gender” to be the main struggle with achieving criteria of excellence (Lund, 2020). Moreover, working academic mothers are struggling for academic recognition while maintaining the responsibilities of motherhood, which creates significant tensions (Wolf-Wendel & Ward 2003, p. 121).

The gendered nature of the tenure track evaluation criteria became visible from the standpoint of junior women academics who were pursuing this dream of permanence. The criteria were written from an unacknowledged position of global masculinity (Connell, 2011). Henceforth we will use the term women rather than female; however, it should be noted that in Finland there are no gendered pronouns and the word for female and woman is similar except for the ending of the noun. Moreover, other studies revealed how conferences are exclusionary on the basis of gender (Eden, 2016), class (Stanley, 1995), race (King et al., 2018) and caring responsibilities (Henderson et al., 2019). Findings in the Walters (2018) study indicate that there are gender stereotypes within the academic culture in which gender (categorized as the simple male and women categories but aware of a variety of other terms in existence) as a category overshadows individual competence. It was found that women faculty continue to experience extreme exposure to microaggressions, work-life conflict and low levels of institutional support (Blithe & Elliott, 2021).

Microaggressive Communication

Microaggressions in communication are often hidden or disguised as banter. They covertly act as pressure or stress in an academic environment. Microaggressive communication is understood as communicative acts, verbal or nonverbal, implicit or explicit, that demean, insult and discriminate against people (Torino et al., 2019). Microaggressions include microinvalidations or subtle acts that exclude or negate the feelings or experiences of individuals. Dismissiveness and exclusion in particular are

evidence of microaggressive communication but are more apparent when observed as it is often an invisible form of communication (Sue, 2010). Gender research in HEs has found that women faculty experience different stressors and conflicts at different points of their academic career (Torino et al., 2019). Within a framework of stress process theory how workplace hostility, microaggressions and work-life conflict function as stressors for academic women (Blithe & Elliott, 2020)? A covert example is if male colleagues regularly interrupt others or take credit for an idea. Another type of microaggression is a microassault, which includes verbal attacks with discriminatory statements (Torino et al., 2019). In academia, this comes in the form of an academic and intellectual argument but is often male colleagues marginalizing women's voices (Winkle-Wagner & Kelly, 2017).

Stress Process

Stress process theory is a sociological lens used in wellness issues. One's social identity categories (e.g., race or gender) correlate to disparities via differences in exposure to unhealthy stressors (Elliott & Lowman, 2015). It facilitates the unpacking of how women experience disproportionate levels of stress that impact their work (Attell et al., 2017). Stressors at work include a wide array of experiences that can reduce the ability of people to adapt and thrive in their work roles (Attell et al., 2017). Again, these stressors can include dismissive language, projecting authority and taking credit for others' work or dismissing emotional issues as trivial. Gender-based assumptions and gender stereotypes are often assumed understanding in organizations. They occur in daily interactions but are often "subtle and difficult to document" (Acker, 2006, p. 451). However, even outside North American, Southern and Western European academic contexts, research indicates even in Nordic institutions the stressors and microaggressive communication exist (Malin, 2018).

Nordic Gendered practices

Recent studies in Nordic countries have revealed gender issues around macroeconomic policies, family life imbalance and hierarchical political structures. Studies have focused on gender economics of budgets and on aiming to depoliticize policy-making at the HE level (Cavaghan, 2017). Nordic knowledge regime provides favourable conditions for knowledge-based feminist claims that macroeconomic and other policies nevertheless remain marginal for women (Ylöstalo, 2020). The idea of depoliticization has also played a key role in feminist academic discussions regarding governance and its implications for feminism (Cavaghan, 2017; Meier & Celis, 2011).

The process of depoliticization does not eradicate the reality of institutionally embedded "evidence hierarchies" in policy-making (Thun, 2020). As

Latimer and Skeggs suggest, the “progressive modernisation of the academy is materialising in the monetary value of research” (2011, pp. 400–401). Internationalization and mobility are components of a perceived global academic requirement. These terms of internationalization and mobility become buzzwords and are superficial implements as a strategy for winning the economic academic competition in global markets. Therefore, women academics who are unable to participate in mobility can be perceived as less valuable than male colleagues. Thus, mobility (or the lack of it) can impact the hiring and promotion of women as professors. In Norway, for example, the ratio of women professors was 25% in 2013, which is barely higher than the European average (EU-28) of 21% (European Commission, 2015, p. 129). Yet globally the demographics of women is around 50%; therefore, hiring of women is still low. Gendered blind spots, which reflect gender bias in the academic organizational structure and culture, continue to the legitimacy of gender inequality (Acker, 2006).

Women in Nordic academia experience a “double bind” of the welfare system because the benefits related to parental leave and childcare clash with the gendered academic work culture (Seierstad & Healy, 2012, pp. 303–304). Seierstad and Healy’s (2012) critique is not directed at the welfare system, but rather at the inequality regimes in universities in neoliberal economies. Neoliberalism is a global ideology roughly emerging around the 1970s in Western global economies, which pushed the commodification of all contexts (education, HE, business, government, culture, food, etc.). It impacted how HEs are governed, trained, recruited and evaluated by researchers, teachers and students. Ultimately, practices in HE such as tenure, student assessment and recruitment are all guided by the need to increase profit over knowledge production (Naidoo, 2011). These policies are so pervasive that even Nordic academic institutions fall into neoliberal practices of academic work, including student retainment, assessment and research. Therefore, if the ultimate (implicit) goal is to make money then embedded in HE are practices that favour patriarchy over enabling women to succeed (Elomäki, 2015). Often the assumption is that in a social justice nation, women have it good, but that is not the reality. Economic policy treats women and men differently in Finland (Malin, 2018).

Gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming, for example, have been criticized for translating problems of gender equality into calculable, economized objects, and thereby giving primacy to issues that fit easily with this numerical logic, such as women’s employment rates and gender discrimination taking the form of unequal pay. This sort of quantification of pay translation is based on meeting continual criteria (pay changes if maternity leave is taken, for example). This has resulted in adopting gender equality policies that are aligned with employment priorities not allowing for interruptions to one’s work trajectory (Elomäki, 2015). Elomäki’s (2015) research in Nordic countries shows how gender budgeting in HEIs politicizes

the budget in two ways. The budget is not a technical exercise but a political tool and process, given that it is the principal expression of government priorities. It highlights gendered consequences of specific decisions that are contained in the budget (O'Hagan, 2017).

Mobility and Social Equity—Gender Not Included

Gender inequality in academia, in Europe in general, as well as in Finland in particular, might be seen as beginning early in women's careers. For post-doctoral researchers and doctoral researchers applying for funding in Finland (and in many other European countries) is contingent on showing academic mobility. Academic mobility highlights that one has studied and worked in another institution and country. The Erasmus program specifically is set up to create opportunities for the academic mobility of students and staff. However, this implies all students can easily move for several months up to a year. An example of how Erasmus student mobility impedes due to gender is that women are less likely to be granted a meeting with a faculty member than are men (Milkman et al., 2012). This later disadvantages these women researchers as on their CV there is a lack of mobility, which is a criteria for hiring and promotion. In Finnish universities, ideas about mobility and internationalization are not uniform. There is variation tied to the practices of different fields, over and above the perceived values of particular fields or universities (Nikunen & Lempiäinen, 2020). In the present study, we analyse junior and other insecurely employed researchers' experiences of geographical mobility in relation to their personal life, career, employability and value as scholars.

Work-life conflict can occur when work imposes on non-work time (Denker & Dougherty, 2013) and when non-work obligations impede work expectations (Blithe, 2015). On average, women in HE have more family responsibilities than men (Nikunen, 2014). In Nikunen's (2014) study, most of the Finnish interviewees talked about reduced mobility in gender-neutral terms, referring to "parenthood"; many talked about parenthood as an obstacle for women, but no one gendered it as a problem relating to fatherhood or men (Nikunen, 2014). Nordic men's academic CV highlighted that they had moved and had academic experiences outside of their home country (Thun, 2020). Yet, many Nordic academic women, especially those with families had less chance to have this reflected on their CV as it was impossible to move for extended periods of time due to their children. Thus, women suffered at the attitudinal level by not being seen as potentially international academics (Thun, 2020). Additionally, social support, such as emotional, tangible or physical help from co-workers or superiors, especially during times of duress, can counter the negative effects of workplace stressors but are often missing in reality (Attell et al., 2017; Turner & Turner, 2013).

Positionality

We need to point out our positionality in the research design and the data analysis. Our research team is transnational (CohenMiller & Boivin, 2021). We each moved to Finland from a variety of immigrant countries with multi-racial migrant families. Furthermore, we have diverse and multi-level academic trajectories, since our team comprises PhD students, emerging academics and ones that are more senior. However, due to the small community in Finland and privacy concerns revealing specific details might be detrimental to our future careers.

Consequently, we are positioned as coming from minority and marginalized countries/groups but are aware of our academic privilege. The importance of the multiple perspectives (age, country of origin, religious, socioeconomic, racial composition) creates more depth to the experiences and as such downplays any biases or inferences. We viewed the responses to the narratives as windows into the HE community of practice, seeing it from our positionality as immigrant women academics. We investigated the Finnish context but with the underlying belief that HE is a neoliberal institution containing expected normative practices.

Research Design

The study objectives were to examine the concept of invisible coloniality of power embedded in HEIs. We investigated unspoken HE normative practices as well as the perception of gender roles and practices through composite narratives and responses given to them. Our research questions were as follows:

1. To what extent do unspoken, gendered normative practices in HE affects transnational and local women's lived realities?
2. What aspects of beliefs of gender roles and practices illustrate how coloniality seeps into HEIs even in social equality countries?

When designing the research study, we applied both quantitative and qualitative approaches. First, we created four composite narratives, drawing on a series of experiences discussed with other academics in Finland. Our study is using the term *composite narratives* literally as these narratives were constructed from a variety of colleagues' stories in Finnish HE. Each narrative was a collective narrative from experiences taken (with oral permission) from our Finnish collaborative research networks to ensure participants would and could not identify any narrative to a particular person. The narratives were constructed from casual conversations in public spaces, amongst women academics over several years of public interactions. Under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) rules, there were no rights of privacy violated as no person was identified (Vermeulen,

2014). The network consisted of women in HE Finland who were interested in gender issues at the HE level. The use of composite narratives is not a methodological approach, rather it was for ethical purposes to hide the identities of women due to the smaller context of Finnish HE.

The composite narratives reflected academic experiences from across Finland incorporating a variety of experiences: research, administration, student and work mobility. The narratives were labelled as follows:

- Research Experience
- Teacher/Administration Experience
- Work-Life Balance Experience
- (Im)mobility Experience

The narratives were translated into Finnish. The research was designed around survey data where the participants responded to four composite narratives. The research team constructed a mixed method survey that incorporated both quantitative survey data (yes/no questions) and a section allowing for qualitative open-ended responses to the composition narratives. This created a strong, rich set of data that was triangulated to create a better understanding of not what people were thinking but how they felt (Geertz, 1972). Thus, this study was designed with an interdisciplinary view of HE as a community of practice, which required a depth of data collection that was not solely reliant on quantitative findings. After piloting the survey, the questions were translated into Finnish from English by a colleague and checked by the Finnish-speaking team member.

Each composite narrative was followed by anonymous survey questions about the composite narratives:

- a. Have you experienced anything similar Y/N
- b. Has a friend/colleague experienced anything similar Y/N
- c. Do you want to share your experience in writing?

The Webropol survey system automatically calculated the Yes/No answers and created charts based on the data. In addition, there was a feedback box added under point c., which had space for up to 2500 characters, where the participants could write reflections on the narratives either in Finnish or English.

Under GDPR regulations the open-ended questions could contain data that might identify a person. Therefore, these were considered pseudonymized (as pertaining to GDPR definition of privacy) open-ended responses to each section (research, teacher/administration, work-life balance, (im)mobility). The Webropol system removed names, and email identification thus automatically pseudonymizing the responses.

The study was approved by the department research committee. A survey link was sent by the research team to 900 women at a Finnish university

and was passed along to other Finnish universities, Universities in Sweden (for privacy purposes the universities are not named). Of the 900 surveys sent only 36 responded. The participants included administration, faculty, researchers and students.

Survey Data Processing

All GDPR ethical and legal guidelines were implemented when collecting and processing data. The members of the mailing list were sent a privacy notice and a research notification, informing them of the purpose of the research, the process of the data collection, the data controllers, the storage and the processing of the survey responses. As outlined above, the answers given to the closed questions were anonymously processed in Webropol. The answers given to the open-ended questions were not considered as anonymous because they had the potential to include personal data. Therefore, the open-ended responses data was treated confidentially and pseudonymized by the PI; the findings were extracted and kept on a password-protected Nextcloud server as per Data Management Plan protocol and regulations in line with Finnish Research Ethics regulations and European GDPR rules. The responses given to the open-ended questions were edited so that they did not utilize data with identifying markers, name, field of research, department, age and job. The participants were given the opportunity to have their data removed up until the date of publication. At the time of writing the chapter, no participant has asked for that.

However, the data processing was done pseudonymously (please see research notification) and the narratives were analysed around the concepts of communication, gender stereotypes, mobility and work-life.

The survey data (responses to both closed and open questions) were categorized into:

- Gender Stereotypes (hierarchy): This category included two sub-components of microaggression and stress process (invisible)
- Microaggression: lack of voice, representation
- Stress process: dismissive language, overlooking real gender differentiation (expectation that women must raise the children)

The categorized data was analysed comparatively for positive (having experienced gender inequality) responses and collated the percentages. The comparison occurred separately by each member of the team and then collectively via mediation. The translated Finnish responses to the narratives were then analysed by the team around these two areas:

- Coloniality of Power: reference to embedded institutional norms, mobility, promotion
- Gendered Hierarchies: expectations of duties, how men treated women, belief in role biases

Data Analysis

We analysed the composite narratives for the various areas in HEIs (research, teacher/administration, work-life, (im)mobility) and highlighted how women have been shown to incorporate the concepts of (1) gender stereotypes, (2) microaggressive communication and (3) stress process (see the numbered categories in the narratives). The same set of categories was used to analyse the open-ended questions. The quantitative survey data was calculated by the Webropol survey program. Only the content from the open-ended survey data was extracted and collectively assessed for language fitting into the categories. The language was highlighted for areas that aligned with the various components discussed above. However, analysis also examined the narrative responses for other types of data that might fall outside the believed intersecting categories. The responses to the open-ended questions were thematically analysed by categorizing data into the themes of administration, research, academic evaluation and expectation of family-work balance, microaggressive communication, stress process and mobility.

The language was analysed utilizing critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary approach that views language as a social practice (Van Dijk, 1993; Wodak, 2011). The statements interacted with the relevant narratives under which they were posted but were anonymous, and the researchers were not aware of employment, social or national context. The language of the discourse in the narratives was assessed for indicators of gender norms in HE (evaluation, promotion, management and representation, gender hierarchy). The data in the closed question sections was processed by the Webropol program. It then created survey results which were compared to the linguistic thematic findings gained from the open-ended responses.

Findings

The survey results raised awareness and questions regarding gender inequality in HE. Our findings suggest the notion that unintentionally there is still coloniality embedded in institutional normative practices. We must better understand how these practices affect women in ways of being academic and communication and negotiation strategies to address these areas impacting women in HE. For future implications, a discussion forum would provide space for participants to engage in creating solutions to the gender inequality issues.

Reflection on Gender Inequality in HE

Below are the four composite narratives. These were combined under contexts in HE. Each narrative Research Experience, Teacher/Administration Experience, Work-Life Balance Experience and (Im)mobility Experience contained various perspectives: (1) gender stereotypes, (2) microaggression,

(3) stress process of gender inequality in HE in research. The numbering (1–3) is used to highlight how the narrative reflects which component.

Composite Narrative: Research Experience

Often women face gender inequality in administrative interactions and academic trajectory, but my experience stems from a research interaction. This did not occur in a singular event but rather is threaded through several research interactions. I hope to unpack how a small seemingly benign incident illustrates how women, especially immigrant women, are often silenced. The first incident occurred in a social lunchtime setting, during which commenced a discussion around a newspaper headline. The headline dealt with a sexual assault issue and the wording was somewhat sexist.

I asked what it said, and the women colleague translated it. A senior male co-worker jumped in, regarding the language in the headline, to state it was not a big deal (1). This was just a minor incident that stuck in the back of my head for a while. First, let me state I utilize ethnographic research practices. I realize there are many perspectives and approaches to ethnographic research. I don't or would never insist there is only one correct method. However, I was used to colleagues and in particular women colleagues who were more attentive to the notions of inclusivity and power in ethnographic research. I was taken aback when the above-mentioned, male colleague in authority discussed ethnographic research methods. Two male colleagues were with me while we discussed getting consent to research in a particular community as we were discussing researching in indigenous communities. I mentioned the need for a cultural mediator and awareness of outsider and power issues. This was immediately brushed aside. Both men stated, "Anyone can research in any community" (1). I agreed but was about to raise the issue of certain marginalized groups. The other colleague agreed stating it is no big deal entering into a community one was unfamiliar with. I was an outsider to the country and the institutional academic community as I was new on staff. I did not feel that I had the power to assert my ethical beliefs. Especially since one of the colleagues was a male in a higher position of power. This in conjunction with the prior social discussion around the sexist language in the newspaper made me feel silenced (1).

Several months later a group of visiting professors came to our university. During a social gathering, I had an interaction with one of the male researchers. I inquired what their research was about. He replied that he was writing an article on mansplaining. I asked if he was writing it with a women colleague, but he wasn't. I was stunned as he appeared to be mansplaining the concept of mansplaining!! When I stated this later to a group that included the prior two male colleagues with other male colleagues around, it was shrugged off as not a problem (1).

So, in these three small interactions, my presenting valid concerns around ethical research perspectives and approaches were shut down by not only

male colleagues but a male colleague of authority. These are the invisible threads that a HE patriarchal system uses to silence women's research voices.

Notice in the above composite narrative regarding research that threads throughout were examples of microaggressive communication practices by male colleagues and in particular male colleagues in positions of authority.

Composite Narrative: Teacher/Administration Experience

When I started working for a Finnish university, the head of our section informed me about the (unwritten) rules of attending meetings. She told me that in Finland meetings always started on time and that I was not supposed to be late. I was told what meetings were obligatory and what meetings were optional. It happened once that I was five minutes late, and, on my way to the meeting room, got a text message from a colleague. She was inquiring where I was and was urging me to arrive, saying that it was disrespectful to be late. Throughout the years, I learnt that meetings were an important part of my colleagues' work. I did my best to attend, being there on time and staying until the end.

With this kind of experience, it was surprising that some of my male colleagues skipped quite a few meetings, or, when present, were not paying attention (1). They were sitting in the back rows with their laptops open, multitasking, for example, checking and answering their emails. Some of them even left in the middle of the meeting, openly stating that they had other tasks. This happened on a regular basis (1).

I am a mother. My child was small when we moved here. It was not easy to organize our lives without grandparents. Having the option to skip some of the afternoon meetings or to leave earlier would have been a great help (2). However, I did not have the courage to go against the rules because I did not assume that this was possible. I did not really feel as if I had the power to even ask for the same privileges that the male colleagues took for granted. Everyone could have important private issues, so if the employer (university) is flexible about meeting attendance, then this should be communicated to all employees (3).

In the next composite narrative about administrative academic life were a series of examples of (1) microaggressive communication, (2) stress process and (3) gender stereotypes.

Composite Narrative: Work-Life Balance Experience

I have been a student and then a researcher for four years at a Finnish university. Coming from a patriarchal society it has been a difficult journey to fit into the environment. HE in Finland does accommodate you in general, but sometimes their understanding of different problems is very narrow. Being a woman, the expectation from the family has been that I perform all the household chores and manage my child (2). Regardless of my home

obligations, the expectation from the university was to actively perform as a student/researcher (2).

Coming abroad for studies was a struggle for me. In our society, a woman is neither encouraged nor expected to go for higher education abroad. In order to achieve this goal, I had to fight against the societal expectations and norms of staying at home and letting go of my ambitions that included “getting a higher education degree”. And finally I succeeded and I secured admission at a university in Finland. But this came with a price and that was sacrificing my mental health. I used most of my mental strength in the initial years of settlement, and now everyday seems like a task. I have to perform every day which is not possible. Now the problem is, since I cannot perform as much, I tend to lose the options of employment at the university. I know a few male colleagues (from the same patriarchal society as mine), who stay at the university till 7:00 or 8:00 pm in order to do the desired tasks. They have more hours in hand, they leave their children with their wives in the evening and do not have to worry about them (2). Hence, they have performed better and have secured long-term funding/employment contracts. The applications do not look at the pressure one goes through, and it would have been great if in the grant applications there was an option to explain the challenges against achievements (3).

Talking from my experience, I feel there is a hardcore expectation of achievements in order to be financially secure. This means if I continue to struggle with my responsibilities that include cooking, cleaning, looking after the child, research, studies and so on, and the male colleagues continue to utilize extra hours in hand, they will always perform better (3). The struggle to fulfill all the responsibilities affects my academic performance. This ultimately affects my mental health, my physical health and my financial situation (2). Ever since I am struggling to create a balance between work and home, one thing or the other is compromised. If I give more time to my work, then the responsibilities at home are on hold (2). And if I fulfill the expectations at home, my work tends to suffer. Some understanding of the unseen problems faced by women students/researchers could help us perform better and feel at ease.

The above composite narrative about work-life balance highlights (2) stress process and (3) gender stereotypes.

Composite Narrative: (Im)mobility Experience

Mobility in academia is undoubtedly a great way to connect and network, to learn new practices and exchange ideas and thus to develop as a researcher. Coming from abroad to Finland during my (graduate and post-graduate) studies, I have experienced how mobility can widen the horizon and help to look at research topics from very different perspectives. However, after defending my dissertation in Finland, having settled down and becoming a mother, I also started to suffer the dark side of academic mobility. This is

because mobility was suddenly not so much of an option anymore, but it had become a prerequisite for the possibility to pursue an academic career in Finland.

In my attempts to acquire funding for my post-doctoral research project, the extreme overemphasis on mobility promoted by (Finnish) foundations indeed caused anxiety and feelings of inadequacy (2). How would we as a family manage such a challenge? We would have to take all the kids out of their safe and reliable environments where they had established stable social relationships with friends and teachers. What would such a fundamental change do to them? How would they cope with yet another language? What about re-entry after a year of being abroad? What if someone got sick? What about my partner's job? I started to realize that transferring an entire family with several kids of different ages and with individual needs would take time to organize. Time that I as a working mother did not have. This is because I needed to focus on research, publish and teach, while not being able to work past 5 pm or on weekends (2). I also considered the option of going alone and leaving my family (including a very small kid) behind for a few months, which is how I framed my mobility plan in funding applications in the end (2). Essentially, I never even considered funding possibilities that the Finnish post-doc pool, for example, offers (The grants awarded from Säätiöiden post-doc pooli are intended for scholars, who have recently completed their doctoral degree and wish to conduct research abroad from Finland for at least one academic year). I do believe that the impossibility to go abroad for a longer period had a detrimental effect on my career and not only prevented me from acquiring more prestigious funding but also a job at a Finnish university that matches my potential (3).

I often have been wondering about the short-sightedness of the current mobility hype in Finland and elsewhere. It implies that academics are uncommitted and can move freely whenever they wish to do so. While for some this may be true, for others mobility represents an almost impenetrable obstacle (3) (instead of the well-intended boost). I can imagine that in some cases it may be even completely out of the question if a family member is chronically ill and needs constant medical care or special educational attention. In fact, people might not be able to go abroad because they are responsible for elderly parents, or siblings. Internationalization is important, but it shouldn't be forced at the expense of families (3).

The rigid requirement for mobility thus potentially discriminates against caretakers (3). This includes young fathers as well, but since the societal expectations are putting mothers on the frontline of childcare even today, and because of continued inequality in wages, I am afraid that it is mostly women in academia who suffer the consequences of not being provided with feasible alternatives for mobility that enable them to equally thrive in academia (3).

The final composite narrative regarding immobility speaks mainly to (3) gender stereotypes embedded within the institution. As stated above,

these composite narratives, created from informal conversations, collectively gathered by the research team with several academics throughout Finland, illustrate how the various aspects of HE contain microaggressive communication, stress process and gender stereotypes. This implies that gender inequality exists structurally embedded within the institution. It is often unnoticed and embedded within an overall patriarchal structure. The next section of the chapter examines others' responses to the composite narratives.

Table 7.1 evidences the quantitative yes/no questions after each composite narrative and shows an overview of the answers given to the two open questions that the participants were asked in connection with each narrative. Each section of the four narratives had the same closed questions: (1) Have you experienced anything similar Y/N. (2) Has a friend/colleague experienced anything similar Y/N (see Table 7.1).

The response in each section is not large but comparatively these results triangulated with open question responses which highlight a larger group of women experiencing some form of gender inequality. The data highlights that academic mobility obtained the largest percentage of agreement from participants. When one combines the four categories of narratives, the total response of experiencing a similar experience of inequality rises to 92%. In addition, the survey was distributed across areas of HE (administration, research faculty and PhD students). As will be discussed later, the open-ended questions reveal the degree that the gendered hierarchy embedded in the regulations, policies and structures of globalized academia in institutions plays with peoples' health and well-being.

The responses to the open-ended questions were generated from the individual narratives. With the help of thematic analysis, the data was categorized under the conceptual types of gender inequality outlined in the theory section: microaggressive communication, life stressors and gender stereotypes. The language in the narratives was analysed through critical discourse analysis.

Table 7.1 Survey data chart – answers to closed questions

<i>Narratives</i>	<i>Q1 Yes</i>	<i>Q1 No</i>	<i>Q2 Yes</i>	<i>Q2 No</i>	<i>Total Y (%)</i>
Research	19.4% N7	80.6% N29	31% N11	69% N24	50.4
Teacher Admin	22.2% N8	77.8% N28	34.3% N12	65.7% N23	56.5
Work-Life	22.2% N8	77.8% N28	26.5% N9	73.5% N25	48.7
(Im)mobility	45.7% N16	54.3% N19	47.1% N16	52.9% N18	92

Note: Q1 = Question 1, Q2 = Question 2, Y = Yes, N = No.

Related to Microaggressive Communication

There were not many examples of microaggressive communicative practices mentioned in the responses to the open-ended questions. However, it should be noted that often cases of microaggression are more evident to researchers when the research is based on observations as this highlight often muted or invisible communication practices. This is due to the fact that microaggressive communication is an embedded and covert normative communication style and even those performing it might be unaware of it. However, here are some examples which were identified in the open-ended responses.

Reflections to the second composite narrative on “Administration Inequality” suggest the presence of dismissiveness. The pseudonymized participant reflects on male colleagues dismissing the importance of administrative issues with their duties: “meetings related to teaching matters, the room is full of women, but the male professors and lecturers are somewhere else”.

The participant points out that male colleagues tend to be absent from meetings that focus on teaching matters. Staff meetings at a HEI tend to focus mostly on administrative issues (e.g., teaching schedules, exam invigilation), which are usually considered less prestigious and less rewarding practices than research. This could explain why some male staff members of high academic rank do not attend meetings on the topic. Another participant reflected on how they had:

talked this with my male colleague, who happens not to have kids, and I was shocked when he said that “we are all in the same boat” ... This is what most of my colleagues without kids could have done, but nobody thinks like that. Most of them told me that they were at risk too, that we all need to be in contact with colleagues because they “were getting crazy working from home alone”.

The above extract highlights a lack of realization about the differences in life situations and suggests that there is some superficiality in assessing how staff members with families manage during the pandemic. One participant in reaction to the Teacher/Administration Experience composite narrative reflected that:

What disturbed me the most was that, even if I was at work from 7h30 to 16h30, meetings could be organised out of this time frame, meaning that I was excluded and that at next discussion of the subject, I was left feeling stupid because I had no clue on what was going on anymore.

Exclusion due to social situations is a form of microaggressive communication. A further example of this was seen in the composite narratives titled “(Im)Mobility Experience and Work-Life Balance Experience”. A pseudonymized participant stated that:

lost possibilities to network. I was excluded from organizing a conference, where I actually was involved two years ago. I cannot move anywhere right now, and for my postdoc I am required, at least to change departments, or even University.

These extracts illustrate how microaggressive communication practices (dismissiveness, exclusion) are embedded unintentionally within HE. Some of the open-ended responses to the composite narratives also highlight the degree of difficulty faced by women with families, especially during COVID. In the first example, the participant points out that male colleagues tend to be absent from meetings. Teaching in HE is usually considered less prestigious and less rewarding than research. This could explain why some male staff members of high academic rank do not attend meetings on the topic. The second extract highlights a lack of realization about the differences in life situations and suggests that there is some superficiality in assessing how staff members with families manage during the pandemic. The examples under the theme of exclusion illustrate forms of microaggressive communication. Some of the open-ended responses to the composite narratives discussed the degree of difficulty faced by women with families, especially during COVID.

Related to Stress Processes

Stress processes are understood as the emotional and family pressures that impact women's academic lives. For women in HE, with families, the notion of time away from home life can be extremely difficult. However, HE promotion and evaluation are usually contingent on mobility, research and research output that fall outside of traditional working hours. It is made more so as funding bodies have stringent economic timelines for funding. Extensions for research funding are rare. Below are some pseudonymized extracts evidencing challenges of mobility. The first was taken from reflections to the composite narrative titled *Work-home Life Balance Experience*. The pseudonymized participant stated:

My superior strongly feels that everyone should spend a longer time period abroad. I do see the benefits of mobility and internationalization but, at the same time, don't see much face value in the physical relocation of one researcher to another country. Shouldn't we be paying more attention to promoting communication and collaboration that is not bound to time and place, as well as consider the carbon footprint of a modern researcher?

The next extract was taken from reflections to the composite narrative titled "Research Experience". The pseudonymized participant stated:

Academic research is not open to ordinary people who have to take care, not only of their research project, but also of their family and home chores. I believe this contributes to science becoming more and more detached from society.

The next extract was taken from reflections to the composite narrative titled “Teacher/Administrator Experience”. The participant reflected that: “Did not let me take part in any departmental meeting (reason) ... care of my child full time ... pandemic ... no support here with my child”.

This was similar to an extract taken from reflections to the composite narrative titled “(Im)mobility Experience”. The pseudonymized participant reflected that:

(colleague) proposed leisure activities during work time, I always had to decline because, the time my son is at the daycare is the only time I can work properly ... I cannot make a 3-hour break during working time to do some group sport activities brought anger on some male colleagues that now just isolate me from the group and don't include me when there is something nice programmed for the weekend.

The final extract is taken from reflections to the composite narrative titled “(Im)Mobility Experience and Work-Life Balance Experience”. The pseudonymized participant reflected that:

A male professor promised me a collaboration for the future. I had introduced him to someone to help him (supposedly) temporarily ... this Professor gave the position for 4 years to this other person, who doesn't have kids. ... Who would hire a woman with a kid that cannot move, but even cannot attend online courses at a given time, online because her child is constantly there requiring attention?

These examples illustrate that institutions, departments and colleagues without families may not consider how time can be a huge challenge for academics with small children. As well, the extracts illustrate how some academics isolate or decide not to promote women employees based on their family circumstances rather than on the equitable notion of talent. There were several examples from the open-ended responses that are not listed above (due to word limitation) with specific reference to issues that occurred during COVID. In these cases, women academics with children were concerned about transmission of the virus. Whereas their impression was that many of the male colleagues did not state their concern as they had wives to assist them. The responses to the open questions inform about the fact that women had requested accommodation for their situation but were declined. Most likely there may have been more cases that our study was

unaware of. Trying to balance family and work-life can be stressful. This especially impacts women academics who have children and face the rigidity and bureaucracy of academic regulations impacting women academics with families more so than those without families. While the context is heightened under COVID conditions, it illustrates how academia (HE) is not flexible to perceive alternative family contexts.

Related to Gender Stereotypes

Within the HE structures, the time needed to apply for funding, expectation of mobility, recruitment and promotion procedures can hinder women with families. It is not men impeding women but rather the patriarchal structure of academia that impedes women from being promoted. Male colleagues might be unaware of the difficulties faced by women.

The following extract was a reflection of the composite narrative titled “Work-Life Balance Experience”. The pseudonymized participant with regard to stress process impacting academic expectation stated that: “(there is a) strict timeframes for applying for research funding and the precondition for mobility create real challenges in combining motherhood and career advancement”.

Another extract was a reflection of the composite narrative titled “Work-Life Balance Experience”. The same participant with regard to stress process impacting academic expectation stated that: “family colleagues have lamented the inconvenience of mobility periods”. Regarding the composite narrative titled “Research Experience” a participant stated that: “Recruitment of faculty- except the end result is almost always a new man in the house ...”

The next extract was a reflection of the composite narrative titled “Teacher/Administrator Experience”. The pseudonymized participant made the following point:

Finnish, society to single moms, mainly by men: single mom = irresponsible woman, probably promiscuous too (even if it is no-one business how many sexual partners someone, male or women, has) ..., Finish childcare services are extremely good) ... accumulation of no equal opportunities despite that the University is committed to that. Indeed, while I am constrained to leave around 16h30 to pick up my son, colleagues can work as long as they want ... but what is problematic about that is that during weekly group meetings it was pointed out that I hadn't managed to advance as much as they had.

The following extract was a reflection of the composite narrative titled “Research Experience”. The pseudonymized participant stated that: “I have learned to give up writing grant applications in my spare time because

the family does not understand it. So I am not applying for funding very actively...”.

The extracts suggest that HEIs embed normative practices, regulations and expectations that are constructed for male academics and that exclude women academics, or to be more specific, academics with families. In an institution that is constructed around a Western, paternal, “coloniality of power”, it is not surprising the hidden barriers faced even by women in Nordic social equity countries. While financial provisions have been made by Nordic governments for women to have and rear children, academic funding and promotional requirements have not been altered to ensure women are not left behind in the academic promotion track. Furthermore, during COVID-19 there was a greater increase in disparity between women academics with children and male academics (Yildirim & Eslen-Ziya, 2021). Several participants discussed that COVID-19 highlighted the greater degree of difference between academic males and academic women with families. Therefore, we must consider how we can overcome these types of challenges and, in addition, what steps and strategies could be implemented in these situations.

Conclusions

Our study found evidence triangulated from the composite narratives, quantitative survey results and open-ended responses that structural coloniality of power is normatively embedded in the institutional policies, practices and behaviour of academics in Finland. However, most of the findings highlighted unintentional aspects such as microaggressive communication practices, stress process, gender stereotypes and gender hierarchy impacting women academics in Finland. This is not due to Finnish academic culture but highlights women’s equity needs being addressed even in a country built on the social equity myth model.

Our study results evidenced similar findings as Ylöstalo (2020), highlighting the family life imbalance and hierarchical political structural issues. As well, our study revealed a double bind for working mothers in Nordic countries. HE policies on parental leave in Nordic countries are based on governmental maternity policies. However, as stated above the issue is not getting the leave but how academic promotion is based on international HE evaluation criteria. The double bind is the perception of a great welfare system with excellent paid maternity leave provided by the government, but the bind women face is the invisible regulations and expectations from Western academic institutions (Lund, 2020). These HE regulations for promotion and funding maintain patriarchal coloniality of power structures in the form of mobility and promotion requirements. Our study evidence is similar to that found by Seierstad and Healy (2012), who called attention to the gender budget biases inherent in academic structures. Moreover, this

dichotomy was stated in one of the open-ended responses “why can’t international collaboration be seen as valid as physical mobility”, especially for women with families to consider.

We chose to create composite reflections from various areas of HEIs to highlight that gender equality is embedded across the institution and not just prevalent in a particular faculty, job level or trajectory of academic life. In addition, we chose to gather composite narratives from academic colleagues throughout Finland as we believed many of the normative practices were, as other researchers have evidenced, a form of gender hierarchy. What was revealed was the issue of invisible gender hierarchy, where normative practices are discursively enacted and embedded within the institutional structure, impacting women, and creating isolation and mental health issues which is similar to the findings of Sang (2018). The fact that almost 60% of the survey participants personally experienced or are familiar with these narratives evidence that there are issues with gender equality in the context of Finnish academia. The open-ended responses to the narratives illustrated the invisibility and embeddedness within the daily structure that insidiously created a climate of “us versus them” within HEIs. Often one can view that men and even some women continue these practices unintentionally. The stakeholders within HEIs are not always aware of the impact on certain communities (women, mothers and those with families). Therefore, to push back to these institutional practices requires reflection and awareness by both men and women. More importantly, it requires the structures, education ministries, policymakers, funding bodies to become aware of these issues and to restructure as space for women.

The limitation of the study is that the number of participants was small and so cannot be generalized. However, the wide range of participants (researchers, doctoral researchers, administration and teachers) creates greater validity to the study as participants came from Finland and Sweden (both Nordic countries) and were from a variety of areas of academia not solely researchers. These participants were the users (students), the producers (researchers) and the stakeholders (administration). Furthermore, future research should include space for online or in-person discussions to co-create strategies and ideas for overcoming issues of gender inequality. Our findings highlighted a series of future recommendations. For example, training men in gender inclusivity should also include training women to become aware of the microaggressive communication practices. This would provide them with communicative strategies to push back on embedded microaggressive practices men unconsciously employ. However, these are minor practices that change from context to context. There is a larger issue and that is at the institutional level. The next section will present larger recommendations that will impact the overall HE institutional structure which is constant across global contexts.

Recommendations Addressing Gender Inequality

There is a dichotomy between the institutional objectives of work-life balance, equity and inclusion and expected commodified measurable academic outputs. We propose three recommendations at the institutional level.

First Recommendation: Raise Awareness in the Academic Community

The first recommendation is to raise awareness in the academic community of the issues in institutional practices which impede gender equity. Collaboratively, academics should write a statement narrating visible and invisible gender inequity issues. The statement would contain narrative evidence which illustrates issues from across regions such as Eastern Europe, Nordic countries, Global North and Global South. This would indicate that problems are not nationally based but are HEIs' normative practices. The statement should then be sent to HE institutional regulatory agencies and research funding boards. Finally, the statement should be posted on HE websites. Gender inequity issues exist in the private sector; yet in academia the issues are bounded and hidden in globally accredited institutional practices.

Second Recommendation: Raise Societal Awareness

The second recommendation is to raise societal awareness. Community stakeholders (parents and students) are present and future clients of HEIs. Posting on social media is the best platform to raise public awareness of the issues in academia and reach a wider audience. This will start a grassroots conversation. It will also raise awareness of the dichotomy between HE objectives (inclusivity, diversity and equity) and the external commodified evaluation impeding these objects. Academic performance measurement is not flexible enough to include other criteria for promotion and hiring evaluation. Rarely are homelife constraints taken into consideration during the evaluation process. Generally, academics are evaluated on their publications, funding obtained and their teaching evaluations by students. There is no room for innovative teaching practices that might take time to be appreciated by students. Nor is there room to provide reference letters by colleagues which provide specific details of the work performed overtime. Evaluators superficially assess the academic based on little information such as role, title, duties and outputs. There is no investigation into the depth of skills, practices and competencies performed and the degree of competence, proactivity and critical analysis utilized by the academic. These are invisible value-added competencies of an academic's performance. The evaluation of success or failure is invisibly commodified through accredited global HE

regulations, protocols and best practices. Community stakeholders and research funding bodies are often unaware of the specific impact commodified academic practices have on gender equity. Therefore, raising awareness about the degree academia has become a capitalist machine and knowledge production as a commodified product is important.

Third Recommendation: Decommodification of HE Practices

The third recommendation would occur after collecting instances of embedded gender inequality practices and raising stakeholder awareness. The final step is the decommodification of HE practices. The first area is that academic evaluation of the success of knowledge production is based on a measurable commodified set of protocols. For example, academics chase citations in books and journals as measurable outputs of scientific knowledge dissemination. These are how they are evaluated for hiring or promotion. The measurable evaluation protocols have shifted the notion of scientific knowledge to viewing it as numbers-driven based on the algorithm of utilizing popular keywords. Scientific knowledge production has become an algorithm that falsely measures quantitative impact rather than actual societal impact. Ironically, government officials, policymakers and funding institutions rarely read the cited journal and book research outputs.

Furthermore, institutional practices such as the notion of mobility are a double-edged sword. The practice of mobility is often a component of how funding applications are evaluated. Evaluators assess the research team's scientific background including the notion of having experienced other research contexts. In the Nordic and European funding contexts, mobility is a measurable criterion for evaluating the performance of a PhD student or emerging researcher. This disproportionately impacts women with families. These invisible gender inequality issues must be raised with the public and made more visible to funding institutions. Academic institutions are financially bound and controlled by budgetary needs.

University budgetary finances come from international students who often choose based on HE global rankings. Students and academics are now economic capital rather than human capital. Research studies have become a component of the economic commodification in HE. This is because universities are ranked based on a set of measurable evaluation criteria such as funding. This is a superficial criterion as only approximately 3% of funding applications succeed. Large universities hire funding application writers to increase their chances of success. Yet, an area often overlooked is that the funding application process creates a strong networking capacity that becomes a future benefit. This is not easily measured as time is a component overlooked in evaluation. These networks are often more crucial in the research process than obtaining funding. Therefore, the fixed academic evaluation criteria of money obtained illustrates a superficial capitalist commodified view of knowledge production. Thus, narratives communicating to

all stakeholders on how academic institutional processes commodify human capital and how the knowledge production process unfairly impacts gender equity are crucial for change to occur. Understanding is the first step toward the decommodification of HEIs. The societal grassroots level is important as they, the future students, are paying customers. The paying customers have the economic lever which is felt by the HE institutional decision-makers. It is with this pressure that changes will be made. Fear of losing future students who are paying customers will create quicker change.

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8 Gender, Precarity and Marginality in Higher Education Spaces in India

Nupur Samuel and Umasankar Patra

Introduction

As a new ad-hoc faculty in a college at University of Delhi (DU), I¹ witnessed a strikingly humiliating incident in the staff common room. One afternoon, in the staffroom while chatting with a colleague who was a Guest faculty (Guest faculties at DU are paid on the basis of per lecture whereas ad-hoc faculty “enjoy” a monthly salary, equivalent to the entry-level salary of an assistant professor), I saw her ask for a cup of tea from the caretaker of the staff common room. As time elapsed into our conversation, I enquired about her cup of tea. She whispered, “They don’t serve the Guests”, referring to Guest faculties who are not entitled a choice of their beverage. I would have mistaken this incident as an aberration if I had not asked other Guest faculties about this kind of treatment or witnessed it in other colleges. The hierarchy and the message were clear: the permanent faculties (senior faculties as they are also referred to as) come first, then the ad-hoc and then the lowest of the low, the Guest faculties. And this pattern repeats itself in the allocation of subjects to administrative duties to obtaining salary and, as we see in this vignette, in terms of even getting a cup of tea. Every day and throughout the year, these micro acts of humiliation are repeated. Tied with these forms of humiliation are larger concerns of alienation from the workplace, pay disparity, discrimination on various levels (including gender and sexuality) forcing contractual faculty to the margins of the Indian higher education system.

This chapter examines the marginalisation of contingent faculty in academia in India and its intersections with identity markers such as gender, social class, caste, ethnicity, sexual identity and age. We argue that the precarious positioning of contingent faculty is discriminatory, and when these faculty members also identify themselves as part of other subsets of marginalised communities, their predicament becomes more pronounced. We further argue that this marginalisation or erosion of contingent faculty voices from important areas of discourse is not restricted to issues of discrimination against an individual or community but a move to make higher education institutions (HEIs) market-driven private enterprises. Despite our

best efforts, we were not able to find much scholarly work on the issue of contingent faculty, and newspaper reports too are few and far, only highlighting the issue when a crisis occurs. Perceiving this gap in literature, the authors of this chapter who till recently were themselves part of this contingent brigade, contributing to HEIs, including helping establish new departments, wanted to explore the conditions of contingent faculty across the country for this academic study. In this chapter, the stories of the participants working in different kinds of HE organisations, such as State and Central Universities, and technical institutions funded by State and Union governments and private universities, brought out the pathetic and vulnerable conditions of the contingent faculties in India which the following sections will elaborate. By documenting the experience of contractual faculty across different contexts in India, we not only hope to highlight this oft-ignored area but offer glimpses of reimagined spaces that are more equitable and empowering for all.

We argue that colonisation of HEIs can take different forms including the issue of faculty recruitment and that these employment mechanisms are put in place to perpetuate colonial and patriarchal legacy (Bhambra et al., 2018; Hammer et al., 2011; Icaza & Vázquez, 2018). We argue that not only is the practice of hiring faculty as contingent labour an attempt to privatise the higher education system, and further the decline of the humanities (Raja & Mazumdar, 2021), but to quell any criticality of thought. We extend Paul Freire's (2017) idea of the oppressed to include adjunct faculty who are exploited: they are denied equal pay, usually receiving minimum wages even after years of service with no perks and benefits; without a platform to voice any dissent; their individuality curtailed, and competition and sycophancy encouraged among their ranks. In short, we argue that when the position of the faculty is contingent and hence precarious, it promotes the hegemony of the elite and suppresses critical thinking, both of which are pivotal to higher education.

Conceptual Framework

We draw on the conceptual framework of queer time which delves into this time bind of “not now” and “no longer” and interrogates the futuristic temporality that the heteronormative society operates upon. The higher education administration's emphasis on the linearity of vision and promises to the contractual faculty may be thought on these terms, and a subsequent examination of the personal stories of some of the contractual faculties will shed light on the disjuncture and ruptures in this story. These fissures to the linear project future are fruitful as they focus on the strategies of the disenfranchised to survive in their exploitative systems.

Elizabeth Freeman (2007) demonstrates the institutionalisation of linear temporality through the example of “premature ejaculation” (p.160) as an articulation drawing on twentieth-century medicalisation of

heterosexual encounter and feminist movement's insistence on the right to orgasm in heteronormative relationships. She argues that a specific way of understanding the world, that is, framing our lives according to the linear temporal arrangement, has become naturalised. Institutional forces have privileged a certain ordering of time that is evident in the inculcation of schedules, clocks and calendars that "convert historically specific regimes of asymmetrical power into seemingly ordinary bodily tempos and routines" (2007, 160). Thus, certain habits and choices have become essentialised, and specific expectations have asserted themselves as normative leading to what Judith Halberstam argues as the establishment of "hetero temporalities" (cited in Freeman 2007, 161). In other words, the interlinking of temporality and sexuality has resulted in codification of desirability (till a specific age one is marriageable or desirable; women need to get married at a certain age; etc.) and synchronicity (by a certain age one should have property and capital, or should be "settled"). Therefore, the queer who do not adhere to the teleological framework of sexual development furthered by twentieth-century sexologists and psychoanalysts is thought of as "backward", "immoral" or "illegal".

Such a conceptualisation of time as constructing and reinforcing certain subject positions opens up questions about marginalisation and normativity. It also suggests that the dominant argument has been to think of past, present and future as monolithic categories and not to view the multiplicities and heterogeneities embedded within them. Many queer theorists have challenged these temporal arrangements as they vilify and criminalise queer lives and affective dispositions: Certain desires are "immoral"; the time for specific sexual formations has not "come"; some affective bonds and solidarities cannot/should not be visible as they are not part of the cultural setup. Whereas some like Lee Edelman (2005) have mounted a serious offensive against the idea of futurity and urged the queer to not get lulled into an illusory future where they might be accepted and have a dignified life, others like Heather Love and Carloyn Dinshaw have worked with the concept of the past-present-future continuum to expose the multiplicity of the present and past and how they affect and effect each other making it possible for the queer to "form communities across time" (Dinshaw, 2007, p. 178). Jose Esteban Munoz (2009), on the other hand, imagines queerness as an ideal horizon, towards which all the efforts of queer politics and solidarity are aimed at. Such engagements with temporality underline the tremendous potential asynchrony has for the queer. It asks us to reflect on the marginalisation that a heterotemporal arrangement brings forth in a largely heteronormative society.

Setting the Stage

Recently, Cornel West's (2021) resignation letter from Harvard, citing systemic racism coupled with the evils of contractualisation, highlights the

projection of futuristic impulse, as outlined above. West's letter is crucial to our argument as it underlines not only the professional cost but the moral, social and cultural implications of contractualisation. Moreover, West's letter echoes many of the concerns highlighted above in our interaction with contingent faculty. West begins by detailing the result of the exploitative system which leads to "disenchantment of talented yet deferential faculty". The contractual faculty's disenchantment, as has been ascertained repeatedly through our case studies, stemming out of the never reachable utopic future of a stable job and brighter future. What West hints at is the (unbearable) weight of the future, of the insistence of the "not now". The consequences of this burden are disenchantment, loss of "intellectual intensity" and in the process, another casualty, "personal respect": not only the respect a faculty deserves from colleagues, students or the administration but also an individual seeks and requires from oneself. As more than one of our participants concurs, contractualisation led to a deep sense of insecurity amalgamated with loss of dignity in personal relationships. It is, therefore, no coincidence that the final straw in the hat for West was not solely an administrative callousness or denial of tenured position but the personal loss of his mother. The university's lack of empathy and collegiality to show basic courtesy was what broke West and resulted in the famous resignation.

It is important to note that West's letter consistently refers to this futuristic horizon of possibilities and opportunities: "I was promised a year sabbatical" and "I hoped and prayed". However, those assumptions and dreams were immediately and gradually crushed. West's letter is a painful reminder of this double movement where some desires and dreams are crushed immediately, and some are kept afloat. In his case, the promise of a year sabbatical turned and tenure review denied owing to the political inclination of the administration.

These two moments are critical, not only because West chooses these two to highlight the discrimination but also because they bring to light the blueprint for exploitation of contractual faculty. First, provide them with lofty dreams and hopes of a brighter and better future, hierarchise the achievable goals that they should aspire for and then crush them in a gradient manner starting with the least fantastical of the promises to the highest one. However, West may be one of the fortunate ones to see a linear growth in terms of the capitulating promises. The scene in India may not be equal for contractual faculty as the formula for their exploitation is adjusted based on the needs of the administration. As is evident from West's case, contingent faculty is constantly deferring their expectation, "not now", so is the administration. In this game of "not now" played from the administration, the faculty is forced to be in sync with this temporal delay and project their desire onto the next achievable promise, if not the sabbatical, then the tenured position. In the case of Indian counterparts, it is less about sabbatical and tenure and more about basics of medical care, maternity leave, pay raises and general workload – all golden promises of a permanent job. This calibration of

expectation on the lines of “not now” and “no longer” (many may not be as courageous or fortunate to tender a resignation) brings us to dwell on the role of time and temporality in the lives of contractual faculties.

In India, the term contingent faculty includes a range of appointments from part-time faculty who teach one or two courses for a semester, Guest faculty who are paid by the hour, experts who offer a special course, or full-time non-tenured, non-regular faculty who receive salary but not the perks or benefits that tenured faculty enjoy. There are differences in their terms of employment, but two things are common: their precarious situation and their institution’s lack of long-term commitment to either their scholarship or personal or professional well-being. Jonathan McNaughtan et al. (2017) call contingent faculty the “invisible faculty” (p. 9) which aptly describes how easily their labour is discounted even when it is crucial to the functioning of HEIs. The critical work performed by contingent faculty notwithstanding, their numbers grow in India while they remain voiceless and neglected at the periphery.

University as a Contested Space

In India, higher education occupies a unique space: “from its historical arrival as a space of exclusion and elite formation, it has come a very long way in the past few decades to represent a vital institutional space for ensuring social mobility” argues Janaki Nair (2019, p. 42). Additionally, as Sukanta Chaudhuri (2021) notes tertiary education in India “provided one arena where young people from all classes and communities could meet on *something like equal footing*, at least as regards institutional facilities” (para. 10; *emphasis added*). It is through education that a lower caste/class person can dream of and actually secure a job leading to socio-economic upliftment and mobility, at the same time ensuring better future prospects for their family. In such situations, access to HEIs also means geographic movement from familiar surroundings, where one is marked with caste, ethnic, sexual and gender labels, to an HEI where others are not immediately aware of one’s social-sexual identity.

Further, as Satish Deshpande (2016) notes, in the last couple of decades, a “silent yet transformative revolution” is underway in Indian higher education with enrolments at educational institutes witnessing new highs: “overall enrolment of eligible Indians (age group 18–23 years) has increased from 27.5 million in 2010–11 to 35.7 million in 2016–17, and of the consequent rise in the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER, the proportion of those in the relevant age group enrolling in Higher Education) from 19.4 percent in 2010–11 to 25.2 in 2016–17” are very encouraging signs that have been acknowledged by the government and civil society (Nair 2019, p. 41). Alongside this, Deshpande (2016) notes that the focus on “knowledge-based economy and society” has resulted in a multifaceted confrontation between the privileged demographics who have always had access to universities

and those who were excluded till now on the basis of their caste, gender, sexuality and ethnicity. This social revolution is “introducing a new heterogeneity into the relatively homogenous space of the university and college” (Deshpande, 2016, p. 38).

However, Nair contends,

The last two years have also seen a massive pushback, by students and teachers, against the attempt to challenge or dismantle the public university system, and the opportunities it had offered to Dalits²—, women, tribals, ethnic minorities, to define a new Future.

(2019, p. 41)

Many scholars have noted the implication of this dual process which underlines the realities of higher education in India today: the democratisation of the university space, opening up of the university both in terms of demography and curricula to be more “inclusive” (Babu, 2019; Deshpande, 2016; Nair, 2018; Subramaniam, 2019).

One of the primary reasons for not sustaining this demographic dividend is the lack of recruitment in HEIs in line with the reservation policy. This becomes apparent when one notices the massive backlog in terms of teacher recruitment in HEIs in India. According to reports, a huge backlog of positions across universities is lying vacant, prompting governments’ anxieties—about it³ (“Center to”, 2021). Repeated reminders from the Ministry of Education to universities and HEIs to fill these vacancies, especially those from the backward communities, are only a grim reminder of the contested spaces of HEIs in India. If contemporary India’s greatest achievement has been in ensuring the entry of Dalits, Other Backward Castes (OBCs), women, and ethnic and sexual minorities to universities and other higher educational spaces, it is not followed through with faculty recruitments which demonstrate such diversity. Many commentaries have rued this lost opportunity and have pointed out the lack of deploying the dividends of diversity in the faculties of HEIs in India (Babu, 2019; Nair, 2019; Subramaniam, 2019).

Though the focus has solidly been upon the divisive and inclusive nature of HEIs, contested notions of the idea of university and broadly of the nation’s social health, one part of the crucible of the HEIs and the recent transformative journey has not been paid enough attention. The contractualisation of faculty has been a trend in the last couple of decades. Though studies have captured the demographic division and thereby been able to assess the inclusivity or the lack of it in terms of the permanent staff, no studies are available on contractual faculties. Comprehensive volumes like *The Idea of the University* and *The University Unthought* which have thoroughly interrogated the university system have primarily focussed on discriminating, alienating, as well as democratic social space of the university ecology in terms of students and permanent faculties. In contrast, there has been

almost a scholarly blackhole with respect to the contractual faculties all across India. It may not be an overstatement that most of the universities and colleges in India now are functional thanks to the contribution of these ad-hoc/temporary/contractual/visiting/Guest faculties. In 2021, according to the University of Delhi, 3,530 posts lie vacant in colleges, whereas the actual number of employed ad-hoc teachers is around the mark of 6,000 (“ad-hoc Teachers”, 2021). These distinctions between different kinds of contractual employment are important and point to layers of discrimination and would be more apparent in the discussion below. Moreover, these distinctions are not consistent across universities and states as they vary in pay scale (if there is one; in many cases they are paid a consolidated monthly salary which is not governed by pay scale like their permanent faculty counterparts) and benefits (whatever little is available).

According to an online survey conducted in 2013 at the University of Delhi participated by 223 ad-hoc and Guest lecturers, 70% had been teaching as irregular faculty for more than one year and 30% over three years; 56% of participants had taught in more than one college, one in as many as 13 colleges; 32% of participants had three-month contracts violating DU guidelines—which require that contracts be a minimum of four months—and 64% were not paid summer or winter vacation salaries at least once; 69% did not have a say in what courses they taught, 64% lived in fear of losing their job and 19% experienced social discrimination at work (30% among SC, ST and OBC). However, the voice of contingent faculty through such surveys seldom finds space in academic discourse. Notably, Chattarji’s (2016) essay which quotes this survey deploys it to make the “larger” point about the impact of neoliberal economy on HEIs. It does not elaborate or dwell on the specific condition of the contractual faculties.

Situating Contingent Faculty in Context

While there is silence in academic discourse about the discrimination faced by contingent faculty in India, it is not the case in the US where much has been written about the precarity of contingent faculty. Rosalba Icaza and Rolando Vázquez (2018), provided a scathing commentary on universities across the globe, observed:

Universities as spaces imbued with norms and rituals or as institutional contexts that involve structures and emotions in which some people feel at home and others are alienated, are implicated in the epistemic violence in the modern/ colonial division of a geopolitics of knowledge.
(p. 110)

This systemic violence is reflected in the stories and anecdotes that contractual, non-tenured faculty from India share: of constantly feeling alienated, left out, with their voices either suppressed or completely obliterated even

as they end up working longer hours and offering courses that no one else wants to teach. The participants of this study shared how they seldom have a say in what is to be taught or what they can teach. Moreover, due to the temporary nature of the employment, participants of this study report that they are unable to take up supervisory roles for dissertation students, thus limiting their teaching to undergraduate students. They also find it challenging to pursue their research interests as they are usually ineligible for departmental or institutional research funding or sabbatical; these and other incentives are, however, available to regular faculty.

Rosalba Icaza and Rolando Vázquez (2018) suggest that it is only by highlighting these issues, raising awareness and collectively voicing our discontent with existing discrimination, can we hope to address this ethical issue. They describe the student movements of decolonising universities which include “confronting the university with its colonial legacies, with its participation in a politics of knowledge that reinforces and reproduces social divides” (p. 108). The Indian education system thrives on rote learning where high-stakes exams promote teaching to the test (Advani, 2009; Ramanathan, 2008) and reproduction of knowledge rather than any originality of thought (Kumar, 2020; Kurrien, 2007; Samuel, 2019), such a group of oppressed and exploited faculty is particularly suited to the context.

Gender and Intersectionality

The positionality of contractual faculty in HEIs in India intersects with other identity markers, more specifically with gender and how this complexity informs their identity as teachers and professionals. Our focus is specifically on contractual faculties employed in HEIs across the gender spectrum that includes male and female, and queer subjectivities. “Practicing intersectionality means that we avoid the tendency to separate the axes of difference that shape society, institutions and ourselves” (Diversity report, 2016, pp. 10–11) and imagine educational institutions as spaces of integration and collegiality. Currently, the picture that emerges is that HEIs are fraught with discrimination which contractual faculty face in different degrees and frequency depending on their social position in the larger societal ecosystem.

A study by British Council in Pakistan, drawing our attention to gender in HE in South Asian context (2009), found the following: gender is absent from any HE discourses, and the dominant discourses in higher education leadership are frequently posed in the gender-neutral language of the knowledge economy with the emphasis on quality assurance, good governance, internationalisation, the digital economy, widening participation and concern for the development of capacity in science and technology (STEM). Socio-economic backgrounds and socio-cultural belief systems were reported by participants in the interviews as significant constraints to women pursuing academic careers; social class and caste intersected with gender to

determine which women could enter leadership positions. Women from more privileged socio-economic backgrounds often reported family support and cultural capital that helped them navigate education and employment structures.

Studies of academic cultures and reports in the interviews point to the patriarchal nature of HEIs, which are frequently represented as unfriendly and unaccommodating to women (Morley & Crossouard, 2019). This might well be the story of India; to counter this constricted space of HEIs, British Council India along with the Government of India and the Department of Science and Technology have introduced an initiative that aims to establish a gender equality framework, the Gender Advancement through Transforming Institutions (Subramanian, 2021). While better gender representation is a step forward, gender equality involves structural changes to effect long-term changes.

According to the World Economic Forum's (WEF) "Global Gender Gap Report 2021", India ranks 140 among 150 countries, after slipping from rank 28 in 2020. At the national level, there are 940 women to 1,000 men, and our literacy ratio is 3:4 with the gap widening as we move from primary to secondary education (Census 2011, GOI). Moreover, there are 73 female teachers per 100 male teachers at the national level (World Economic Forum [WEF] 2021), and this gap becomes wider as we go higher up the hierarchy; for instance, only 13 out of 431 universities in India have women Vice-Chancellors (2015 report of Times of India).

John F. Keenan (2015) in his book *University Ethics* compares US universities to fiefdoms where hierarchal structures lead to rampant problems of gender and racial discrimination. He highlights how "tenure-track and tenured faculty as well as departmental chairs simply take for granted the secondary status of adjunct faculty" (p. 5), arguing that it is above all an ethical issue. Such disregard for minority voices mirrors the broad social patterns of devaluing and dismissing the contribution of women and other marginalised communities. Karen Peterson-Iyer (2019) calls this the "feminisation" of academia which is manifested in various forms from lack of office space to lack of opportunities to share their voices or be active members in university governance which pushes women out of specific areas within academic spaces. Further she finds this particularly troubling "in the context of women's general socioeconomic marginalization" (Peterson-Iyer, 2019, p. 96). These problems are compounded when the American academic situation is compared to a developing country, such as India, which is conventionally a patriarchal society and has only recently begun to accept that women's role can be expanded beyond the home and the hearth (for more information on this, refer to the works of Janaki Nair, Nivedita Menon, Upendra Baxi, Urvashi Butalia).

Women as care-givers, being pushed-out of ambitious academic/professional pursuits by what John Curtis (2011) notes is a "combination of unrealistic workplace expectations, public policies that provide little or no

support for caregiving, and male partners who neither provide significant amounts of help with household work nor are in a position to forego their own careers” (p. 100). Such social and religious perspectives that call child-bearing a higher calling are offered as valid reasons for the higher ratio of female faculty working as contingent faculty (Curtis, 2011). The only difference is that while it is the Catholic social and religious teachings that Curtis refers to, in the Indian context, those roles are fulfilled by social and religious norms/mores for all groups. Invoking the pre-modern educational system where the guru, an ascetic who taught students without any desire for promotion or worldly comforts, the underpaid, overworked faculty are exhorted by their senior colleagues or management personnel to consider the students as their children and colleagues as family members. If looked closely, it is not an incorrect parallel since the senior faculty, institutional heads and policy makers behave like patriarchs resentful of being questioned, and angered to receive applications for better pay and better work conditions by the contingent faculty.

Methodology

We conducted this study to understand contingent faculties’ live experiences representing the struggles and challenges that the contingent faculty in higher education in India faces on a regular basis. Data was collected using open-ended interviews which were conducted online due to the pandemic (COVID-19); all names are pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of the participants and their institutional affiliation. A total of ten participants, (who identified themselves across the gender spectrum, for example, “woman”, “queer”, “male”, etc.) were chosen according to purposeful sampling to reflect the voices of a diverse group belonging to varied economic profiles, age groups, gender and social class. The participants were engaged in their personal capacity, and in their personal time and gave consent before the interactive sessions to record, transcribe and share their responses. They were not asked to fill out questionnaires or attempt any written responses because we wanted to explore the responses and also because anecdotal interactions indicated that online fatigue and people are less likely to submit a written document unless it was absolutely necessary. As such, open-ended interviews allowed participants to share easily without constraints on the direction of questions.

We each talked to an equal number of participants, five each, over Zoom video, which lasted between 90 minutes and over 120 minutes in the months of September and October 2021. The participants’ consent for recording interviews was taken at the beginning of each interview; the recordings were referred to check information and to complete our notes which we took during the course of the interview. Purposeful sampling allowed us to identify divergent voices that seldom have any platform to share their concerns and experience. Responses to the open-ended interview questions were

recorded and transcribed. Coding categories were derived from the data (J. W. Creswell & J. D. Creswell, 2018) by listening to and reading through all the data, organising the responses into chunks of meaningful information and finally, creating categories for the emerging themes.

We interviewed ten participants who have had the experience of teaching as a contractual faculty at Central, State or Regional universities and colleges, from a few years to almost two decades. We also chose faculty who identified themselves with different gender categories: their commonalities brought out the issues that affect all of them in equal measures, and their differences gave us a large range of experience. Some of the sample questions that guided our semi-structured interview were:

- 1 Academic qualification, current place(s) of work
- 2 Nature of the job, official requirements of the job and what all *really* they have to do
- 3 How do they view the workplace? Nourishing/toxic/patriarchal/homophobic et al.
- 4 How does gender affect their workplace relationship?
- 5 How has the contingent nature of their job affected their personal and social life
- 6 What do they think about the precarity of their jobs? What is their mechanism, if any, to cope with their own vulnerable position?
- 7 How do they view “time” vis-à-vis their career with the continuation of the contingent nature of their job?
- 8 What are the suggestions to better the lives and careers of the contingent faculties? How would they like to see the future of contractualisation?

These questions generally marked the outline of the conversation but we did not rigidly stick to the order of the question or made it a point to ask all of these questions. Some questions also arose specifically to the context of the participant’s conversations and observations. As we have marked that it was a free-flowing conversation, with open-ended questions, the focus being to hear their stories. The larger objective of the study was to comprehend the lived experiences of the contingent faculty in India. Below we give a brief sketch of each theme that emerged from our interactions with the participants and towards the end of the chapter, we share their suggestive re-imaginings of the higher education space.

Findings

All the participants across the gender spectrum – male, female and queer – underscored the vulnerability of the contractual faculty. From our analysis, we found six common themes speaking to the lived experiences of contingent faculty in India including (1) identity and voice, (2) pay disparity and

unsteady finances, (3) gendered/differential treatment, (4) patriarchal societal system, (5) safe space and dissent, and (6) time graph.

Identity and Voice

All the participants, in different ways, indicated how the precarity of their employment has become intricately aligned with their identity. For example, one of the drawbacks of being a contractual employee means that often faculty are diffident about sharing their affiliation with the institution such as the inability to use the institution's basic facilities like libraries, or use letterheads for writing recommendation letters for the students. This leads to a crisis of situating oneself vis-à-vis the institution such as articulated by one of our female participants from Pune in Maharashtra (Western India). She reported how on being congratulated that she works at a prestigious college, would sheepishly reply that she was only a "Guest" there, referring to the contractual nature of the appointment. This was echoed by our participants from the University of Delhi, who would identify themselves as "Guest" or "ad-hoc" underscoring their ambiguity of affiliation as well as the precarity of their position.

The sense of belonging that is usually associated with an institution seems misplaced as does the false sense of identity that the participants share across the board. One of the faculties related how she feels conflicted at times, feeling a connection with her college and students only to get displaced every few months preventing her from making any "real connections". Another participant from Guwahati (Eastern India) reported that people have certain expectations from a university faculty, and she felt socially pressured to maintain a social status that was not adequately supported by the remuneration she received. The disparity in how social and economic identities are forged and maintained is a crucial component of how these contingent positions are imagined.

This disassociation is reflected in the decision making of the departments where the ad-hoc or Guest faculty are hardly consulted but assigned administrative or teaching duties resulting in a sense of disaffection with the workplace. For example, a participant from New Delhi (North India) recalled that she seldom went to the staffroom during her tenure owing to the transactional nature of the relationship adopted by the institute. In the words of another participant from Haryana (Northern India), the contractual faculty is much like the "customer care" agent who is at the service of the system. This transactional nature is reiterated with each renewal of tenure which heightens the anxiety of landing in a "no job zone", once again creating disparity among faculty.

Pay Disparity and Unsteady Finances

Temporary employment not only affects how one perceives one's position socially or academically but also financially. The anxiety of not being able

to pay rent, or bills; accumulating furniture and appliances for a functional home, or whether they would be employed next month or not, are all connected to the insecurity about the job. As one of the participants observed, “it is like constantly living out of a suitcase” while recounting the anxiety and precarity of her position when she lost her job at a private university in Delhi. She had to relocate to Western India (Mumbai) for some days and is now in Eastern India (Kolkata) handling many short-term, temporary appointments as Guest faculty or Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant/Project Fellow.

From our participants, we could understand that the salaries of the contingent faculties varied across regions and institutions, and even within the same universities or states, different institutions were paying differently. While salaries of contingent faculty are less than what their colleagues with the same educational qualifications, job experience or expertise demand, the disparity is more pronounced in regional institutions where the gap between salary is visible in a difference of about 30% to 85% of the stipulated salary of permanent faculty. For example, an ad-hoc faculty at University of Delhi noted that their earning was in the range of 70–80,000 Indian Rupee (INR) per month, whereas their counterparts across the country were paid from 21,600 INR to 35,000 INR per month. One of our participants from Guwahati, located in the North-Eastern part of India, complained about getting only 10,000 INR per month. It is important to note that in most of these cases, salaries are not standardised or even if they are across a state university, they are not implemented in reality. In the majority of the cases, our participants noted that it boiled down to the particular institutes’ whim. Participants reported deferring plans to get married or to have children in favour of decisions, such as buying a vehicle or a house, as they were not sure whether their jobs would support them financially. As such, this precarity points to the need to understand not only in terms of loss of professional career advancement and security and nourishment but gets reflected in the contingent faculty’s sense of self-worth and life choices.

Gendered/Differential Treatment

While female participants reported numerous instances of harassment, others too had their share of experiences of feeling inadequate and worthless. The reasons and means of belittling or exploiting the contingent faculty appeared to differ. For example, single female faculties explained that they were harassed, albeit implicitly, by colleagues, family, relatives, friends and neighbours—with invasive questions about their personal life, romantic relationship, impending marriage and given unsolicited advice blurring professional boundaries. Questions like “Do you live alone?” quickly escalate to “Do you have a boyfriend?”, “When are you getting married?”, “Why aren’t you getting married?” Female participants shared that they were constantly given cues to have a family, and as one of our single female participants observed that single women are perceived as irresponsible or a threat to the

social order if they do not fit in the normative social role of family, marriage and parenthood.

One of our participants, a young mother, currently working at a college in the University of Delhi, recalled how traumatic the entire experience of postponing motherhood was due to the lack of maternity leave and other financial support not available to her as a contingent faculty. According to our participant, even the committee formed to look into granting maternity leave for contractual faculties by University of Delhi agreed that “availing maternity leave is a basic and vital necessity for the physical and emotional well-being of the mother and the child”. Another young mother from New Delhi (North India) described how her college exploited her precarious situation, insisting that she continued to share the extra workload of her senior colleagues or quit. She explained the reasons given to her were, “You have to justify your salary”, “Why don’t you quit? After all, you are only an ad-hoc teacher” – a dismissal of years of labour and commitment to both her teaching and her students. Our participants asserted that many women who are working in colleges at University of Delhi attested to the fact that they fear the loss of the job as there is no concept of maternity leave despite the Supreme Court’s ruling in that matter. Universities denying maternity leave to contractual faculties whereas the regular faculties can avail it heightens the disparity and breeds alienation.⁴ For contractual workers in HEIs, if they leave the workplace for childbirth, there may not be a job to return to.

The same social forces pressure men to have a family, though the reasons for pushing them into the socially acceptable relationships are different. They are also expected to financially support their families and their inability to do this in a sustained manner or with much confidence about the future puts them under immense stress. A female participant from New Delhi (North India) put the feeling of inadequacy in the following manner:

There is a power structure which speaks of a patriarchal mindset. You are helpless, insecure (pause), if you are female, you are useless. If you are not married, they ask you why not; or they say you will not be able to handle some things because now you are a mother.

These findings point to the HEI workplace as a toxic place, associated with deferred life choices and related consequences.

Patriarchal Societal System

Our participants used words such as “feudal mindset”, “patriarchal”, “conventional”, “abusive and exploitative” to comment on the institutional power structures that relegated them to a position of subservience and discrimination. A young mother from New Delhi identified herself as “insecure” and “helpless” who felt “useless” because she was neglected by various interview boards in HEIs. She felt discriminated against her gender and for being a mother. She shared how the words of a panellist were still etched

on her mind: “You will not be able to handle some things because you are a mother”. Such comments were echoed by other participants.

The power structure of HEI limiting access was noted in many cases. A male participant who had been teaching as an ad-hoc faculty, for almost two decades, in various universities and colleges in Delhi shared his observation that “insecure and mediocre” people appear to perpetuate this system of contingent employment in order to ensure that meritorious and deserving faculty remain voiceless. Reiterating the same point, a female faculty observed that the power structure reflected a mindset that thrived on keeping faculty under control, vulnerable and open to multiple instances of exploitation, from doing extra duties to standing in for regular faculty.

Safe Space and Dissent

While most participants noted not feeling safe and not having space to voice concerns, a faculty member who identifies herself as queer declared that her positionality with respect to more socially acceptable norms allows her the space to voice her dissent: “I feel confident about dissent because I can think different and am not hindered by responsibilities of children”. This participant gave credit to her senior, permanent colleagues for creating a collegial environment that gave her a strong sense of solidarity. This acknowledgment of a collegial space is not reported by other participants, some of whom reported being harassed by their senior colleagues.

In contrast, the queer participant from Delhi (North India) observed that cordial, collegial workplace engagements are appearing to become rare, as HEIs foster competition among colleagues by hiring some as temporary employees. She wondered how could ideas flow if, “CVs brush against each other to be sharper” and one has to constantly compete with one’s colleague; “How can you think or write if you are accountable to only one boss?” she asked. Another male participant from the same city echoed the same discomfort by voicing that there was no scope for asking questions when one’s very existence is precariously dependent on the senior colleagues’ and administration’s favours.

Time Graph

The nature of employment is time-based, pitting those with short-term employment against those who have permanent job security; thus, time impacts the lives and lived experiences of the contingent faculty. Highlighting the ephemeral nature of her academic association, a female participant from Delhi observed, “... maybe we couldn’t pause. Every year we fill up forms, every time we wait; everyone is waiting- marriage, kids; some are just waiting, for things to move, to happen”. This sentiment was echoed by others too who reported an inordinate amount of waiting for a permanent job or some sense of security and their sense of time in this journey.

Participants of the study reported feeling enthusiastic at the beginning of their professional life or as one of them put it, “raring to go after my MPhil” to feeling a sense of loss and despondency when they see their friends in the corporate world achieve success and milestones while they struggle to hold on to a job.

According to the participants of our study, the sense of worthlessness that contingent faculty feel is exacerbated by the lack of research opportunities and infrastructure. A contractual employee, as our participants ascertained, is *officially* not part of administrative committees; however, they are inducted *unofficially* to work in various committees and groups well beyond their job commitments which extend their work hours. As a result, young, contingent faculty do not have either the time or the freedom to choose topics for their own research.

Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusion

Contractual faculties in India are under no illusion that their lives will change radically unless structural changes are made in HEIs. However, they are interested in making the workspace less precarious and less toxic for future appointees. HEIs can improve on the “little” things that contractual faculties are denied and need to feel part of a workforce: basic facilities like library access, freedom to borrow books, getting a beverage, not being humiliated in implicit power equations where senior faculty or administration exploit their vulnerabilities. Since the workplace discriminates at these micro levels and does not help them “nourish”, they feel left out, not part of the system but just as “Guests” or “ad-hoc”. Moreover, the specific roles and responsibilities of the contractual workforce should be framed in empathetic and non-discriminatory phrasing. Maternity leave, medical leaves and basic facilities and rules that apply to regular faculty should be provided. If these “little” and substantial transformations could be brought in, one can think of a less toxic and more nourishing space for the contingent faculty. Given the framework of queer time, we have seen that the idea of a linear temporality that is being imagined for the contractual faculty in India is part of synchronous temporality.

The faculty themselves, though forced to imagine such a futuristic vision, consistently oscillate between the future and the past and the present, not necessarily conforming to the order of the past-present-future. The situation becomes far more complex when we factor in individuals across the gender and sexuality spectrum as their non-synchronous existence problematises this systemic temporal manipulation. The existence of the teleological and the non-sequential disposition of the spectrum calls for a deeper investigation in line with the theorisation of queer temporality. The horizon of a futuristic utopia, of a permanent job, financial independence and of being “settled” in life are simultaneously played alongside that of constant anxiety

about the precedents from the past involving loss of job, or rented accommodation, sexual choices, and domesticity, motherhood, parenthood, questions of future stability or future. During the unprecedented situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic, loss of job means the faculty on the spectrum shifts between temporal orders and devises novel ways of negotiating with the institutional and structural hetero temporalities.

Delving into personal stories of ten contractual faculties illuminates these strategies through which they create spaces and opportunities to exist in different temporal orders and thereby circumvent the forced linearity of a heteronormative world order. Though these interventions signal a resistance towards the order of futurity, they suggest a grim picture that forces contingent faculty in India to continue in this system. In the process, it also urges us to rethink temporality as the crux of the problem of contractualisation that has, in major ways, crippled the system.

Reimagining Institutional Space

As contractual employment seems to be part of the HEIs and HEIs moving towards maintaining a substantial temporary workforce, our participants offered certain suggestions for reimagining contractual employment practices. Participants pointed to the potential of longer contractual appointments which could be offered along with medical benefits and other institutional infrastructure, such as library access and other research facilities. Women participants added that reimagined institutional spaces would offer daycare facilities and maternity leaves. The administrative work that contingent faculty undertake must also be accounted for as part of their job profile so that one does not do the administrative work for free. If higher education has already transformed itself accordingly as an industry, contractual appointments should also be rethought on similar lines. Years of service need to be counted as part of work experience which can likewise be factored in while applying for a regular post (which is currently not the case).

More transparency in HEIs would take the power away from individuals in positions of authority and allow contingent faculty to enjoy basic support and facilities. While struggling in most cases, there were many instances, where when the system failed contingent faculty, ethical support from senior colleagues provided much-needed succour. Thus, instead of requiring vulnerable individuals to rely on the personal goodwill of others or be at the mercy of difficult superiors, such support mechanisms should become part of the HEI system.

Notes

- 1 The second author who was at that time working as a contingent faculty at one of the constituent colleges of University of Delhi.

- 2 Dalits in India refer to the caste group who have faced socio-political-cultural-economic marginalisation due to their position in the caste hierarchy of Indian society.
- 3 See the *Times of India* report on August 24, 2021, summarising government's stern directive to HEIs to fill all vacancies in faculty positions, especially in the reserved categories within a year, that is, by Sept 2022. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/education/news/centre-to-its-higher-education-institutions-fill-up-all-vacant-teaching-positions-by-sept-2022/articleshow/85596098.cms>
- 4 Recently on January 4, 2022, University of Delhi, acceding to a long-standing demand of contractual teachers, has notified maternity leave for ad-hoc and Guest faculties working in the department. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/delhi-university-notifies-maternity-leave-for-ad-hoc-contractual-staff-7717226/>. January 11, 2022, *Indian Express*.

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9 Centering Voices of Motherscholars during the COVID-19 Pandemic Shows Overwhelming Responsibilities, Ingrained Gender Roles, and Blurred Boundaries

Anna CohenMiller and Jessica A. Leveto

Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, mothers faced untenable obstacles, becoming increasingly front-line workers in their motherwork (O'Reilly & Green, 2021; O'Reilly, 2020). Mothers have been forced to do the necessary and arduous carework to sustain their families and communities during COVID-19 pandemic disruptions. Mothers, not fathers, do most domestic labor, childcare, and eldercare (Andrew et al. 2020). And with the implementation of social isolation and pandemic protocols, the burden of their carework has increased exponentially in both time and concern, as mothers are running households with little or no support, under close to impossible conditions, while also often engaged in wage labor. One comparative study in Canada and Australia reported that while men spent caregiving per week that increased during the pandemic, women spent almost double the number of hours (Johnston et al., 2020). The pandemic has particularly compounded the “third shift”—the emotional and intellectual labor of motherwork. Moreover, with COVID-19, many mothers work in what may be termed the “fourth shift”—guiding the schooling of their children online. Despite the cataclysmic upheavals of the pandemic, one fact remains unchanged: Motherwork remains invisible, devalued, and taken for granted.

A common refrain throughout the pandemic has been that although we may be in the same storm, we are not in the same boat. Continuing with this metaphor, we suggest it is mothers who are in particularly turbulent waters, and the pandemic has caused a perfect storm for their carework, health, and employment. The confluence of gendered carework and COVID-19 has meant that mothers have most fully and keenly felt the devastating effects of the pandemic. Initial research confirms that the pandemic has had a substantial negative impact on academic mothers' careers: academic mothers have lost grant funding, have delayed or postponed research projects, and have missed deadlines for submitting articles and manuscripts (Becegato et al.,

2022; Boncori, 2020; Bowyer et al. 2022; Casey, 2021; Crook, 2020; Cui et al., 2021; Deryugina et al., 2021; Flaherty 2021; Fulweiler et al., 2021, 2021; Guy & Arthur, 2020; Hipólito et al., 2020; Kim & Patterson, 2022; Mogro-Wilson et al., 2022; Morgan et al., 2021; Pettit 2021; Squazzoni et al., 2020; Staniscuaski et al., 2021). Indeed, evidence suggests that women's research has plummeted during the lockdown, and articles by men have increased (Fazackerley, 2020).

In this chapter, we center on the voices of mothers in academia, whose voice has been marginalized and subordinated in academic spaces, by examining the experiences of motherscholars and insights for transforming and decolonizing higher education policy and practice. We compare two studies, one an international arts-based study and the second a longitudinal survey study. The first study used an asynchronous online photovoice study with motherscholars in quarantine while leading children through online learning (CohenMiller, 2022; CohenMiller & Izenkova, 2022). The photovoice study was conducted during the height of the first wave (March 2020) and compiled experiences internationally of 68 motherscholars, across nine countries, with the majority of participants in the United States and Kazakhstan. The second study is an ongoing investigation into the impact of COVID-19 on mothers in higher education. Data come from two online surveys deployed early in the pandemic (April and May 2020, $n = 221$) and at the end of the first year of the lockdown (April and May 2021, $n = 749$).

Academic Institutions and Mothers

Academic institutions are based upon a colonial, male model prioritizing and applauding overwork and valuing masculine traits in teaching, research, and service. Women in academia have been allowed to enter higher education but have not been afforded the same opportunities or considered as highly as men (Fotaki, 2013). A central component of decolonizing higher education is to center women and intersectional identities (see Bhamba et al., 2018). Feminist scholars have emphasized the sociopolitical nature of voice and silence: social power structures privilege some voices while excluding others (CohenMiller et al., 2021). Women in academia face basic obstacles in being heard and having time/space to speak (Luke, 1994) and exclusion from academic spaces, such as conferences (Fotaki, 2013).

Those women who also identify as mothers face particular challenges and structures impeding their acceptance and progression in academia (Sallee, Ward, & Wolf-Wendel, 2016). Academic parenting is not the same for mothers and fathers, such as seen at academic conferences where women consistently take on primary caretaking responsibilities (Henderson & Moreau, 2020). Mothers as parents encounter the motherhood penalty: the systemic disadvantages in pay, perceived competence, and benefits relative to fathers. Academic mothers have more responsibility for childcare and family-life management. Williams (2000) argues that mothers face a “maternal wall”

because they are unable to meet these ideal-worker norms. Williams defines the maternal wall as “bias and stereotyping that affect mothers in particular as opposed to women in general” (p. 97). The maternal wall manifests itself in both obvious and subtle ways, including the following: negative competence assumptions (e.g., once they become mothers, women are regarded as less committed to their careers) (Williams, 2000, p. 97).

Studies of both academic women and mothers (Mason & Goulden, 2002, 2004; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2008) reveal that gender discrimination against academic mothers continues to be widespread in academe, primarily because of intersectional identities including women’s ongoing caregiving responsibilities. The academic pipeline—starting from doctoral student mothers through full professor roles (CohenMiller, 2014)—is not structured to be inclusive or equitable for mothers in academia (CohenMiller et al., 2022). The interrelationship of mother and academic can be integrated as “motherscholar,” advocating on behalf of each role (The Motherscholar Project, 2015; Matias, 2011; Matias & Nishi, 2018; Matias, 2022). One way to better understand the embodiment of being a motherscholar is through the lens of matricentric feminism (O’Reilly, 2021).

Matricentric feminism begins with the conviction that mothering matters, and it’s central to the lives of those who identify as mothers. Matricentric feminism seeks to make motherhood the business of feminism by positioning mothers’ needs and concerns as the starting point for a theory and politics and for women’s empowerment and emphasizing that the category of mother is distinct from the category of woman and that many of the problems mothers face—social, economic, political, cultural, psychological, and so forth—are specific to women’s role and identity as mothers. Indeed, mothers are oppressed under patriarchy as women *and as mothers*. Consequently, mothers need a matricentric mode of feminism organized from and for their particular identity and work as mothers. Indeed, a mother-centered feminism is necessary because mothers—arguably more so than women—remain disempowered despite 50 years of feminism.

Who We Are: Positionality

We are writing this chapter as academics and as mothers. An essential step in unpacking this topic is to situate ourselves in the research. By sharing our positionality, we provide a means for the reader to better understand the topic and how we are connected to it. In qualitative research, sharing a researcher’s positionality can inform the audience to contextualize and see the process and findings deeper. It offers a means to understand when we are considered insiders or outsiders and how others might interpret that position (see Bourke, 2014; CohenMiller & Boivin, 2022). Yet being an insider or outsider is neither a dichotomy nor static. Instead, a “spectrum of insider-outsiderness” shifts as researchers enter the field and move throughout their work (CohenMiller & Boivin, 2022). For quantitative research, the

integration of positionality and critical self-reflection is beginning to be recognized as useful for conducting socially just research (see CohenMiller & Grace, 2022).

We have not met in person but have met virtually, first through a professional invitation to present for a webinar about motherscholars during COVID-19 (Garner, 2020) and then through a mutual professional friend. The first author, Anna, lives and works in Kazakhstan in Central Asia and identifies as a motherscholar—purposefully integrating the roles of mother and scholar together in research and community outreach. As a doctoral student mother, she noticed the vast differences in how other graduate student mothers were treated and the varied types of resources available. This led to her dissertation on the topic of doctoral student motherhood/mothering in academia and the development of *The Motherscholar Project* (CohenMiller, 2015), an arts-based online gallery showcasing the presence of those who identify as mothers and as scholars from around the globe. She raises her two children (ten and seven) with her husband in an international community. Her work focuses on equity and inclusion in higher education as both a professional and personal commitment born from historical experiences and research working with excluded communities.

The second author, Jessica, lives and works in Northeast Ohio, USA. She is a sociological social psychologist focusing on the intersections of identity, emotions, and mental health. She is the mother of three children (22, 7, and 6) and has been a mother for her entire academic life, starting as a single mother during her undergraduate and graduate school years and having two children within two years while on the tenure track. She realized structural inequities were harming mothers in the academy and created *PhD Mamas*, a support network on social media that has grown to over 11,000 members since its creation in 2015. Her scholarship related to academic mothers has been informed by her personal and professional experiences. COVID-19's impact on her, like many mothers in academia, will be everlasting. While writing this chapter, the pandemic continues to be a destabilizing force. Her young children remain at home due to safety concerns and limited protections and protocols to control the spread of the virus in compulsory school settings. The transition to motherscholar was a natural progression for her. COVID-19 brought a collision of worlds, and an alignment of opportunity and shared challenges brought us together.

Methodology

It was clear from the first introduction between the authors that the projects were compatible and amplified messages from mothers around the world. In this chapter, we use an innovative qualitative approach to highlight the topic of motherscholars during COVID-19 through two separate studies conducted independently and then integrated. The first is a qualitative study conducted during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the second

study is compared with an ongoing mixed-method project conducted during two different time points of the pandemic (2020 and 2021). We discuss each study separately in the following sections, highlighting the process and selected findings. Then we look across the data from both studies to answer two *new* research questions:

- 1 How has the pandemic impacted academic mothers?
- 2 What do academic mothers suggest as steps to address issues of equity and inclusion in higher education?

Individually, each of us coded and analyzed our data. We returned to collaborative efforts after individual analysis. We discussed overlapping patterns via email, texting, and Google docs. We each saw themes of motherscholar stress, strain, work-life conflict, mental health, and limited institutional support in this analysis. It was clear how motherscholars were overshadowed and de-voiced. These findings led us to recognize the necessity of amplifying motherscholar voices. In both studies, it was clear that the strength of our unique approaches was to reinforce each other's findings while advocating for motherscholars to promote the curation of more equitable, practical, and transformative institutional responses in higher education. The steps to address the impact of COVID-19 on motherscholars are complex; however, the overarching themes of our work echo and reverberate the importance of this work for structural change. To create equitable and inclusive spaces in higher education, we must consider the lived experiences of women worldwide and the impact COVID-19 has had on the lives of mothers in academia.

In the first study, CohenMiller utilizes innovative arts-based participatory research, photovoice. She finds that motherscholars felt pressure to work at the same pace with little recognition of their lived experiences, lack of separation, and limited personal space. Leveto's study builds upon two open-ended surveys deployed a year apart to explore the impact of COVID-19 on motherscholars. Motherscholars identify the difficulty with time and space during the pandemic. Motherscholars are asked what has been done and what can be done to alleviate the pressures. Leveto's work provides space for mothers to reflect and provide suggestions for institutional change that will best serve motherscholars into the future. In the following sections, we unpack vital aspects of each of the studies individually and then integrate the findings.

Study 1—Photovoice: Motherscholar during Quarantine (Anna's Study)

At the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown, there were clear health concerns. I was living on an international expatriate campus which presented unique experiences for faculty and staff (CohenMiller et al., 2019; Kuzhabekova, 2019). For many of us living in Kazakhstan, the country has become our

home even if we are not from the country originally. I have been in the country for close to seven years, and my children grew up in this community. During the pandemic, some people became concerned about the ability to stay living and working in Kazakhstan or if they would be required to move back to their previous country. As I have spent my career studying mothers in academia (see CohenMiller 2014, 2015, 2020b; CohenMiller & Demers, 2019; CohenMiller et al., 2022), I was highly attuned to networks of women sharing about what they were facing, the pressures and stresses, and how the universities were responding (or not) to COVID-19 (see CohenMiller, 2020a, c). From my own experiences of moving into lockdown, which in Kazakhstan involved a complete restriction of all movement outside of the house, and hearing from other motherscholars and leadership, it became evident there was a misunderstanding of what was happening “on the ground” for motherscholars.

I created a study to collect the lived experiences of motherscholars during a tenuous time, deciding to collect data in an asynchronous fashion to reach participants (CohenMiller, 2022). From previous research with this community, I found that asynchronous communication and interviews were often beneficial and even essential to negotiate the timing motherscholars had available (CohenMiller et al., 2020, rigid flexibility). After receiving institutional ethical approval and beginning collecting data through posts shared on Facebook groups and through snowball sampling with motherscholars, I invited a second researcher to the project, a PhD student I had worked with previously on topics of gender in education (see CohenMiller & Izenkova, 2022). We distributed a link through Google forms to adapt photovoice, an arts-based participatory research approach first developed for conducting community health research (see Wang & Burris, 1997), to an online asynchronous format (CohenMiller, 2022).

In the photovoice methodology, participants document their lives by taking photos and describing them. The participants become researchers, developing and sharing data and interpreting the data. Therefore, the photos were not analyzed by us, the two lead researchers, but described by the participant/researchers. In a typical photovoice study, participants would be led through focus groups to discuss the process of taking photos and describing them, identifying the important components for a group of people, with a final step often culminating in community action such as a gallery show for local stakeholders. In our asynchronous online photovoice study, we described the process of taking photos in the Google form and asked participant-researchers multiple questions, including demographic background questions. We asked participants to take a photo that demonstrated their lived reality as a motherscholar during quarantine while taking care of children learning online. We then asked them to explain further why they chose that particular photo, what it shows about their life, and what it might suggest about what could be done to address issues in higher education.

At the end of six months, we collected complete data from 68 motherscholars from across nine countries, with the majority from the US ($n = 31$) and Kazakhstan ($n = 15$). For this chapter, I focus on the final question asked about suggestions for steps to improve issues of equity and inclusion in higher education. All names provided here are pseudonyms, and photos have any identifying information blurred. (To see the complete set of photos from the online photovoice study, see www.photovoicemotherscholars.wordpress.com).

Some responses focused on the personal or internal aspect to move through a pandemic as a motherscholar (e.g., “create harmony,” “self-care and outside time are key”); others emphasized structural changes, while other motherscholars had overlapping concepts of looking within oneself (e.g., “Appreciate goodness,” “Be willing to think outside the box”) and external aspects. For example, Aina’s simple response “Ask for help” (Figure 9.1) could be considered as both an individual need and pressure for



Figure 9.1 “Ask for help” (Aina).

motherscholars to reach out, and also an important component of a neo-liberal society that often applies pressure in the workplace to do the work by oneself instead of asking for help. As Aina describes in her photo, “Everyone is studying and I am working and studying simultaneously. My toddler daughter is doing whatever she wants: look at her hands. She decided to color her body with the paint.”

The added stress and pressure of caretaking full-time were also described by Joy (Figure 9.3). She recognized the way external pressures have built up and required her to take on roles that do not fit. As the question asked to motherscholars about ways to improve life did not focus on higher education, there was leeway for participants to share their ideas. Joy talked about the education in general and the untenable pressure to lead “homeschooling”:

For many parents, homeschooling is something they’ve never done or even desired to do. The time that it would take to oversee and manage the materials that were being set up by the teacher really requires a full-time parent who is dedicated to the task. You shouldn’t even call it homeschooling because parents who homeschool full time are the ones to decide how to teach the curriculum, but in this case, the parents have the task of executing the lessons and materials that the teachers have provided. That means much more time in figuring out someone else’s teaching style and methodology. I do not think I am alone in feeling that I was failing miserably- both at being my kids’ teachers and doing my own job well.

Blurred and competing boundaries of academic and personal were shown by Associate Professor in the US, Jane’s photo. Her kids were three, seven, and nine years old, and she explained that this one area was where she spent “7–10 hours a day” (Figure 9.2).

Jane further pointed to the bigger issue of the culture of care (see Castaneda & Isgro, 2013 & CohenMiller et al., 2022), about how communication is shared, and the value of the individual worker:

My university never said to the faculty ... we know you are homeschooling, teaching online when you have never done it before, worrying about the people you love, etc [sic] so let go of some of the expectations around research productivity. It’s ok to just do your teaching at this time ... focus on that part of your job. Instead, there are weekly reminders of grant deadlines, grant applications submitted, kudos for scholarly awards received, etc.

For other participants, ingrained gender roles and responsibilities were particularly noteworthy. Maggy, for instance, an Assistant Professor in the United States who had one child in pre-kindergarten who was breastfed,



Figure 9.2 “I spend 7–10 hours a day in this room” (Jane).

shared a photo of her daughter looking down at her computer, obscuring the screen as a metaphor for her life (Figure 9.3) and explained how academic could, “Acknowledge and accommodate for parents doing full-time child raising during a pandemic. We are here. We need family-friendly policy.”

Maggy said of her photo “Her curls are beautiful! and what a metaphor. It represents how even if I try a little to work she is always there and always first priority and she’s so curious and fun. I love both being a mother and being a professor. I am trying.” Blurred boundaries can also be seen in the photo shared by Ainur, a graduate student in Kazakhstan with a child in kindergarten (Figure 9.4):

This photo describes my typical working day at home. My daughter and I are sitting in the kitchen, because if there is a meeting I can quickly feed my daughter or give her water or another snack. In order for my daughter to be in sight, I give her books, paints and of course a tablet. If there is an important meeting going on or I need to concentrate, then without a tablet it is impossible to work, as it allows my daughter not to distract me for at least for 1 hour. Of course, this is not always the case, but sometimes it helps me out.



Figure 9.3 “Daughter sitting on kitchen table looking at my computer screen while I tried to open my laptop for a quick moment” (Maggy).

Ainur and Jane both continued on to articulate what needs to change in higher education to create policy and practice that is inclusive and accessible. They both talked about awareness and simple adjustments. Ainur said,

I would like the bosses and colleagues to understand how women and children are busy and take this into account when setting up any deadlines and meetings. For example, to talk on time about the proposed project and its deadline so that mothers could start to complete it on time. After all, when you have a family and a child, then all projects take twice as much time to complete, not because you are not competent, but because your work time may be unexpectedly interrupted by internal family circumstances. It would also be nice to provide some kind of psychological online support to working mothers, because sometimes you don't even have anyone to express your worries about working



Figure 9.4 “A typical day” (Ainur).

and raising children. It is also possible to create a club for working mothers where everyone can also speak out and share their life hacks about work or educating children.

Jane suggested to,

Acknowledge and accommodate for parents doing full-time child raising during a pandemic. We are here. We need family-friendly policy. Breastfeeding, managing nap resistance, dealing with #2s during potty training, and the 84 different activities toddlers do in 1 day is very, very, very hard to do while teaching, engaging in service, researching, writing, and leading a program. I am beyond exhausted.

For other participants, changing policies during the pandemic have exacerbated inequities. For Yelena in Ukraine, she was in an assistant role

with two preschool children and a child in middle school. She shared about unequal responsibilities and promotions being delayed:

During the pandemic, I acutely felt how unfairly distributed expectations. I must provide distance education to my students and my child, as well as second child supervision. And I must at the same time be competitive in academic life. The university leadership has already promised me twice to provide the position of assistant professor. However, this has not yet happened. And this is again postponed due to the fact that the university has not changed the procedure for the competition and submitting documents from offline to online.

When answering how the image may help address issues of equity and inclusion in higher education, Yelena said, “This picture may make someone think about what should be changed in their approach to working mothers. I would also like attention to be paid to the fact that mothers have an extra (and extreme) unpaid load in a pandemic.” Since sharing for the photovoice project, in February of 2022, Ukraine was attacked by Russia, sending Yelena’s family (along with millions of others) into a life-or-death situation. As of April 2022, we have been in touch a few times and she has confirmed that she was able to find refuge out of the country, has been able to continue some academic work, and like most Ukrainians, wants to return home.¹

Overall, motherscholars clearly articulated through images and descriptions how their lives during the pandemic involved additional responsibilities revolving around gender roles of being a mother and lack of separation between work and personal spaces. Motherscholars felt pressure from higher education organizations to remain working at the same pace while taking on full-time childcare and homeschooling. There appears to be little evidence of people in higher education organizations that recognized and/or adjusted for the additional roles, responsibilities, and expectations of motherscholars. To that end, simple solutions are suggested to account for inequities in policy and practice to create a culture of care to facilitate success, recognizing those who are caretaking during the pandemic.

Study 2—Institutional Policy Structure (Jessica’s Study)

“COVID-19’s impact on mothers in academia” (Leveto 2020, 2021a, 2021b, 2022) is a multi-year, mixed-method ongoing project. The first data were collected from an online survey (n = 221), including open and close-ended questions, organized in April and May of 2020; I served as a consultant on the survey design for a colleague, Nicole Willey (2020). The project was originally designed to explore how the shutdown impacted academics’ caregiving responsibilities, ability to move forward in research, teaching, and service, division of labor in the home, and to identify primary stressors on academics during the early days of the shutdown (Willey 2021). By late

spring and early summer of 2020, my interest in this topic was invigorated. I had been an administrator and founder of *PhD Mamas* since 2015, and I was repeatedly seeing the impact COVID-19 was having on mothers in academia. Using Willey's 2020 data, I took part in the virtual IAMAS VVA Lecture along with Nicole Willey and Anna CohenMiller. Willey encouraged me to continue the work using the data and expand the reach and analysis. Nicole Willey's involvement as collaborator and mentor throughout this project has been immense and cannot be understated. Willey suffered from the impact of long covid throughout 2021. Her experience with long covid and its impact on motherscholars informs this work and represents an embodiment of the impacts of COVID-19 on mothers in academia.

I modified the 2021 survey, and a new, approved internal review board protocol was obtained for the project. One noteworthy difference between the instruments from 2020 to 2021 is the addition of more measures of identity to help examine inequities between racial groups and other potential areas of intersectional oppression mothers may experience. Participants were recruited through online networks and social media. The 2021 data (n = 749) gave another time point to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on mothers in academia and an opportunity to compare the impact over time by looking at the similarities and differences between data time points. This project is ongoing with another survey data collection in April and May 2022. I have expanded the project and will include focus groups and one-on-one in-depth interviews conducted in the spring and summer of 2022.

Samples

Sample characteristics of the 2020 (n = 221) data include 92% of respondents identified as mothers; 89.33% were married or in a domestic partnership. Among the 2020 respondents, 36% were promoted faculty with tenure, 35% were tenure track faculty that were not yet tenured, 9% were graduate students, 7% full-time, not promoted non-tenure track, 5% were full-time promoted, non-tenure track, 4% administrator, and 3% part-time faculty. Data on race or national origin were not collected in the 2020 sample.

The 2021 sample (n = 749) included 100% self-identified mothers, 90% based in the United States, and 10% outside of the United States. The sample was 84% white, 5% Asian or Pacific Islander, 5% Hispanic or Latinx, 3% Black or African American, and 2% indicated a race of "other"; 91% of the 2021 sample was married or in a domestic partnership, 5% divorced, 2% single/never married, and less than 1% widowed or in another marital status. Among those in the sample with children under the age of 18, 46% had two children, 38% had one child, 9% had three children, 3% had four children, and 1.5% had five or more children. Approximately, 97% of respondents had one or more children under the age of 18 and 13% of respondents are caring for one or more adults. Academic positions varied, 26.4% of the sample were promoted faculty with tenure, 25% tenure track faculty not

COVID-19 Impact on Research Productivity

Motherscholars juggle multiple demands, and the utopian ideal of the elusive work-life “balance” is often difficult, if not impossible, for mothers to obtain (Calarco et al. 2021; Collins et al. 2021; Hertz, Mattes, and Shook 2021; Kapoor et al. 2021; Misca and Thornton 2021; O’Reilly 2020; Schieman et al. 2021; Zamarro and Prados 2021). The explosion of scholarship over the past two years demonstrates the detrimental impact on motherscholars research productivity during COVID-19 (Becegato et al. 2022; Boncori 2020; Bowyer et al. 2022; Casey 2021; Cui et al. 2021; Flaherty 2021; Fulweiler et al. 2021; Guy and Arthur 2020; Kim and Patterson 2022; Mogro-Wilson et al. 2022; Morgan et al. 2021; Nwoko 2020; Pettit 2021; Squazzoni et al. 2020; Staniscuaski et al. 2021; Velander et al. 2021). These data amplify the results of the previous studies and show that during the 2020 data collection (April/May 2020) and the 2021 data collection (April/May 2021), many mothers found themselves at the impossible intersection of work/life conflict. The most salient impact on the careers of motherscholars was their interrupted research productivity exasperated by the lack of time, blurring of boundaries, and inadequate space.

Time

A significant impact COVID-19 had on the mothers in academia in both the 2020 and 2021 data identified was associated with time. Time was elusive for mothers working from home during COVID-19 lockdowns, and the impact will have lasting ramifications.

I find myself in meetings all the time with colleagues whose experience of COVID-19 is very different – they seem to have more time, not less. I find this very difficult. I feel that I don’t want to draw attention to my situation because I fear losing professional credibility (2020, divorced or separated, promoted faculty with tenure, mother of one child under the age of ten).

Another respondent recognized the impact of trauma on concentration, time, and productivity,

Everything takes longer. I look incompetent to my students. I have had to rerecord multiple lectures. Canvas resets mid-grading and I lose work. Meanwhile, I am constantly side-tracked by an emotional, semi-traumatized, stir-crazy toddler or to breastfeed my infant. I cannot get work done (2020, married or domestic partnership, Full-time contingent faculty not yet promoted, mother of two children under the age of five).

Motherscholars repeated refrain that they have “no time.” The loss of time is reflected in the voices of those represented on the table. This lack of time contributes to the decrease in scholarly and creative research productivity: “I have no time for research which is very disappointing” (2020); “No time for myself as I’m either always working, engaging in childcare/kid’s schoolwork, cooking or cleaning” (2020); “I have no time; still working from home and it’s impossible to maintain a work flow” (2021); “No time for research, fieldwork on hold” (2021).

Boundaries (Work/Life Fit)

Motherscholars experienced a direct collapse of two highly salient identities: mother and scholar. Motherscholars in particular have been found to have the need for boundaries between professional and personal identities (Trepal and Stinchfield 2012). The annihilation of boundaries between these identities was noted throughout responses to the survey. The following motherscholars highlight a select subsample of these reported concerns. Both samples (2020 and 2021) indicated the overwhelming difficulties that the lack of boundaries had created limited their time for research productivity:

“... further blurring work/home boundaries, children may be feeling ignored if I work and throw them a tablet, increased guilt about not spending extra time with kids, not doing all the cool crafts their friends are doing with their parents who are not ...” (2020).

“There are no boundaries between work and home; my child walks into my work space and I’m cranky that I have no separate self” (2020).

“I’m worn thin by the lack of boundaries around each category of my life, and missing the time I had away from home prior to COVID” (2021).

“Lack of boundaries has made it difficult to enjoy family time” (2021).

Space

Space was another repeated theme in respondents’ open-ended responses. As the boundaries between roles (mother and scholar) blurred so too did the reality for mothers working from home, physical space is finite. Personal spaces became professional spaces and office spaces became children’s virtual classrooms. The making and remaking, and even taking of space, created a new meaning for the physical environment. The following subsample of motherscholar comments addresses how spatial constraints impacted motherscholars’ lives during the pandemic and in many cases the impact on research productivity: “It’s hard for me to focus with kids needing me constantly & not having a dedicated space to work” (2020); “Lack of privacy; lack of work space; lack of respect for work needs” (2020); “I wouldn’t have bought this house if I’d known I was going to be working in it, I would

have gotten one with a separate space for working” (2021); “I was on the waitlist for a year and a half and then I found out that a family of 3 is only eligible for a one bedroom 600 sqft apartment which isn’t enough space for us” (2021).

As indicated by the comments above, the impact of COVID-19 on motherscholars during spring 2020 and spring 2021 was and continues to be profound. Research productivity is a critical component of motherscholars’ identity and career advancement. Limitations of time, blurred boundaries, and finite space constraints put direct pressure on motherscholars during this time. Considering the impact on productivity set in motion by constraints on time, boundaries, and space, any institutional response must hear and center mothers’ voices in academe to prevent the loss of great potential in scholarship and derailment of careers for mothers throughout academia.

What Mothers Need: Institutional Wishlist

Data from the 2020 sample highlighted an overwhelming concern for health and safety. These data came before vaccination authorization for adults. Safety concerns were also expressed in the 2021 sample after vaccination availability for adults and teenagers. Motherscholars with immunocompromised families or young children ineligible for vaccines were particularly requesting flexible schedules to ensure the safety of their families. Mothers’ frustration with a return to normal when their families were still at risk was particularly impacted by these messages of “return to normal” in early 2021:

They could stop pretending that everything is normal. Nothing is normal. Our students are walking disasters right not [now] and demand so much extra support that there isn’t much bandwidth left for anything else. Further none of the supports they have offered actually help those of us who are posttenure, and we all know that pausing the clock allows them to save money on our backs (2021, White, promoted faculty with tenure, married, mother of two children under 18).

Another motherscholar addresses the anxiety in uncertainty that mothers faced in spring 2020:

I have so many feelings. Seriously, the email about summer semester and basically telling us you got a break with expectations of how you did this in the spring, but time to get your shit together and remember that these are supposed to be normal synchronous classes set us moms with young kids over the top with anxiety. It has been a constant source of discussion amongst us (2020, promoted faculty with tenure, married, mother of two children under 5).

The varying degrees of comfort with in-person return came up in the motherscholars' responses. Recognizing the variation in comfort with sending unvaccinated children to childcare centers or schools with varying safety protocols was taxing to mothers. The lack of care or concern is noted, and motherscholars ask for flexibility in scheduling with consideration of the health of their families over tuition dollars:

Understanding that just because some people have gotten vaccines not everyone has, and the pandemic isn't over yet. There are still not enough childcare spots, and the school year hasn't ended yet and we can't leave minor children home alone while they are remote learning and for children/families with high-risk health conditions, it's still not really safe to return to in-person school (2021, White, promoted faculty with tenure, married or domestic partnership, mother of two under 18).

We have been teaching in person for this whole academic year. It's clear to me that they don't care if I get sick, they just want the tuition dollars (2021, White, married or domestic partnership, Promoted faculty with tenure, one child under 18).

Including faculty in decisions related to the modality of their course offerings is essential in demonstrating a mutual understanding, respect, and collaborative effort between faculty and administration to the difficulties that impact caregiving faculty, "I would also like the institution provide parents with more choices for course modalities" (2021, Latinx, promoted faculty with tenure, married or domestic partnership, mother of one under the age of five).

Choice and flexibility during times of uncertainty are paramount. COVID-19 and the return to a new "normal" gave higher education administrators a chance to demonstrate their priorities. For some, these were considerate and flexible; for others these were rigid and forced many motherscholars to make difficult decisions about their careers, futures, and the safety of their family.

Throughout the data, it became clear that the best ways to ensure institutions are helping families was through compensation in various ways—paid leave, increased salary, and funding for research support. As one motherscholar stated, even under pre-pandemic standards, they felt underpaid, "Frankly, I feel that I am not paid adequately for the work I do under normal circumstances ... I would not be able to afford working at this position if it weren't for my spouse's income" (2020, tenure track not yet tenured, mother of two adults). And, "*Pay us more!*" (2021, White, Divorced, Promoted Faculty with Tenure, Mother of four under ten).

Another faculty member contends that institutions should consider emergency grants and funding, especially for contingent or adjunct faculty. Another echoes the prioritization of support for early-career faculty that may be impacted disproportionately: "Provide emergency financial

grants to faculty and staff that need it (not me, but adjunct faculty for example)” (2020, promoted faculty with tenure, married or domestic partnership, mother of adult child(ren)); “Bridge funding for those whose grants are ending and prioritizing early-career researchers in funding and hiring/promotion would be beneficial” (2021, White, married or domestic partnership, post-doctoral fellow, mother of two children under ten); and “Designate COVID funds to scholar mothers; offer time and funding extensions ...” (2021, Black, married or domestic partnership, graduate student, mother of three children under ten).

Other motherscholars identify funding for graduate assistantships for research to support lost time while helping graduate students who may need additional support due to lost productivity. Again, we see the outcry for help by women not always for women like them. Still, the recognition that supports were always scarce for motherscholars, and the pandemic exacerbated the need for support: “Funding for a GA to help with research. I lost time. I want help making it up” (2021, White, married or domestic partnership, tenure track faculty not yet tenured, mother of one child under the age of five); “Provide funding for more RA positions and staff positions to help with administrative/service work ... additional support for grad students (I am not one bit spend a lot of time trying to help students find funding, etc.)” (2021, White, married or in a domestic partnership, promoted faculty with tenure, mother of two children under the age of 18).

The financial strain of the pandemic was evident, but so too was the need for childcare and childcare subsidies. Due to space limitations, the magnitude of the salient, precarious childcare conditions for motherscholars is not explicitly addressed in this chapter. However, the call for onsite childcare as pandemic dangers lifted and vaccines became available was addressed: “I wish they would provide onsite childcare” (2021, White, married or domestic partnership, Promoted faculty with tenure, mother of two under ten); “... childcare on campus- we’ve been pushing this for years, and instead the Board of Education is trying to push us to a 5-5 with 15 hours of office hours a week!” (2021, White, married or domestic partnership, promoted faculty with tenure). One motherscholar highlights her greatest fear as she shares her concern:

Covid threatens to set back the gender gains we have made in academia over the last 30 years. We as women need to support each other to make sure that none of us are left behind. Academia cultivates competition and makes us think that there are only so many seats at the table for women. If we support each other, we can hold as many seats at the table as we need. But I’m afraid The stress and anxiety of covid may have the opposite effect and trick women into competing with each other. We need to look at the greater picture and see that we are fighting for all women in academia. Women need to support women (2021, White,

promoted with tenure, married or domestic partnership, mother of one child five or under).

Centering motherscholars' voices and addressing their needs is the only way to transform the structure to create more accessible, equitable, and productive spaces. The inequities faced by motherscholars during COVID-19 were exasperated, but they were not new. Motherscholars have been navigating these unequal landmines in higher education throughout their career. The pandemic just brought their students, colleagues, and every other participant in web meetings into their world. With the veil lifted, the lives of motherscholars were now on display. We ask, "what do motherscholars want, what do motherscholars need?" The answer is not only asking motherscholars what they need but also investing in and making the changes. Creating a culture of care and understanding is essential, and it is a start; it will lay the foundation for what comes next, systemic change.

Seeing the Commonalities: Discussion

For this chapter, we analyzed two separate research studies conducted by each author to understand how the pandemic impacted academic mothers and how to improve higher education to enhance equity and inclusion. During the pandemic, there was (and is) an exacerbation of stress on the multiple roles motherscholars took on and found three key experiences of overwhelming responsibilities, ingrained gender roles, and blurred boundaries of work and personal life. Stress impeded many aspects of life, including research productivity, a key element for earning tenure and promotion in higher education. The intersection of roles, such as highlighted by participants in Kazakhstan, where women are traditionally expected to take on the role of managing the house (e.g., cooking, cleaning), demonstrated how intersectionality and colonial, hierarchical structures are essential to consider for those in higher education leadership. Centering intersectionality is particularly important during the pandemic (Statti et al., 2021). Such overlapping responsibilities and cultural forces are echoed in research in Kazakhstan (Almukhambetova & Kuzhabekova, 2020; Kuzhabekova & Almukhambetova, 2021) and highlighted during the pandemic in the United States (Schnackenberg & Simard, 2021).

Becoming a mother as an academic involves conflicting roles (CohenMiller & Demers, 2019) and a cumulative disadvantage (Tower & Latimer, 2016). Not only do mothers in academia face extra stress and responsibilities, but external evidence such as promotion through the academic pipeline can also be affected negatively (see Mason & Gouldon, 2002, 2004; Sallee et al., 2016; Williams, 2000; Wolfinger & Mason, 2008). Societal pressures that become internalized for women to "do more" and "lean in" to overcome barriers at work have been debunked (Saujani, 2022). During the pandemic, these opposing expectations, pressures, and "institutional gender

inequities and socially imposed responsibilities” were further exacerbated (Schnackenberg, 2021, p. 190).

Concerns about promotion and “publish or perish” were voiced by many participants in our study. Our findings were like research emerging during the COVID-19 pandemic, where women’s carework increased for those working in higher education, while for men, this was not always the case (Del Boca et al., 2020). To make it through the pandemic, motherscholars had to develop their own strategies to find a way through the inequities faced in higher education organizations (CohenMiller & Izenkova, 2022). The lockdown had extreme effects on women in academia and childrearing (see Fontanesi et al., 2020; O’Reilly & Green, 2021), results were found in our work as well. As O’Reilly (2020) noted, mothers during COVID-19 were “trying to function in the unfunctionable.” For mothers in academia, the competing demands were extraordinary (Willey, 2020), an idea found in our work as well, where many participants felt they were not functioning well as being either a mother or an academic. Identifying the inequities and disruptions the pandemic has had on motherscholars is essential. The limited and inconsistent response by the administration creates a culture of uncertainty and disconnect and has contributed to the “great resignation” (Parker and Clark 2022).

Suggestions for addressing inclusion and equity issues in higher education have commonalities across both studies, highlighting the need for higher education institutions to address problems during the pandemic, such as providing support for caretakers and creating policies that would facilitate motherscholars to return after the pandemic. For example, Leveto’s work overwhelmingly centered on structural, institutional changes that can be extended to minimize the negative impact of COVID-19 work stressors on the careers of mothers. The 2020 data indicates that motherscholars are disproportionately burdened with juggling responsibilities including carework, teaching, scholarship, and service. The 2020 data speaks to the lack of time and relative shock of the pandemic. By the time the 2021 data was collected, the pandemic had raged on for over a year. The perpetual upheaval and evident exhaustion were indicated in the motherscholars response to open-ended questions. While the similarities between spring 2020 and spring 2021 are evident, time, fatigue, stress, strain, the pervasive, unrelenting strain begins to bubble to the surface in 2021 with reports of apathy, exhaustion, and increased frustration with the institutional response.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, this chapter aimed to understand how the pandemic has impacted academic mothers and to imagine new and innovative practices and policies to “facilitate success” (CohenMiller et al., 2022) systematically in academic organizations while empowering academic mothers to build back better in a post-pandemic world. The two studies described here and their integration

were conducted during particularly stressful times of the COVID-19 pandemic. To create equitable spaces for motherscholars and other caregiving faculty and graduate students, it is essential to decolonize higher education through structural and cultural change. As such, based on our work, the following is recommended:

- 1 **Lay the Foundation:** Create, support and sustain a culture of care and understanding for faculty and graduate students.
 - a Normalize motherscholars and caregiving scholars' existence.
 - b Center, amplify, and respond to the voices of motherscholars as well as other marginalized and historically underrepresented groups.
 - c Invest (figuratively and literally) in building a supportive culture, honors difference, and value innovative, creative contributions and collaborations.
 - d Recognize the strain that faculty and administration experience and adjust expectations for response time in communication, scheduling of meetings, etc.
 - e Move beyond promoting well-being and platitudes to concrete action to ensure it; ensure the work-life fit is a priority for all to optimize productivity long term (reduce burnout, stop the "leaky pipeline," and enhance innovation, creativity, and discovery).
- 2 **Rebuild the Structure:** Reconsider what has "always been" and rebuild it to be better.
 - a Reconsider "publish or perish" during crisis times.
 - b Normalize flexibility in adjusting deadlines, scheduling, and workload expectations to meet the varying degrees of lived experience and differential needs in career trajectories.
 - c Provide childcare subsidies and onsite childcare.
 - i Where or when that is not possible, create collaborations and innovative networks to support carework in the community. For example, exchange childcare hours at a local facility for tuition waivers or other institutional commodities.
 - d Create and normalize using paid leave
 - i Offer flexible leaves for life events, including research leaves to make up time for unforeseen circumstances.
 - e Increase accessibility—enable remote options to include those historically left out of the "room." Consider universal design principles when rebuilding institutions (less about accommodations, more driven by access).
 - f Fund graduate students (including graduate student motherscholars)
 - i Support faculty scholarship.
 - ii Extend funding supports for graduate students to encourage creativity, innovation, discovery, and scholarship.

These suggestions are only a few small steps in innovative strategies to rebuild higher education institutions to lead to transformative global change. These strategies and recommendations are not only to benefit motherscholars but to increase the persistence, accessibility, and culture of academia. For so long, the institution has been centered on an archaic, patriarchal system that only rewards a particular “type” of scholar. The pandemic spotlighted the tightrope motherscholars have been walking for generations. The failed response of institutions regarding COVID-19 has empowered motherscholars to demand more. Such an emphasis on empowerment is echoed in the work of Rashmi Saujani (2022) regarding the creation of lasting change for women in the workplace. Resilience and fortitude are built during traumatic times, and rapid social-cultural changes occur during times of disruption. The pandemic has reshaped lives for many. It is time for us to rebuild academia to create a better space for motherscholars and other historically underrepresented groups—in doing so, we create a better climate for all.

Limitations and Future Directions

While our innovative approach of looking at the impact of COVID-19 on the lived experiences of motherscholars during the thrust of the COVID-19 pandemic is essential, it is not without limitations. Like other qualitative projects, our work is not generalizable. The noted themes are significant to the lives of those who participated in our studies. While limited, our findings amplify and give nuance and depth to the multitude of quantitative, qualitative, and mix-method projects coming out of nearly every academic discipline over the past two years related to the impact of COVID-19 on motherscholars. COVID-19 changed families and workplaces; mothers in higher education are but one piece of a cataclysmic event that has shaken the culture of nearly every pocket of human society. The impact is yet to be determined, and only time will tell how the recovery and transformation of higher education institutions shape their response to either maintain the status quo or transform into more accessible spaces where scholars can fulfill their full potential beyond professional prestige, publications, and progress through the hierarchy of status attainment but through finding a work-life fit that makes them whole, productive, happy members of society. Future research must continue to center motherscholars’ voices and those that have historically been marginalized in academia. A limitation of these projects is the overwhelming centering of white mothers; we know that without the voices of BIPOC motherscholars we are only telling a part of the story. Centering motherscholars of color voices, as well as the voices of single mothers, will only help us move toward equity for motherscholars and give a better understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on mothers in academia. Future research should also examine how shifts in culture and

structure benefit all of those in academia and provide an ongoing feedback loop toward action, innovation, and progressive practice and policy to reshape, reimagine, and propel higher education into a more accessible, diverse, productive, and meaningful institution.

Note

- 1 For those in Kazakhstan, the tensions around the war between Russian and Ukraine is palpable with concerns for a possible invasion. While the day-to-day practices remain fairly normal, the mental strain and considerations for how to help those fleeing Ukraine is evident.

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10 Decolonising “Those Who Are Not” in Polish Higher Education Institutions

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Introduction

Poland, a Central-European country with 38 million people, has no colonial past. It has never colonised or been colonised in the sense of classical colonial theories. Yet it had the experience of conquering its eastern neighbours (14th–18th centuries), while in turn it was subsequently conquered by its neighbouring states (until the complete loss of statehood, 1795–1918). Both situations can be interpreted as quasi-colonial experiences. Stryjek (2021) proposes to recognise the Polish governance towards the conquered nations as fulfilling some of the colonial model criteria. These are, however, new issues that only start to be discussed, inter alia in the context of post-dependency studies. That is why linking Poland to colonialism might remain beyond what the Polish public could comprehend. Therefore, including the country in a book on decolonisation of higher education (HE) could seem puzzling.

While Poland is deemed to not have the post-colonial burden, its history comprises a similar institution, that of serfdom (pol. *Pańszczyzna*) – the peasants’ servitude and quasi-slavery under the lords – which has shaped for centuries the relations within structures of power. This specific feudal relationship between landlords and land tenants consisted of a set of tenant obligations to be completed under the legal control of the landlord. The tenants had to deliver work and produce with a target often impossible to be met by one person (e.g., 12 working days per week). They were also legally tied to the land, with no possibility to change this status, whereas their landlords could decide most of their life decisions including marriages and education (Janicki, 2021). Serfdom was gradually abolished on Polish territory in the second half of the 19th century. It was condemned in 1956 in the Supplementary Convention of the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery.

These clearly asymmetrical feudal relations between social classes are widely spread and still present in many professional and organisational settings, especially within strong hierarchical structures, where the social

classes of employees might not differ significantly, but the existing hierarchy creates analogical boundaries between the more and the less empowered groups. The concept of serfdom has previously been used to analyse the relationships within academia since the reproduction of feudal relations is still visible in the Polish academic culture (Zawadzki, 2017). We believe that higher education institutions (HEIs) in post-colonial and post-serfdom countries can benefit from a shared deconstruction of these historical concepts. Our chapter builds therefore on the decolonial approaches concerning the university (e.g., Bhambra et al., 2020), post-colonial studies framework and studies related to HE management (e.g., Leja, 2011). University decolonisation aims to deconstruct knowledge, images and pedagogies that reproduce colonial approaches and seeks to empower the marginalised voices within HEIs. Unlike the main actors of academia – academics and students – the administrative staff is usually an unnoticed and marginalised group (e.g., Allen-Collinson, 2006, Górak-Sosnowka et al., 2020a, Leja, 2001). In this chapter, we demonstrate that the framework of decolonisation (rethink, reframe and reconstruct) can be used to understand and deconstruct the complex and seemingly unchangeable hierarchical relations between academics and the so-called non-academics in the Polish HE setting.

Polish HEIs are hierarchical institutions with clearly defined boundaries between academic and non-academic staff empowerment, including epistemic violence and multidimensional power relations. Academics are ranked higher, and there is a fundamental discrepancy between academic freedom (longed by academics) and bureaucratic surveillance (delivered by the administrative staff) (Szwabowski, 2013). This discrepancy is also visible through a stereotypic intergroup perception with prejudices directed towards the members of the “other” group.

Administrative staff is an essential group for academia. By performing supporting functions, they deliver value to internal customers (students, academics) and give assistance in value-delivering core processes (i.e., research and teaching) performed by academics. Good administration is unnoticeable. Just as with every other service provider, one notices them only if something goes wrong (e.g., a deadline has not been met or a document is rejected).

In this chapter we give voice to the mostly invisible and strongly disadvantaged part of academia – the non-academics. One of us (Maria) belongs to this category as she is the administrative director at one of the faculties of the biggest university in Poland; two others are on the other side of the spectrum and are junior (Urszula) and senior (Katarzyna) faculty members. Our positionality in the topic is much more complex, since Maria is finishing her PhD that should help her in managerial career within academia, while Katarzyna established a Poland-wide student services employees association that aims to empower the non-academics in Polish HEIs. Moreover, Katarzyna and Urszula have a record of holding administrative functions in academia (vice-dean and program director and acting

chairperson, respectively). Therefore, it is self-evident that the intersection of both our worlds is deeply interesting for the three of us.

By their very definition, non-academics are legally referred to as *pracownicy niebędący nauczycielami akademickimi* meaning “those who are not academics” – a term that does not define their subjectivity, but only their opposite relation to the dominant group. Non-academics play a subservient role to the other groups at the university (Górak-Sosnowska et al., 2020a). If observed as a multidimensional victimisation and domination via language (Ballard and Easteal, 2018), this narrative of lack of subjectivity translates into practices of thinking about non-academics as inferior and negligible. A second discriminatory position comes from the fact that the administrative staff in Polish HE sector is strongly feminised. The intersection of those two disparities leads to a double exclusion.

In the first part of the chapter, we characterise “those who are not” at Polish HEIs. We point to the two categories of “invisible” and “mute” which define the position and perception of this unprivileged group within the university space. We also address issues of gender and intersectionality by highlighting the seemingly invisible multiple levels of forms of oppression that reinforce subordination in a hierarchical bureaucratic university system. The next section concerns the study conducted in August 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, of 233 academics and non-academics at Polish universities. We describe the research assumptions, methods, procedure and ethical issues and finally present our findings. The text ends with conclusions and implications for practice in HE, and, possibly, in other contexts.

Those *Who Are Not* at Polish HEIs

There are two occupational groups at Polish HEIs – academic teachers and “employees who are not academic teachers” (Polish Law on Higher Education and Science of 2018, art. 112). The latter category encompasses a wide range of people who work as administrative staff, technical staff, workers, librarians, archivists or even museum staff. Many of them are “office workers” while others perform physical work, some of them work with documents, others with customers – let it be a student or an academic. The only characteristic non-academics have in common is that they are not academic teachers. As Wieneke (1995) explains, in the hierarchical and patriarchal university culture being an academic is much more appreciated than any other occupational position. But as Sebajl et al. (2012) point out, this is not the only reason why non-academics consider this term (“non-academics”) derogatory.

A binary divide (Dobson, 2000) might be functional, but in this case, it defines an occupational group by referring to some other group and by pointing out what this occupational group lacks (or what it is not) (Conway, 2000: 14). Bamber et al. (2017: 1) considers non-academics to be in an

occupational limbo as “*always-this-and-never-that*, where *this* is less desirable than *that*.” However, Trowler (2013, p. 43) argues that this definition works on a reciprocal basis: just like the majority group needs subalterns to construct their identity, in the same manner academics need non-academics.

The relationship between academics and non-academics is not an easy one. While these two groups ought to cooperate for the sake of their HEI, they often stay in opposition in terms of goals, visibility and work routine. Academics have individual goals (to publish an article, to win a prestigious grant), whereas non-academics have organisational goals (to provide support to everybody with the limited resources). Academics are visible when they are successful. Non-academics remain invisible when they are successful; they become visible once they fail to do something (Szekeres, 2003). Academic work is task-oriented: except for teaching, academics are mostly free to decide when and where they work. Non-academics have fixed working hours, and – till COVID-19 – also a fixed space: their office.

Until the COVID-19 pandemic, the ability to work from home has long been considered a privilege for academics. But even under the pandemic conditions, it required a Ministry of Science and Higher Education action to force the HEIs to allow their staff to work remotely, since the authorities of some HEIs were reluctant to send their non-academics to work from home, despite the lockdown. Non-academics were considered to be “non-infectable” (Mielczarek-Taica, 2020) and therefore they could and should stay on site at the university premises, even when academics and students were all online. Moreover, while academics were considered to be essential workers and were allowed earlier vaccination, the same privilege was not provided for non-academics (Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów, 2021), although academics had been working mostly online, whereas non-academics had been staying mainly on site, or at most, could work in a hybrid mode.

Invisible and Mute

Unlike academics, the work of non-academics is invisible. According to Allen-Collinson (2006: 273), this lack of visibility excludes them from being valid actors in the decision-making process. The proportion of non-academics in the governing bodies – both at the central and faculty level – is minimal. Article 25 of the Polish Law on Higher Education and Science stipulates that the senate of a university, or the main governing body in every public HEI, is comprised of the professors who fill at least 50% of seats, students who fill at least 20% of seats and the others who fill up to 25% of seats. That last category includes all the other academics (e.g., assistant professors, lecturers, trainers and lecturers) and a small number of non-academics. The proportion of non-academics in the governing bodies is severely limited, even though the size of both groups – academic and

non-academic – is usually comparable in each HE institution. Academics act as gatekeepers and reinforce the exclusion of non-academics from governance structures (Henkin & Persson, 1992). Despite the institutional exclusion many non-academics are attached to their universities and committed to their work. Górak-Sosnowska et al. (2020b) found that while Polish non-academics experience low levels of vitality and high levels of work-related fatigue, they present an above-average level of attachment to their universities. A similar sense of attachment had been found in the case of Australian universities. Pignata et al. (2016) found out that Australian non-academics reacted more positively to the perceived organisational support than academics, and – unlike academics – this support predicted organisational commitment and the perceived procedural justice.

Not only on the institutional level are non-academics invisible. Trowler (2014, p. 46) indicates that the work of non-academics and their contribution to knowledge in academia is often ignored or devalued. Allen-Collinson (2006) studied research administrators, who adapted a wide range of strategies to increase their own visibility, strengthen the relationship and teamwork with academics and avoid any credibility problems. However, it is academics who hold the power to define the scope of this relationship. As Trowler (2014, p. 46) argues, “[w]here subordinate staff are present, this is typically only in servicing capacity, with the servicing officer having no vote, and no voice – and procedurally permitted to speak only when spoken to.” This lack of voice forces non-academics to enforce various resistance strategies in order to fight the unequal relationships. Górak-Sosnowska et al. (2020a) analysed resistance practices used by student services employees at Polish HEIs. Many of these strategies referred to academics willing to impose tasks that did not belong to non-academics or were impossible to perform at that time. The strategy adapted by non-academics consisted in communicating an inability to perform the task due to structural limitations (e.g., inability to log in as an academic and fill in the protocol due to data protection policy) in invoking the authority of the superior (e.g., performing the extra task only after receiving superior’s approval), in instructing the academic (i.e., doing the extra task together with the academic in order to decrease the probability of being asked next time), or in avoiding to perform the task (e.g., by saying that the task will be performed the next day, whereas the academic needed it immediately).

One could claim that non-academics exercise power over academics through this resistance (Górak-Sosnowska et al., 2020d) and that these strategies are misused by non-academics in order to avoid working. However, as the above research indicates, it is usually a recourse. Some non-academics (e.g., auditing, project management, bursary and public procurement) perform a controlling function over academics, but their control is merely illusional. They only act as “messengers of bureaucracy” (Allen-Collinson, 2006, p. 178) by delivering the bureaucratic message to academics. Often,

they have no control, nor influence over the content of this message (Górak-Sosnowska & Tomaszewska, 2020) which provides an extra burden on them and on academics.

The position of non-academics is uncomfortable for three reasons. Firstly, they have to follow bureaucratic regulations usually set by someone else; the academics are also required to follow these regulations, but their main and individual work has fewer constraints for the sake of academic freedom (after all there is no “non-academic freedom”). Secondly, non-academics have to enforce these regulations and control academics in regard to them, but they have no power over the academics. Thirdly, whenever academics dislike the constraints created by the rules, they often burden non-academics with their irritation, whereas the latter are not really allowed to react, considering their subservient and subordinate role (Sebajl, Holbrook, Bourke, 2012).

Gender and Intersectionality

According to the national statistical data (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2021), 68% of non-academics identify themselves as female. A study conducted on a representative sample of student service officers indicated that around 90% of them identified as female (Decewicz & Górak-Sosnowska, 2019).

Gender usually plays a significant role and works against those identifying as females in academia (e.g., van den Brink & Benshop, 2011). This problem applies to non-academic staff as well. The available data for the Polish context makes comparative studies impossible due to a very small number of participants identifying as male in all studies that had been consulted. However, two studies from Australia seem to point to a more complicated character of the relationship between gender and inequality among non-academics. Allen-Collinson (2007, p. 297) found no gender differences between research administrators identifying as male or female regarding their occupational identity work. Both groups believe that their work is invisible – gender is not a factor here. According to Dobson (2000, p. 206), general staff identifying as female believe that it is their occupational group rather than gender that has limited their aspirations. It seems that being a non-academic plays a much more significant and challenging role than being a person identifying as female.

Methodology

The design of our study was fuelled by the above literature review and our own experiences coming from the two opposite sides of the university workplace. The study was conducted to explore the attitudes, beliefs and motivations of Polish HEI employees (both academics (A) and non-academic (N)) in order to answer three key research questions:

- Q1. Is there a significant difference between the two groups (A and N) with regard to their reciprocal perception?
- Q2. If so, is this difference a result of hierarchical structure or is it an example of colonised/feudalised reality, which is worth to be addressed?
- Q3. What are the existing methods to decolonialise and defeudalise these relations?

The section below presents the research aim and questions, nature, procedure, research method and research sample. We highlight the research ethics and then present the analysis of the collected data and the research findings.

Research participants included A and N of HEIs in Poland. The study was conducted in August 2021. A survey (online questionnaire) in Polish was prepared on the Qualtrics.com survey platform. It was distributed online by the researchers (social media, mailing) among the employees of HEIs in Poland. It consisted of eight open-ended sentences to be completed by the participants and a couple of multiple or single choice questions concerning the type of job and some socio-demographic data.

We used a sentence completion test in order to evaluate and analyse the attitudes, beliefs and motivations of the HEI employees. A semi-structured projective technique was considered to offer better access to the possibly concealed feelings of the employees, especially within the group of Ns, as they are positioned lower in the hierarchy and might want to avoid revealing their views. The projective techniques, albeit traditionally linked to clinical psychology and the analysis of personality, have also been used in sociological and anthropological research within cross-cultural studies (e.g., Veutro, 2020). The use of projective techniques for the diagnosis of social relations within an organisation is a method that allows the researcher to obtain a reliable and precise image of the organisational behaviours (Pawłowska, 2006). According to Maison (1998), the projective techniques are worth using when the study participant might be afraid to express his or her true opinions and when the problems dealt with in the study might be difficult to verbalise or describe.

The number of sentences chosen for the test was limited to eight, which is consistent with the standard proposed by Maison (2010). A qualitative interpretation of the completions is only possible when the objectives of each sentence as well as their interpretation criteria are determined before the start of the research. We determined that the main objective of the test was to seize the existing differences between academics and non-academics, their different attitudes, their reciprocal perceptions, their associations connected to the social relations in the organisation and their general opinions and feelings about the workplace and the job performed. We wanted to capture the possible asymmetry in reciprocal perception and the individual attitude towards this possible asymmetry. We applied the ethical symmetry approach by being a research team consisting of academics and non-academics in

order to rule out the danger of power relations (asymmetry) constructing a single biased story about “employees who are not academics” (Christensen and Prout, 2002). The research concept, the research process, the analysis of the results and the search for the key to analyse the results were jointly discussed online (meetings, correspondence) and in live meetings. This is a model of collaborative, reflective work based on drawing on resources and experiences gained in our work as academics and non-academics.

The sentences to be completed were the following (as translated into English):

- 1 *My workplace*
- 2 *At my HEI academics are ...*
- 3 *At my HEI the administrative staff¹ are ...*
- 4 *An academic can/is allowed/is able ...*
- 5 *An administrative employee can/is allowed/is able...*
- 6 *I like my job ...*
- 7 *At work, I avoid ...*
- 8 *At work, someone could change ...*

Sentence 1 was aimed at understanding the general opinion about the workplace and the related emotions, associations or attitudes. Sentences 2 and 3 captured a general opinion about both analysed groups in order to see whether there are differences in the way these groups are treated in the organisation and by the organisation. Sentences 4 and 5 aimed to discover the opinion about the capabilities of both groups. The Polish verb *może*, translated here as “to allow” in Sentences 4 and 5, is ambiguous. It can be understood as an ability, a capability, a possibility or a right to do something. This ambiguity was chosen on purpose in order to capture the possible opinion about a lack of symmetry within the rights and capabilities of both groups. Sentences 6 and 7 were aimed at understanding the individual attitudes towards the job. Sentence 8 was formulated in order to seize the deficiencies or problems of which the tested persons might be aware.

Ethical Issues

The study was conducted with respect for the researchers’ and participants’ rights to information and privacy.² We informed the participants about the aim of the research, the purpose of processing the collected data (PDPA) and their rights; we assured them at the beginning of the survey that the collected data would be used only for academic purposes. The participation was completely voluntary, the questionnaire was anonymous (apart from the IP addresses collected by Qualtrics platform, which were deleted before the analysis). The participants had the option to refuse to participate before or during the study and the option not to answer questions they did not want to answer. Their identities were encoded for the purpose of preparing

an academic publication. Each participant was assigned a code A (academic) or N (non-academic) from 1 to 97 (A) and from 98 to 233 (N), which was used to annotate the excerpts of their statements used later in this chapter.

Sample Characteristics

At least one open-ended research question was answered by 233 out of 454 participants that started the survey. Only these 233 responses were included in the analysis.³ Within the analysed group, 42% (n = 97) of the participants identified as academics and 58% (n = 136) identified as non-academics. As for the type of HEIs, 92.3% (n = 215) of the participants work in public HEIs, whereas 7.7% (n = 18) are in non-public HEIs; 57.9% (n = 135) of the participants come from general universities, 11.6% (n = 27) from technical HEIs, 9.4% (n = 22) from economic HEIs, 6.4% (n = 15) from medical HEIs, 6% (n = 14) from vocational HEIs, while the remaining 8.6% (n = 20) are recruited from art, pedagogical, agricultural, theological, military or sport HEIs.

Genders were unevenly represented: 76% (n = 178) of persons identified as female, 21% (n = 50) of persons as male, two persons answered “other” and three persons refused to answer. This overrepresentation of people identifying as women was higher among non-academics (87.5% identified as women, 9.6% as men for N vs 60.8% of persons identified as women, 38.1% as men for A). These distributions are generally consistent with the gender proportions in the population of Polish HEIs.

When it comes to profession, 23.7% (n = 23) of participant academics are middle managers or heads (e.g., chair head, lab head, project manager, etc.), 13.4% (n = 13) are senior managers (directors, deans, provosts), 47.4% (n = 46) are members of elected boards and 59.8% (n = 58) declare to perform other organisational activities every week; 23.7% (n = 23) have no official function or organisational role. For non-academics, 46.3% (n = 63) are middle managers (e.g., section manager, division manager, etc.), 2.9% (n = 4) are senior managers (e.g., directors, chancellors, etc.), 15.4% (n = 21) are members of elected boards, 48.5% (n = 66) have no official function. In terms of mutual contact, both groups declared regular contact with each other, with over half (53.7%, n = 63) of N and almost a quarter (24.7%, n = 24) of A meeting the other group every day or almost every day, and further 29.4% (n = 40) non-academics and 26.8% (n = 26) academics declaring frequent mutual contacts. In fact, only 3.1% (n = 3) of A and 2.9% (n = 4) of N declared no or almost no contact with the other group.

Encoding

In order to enable consistent coding and thorough examination of the large quantity of data, MaxQDA software was used. Since the coding structure can already include assumptions and interpretations of the data, in order to

examine both the rational and the emotional content of the data, various coding approaches were applied, as a result of discussions at various stages of the analysis. The encodings were performed by one researcher and reviewed by the other two.

The first coding categorised data into a limited number of general codes – the positive opinions, the negative opinions and the stipulated changes. The second coding put these categories into collectively determined subcategories: the positive opinions about academics, non-academics, the workplace, the students; the negative opinions about academics, non-academics, the management, the social relations; and, finally, the postulated changes concerning the management, the people mentality and the social relations. The third coding identified the transactional inequalities (as in Berne, 1961) between academics and non-academics (Code: “*Academics can ... do more than non-academics*” vs “*non-academics can ... do more than academics*,” Sentences 4 and 5 compared). Finally, the last coding selected the segments comprising sarcasm, irony, cynicism or Aesopian language, in order to identify the language forms that could influence the positive vs negative interpretation of the answer. As a result, a final number of 154 codes was identified and applied to the 1864 answers of the 233 participants.

The first narratives emerging from the coded data describe the two main groups analysed in the study – academics and non-academics. The research questions were answered in the following manner. For Q1, we identified the subsequent narratives: academics, non-academics, what academics think of non-academics and what non-academics think of academics (Sentences 2 and 3). The first and second coding revealed also differences between groups concerning not only the reciprocal perception but also the general opinion about the workplace, the organisation and the quality of management (Sentences 1, 6 and 7). In order to answer Q2, we deconstructed the linguistic and emotional differences between the two groups. We also analysed the relationship between the answers to Sentences 4 and 5. To address Q3, we analysed the answers to Sentence 8, looking for constructive suggestions given by both groups about the changes that are expected in matters of organisation, mentality, attitudes and reciprocal relations.

Findings

Our analysis starts with the fundamental difference between academics and non-academics that we observed. When analysing Sentences 4 and 5 together (4. *An academic can ...*, 5. *An administrative employee can ...*), we noticed a strong and unfair hierarchy between the two groups coming from the asymmetry between what an academic and a non-academic *can do*. The vast majority of participants from both groups point to the fact that an academic has significantly more possibilities, rights and privileges. By far the most frequent answer to these sentences in the N group was:

An academic can ... do everything

An administrative employee can ... do nothing / not much / almost nothing.

This essential element of almost all the statements reflects a strong entanglement in the geometry of power that intensifies the inequalities of a seemingly common workplace, in which one group is allowed to participate and actively pursue virtually “anything” for the advancement of the HEI, and the other is prevented not only from participating in matters that affect its members but also from taking part in activities that go beyond the day-to-day process of administrative tasks.

Academics

Academics do not perceive themselves as a homogeneous group, and they essentially define themselves as “diverse” (At my HEI academics are ... diverse, some of them are nice, some are not, some of them are competent, some are not, A₅₉), but they are strongly aware that they are the fundamental and most important members of their HEI. They have a strongly constituted identity coming from being the core of the HEI and in a way constituting it (at my HEI academics are ... they are, because there wouldn't be an HEI without them, A₃₇).

Some of the academics notice that they are subject to good treatment. They seem to be aware that this treatment is part of a dominant hierarchical discourse of post-feudal relations resulting from their status: At my HEI academics are ... respected (A₁), ... treated way better than non-academics (A₂₆). A few of them feel the opposite way (at my HEI academics are ... farmhands and henchmen, A₃₈).

Academics appreciate the freedom coming with their job as it allows them to do what they like and when they like: “I like my job ... because I love doing research, I really like teaching and they pay me to do it” (A₅₁); “... because it gives me a lot of freedom” (A₁, A₁₉, A₃₂, A₃₆); “... for the flexible working hours” (A₃₀, A₆₆, A₆₉, A₇₅), and “...because it gives me satisfaction, contentment, and development opportunities” (A₅₇). Although academics value this element of their jobs, sometimes it comes at a price (at my HEI, academics are ... too burdened by the amount of work, A₃₁). Nonetheless, most of the participants indicate positive aspects of their academic work, associating it with freedom, satisfaction, intrinsic motivation and opportunities for self-development.

However, the survey also revealed the negative side related to working conditions and working environment. When academics express discontent, it is usually against the organisational issues that make their work difficult, wearisome, or unprofitable. Their frustration refers to those aspects of quality of life that are connected to the workplace. It is mainly directed against the bureaucracy, countless procedures and the administrative work

they have to do: “At work I avoid ... organising useless meetings, any excessive formalisation and generating artificial problems” (A₂₈); “At work, someone could change ... the high level of bureaucracy (e.g., reduce the number of formalities that must be completed in order to use funds obtained from grants)” (A₂₂); “... the formalities, applications and reports writing. Of course, to no avail – the amount of paperwork is overwhelming and constantly growing” (A₉₃); and “... let academics do the science, and the administrative staff do the administrative work” (A₆₆).

The participants (from the perspective of their position and academic degree) clearly point to the highly bureaucratic and dehumanising context of accomplishing their work within the walls of academia. Moreover, academics also negatively comment on the HEI authorities and their management style, and the remuneration they receive: “At work, someone could change ... the attitude of the supervisors towards the lower-level employees, e.g., the faculty authorities towards the rest of the faculty. A dean is not forever” (A₆₅); “... the widespread mobbing” (A₁₈); and “... the salaries” (A₁ and over 20 others).

Academics are therefore quite satisfied with their work and the development opportunities it gives. They notice some drawbacks (especially the bureaucracy and the general flaws of the management), but they appreciate the freedom and other positive aspects of their workplace.

Non-Academics

Like academics, non-academics perceive themselves as a heterogeneous group, especially when it comes to their competences and attitude to work in HE (at my HEI the administrative staff are ... diverse, a lot of incompetent persons, but also a lot of ambitious people, eager to learn, N₁₅₅). Interestingly, they quite often accentuate the fact that these diverse attitudes make the relations with academics more difficult:

At my HEI the administrative staff are ... diverse, like everywhere. The majority is great at being assertive, they don't do more than they have to, and they don't like learning new things – and that's where the unflattering opinions of academics about the administrative staff come from. That's why the limited group of ambitious persons, ready to work and introduce changes is exhausted, frustrated and feels underappreciated, because at the end – we are all lumped together. (N₂₀₃)

Another important point that emerges from the research is that non-academics rarely feel acknowledged for their work (at my HEI, the administrative staff are ... starting to be noticed and treated better, like a new approach of the authorities, N₁₆₄). What is more, non-academics usually stress that their work is underappreciated, their competences and efforts are unnoticed, their role is subservient and their needs are ignored and abused,

even if their work is essential, crucial to the functioning of the university and for the academics, as indicated in the following statements:

At my HEI the administrative staff are ... underestimated and “invisible,” even though a huge amount of work is their responsibility and it is thanks to their work that most tasks are carried out. (N₂₂₆)

... a subservient group of workers, from whom they demand a lot, but who have a very limited career development path and available rewards. (N₁₇₂)

... treated as a lower-class employee. During the pandemics this division has become apparent (e.g., the order to return to the offices, that was addressed to the administrative staff, not academics). (N₁₅₂)

An administrative employee can ...

... not much. Usually, he can't even react when somebody treats him in a rude way. (N₁₀₈)

... get tired by their subservient role and lack of appreciation. (N₂₀₀)

The participants draw attention to “being invisible,” despite the importance of their efforts for making the university work.

Nonetheless, some of them like their work (*I like my job ... I like it. Despite everything, I like it*, N₁₅₂). They point out that personal development is possible and that the job itself is never boring. The workplace means a lot to them. Unlike academics, non-academics accentuate the importance of the contact with other people: for them, it is a significant positive aspect of working at the HEI.

I like my job ... because of the people and the work atmosphere, for the development possibilities and that we can benefit from additional bonuses (e.g., Erasmus trips). (N₁₇₀)

... because it is diversified and I often have a sense of mission. (N₁₅₅)

... for the contact with other people/because I like working with people. (N₁₀₀, and over 20 others)

My workplace ... is my second home. (N₁₁₀, and 4 others)

In addition to that, non-academics acknowledge the benefits of a steady and secure job with fixed working hours.

An administrative employee can ... have a more balanced or fixed life, because he or she can work 9 to 5. (N₁₂₉)

I like my job ... because it is stable, the labour code is respected and we have various benefits. (N₁₅₁)

Stability and constancy as well as predictability in terms of time and space create a comfortable situation that allows one to leave the workplace at a fixed hour and take care of one's private life. However, such work is not

without its drawbacks either. Non-academics have a lot of negative opinions about the relations at work. Unlike academics who primarily notice the bad management, non-academics accentuate the problems of attitude towards their professional group. They would welcome a change of approach of the authorities and academics as well. Non-academics ask for respect, for being noticed and trusted, and they would like to see more partner relations and better cooperation. They notice the overwhelming bureaucracy, but see its necessity and would rather change the procedures, in order to make them more effective.

At work, someone could change ... the relationships between academics and administrative staff. Recognize that both groups have competencies, not just one of them. And trust each other that together we can contribute to science. (N₁₀₈)

... one could try to manage people not by fuelling conflict but by bringing people together as a team you can really trust. (N₁₇₆)

... taking into account the opinion of administrative staff, listening to their opinion, because a significant part of the procedures is unrealistic, not vital and hinders the work. (N₁₉₆)

In this regard, non-academics pay particular attention to the importance of trust, respect and non-differentiation which can lead to marginalisation. They also point out the need to take into account the voices of all and not only of selected groups of workers. Like their academic colleagues, they notice the low salaries, and they put it in a wider organisational context.

At work, someone could change ... rules for career advancement, evaluation of administrative employees, improve communication channels, simplify procedures, organise more team-building events, unify salary rules for administrative employees without dividing it by unit, and improve working conditions. (N₁₅₈)

Non-academics are emotionally engaged with their workplace; they appreciate its stability and the opportunities coming directly from the organisation, especially the possibility to meet a lot of interesting people, but at the same time they pay a lot of attention to the attitudes expressed towards them, especially the negative ones, and they often feel underappreciated and unnoticed by the authorities, as well as the academic colleagues.

What Academics Think of Non-Academics

The opinions of the participants about their colleagues from the other group seem crucial to understanding their relationships. Academics have a lot of positive opinions about non-academics. Above all, they notice that non-academics are helpful and play an important supportive role. Their

commitment to the institution is usually acknowledged, as well as – sometimes – their competences and sense of responsibility. Non-academics are often perceived as nice, kind and/or considerate: “At my HEI, the administrative staff are ... incredibly engaged, effective and friendly” (A₂₂); “... overworked, helpful, competent” (A₅₂).

As for the negative opinions, three types of non-academics can be described. The first one is unprofessional, incompetent and lazy. Non-academics of this type avoid taking any responsibility or new tasks and cannot do much by themselves, so they are seen through a prism of their resistance strategy (avoidance). Their work is usually ineffective. They cannot be counted on and do not provide any real help.

An administrative employee can ... not do much. Either they work within a rigid framework, or (...) they don't have a lot to do (especially now). So they don't do much. They drink coffee, they watch YouTube. Isn't it worth it to prove themselves? To do something more than scheduled? (A₇₆)

At work I avoid ... getting involved in activities that would be something new for the administrative staff, because a lot of administrative burden would fall on me. (A₃₃)

The second type of non-academics was identified as having a bad attitude. Not only were they noted as rude or unkind but also that they prove the lack of competence of their fellow academics and exercise their administrative power in the wrong way. Non-academics were perceived as unfriendly:

At my HEI, the administrative staff are ... a separate group that treats academics and the students as “bothering and demanding.” (A₈₃)

... diverse. At the rector's office they are professional, at my faculty they are unkind and unhelpful. They constantly try to prove that academics lack knowledge about anything. (A₈₂)

The third type of non-academics carries all the characteristics of a typical clerkship. They may harm academics on purpose, deliberately delay their work or slow down any process. This type is described as “Mrs. Halinka,” a Polish symbol of the worst clerical behaviours and the dangerous personification of bureaucracy. These are behaviours and practices through which non-academics want or try to change their position in existing power relationships:

At my HEI, the administrative staff are ... squeezed into the system. (...) The financial and administrative services are robotic representatives of the system. The bureaucracy is doing just fine and they are its gatekeepers. (A₇₆)

An administrative employee can ... behave like a stereotypical Mrs. Halinka from the post office, if she is here because of nepotism, which is not rare at all. (A₈₅)

... slow down any process, making our work completely obsolete. (A₈₀)

Interestingly none of the academics' statements indicate that they perceive or interpret these behaviours as practices of resistance or coping strategies. Academics seem to be unaware of non-academics' intentions and feelings. Altogether, academics perceive non-academics as being usually helpful and professional; however, they also consider some of the non-academics as incompetent, ineffective, reluctant and intentionally bureaucratic.

What Non-Academics Think of Academics

Non-academics notice, above all, the professionalism and the expertise of the academics. The academics' position in the hierarchy also influences the positive opinions about them held by non-academics. Academics are seen as ambitious, engaged and sometimes cooperative. They are described as nice and kind: “At my HEI, academics are ... mostly kind and cooperative with the administrative staff” (A₁₁₆); “... mostly nice and professional” (A₉₉).

However, the negative opinions about academics are strong and specific. Academics can be categorised into several types. Those in the first one are vulnerable, somehow clueless, overwhelmed by the procedures and unorganised: “At my HEI, academics are... strange, heavily vulnerable” (N₁₄₂); “... lost in procedures” (N₁₉₀); “... detached from reality” (N₁₃₆).

These statements indicate a group that, for various reasons, does not fit the image of resourceful, procedure-aware academics and thus escapes the customer-oriented bureaucracy known to non-academics.

The second type seems to be more burdensome (in terms of accessibility, relationships and expectations) in the opinion of non-academics. Difficult to be effectively contacted; he or she might be often unreachable and absent (especially during the pandemic). His or her attitude is characterised by lack of responsibility, some unreliability and a lot of untimeliness. Such an academic usually ignores the e-mails and needs a lot of attention:

At my HEI, academics are ... hard to contact and unreliable. (N₁₁₂)
... terrified of the pandemics. (N₁₉₂)

An academic can ... show up at work unprepared or not appear at all. He or she may not reply to e-mails from students or administrative staff. (N₂₂₆)

The third type is accustomed to full and constant support from the administrative staff and convinced that academics should be allowed to do anything they want, with no negative consequences. In the opinion of

participants, this type is usually demanding and disregards all the rules. He or she is perceived as the proverbial “sacred cow”:

An academic can ... get a prize for any slightest activity not related to teaching and research. He or she is allowed to leave the e-mails unanswered, to be in a bad mood or to ignore deadlines. (N₂₀₃)

At my HEI, academics are ... unkind. They don't read the rules of the library and when they hear that they can't get something, they get angry at us. (N₁₅₁)

The last type described represents a mean and rude person, proud, self-centred and pretentious. Convinced about their superiority, demanding and arrogant, very difficult to be helped or handled. This type of academics is easily upset:

At my HEI, academics are ... mostly professional and respectful of others, but some have a sense of superiority, which they manifest in their interactions with others (“please don't talk to me like that, do you know that I have a PhD?!”). (N₁₆₂)

An academic can ... make a scene. (N₁₅₁)

... take it out on an administrative employee. With no reason. (N₁₀₈)

These statements point to the relational and hierarchical abyss into which the participants, as parts of two different but interconnected worlds of one academy, are forced without preparation.

Summing up, non-academics usually notice the uniqueness of certain academics and their expertise, but also express strong negative opinions about the others – underlining how academics happen to be demanding, unreliable, unreachable, easily upset and mostly self-centred.

Language and Emotions

When analysing the negative and positive emotions contained in the answers, we also observed differences between the two groups. Academics have an emotional approach mainly towards their workplace (negative and positive), the management style (mostly negative) and the bureaucracy (strongly negative). Non-academics put a lot of emotions into the interpersonal issues – negative when identifying the asymmetrical relations with academics and positive when describing the satisfying aspects of their work:

I like my job ... the institution is a nightmare. (A₁₈)

My workplace ... is a reason to be proud, a kind of prestige. (A₇₆)

At work, someone could change ... o my gosh, where to start ... the authorities, the atmosphere of violence, the obsession about the evaluation points, the general mobbing, and that's only the beginning. (A₁₈)

... less paperwork and pointless meetings. (A₅₆)

At my HEI, academics are ... a diversified group, respectful and disrespectful, sometimes they exalt themselves and treat administrative staff as subhuman. (N₁₈₅)

My workplace ... It's the students' service office, the “heart of the university,” a place that I treasure. Every day I go to work with pleasure. The good atmosphere comes from the people here, it's undeniable. (N₂₂₆)

In matters of frequency, analysis of emotions contained in the A and N answers, academics are frequently positive about non-academics, far more frequently than non-academics are about themselves. They also have far fewer negative comments about non-academics than non-academics about themselves. On the other hand, non-academics are far more negative about academics than the latter are about themselves, but they have fewer negative comments on the workplace than academics do.

The language of expression in the open-ended questions turned out to be a great source of knowledge about relationships and mutual perceptions. When analysing the language of the answers, we observed numerous cases of sarcastic, ironic or cynical linguistic figures as well as Aesopian language, that is, the metaphorical language used to conceal a hidden or encrypted message which we interpreted as coping and avoiding mechanisms. It is worth to notice that these figures were used exclusively by non-academics and a few academics having a PhD position, especially within the answer to Sentences 4 and 5 (“An academics can ...”; “An administrative employee can ...”), most probably due to the previously explained ambiguity of the Polish word “może” (can, is allowed to, is able to, is capable to). The following quotes illustrate this type of language: “An administrative employee can ... politely listen to objections” (N₁₁₅); “... quit if he is not satisfied” (N₁₄₅); “At my HEI, the administrative staff are ... pandemic-proof” (N₂₂₆). We also noticed a number of strong idiomatic, metaphorical and emotional phrases among the answers of non-academics, especially when describing academics or themselves:

At my HEI, academics are ... like “sacred cows”; pointing out even the slightest issue is treated as an insult. (N₂₂₆)

... mostly snobs. (N₂₀₂)

... a pain in the ass. (N₁₄₃)

At my HEI, the administrative staff are ... treated as peasants on a farm. (N₁₅₃)

My workplace ... a kolkhoz. (N₂₀₇)

This metaphorical nature of the language, comprising numerous phrases from the so-called common language, may indicate the awareness of the existence of dependencies and interdependencies in the relationship, which can be seen as hallmarks of academic feudalism. In this type of relationship,

there is no room for academics and non-academics to get to know each other and understand the value of diversity.

The Necessary Changes

When asked for the necessary changes to be introduced (*8. At work, someone could change ...*), academics focus on the structural and institutional changes related to a more effective and less bureaucratic work. They would like to have less administrative burdens, better salaries and constructive relations within the academy. Academics hardly ever notice the unequal positions of both groups. Non-academics underline the need for a new mentality and attitude coming from academics, especially in matters of respect, trust and cooperation. This group would welcome a streamlining of procedures and communication rules, as well as better working conditions, including an introduction of motivational tools. Both groups strongly accentuate their need to avoid toxic persons within academia, conflicts and confrontation at work:

At work, someone could change ... the financial conditions, the hierarchical arrangement of social relations and the internal disciplinary and punitive regulations, which are aimed at “catching someone” instead of creating possibilities for development. (A₈₁)

... a lot. The authorities should respect the employees of the academy. All of them. With no exceptions. (N₁₁₉)

... the general approach concerning the contacts between both groups of employees – those who are academics and those who are not. (N₂₂₁)

... a lot of things, e.g., introduce clear and transparent procedures. Stop the “let George do it” attitude. One could also increase the salaries. (N₁₇₃)

At work, I avoid ... conflicts. (A₆, N₁₀₀, and over 50 others)

Academics focus on the organisational matters and underline the need to lighten the burden coming from the bureaucracy, while non-academics are almost exclusively focused on the necessary improvement of interpersonal relationships between both groups and the lower hierarchical position of their own group which is perceived as unfair.

Discussion

The use of unfinished sentences allowed us to capture problems and dilemmas that were not obvious or visible (due to different status, different roles, different access to the university, different social perceptions and different perspectives) for Polish HEIs employees. Through this technique, we were able to grasp the context, some sarcasm and emotions that could not have been expressed on a 1–5 scale of a quantitative research. Out of

all possible differences, it seems that the one dividing the participants into academics and non-academics is the strongest, which relates to completely different organisational goals, but also a different mode of work, different visibility of work and its outcomes. Interestingly, non-academics are not so much the shrinking violets of this world, but rather their “crouching tigers and hidden dragons” – excellent observers remaining in the background, either because they do not want to stand out (resistance strategies), or because they cannot do it, as they are stuck in the hierarchical web of university dependencies.

In the study we conducted, the differences between academics and non-academics show that academics usually lead a “normal” working life. They like some things more and others less, but in general academics can do what they like. Sometimes they are frustrated with some shortcomings of their institution or its part (department, institute, chair), but it is not an essential problem for them. Non-academics, on the other hand, fight every day to be respected, appreciated and preserve human dignity hidden under the mask of an employee sitting behind a desk. Academics are thus concerned about details that could improve their workplace, whereas non-academics have no space to worry about the organisational issues, because on a day-to-day basis they feel treated as objects, sometimes even as “subhumans.”

An important theme in the study is mutual perception. Academics and non-academics see each other through completely different lenses. Academics see non-academics as a service group, as helpers, sometimes better, sometimes worse, who serve them to achieve their research and teaching goals. Importantly, academics do not see this asymmetry as unfair. They are pressed into a role and reproduce the feudal pattern of dependency, hierarchy and oppression. Non-academics see academics primarily as oppressors and those who unreflectively confirm the existing post-feudal system. Non-academics express negative emotions literally and harshly or through a veiled Aesopian language. Academics’ statements are less emotionally charged because the coloniser does not emotionally identify with the colonised. He recognises the colonising relationship as a fact and yet requires the colonised to be diligent and remain in their roles.

Conclusions, Recommendations and Implications for Higher Education and Other Contexts

Decolonisation requires a deliberate effort of all parties engaged in the process of building HEIs. The relationships to which we pay attention reflect the soft power of the dominant group of academics and the geometry of this power (Massey, 2005). Academics are burdened with the hegemonic view of academics, in which the “others” exist only on the margins. In our study, we superimposed colonial (or feudal, in the case of Poland) relations on the hierarchical and ossified culture of the university, where academics are on top and non-academics play subservient roles.

Decolonisation is therefore about noticing and appreciating the world of both groups by ensuring that the views and voices (Spivak, 1988) of a marginalised group of non-academics are heard and recognised. A shared academic workspace can benefit all groups as long as it does not create an inferiority complex or reinforce barriers between its different users. But the empowerment of non-academics seems to be a challenge for two reasons. Firstly, non-academics seem to hardly belong to the academic community which consists essentially of students and academics. Academics are to perform the core mission of the university, while non-academics are to support them. Only seldom are non-academics provided with a setting where they can work together without a clear hierarchy. Secondly, non-academics are not in charge of the bureaucracy that they are imposing on academics and that affects themselves. They are solely the messengers of bureaucracy. Paperwork and unrealistic bureaucratic burden are one of the biggest miseries identified by academics, and the blame is usually placed on the non-academics. Non-academics are, though, in the same position, while not consulted about the planned changes; they are obliged to follow any new regulations imposed on them and consequently impose them on academics. It seems that both groups have a common goal – to limit the bureaucratic burden – but due to the structural conflict, both groups seem to be unable to notice it. However, it is in the capacity of academics, as the group at the top of the hierarchy, to initiate change. Non-academics, who usually identify their position as weaker, have no courage, hope or possibility to make a difference.

Recommendations

- 1 **Trust and mutual respect** – the first goal is to find methods directly aimed at the development of trust and mutual respect among and between two of the main groups of the academic community – the faculty members and the administrative staff. If HEIs' organisational culture was based on trust, academics would not suspect non-academics of deliberately imposing a bureaucratic regime onto them, while non-academics would not feel the urge to control the workflow so much. Mielczarek-Taica (2022) indicates that the HEIs' culture in Poland is based on control rather than trust. One can argue that the structural context only strengthens the feelings of alienation, striving for control and misunderstanding between academics and non-academics. Therefore, there is an increasing need for closer and more frequent contact between both groups, built on partnership rather than hierarchy – joint trainings, common onboarding sessions, integration meetings and team working instead of day-to-day contact based on rules, procedures and formal communication.
- 2 **Bureaucratic burden** – the second important goal to be acknowledged and achieved is the alleviation of the bureaucratic burden, which is

a real challenge for both the academics and the non-academics. For instance, Matukin-Szumlińska (2022) identified 12 Polish laws and 72 ordinances issued in the period of 18 months (2020–2021) to regulate HE during the pandemics; in other words, on average there had been more than one new regulation per week. Non-academics had to implement and enforce these new regulations, while academics, quite reasonably opposing the bureaucracy, considered the rules as imposed by non-academics rather than by external authorities. It seems necessary to resolve such structural conflicts by a substantial increase of transparency between both groups – there is a need for mutual knowledge about the real meaning of their respective work, about their main priorities and goals. This dialogue could lead to a better understanding of the interconnected nature of their jobs.

These practical implications can be applied in a wider context, especially within organisations enduring a strong hierarchical division between two groups of employees – e.g., doctors and nurses in the health sector of some countries. The recommendations may also prove to be useful in understanding how workers from Central and Eastern European countries function in countries with no serfdom history. A post-serfdom organisational culture might require some additional attention dedicated to the interpersonal and intergroup relationships, in order to deconstruct the existing hierarchical relations and empower those who are vulnerable. One could argue that a strong hierarchy makes the post-colonial relationship questionable, since it could be some external circumstances, not the academics, that have set the code of conduct in force. We believe that this is not the case. As a consequence of the difference in status (in the past and today), academics can exert real and symbolic power over the non-academics. They have most of the privileges and the right to complain about anything, whereas non-academics can at most complain about academics, but preferably in silence and while remaining invisible. Decolonising university relations could benefit both groups. However, it is academics who need to notice this opportunity. The crouching tigers and hidden dragons of academia – the administrative staff – will remain in shadow and perform the role of sarcastic, frustrated and mostly silent observers. In the Polish context, it seems that the only possible empowerment is top-down.

Notes

- 1 We used the term “Administrative staff” or “Administrative employee” because the term “employee who is not an academic” is derogatory (even if it is the formal term according to the Polish law) and no non-academic would ever use it to describe him/herself.
- 2 In Poland, there is currently no formal obligation to submit every research or research proposal involving human participants to an ethics committee. At the

time of our research, there was no such ethics committee at SGH Warsaw School of Economics. As the participation was anonymous and the study involved adults only, we did not seek to submit our research proposal to another research ethics committee.

- 3 We did not analyse the answers of 220 participants who only filled in the background data and did quit the survey having not answered any of the open questions.

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In-Dialogue Editorial for Chapters 7–10

Responding to Invisibility in Higher Education Institutions with Purposeful Collaboration, Cooperation and Collegiality to Improve Equity, Inclusion and Access

Anna CohenMiller

Invisibility. This one term provides a key insight into the chapters that follow, chapters that unpack what it means to be unseen, unheard and unvoiced in higher education institutions (HEIs) for faculty, staff and students. Such evidence comes globally from the US, Western and Central Europe, and Asia. In this editorial, I provide an overview of each of the chapters' innovative research methods and important findings, then move into highlighting recommendations for higher education leaders to make HEIs more equitable, inclusive and accessible. These ideas for solutions emerged from a focus group discussion convened to bring together the authors across chapters to share the context of their study, their findings and key recommendations.

Starting with Chapter 7, Nettie Boivin, Judit Háhn and Shomaila Sadaf discuss the experiences and feelings of being outsiders looking in on institutional gender norms focusing on Finland. Through a collective narrative method, they point to the invisible structures perpetuating and reproducing inequitable HEI systems. The researchers show how foreigners, especially those who are women and also mothers, face institutionalized ways of being that exclude and disregard their roles.

In Chapter 8, Nupur Samuel and Umasankar Patra demonstrate how precarity in faculty positions – contractual labour (e.g., adjunct) – intersects with gender and marginality in higher education in India. Through interviews with instructors in various places throughout the country, the researchers illustrate how coloniality of power continues to affect the ways faculty are treated based on social class, caste, ethnicity, age and sexual identity.

In Chapter 9, Jessica Leveto and I offer a novel approach to combine two studies about the experiences of mothers in academia (“motherscholars”) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Across the two studies, our findings identify common experiences and recommendations. In the first section discussing the study (see CohenMiller & Izenkova, 2022), I demonstrate how innovating

photovoice for asynchronous online use can offer an important way to hear the voices of mothers quarantined at home with young children learning online (CohenMiller, 2022). In the second section, Leveto offers important insights into both experiences at the start of the pandemic and also after two years for motherscholars in the US.

Lastly, in Chapter 10, Maria Cywińska, Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska and Urszula Markowska-Manista examine the beliefs and relationships between Polish academics (faculty members) and administrative staff, employees who are “defined by [Polish] law as ‘those who are not academics.’” The researchers, through semi-structured projective technique within a survey based on a sentence completion test, uncover asymmetrical relationships highlighting systems of power and ways to dismantle and decolonize hierarchical feudal systems.

In bringing together the researchers from across these four chapters, we collectively identified a need for a humanizing methodology and an egalitarian approach. There is an overarching need to humanize HEIs that would shift from the commodification of knowledge and power hierarchies to viewing all stakeholders as equal creators in thought leadership and knowledge creation. In this way, HEI leadership can move towards centring non-dominant communities (see Reyes et al., 2021). To humanize, everyone needs to be seen, the invisible needs to be made visible and represented. This is why we have chosen to include a screenshot of part of our focus group discussion to show our presence not as labels but as people (see Figure 10.1 for a screenshot from our discussion).

As suggested by Boivin in our follow-up email discussion, “By maintaining the present one size fits all system of evaluation (human, research societal output) we are inadvertently losing humanity’s most valuable asset, our creative voice” (email conversation). Likewise, Cywińska extended, The archetypical “white male professor” cannot be the benchmark anymore for our organizations to improve. As we discussed for the in-dialogue editorial for this collection, CohenMiller notes, “To that end, to achieve more equitable, inclusive and accessible spaces in HEIs, it is essential to emphasize collaboration, cooperation and collegiality.” The following offers a snapshot for HEI leaders who are committed to developing and recreating HEIs for creating more equitable, inclusive and accessible spaces:

- 1 Recognize that the current HEI system is not currently equitable and thus examine ways to increase institutional support, in particular for those historically left out;
- 2 Create a culture of care (Isgro & Casteñeda, 2015; CohenMiller & Leveto, in this collection) that reconsiders what counts as the “academic community,” reconceptualizing all stakeholders being included and “seen” (CohenMiller et al., 2022);
- 3 See how being left out can have a deeper impact on certain stakeholders (Boivin et al., in this collection) and thus recognize strain (e.g.,

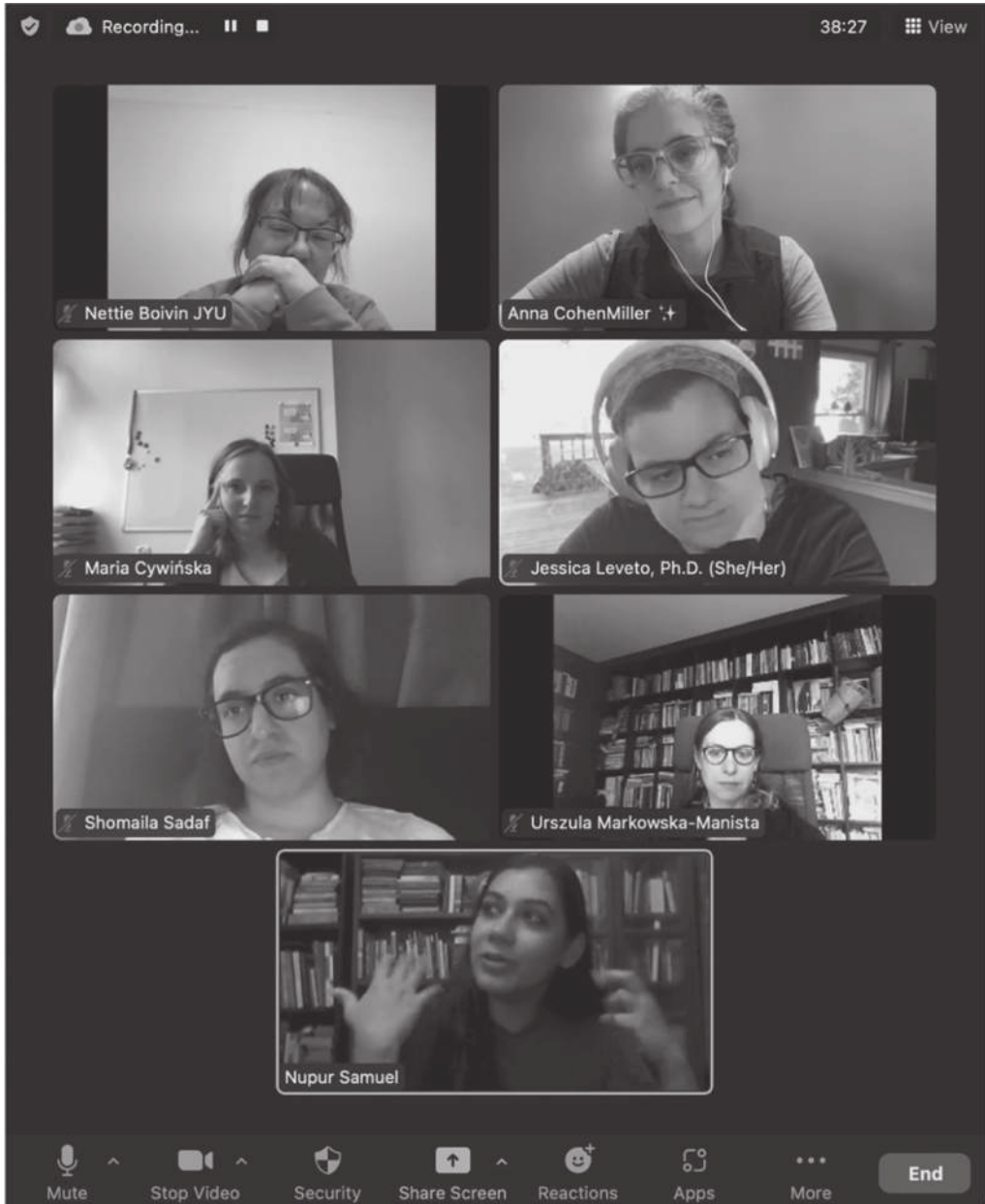


Figure 10.1 A conversation across countries – India, Kazakhstan, Poland, Finland, US.

- caretaking, COVID-19) and readjust expectations based upon differential needs (CohenMiller & Leveto, in this collection);
- 4 Reconsider “publish or perish” to move to more transparency with equitable outcomes;
 - 5 Find common ways to purposefully unite people across classifications/ roles in non-hierarchical ways and in shared spaces (e.g., onboarding, break rooms, projects). Such spaces offer level playing fields between

people (Augé, 2009), a “third space” (Bhabha, 2004). Incentivizing bringing people together would further provide an essential foundation for a more equitable and inclusive higher education organization (CohenMiller & Leveto, in this collection);

- 6 Seek creative solutions to address bureaucratic systems which stymie administrative, faculty and graduate students’ goals.

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Part 4

Higher Education Cultures of Teaching and Research



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11 Making Higher Education Institutions Gender-Sensitive

Visions and Voices from the Indian Education System

Debdatta Chowdhury

Setting the Context: Higher Education and the Gender Question

Higher or tertiary education is one of the most important levels of education which see through a person's transition from school to higher levels of specialization and further on to the person's becoming a responsible, empathetic citizen. It is at the higher education level that the fundamental objective of education of ensuring liberty, dignity and livelihood for a person reaches its eventuality. The impact that higher education (henceforth HE) has on a person's learning outcome goes a long way in shaping not just their capacity to earn a livelihood but, more importantly, a person's outlook and personality. As a provision in almost all Constitutions across nations, and as part of international and regional legal instruments, conventions, charters, laws, declarations and frameworks¹—education, including HE—have come to be the site on which much of global politics, economy and culture come together. It is also the site where other, comparatively less visible, intersectional concerns of gender, class and religion come together, in not so positive ways.

The Global Context

Gender concerns in education have been foregrounded as one of the primary areas of deliberation in the legal instruments and documents and include questions of equality, diversity, parity and inclusiveness (A Question of Gender-Sensitive Pedagogy, 2011). Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979 in Right to Education, p. 5) and UNESCO's Convention Against Discrimination in Education (CADE, 1960 in Right to Education, pp. 10–12) are the two foremost documents which focus on gender issues in education, including women's right to education, career and vocational guidance without being subject to discrimination. These documents, specifically, emphasize the elimination of gender stereotypes at all levels and forms of education, as well as the need to put into effect monitoring and complaint mechanism in

education institutions for reporting discrimination, if any. What all these gender concerns add up to is what we understand as gender sensitivity in education. Gender sensitivity is “a way to reduce barriers to personal and economic development created by sexism” (Gender Sensitivity, 2004, p. vii). It is the milieu that enables gender equality and inclusiveness to flourish by helping one to “determine which assumptions in matters of gender are valid and which are stereotyped generalizations” (Gender Sensitivity, 2004, p. vii). Gender inclusivity can work in education systems only when stakeholders, including teachers, students, office personnel, families and communities, are sensitized into acknowledging the gaps in the system, accept gender stereotypes as being built into the system and sincerely feel the need to address the same (Gender Responsive, n.d. p. 6).

Despite the world community coming together to affirm their commitment to address education rights for all, across class, caste, gender, religion, geographical location, ensuring access to education and creating an enabling environment for the same did not reach its desired goal.² Marginalized genders, including women, non-gender binary persons and persons with disabilities are yet to be part of the vision of inclusivity that the various legal instruments and covenants so grandly project. Gender stereotypes, along with a diverse range of discriminatory practices are the main obstacles to ensuring access to education for all marginalized groups, including women and girls (Guidance for Developing Gender-Responsive, 2017, p. 26). Gender parity (balance between enrolments of all gender categories) is commonly understood to be the sole index that countries, increasingly, project and refer to which overshadow the equally, if not more important question of gender sensitivity. Hence, ensuring an enabling environment in educational institutions and society at large—one of the primary provisions in all the international instruments—is compromised while statistical data on the increasing number of women in HE is projected by countries as an indication to their realization of the right to education. It is important to understand that gender parity is only the first step to gender sensitivity, and not to be confused with gender equality. “Gender parity is no indication for classroom experience, participation, achievement, capacity development, but only gives an incomplete information needed to develop, support, sustain gender responsiveness in education” (Guidance for Developing, n.d. p. 33).

Discrepancy in choice and offer of subjects to boys and girls, low enrolment of girls in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) subjects (Women and Gender Equality in Higher Education, 2015, pp. 18–21; To Choose Or Not To Choose Science, 2019), low presence of women in senior and managerial/administrative positions in HE sector (Status of Indian Women in Higher Education, 2016; Women and Gender Equality, 2015), gender differences in career and job preferences have been identified, globally, as areas which indicate gender gaps and violations and are, yet, neglected by most education frameworks around the world. This calls for the immediate need to address the question of a gender-sensitive curriculum (that

does not reinforce gender differences and stereotypes) and everyday school practices (gender stereotyping, use of gendered vocabulary, homophobic attitude, disability-insensitive infrastructure and corporal punishments) in order to create enabling environment in education institutions (Guidance for Developing, n.d., pp. 26–28).

The Regional Context: India

Identifying causal links between global forces of political economy and local/regional education policies helps us in putting our national education agendas and frameworks in perspective. Empirical studies of local educational phenomena add to this perspective—giving us a larger spectrum of global visions and local ground-level realities. It indicates how nation-states and their education policies are placed precariously at the crossroad of inequalities of global capitalist forces and the demands of democratic ideals on which nation-states are founded, taking into account diverse socio-cultural groups (The Three Stages of Critical Policy Methodology, 2014).

This paper argues that despite a strong foundation of the Right to Education Act (2009) in the Indian Constitution,³ and sound suggestion from experts in the field of education, Indian education framework leans on a flawed vision of education as primarily being a marketable commodity aimed at creating human resources (National Education Policy 2020, henceforth NEP) rather than sensitive empathetic citizens. And in the light of such a vision, gender sensitivity in higher education is compromised—both as a process and as an outcome. This chapter uses empirical studies in the form of data collected from stakeholders like teachers, academicians associated with syllabus-making processes in HE institutions, faculty associated with Internal Complaints Committee in HE institutions and research students, to support this argument and to establish that in the absence of a blueprint for implementation of the visions and monitoring mechanisms of NEP 2020 to evaluate outcome, neither the visions of gender sensitivity in policies nor the laws to address it will be effective.

The Vision

A critical engagement with education policies and practices helps us situate curriculum in the national political and economic agenda, as well as provides an idea as to if and how curriculum, and education policies at large, need to be altered. In the case of India, as might be the case for a number of industrializing nations, its national economic agenda and, consequently, its education agenda are directly affected by the current neo-liberal and neo-conservative politics that shapes much of contemporary global capitalism (The Three Stages of Critical Policy Methodology, 2014, p. 348). The NEP 2020 of India is a clear manifestation of India's economic agenda—considering education institutions as manufacturers of 'human resource' in

terms of labour, who will eventually participate in the national and global economy and a complete absence (or tokenistic presence) of a vision for gender sensitization. Here, I wish to draw attention to the fact that the Education Ministry in India is one of the verticals of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) (Niti Ayog, Govt. of India, 2015), which calls for a critical evaluation of the larger objective of education agenda—driven by the aim of creating formal and semi-formal economic subjects rather than sensitive citizens.

The whole range of education systems, including primary, secondary, higher education, adult literacy, sports, youth affairs, education for girls and Scheduled Castes and Tribes, are under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and, hence, MHRD. The Ministry partners with organizations like the World Bank, Piramal Foundation and Boston Consulting Group for consultation, financial and infrastructural support. This, I argue, has direct and indirect impact on the way education is envisioned, designed and implemented in institutional settings in India—as a way to “reduce the gap between Industry and Education” (Emerging Trends of Privatization of Education in India, 2016, p. 2). It, no doubt, affects curriculum designs, subject choices and preferences, and access to education for socio-economically marginalized students in certain levels and areas of education. The Government of India’s education vision insists on the need for privatization of HEIs to provide quality education, while also ensuring equal access to socio-economically diverse groups of students (MHRD, 2019, p. 206). To call private HEIs “public-spirited philanthropic HEIS” (MHRD, 2019, p. 206) “seems ironic in an age when education has been commoditized, and is part of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)” (How Does the NEP Accelerate the Privatization of Higher Education, 2020).

Interest-driven political intervention in the education sector, including HE in India, is borne by the creation of Rashtriya Shiksha Ayog (National Education Committee), an apex body to oversee education in India, with the Prime Minister at its head and the establishment of the National Research Foundation to act as a “liaison among researchers, ministries of the government, and industry” (MHRD 2019, p. 209) (Priya, 2020). Instead of an emphasis on the “creation of social knowledge and historical awareness about formations of power, culture, and knowledge”, the policy mandates the creation of “beneficial linkages among government, industry, and researchers” (MHRD, 2019, p. 279)—a clear “attempt to quantify research for its commoditized capital use-value” (Priya, 2020).

Outcome-based curricula being at the core of the Indian curriculum vision means that ‘experience-based’ curricula (that have students’ and teachers’ daily experiences at its core) or what we know in education as ‘voice discourses’ (Rata, 2014, p. 349) finds no place in the curriculum frameworks. The importance of epistemic knowledge about disciplines (reconceptualized as subjects to be taught in education institutions) in making a human being capable of a livelihood and of contributing to the

national economy is undeniable. But social knowledge (everyday experience, common sense, popular/cultural/gender socialization) makes an individual capable of empathy and impartiality (Rata, 2014, p. 349). There is no denying the fact that knowledge is produced in the socio-cultural context. The primary concern of schooling is to take both into account such as socialization that the students bring with them and sensitize them into a balanced outlook not marred by socio-cultural stereotyping or hierarchy. To that end, education institutions should act as a leveller that can work across socio-cultural and economic backgrounds in shaping sensitized human beings, irrespective of external influences of socio-cultural prejudice (National Education Commission, 1964)—a vision that is being hijacked by realities of competitive market-oriented nation-making projects (Bhosale and Agte, 2021).

Policies and Reports

This section looks at how the vision and mission laid out in India's education policy is reflected in, or overrides, the NEP as well as other relevant reports prepared by government and/or non-governmental agencies, in the context of addressing questions of gender sensitivity in the HE sector.

National Education Policy (NEP), 2020

India's NEP 2020 provides an apt study in this act of balancing the global and local education framework, though the inclination is increasingly towards global capitalist demands. As L. Priya observes, "It does not factor in the realities of our society that include providing basic education to every section of the population" (Priya 2020). While, it attempts to incorporate, at least in theory, both constructivist (informed by social construction) and instrumentalized approaches to curriculum, the constructivist approach is primarily in the form of formal representation (and reservation) of socio-cultural diversity rather than ensuring sensitivity in everyday pedagogical practices in classrooms and campuses, or in ensuring a change in attitudes of various stakeholders in education. According to the Jawaharlal Nehru University Teachers Association, despite the vague mention of 'high-quality education' and use of 'language of equality' (A Critical Assessment of the Draft National Education Policy, 2019, p. 29), the NEP does not venture into providing a blueprint as to the methodology of deploying the same—hinting that the vision is merely inserted into the education policy as a set formula under the global, pressure of rights-discourse and humanitarian laws, and not under any responsibility to comply with Constitutional values (A Critical Assessment, 2019, p. 29). It does not devote any part of its concern to gender questions—sensitivity, curriculum, safety or violence—making women gender-fluid identities and persons with disabilities 'invisible and irrelevant' in the education framework (A Critical Assessment, 2019, p. 43).

Questions of gender sensitivity are sporadically mentioned, with no mention of the structural mechanisms of ensuring the same. Women's education is regarded not as a 'right' but founded on the ideal of the "greater good it will yield"⁴ (A Critical Assessment, 2019, p.44). Non-gender binary students are the worst affected in the gender-blind environs of the Indian HE sector—neither are the forms of violation faced by them find a mention nor are there any infrastructural mechanisms to address their concerns.

One of the alarming concerns in the NEP 2021 is the clear shift from government-controlled education sector to large-scale privatization founded on the vision of commodifying education (discussed earlier). This, critics note, is a shift from the earlier national education policies of 1986 and 1992, which were marked by tension between state responsibilities and private opportunities in education (A Critical Assessment, 2019, p. 28). This implies, on one hand, a withdrawal of the Government of India from its obligation to ensure every person the right to equitable education and, on the other hand, of opening up education as a tradeable commodity to private players, under the pressures of world organizations like the World Bank, World Trade Organization and GATS (Critical Response to the Draft NEP 2019, 2019, p. 3). One of the fields of research and development in education sector under the Niti Ayog (Planning Commission) vision of Government of India is 'Reforms in Higher Education: Rebrand India as the Education Destination' (Niti Ayog, Govt. of India, 2015)—which hints at India's opening up of its education sector to the global market as an attractive 'service' sector controlled and developed by private players. India's education policy is largely driven by the agenda of marketable skill development, that undermines the commitment towards social justice (Abrol, 2016) and inclusive pedagogical concerns. Consequently, it lessens the importance of the 'input' into curriculum and pedagogy than the 'output', that is, producing globally marketable labour and skill (Critical Response, 2019).

Ancient Indian heritage and personalities (primarily Brahmin upper-caste) as the only reference point in the tradition of knowledge production, with no mention of any other personalities from other times or other socio-cultural backgrounds, and with no mention of women personalities or their contribution to knowledge production in any age, makes the NEP exclusionist (Critical Response, 2019, p. 4). Neither secularism nor socialism, the two main pillars of the Indian Constitution, find any mention in the education policy (Priya, 2020)—pointing clearly to the skewed foundational vision of the NEP. Lack of a Constitutional focus on social justice and equality in the NEP (Priya, 2020) might translate into lack of access to equitable education, which in turn violates the fundamental right to a 'Life with Dignity' (education being integral to such a life) (Critical Response, 2019, p. 4).

UGC Regulations, 2015⁵

The mandatory presence of redressal mechanisms like the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) and laws like UGC (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal of Sexual Harassment of Women Employees and Students in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations 2015 are proofs of very important formal mechanisms which have been put in place in the context of addressing gender questions in HEI. The Justice Verma Committee Report 2013, Vishakha Guidelines 1997, Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act 2013 and the Criminal Amendment Bill 2013 together informed the need for and contributed towards the shaping of a specific act for addressing sexual harassment in higher education institutions (HEIs). The report prepared by the Task Force⁶ to review the Measures for Ensuring the Safety of Women on Campuses and Programmes for Gender Sensitization talks in great depth about the gaps in such measures and ways to address them. It emphasizes an intersectional approach towards gender questions in terms of class, caste, region, religion, ability and sexuality—as the core vision to ensure equality, dignity and enabling environment in HEIs (SAKSHAM, 2013, p. 1). One of the basic problems that the report pointed out was the denial of gender discrimination/harassment on campuses by the authorities of a number of HEIs, including women's colleges and universities, who do not consider gender sensitivity or inequality as an area of concern, despite clear signs of increasing sexual violence within HEIs.⁷ The latter also indicates how the question of gender sensitivity is conflated with sexual harassment alone, sans the gender stereotyped classroom practices and gender blindness of teachers and other stakeholders which not just affect students, but are more pervasive in everyday HEI practices.

The weakest aspect of the Indian HEIs, as the report points out correctly, is the lack of recognition that gender sensitivity in HEIs is not just students' issue but involves teachers, staff, administration personnel too (SAKSHAM, 2013, p. 3). The problematic approach to ensuring safety on campus or what the report calls the 'problem of protectionism' is also seen in the deployment of excessive monitoring on female students, including women's education institutions. Strict disciplining, restrictive hostel timings and restriction on movement are some of the ways female students are 'controlled' within the institutional set up. The report drew attention to the importance of educational, preventive and corrective measures to address gender questions on campuses instead of solely focusing on punitive measures. And this seems to be an area that HEIs in India are seen to be lagging behind. While mandatory ICCs are in place in most HEIs, their role in sensitization and educational programmes is not very encouraging. Nor is the role of institutional authorities in ensuring infrastructural services (like counselling, lighting, safe transportation between home and institution, toilet facilities, health, hostel and female security personnel)

laudable. Even Women Development Cells, frequently seen to be instituted in HEIs in India, rarely have a guideline as to their scope or to addressing gender questions on the campuses (SAKSHAM, 2013, p. 32). According to the SAKSHAM report, a number of institutions think a course primarily meant for women with vocational potential to provide employment (for example teachers, nutritionist, designers, beautician course) serves the purpose of addressing gender questions in HEIs (SAKSHAM, 2013, p. 32)—an approach that is clearly misguided and, hence, ineffective. Both policy framework and pedagogical concerns need to be incorporated into creating an enabling environment in HEIs, including a gender-sensitive curriculum and a pedagogical practice that acknowledges gender justice as a cross-sectional concern, rather than as a ‘women’s issue’. To that end, the report suggests course modules and themes for workshops on gender sensitization (citizenship, violence, power, equality, masculinity and legal literacy), besides open forums and counselling mechanisms that HEIs could offer (SAKSHAM, 2013, pp. 48–57).

Gender Concerns in Education, National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT)

The NCERT’s report on *Gender Concerns in Education* specifically focuses on the question of gender disparities in education in India (Srivastava, 2020). Elimination of sex stereotyping in vocational and professional courses and women’s participation in non-traditional occupations and emergent technologies are the important areas of concern in the report. The report emphasizes the need to re-evaluate how textbooks break and/or reinforce gender stereotypes. How textbooks reflect social realities and depict human values, how content, exercises and visuals in textbooks portray gender relations, how they address contributions of men and women and if they promote critical thinking about stereotypes and derogatory practices related to women are some of the fundamental questions that, the report insists, need to be asked (Srivastava, 2020). Pedagogical practices by teachers are also an area that the report talks about. A gender-sensitive outlook and its fruitful dissemination among students have a long-term impact on how students are socialized, and how gender barriers are questioned and broken in educational institutions. To that end, NCERT suggests how a teacher can incorporate gender education in his/her own discipline by incorporating students’ lived realities as examples, through teaching aids and project methods, by making teaching dialogical and by ensuring participation of students in the interaction. Mention of Science disciplines (Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics) has been specifically made by the report in this context—an area that has been left neglected in our national education policies, yet a concern that plagues higher education curricula in more ways than one can imagine. This is

not to mean that Social Sciences are inherently gender-sensitive in their curriculum design or pedagogical approaches. Including gender questions as part of Social Science disciplines (History, Geography, Political Science, Sociology and Economics) needs as much attention and deliberation as does Sciences.

Conscious usage of gender-inclusive terms in classrooms is of utmost importance and is the first step towards making curriculum and teaching gender sensitive. The report provides an exhaustive list of such terms that teachers might refer to (Srivastava, 2020, p. 14). One of the crucial aspects that the report talks about is ‘hidden curriculum’—the part of the curriculum inside and outside classrooms that is learned but not openly intended. This includes norms, values and beliefs which either reinforce or question socio-cultural ethos and biases. This ‘unintended learning’ is, often, an outcome of interaction between students and educational administrators, teachers, peers and other officials and can, in the long run, play a crucial role in the personality development (including gendered outlook) of the student. It can also, as the report rightly points out, act as an “equalizing agency for addressing paradoxes between policies on gender equality in education and practices” (Srivastava, 2020, p. 14).

Report of Expert Committee on Gender and Education, 2012

The Report of Expert Committee on Gender and Education (Walikhanna, 2012), draws our attention to the forms of constraints which affect education of girls and women—undervaluation of female labour and stereotyped domestic socialization being two very important ones, besides poverty (often leading to parents choosing son’s education over daughter’s), gender biases in family and community, discrimination in education institutions, distance between home and education institution, poor sanitation, sexual harassment, hostile public places and unavailability of safe transportation options. Lesser reward in workplaces and bias against seeing women as breadwinners lead to control on women’s mobility which, in turn, affects women’s enrolment and/or continuation in education (Walikhanna, 2012, p. 12). The Report puts forth specific suggestions for the government and the institutions for ensuring gender sensitivity and a gender-friendly environment, including the need to have a Task Force in matters of curriculum design, teacher orientation on gender-sensitive pedagogy, basic legal awareness and human rights concerns as part of curriculum, consideration of cultural variation of urban-rural experiences, monitoring of time-bound implementation of change, ensuring hygiene and safe hostel accommodation, counselling centres, encouraging research on gender, involvement of families and local bodies/communities, reworking of curriculum to include gender issues, awareness and outreach and programmes and parent-teacher sessions (Walikhanna, 2012, pp. 23–31).

Empirical Studies: Responses from Stakeholders

The concerns discussed above find resonances in the responses of the interviewees who shared their valuable experiences, perceptions and suggestions with me during our hour-long conversations. Convenience sampling was chosen as the method to locate, within a limited time and scope, respondents associated in various capacities (majority being teachers/faculty) with HEIs in the state of West Bengal (India), across geographical locations and socio-cultural backgrounds. Cross-disciplinary and multi-level (higher secondary, degree colleges, and universities) responses could be made possible across 25 respondents, over a period of a month, due to the choice of targeted convenience sampling. Open-ended interviews were conducted with a set of thematic questions making up the main framework of the conversations. Voice records of the conversations were made both for documentation and for references. Conversations were mostly in Bangla—the native language of all the respondents and in which most of them were comfortable articulating themselves.

Summary of Thematic Responses

Perception of Gender Sensitivity in Higher Education and if Higher Enrolment of Women in Higher Education Translates into Gender-Sensitive HEIs

Gender sensitivity in the context of HEIs was defined by most respondents as introducing students to the various gender inequalities in society and to encourage them to question such biases. Very few respondents focused, specifically, on HEIs while responding to this question. This was not, according to me, a conscious omission but an outcome of a socialization that drives one to locate gender questions in the larger society and family but not instantly in the context of the education system and institutions. When redirected to the context of HEIs, respondents took time to think about what they understood as gender sensitization in HEI context, and some went straight to addressing it in the context of their own disciplines. Interestingly, all the respondents thought that higher enrolment did not, necessarily, translate into gender sensitivity, despite a number of them having mentioned increasing numbers of women in higher education as one of the important signs of a gender-sensitized higher education sector.

Awareness of India's Current Education Policy, UGC SAKSHAM Report and UGC Regulations 2015 and whether Redressal Mechanisms, besides Addressing Harassment Cases, Are also Effective in 'Sensitizing' and Prevention of Violence

Respondents' knowledge/awareness of education policy/laws/reports varied from nil (and honest admission of their ignorance) and vague ideas of some

(may have heard about a report or a law but no clear knowledge about it) to recent browsing and going through some (to be able to respond to my question, after the questionnaire was sent to respondents in advance) to clear idea (though very few in number) about most, if not all, relevant documents/laws asked about. Most were vaguely aware of the mandatory regulation of UGC to have an ICC in HEIs. A number of them were hopeful about the role of the ICC (or any other form of committee/board that they had in their own institutions) in sensitizing students and faculty (stemming from their belief that yearly orientation programmes/gender workshops are capable of sensitizing) while some thought otherwise. Gender-sensitization workshops and orientation programmes have been made a part of career advancement schemes and a criteria for assessment of institutions by National Assessment and Accreditation Council. This, a number of respondents (who have attended such programmes) felt, rarely had any impactful outcome as far as gender sensitization is concerned since the institutions and the participants organize/ attend these programmes as part of a checklist of criteria to be fulfilled. But some respondents also felt that such programmes might be effective in making participants aware of the gender issues which plague HEIs, even if they do not offer ways to address them.

Perception of Gender-Sensitive Curriculum, Ways of Gender-sensitizing Existing Curriculum in the Context of Respondent's Own Discipline, if Choice/Preference of Subjects in HEIs Is Gendered, and Role of Student's Family in the Choice of Subjects

Respondents were not very clear about what a gender-sensitive curriculum might mean, though they all agreed that curriculum plays a vital role in gender sensitization. Respondents from the Social Sciences background (History, Political Science, Sociology, Literature) found it comparatively easier to imagine how they could incorporate 'gender' within their subjects and some of them, in fact, already did so. Talking about women in history, in politics, in society at large, gendering fictional characters, questioning the absence or stereotypical portrayal in textbooks were some of the ways respondents thought they could engender their subjects. Interesting responses, though somewhat expected, came from respondents from Science backgrounds (Physics, Mathematics, Biology, Zoology) and Commerce backgrounds—most of whom subscribed to the general notion of Sciences and Commerce subjects as being gender-neutral. Hence, most of them thought there was no need, nor scope, to incorporate gender questions in their subjects. Few respondents from Science backgrounds were the rare ones who acknowledged gender sensitization as a larger concern, beyond what the subject curriculum had scope for and that some insights into gender questions within their subjects were, in fact, possible. They seemed to understand the role of, what the NCERT report calls, 'hidden curriculum' and took individual efforts to devote some part of the class to talking about gender questions in the context of their subjects. Whether it be talking

about women personalities and achievers in Sciences, or talking about how simple scientific knowledge (about light, heat, electricity, chemical reaction) might help in everyday household chores (thereby not having to depend on other, usually male, members of the house), or talking about how physiological differences between male and female bodies are just natural phenomenon and does not justify socio-cultural discrimination—these respondents made sure that gender sensitization was integral to their everyday interactive practices.

Most respondents also agreed that the choice of subjects (both offered by institutions and chosen by students) had a gendered aspect. Some subjects and curriculum are considered primarily girl's/women's domain, like Nutrition, Home Science, Crafts (co-educational schools have different craft making assignments for male and female students, boys' institutions have a completely different syllabus for craft courses, if at all they have a subject like Crafts), Fine Arts (music, dance, recitation, painting) and Women's Studies (most HEIs project the existence of a Women's Studies Department/Centre, with a disproportionately high number of women students in it, as a sign of fulfilment of the criteria of gender sensitization), while some will be less or not available at all for female students, like Commerce subjects (many girls' institutions, still, do not have Commerce subjects led by the belief that there will be no takers), Sports subjects/curriculum (not physical training which is part of almost all secondary schools), Mechanics and so on. The skewed understanding of gender roles is what begets these gendered subject choices. The idea that the domestic sphere is, exclusively, a woman's sphere impacts the decision to offer Home Science/Nutrition only to female students (mostly in women's colleges/universities). Only medal winners/participants at international and national sporting events (implying that the winners have had opportunities to pursue sports unhindered) are eligible for free/subsidized higher education (UGC Guideline for XIIth Plan, 2012), while the scope and encouragement for pursuing serious sports training in institutions, especially by female students, are rarely addressed.⁸ The notion that Crafts and Fine Arts refine women into an 'ideal women', or considering craft/arts-related occupations (like tailoring) as ideal vocations for women, impacts choice of such subjects. Occupations that Commerce subjects or Mechanics might offer are not considered suitable for women—hence, not many institutions offer the same for female students, and female students, too, do not opt for these based on such gendered notions. Even Women's Studies Centres/departments are considered women's domain—male enrolments or researchers being very few and far between.

Low enrolment of women in STEM subjects, including certain areas of Engineering (like Civil and Mechanical), is also indicative of biases which affect subject choices. A number of respondents, themselves Science students at some points in their lives, shared experiences of being the only female student in a class of 30 students (like some respondents from Sociology

background talked about being the only male student in a class of 30 students). Role of families in influencing students' choice of subjects also has a clear gendered approach. The 'prospect-risk-uncertainty' concerns of parents regarding the kind of jobs that this choice will imply results in encouraging or keeping their ward from choosing or giving up a subject. Matrimonial concerns (like which subject choices might make a prospective bride out of their daughter) impact subject choices (a uniquely Indian phenomenon, commonly seen in middle-class households) were also experienced and noticed by a number of respondents.

Role of Teachers in Addressing Gender Questions in the Classroom, Need for Gender Sensitization/Orientation for Teachers, and Socio-Cultural and Infrastructural Drawbacks which Keep Teachers from Addressing Gender Questions in HEIs

Respondents agreed that in the absence of a clearly laid out blueprint for gender-sensitizing curriculum, it is the role of individual teachers that makes a difference. And so do the prejudices and biases that the teachers might practice in class, albeit not purposely. Biased language and attitude, practising/encouraging segregated seating arrangements in class, discouraging female students from asking questions, focusing on/looking at male students more than female students, misogynist comments are some of the gender-insensitive practices which individual teachers are known to be practising, irrespective of the gender of the teacher (brought to the notice of respondents primarily by students' feedback/complaints). At the same time, the kind of efforts taken by some individual teachers (discussed earlier) in engendering not just their own subjects, but pedagogical practices at large, are also commendable—especially in the absence of a structured framework or monitoring mechanism.

But examples of sensitized teachers and the number of them taking this effort, is no match for what the situation demands. This makes it imperative to consider the importance of gender-sensitization training/orientation (maybe even mandatory ones) for the teachers, so that the programme of gender-sensitizing HEIs does not merely depend on individual efforts, if and when that happens. Most respondents are of the opinion that mandatory gender-sensitization training should be introduced, and monitoring mechanisms put in place to ensure that the same is being practised in classrooms. The fact that curriculum for the (school) training course (Bachelor in Education), which has now been made mandatory for those wishing to teach in schools, does not have any specific provision for gender-sensitive pedagogy or curriculum. And the situation is even worse for college and university faculties, since there is no teacher-training course at all for HE, let alone gender-sensitization training. Even curriculum for Women's Studies departments/Centres rarely focus on engendering HEIs or gender concerns in pedagogical training and curriculum framing. Women's Studies Centres focus on gender/

women's issues in a wide spectrum, but rarely in the context of education institutions, which they themselves are a part of.

Drawbacks faced by teachers in taking initiatives to incorporate gender questions in teaching are, also, varied. Lack of cooperation (even pressure to stop incorporating issues which are 'outside' the syllabus) from institutional authorities, pressure from families of students and local communities/bodies on the teachers to stop discussing such issues in class (questioning gender stereotypes) that may make their wards, especially daughters, errant/rebellious, pressure on teachers to complete syllabus on time (and thus not 'wasting' time discussing other 'irrelevant' matters), and pressure of workload on teachers besides teaching (including administrative and clerical work) are some of the major drawbacks which leave the teachers with neither the enthusiasm nor the time to invest in gender-sensitization classrooms.

Impact of Students' Socio-Economic Background in Their Gender Socialization in HEIs and Need to Incorporate Students' Experiences/Feedback in Framing Gender-Sensitive Curriculum

All respondents agreed on the need for a curriculum to reflect students' experiences ('voice discourse'). Interaction with students and feedback in some form (not just about teachers, which some institutions have made operational) might help curriculum experts to frame curriculum with a wider scope where students from diverse socio-cultural and economic backgrounds find some reflection of their experiences, and which pushes the students to see and question the prejudices which their own socialization has resulted in. In this context, the experiences of non-gender binary students in HEIs need to be specially focused on. Respondents agreed that neither the environment and infrastructure, nor the curriculum or pedagogical practices make space for the experiences of gender-fluid identities, which makes it imperative for the agenda of gender-sensitizing HEIs to take into account the question of gender-fluid persons to make the environment equally enabling for them as for others.

If Low Presence of Women in Senior/Administrative/Managerial Positions in the Education Sector Is Indicative of the Gender-Imbalance in HEIs

Most respondents were not aware of the larger picture of low presence of women in senior/administrative/managerial positions in the education sector, though they had personal experiences or anecdotes to share about the incomplete journeys of women (themselves or someone they knew) from being an achiever in higher education to pursuing research and/or taking up senior positions in the education sector. A number of factors were cited by the respondents as causes for this gap, including societal pressure to 'settle' (marriage, kids, devoting time to family), accompanying husbands to places

of their jobs, issues with mobility or job risk, belief that some jobs ‘suit’ women better than men (outcome being disproportionately more number of women in some jobs than others), belief that women are not good administrators/managers, men not wanting to have female heads/bosses and unavailability of qualified women due to many of them not completing the required training/degrees.

If the Impact of Digital/Virtual Education during the Pandemic in the Last Two Years Has a Gendered Impact on Students

Almost all respondents agreed that among the various impacts of education turning virtual during the pandemic situation, gendered impact was one of the most visible. The kinds of crisis that students, especially in rural areas and from marginalized communities, faced were doubly felt by female students. Access to smartphones (with an internet connection) was one of the most pressing crises for female students. A number of respondents noticed that the son of the household had access to a smartphone (even if he was in a lower grade than his sister) while the daughter had none (this was confirmed by female students themselves when their login names were seen to be that of a male, and teachers asked them to change it to their own). This meant that the daughter could use the phone only when and if her brother or father did not need/use it. When asked by teachers about the use of the scheme money (given by the Government of West Bengal for girls’ education) to get a phone for their daughter, the parents confessed that the money was being saved for the daughter’s marriage (instead of her education). Some also confessed that the money was being used for running the household after both or one of the parents lost jobs during the pandemic.

Loss of jobs also meant that many households saw a cut in education expenses for their kids, and the daughter’s education expenses were the first to be curtailed, as respondents were informed by their students. Available resources were, often, seen to be used by parents for the son’s education. Lack of access to phones (or machines to be used at home for classes) means that the daughter has to go to the nearest cyber café/hub to access a machine—which in many cases would be a few kilometres away. Timings of classes/examinations resulted in female students returning late from the cafes, which parents did not allow—implying discontinuation of classes by the female students. A number of respondents also confirmed the sharp rise in early marriages during the pandemic (loss of jobs of parents leading them to lessen one member of the family to be fed) as being another crucial factor for the huge increase in drop-outs, at all levels, by female students. Discussion and counselling sessions between teachers and students regarding such household and/or gender problems, most effective when done in person, also faced an abrupt halt during the virtual interaction structure of pandemic times.

Way Forward

Sincere intention and implementation seem to be the most crucial factor in the context of gender-sensitizing higher education sector and institutions, and also the one that is grossly lacking, as far as the Indian education sector is concerned. Inclusion of the vision of gender sensitivity without sincere effort to implement it and a flawed understanding of the sole purpose of education being that of making economic subjects scar the Indian education policies and framework. There is very little desired outcome due to the complete absence of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. In the Indian context, as is globally, physical gender violence and harassment have come to represent the entire spectrum of gender questions. Hence, redressal mechanisms of some effectiveness are seen to be functional in most HEIs. Consequently, gender sensitivity has come to narrowly mean redressal for harassment/violence or disciplining/controlling of women/girls students as a means to ensure safety. Understanding gender blindness as a ‘system’ including stakeholders and victims across class, caste and gender rather than merely seeing it as a male-female issue needs to be acknowledged, especially by stakeholders in HEIs on whose gender approach the students’ outlook and experiences largely depend. Merely projecting gender parity in enrolment as a sign of gender sensitivity (often practised by the Indian HE sector) is no solution. Nor is manufacturing an insensitive labour force instead of sensitive and empathetic citizens.

Socio-cultural, economic and infrastructural considerations need to be reflected in the curriculum for the students to be able to take home meaningful insights from their learning experiences. Education policies—which are the final word in the education system—need to take heed of the reports and suggestions made by expert committees conducted through in-depth surveys, to make meaningful intervention in curriculum framing. The fact that many of the important curriculum and infrastructural concerns expressed in the reports do not find resonance in the provisions of NEP 2020 shows that enough importance is, often, not placed on expert opinion and field surveys that are made prior to the drafting of the policy. If job-driven subject choice is anything to go by, it is a clear indication of the ‘feminization’ of certain labour⁹—considered low-risk, low-prospect, informal, semi or unskilled—that has a reverse impact on the kind of subjects offered by HEIs and chosen by students. Hence, disproportionate representation of women in particular subjects and, consequently, in certain jobs need not necessarily be an assurance of gender equality and balance. Seeing the higher education sector and institutions as an island does not work, it never has. One needs to acknowledge that HEIs are situated in the society, and in which societal bias/stereotypes/disparities find their way. Students spend a few hours in education institutions, but a lot more time within family, and in society. Understandably, gender socialization happens more outside

education institutions than in it, which makes the work of institutions even more difficult. Hence, the teacher's role and outlook (especially in terms of a gender-sensitive orientation) and sincere participation of all other stakeholders, including office personnel, family, community and local bodies, need to be ensured to make HEI experiences meaningful. To that end, the Indian experience of gender sensitization in HEIs, along with its efforts and gaps, could act as a point of reference for other countries (especially socio-culturally diverse nations like India) trying to address similar concerns in their education systems. The representation of labour in household chores is one of the positive changes in the Indian school (primary) textbooks that could be used as an example of where to begin implementing the changes from. The teacher-training institutes in India are also trying to bridge the gap by addressing gender-sensitive texts and pedagogy which, in the process, will have positive impacts on HEIs and is something that education policies of other countries can set as examples. Indian experiences of gender-sensitive initiatives, practices and drawbacks¹⁰ in the context of incorporating gendered experiences of not just women but also a range of other gender-fluid and non-binary categories should also act as eye-openers and examples for other education systems trying to address similar concerns. Such changes and initiatives across regions and contexts will, in the long run, help create a gender-inclusive enabling environment in HEIs around the world.

Notes

- 1 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960), International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (1966), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their families (1990), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), the International Labour Organisation Conventions and International Humanitarian Law have all given the Right to Education its due place in their visions and agendas (Right to Education).
- 2 World Declaration on Education for All, Jomtien (Thailand), March 1990, World Education Forum, Dakar (Senegal), April 2000, Incheon Declaration, Incheon (Korea), 2015, Sustainable Development Goals 2015 are some of the global conferences where the global community came together to pledge right to education for all people across socio-cultural contexts.
- 3 The Right to Education Act was enacted in Indian Parliament in August 2009 and came into effect in April 2010. Article 21-A in the 86th Amendment Act of the Constitution of India ensures Right to Education and its various provisions.
- 4 The vision of women's education in India is deeply entrenched in the colonial policy of education in nineteenth century, which saw the need for women's education less as a form of empowerment and more as a fulfilment of the idea of

- the companionate wife and educated mother, capable of producing, and participating in, the creation of learned future citizens. For further reference, see Chatterjee, P. (2010). 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question', in *Empire and Nation: Selected Essays*. Columbia University Press.
- 5 University Grants Commission (UGC) is a statutory body set up by the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India in 1956. Its main duty is to decide and maintain standard and quality of higher education in India, provide recognition to universities in India and to disburse funds to such recognized universities and colleges.
 - 6 A Task Force was formed under the aegis of the UGC in 2013 which conducted an expansive survey of the gender questions, including safety and infrastructural issues, hierarchical power relations between the actors, quality of education, evaluation processes and harassment and victimization, which were reported in the UGC-SAKSHAM Report in 2013. The Task Force was chaired by Prof. Meenakshi Gopinath and included other distinguished members such as Prof. Mary E. John, Prof. Yogendra Yadav, Prof. Uma Chakravarti, Prof. Gopal Guru, Prof. Wasbir Hussain, Prof. Sanjay Srivastava, Prof. Susie Tharu, Dr. Kulwinder Kaur and Dr. Archana Thakur.
 - 7 Gohain, M. P. (20 March 2018). 50% increase in sexual harassment cases on campuses in 2017: Minister. *The Times of India*; Dasgupta, S. and Mukherjee, A. (4 October 2020). Survey of 500 Women Finds 1 in 10 Had Been Sexually Assaulted in Higher Education Institutions. *The Wire*; Karmarkar, P. (7 September 2020). Sexual harassment at higher education institutes: what needs to be done? *Confluence*.
 - 8 This irony came through clearly from some of the stories of female achievers from India in the Tokyo Olympics 2021. The common trajectory for most of them was the complete absence of encouragement or infrastructural support from educational institutions or government for sports training. It was only after their win at the Olympics that the nation wanted a share of their glory, and wanted to feel proud for its 'girls'.
 - 9 Sassen, S. (2005). Women's Burden: Counter-geographies of Globalization and the Feminization of Survival. *Journal of International Affairs* 53(2), 503–524; Sassen, S. (1996). Toward a Feminist Analytics of the Global Economy. *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 4(1), 6–41; Nassbaum, M. (1999). *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*. Cambridge University Press.
 - 10 NCERT's recent efforts at providing (and uploading in their website) a teacher-training manual on transgender-inclusive school education was met with backlash and social media outrage, in response to which the manual was pulled out from the website. Datta, S. (10 November 2021). NCERT Removes Teacher-Training Manual on Transgender-Inclusive School Education After Backlash. *The Wire*.

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12 Co-Creating Cross-Cultural Approaches to Gender Mainstreaming in Higher Education

Experiences and Challenges in Developing an Interdisciplinary, International Feminist Knowledge-Exchange Research Approach

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Introduction

This chapter shares insights from the journey of seeking to carry out gender-focused higher education (HE) research in equitable ways, as an international, interdisciplinary team of feminist academics. We draw upon our experiences in an ongoing research project which sets out to explore and promote gender-aware approaches to curriculum and pedagogy across disciplinary areas in HE, namely the Sciences, Social Sciences, and Humanities. As well as representing these disciplinary fields, the project includes research teams in India, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Nigeria, and the United Kingdom. Each country team includes tenured academic faculty leads and research assistants appointed for the duration of the project. The research is funded under the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), with interdisciplinarity and collaboration being central principles. The GCRF seeks to “maximise the impact of research and innovation to improve lives and opportunity in the developing world” and “strengthen capacity for research, innovation and knowledge exchange in the UK and developing countries through partnership with excellent UK research and researchers” (GCRF, 2021). We recognise that “collaborative research aimed at building local capacity is a complex, contested, time-consuming, and at the same time immensely rewarding experience” (Fimyar et al., 2017). However, we also identify the need for “problematizing the obvious” and recognising the significance of “changing context” as vital to critically considering such contexts as researchers (Bartels & Wagenaar, 2018, p. 200).

This chapter is intended not only for fellow feminist researchers of gender in HE but more broadly to academic colleagues who wish to promote more

equitable ways of researching collaboratively across intersections of gender, ethnicity, country context, and academic seniority. Our own increasing sensitisation to the politics of inequalities and exclusions within our feminist team has led us to focus more on these methodological and ethical questions of inequality in the research process itself, and how we might share insights around these. These inequalities encompass the material and the symbolic, and we recognise them as imbued in the deep and persistent colonial legacies of historical exploitation and domination that continue to impact HE (Bhambra et al., 2018).

To more responsibly incorporate and represent a diverse range of participant's voices, feminist research has been moving towards collaborative research, but there remains a need for greater exploration of how this plays out within research teams. There is a danger otherwise that researchers will downplay and gloss over the inequities within their own projects as part of demonstrating their success at equitable practice, rather than taking the riskier route of embracing the opportunity to acknowledge tensions and subject them to interrogation in pursuit of more equitable future practice. In doing so, we respond to calls for more research that explores what collaboration can mean (Bassett, 2012), how it is executed, and its consequences (Rhee, 2013).

Existing Insight into International Collaborative Feminist Research

A feminist epistemological perspective determines the need for us to “disentangle the power geometry of situated knowledge” and the cross-cultural contextualisation of this (Caretta, 2015: 489). An increasing body of methodological writing in the Social Sciences is now devoted to the need to democratise research processes including for researchers to build rapport and form equitable relationships with participants (Hinton-Smith & Seal, 2018; Behar & Gordon, 1995, Olesen, 2011). This literature acknowledges “the power-loaded relationship between researcher and researched and lets the voices of informants and interviewees be heard through the text” (Caretta, 2015, p. 490). Meanwhile, it has been argued that “typically, research accounts provide little insight into how researchers go about doing research and constructing knowledge in practice and as a team” (Mauthner & Doucet, 2008, p. 974).

Collaborative research is highly valued for the perceived strength of bringing together multiple researchers with distinctive and specialist perspectives to tackle large or complex research problems. This is seen as offering an epistemological edge over solo research but raises questions over how such multiple viewpoints are integrated in practice (Mauthner & Doucet, 2008), and this challenge has been argued to be in need of further theoretical attention (Wasser & Bresler, 1996). Accompanying the growth

of collaborative research projects within feminist research, there is emergent scholarship explicating the negotiation of power dynamics between differently positioned researchers in collaborative work (McGregor et al., 2014). This includes critiques of the limitations of collaborative methodologies which attempt to achieve feminist goals (Scantlebury & LeVan, 2006), and the spaces and power structures of collaborative research are seen as a critical site for the interrogation of feminist post-colonial knowledge-making (Chowdhury et al., 2016).

We bring our own “luggage” to collaborative feminist research (Krane et al., 2012) being grounded in different academic backgrounds, and with each researcher carrying their respective “suitcases” of theory, methodology, and life experiences. There is an identified need to understand the relevance of the contexts of each other’s different working lives and the demands these place on individual researchers (Dusdall & Powell, 2021). This includes recognising where there might be difficulties related to communication which is identified as a particular challenge for international teams working virtually (Brewer, 2015). This is an increasingly important area to explore, given that the expense of travelling physical distance means that much collaborative research must be conducted virtually (Dusdall & Powell, 2021; Goddard et al., 2006). Challenges can also include what Fimyar et al. (2015) have expressed as an inevitable “clash of different research cultures, managerial approaches and values involved in conducting and delivering research” and the consequent need for “determination to reconcile differences through constant reminders of a shared vision and long-term goal” (p. 2; DFID, 2010).

Commentators (e.g., Bartels & Wagenaar, 2018) have identified a silence in literature around what we term the “messiness” (Danvers et al., 2018) of the actual process of *doing* research. There is an identified need for further understanding around experiences in power sharing between feminist scholars seeking to challenge inequities, yet where inequities in the ability to participate are present (Lacey & Underhill-Sem, 2018). It is necessary to examine “collaboration dynamics” (Dusdall & Powell, 2021, p. 2), including the call to examine hierarchical and horizontal relations to understand the ties that bind together international teams (Dusdall & Powell, 2021; Kollasch, 2012). This includes a need for attention to crediting contributions correctly and negotiating conflicts (Dusdall & Powell, 2021; Bozeman et al., 2016). Attentiveness to researcher power dynamics is seen as offering the potential to reveal tensions and inequities that may otherwise remain obscured (Ackerly & True, 2008). This fits within a feminist research ethic which requires “being attentive to the ways in which social, political, and economic processes make many people and social processes themselves invisible or silent and it means being committed to self-reflection to guide researchers so they anticipate ethical issues that may occur throughout the research process” (Ackerly & True, 2008, p. 699).

Collaborative International Feminist Research in Theoretical Context

Our focus in this chapter is situated within the broad framework of “practice theory” in that the main intended unit of analysis is *practice* (Bartels & Wagenaar, 2018). The potential of practice theory is identified in “turning experiences and emotions of doubt and excitement into a dialogical process of asking creative questions, imagining new ideas, and animating a practical relationship to the world” (Bartels & Wagenaar, 2018, p. 191). Within this context, the idea of heuristics is relevant as “strategies of discovery” (Abbott 2004) enabling researchers to disrupt taken-for-granted ideas and comforting categories and “theorise themselves” (Bartels & Wagenaar, 2018, p. 200). We do this by interrogating the affective, intellectual, practical, and political elements of working collaboratively, drawing upon the notion of embodied subjectivities (Longhurst et al., 2008), the extant literature on feminist post-colonial collaborative research (Nagar & Geiger, 2007; Chowdhury et al., 2016), and post-structural feminist work which draws attention to the unstable and uncertain basis of claims to knowledge (Lather, 2007; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000).

Our approach is underpinned by a commitment to interrogating the intersectional ways in which ourselves and our co-researchers are positioned, employing an “analytical sensitivity [which] think[s] about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power” (Cho et al., 2013, p. 795 in Lacey & Underhill-Sem, 2018, p. 1738). We critically self-reflect to better understand our power, privilege, and relationships (CohenMiller & Boivin, 2021a). By unpacking our experiences in dialogue with each other, we understand reflexivity to be the disentangling processes of “interpretation, translation, stuttering and the partly understood” (Haraway, 1991, p. 195).

A central theme in both post-colonial and feminist research are questions related to knowledge production and the question of whose knowledge counts, how and where knowledge has been obtained, “by whom, from whom, and for what purposes?” (Olesen, 2011, p. 129). While recognising that international collaborative research provides a potential avenue through which to move beyond a hierarchical approach to knowledge production whereby research on the Global South is undertaken by researchers from the Global North (Crewe & Axelby, 2013), we wish to explore the experiences of international collaborative research from the perspective of different actors involved. While the idea of “participatory” development has been scrutinised (Cooke & Kothari, 2001), the practice of collaborative international research, which has ideas of participation at its core, has been relatively unexplored. Our interest here is the impact of collaborative work on the formation of researcher subjectivities, with implications on global flows of knowledge and knowledge exchange.

As noted by Mohanty (2003), questions of difference (sex, race, class, and nation), experience, and history remain at the centre of feminist analysis. We seek to better understand the institutionalisation of difference within feminist discourses and, inspired by Mohanty's (2003) discussion of what feminist research "without borders" could be like, we wish to explore how the politics of our respective locations have been imagined and can be re-imagined through our working together. Given that the research project is made up of diverse team members, we intend to scrutinise the ways in which the different elements of our identities have impacted how we engage with each other and the project itself. This requires drawing upon theories of intersectionality to explore the possibilities of diverse and divergent flows of power and to help us explore categories of difference including ethnicity, age, socio-economic status, university rank, place, and indigeneity (Crenshaw, 1989; Mohanty, 1986). We believe that intersectional positionality cannot be ignored but must be acknowledged and worked with, so that post-colonial knowledge hierarchies can change (Smith, 1999). For the purpose of our discussion, "identities" are regarded as being "produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices" (Hall, 1996, p. 4).

Our understanding of identity is influenced by the work of Judith Butler on the formation of subjectivities (1990, 1993, 1997) and her theorisation of how structures such as gender define what it is possible to be and the range of "norms" at our disposal. Our understanding here is that subjects are constructed (not born), created in and through socially, culturally, and historically located interactions, and are fluid, multiple, and contradictory. This implies that our own position as subjects is always under construction and constantly reconstituted through discourses that establish what it is possible to be. A particular concern for our research project is the ways in which the age, gender, race, ethnicity, and the nationality of different team members impacted their engagement with each other and with the aims of the research project more broadly. We are interested in how the norms of our collaborative research culture may have opened up the space to perform some subject possibilities rather than others. Given that our research took place virtually rather than in a fixed location, it is worth interrogating the nature of this "virtual space" that we created and to what extent it was experienced as a neutral and borderless zone.

Of pertinence to this chapter is a consideration of where power sits and flows within collaborative research projects. Our understanding of power reflects Foucault's (1990/1976) assertion that "power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms" (p. 86). As such, our analysis will consider both the subtle and more overt manners through which certain research partners were made more or less powerful within the research project. Our reflections here include a discussion related to the design of

the project, the use of the English language, and resources at our disposal, a consideration of how “voices” have been or have not been heard, and a recognition of the need to explore both what is spoken and the silences and omissions in our engagements (Mazzei & Jackson, 2009). We are interested in the ways in which relations of power have a productive role, and how, through the design of the project itself, we set up norms within the study which may have advertently or inadvertently disciplined the research team into performing particular subject positions.

We see an approach to research as necessary that “agent, activity and the world mutually constitute each other and make each other intelligible” (Bartels & Wagenaar, 2018: 193; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Tuckman’s identified stages of group development are relevant here, including Forming (establishing of ground rules), Norming (developing shared values), Storming (dealing with conflict/misunderstanding), and Performing (efficiently and effectively carrying out the group objectives) (1965). Our experience corroborates that these stages may flare up cyclically though with increased learning about working together as a team, rather than always being a straightforwardly linear journey.

Designing International Feminist Collaborative Research for Equity and Inclusion

This chapter explores the experience of working as part of a team of interdisciplinary, international feminist researchers on a funded project focused on developing gender equity in HE contexts. In doing so we faced challenges in achieving the very priority that we had set out to advance – equitable co-produced practice in gender-focused HE practice. With an aim of co-producing research and outcomes, we sought to “overcome the issues of power related to marginalized communities” (CohenMiller & Boivin, 2021b, p. 184), which evidence themselves in and outside of research projects and communities. As feminist researchers, we are committed to being alert to such challenges and contradictions, and to acknowledging and addressing them even as we remain aware of the impossibility of completely overcoming pervasive inequalities to inform how we work. We recognise our practices as researchers working together to be steeped in wider contexts that include our embodied intersectional identities (Crenshaw, 1989), the historical legacy of global colonial power relations (Chowdhury et. al., 2016), and the bureaucratic processes created within the structures of this legacy.

The research, *Gender on the Higher Education Learning Agenda Internationally*, is funded through the GCRF, which has interdisciplinarity and collaboration between Global South and Global North partners for mutual capacity-building as central principles. Our team included research teams in India, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Nigeria, and the United Kingdom. Between us, our country contexts represented five core languages with many more languages spoken within some partner countries. Our common language for

project communication was English, with recognition of the colonial legacy and researcher inequalities that this implies (Behar, 2011). Disciplinarily we come from the fields of Education, Writing Studies, Chemistry, and Climate Change, unified by a personal and professional commitment to principles of feminism. Part of the task of this research has been to destabilise disciplinary epistemologies and our own (Ackerly & True, 2008).

We represented different career stages and roles on the project including Principle Investigator, Co-Investigators, and Research Assistants. Our data collection included surveys and interviews with students and staff in partner countries, with a dissemination focus on knowledge-sharing for gender mainstreaming and capacity-building within the wider international HE sector. These types of approaches offer chances for organisational change and learning in HE (CohenMiller & Lewis, 2019). The research commenced during the COVID-19 pandemic and as such all activities were conducted online (Dusdall & Powell, 2021), which brought with it both advantages and challenges which inform our discussion (Brewer, 2015; Goddard et al., 2006).

Here we explore our interrogation and learning around not the data that we collected but what we have learned from collectively critically reflecting on the process of the research itself. We draw upon personal reflections of our research process, in combination with reflexive group discussions, to provide a behind-the-scenes account of the processes of collaboration in research. Through using a feminist reflexive process we recognised the potential for creating more socially just academic spaces (CohenMiller et al., 2022). While recognising that within the context of real-world institutions in which researchers are located, it can feel undesirable or unsafe to acknowledge doubts, struggles, and failures; we nevertheless seek to embrace the potential rather than downplay the existence of feelings of fear, anxiety, uncertainty, incompetence, frustration, misunderstanding, self-doubt, and being ill-equipped that can emerge as we embark on research. In doing so we hope to be able to move closer to the transformative potential of research (Bartels & Wagenaar, 2018; Caretta, 2015; Lacey & Underhill-Sem, 2018). This reflects St. Pierre and Pillow's (2000) assertion of the need to "work the ruins" of the "failures of humanism, feminism, education, and methodology" (p. 16) and to champion unstable epistemologies which work to constantly interrogate power structures (Lather, 2007). The concept of "working the ruins" encourages readers to expect contradictions or gaps between research design and actual process (Gustafson, 2000) and to seek and dwell in gaps, cracks, and spaces rather than stable, reliable, objective spaces (Schultz, 2016, p. 509).

It was important to us as feminist researchers to seek to conduct all stages of the research process as collaboratively as possible from the outset. Our undertaking of core research processes such as coding data collaboratively in the initial stages chimes with Bartels and Wagenaar's reflections on "engaging in the craft of research" (2018, p. 201). However, in striving to

achieve this ongoing collaborative, democratic approach, we also recognise the potential for multiple barriers to stand in the way of this rosy ideal. Close attention given to what is often “taken-for-granted” allows for the examination of new ontologies (Lacey & Underhill-Sem 2018, p. 1739). Reflexivity requires reflecting not only on ourselves but also on our relations with others (Rose 1997). Autoethnography is a popular methodological tool amongst feminist researchers for exploring how power relations develop in the field (Caretta, 2015). Like others (Dusdal & Powell, 2021), we recognise the benefits of an autoethnographic approach for reflecting on the process of collaborative international academic research. Autoethnography is seen as particularly beneficial as a method because of the way in which it recognises and values researchers’ social embeddedness (Dusdall & Powell, 2021), acknowledging the need to be aware of positionality, including our own privileges, as part of a feminist research ethic (Ackerly & True, 2008; Hinton-Smith et al., 2017; McGregor et al., 2014).

In interrogating and theorising our learning from the process rather than findings of the research we have drawn on principles of Collaborative Autoethnography (CAE), a research process in which the authors utilise their own experiences through *joint* exploration as a tool in the research process (McDonnell et al., 2019). In doing so the lens of our own experiences is identified as a means of developing understanding of wider social contexts. Through this process, we sought to bring our academic and personal reflexivities into relation, in order to shed insight into the complexities of collaborative international research as the space of reflection (McDonnell et al., 2019). CAE is an increasingly used approach with identified advantages that include community building and the potential for power checking between participants (McDonnell et al., 2019). We are also informed by the principles of “duoethnography” (Norris et al., 2012; Sawyer & Norris, 2013), which seeks to create a multi-vocal and critical understanding of phenomena through recognising the importance of dialogue and the socially constructed nature of knowledge production. Duoethnography has the potential to blur the researcher/researched line, requires researchers to be reflexive, and can create a more equitable collaborative process, thus aligning well with feminist collaborative research goals (Spencer & Paisley, 2013).

Insights from Reflection: Communication, Humanisation, Embodiment, Ethics

Our purpose here is not to describe the research project itself, but rather to explore the dynamics of the research process and to identify important issues arising during the conduct of the research (Goddard et al., 2006, p. 1). The following unpacks concepts of complex communication, connectedness and humanisation, and embodied experience and affect.

Complex Communication

The first theme we identified concerns the complexity of communicating that we experienced as a team. This relates to both material and symbolic dimensions, encompassing technology access, language, and cultural norms. Carrying out an international research project with multiple partners solely online has necessitated a high level of technology use. While technology has facilitated our communication as a virtual team, it has not done so equally. International inequalities in technology access impacted team members' ability to participate fully in the research both in terms of physical access and access to the skills to feel confident in the variety of technological tools that we have relied on to carry out this research virtually as an international team (Brewer, 2015). This has included inequalities in access to hardware, software, and, perhaps most pressingly, connectivity. The commencement of the research as the world was gripped in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that we had in some cases underestimated the new pressures that there would be on local technology infrastructures as the world moved online more than ever before. This created connectivity challenges that team members had not anticipated or previously experienced to such an extent in their local contexts. Throughout the research, internet failure and power outages prevented some colleagues at times from participating fully in online meetings, and this impacted team members' experiences of being part of the project, as demonstrated in the following quote, "I feel cut off because of the Internet outages" (Nigeria Country lead).

Language in an international project inevitably poses a further communication challenge, and we recognise the importance of the relationship between language and power in our research (Foucault 1976/1990), more widely. Conveying colonial legacies, English was the first language of two of the research partner countries (UK and Nigeria); the language of instruction and communication in the international Kazakh University and a common language for academic communication in the Indian and Moroccan contexts. However, working in English placed additional burdens on team members communicating verbally and in writing in a second or third language. While the project included support for professional translation of outputs, this cannot entirely mediate inequities in the additional time necessitated to complete project tasks.

Beyond the challenges of semantically working between languages, we are aware of the more important consideration of how to render comparable interpretation and meaning of a phenomenon from one culture to the other (Caretta, 2015), raising questions around challenges in cross-cultural understanding in international research (Gaskell & Eichler, 2001). This awareness demands that translation entails much more than simply understanding the words that are being said, but the need to keep translating, not just languages but also cultural understandings that may include

different assumptions including around research processes, communication conventions, and the need for cross-cultural translation of theoretical understandings (Fimyar et al., 2017, p. 9). We recognise the essential nature of working across disciplinary lines purposefully to bring forward greater cultural awareness (CohenMiller et al., 2017). Theoretically, we find resonance here with Haraway's observations around the need for disentangling processes of "interpretation, translation, stuttering and the partly understood" (Haraway, 1991, p. 195) in undertaking feminist research. As a research team, we experienced a need to negotiate and come to shared understandings around areas such as frequency of communication and expectations around responding. Differences in procedural research understandings were conveyed by research team members in our focus group discussions:

We don't have the same interpretation, this depends on our culture, our own culture and our own context, our own experiences and then, when it comes to make analysis we don't usually have the same interpretation, and this causes sometimes problems of understanding and problems of progress.

(Morocco Research Assistant)

Over time, we developed a greater understanding of similarities and differences in assumptions around research practices, but these were not immediately obvious to us. For example, in the Indian and Nigerian context, hiring a Research Assistant to work one day a week meant working only on that one day per week. However, for others, working one day a week instead meant an equivalent to that amount of time, but spread throughout the week; however, these different working patterns were not always known or understood by all team members. Similarly, Research Assistants identified that dominant project conventions, such as the use of first names for all team members and the expectation for Research Assistants to actively participate verbally in team meetings and even to Chair meetings on occasion, were dissonant with their more hierarchical expectations of research teams. Such experiences revealed differences in *how* work is expected to unfold within and across countries, as well as different bureaucratic processes which impact how collaboration can take place in practice:

When you have like an international team it's ... There is always, I think, not maybe clash but different cultures, so you have different cultures of doing research, of communication, etc, and you have different expectations. So that's why it's very important from the very beginning, like to, to talk about it and to make it clear, so, what we are going to do and how we are going to do.

(Kazakhstan Research Assistant)

A particular key aspect of differences in cultural understandings relevant to our research is that around gender. We have reflected upon some of the assumptions underpinning our work, namely that we have a shared understanding of “gender.” This has required us to explore the multiple feminist epistemologies that have emerged from our shared working. For example, there was some discussion between different international team members as to whether “non-binary” was a relevant and appropriate gender option for our surveys and interviews, and there were differences of opinion on the framing of gendered identifications for the purposes of the project. This required creating spaces for differences of opinion to be expressed and “initiating difficult conversations” (Krane et al., 2012, p. 263). Gaskell and Eichler (2001) have similarly highlighted the importance of potential divergence in cross-cultural understandings around feminism and gender equality issues and language in their international research.

Emerging as salient to our awareness of the complexities around communication is the importance of being clear and explicit around all dimensions of communication from logistics and expectations through to theories and values. Further, team members feel able to seek clarification and maintain ongoing communication (Fimyar et al., 2017), despite the challenges of this.

Connectedness and Humanisation

Building on the importance of communication, the second key area of significance was identified as the importance of connectedness and humanisation when carrying out international research as a feminist team. Our online methodology required us to build the relationships of a cohesive research team able to successfully deliver an international project, without everyone meeting in person. While the country leads were all already connected to the overall project lead, they were not previously connected to one another, and Research Assistants were appointed specifically for the project and hence not initially connected to any other team members.

We were committed to the importance of making time to form team relationships and regular team meetings, and our project was premised on the understanding that every team member brings a valuable contribution to the research and everyone’s opinion matters (Krane et al., 2012). This was embodied in research design through processes such as exchanging peer reviews of country reports, which team members identified as finding helpful and supportive (Nigeria country lead). However, we have understood the importance of building a cohesive research team to embody more than formal research design elements such as regular meetings and negotiating linguistic and cultural understandings; beyond this, it necessitated the building of rapport through such attention to how team members feel included and valued, “I found that the more human, that we can be in

that we know each other, then there's less chance for offending someone" (Kazakhstan Country lead).

We find resonance with Brewer's (2015) identification of the importance of issues around tone in online communication for international research, including conventions around formality, familiarity, humour, and politeness that vary cross-culturally and can hence be misconstrued. Such concerns around being misconstrued through contrasting international understandings came through in our research,

Sometimes you are working with people who don't know you, working with people who have never seen you. they don't know you really in your real life. Sometimes I do not feel really satisfied because sometimes you are not up to date, and this will make you feel uncomfortable because you have people who are abroad, they don't know you.

(Morocco Research Assistant)

Overall, the research team identified that the spaces created for us to connect as a research team via email, video conferencing, and messaging platforms were encouraging and "supportive" and that the sense of feeling "comfortable" with each other grew as the project matured. The start of meetings emerged as a particularly valuable time to greet and check in with one another on a more interpersonal level, before engaging with the agenda of the meeting itself.

We recognise that working to ensure that team members feel included and understood requires creating space for social communication within cross-cultural teams (Goddard et al., 2006; Gaskell & Eichler, 2001). Specifically, we have found the need for attention to understanding the relevance of the contexts of each other's different working lives and the demands these place on individual researchers (Dusdall & Powell, 2021). In seeking to humanise the research process and our relationships with one another, as a team we sought to deliberately carve out time for welcoming the personal, as a means to building rapport across the research team. This included occasionally scheduling portions of research team meetings as a space in which colleagues were able to share personal updates and/or bring photos or objects to share something about their own lives. We perceive this welcoming of personal selves into academic lives as of feminist value to professional integrity and cohesion regardless of topic, but as particularly important to our substantive commitment to understanding gendered experiences in HE in different disciplinary and international contexts. The purposeful commitment to working across disciplinary contexts we recognise as essential for gaining understanding and solutions (CohenMiller & Pate, 2019). Colleagues identified the importance of human connection to our capacity to learn from each other through the research:

About the human level, I think, in principle, what is very important and what I appreciate about this international cooperation is that we are making links with other people, we are getting connections with other people, we try to learn from each other and this is very important. We have more things to learn from other people.

(Morocco Research Assistant)

Nevertheless, colleagues more experienced in being part of international research that had worked together in person prior to the pandemic drew attention to the qualitatively different nature of the research encounter, noting that “I do still think it would be different if we had met” (Kazakhstan Country lead).

Embodied Experience and Affect

We recognise the potential of online research design such as our own to subvert the privileging of embodied presence that favours able bodies as well as geographic proximity and monetary access to travel (Lacey & Underhill-Sem, 2018). As a team, we have nevertheless experienced the challenges of keeping all team members on board and balancing conflicting commitments (Fimyar et al., 2017, p. 14). This has been the case not only in terms of managing time conflicts, but also the emotional energy that has necessarily drawn team members away from project tasks to wider life commitments. As a team of feminist researchers we regard it to be impossible to keep embodied and emotional experience out of the collaborative research journey, and indeed we would not seek to. Our identities are produced within the specific discursive formations of historical and spatial contexts, informing the development of our unique subject positions (Hall, 1996). Drawing upon the legacies of feminist and post-colonial theorists (Crenshaw, 1989; Mohanty, 1986; Smith, 1999), we recognise the centrality of embodied identities and intersectionality to flows of power and inequality within our research. This requires taking an approach to research that is reflexive, holistic, involves the whole person, and is attentive to emotion, finding resonance with Bartels and Wagenaar in their observation of the way in which making sense of empirical data “requires practical judgment, sociability, imagination, being in touch with one’s feelings, and a tolerance for critique and set-backs – in a word, it involves the whole person” (2018, p. 203).

Like international researchers before us (Caretta, 2015), we have found the importance of the temporal, spatial, and embodied dimensions of carrying out international research amongst the demands of team members’ wider work and family commitments. Working across time zones created demands on researchers (Brewer 2015; Goddard et al., 2006) including extending working hours beyond normal practice to facilitate real-time communication, receiving out-of-hours communications, and delays in responses.

Team members' embodied experiences of participating in the research were impacted by local conditions that included extreme weather (-30°C in Kazakhstan and 43°C in Delhi) and extreme weather-related pollution conditions in Delhi that rendered it impossible to work efficiently during the afternoons – which coincided with work hours in the UK, Nigeria, and Morocco. A humanising approach was central to such scheduling considerations as team members' conflicting work and family responsibilities inevitably impacted their ability to participate in project activities at times.

Beyond this, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic caused us to reflect in new ways on the embodied and emotional impact of wider context on experiences of carrying out the research. The pandemic has impacted to different extents and in varying ways on team members' personal and professional lives. For all of us the pandemic required unfamiliar new academic work patterns in terms of homeworking, and our reflective research focus group discussions showed the challenges team members felt around this. Team members identified the potential of online working to create a disembodied experience, and the emotional affect associated with this.

In turn, research team members have experienced deeply impactful experiences throughout the life of the project including childcare and children's emotional well-being; problems with their own health and/or that of their children; illness of loved ones; care for sick parents; and the emotional impact of fulfilling pastoral responsibilities for students in the context of the pandemic. The latter was of particular impact in the Indian context, where research necessarily ground to a standstill in summer 2021 when data collection should have been taking place, as pandemic conditions in India made normal life impossible. Here our team was impacted by the trauma of COVID-19 impact that included the death of students.

External factors including the impact of COVID-19 on research team members appeared superficially to be shared by all yet on closer inspection held differing impacts in terms of embodied experience that varied according to factors such as internet connectivity; children's age; climate conditions; and medical infrastructure. Amidst these differences, team members identified that they experienced the research team as a welcoming and supportive space in terms of the varied ways in which wider life asserts itself into work, such as a child stepping into the Zoom frame. One team member commented on how a shared, albeit different, experience of the pandemic may have engendered within us a particular sensibility:

Even though we come from different backgrounds both discipline wise, geographically, culturally and linguistically they'll be a shared language that we use to communicate. Would you say that the COVID in some ways, has also made us more sensitive in working on this project?

(India Country Lead)

Ethical Concerns and Considerations

The final theme we identified as emerging from reflections on our research process relates to ethical concerns and considerations. While international collaborative research can be vital in providing the opportunity to move beyond hierarchical approaches to knowledge production whereby research on the Global South is undertaken by researchers from the Global North (Crewe & Axelby, 2013), it is nevertheless wrought with challenges to achieving equitable partnership in practice. This includes some of the key areas explored above, including those around technology, language, variation in skills, and confidence relating to researcher academic discipline and career stage, project leadership, and research outcomes. Giving inadequate attention to interrogating ethical concerns risks the potential to remain unaware or without understanding around complex power dynamics taking place within international research teams and surrounding connections (Gaskell & Eichler, 2001), resonating with Foucault's understanding of the way in which "power is tolerable only on condition that it masks a substantial part of itself" (1990/1976, p. 86).

International inequalities in opportunities to have voice included in the research emerged as a prominent ethical concern. This was seen as being more than a question of academic power dynamics in terms of who is listened to, but of inequalities in the literal potential to be physically heard, through inequalities in technological access, limited by power cuts and internet failure. Even where researchers were not completely excluded from discussion by internet access, time lags in speech caused by connectivity could compromise the ability to be heard and contribute to discussion. Where colleagues were forced to communicate without video because of internet speed, this was seen as compromising potential to be fully present.

Through this collaborative learning process, we have grown and maintained awareness of the complex and interrelated ways in which such factors as politics of language and limits of "voice" (Mazzei & Jackson, 2009) impact the potential for equity in practice in international collaborative research. This exemplifies our attention to the need to be willing to "theorise ourselves" (Bartels & Wagenaar, 2018) in the process of this research, in line with the principles espoused by practice theory.

In addition, project management constraints stemming from the UK research leadership were sometimes experienced as challenges to achieving equitable partnership in practice under a funding stream self-consciously aimed at increasing equitable research partnerships between the Global North and South. This included ethical requirements for project management including hosting of data collection interviews via video conferencing software, online data storage, and budget holding to be managed from the UK, as research team members commented on in a focus group discussion:

The UK team has had to set up all of the interviews ... it's like the UK is giving the other teams the power to be able to have a conversation, and I know that that's not what it is and it's just to do with the technological platforms and the way that data is stored and the permissions we have ... but for me, I find that quite challenging ...

(UK Research Assistant)

These challenges reflect colonial continuities within international research projects, underpinned by structural and normative factors and perpetuated by a matrix of actors and processes in complex ways, albeit not always intentionally (Istratii & Lewis, 2019). International inequities within the academic research spheres continue to shape the experiences of collaborative research, as encapsulated in an extract from a focus group discussion below:

Research, which is being done in the countries of Global South, it can be funded by international organizations or it can be funded locally, but what we have at the end of the day, the research outcomes, they are not widely circulated in the local communities. They go to the Global North.

(Kazakhstan Research Assistant)

This quote cements the importance of international collaborative research which is intended for a broad international audience, and which serves to continually reflect upon not only its research design but also research dissemination.

Conclusions: What Have We Learned as International Feminist Researchers?

This process of reflecting critically and collaboratively on the research process as an international team has taken place alongside our fulfilment of the espoused research aims of collecting, analysing, and theorising our data for sharing with others in our intellectual community. It has not as such been an “add-on,” but rather has been integral to the authenticity and integrity of our research process and findings.

We continue to work together as a team towards our core research aims of developing collaborative insight into mechanisms of gender inclusion and exclusion in international HE teaching, with the intention of co-producing shareable tools to support wider gender inclusion and sensitisation within HE teaching and further to provide methodological tools for future virtual research collaborations. We see the central task as being to create a synergy as a team through approaching collaborative work primarily as a form of intellectual companionship, whereby growing commitment and communication play a central role and that for this synergy to be achieved requires constantly reviewing process and reaffirming shared commitment

to project goals (Fimyar et al., 2017; Katz & Martin, 1997). This leads us to argue for the need for international feminist research to build in time for co-researchers to develop researcher rapport, and further collective understandings of intersectional dimensions of identities and how these are present in the research process. This is central to ensuring a wider framework of “respectful interaction” in research teams (Krane et al., 2012).

While recognising that collaboration should be as “horizontal” as possible (Goddard et al., 2006) and striving for non-hierarchical research relationships in our own work, we have reflected in this chapter on some of the ways in which feminist international collaborative research still occurs within a broader global and academic landscape coloured by unequal access to resources and power differentials (Istratii & Lewis, 2019). The lived experience of undertaking such research as ours in ways consonant with feminist researcher principles is a constant precarious and slippery tightrope to cling to, fall off, and return to. This close attention given to the undiscussed and the often “taken-for-granted” aspects of collaborative research encounters allows for the examination of new ontologies, in which there is more to be gained from resisting the confidence of the knowing expert (Lacey & Underhill-Sem, 2018). This resonates with post-structural feminist work which draws attention to the unstable and uncertain basis of claims to knowledge (Lather, 2007; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000).

The spirit of reflexivity to inform this chapter capitalises on our personal and professional relationships to improve our research (Caretta, 2015). Being part of a research team in which some members have less prior knowledge around the research area and perceptions, as has been the case with our interdisciplinary team, is identified as being an advantage rather than a disadvantage, in facilitating fresh interpretations (Goddard et al., 2006). In turn, recognition of the value of difference has helped us to navigate how we will all experience research differently and how the process of sharing diverse experiences and knowledge is ongoing and incomplete.

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13 Improving Gender Diversity in STEM through an Inclusive Professional Framework

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Introduction

This chapter explores the Inclusive Professional Framework for Faculty, (*IPF:Faculty*)—a research-grounded, holistic professional development framework—and how it can inform the approach higher education leaders take to advance the work of equity and inclusion on their campuses, particularly their work to address gender disparities. Importantly, we describe leaders in higher education as both those with positional authority in the institution and faculty and instructional staff, whose sphere of influence may be more limited to teaching and learning settings. The *IPF:Faculty* identifies key domains, as well as the awareness, knowledge and skills within them, necessary for leaders to develop and deepen their equity mindset,¹ and the interpersonal relational and communication skills necessary to effectively put that equity mindset into practice. Combined with an “equity-centered” leadership approach, the *IPF:Faculty* highlights principles of inclusion that can help guide higher education faculty and institutional leadership in making student-focused decisions (e.g., classroom policies, laboratory management), as well as broader, systemic and structural decisions (e.g., programming, curriculum and policy). Considering faculty and instructional staff as leaders, we explore a graduate-level course as a case study for the application of IPF principles in a student-focused context and consider how these principles can impact STEM trainees, with a particular focus on graduate students and post-doctoral researchers (post-docs). This serves as an example of how faculty can embed equity-centered leadership principles in undergraduates in mainstream STEM courses and/or how faculty can embody equity-centered leadership in their teaching of undergraduates to model and inspire their empowerment as future scientists. We next describe how the *IPF:Faculty* can be applied at a broader, systems level to influence institutional policies, and the overall training structure of STEM higher education. The chapter concludes with recommendations for all institutional leaders for creating structures and systems within their units that

empower individuals at all levels to advocate for their own progress and career success.

Gender Disparities in Higher Education

In nations around the world, STEM fields suffer from over-representation of cisgender men at all levels (Huyer, 2015). Data have been collected by numerous government organizations and academic researchers, and examples of resources highlighting gender representation in STEM fields can be found in Table 13.1. Inequities in each national context are the result of the particular national history and the emergence of the educational system; however, many of the patriarchal norms that are pervasive in STEM emerge regardless of these particular historical influences.

Table 13.1 Sample demographic datasets for representation in STEM fields in various countries/regions

<i>Nation/Region</i>	<i>Title, Reference</i>
Africa	Black African Women in Engineering Higher Education in South Africa: Contending with History, Race, and Gender (Mlambo, 2021)
America	Women in STEM in Chilean Higher Education: Social Movements and Institutional Transformations (Kim & Celis, 2021); Secretaría Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, Indicadores de Ciencia y Tecnología Guatemala (Tecnología, 2020); Consejo Nacional de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación Tecnológica Perú (Consejo Nacional de Ciencia, 2021); Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering (National Science Foundation, 2017); Mujeres en Ciencia, Tecnología, e Innovación, un Problema de Justicia Uruguay , (Oficina de Planeamiento y Presupuesto, 2017)
Asia	The Rise of Women in STEM Higher Education in China : Achievements and Challenges (Lingyu et al., 2021); Gender Equity in STEM Higher Education in Kazakhstan (CohenMiller et al., 2021); The Higher Education Trajectories of Taiwanese Women in STEM: A Longitudinal Analysis (Fu et al., 2021)
Europe	Enseignement Supérieur, Recherche et Innovation. Vers l'Égalité Femmes-Hommes? Chiffres clés. (Ministere de l'Enseignement Supérieur, 2020); A Comprehensive Approach to Addressing Gender Equity in STEM Subjects at Four-Year Universities in England (Ro et al., 2021);
List of 75 countries	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Science Report: Towards 2030. Section 3: Is the Gender Gap Narrowing in Science and Engineering? (Huyer, 2015)

In addition, many of these data indicate greater representation of men than women in all position types, and the discrepancies are particularly large for research-focused faculty positions and teaching-focused faculty positions. As the positional power of the role is diminished, the discrepancy between gender representation decreases as well (National Science Foundation, 2017). There also remains an average salary difference between men and women in science fields of greater than 20,000 USD. For example, in a multi-center cross-sectional study of over 200 female scientists across 55 countries, it was found that female scientists averaged a lower salary than their male peers and experienced additional limitations; although maternity leave was usually available, on-site childcare was rarely found (Fathima et al., 2020). Other challenges reported by women across the study included workplace sexual harassment (24% of the study population), work-related stress (71.5%) and work-life imbalance (46%) (Fathima et al., 2020).

Higher education has a powerful role in the training and career trajectory of professionals in STEM fields. As such, the goal of seeking gender equity in STEM impacts the mission of higher education broadly. The typical model for a student pursuing a career in STEM typically begins as an undergraduate, progresses as a graduate student trainee and (potentially) post-doctoral fellow, and subsequently continues to a STEM career. This linear, pipeline model does not reflect the experience of all students in the US. Batchelor and colleagues (2021) describe a model of the STEM career path that validates alternatives to traditional career paths and offer flexibility not historically afforded to the scientific trainee. Further, personal experience from the author team indicates that this streamlined process is less common in developing countries that do not offer significant graduate and post-doctoral opportunities (Luxton, 2016), where progression can be more staggered and discrete and, in turn, has career-related impacts.

Positionality Statement

The writing team of this chapter includes individuals who hold a variety of social and cultural identities, positions in higher education and backgrounds. While we are all US-based, some members have experiences working on teams internationally and can provide insight into the applicability of strategies discussed to international contexts.

This chapter is grounded in the perspectives of the members of the writing team, who are mindful of the role and influence of their lived experiences in the writing process. Since social and cultural identities are a core part of the Inclusive Professional Framework introduced in this space, the team was very cognizant of how our social and cultural identities have shaped our experiences and perspectives, particularly about gender equity in STEM. Our team includes among others, a first-generation college student, queer woman (SK), a cisgender, heterosexual, Caucasian male (DLG-D), a white bisexual woman (RMcCG) and a first-generation Latina (CIC).

The Inclusive Professional Framework (IPF)

Faculty responsibilities include tasks that are student-, discipline- or profession-centered, as well as community-centered (American Association of University Professors, n.d.). The breadth of faculty responsibilities requires them to take on different roles, like teacher, advisor, mentor, colleague and leader; faculty success is tied to excellence in each of these roles. However, training for each of these roles is not widely a part of the standard graduate curriculum, with the exception of evidence-based teaching practices, which may be addressed in graduate teaching assistant training or other future faculty professional development settings (CIRTL Network, 2020; Preparing Future Faculty, n.d.). Thus, many faculty, and particularly many new faculty, are asked to step into roles for which they have little training and experience (International Association of Universities, 2015).

The majority of faculty roles are student-focused. They include the many interactions students have with faculty, all of which are opportunities for faculty to support and affirm a student's skills, potential and sense of belongingness. For example, the teaching, advising and mentoring in research that faculty do are essential for making connections with students, and in turn affecting students' sense of belonging within their discipline and institution (Rainey et al., 2018), which is a key predictor of students' academic success (Walton & Cohen, 2011).

Supportive and respectful relationships between faculty and students that reinforce a sense of belonging throughout the STEM pipeline are critical for the success of women, and especially women of color (Rainey et al., 2018; Lykkegaard & Ulriksen, 2019; van den Hurk et al., 2019). This is particularly relevant as women usually struggle with developing a sense of belonging in STEM fields due to early gender stereotyping (Moe et al., 2021), being outnumbered by male peers in university STEM classes and having fewer role models who share their gender identity (Dasgupta & Stout, 2014). Those women who do enter the STEM workforce continue to face gender bias in hiring, promotion, tenure, grant and paper reviews, less inclusive climates in STEM industry and academia, and a greater challenge balancing work-life responsibilities (Griffith & Dasgupta, 2018).

Similarly, trans-, gender nonbinary, gender queer and other LGBTQAI+ individuals are subject to bias and, as a result, disadvantaged in STEM environments (Cech, 2015). Initiatives promoting gender equity in STEM are frequently focused on the progress of cisgender women (cis women, women who identify with their gender assigned at birth), resulting in exacerbated isolation among scientists who do not fit within the gender binary. The resulting climate for many LGBTQAI+ scientists remains unwelcoming in academia (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009; Patridge et al., 2014) and industry (Cech & Pham, 2017) alike. Explicit homophobia and transphobia are rarely the culprit of the negligence around LGBTQAI+ inclusion. Rather, implicit biases, much like those that have slowed the advancement of cis

women in STEM, create and perpetuate systems that marginalize queer scientists. When discussing the way that implicit bias impacts gender equity in STEM, a more inclusive definition of gender needs to be considered. In this way, the interests of all gender minorities in STEM fields can be represented.

Some faculty roles, such as leader and colleague, are institution-focused and relate primarily to the interpersonal interactions faculty have with other faculty, staff and administrators. More equitable, colleague-focused interactions are key to establishing a positive departmental culture and climate, which is important for the success and retention of students from underrepresented groups (Crowe, 2021) as well as female, minoritized and international faculty (Mamiseishvili & Lee, 2018). Higher rates of female faculty retention create role models and belongingness for female students and change the nature of research, teaching and mentoring that students experience. And a better climate for women encourages recruitment and retention of female students who then may begin to see STEM as a more welcoming field. These institution-focused roles are also critical because they can impact inequitable policies and procedures.

How then can we best support all faculty in developing the skills that they need to excel in their varied roles? Developed by the National Science Foundation Inclusion across the Nation of Communities of Learners of Underrepresented Discoverers in Engineering and Science (NSF INCLUDES) Aspire Alliance (Aspire), the Inclusive Professional Framework for Faculty (*IPF:Faculty*) articulates key foundational concepts (or domains) that are common across faculty roles (Gillian-Daniel et al., 2021), as presented in Figure 13.1. This framework equips faculty with attitudes, knowledge and skills essential for building authentic, equity-based relationships, cultures, norms and resources. Given that many faculty roles, not directly tied to discipline-specific knowledge, center around building relationships with others, these skills will lead to a more equitable STEM environment. Importantly, this framework works at both an individual and systems level (Gillian-Daniel & Bridgen, 2021).

The **Identity** domain of the *IPF:Faculty* includes awareness of personal and others' social and cultural identities, the intersectionality of those identities (Crenshaw, 1991) and examination of the role that identity plays in creating equitable and effective learning and working environments. This domain also includes the development of strategies for resolving intercultural conflict, as well as mitigating social and cultural identity-based bias, prejudice and microaggressions.

The **Intercultural** domain includes developing an understanding of cultural differences (e.g., around different racial, ethnic or social identity groups), in both domestic and international/local and global contexts. It involves understanding the value and impact of lived experiences, as well as cultural values, beliefs and customs. Critical to this domain is the ability to create effective interactions and practices where individuals can bring their

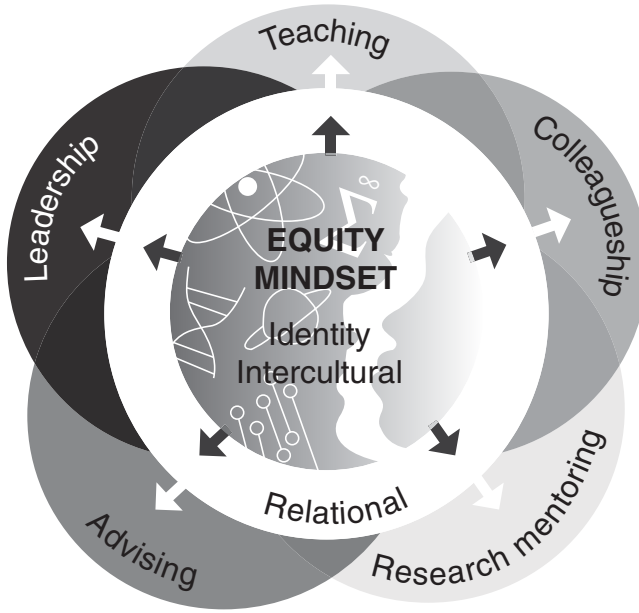


Figure 13.1 Aspire's Inclusive Professional Framework for Faculty.
Source: (Aspire Alliance, 2021).

full and authentic selves to a given experience (Bibus & Koh, 2021; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005).

The **Relational** domain rests on building one-on-one connections and interactions where all are welcome and supported. This relational domain includes creating interpersonal relationships and environments based on effective written, oral and behavioral skills in communication and trust-building.

Many of the skills identified through the *IPF:Faculty*, when put into practice, are communication skills, as all faculty roles include building relationships with students or colleagues. In addition, effective, equity-focused communication requires self-reflection, engagement, progress monitoring and adaptation, which further support self-directed growth (reviewed in Silver (2013)). The needed elements for inclusive and equitable communication and building mutually beneficial relationships are emphasized through the Relational domain of the framework. Using the *IPF:Faculty* for individual or group professional development necessitates practice and feedback of inclusive and equitable communication as a core element to advance all of the domains.

Leadership with an Equity Focus

Much has been written in the P-12 school domain about leadership that centers equity and focuses on supporting organizational change to advance

diversity and inclusion. Social justice, transformative and culturally responsive leadership are all terms used to describe “equity-centered” leadership (Galloway & Ishimaru, 2015). Adserias, Charleston and Jackson (2017) center the discussion of leadership with an equity focus in higher education and review the literature about diversity agendas, change paradigms, as well as leadership style. Other scholars have explored these equity-centered approaches to higher education leadership, including Santamaría and Santamaría (2015) who edited a volume that explores culturally responsive leadership, and Williams who articulated strategic diversity leadership (Williams, 2013) and the role of the Chief Diversity Officer (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013) in effecting organizational change at an institutional level. The reader is encouraged to explore these authors as a more in-depth exploration of the literature around equity-focused leadership approaches.

One additional model for equity in higher education can be found in the field of feminist pedagogy.

The basic principles center around the redistribution of power between faculty and students and creating a more democratic relationship. This is accomplished through (1) student empowerment, (2) building community, (3) privileging the individual voice as a way of knowing, (4) respecting diversity of personal experience and (5) challenging traditional views (Webb et al., 2002). For the purposes of this chapter, and following the lead of feminist pedagogy, we define “equity-centered” leadership as a structuring of institutional-level units (e.g., departments, schools, colleges) such that power structures can be dismantled, and solutions to problems emerge from open dialogue among all stakeholders. This requires opportunities for students (undergraduate and graduate), professional trainees (staff and post-docs), instructional faculty and research-focused faculty to build a community with institutional liaisons (e.g., department chairs, deans). Within this community, each individual needs to embody the cultural competency to engage in conversations and interpersonal relationships that validate all social and cultural identities and lived experiences. This competency can be built through specific, targeted professional development with a clear framework and with institutional change as a goal. Importantly, we are defining an institutional structure in which each participant embodies leadership with an equity focus within their own sphere of influence, whether that is the classroom, or at the department, school or college level. At the crux of this equity-centered leadership is a structure that engages individuals who have personal experience with the inequitable barriers that need to be addressed. Leadership with an equity focus also recognizes that based on a history of marginalization and discrimination; these individuals often lack the positional power of formalized institutional leadership and seeks to address that.

The *IPF:Faculty* provides a structure and framework for individuals and institutions to put into practice principles of equity-focused leadership. As an example, using the *IPF:Faculty*, an individual first builds an *awareness* of

the range of social and cultural identities and how identity impacts their and others' experiences. As they start to understand more deeply how different identities and types of discrimination overlap, accumulate and intersect, they begin to more deeply empathize with others. This awareness comes with the *knowledge* that certain populations carry a heavier and often invisible burden, due to systemic oppression and inequity, which also results in a greater negative impact on mental health and well-being. This awareness and knowledge make it possible for the individual to then seek out training opportunities and develop the *skills* to recognize conscious and unconscious bias and microaggressions (Solorzano et al., 2000; Sue, 2010a, 2010b) and address these problematic situations in the future (Carnes et al., 2015; Gillian-Daniel et al., 2020). In addition, the *IPF:Faculty* can be used as a lens to build awareness, knowledge and skills and take a more inclusive view of gender to expand our understanding of its role in higher education. Including the voices of women, men and fluid sexualities in policy decisions can aid in dismantling institutional structures that reinforce gender stereotypes and workplace norms.

In addition, while the purpose of this chapter is to discuss gender equity in higher education, it should be noted that equity-centered leadership strategies can also be used to address inequities that affect other marginalized social identities. The way individuals experience barriers is never due solely to their gender. This intersectional lens focuses on how different social identities combine and expand our understanding on privileges and oppressions that gender confers and better addresses these inequities. Because leadership with an equity focus aims to reveal bias and oppressive structures within a specific local context, it has the potential to create change cross-culturally, and to address a range of identity-related biases within higher education.

Using the framework, faculty are equipped to do the following: (1) embody leadership with an equity lens at an individual level as well as (2) advocate for change at an organizational level. In the following section, we explore examples of the ways the IPF can be operationalized within these spheres of faculty influence, by first centering leadership with an equity focus at the individual level of instructor in the classroom.

Classroom as Sphere of Influence

Introductory Undergraduate STEM Course

A student's perception of their future STEM career begins in the undergraduate classroom, if not earlier. As undergraduates navigate large, often challenging introductory STEM courses, they receive information about what STEM in higher education looks like. These messages come in the form of feedback on their performance in the course, their sense of self-efficacy and belonging compared to their classmates, their instructor, who may or may not share social and cultural identities as a model of a successful

STEM professional and direct messaging about what a STEM career path is. Historically, introductory STEM courses have focused solely on course content, implying that elements of identity, career goals and motivation are incidental or distracting from the goals of the course and the scientific process (Bowling & Martin, 1985).

Recent developments in inclusive teaching strategies emphasize the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) within STEM courses, finding that self-efficacy and sense of belonging predict retention, academic success and persistence in STEM courses across national contexts (Walton & Cohen, 2011; Yusoff, 2012) and persistence in STEM careers (Syed et al., 2018), particularly among underrepresented minority groups and gender minorities (Chemers et al., 2011). With respect to gender identity, students can receive direct messaging about the exclusionary history of STEM fields, and use that information to empower their persistence. Introductory STEM courses are a perfect setting to begin fostering this sense of inclusion and belonging, and faculty are key in setting a positive classroom and departmental climate, which is important for the success of students from underrepresented groups (Crowe, 2021).

Classroom as Sphere of Influence

Equity in STEM for All Genders Course (Graduate and Post-doc)

The IPF is a powerful framework for faculty to use as they interface with students in a variety of roles to intentionally address equity and inclusion. Using the lens of identity, intercultural awareness and interpersonal relationships, faculty are likely to improve each context they encounter and foster a more inclusive and equitable environment.

The framework can be implemented in a variety of contexts, and with gender equity, a powerful implementation is direct-bias intervention. To this end, a graduate-level course was created that comprehensively addresses issues around gender bias in STEM fields and was offered to graduate students and post-docs at institutions nationwide in the US via the CIRTL (Center for the Integration of Research Teaching and Learning) Network. The course serves STEM trainees (graduate students and post-docs) and engages them in discussion around their personal experiences with gender bias in STEM while validating their experiences with academic research about the prevalence of this type of bias. Second, the course serves as a concrete example of how the IPF can be used to instill equity-mindedness at the individual faculty/instructor level. And third, the course goal is to equip participants to be equity-focused leaders in their current departments and future careers, which positions them, as individuals, to leverage the principles of the *IPF:Faculty* at a systemic and structural level.

Equity in STEM for all Genders is a synchronous, online course offered as part of the curriculum of the CIRTL Network in (insert name of the

country)—a group of 42 higher education institutions that function as a network to promote professional development about teaching for a future faculty audience (e.g., graduate student and post-doc; www.cirtl.net). The class size ranges from 20 to 50 students from different institutions, and class sessions involve a combination of discussion, short lectures and interactive role-playing activities—described further in Knezz et al. (2021).

As shown in Table 13.2, each domain of the IPF manifests in different elements of the *Equity in STEM for All Genders* course, helping to instill in the future faculty STEM principles of equity-centered leadership.

Table 13.2 IPF: Society core component attitude, knowledge and skill activities as well as how those components map to the equity in STEM for all genders course

<i>Competence Measures</i>	
IPF: Societies Domain	Awareness [A] /Knowledge [K] /Skills [S] as put into Practice in the <i>Equity in STEM for All Genders Course</i>
Identity	Instructors with differing gender identities (cisgender woman, cisgender man, transgender man) share their varying experiences to model the intersection of gender identity with STEM power structures. Frame each topic as an invitation for students to share lived experiences from different identity perspectives. [A] Explore the data representing gender discrepancies in various STEM fields and contexts. Discuss how policies developed in STEM higher education can be influenced by gender bias (maternity leave policies, hiring practices, etc.). [K]
Intercultural Awareness	Apply an intersectional lens to experiences of gender bias in STEM. [A] Emphasize the value added to class discussion when a range of lived experiences and cultural backgrounds are represented from across the participant group. [A] Explore the research around how various gender identities experience gender bias differently in STEM and how other aspects of identity can play a role in marginalization. [K] Approach situations in STEM contexts with awareness of bias and ability to advocate for equitable alternatives. [S] Identify policies within an individual STEM context (one’s own department or institution), and propose an alternative policy that mitigates bias. [S]
Relational	Appreciate the way that gender bias affects classmates with different identities differently. [A] Read and analyze research that supports the way different relationships in STEM (research advisors/students, mentors/mentees, instructor/student) are affected by gender bias. [K] Communicate with one another about difficult or vulnerable topics, and validate others’ experiences. Voice support and empathy for classmates’ challenges and victories. Seek to understand how and why a classmate’s experience differs from your own. [S]

Educating early-career scientists about the systems in higher education that perpetuate gender bias and inspiring them to be vigilant against this will allow for a new generation of STEM professionals who are positioned to interfere with the long-standing institutional structures that have inhibited gender equity progress.

Organizational Structures and Policies in STEM Higher Education

In addition to student-focused roles, faculty maintain peer-focused roles as colleagues and leaders, and the IPF framework can aid faculty in addressing equity and inclusion in these roles as well, particularly because these roles are where the systemic and structural changes can occur through, for example, more equitable policy decisions. In this section, we identify three critical components of a STEM academic career progression that are impacted by gender inequity: (1) reward structures, (2) disciplinary norms regarding research and (3) structure of career progression. We will explore how the IPF, in combination with an equity-focused leadership mindset, can be used to reveal where gender inequities exist and importantly provide tools to address them.

Historically, STEM careers have been modeled as a “pipeline”, where trainees move in a linear fashion through their scientific training and eventually onto their careers. The pipeline model itself encourages faculty and the institutional leaders who oversee their progress to look for specific instances of discrimination, the “leaks” in the pipeline that might impede a scholar’s career progression (O’Connell & McKinnon, 2021). While these instances are important to identify, the model itself embodies a mindset grounded in dominant Western cultural assumptions about STEM career paths (Lykkegaard & Ulriksen, 2019; van den Hurk et al., 2019). For example, the pipeline assumes a common starting point, a common end goal and a linear pathway and progression between the two that follows in an uninterrupted timeline. Such a model itself limits the questions asked, the challenges observed, the opportunities allowed and the solutions posited.

We have already referred to Batchelor’s braided river analogy (2021) as an alternative model of the STEM career pathway. Alternative framings such as this, and others (e.g., Johnson & Bozeman, 2012), can change the discourse from identifying places where people have failed to reach a desired career outcome, to places the model has failed to value a diversity of individual assets, career approaches and aspirations. This shift allows us to interrupt the stigma around non-traditional career paths and empower individuals to balance whatever assets and challenges their individual lives present with a path to a fruitful STEM career (Listman & Dingus-Eason, 2018).

Reward Structure

One traditional measure of faculty career advancement is publications. The use of quantity of publications, citation rates and impact factors as primary indicators of STEM faculty success is problematic, because there are inherent biases and structural barriers that exclude women, nonbinary individuals and people from other minoritized groups from achieving the same degree as cis-identified men are able to achieve. For instance, Davies et al. (2021) mention higher rates of self-citation by men, women having shorter career lengths than men, as well as the existence of exclusionary networks in science (meetings, conferences, review panels). An introspective examination of the multifaceted nature of science is needed to create systemic change and requires questions like the following to be asked: (a) Who gets invited to write papers, commentaries or book chapters? (Thomas et al., 2019), (b) What scholarship is used as the gold standard for high quality and is therefore cited more often?, (c) What biases exist in scholarly peer review processes? (Helmer et al., 2017), (d) Are awards, prizes and nominations being awarded equitably across genders? (Lincoln et al., 2012), (e) What is the most used language for publications and how can that affect diverse representations of world views and perspectives? (Ramírez-Castañeda, 2020), (f) Can diverse scholarly activities like mentorship, community-based research, excellence in teaching, extension and outreach be recognized in promotion guidelines? and (g) Can this work be included as supplemental pieces in tenure dossiers even when published in non-traditional outlets?

Critiques of the promotion and tenure process include its focus on research and publication and frequent devaluing faculty labor in areas like community service, DEI initiatives and teaching, which can reinforce a systemic bias against women and other individuals with minoritized identities, who are more likely to engage in those activities (Diekman et al., 2010). BiPOC (Black Indigenous People of Color) and women faculty more frequently incorporate equity ethics in STEM and engage in service that is motivated by an altruistic desire to give back to or serve the community (McGee, 2021). Institutions have begun to examine tenure and promotion to create processes that support the stated DEI aspirations of their institutions (Khalid & Snyder, 2021).

Disciplinary Norms Regarding Research

In most STEM disciplines, disciplinary research is evaluated on a series of criteria that are based on both individual and systemic biases, further creating a limited definition of what is considered valid and rigorous research. Epistemic exclusion, the institutional systems of evaluation that combine with individual biases to devalue certain types of scholarship, has been shown to impact BiPOC and women scholars (Settles et al., 2021) and

to lead to the perception that certain scholars, and types of research, lack value or are illegitimate. This marginalization can include types of questions asked, methodology employed, populations studied and knowledge valued. This bias against certain types of research topics can ultimately influence what research is and is not funded for study (Hoppe et al., 2019).

Structure of Career Progression

What pathway/timeline is right for STEM practitioners? Traditional pipeline views fail to acknowledge factors such as evolving career paths, caregiver demands that fall disproportionately on women, career goals that are not tied to traditional measures of prestige, that are instead driven by equity ethics and a sense of wanting to pay back or return home to apply one's skills. Disproportionate demands are also placed on faculty who carry traditionally minoritized identities in terms of service, advising, mentoring. And this increased time burden is compounded by an institutional lack of recognition of this labor and lack of it being valued in tenure considerations (CohenMiller, 2014).

Applying the IPF to Organizational Structures and Policies

The IPF enables faculty and other institutional leaders to build their *awareness* of the differential impacts of social and cultural identities, combined with systemic and structural inequities, on STEM training and career advancement. It also supports these institutional leaders as they develop *knowledge* about the statistics behind the inequities at a local, national and global level. For example, leaders can consider institutional and global data reporting on gender representation in STEM fields. These data have almost exclusively been reported in terms of binary gender—that of “male” and “female” (Table 13.1). As a result, efforts to promote gender equity have often taken the form of “Women in Science” events that further marginalize transgender and nonbinary scientists. While it is important to note and track the progress of cisgender women in fields that have historically been dominated by cisgender men, it is vital to adopt a definition of gender equity that encompasses the representation of all genders.

Further, the framework empowers institutional leaders to leverage their positional power within their own spheres of influence to raise others' awareness and knowledge. By asking the types of questions identified in this chapter and pursuing *conversations* about the answers, individuals can begin to push back against inequitable systems and structures and make different, equity-informed policy decisions to effect change.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Gender imbalances have persisted throughout waves of feminism and calls to action from within and without the scientific community. It is easy, in the

face of this persistence, to be discouraged and to believe that this problem can only be solved by the leadership of those with institutional power. It is this assumption that has continued to disempower marginalized gender groups and has facilitated the inhibition of necessary change. A shift in the perception of leadership and accountability is the catalyst for institutional and structural change.

The *IPF:Faculty* is a tool that equips STEM faculty in higher education with a framework to approach their roles with an equity mindset and empowers them to be leaders to advocate for necessary change. Further, this mindset allows faculty to empower others within their sphere of influence to do the same—from undergraduates in gateway STEM courses to Ph.D. trainees in research labs. Faculty hold this kind of power in a variety of contexts, and the skills, knowledge and awareness that the IPF provides a different lens, and allows them to use their position with intention and insight. In this way, leaders can emerge in higher education at all levels to enact the changes required to achieve gender equity.

Equity-focused leadership in STEM means that the many disparate groups that work together to move science forward and train future scientists must all be empowered to influence others in their sphere. Beyond empowerment, it also requires those who hold institutional power to examine how the structures they uphold dismiss and erase identities. Because the goals of individuals within STEM higher education are so broad and diverse, encompassing everything from classroom objectives to large-scale research efforts to interdisciplinary collaboration to major grant funding, equity efforts often get siloed and eventually ignored. By creating a shared vision for gender equity in STEM fields, each person within their local sphere can communicate and hold others accountable for the examination of policies and structures. Gender equity in STEM is not simply about recruiting more women scientists; it is about changing the conversation to make a universally accessible system for developing a career as a scientist. It is about empowering individuals of all genders to advocate for the type of training that is compatible with their lives, that facilitates their work and their success.

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Notes

- * Stephanie Knezz and Donald L. Gillian-Daniel both contributed equally to this work.
- 1 Mental models are deeply held beliefs and assumptions that influence how we engage with the world around us (Kania, 2018). Building an equity mindset through the framework involves articulating these mental models, making sure that they are grounded in equity and inclusion and revising them as needed to ensure that action reflects this grounding.

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14 Feminist Perspectives for the Co-decolonization of Gender Equality in Cambodian Higher Education

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Introduction

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Cambodia have seen tremendous growth since the reintegration of formal education institutions after the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979 (Chealy, 2009). Despite this growth, the quality of HEIs remains relatively poor and with most HEIs located in urban centers, access to these institutions is difficult for students outside urban areas, especially for female students. Additionally, the interplay of patriarchal and colonial forces in the field of gender and higher education spaces remains prevalent. The current chapter seeks to establish a framework in which Khmer actors within higher education can co-decolonize these spaces. Co-decolonization, as defined and modeled throughout this chapter, is a method of collaborative deconstruction and reconstruction of native and indigenous education systems of education (Santamaria & Santamaria Graff, 2021). By developing a workshop created by a team of Cambodian and American researchers and higher education actors, we seek to support lasting change in these spaces through the collaborative development of co-decolonization processes. We argue that illuminating and developing these processes using the co-decolonization framework can help dismantle colonial, decolonial, and patriarchal policy and practice within Cambodian higher education.

Background

The Khmer Rouge genocide, 1975–1979, destroyed formal education in an effort to rid the country of colonial powers and international influences. In addition to the destruction of educational institutions and infrastructure, the educated population was targeted and killed in an effort to “cleanse” the population of Cambodian men, women, and children who were educated by the French protectorate and other international institutions (Chandler, 1999). The colonization of Cambodia and the influence of the French

education system was a significant departure from traditional forms of education taking place only for the boys in Wats (i.e., temples). There was no parallel system of education for girls. During the genocide, Western-influenced schools were converted to prisons or destroyed to reinforce the desire of the Khmer Rouge to eliminate all external influences on the population. After the fall of the Khmer Rouge in 1979, the newly formed (and Vietnamese-supported) government reestablished an education system similar to the educational system in Vietnam, Cuba, and the Soviet Union (Clayton, 1999). Compulsory schools took on the 5+3+3 system and evolved into a model that currently consists of preschool, primary, secondary (lower and upper), and higher education.

It wasn't until 1993 with the new Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia that formal articles of education were explicitly stated. Article 68 of the Constitution refers to the government's responsibility to provide education for nine years, although the content can be modified and decentralized in order to provide optimal educational opportunities within a given context (Chhinhi & Dy, 2009). Additional policies outlined by the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) in 1996 outline performance indicators in order to promote quality education, teacher training, as well as to support the development of key skills and competencies needed for the country to continue growing economically from a low- to middle-income country. Additional policies published by MoEYS continued through the early 2000s (and remain today) with an emphasis on Education for All, the cultivation of a knowledge-based society, and accountability and transparency in the education sector (MoEYS, 2019). While these policies are outlined in some detail for compulsory schooling controlled by the government, less regulation is seen in higher education spaces.

While HEIs are widespread in Cambodia, the diversity of the institutions is significant. When the Royal University of Phnom Penh reopened in 1979, there were few professors remaining to support student learning (Chandler, 1999). The decades to follow proved most difficult for the HEI sector, as the required skills and education of professors and other faculty were unavailable (Ahrens & McNamera, 2013). Public HEIs are managed and supported by nine government offices, including MoEYS; the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries; Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts; Ministry of Economic and Finance; Ministry of Religious Affairs; Ministry of National Defense; Office of the Council of Ministers; and Ministry of Health (UNESCO, 2006). Outside of the government-run HEIs, private universities began to emerge in the late 1990s as profit centers and degree mills (Chealy, 2009). These institutions saw dramatic growth in enrollment and continue to compete in the HEI space, with almost half of all students enrolled in an HEI at a private university.

This initial step of examining co-decolonization and gender in higher education and setting the foundation for Cambodian-constructed

co-decolonization framework will interrogate and deconstruct inequities within gender and higher education spaces and reconstruct alternatives to global colonizing and decolonizing patriarchal discourse. The impacts of the work put into motion the potential of a Global South feminist, co-decolonization framework originating in an area where feminism is often viewed as an external, Western concept (Grace & Oul, 2020; Rogers & Nairn, 2020). Through a collaborative and co-decolonization process, both leadership and methodological approaches are framed through a Cambodian-driven lens, with the support of Western-trained researchers and authors that focuses on context-specific approaches to gender and higher education in Cambodia.

Literature Review

With the recent history and complexities growing in HEIs in Cambodia, including a rapid influx of Eurocentric and other international influences on HEI, it is important to carefully navigate the inclusion of gender equality in HEI as it relates to both the local culture and context of Cambodia, as well as an understanding of the influence of colonization of education on women. While colonization generally refers to the political and social dominance of an outside influence on a country or population, in the context of colonial education this is often created by colonial powers to reinforce the education of the population to become civil servants and educated in the culture and norms of the colonial power (Mok & Lee, 2000). The international influences on HEIs in Cambodia, especially private institutions, is of significant concern related to the content and curricular initiatives implemented at these institutions. In addition, research on the influence of HEIs on gender norms in the Cambodian context is lacking. The goal of co-decolonization, therefore, comes from a concerted effort by outside actors (non-Native, non-Indigenous) to support the “rewriting and righthing” of educational practices (Smith, 2009, p. 29), and more specifically as that relates to gender in HEIs in Cambodia. The rewriting of educational practices allows for a reorientation of teaching and learning that supports authentic and decolonized spaces, while righthing promotes the acknowledgment of the marginalization and wrongdoing that comes with the colonization of a country and its people.

Because of the rapid expansion of HEIs, this phase of reconstruction is an ideal time to address the decolonization of gender in higher education. Recent research indicates that decolonization in its common form can entrench colonial beliefs and practices further as external actors and researchers undertake the practice of decolonization for Cambodians (Beeman-Cadwallader, Quigley, & Yazzie-Mintz, 2012). Current practices, when established and implemented by the same authors and agents that created the imposition of external values and beliefs related to education, create a “solution” that again is implemented by outside actors (Battiste, 2017).

Co-decolonization, or the practice of both dismantling and reconstructing native and indigenous educational practices with teams from diverse backgrounds, allows for an authentic co-creation of educational approaches and curriculum that foster authentic, culturally appropriate, and locally relevant educational opportunities (Beeman-Cadwallader et al., 2012). By nature of this practice, co-decolonization inherently requires interpretation and integration of specific methodologies to support the co-decolonization of the topic within the given context. To this end, the process of co-decolonization (Santamaria & Santamaria Graff, 2021) emphasizes a collaborative process and output that helps participants to:

- 1 Reframe notions of traditional research;
- 2 Understand the importance of sacred space and “being” with communities pre-inquiry (i.e., before making assumptions or recommendations);
- 3 Support community’s identification of community-serving research needs, questions, and approaches;
- 4 Co-create through forms (i.e., methods) by sharing traditional research methods to allow for adaptation, change, and innovation;
- 5 Facilitate community-engaged research methods and efforts in a supportive, conscious experiential community.

Looking more specifically through a co-decolonization lens and incorporating agents and actors from different perspectives, we engaged in the “rewriting and righthing” of gender in higher education and allow for integration (or reintegration) of cultural norms and beliefs that are essential and authentic to the community and culture where education is taking place. In Cambodia, as is the case in most countries, education and social norms differ by locality, province, religion, and other factors. The importance of the “co” in co-decolonization is the balance, or joint participation, in the dismantling of oppressive or inappropriate practices and structures. Given the deeply rooted gender dynamics in Cambodian culture (Santry, 2005), the dismantling of gender in higher education comes with a contextual lens that must be addressed in order for co-decolonization of gender in higher education to be understood and supported in a way that integrates the cultural norms, values, and beliefs of teachers, students, families, and communities.

This chapter examines the experiences of Cambodian higher education actors in Cambodia in the construction of a co-decolonizing framework for gender in higher education. Using a co-decolonizing framework, we assessed current practices around gender in Cambodian higher education. We initially explored these mechanisms through a decolonization lens, with the intent of providing insight into the promotion and adoption of co-decolonizing practices. We sought to answer the question: How do currently utilized co-decolonizing frameworks apply to Cambodian gender and Higher Education policy and practices?

Researcher Positionality

Our research team consists of five women with diverse backgrounds. Three of us are Khmer Cambodians who were raised and educated in Cambodia and are fluent in English. Two of us pursued graduate studies abroad. We have different backgrounds in degrees and majors, but we share the same interest to promote more exercise and practices for gender equity in Cambodian's HEI. Two of us are white, middle-class Americans with Ph.D. degrees in education and limited Khmer language proficiency. The American team members have collectively spent two decades researching and supporting Cambodian education, gender, and socialization within the Cambodian context. Collectively, we all work in academia, although our roles within the academic context vary slightly. From professors to NGO practitioners, our commonalities stem from our feminist viewpoints and dedication to educational practices that support Cambodian-led educational opportunities that support the promotion of gender equity in higher education.

Methodology

Feminist Participatory Action Research Method

Within this context, Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) is well suited to provide a methodological perspective that integrates co-decolonization in a way that supports all voices, requires full participation, and allows for emergent themes and concepts to co-decolonize and, in this instance, co-create an authentic framework for the support of a community of actors that give input and perspectives on the different roles, expectations, and investments of the process of co-decolonization of gender in higher education in Cambodia. FPAR engages the voices of participants around the deconstruction of inequitable power dynamics and patriarchal practices to center participant agency in the co-construction of research and knowledge. At the heart of FPAR is the identification of the research process, researchers, and the communication of research findings as a gatekeeping process that privileges the knowledge of white patriarchal colonial voices and the reconstruction of the definition of whose knowledge is legitimate. The ultimate goal of FPAR is structural change (Chakma, 2016) and political activism (Wickramasinghe, 2010). FPAR calls for the engagement of participants as co-researchers in an iterative, organic, and reflective process of inquiry to themes of gender, multiple identities and interlocking oppressions, everyday experiences, and power (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000).

We engage FPAR as a methodology in the co-decolonization process because of its ability to challenge traditional, colonial power hierarchies in feminist research. Co-decolonization calls for radical reckoning with the trauma caused by colonial forces and the research process. FPAR has

been shown to support collective solidarity and inclusive decision making (Chakma, 2016). It also builds the capacity of co-researchers in research skills and knowledge, while potentially shifting what is viewed as legitimate knowledge (Riley & Scharff, 2013). Co-decolonization similarly seeks to shift the colonial view of legitimate knowledge and amplify the voices of women (and others) marginalized by colonization and research processes deemed legitimate by colonizers (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2021). Both FPAR and co-decolonization seek to amplify the indigenous voices of the colonized. Within the goals and objectives of the current chapter, FPAR methodologically provides an opportunity to fully engage in and maintain the integrity of the theoretical aims of co-decolonization.

This method is relevant to our work in co-decolonization in Cambodian higher education spaces given the long history of colonial forces which continue to influence gender and education. Because this workshop engaged Cambodian higher education actors in the process of evaluating and developing a contextually relevant co-decolonizing framework examining gendered spaces in higher education, FPAR is a flexible and appropriate method that engaged participants in the research process. To exclude participants from the research process would be disingenuous to the goals of co-decolonization by marginalizing those we seek to learn from. Additionally, Cambodian higher education is a patriarchal space dominated by ethnically Khmer culture and knowledge. It is critical that this work amplifies the voices of the diverse ethnic groups in Cambodia (e.g., Cham). FPAR is a methodology that documents the myriad of patriarchal and colonial forces which silence indigenous knowledge and ways of being and calls for action to change the gendered spaces of the Cambodian higher education landscape. We also recognize the limitations of the FPAR approach, which includes the risk of tokenism in the application of the method (Godden, 2017), the continued issues of power imbalances and safety (Gatenby and Humphries, 2000), and the perceived lack of professionalism in the methodology (Duraiappah et al., 2005). By combining FPAR with co-decolonizing theory and approaches, we mitigated these issues by grounding our method and framework in complementary approaches to research and practical application of co-decolonization.

Co-decolonization for Gender in Higher Education Workshop

For this, the authors co-created and implemented a half-day co-decolonization workshop for higher education personnel in Cambodia in September 2021, which included the five researchers authoring this chapter, one of which was also a participant in the research, for a total of 14 participants and 4 researchers facilitating the workshop. The aim of the workshop was to identify and analyze co-decolonization frameworks for their relevance and applicability to gender spaces in the Cambodian higher education system and to create a co-decolonization framework that

is contextualized and inclusive, giving voice to ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities along with those marginalized by gender.

The workshop was conducted online via Zoom, with most of the workshop conducted in Khmer, except for one breakout room led by the two American authors. This breakout room was conducted in English and participants were asked about their familiarity and comfort level with English to ensure that participants in this breakout room could comfortably work in English. The breakout rooms lasted 25 minutes. Participants were engaged in a Telegram chat before and after the workshop in Khmer and a pre- and post-survey was distributed before and after the workshop. Consent was obtained from all participants prior to engagement with participants and prior to the workshop.

Workshop participants and research team members were identified using snowball sampling, a strategy in which the researcher asks each person interviewed to suggest additional people for interviewing (Rubin & Babbie, 2007). Four male and ten female participants took part in the workshop. Male participants are employed at private and public institutions in various roles, including head of the department at a private university, staff at a private university, and staff at a public university holding top management roles. Female participants also worked in top management at public and private universities, as well as staff at the National Institute of Education and regional teacher's colleges. Three female Cham Muslim participants were part of the workshop, while the rest of the participants were ethnically Khmer (see Table 14.1).

Data Analysis

Using qualitative approaches guided by FPAR, we analyzed workshop documents, workshop whole group and breakout room sessions, autoethnographic interviews, as well as our memos of the process. This process was initially guided by open coding, but as we each experienced co-decolonization differently in our teamwork and research approaches, we diverged from traditional methods of analysis to a more collaborative style of a blended deductive and inductive coding that honored and centered the data analysis experiences of one of the team's Khmer researchers. All documents were co-coded. In this way, we intentionally shifted from a traditional approach to data analysis, while simultaneously maintaining trustworthiness of the data. Following coding, we collaboratively developed categories and themes through weekly team meetings, which revolved around key questions of identity, co-decolonization, gender, and higher education in Cambodia, which were developed for the workshop.

Findings

While our research team underwent profound shifts related to co-decolonization approaches, these findings are beyond the scope of this

Table 14.1 Participant background information

No	Sex	Ethnicity	Institution	Code HIE	Career Positionality
1	F	Khmer	Battambang Teacher Education College	Public	Top Management
2	F	Khmer	Royal University of Phnom Penh	Public	Middle Management
3	F	Khmer Muslim	General Taxation Department		Staff
4	M	Khmer	Cambodian Community Dream Org/Head of Dep, Private University	Private	Middle Management
5	F	Khmer Muslim	General Taxation Department		Staff
6	M	Khmer	History Department, Royal University of Phnom Penh	Public	Staff
7	F	Khmer Muslim	Protek Cambodia		Staff
8	F	Khmer	Battambang Teacher Education College	Public	Staff
9	M	Khmer	Kampong Chheuteal Institute of Technology	Public	Top Management
10	F	Khmer	National Institute of Public Health	Public	Staff
11	F	Khmer	Albert International Academy	Private	Top Management
12	M	Khmer	Pannasastra University of Cambodia	Private	Staff
13	F	Khmer	National Institute of Education	Public	Staff
14	F	Khmer	Kids Play International/ Southeast Asian University	Private	Staff

chapter. Therefore, findings are centered around the co-decolonization workshop with the intent for our team to publish on our own transformations at a later time. Findings of data analysis revealed themes around lost, marginalized, and reclaimed identities, in particular the interaction of gender and ethnic identities and personal, professional, and educational identities as carriers that enhance or deny autonomy in higher education spaces. Central to the pathways that these intersectional identities created were notions of leadership for co-decolonization in gender and higher education, grassroots organizing through the បុគ្គលគួរឱ្យកោតសរសើរ (*bokul kour oy koat sor seu* – admirable person) model, and male allyship. While the steps of co-decolonization outlined in Santamaria and Santamaria Graff (2021) center around research practices, we found that discussions in the co-decolonization workshop were rooted in practice and therefore brought forward challenges and opportunities for co-decolonizing practices in gender and higher education spaces. We believe that our adherence to the five steps

of co-decolonization in research created a space in which participants could begin to examine and dismantle the systems of oppression that are built into HEI spaces in Cambodia (e.g., lack of women role models and lack of women in leadership roles). However, participants did discuss the need for co-decolonized research approaches, guided by the five-step process outlined above, to dismantle patriarchal systemic structures in higher education that keep women and ethnic minorities out of leadership roles in higher education in Cambodia. Through participant discussion of these themes, we constructed a potential path forward in recommendations for a co-decolonization framework rooted in Khmer intersectional identity to deconstruct patriarchal, colonial, and even decolonial forces embedded in Cambodian higher education for critical consciousness and enlightenment.

Identities: Reclaimed, Lost, and Marginalized

Through this workshop, participants described the preferencing and marginalization of identities, as well as the possibility to reclaim identities through government policy and initiatives for increasing ethnic representation in higher education. Attracting women and ethnic minority students to HEI was a common theme. Participants discussed the desire of institutions to attract women to HEI, which was in contrast to the experiences of the description of a lack of efforts and mechanisms, that is, practices and systems in place to support those efforts, for recruiting women and ethnic minority faculty. Though co-decolonization was a new concept to participants, it was a concept that was embraced as a practical approach to addressing issues of positionality, gender, and higher education. The participant-researcher on our team served as a grounding force for the research team. She reminded us of the need for co-decolonization processes within research teams as well as the power of co-decolonization to provide a space for dialogue, sharing experiences, and changing the way that higher education actors engage in patriarchal spaces.

Given the stigma of being a Muslim in Cambodia, we were surprised to learn that ethnic minority participants discussed reclaiming identity through government policy which promotes inclusion in HEIs. All ethnic minority participants who joined the workshop expressed experiences of networking and amplifying their identity in HEIs through policy with the aim of motivating more female students of minoritized ethnic backgrounds to pursue higher education and careers in HEI. Discussion of co-decolonization illustrated the policy level and the grassroots mechanism support for female Muslim participants in receiving higher education. As one participant stated, “from then until now, there is no stigma or discrimination because the Government increase the awareness and encourage Muslim in society” (Participant 3). A lack of religious stigma, however, does not indicate empowerment or voice, but another participant indicated that it is more than a lack of stigma and that her Muslim identity was a supporting factor in

her ability to pursue a higher education, stating “I was lucky because I have Muslim association to promote female Muslim to pursue higher education and I now work for government” (Participant 5). Because this research did not include any ethnic minority faculty at HEIs or any ethnic minorities, we are unable to examine how these policies might impact women of ethnic minority status who pursue careers in higher education.

The lost identities of women, and in particular professional identities, were referenced by several participants in the co-decolonization workshop. Participant 6 addressed that “so many conservations in Cambodia, half-blood Chinese dare not reveal their identity, they practice their tradition secretly it is related to social value, Khmer is higher class, cham & Chinese are immigrants.” Class identity is left on the margins in HEIs in Cambodia. In the co-decolonizing workshop, the class was referenced by men and women as motivation for seeking equity in gender and higher education spaces, with male participants relating the need to co-decolonize higher education spaces through their own marginalized experiences as members of the lower class. Participant 9 discussed his experience in rural Cambodia growing up in poverty and that the challenges he faced gaining access to education led him to align with the needs of women in similar situations in gaining access to higher education. Yet, it was his institution’s initiative to enroll more women in his Technical and Vocational Education and Training institution that was driving increased women’s enrollment in his institution and was a guiding force in his own interest in co-decolonizing gender spaces in higher education. Participant 4, a male participant described his own barriers with class and his entry into a female-dominated professional sphere:

My experience is as a farmer’s son. As I came from a poor family, with no parent’ support, no direction and clear vision in studying and life or even choosing a subject major in higher education. I took the risk to come to Phnom Penh. My dream for the future was to be a medical doctor. But I failed the exam. I didn’t know the differences between a medical doctor and a nurse. In general, nurses are women rather than men. I just continued to apply and did the exam. I passed the nurse entrance exam with the highest scores. At that time, I was excited, but actually I felt hurt because there was a candidate who had lower scores than me but that one passed due to corruption. In my first and second year at the nurse training program, I realized that the nurse profession is the one who takes care of patients, not medical doctors.

The co-decolonization workshop stimulated the examination of identities in Cambodian higher education, but silences around this discussion indicate spaces where further co-decolonization work could lead to the interrogation of power and gender in HEIs in Cambodia. Intersecting identities were largely undiscussed and considerations of identity centered around women. There was discussion of the interaction of class and gender, but primarily

among male participants. While the marginalization of LGBTQ+ identities was mentioned in passing, this was limited and there was no participant representation of this group that we were aware of. Cambodian HEIs are fertile ground for co-decolonization, with HEI actors in middle management and outside of leadership in HEIs seeking to implement relevant change in positionality and valuing identity. Unfortunately, these efforts are thwarted through systematic exclusion and silencing of these actors and other non-dominant group voices at the leadership levels, thereby maintaining professional power while signaling representation and inclusion through students.

Co-Decolonizing Leadership in Patriarchal Spaces in Cambodian Higher Education

From participant discussion in the co-decolonization workshop, the desire to include women and others with marginalized identity remained at the student level. Participants discussed the exclusionary gender practices of higher education which either kept women and others with marginalized identity out of positions of power or which silenced those who sought to create change in leadership positions. The higher education structure in Cambodia excludes women from positions of leadership, despite policy to support women in HEIs, with common patriarchal structures and practices such as creating inhospitable workspace, lack of gender equity input into recruitment plans and processes, and male-dominated spaces of leadership. Participant 6 also described that there are “no quotas for male and female staff, no female voice for curriculum development, and a lack of understanding of female needs.” All female participants expressed that they experienced humiliation during their professional life and that they felt that they lost a form of their identities, be it related to gender, ethnicity, ability, or religion, as a result of patriarchal expectations in higher education systems and in Cambodian society at large. Participant 8 stated, “There is no encouragement and incentive for females who are active performer to exercise her duty or task.” Even when women made it into leadership spaces in higher education, both male and female participants described being unable to work against the higher education system with one participant stating that “I could not express any thought because my position was just the head of department.” (Participant 1). She further expressed that the hierarchical structure of the university limited her ability to express her thoughts at higher levels of the university. However, the co-decolonization workshop created space in which to consider positionality in gender and higher education spaces:

I reflected back to the presentation on the levels of structure (individual, family, community and society)—more difficulties to express when people see me as a young girl who is the head of department,

where most of the structure and hierarchical decision making are majority men.

(Participant 2)

This highlights the potential of a co-decolonizing framework and workshop to begin to analyze and discuss these patriarchal forces and structures and consider ways to dismantle the gender exclusionary practices seen in leadership in HEIs. Participant 9, a man working in a rural HEI, indicated that while promoting women in education, a lack of higher education degrees and credentials also keeps women out of institutional spaces that insist they want female leaders. He stated that:

... in my institute we try to promote women in a little leadership role but you know in my institution, because we are located in a remote area, we have to find the female staff that has the capability to take a role in the management team. Because in my school, we have few women that finish their study for higher education, so it's hard to find females to be in the leadership role, but we try we encourage them to study a master degree or something like that, but in my mind, I would like to support female staff in the leadership role.

In this way, HEIs, and the legitimacy of degrees, exclude women and others. Yet even those female participants who earned higher education degrees indicated that this was not sufficient and that to pursue leadership roles in HEIs they needed international degrees, “I thought that within this position as deputy director of this institute, I am not qualified with such a requirement as I just have local master’s degrees—hence in 2020 I planned to apply for PhD scholarship in Japan” (Participant 1).

And yet even with a well-respected international degree, one woman (Participant 2) in our workshop ended up working outside of HEIs in order to work in a leadership role, though she did state that “what helped me is education. I can say that my degree from overseas helped me to step into the leadership role because I did Master of Educational Leadership.” She left her dream of being a female university lecturer in order to seek a leadership role in higher education. In this way, the legitimacy of higher education and the degrees that they produce serve as exclusionary forces for reproducing patriarchal and colonial power in HEIs. Additionally, women who pursue this path also risk losing their job as they attempt to pursue international higher education degrees and face professional instability as they attempt to fulfill these unwritten expectations of chasing higher education to be agentic actors in HEIs. While this is not only an issue for women, it is compounded by their marginalized identity. As Participant 2 discussed in follow-up conversations, though “the Ministry of Education does have its own policy to save spots for women in management positions if this position

used to be held by a woman,” policy safeguards for women to maintain their jobs in HEIs are not always reified in practice.

បុគ្គលគួរឱ្យកោតសរសើរ (bokul kour oy koat sor seu – *The Admirable Person Model*)

To circumvent these factors and to find a welcoming space in leadership in education, this participant, and others, relied on other women as informal professional networks, support systems, and empowering pathways. As our team discussed this process, we discussed that this moves beyond the notion of role models, mentoring, or other ways in which women seek support in patriarchal higher education spaces. Role models are viewed from afar and mentoring is a process, formal or informal, that indicates a one-on-one process. What we describe below, we have described in Khmer, in order to represent what we believe is a significant part of grassroots networking that helps circumvent oppression and exclusion in HEIs and instead seeks to navigate the professional world of education on the margins of HEIs and sometimes even beyond HEIs altogether. Participants also discussed the importance of being this បុគ្គលគួរឱ្យកោតសរសើរ (The Admirable Person Model) for students and other women in HEIs. This engagement of បុគ្គលគួរឱ្យកោតសរសើរ (The Admirable Person Model) was described through the sharing of inspirational stories, experiences of challenges that they have overcome in society, culture, and structural barriers. The researcher/participant on our team validated this experience. She described her participation in the co-decolonization workshop and indicated that a participants’ sharing of her experience in a safe space was important to her own experience. The participant shared that:

People judged me as a crazy woman. I always asked myself, “Am I crazy? I answered myself that I am so crazy but it is maybe because I acknowledge the educational issues, relationship between theories and practices in another level where most of the majority people do not have such understanding.

(Participant 1)

The បុគ្គលគួរឱ្យកោតសរសើរ (The Admirable Person Model) also supported through direct professional recruitment and job networking, and with women in leadership positions in higher education who center gender and identity as a priority. As Participant 11 shared:

I think the identity, it depends on the owner of the university as well, are they higher in institutions, like the university that I work for my Rector, as a woman, so I think the way she support the program and even offering the major at the University, also, she also think about the females to them as well.

Through these networking of បុគ្គលគួរឱ្យកោតសរសើរ (The Admirable Person Model), women found inspiration, professional connection, and mobility, and a way to navigate patriarchal and colonial barriers. Amplifying the empowerment that participants described in their own experiences and through the experiences of others highlights the opportunity for ownership of the co-decolonization process and the creation of a space for the dismantling of patriarchal and colonial forces from experiences of autonomy such as Participant 1:

My experiences, life challenges, discouragement in the career profession that I exercised and the career pathway that I came across are the extra empowerment for my desire for self-development and long-term vision to achieve more achievements in life and professional career.

This aligns with a guiding principle in co-decolonization in which there are reciprocal relationships to co-decolonize. Given that these reciprocal relationships are already occurring on some level, future co-decolonizing workshops could provide a space for the បុគ្គលគួរឱ្យកោតសរសើរ (The Admirable Person) model to find a platform for working to dismantle patriarchal and colonialist structures within HEIs.

While many participants described these relationships as between women, our team envisioned these relationships as expansive beyond women and therefore our team arrived at the concept of admirable person. Also, we feel it is important to note that one participant extensively described women as creating barriers for other women with “Discrimination, gender bias and devalue on women’s capacity not always perceived by majority men but women also look down and discriminate on women not to support women” (Participant 1). In the workshop planning, we envisioned a continuation of the networking and sharing of co-decolonization work through associations and open research platforms such as Research Gate to continue growing opportunities outside of the formal networks of HEIs.

Co-decolonization Framework

Figure 14.1 outlines workshop findings presented as a framework for co-decolonization. Adapted from the Diagram of Dispositional Orientation to Unlearning, Re-membering and Re-imagining Futures (Santamaria & Santamaria Graff, 2021), this framework describes a process that is both continual and also an outcome of the co-decolonization workshop. The centering of identity and positionality in the workshop materials (PowerPoint, manual, and breakout room discussions) cultivated consciousness and awareness around positionality. From this awareness, participants identified barriers and supporting structures and processes that were the lived experiences of participants but were unvoiced, quieted, and even silenced.

A preliminary co-decolonization framework allows for further examination and deconstruction of patriarchal and colonial forces within HEIs. But it serves only as a starting point. Participants discussed the need for further engagement and the use of international publication machinery to further explore the framework. We want to stress that the framework in Figure 14.1 is participant-derived, but not participant-constructed. This is a limitation of our work. The short timeframe of the co-decolonization process and the realities of the limitations of time for follow up with participants means that this framework is participant-derived, but researcher-constructed. It is our hope that continued engagement with this process will result in a participant-constructed co-decolonization framework for gender in higher education in Cambodia.

Critical actions needed to move the co-decolonization process forward were identified by our team as networking for voice and continual engagement in the co-decolonization process. Networking for voice seems to be particularly important for ethnic minorities in their ability to reclaim their identity. This networking was expressed as an important aspect of the ability to access higher education. Participant 5 stated, “I was lucky because I have Muslim association to promote female Muslim to pursue higher education and I now work for government,” indicating that this networking is a critical action to reclaim lost and marginalized identities. Continual engagement was highlighted in the ability to interact with participants through Telegram for follow-up questions and to be able to ensure member checking and the true representation of participant’s voice. Participants also suggested this continual engagement in the form of research. They suggested further approaches for workshop organizers (researchers) to bring to light, record, and publish the stories of women in the higher education which challenge both individuals and the system for leadership positions. Participant 1 suggested, “Due to the rich and unique background of each participant, I suggested to researchers in this project further conduct and collection of case study to be publicized for lessons- learned and model for the young generation.” And that these case studies “could help to determine that we all have different backgrounds and difficulty, but we have our own journey. We know that we all need motivation” (Participant 2).

Discussion

The implementation of the co-decolonization workshop in gender and higher education in Cambodia was an initial step in examining the usefulness of a co-decolonization framework, paired with FPAR methodology, in a context outside of the United States. When we began this project, we were unsure about whether this approach would be appropriate. We worried that it might reproduce colonial approaches and practices, and as our researcher/participant stated in her memo:

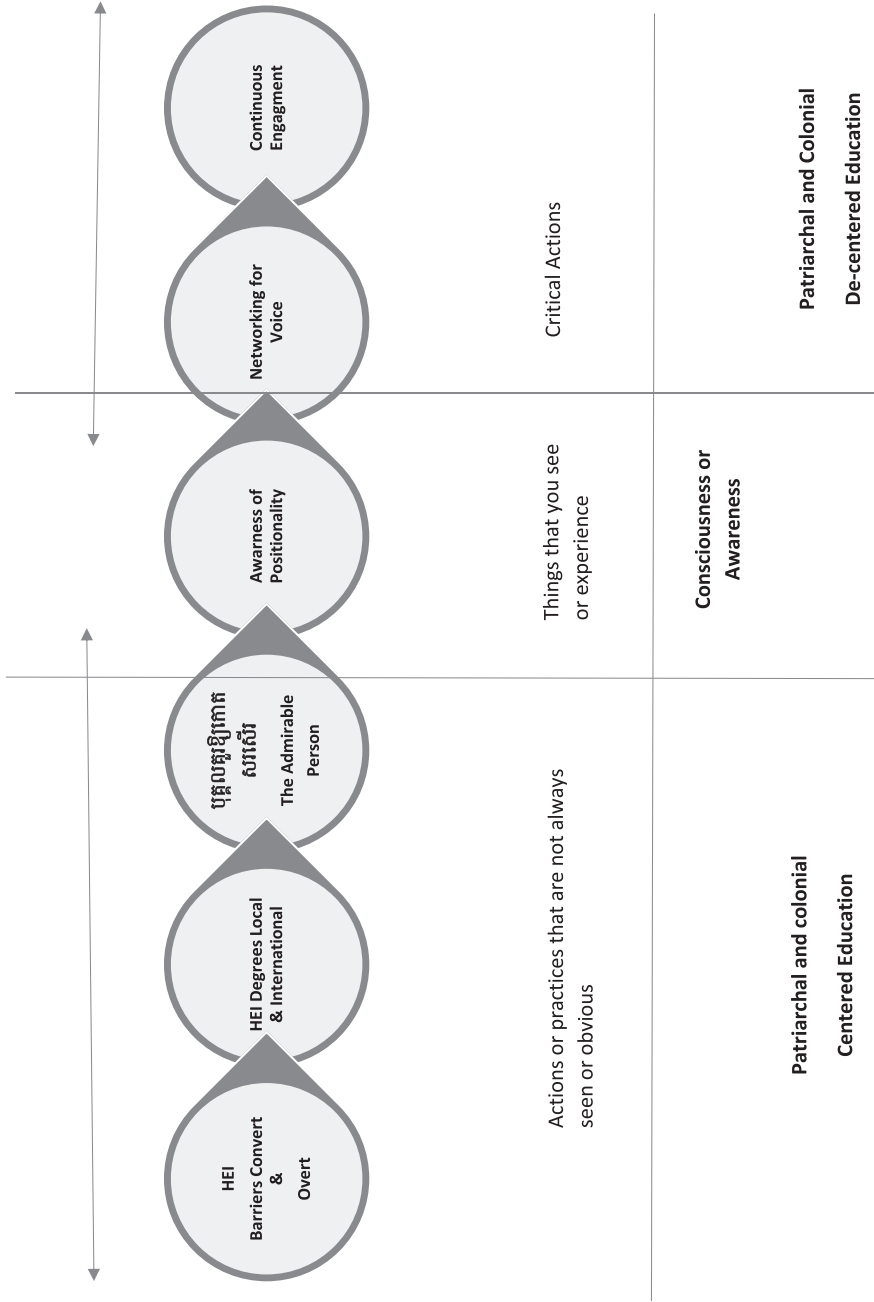


Figure 14.1 Suggested participant-derived and researcher-constructed co-decolonization framework.

Is decolonization similar to “collaboration” or “partnership” “making ownership” ...? or to de-colonize, does it mean only local/indigenous do it solely??? This also struck me when I did the translation of this part (of the manual) and my thought came like, “if we all do co-decolonization, why do we still need other international partners to help to remove????” Maybe Cambodians are not able to do it by themselves or have no capacity to do it.

These concerns remain centered in our team’s minds and hearts.

While co-decolonization may not be the only way forward, we found the centering of positionality and identity in a safe space fostered dialogue for voice, critical consciousness, social justice, and critical enlightenment promising for participants. The interest in continued interaction and the suggestions of participants for further research is promising.

The use of FPAR was also an encouraging method to ensure the centering of participant’s voice. A challenge to this method is its preference of the voices of women. We found in this workshop that preferencing women in gender was in some cases helpful, but in other cases marginalized ethnic minorities, non-binary groups, and perhaps quieted the gendered experiences of men who were also marginalized by patriarchal and colonial forces. Infusing intersectionality into the method is critical. An examination of these possibilities is beyond the scope of this chapter, but our team hopes to work toward questions and solutions related to methodology to help better deconstruct power dynamics and support co-decolonization practices.

Finally, while the authors reflect back on this research, we would argue that the co-decolonization process was successful. Not only were we able to create an experience for researchers, workshop participants, and the research participant that was a co-creation of content and programming, but the majority of the practical experience (i.e., workshop) was conducted in Khmer. However, the practice of co-decolonization requires a true and authentic practice of the deconstruction of colonial and decolonial practices. Yet, some limitations still remained, most significantly related to language. As one American scholar stated,

Something that really started to resonate was the importance of language in the process of co-decolonization. English, arguably the largest colonizing agent of all time, remained a significant factor in our process, and something (as a non-Khmer speaker) that made me realize I cannot fully participate in the co-decolonization process until I am fluent in the Khmer language.

While it may seem unrealistic to require all participants in the co-decolonization to operate within the native language, the use of English in any capacity remains a deterrent to an authentic co-decolonization process. Looking back to the co-decolonization framework, it is arguable that the

use of anything, but the native language stunts the co-decolonization process at stage 2, understanding the importance of sacred space and “being” with communities’ pre-inquiry.

Recommendations for Practice

Constructing this workshop, the materials, and the research processes associated with our team and participants was an enormous undertaking. The success of this workshop lies in the co-decolonization of our own team’s dynamics and processes. While we were not always successful, our attempts to recognize our own positionality and identities, and how they interacted with one another, were critical in ensuring that we all carried the beloved weight of this process. Therefore, our first recommendation is careful and deliberate construction of the research team and the continual interrogation of positionality, power, and language in the research team.

As stated above, it is critical that the workshop be conducted in the local language, with the recognition that even for us the Khmer language comes with exclusionary forces at a local level. While this cannot be avoided, it should be identified and acknowledged. In particular, it should be acknowledged that the local researchers will bear the brunt of translation, an extensive job that can lead to an unequal workload. Obtaining funding for this work would lessen that burden. The potential for exclusive dynamics identities of the local team should also be acknowledged and interrogated and, of course, an extensive interrogation of the identities of any international allyship, in our case the American researchers on the team, before starting down this path is critical. This will be an uncomfortable journey for everyone, but we hope that this discomfort means that we are all on the right path.

Establishing close contact and communication with participants during recruitment, pre-workshop preparation, and after the workshop proved critical. We used Telegram, as it was the most popular means of communication according to the participants. All the communication was conducted in Khmer, and this allowed us to follow up on the post-survey questionnaire and allowed us to check in with any potential misunderstandings or misrepresentation of data. While we worried about the fragmentation of our team based on what we called “the local and international” team, the experience of the American researchers was that this sometimes facilitated more contact and connection with our Cambodian researchers. Contact with participants also helps establish that this will be a long practice, not only a single workshop that is soon forgotten. We also wanted to give something back to our participants; therefore, we suggest finding ways to make the workshop a reciprocal relationship. For us, this was working through Research Gate and gender associations to create working groups for continued engagement.

Future research will include the analysis of our own team’s co-decolonization processes, interrogation of the methods used, and we

hope, future cycles of the workshop to stay true to the cyclical participatory action research method that supports transformation. This research will also include materials created for the workshop, with the aim of providing support to other Khmer-speaking teams who wish to engage in this process. We view our process of co-decolonization as a long-term commitment, a responsibility to critical consciousness, social justice, and critical enlightenment. But we also see this as a labor of love—an opportunity to continue in a team, which, in our experiences, evolved with unparalleled collaboration and friendship with a common goal to find solutions to the patriarchal and colonial forces in gender spaces in higher education that marginalize, hurt, and other those it could be empowering.

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In-Dialogue Editorial for Chapters 11–14

Higher Education Cultures of Teaching and Research

Nupur Samuel

All processes, including the process of teaching, learning and research, are located in a specific culture, and in this section, we focus on what cultures influence the processes of teaching and research in Higher Education (HE) spaces. We gather insights from cultures as diverse as Cambodia, United States of America, Europe and India. In this editorial, I first share a brief outline of each chapter, highlighting some key issues that emerged from a focus group discussion, which was organised over Zoom call to bring together the chapter authors to share the insights, experiences and recommendations to HE stakeholders such as leaders, researchers, students and practitioners.

In the first chapter of this section, Chapter 11, Debdatta Chowdhury raises the issue of gender sensitisation in HE institutions (HEIs) in India, specifically Kolkata, by locating the discussion in the everyday form of classroom practices, pedagogy, curriculum design and diversity of student experiences. Perusal of policy documents on the one hand and dialogue with HEIs stakeholders on the other leads Debdatta to observe that policy frameworks are ill-suited to address the varied concerns related to gender-sensitisation issues.

In Chapter 12, the editors of this book – Tamsin Hinton-Smith, Fawzia Haeri Mazanderani, Nupur Samuel and Anna CohenMiller – come together to reflect and explore the processes, experiences and challenges that guide collaborative feminist research into gender equality in higher education. Through reflexive praxis, this group of interdisciplinary and international research team of feminist researchers engage with the processes of decoding issues of communication, connectedness and humanisation, embodiment and ethics while engaged on gender mainstreaming research in HEIs across multiple-country contexts.

Chapter 13 sees Donald L. Gillian-Daniel, Stephanie Knezz, Claudia Irene Calderón, April Dukes, Robin Greenler and Louis Macias exploring the Inclusive Professional Framework for Faculty (IPF: Faculty), a framework that has the potential to inform equity and inclusion with respect to

gender issues in HEIs. Aimed at bringing long-term, sustainable changes in mindset, this text explores possibilities of embedding principles of inclusion and equity that illuminates both micro and macro levels of structural and systemic changes in leadership as well as for students.

And finally, in Chapter 14, Rothsopha Nguon, Samphors Mech, Kimkanika Ung, Kelly Grace and Whitney Szmodis use the co-decolonising framework to investigate practices that influence gender issues in HE spaces in Cambodia. Authors from Cambodia and the US co-create workshops, based on feminist participatory action research (FPAR) framework, to gather insights on Khmer gender literature through feminist, collaborative, and co-decolonising practices.

When the authors came together to reflect and share insights, we ended up framing our discussion within the idea of culture, not limited to cultures of higher education spaces but also the cultures within which the HEIs are located. Intertwined with culture are issues of language, family, leadership and multiple roles that each one of us perform. A discussion of key issues led us to the basics: from acknowledging that there is a gender issue and that disparities do exist in higher education to asking *the right kinds of questions* (emphasis Debdatta) starting from curriculum to textbooks to language, to how physical infrastructure is organised and whether they promote gender equitable practices. One of the first steps towards developing a more holistic model of gender equity and gender sensitisation is to become aware that it is, as Louis put it, an “all of us issue”; that we need leaders from everywhere, especially since lack of gender representation in leadership adversely impacts collaborative, inclusive work (Claudia); moreover, it denies students the opportunity to have role models that they can identify with (Rothsopha). In this context, collaborative leadership requires each of us to bring leadership to our own sphere of influence and to lead from whatever level of power or positionality we inhabit.

Promoting equitable gender sensitive practices cannot be limited to setting up grievance-redressal mechanisms or offering courses for students and faculty on gender issues as the entire burden of balancing the scales cannot be entrusted to women, non-binary groups or students who are interested in these issues. What we need is sustained, large-scale, on-going dialogue on issues of gender at various levels of HEIs. This would create, foster and in turn normalise a culture of collective questioning, of examining and re-examining and in the process, re-imagining spaces of higher education that are holistically gender equitable. In developing such practices, it is the importance of connectedness and humanisation of the crucial role language, our disciplinary understanding and our cultural context play of collaboration and reflection that need to be fronted and acknowledged.

Following are some of the recommendations that emerged during the focus group discussion with the authors:

- 1 Acknowledge that there is an issue that needs to be addressed; gender, equity and inclusion are issues that need our attention beyond the rhetoric.
- 2 Ask the right kind of questions, the kind that look at the big picture and can bring about change across HEI spaces.
- 3 Include equitable and inclusive practices by empowering and enabling every member of HEIs, from students to staff to leaders.
- 4 Reimagine and empower leadership that believes in collaboration and inclusion at all levels of the HE community.
- 5 Adopt the IPF model (Aspire Alliance, 2021; Gillian-Daniel, Knezz, Calderón, Dukes, Greenler, & Macias, in this collection) that is context-neutral to train faculty and all members of HEIs to adopt an equitable mindset that encourages inclusive practices across all faculty roles, leading to student success.
- 6 Adopt Participatory Action Research models to mainstream gender knowledge and practices such as co-decolonisation of gender equality (Santamaria & Santamaria Graff, 2021; Nguon, Mech, Ung, Grace & Szmodis in this collection).
- 7 Designate leadership positions to represent people belonging to different gender profiles/identities.
- 8 Design a consistent ethic of care for non-binary gender population.
- 9 Build reflexive, collaborative practices, and dialogic opportunities within structures, curriculum as well as faculty and student interactions.
- 10 Give adequate attention to ethical concerns (Mazzei & Jackson, 2009) to protect the interests, experiences and voice of all stakeholders of HEIs.

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