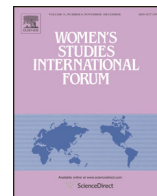




Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Women's Studies International Forum

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/wsif](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/wsif)

## Women's ways of working: Circumventing the masculine structures operating within and upon the University☆

Hazel R. Wright \*, Linda Cooper, Paulette Luff

Department of Education and Social Care, Anglia Ruskin University, Young Street, Cambridge CB1 2LZ, UK

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 23 December 2015

Received in revised form 7 November 2016

Accepted 12 November 2016

Available online xxxx

#### Keywords:

Higher education

University

Gender

Feminist research

Caring

Reflective practice

### ABSTRACT

Three female, and feminist, academics become participant researchers to explore their working practices seeking to make visible the ways they work to wo(*manage*) the masculinist environment of the University. After reviewing the literature, the paper starts by considering what 'masculinist' means in this context, finding that it refers to both rigidity of structure positioned as 'impartial' and, paradoxically, processes that enable competition and the clear identification of winners and losers; a University regime compatible with neo-liberal governance. Such values are at odds with those promoted within Early Years Education where 'caring' and 'inclusion' are fundamental, embedded in a strong 'domestic' tradition. The paper examines the historical practice of transferring 'mothering' skills into the educational institution and considers current attitudes and behaviours in relation to this synergy.

Analysing their own attitudes and practices through an innovative (and time-effective) methodology, AAA/I (Asynchronous Associative Auto/Inquiry), the participant researchers consider the ways in which, through collaboration, they ameliorate University processes and working conditions to support each other and their students. Findings are discussed in relation to masculinist traditions and competitiveness, collaboration and caring, and the creation of 'protective enclaves', feminised micro-contexts within the larger masculinist domain. Considering their actions *in toto*, the trio reflect on the extent that their actions promote, evade or hinder a move towards greater gender equality and admit to the personal costs of continually striving to change the working environment.

© 2016 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

### Introduction

This paper uses a gendered frame to examine how female academics can enhance their working conditions and the satisfaction of their female students by adopting collaborative, even collusive, 'ways of working'. The discussion is deliberately a gendered one because we are choosing to explore our ideas from a feminist position but also for practical reasons: we are all women, and for the most part our students are female too (but when male students enroll we do include them in our supportive practices). It sets out to consider how, as women, we *manage* our working lives, seeking successful careers within a profession where the 'ways of working' are commonly termed masculinist and men are promoted more often than women.<sup>2</sup> It was our intention to focus on the positive strategies we employ but, in response to feedback, we later discuss the cost of this positivity on our individual career

progression and the choices that we have made. There is no intention to present a saccharine account, to artificially sweeten the discussion but nor do we want to position our university as a difficult place to work. From our reading and our academic networks we know that the challenges we face are not uncommon.

The paper takes a narrative approach. It aims to blend the stories of three individuals with different career trajectories to find a 'common' voice. We have been colleagues for many years, co-teachers and co-researchers within the same university department and, more importantly, remain close friends despite working in an environment that is often considered to promote competition rather than the caring ethos we value. Part of our survival strategy includes developing novel ways of working like the research methodology that we describe within this paper, an approach that enabled us to share our reflections even though we were too busy to meet together face-to-face. The intention was to collect the relevant aspects of our 'life stories' and set them in context in order to weave a coherent 'life history' of our working practices. In doing this, we were following a tradition commonly used within education (e.g. Ball & Goodson, 1985; Clough, 2002; Goodson, Biesta, Tedder, & Adair, 2010; Trahar, 2006), a research tradition in which Hazel frequently works (e.g. Wright, 2011a, 2011b, 2016) and with which Paulette and Linda are familiar. In this tradition criticality is achieved

☆ Women's Writing Workshop: Special Issue in Women's Studies International Forum  
Paper from: Hazel Wright, Linda Cooper, Paulette Luff, of Anglia Ruskin University

\* Corresponding author at: Department of Education & Social Care, Anglia Ruskin University, East road, Cambridge CB1 1PT, UK.

E-mail address: [Hazel.Wright@anglia.ac.uk](mailto:Hazel.Wright@anglia.ac.uk) (H.R. Wright).

<sup>2</sup> Only 23% of professors were female. 2014/15. <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/stats-staff>.

through making appropriate connections to create a coherent and contextualised account. Rather than embracing a particular philosophical framework, this is an abductive process whereby the analysis iterates between narrative and locally relevant theory.

In this paper we consider the masculine structures that regulate university practices and the ways that political and economic forces within society conspire to keep these practices in place even though women account for almost half of academic staff (2013/14 figures, HESA, 2015a) and more than half of students (56.1% compared to 43.9% in 2013/14, HESA, 2015b). We make this claim in full awareness that in so doing we are using metrics that derive from those masculinist practices of measuring and monitoring that we at other times will decry. Despite inhabiting this paradoxical position, we argue that many masculinist structures fit uncomfortably alongside the feminist traditions of 'care' and 'nurture' that mark the domestic sphere from its oppositional, even antagonistic space, the aptly named public sphere, traditionally the reserve of men and male workers in society. This distinction inhabits a position increasingly challenged by female academics, challenged retrospectively by those researching the history of women's education and women's lives using family records and private diaries, and pro-actively by feminist activists who advocate for greater equality of opportunity and better treatment of women. By listing these women as separate and specific archetypes we are not suggesting that these are either exclusive or exhaustive categories, just (wo)managing our limited time and space as effectively as possible. In this paper we deliberately bring the narratives of higher and early childhood education together as these essentially reflect the position we inhabit. For us, the conflicts centre on our (subjective) need to act 'flexibly' to support the individual within a world structured to ensure (objective) parity of treatment and (competitively) the ranking of outcomes.

### Our place within existing literature

The dominance of men and male traditions over those of the female staff within the academy is well-documented (Acker & Dillabough, 2007; Bagilhote, 2002; Probert, 2005). Writing from a sociological/educational perspective, David (2016:15) describes how 'universities today remain bastions of both male power and privilege'. She claims, too (David, 2015:15) that policy is focused on students rather than staff and that neoliberalism has both encouraged and obscured the lack of gender equality. David (2015) endorses Morley's (2013) claim that managerialism and the 'leaderist turn' are reinforcing the dominance of patriarchal rules (the masculinist traditions), a view shared by Teelken and Deem (2013) and found, in an Australian context, to concentrate women in the least secure and lowest paid positions (Lafferty & Fleming, 2000). David also reiterates the findings of Bagilhote and White (2011, 2013) that although women are now more numerous in HE across the globe, they still remain under-represented in high-level roles, excluded from the most senior positions. Specifically researching gender inequality within UK departments of Geography, Maddrell, Strauss, Thomas, and Wyse (2016) acknowledge problems of early-career precarity, workload pressures, stress-related illness, discrimination, harassment and bullying with long-term consequences on personal life decisions around parenthood and ultimately pensions; the prevalence of what Valentine, Jackson, and Mayblin (2014) term 'ordinary sexism'. Considering how esteem affects promotion, Coate and Kandiko Howson (2016) identify homosociability, non-transparency of criteria, and self-promotion as favouring the male academic, in addition to the commonly invoked academic workload balance.

Fotaki (2013), writing from an organisational perspective, attributes differential rates of career progressions across the genders to the structural inequalities common within society and within the family (a view supported by Acker & Dillabough, 2007; Fox, 2005; Long, Scott, Paul, & McGinnis, 1993; Reskin, 2003) and promotional decisions within the academy that favour men over women (a view shared with Falkenberg, 2003). She offers evidence, too, that marriage and child

rearing also negatively affect women's productivity (Probert, 2005; Long et al., 1993) again impacting on career progression, too. Fotaki (2013) examines the work of Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva to frame her discussion of the demands academic life makes on women. She reviews existing literature before claiming that 'there are virtually no studies on how women live within the supposedly universal masculine symbolic order of academia' (ibid:1253). It is this situation that our paper intends to address. We offer, here, material that illuminates how we, as female academics, find ways to 'live' within a masculinised environment; how we modify the workplace to make it better fit our value system. In doing this we risk being seen as 'too caring or relational' (Fletcher, 2001:9), even as 'ineffective' (Carlson & Crawford, 2011:371) (both in Bevan & Learmonth, 2012:140) and could be accused of failing to 'confront the dilemmas of unfair subtle practices that are unspoken but have insidious effects' (ibid:154) but at least we are trying to 'behave differently' (Stanley & Wise, 1993:133) rather than merely conform.

Our focus is on collaboration and mutual support, so this paper differs significantly from those that focus on performativity (Perriton, 1999; Sinclair, 2007; Swan, 2005). We are, all three, parents of young adults and motherhood is part of our core identity, a part that 'closely determines [our] moral and social standing' (Ribbens McCarthy & Edwards, 2011:134; in Cooper & Rogers, 2015:3). In adopting a 'caring' stance we acknowledge that we draw upon our experiences of 'mothering' but disagree that this must be 'predicated on a naïve but seductive humanist view of individual will and agency' (Perriton, 1999, in Swan, 2005:320). We seek to make our working lives palatable not just to support our students. However, we recognise that the energy expended on 'ameliorating' the system could be more profitably used to further our careers if the system were different. We see a distinctive cultural difference between the masculinist tradition of the university *per se* and the caring tradition common to the disciplines in which we work.

We anticipate that whether we are freely choosing our way of working or 'conditioned' to act collaboratively could be questioned but are prepared 'to listen to reasoned argument' (Goldberg, 1993:6), and accept that the dissonance between the way we choose to work and the university's expectations could partly be attributed to basic gender distinctions. For Goldberg, the issue is clarification of the terms of engagement. As a sociologist who takes an interdisciplinary perspective on gender, he considers physiological factors alongside the social. Goldberg sees men and women as equally but differently powerful and believes that women's efficacy relies on their skillful use of feminine skills: for a woman persuasion is more useful than insistence, for a man dominance is physiologically determined. Steven Goldberg's book *Why Men Rule* falls well outside our normal range of literature and his views are controversial (see the Internet) if well received in the American Press where they are supported by a number of eminent (but possibly Right Wing) academics in the economics/legal/public policy sectors. However, his arguments are pertinent here so are given due consideration. Moreover, it seems likely that the eminent anthropologist, Margaret Mead, endorsed some of Goldberg's claims. We have been unable to trace the complete review to judge it for ourselves, but the cover of *Why Men Rule* carries a partial quotation that starts with '...persuasive and accurate.' and continues with a claim that 'men have always been the leaders in public affairs...'; a statement that can clearly be related to the University as a public space.

In terms of choice, we consider, too, Sen's discussions as part of the Capability Approach. Hazel has used this framework extensively and, consequently, we are all familiar with his ideas. Sen (1999), at times writing with feminist Martha Nussbaum, (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993), considers how 'choice' can be offered through public policy. He sets out the philosophical position that it is people's 'beings' and 'doings' that matter, the life they can lead (Sen, 1987). We see this as a vital motivational factor. Sen and Nussbaum adopt the notion of 'preference' to express choice, and describe restricted options that go unchallenged as 'adaptive

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

**ISI**Articles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات