

FACULTY WOMEN: MAKING OUR MARK...⁶

Professor Pat O'Connor
University of Limerick

Introduction

The reality of discrimination within the university system has been recognised by, for example, the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals in the UK (CVCP, 1991), and the President of MIT in the US (MIT, 1999). In a classic article, Acker (1980) suggested that wage differences were only one indicator of the reality of such discrimination. She highlighted three 'subtle problems' faced by women academics: firstly, their relative powerlessness as minorities within academia; secondly, male domination of knowledge, and thirdly, the conflicting demands of greedy institutions, (viz. work and family). More recently, it was still being noted that: 'A conscious effort needed to be made by academic institutions to address the underlying structures and systems, which disadvantage women' (European Commission, 2000, p.30). Typically, however, even if this is recognised, it is seen as a 'woman's problem' rather than one arising from the nature of academia itself or from wider socially created disjunctions (Beck, 1992). Issues surrounding women's position in the academy have been raised in the Republic of Ireland (subsequently referred to as Ireland) since the 1980s (Smyth, 1984; HEA 1987). Indeed, Ruane and Dobson (1990) showed that, controlling for academic discipline, qualifications, research output, teaching, administrative experience and career breaks (some of which could in fact also be regarded as indicators of discrimination), Irish women academics were still paid 10 per cent less than their male counterparts.

However, very little qualitative data is available on women's experiences in the Irish academy. In this article, the concept of resistance is used in exploring some of the ways faculty women respond to a situation of hierarchical and numerical male dominance. In a late modern or post modern world, the possibility of resistance is increased as individuals 'come to acquire partially or even wholly conflicting identifications' (Benton, 1981: 181) and come to reflect on disjunctions between 'practical' and 'discursive consciousness' (Haugaard, 1997). Resistance is understood 'in terms of consciousness or action, whether structurally or subjectively determined, either collectively or individually engaged' (Gottfried, 1994, p.109). This definition encompasses, but is not restricted to, the kinds of resistance typically associated with industrial labour conflicts. A broadly similar concept of resistance is implicit in Scott's (1990) work where he suggested that subordinated social classes within a class-divided world, resist not only the material conditions of their situation, but also their daily humiliations and indignities, in a context where the powerful attempt to maintain and extend their material and symbolic power.

This article starts from a recognition that gender is embedded in organisations (Acker, 1990 and 1998) and that once we accept 'that staff bring their personal interests into

⁶ This paper was published as 'A Bird's Eye View.....Resistance in Academia', *Irish Journal of Sociology*, (2001), 10, 2: 86-104: and is a revised version of the paper previously published in *Higher Education in Europe* (O'Connor, 2000b)

organisations and that these shape the way they discharge their functions, we must also accept that gendered perceptions, practices and attitudes will be present too' (Halford, 1992, p.172). It assumes, drawing on Connell's work that although only a minority of men actively subordinate women (hegemonic masculinity) the majority benefit from the patriarchal dividend 'in terms of honour, prestige or the right to command. [They] men also gain a material dividend' (1995a, p.82). This dividend is facilitated by the fact that hegemonic masculinity is used as 'an organising principle' in such structures (Cheng, 1996, p.xiv). Thus, effectively, men and women are not treated the same within such male dominated structures.

Clegg (1994) suggested that the consciousness upon which resistance was based could be inhibited ('outflanked') at various levels. He suggested that individuals might simply accept the existing social order because it was seen as 'natural' or 'inevitable', or because they were unaware of the social organisation of power: 'It is not that they do not know the rules of the game so much as that they might not recognize the game, let alone know the rules (Clegg, 1994, p.290). Resistance could be inhibited by the fact that exploitation was less salient than other daily realities or identities (with the costs of resistance far outweighing any likely short-term benefits). Isolation and/or lack of awareness of potential allies (or lack of solidarity with them), meant that resistance was often seen as individual deviance. Finally, he suggested that resistance was most likely to occur 'if a subjectivity formed around a will to resist' existed; if individuals were able to draw on family or community networks or on the 'consciously organised resources of a social movement or collective organisation in the pursuit of their agency' (Clegg, 1994, p.288).

The absence of women in senior positions in academia is, of course, only one symptom of patriarchal dominance. Such dominance is also reflected, for example, in the content of the curriculum and in the relative value attached to science and technology ('male') as opposed to arts and humanities ('female' subjects': see Lynch, 1999). Nevertheless, male numerical and hierarchical dominance within academia is seen as highly significant. Firstly, it ensures that 'the production of representations of the social world, which is a fundamental dimension of political struggles, is the virtual monopoly of intellectuals' (Bourdieu, 1993, p.37) - in fact of male intellectuals. Within a gendered society, a whole realm of experiences and representations is thus marginalised. Secondly, in a context where roughly half of the undergraduate and post graduate population is female, the under-representation of women in senior faculty positions raises issues related to cultural imperialism, indeed to colonialism. Thirdly, in this context, young women are deprived of a range of female role models within the academy: with American work showing that such same-sex models were important in facilitating female students' professional development - including their career-orientation, their confidence and success (O'Leary and Mitchell, 1990). Indeed, the persistence of academies as 'bastions of male power and privilege' has been seen by Hansard Society Commission (1990), amongst others, as 'wholly unacceptable.'

It is important to stress that resistance is not seen as reflecting a biological reality – although it clearly reflects gendered social and cultural realities. Focusing on faculty women, then, within the hierarchically and numerically male dominated structures of academia, seven types of resistance are identified. Prior to outlining this, the Irish trends as regards the proportion of women in academia will be compared with those in other countries.

Context

Ruane and Sutherland (1999), using Irish data derived from the Higher Education Authority (and including two primary teacher training colleges), found that women constituted 28% of the faculty and just over 5% of those at professorial level. Somewhat similar patterns exist in the UK: women constituting 31% of all full time faculty and 9% of those at professorial level (Bagilhole, 2000). Recent dramatic changes in academic structures in the UK have not substantially altered the gendered nature of the faculty profile there (Davies and Holloway, 1995; Morley, 1999; Hearn, 1999). Very similar trends exist in other European countries (European Commission, 2000). In the US, women constitute 20% of those with full professorial status (Chronicle of Higher Education, 1999, September:14); but only 8% of those in the Eight Ivy League and the 'Big Ten' Universities. The proportions of women at (full) professorial level in Australia, Canada and New Zealand is also low (10-14%: European Commission, 2000). In Finland - widely seen as 'the promised land' (Husu, 2000) - only 18% of those at professorial level are women. Toren (2000) found similar patterns in Israel. Such patterns cannot be explained by a country's level of economic development (Malik and Lie, 2000); by the proportion of women in the labour force, or by their educational levels. In fact, the proportion of women at professorial level in Ireland is virtually identical to the situation before the Marriage Bar was removed in 1973 (this obliged women to withdraw from paid employment on marriage in a variety of occupations and created a context where there was social pressure to do so in a variety of other areas: O'Connor, 1998a and 2000). In Ireland, as in these other countries, the patterns at faculty level contrast strikingly with the increasing feminisation of the student body. Thus, Irish women constitute roughly half of all undergraduate and post-graduate University students (O'Connor, 1999; Ruane and Sutherland, 1999). They are out-performing boys educationally in State examinations and constitute just under two thirds of those in professional occupations (O'Connor, 1998a).

Resistance, as Clegg noted, is facilitated by the existence of a social movement: a 'conscious collective activity to promote social change, representing a protest against the established power structures and against the dominant norms and values' (Dahlerup, 1986, p.2). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Irish Women's Movement generated a heightened consciousness as regards the reality of women's exploitation, oppression and marginalization. Given the low proportion of married women who were in paid employment in the early 1970s (7.5%) the focus of the Women's Movement in the area of paid employment was on access to paid employment and on the removal of legal and traditional barriers to equal pay. Nowadays, expectations concerning the long-term nature of married women's participation in employment, as well as women's high educational and achievement levels have increased the relevance of women's position in such structures.

Methodology

It is important to stress the methodological limitations of this paper. It draws particularly on personal observation of the position of faculty women in three of the five academic organisations in which I was employed at various times over the past 30 years (i.e. in the early 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s, respectively): initially at

research assistant level and more latterly at professorial level. It thus can be seen as a personal account: there are 'no empirical findings in the positivist sense' (Lentin, 2000). Observations were not recorded systematically over the years and the possibility that they constitute a highly idiosyncratic perception of the academy cannot be eliminated. A focus on reflexivity and autobiography is part of an epistemological challenge to positivism (Lentin, 1993 and 2000; Goode, 1998) albeit one that has been viewed with considerable scepticism by many sociologists. Nevertheless, in a context where there are considerable sensitivities around the collection of qualitative data (because of the size of the country; the small number of academic institutions, and strong norms involving institutional loyalty) this kind of approach can arguably be an important source of insight. Similar reflective and reflexive accounts have been given by other academic women (e.g by Burke *et al.*, 2000 in relation to black women).

The insights on which this paper is based have crystallised over the past ten or twelve years. Their seeds can be traced to observations and reflections on the gendered nature of power that go back to the early 1970s (before the Marriage Bar was removed) when I had no framework within which to locate them. At that time, I was struck by the spatial location of the women in one of the organisations I worked (i.e. they became increasingly invisible from the ground floor upwards). Throughout my career, my research interests have focused on women, but unconsciously avoided power. It was not until the late 1980s, when I was exposed to a series of events, personal and professional, that my sensitivity to the gendered nature of organisations began to move to the level of 'practical consciousness' and 'discursive consciousness' (Haugaard, 1997).

As Lynch (2000) has noted the position of women in the academy is a contradictory one: with women academics being simultaneously part of a privileged class and subordinate to men within this class. Such contradictory positions have characterised most of my life - sometimes generating a heightened awareness of the possibility of resistance and sometimes a kind of paralysis in terms of action. An important milestone in this perceptual transformation (Kelly, 1984) was the undertaking of an empirical study of the barriers to women's promotion in the Health Boards (O'Connor, 1995 and 1996). In listening to over 160 women, my own questions and observations became re-awakened. This coincided with my experience as Course Director of an MA in Women's Studies, an experience that sharpened and deepened my awareness of gendered power. Nevertheless, until the mid 1990s it simply did not occur to me to examine the patriarchal structures of the academy (Byrne and Lentin, 2000 have observed a similar phenomenon amongst feminist academics; and such patterns are consistent with Luke's (1974) views on power). At that time, equal opportunities emerged as part of a total quality management exercise undertaken by Richardson for Women's Studies (see Richardson, 1997). This led me to look at documentary evidence on the position of women in the academy; to revisit the turning points in my own consciousness and to try to understand some women's apparent complete indifference to the issue.

Raising issues publicly about any organisation is widely seen as problematic and involves questions of institutional loyalty. The size of the academic sector can be illustrated by the fact that there are eighteen women at professorial level in the entire academia (Smyth, 1996; Ruane and Sutherland, 1999). Hence, the specific

characteristics of the three organisations will not be described nor the differences between them referred to. This puts demands on the reader's trust. I can only echo Sennett's (1998) hope that this deviation from normal methodological practice is seen for what it is: a device that enables ideas and observations to be presented in a delicate situation.

This article comes from the perspective of a faculty woman within the predominantly male structures of academia. The academy is privileged in class terms, with the majority of the students coming from middle class backgrounds, and arguably, an even larger proportion of the faculty (Lynch, 1999). This class issue is important but it lies beyond the focus of the paper. Equally the extent to which similar kinds of resistance might exist amongst men is not explored (Mc Cullagh, 1999). Neither is the situation of part-time faculty nor of the (predominantly female) administrative, secretarial and library staff explored, although their position clearly raises related issues about the value of 'women's work' within such structures. Finally, it is recognised that the kinds of resistance used by women may also vary across faculties or departments, depending on the gender balance within those areas, although only brief references will be made to these situational factors.

Types of Resistance

Focusing on the micro-politics of organisations (Morley, 1999) analytically separate kinds of resistance are described below and are speculatively located on a continuum in terms of their potential for organisational transformation. In the interests of anonymity, specific examples are not included. However, in presenting this paper nationally and internationally, women's recognition of these analytical types suggests that they have a degree of validity.

1. Apparently Accepting the Current Social Order

It is arguable whether this can be seen as resistance at all - since in a sense, the possibility of resistance has been undermined by what Clegg (1994) has called outflanking. This pattern is colloquially referred to as 'keeping your head down.' As Clegg (1994) has noted, it may reflect a perception that the existing social order is 'natural,' 'inevitable'; it may reflect the prioritising of other areas of one's life and/or a lack of awareness of the social organisation of power. At an individual level, this approach involves social, emotional and/or physical withdrawal from the wider organisational structure and a focusing of energies on that limited arena where the maximum level of control can be exerted (viz. the lecture theatre or one's own desk). For those adopting this approach, face-to-face student related activities are typically prioritised (for example, lecturing, supervising undergraduate theses, tutoring and counselling students). Such activities are compatible with a gendered concept of self, revolving around caring (O'Connor, 1998a). They are however, the elements that are least valued within academia (being seen as a kind of necessary, but not prestigious 'housekeeping activity'). As such, they are least likely to increase one's promotion prospects. In predominantly male areas, women's 'natural' abilities as regards this kind of work were evoked by (predominantly male) heads of department in explaining its disproportionate allocation to women.

Until the possibility of change emerges, it is difficult to differentiate between those who actually do accept the existing situation and those whose acceptance is redolent of Scott's (1990) tactical public deference or Faith's (1994) muted protest and pragmatic adjustments to situations. In some cases, (such as, for example, the farm wives in O'Hara's 1998 study) the apparent acceptance of the *status quo* was associated with passing the challenge on to a new generation. The very nature of teaching is such that it is eminently suitable to this. This can be done directly through the content of the teaching material used. At a more general level, the pedagogic style adopted can be more or less facilitative of developing a radical critique of institutional realities. The creation of awards and bursaries that validate the academic achievements of young women can be seen as a similar kind of resistance, since it recognises the responsibility of a new generation to keep the issue alive. In all three academic institutions, women's withdrawal from the wider organisational context was simultaneously an act of individual resistance and was used as evidence that they were not promotable. It is seen as the least organisationally transformative type of resistance.

2. *Creating or Maintaining a 'Separate' World*

This type of resistance was largely used by women within predominantly female areas of activity, in predominantly female departments or faculties. Such areas of predominantly female employment are typically characterised by a chronic shortage of resources (Davies, 1995). In such areas women who did not wish to see themselves as victims resisted by collectively creating their own 'separate' world where a gendered sense of identity was valued (Kilduff and Mehra, 1996). Such relationships with other women offered a definition of identity, which enabled them to critique the definition of self as the 'Other': 'In these places of women-among-themselves, something of a speaking (as) woman is heard'; 'In suffering, but also in women's laughter. And again: in what they "dare"- do or say - when they are among themselves' (Irigaray, 1985, p.135 and 134).

This kind of resistance provoked little negative reaction when the areas involved were seen as trivial. Where they were seen as subversive, invisibility was not an option. 'Slagging', bullying, isolation, the undermining of professional identity and stymieing of task achievements were then used to discredit the area and those involved in it. Attempts to sustain a non-stigmatised identity and a collective worldview in this situation were only possible through frequent retreats to a bunker (Telford, 1996). The existence of Women's Studies in adult education and in undergraduate and/or postgraduate levels within all the universities from the early 1990s constituted an ongoing structural challenge since it implicitly valued a gendered sense of identity and suggested that what purported to be a gender neutral education was not so (Lynch, 1994 and 1999; O'Connor, 1998a). The sheer existence of Women's Studies was perceived as a source of resistance within academia, although its structural transformative potential was associated with the extent to which the underlying ideas permeated the wider college community, and/or underpinned resistance in other areas. Furthermore, the very marginality of Women's Studies meant that it was difficult for those in this area to attain the kind of visibility that is important as regards promotion. Thus, very few individuals from it came through to the wider management structure, thus limiting its transformative potential.

3. Challenging the Socially Created) Opposition between Work and Family

Beck has argued that the contradictions which flow from this socially created opposition can 'only be overcome if *institutional possibilities for the reunification of work and life* are offered' (italics in original) (1992, p.124). There is little evidence of this occurring within academia. Child-care facilities for staff in academia are, even yet, very limited (HEEU, 2000). This reflects, and reinforces, a perception of the 'normal' academic as a (child free) man. In this kind of organisational culture, there is considerable pressure on women to behave as 'token men' (Kanter, 1993). The socially created opposition between paid work and children can be dealt with by women remaining single not having children. National data is not available, but there is some evidence that faculty women are more likely than faculty men of similar age to be single and/or childless (McCarthy, 1996).

Limited maternity leave has only been in existence in Ireland since 1981, so that faculty women in their forties are likely to have had to 'manage' without it. Arrangements as regards 'cover' for maternity leave were typically left to the discretion of individual heads of department: essential teaching commitments being covered by colleagues or by a mosaic of part-timers - with considerable pressure on faculty to arrange their childbearing to coincide with the summer vacation. Not surprisingly in this kind of context, there was a lack of a 'sense of entitlement' (Lewis, 1997) even to statutory maternity leave. Byrne and Keher Dillon (1996) noted that faculty women did not even take advantage of their full statutory rights as regards maternity leave. There is no evidence as regards the use of parental leave (1998). In any event, it is unpaid and the EU has already had to instruct the Irish State to extend its coverage (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2000).

Because of the nature of academic work, family friendly employment policies, such as part-time employment, flexi-time or job sharing, have little relevance to full-time faculty. Conflicts between paid work and family responsibilities were negotiated on a grace-and-favour basis by 'helpful' heads of department. This in turn increased women's feelings of indebtedness to them and reduced their ability to negotiate as regards the allocation of the low status 'housekeeping' activities. Paid sabbaticals were seen as privileges to be given to high status academics (who were unlikely to be women). Unpaid career breaks, like many other kinds of family friendly initiatives can be seen as facilitating individual women's attempts to reconcile work and family but do 'not challenge traditional work structures' (Lewis, 1997, p.21). If anything, in a context where being a woman was problematic, even mentioning the socially created tension between paid work and family was widely seen as counter-productive since it offered a rationale to predominantly male managers for not appointing or promoting women. Hence, resistance at this level treads an uneasy line, and one that was viewed with considerable ambivalence by many men and women. Nevertheless, in its implicit refusal to accept equality on male terms, and its re-envisioning of 'institutional possibilities' (Beck, 1992) it constituted a potentially more transformative type of resistance.

4. Creating a 'Subjectivity Formed around a Will to Resist'

Although women were (and are) severely under-represented at decision-making level in the three academic organisations, the majority did not 'see' it. Thus, despite the Women's Movement, there appeared to be an absence, especially amongst younger women, of 'a subjectivity formed around a will to resist', a lack of coherent

organisation of their own subjectivity 'as a reflexive agent in power relations' (Clegg, 1994, p.288). The educational and occupational systems relentlessly encourage this illusion: one which is very re-assuring for those who benefit from the patriarchal dividend but are 'bashful about domination' and like to feel that the privileges they enjoy are given to them 'by nature or convention or by women themselves' (Connell, 1995b, p.215).

It has been shown that in various Irish contexts, even amongst well-educated women, a widespread lack of confidence and organisational naiveté appears to be common (Dorgan *et al.*, 1994; O'Connor, 1995a). There is no evidence that these do not continue to exist amongst women in academia. Low levels of self-esteem have been shown to appear very early in Irish women and to exist even when class background and ability are controlled for (Hannan *et al.*, 1996). In this context, references to women's interests were perceived (by men and women) as 'sexist' and effectively as attempts to demean. The lack of a 'will to resist' amongst junior faculty women in the three Irish organizations may reflect the fact that discrimination is more muted in the case of such women than in the case of more senior faculty (MIT, 1999). Equally of course, it is possible that those with the strongest will to resist simply do not enter academia at faculty level or leave it rapidly, so that effectively the end of a continuum is missing in terms of an individual will to resist. There was some evidence of this kind of self-selection within these organisations.

Meyerson and Scully have suggested that those who were most likely to have 'a subjectivity formed around a will to resist' were 'tempered radicals'(1995, p.586)'. These were 'individuals who identify with and are committed to their organisations, and are also committed to a cause, community or ideology that is fundamentally different from, and possibly at odds with the dominant culture of their organisations'. In the three Irish organisations, some of these were feminists, while others were those who were concerned with particular issues that were seen as problematic by their organisation at a point in time. They created change both through incremental semi-strategic reforms ('small wins') and through 'spontaneous expressions of authenticity' (Meyerson and Scully, 1995) - their courage creating ripples of resistance within these organisations.

5. Naming Non-Woman Friendly Aspects of Organisational Culture, Procedures and Practices

Overall, within academia, women faculty are typically in a minority within a male controlled organisational context. Organisational culture is the concept that is typically used to refer to ideas about 'women's place' and to what has been called the complicated fabric of myths and values that legitimise their position at the lower levels of the hierarchy and portray managerial jobs as primarily masculine (Hansard Society Commission, 1990). A variety of work has adverted to the existence and importance of such an organisational culture in 'chilling' women out (Deem, 1999; Husu, 2000; O'Connor, 1996). Bagilhole found that nearly two thirds of the women in her study became convinced that 'the concept of a woman academic is a paradox. They become convinced that they do not belong'(1993, p.446).

A non-woman friendly organisational culture was also reflected in the organisational procedures within these organisations. Thus, for example a requirement to ensure a gender balance on the interview board was sometimes met by including only one

woman - and one who was at a lower professional level than her male counterparts. Frequently, high profile work was not allocated to women, making it difficult for them to achieve visibility, to 'show form', to be seen as an obvious candidate for promotion. Even where positions of managerial authority were rotated, this sometimes occurred amongst a small number of men who utilised existing structures to allocate resources to each other and who generally advanced each other's careers. Thus, in predominantly male departments, the most administratively arduous of these posts was often given to a man at quite a low level, whose own chances of promotion were increased by the ties of indebtedness he was then able to create. In departments or faculties where the majority of faculty were women, positions of managerial authority were associated with hierarchical position and were typically allocated to men (who constituted the majority of those at senior level). The narrowness of the 'channel' from which senior academics were recruited further militated against the presence of women at senior level.

Subtle discrimination was also reflected in the allocation of senior posts to particular gendered areas; in the framing of advertisements; in the importance attached to vague criteria at critical access points; in loose marking schemas. It was implicit in general assessments of a candidate's 'style' at interview as well as in ideas that men are more 'natural' management material or that they 'needed' promotion more. At a more fundamental level, it was reflected in the differential value attached to predominantly 'male' as opposed to predominantly 'female' work; in the better ratios of senior to junior posts and the differential allocation of research resources to such areas. Halford *et al.* (1997) noted that, in the organisations they studied, it was very unlikely for men, to be in the most junior positions, *other than at the very start of their careers*, while these latter positions were filled by women who stayed there for most of their careers. Similar patterns are referred to by Heward (1994) and could be seen within the Irish organisations.

Publicly naming such a culture and identifying procedures and structures which are not woman-friendly in a variety of internal fora (at Departmental, Faculty, Management Co-ordinating Group; Promotion Committee; Governing Body and Union meetings) was seen as a form of resistance. In some cases, doing this was seen as indicative of an inability to accept authority, with the consequent demonization of those raising such issues, thereby undermining their attractiveness as collaborators, reinforcing their status as not being 'team players' and so increasing their structural vulnerability. It was also common for the accuracy of the figures to be challenged; for such concerns to be seen as feminist and divisive and for claims to be made that the trends would change 'naturally' in the future. Nevertheless, it is suggested that this form of resistance, particularly when it was used by a number of women in different areas, departments or faculties was at the more potentially transformative end of the continuum.

6. A Positive Strategic Approach: Creating/Mobilising Allies and Targeting Key Structures

Various studies have shown that faculty women in academia are unlikely to be included in male networks (Bagilhole, 1993; Kettle, 1996). Yet, because of the gendered nature of academia, women are often dependent on men for references; are interviewed by predominantly male interview boards and have men in positions of authority over them. For the most part within the three Irish organisations, men at the

most senior level had more potential than those at middle management level as allies (a point also made by Barker and Monks, 2000). This reflected the fact that they were less threatened by women, more accountable to wider institutional forces and more sensitive to the performance of their organisation on a variety of externally defined indicators. Such support was reinforced by their 'buying into' a 'female' agenda through participation in gendered projects to raise the profile of their area. In this way, they became stakeholders in the wider gender project: exemplifying Foucault's observation (1980) that 'resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.' Their receptivity at a personal level to such initiatives seemed to be related to their own experience of discrimination, and their willingness to identify across gender (a willingness which, it has been suggested, was related to their ideas about their own sexuality: Maile, 1999). Their support was crucial and meant that resistance was indirectly legitimated. Many men at the middle ranks of these organisations had ties to male colleagues rooted in their common identity as men, in patterns of sociability and past indebtedness. The limit of such men's support frequently consisted in not actively opposing any proposal that might benefit women (although there were, of course, some pro-feminist men: Hearn, 1999).

Kanter (1993) has been amongst those who noted that, for that minority of women who moved above the 'glass ceiling' (i.e. that part of the career hierarchy that women can see but not reach) the price of women's acceptance by the 'boys' was being hard on the 'girls'. This obviously created a context that was not helpful as regards solidarity between women. Nevertheless, a tenuous but effective form of solidarity between women did exist in these organisations. The transmission of information and the creation of a feeling of collective strength and identity amongst what is a very scattered and fragmented community was facilitated by electronic networking. Strong visible ties between women were sometimes informally ridiculed, and in other contexts were seen as subversive. The quiet support of various kinds provided by women in the administrative structure, many of whom were in junior positions, was also crucially important for faculty women in many situations.

It was striking that in these organisations, once women recognised that they were unlikely to be either sacked or promoted, their co-operation with structures which disempowered them became problematic and they took steps to become increasingly represented in union structures, on key committees and representational bodies. Thus, a decision to introduce quotas on certain key representational structures in one organisation created a context where women were more willing to put themselves forward, so that the imposition of quotas became effectively unnecessary and was simply 'the structural stuff that gives women confidence' (O'Connor, 1996). In some cases the sheer paucity of women, especially at senior level, and the requirement that senior staff be involved in key committees, made the support of pro-feminist men critical. The importance of the support of men at the very top in encouraging such pro-feminist men, in validating women's efforts and legitimating gendered resistance was critically important.

7. Use of Negative Power, Whistle Blowing and Industrial Action

Handy (1993) defines negative power as 'the capacity to stop things happening, to delay them, to distort or disrupt them'. This power is available to everyone regardless of position although many women in these organisations had only begun to be aware of its potential. However, individual women and groups of women were involved in

'whistleblowing' - disclosing 'illegal, unethical or harmful practices in the workplace to parties who might take action' (i.e. to those further up or outside the hierarchy: Rothschild and Miethe, 1994, p.254). Rothschild and Miethe noted that typically whistleblowers were highly competent employees, although the typical response was to depict them as troublemakers, 'whingers' or crazy people (if they could neither be got rid of nor intimidated into silence). The personal and financial cost of attempting to raise gender related issues through whistleblowing are usually considerable. In this context, the public action of eight faculty women in University College Dublin in publicly highlighting the position of women in that organisation was remarkable. A case was subsequently taken by the Office of the Director of Equality Investigations on behalf of all women faculty within that University. Legal action was not unique. Women in at least four of the seven universities in Ireland have been involved in such action in the area of discrimination in the past five years.

Various kinds of industrial action are a collective form of negative action. In University College London, the Association of University Teachers was effective in the 1980s in developing good practice in the equal opportunities area- arguably reflecting the historical position of that university as a mould breaker in the gender area (being the first university to admit men and women on an equal basis: Heward and Taylor, 1992). In the hierarchically and numerically male dominated Irish organisations, it was extremely difficult to get the union to negotiate on measures which are seen as even predominantly in favour of women. Quite simply, the membership would not support them. Individual male representatives (particularly those who had some personal experience of discrimination) were frequently personally supportive, but there were clear limits to that support. The perceived timidity of women whose 'frontier of control' (Gottfried, 1994) was a personal and professional commitment to the students further inhibited industrial action. The importance of credible trade union women in supporting gendered issues was very important in ensuring some degree of union support. Industrial action is seen as the most potentially transformative type of resistance since, for various reasons, in its absence, such issues 'become too easily submerged in the day-to-day concerns of policy makers who do not view that particular policy preference as central to their activities' (Mc Crudden, 2000, p.10)

The Way Forward?

A number of recent national developments have underlined the importance of equality. Thus, pressure from the EU (including the requirement to gender audit EU funds: Mulally, 1999) as well as a national commitment to equality proofing (Mc Crudden, 2000) has generated a context that is potentially sympathetic to the under-representation of women at the higher echelons of all structures. At national level, *The Employment Equality Act* (1998: S 24(1)) allows (but does not require) positive action. It does define positive action very broadly to focus on 'removing existing inequalities which affect women's opportunities in areas of access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions.' However, it lacks specificity (Barker and Monks, 2000) and, in any event, the inadequacies of legislation as a way to promote equality have been widely noted (Bercusson and Dickens, 1996 and McCrudden, 1993). Nevertheless, positive action is now seen as necessary to deal with gender inequality in the public service (Humphreys *et al.*,

1999; Department of the Taoiseach, 1999, 22nd July p.6). The European Court of Justice suggested with certain caveats that where male and female applicants were equally qualified for a post in the public sector, a woman should be promoted because of deep-seated prejudices against women (Marshall v Land Nordrhein - Westfalen: Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 1999). Case law from the European Court of Justice also established for the first time that it was sufficient to prove that a practice bore more heavily on one sex than another to constitute indirect discrimination, (which had been virtually impossible to prove under previous Irish legislation (Honan, 1997; Fourth Report of Fourth Joint Oireachtas Committee, 1996).

The Universities Act (1998) has specified obligations as regards equality. The Second Progress Report (1996, Department of Equality and Law Reform) noted that the Higher Education Authority was responsible for monitoring equality and 'for providing appropriate support at national level'; with all Third Level institutions under the aegis of the H.E.A. being required to 'publish policies to promote gender equality.' These were to include 'policies for the promotion of equal opportunities and associated action programmes' and 'encouraging and facilitating women to apply for senior academic and administrative positions' (Department of Equality and Law Reform, 1996, p.128). Action plans typically include the identification of targets as regards staffing profiles, the provision of training targeted at increasing women's skills within managerial areas, the encouragement of women to apply for posts especially at senior level, etc. The Second Commission on the Status of Women (1993) noted that without such measures to address 'imbalances arising from past discrimination', equal opportunity legislation will simply offer an 'equal chance to become unequal'.

Such measures are completely legal, and perfectly compatible with Government and E.U. policy. However, Pemberton (1995) and Brown (1995) have argued that any attempt to bring about change in the position of women within organisations is doomed to failure unless an attempt is made to understand and to devise strategies to deal with the organisational culture. Voluntary targets have been seen as an appropriate and legal way of increasing awareness and as a way of giving responsibility to line management for gendered organisational change. In the case of the Universities, the Hansard Society Commission in the UK suggested that: 'Their function would in part be that of consciousness raising'(1990, p.67). Indeed, the failure to identify such targets and the reliance on monitoring mechanisms was related to the poor performance of the Irish civil service in terms of gender equality (Callan and Wren, 1994; Department of the Taoiseach, 1999). As part of the Strategic Management Initiative in the civil service there is now a commitment to 'the adoption of strategic objective setting at individual Department/Office level, including the setting of increasingly specific equality goals to be achieved over a stated period of time' (Department of the Taoiseach, 1999). Such targets are simply objectives and, hence are very different from quotas. As such, they are intrinsically no more problematic than objectives as regards student admissions. They do, however, imply a managerial responsibility as regards organisational change.

Many of the initiatives required to create genuinely 'woman friendly' structures have long been recognised (Cann, 1991). Many require a shift in the practices and attitudes of those in positions of power within these structures. Muller (2000) found that despite obligatory procedures and practices, an active implementation of a gender

equality policy in the institutions of higher education in North-Rhine Westphalia only occurred in a quarter of these institutions. Where it occurred, it was associated with the location of gender equality in the context of long-term planning for innovative change; having 'an eye on the promotion of young qualified female talent' (Muller, 2000, p.158); defining gender equality as one of the criteria in distributing resources and providing child care facilities and supports for those with child care obligations.

To date no attempt has been made to use economic leverage to achieve equality goals in Ireland, (for example, 'by awarding public contracts to those who further a basic policy aim [such] as equality' (McCrudden, 2000, p.5). However, a Change Management Fund (co-funded by the Department of Finance and the sponsoring Department) has been established in the civil service to facilitate such change, including funding affirmative action for example, in the areas of training, development, promotion, work and family responsibilities (Department of the Taoiseach, 1999). Such a model offers possibilities, although it still presumes that originating departments with their male dominated structures will be aware of, and interested in co-funding the kinds of activities that would promote gendered organisational change. To-date, no such initiative exists in the Irish Universities. Indeed academia as an organisational context seems uncertain, if not actively hostile, to the extent and nature of the change which is required (a pattern which is not atypical: see Clare, 2000).

Conclusions

Resistance is a painfully slow and extremely time consuming process (Price and Priest, 1996). The extent to which change is brought about by faculty resistance is difficult to assess. In one or more of the organisations referred to, equal opportunities policies were formulated; structures created to deal with equality issues; directives issued as regards the composition of interview boards and the use of search procedures; a women's academic network was formed; gender awareness workshops were undertaken by senior management and a commitment was given that line management would identify time-specific targets as regards redressing gender balance and ways of dealing with an organisational culture which was not 'woman friendly'. It is important to recognize that these changes may have occurred anyway. Change in the proportion of women at senior level has been minimal.

Resistance was most effective when it occurred across a variety of fronts, involved a range of faculty across a number of departments or faculties, where it was ultimately rooted in an intellectual and/or ideological commitment, and where it received at least some support from the union and was validated by senior management. However, where resistance occurred, counter resistance became a reality. The most obvious counter resistance strategies were the stigmatisation of any initiative in favour of women; the demonization of prominent women; the starving of women of resources (individually or collectively); the establishment of organisational 'roadblocks' and the rendering of hard-won procedures irrelevant by the introduction of new ones containing implicit positive discrimination in favour of men. Lynch (1999) has argued in this context that any kind of positive action is essentially remedial and limited in impact and typically fuels a backlash, which completely offsets any improvements that may have occurred. This has provoked her to stress a more radical model for

academia. Resistance within the existing parameters does seem to be useful in generating an ongoing awareness of gender amongst both women and men. Such awareness is not enough, of course, since it may simply increase women's frustration and the intensity of the backlash. It remains to be seen if the changing national and legal context will create a context which is more conducive to the efficacy of such resistance.

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