Chapter 7: ‘Where do women fit in University Senior Management? An Analytical Typology of Cross National Organisational cultures’ by Pat O’Connor

Gender, Power and Management ed by B. Bagilhole and K. White. Palgrave McMillan pp168-191

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Introduction

Universities present themselves as gender-neutral meritocracies, concerned with the transmission and creation of scientific, objective knowledge. However, it is now widely accepted that they are in fact gendered organisations (Brooks 2001; Collinson & Hearn 1996; Currie et al 2002; Deem et al 2008; Hearn 2001; Morley 1994 and 1999). In this chapter the focus is on the broader organisational culture, focussing particularly on its gendered character as seen through the eyes of senior academic managers.

It has been suggested that ‘Organisational culture is a function of leadership’ (Parry, 1998, p. 93). The concept of ‘organisational culture’ is a contested one. Alasuutari (1995, p.25) suggests that it refers to a ‘collective subjectivity’ ‘a way of life or outlook’. Wajcman (1998) argues that cultures are produced and reproduced through the negotiation, sharing and learning of symbols and meanings. Mcllwee and Robinson (1992) suggest that it is reflected in day-to-day activities and interactions. Smircich (1983) and Bagilhole et al. (2007) suggest that organisational culture is a dynamic process that can be conceived as something an organisation has, something an
organisation *is*, and something an organisation *does*. In the context of management, the concept of organisational culture has been used to refer to a complicated fabric of management myths, values and practices that legitimise women’s positions at the lower levels of the hierarchy and portray managerial jobs as primarily masculine (Deem 2003; Bagilhole 2002; O’Connor 1996; Benshop & Brounds 2003), with Acker (1998) asserting that organisational culture reflects the wishes and needs of powerful men. Such work has suggested that the barriers women face in universities include those related to male definitions of merit; a ‘chilly’ organisational culture premised on male life styles and priorities; a culture where senior positions are seen as ‘posts of confidence’ (Bond quoted by Brooks 2001, p. 24; Currie & Thiele 2001; Hearn 2001) and are premised on ‘the way masculinity is constructed as a care-less identity’ (Lynch & Lyons 2008: 181; see also Grummell et al. 2008; Bailyn 2003; Acker 1998).

In this context, changing women’s position in universities requires changes to gendered culture as well as other kinds of change. For Hearn (2001, p.70) the most important aspect of this is ‘changing men and men’s position in universities and their cultures’. Men as he sees them are ‘a social category associated with hierarchy and power ... Management is a social activity that is also clearly based on hierarchy and power ... Academia is a social institution that is also intimately associated with hierarchy and power’. In this situation ‘Women’s place’ is defined by men and is a subordinate one. While ‘ignoring difference, acting as equal’ is often ‘an important strategy for women…it leaves patriarchal cultures intact’ and is inherently fragile since at any moment women’s status as honorary males may be withdrawn (Cockburn 1991).
As discussed in Chapter six, academic senior managers who report directly to the VC/Rector/President are likely to be appointed by him in a managerial system, while in a collegial system they are likely to be nominated by largely male constituencies (O’Connor & White 2009). There has been good deal of discussion about whether the organisational culture in collegial or managerial systems is more helpful for women. Deem (1998 pp.48 and 50) noted that managerialism makes explicit the low profile administrative and caring roles that have typically been carried out by women (Brooks 1997). However Deem (1998, p.66) also argues that a managerial culture is incompatible with ‘concerns about equity and feminist values’ (see also Ozga & Walker 1999; Kerfoot & Knights 1996; Knight & Richards 2003). Similarly, Currie and Thiele (2001, p.108) argue that although certain aspects of managerialism such as equity targets assist a few women to move into senior positions, most women, like most men, are ‘likely to be proletarianised’ by it. However regardless of the collegial or managerial status of the organisational culture, Husu (2001b, p.172) concludes that ‘women’s under-representation among academics and gender inequalities in academia appear to be persistent and global phenomena’. Hence in this chapter the focus is on the gendered aspects of the wider organisational culture.

**Sinclair’s typology**

Sinclair (1998, p.19) identifies a typology of such culture at senior management level:

1) **Denial:** that is the absence of women in such positions is not seen at all and/or is not seen as a problem
2) **Problem is Women**: that is women should adopt male attitudes or life styles

3) **Incremental Adjustment**: that is allowing access to a small number of women who are seen as a low risk to the established culture

4) **Commitment to a new culture**: that is commitment to fundamental cultural change and/or the identification of specific ways of producing that change

This schema is used to classify gendered organisational cultures in this cross-national study. However the denial category is redefined to include both denial and the identification of processes used to maintain a culture that perpetuates male dominance and which is identified as a pro-male culture.

1) **Denial and/or the identification of a pro-male culture**

Connell (1987) is among those who suggest that it is in men’s interests to deny the existence of gendered patterns or to see them as ‘natural’, inevitable’ or ‘what women want’. Currie and Thiele (2001) find that in their Australian and American study, men most often are in what they called the denial category, as reflected in the perceived lack of importance attaching to gender or suggestions that discrimination ‘doesn’t happen anymore’ (see also Kloot 2004). There are costs for women in identifying gendered processes, not least of which is the fact that women do not want to depict themselves as ‘victims of misfortune or injustice’ or to open themselves up to the possibility of being professionally discredited or perceived as ungrateful (Husu 2001a). There is evidence to suggest that women are less likely than men to deny the importance of gender. In Harris et al.’s (1998) study, the system is depicted as gender neutral by those who see it as ‘reasonable’: male professors in particular stress that ‘there is no sex discrimination in
university or academic life’ (Harris et al. p. 259). On the other hand, those who see it as flawed (and women academics are the majority of these in that study) are critical of what they see as institutional traditions that favour middle aged men and ‘people in the know’, and of patterns of direct and indirect discrimination that favour those in the ‘old boys network’.

Deem (2003) finds that two thirds of the women manager-academics in her UK study claim that women are treated differently to men in their universities. Furthermore, more than two-thirds of the women manager-academics in that study, as compared with 44 per cent of their male counterparts, think that gender affected their careers. Similarly Bagilhole (1993) finds that three quarters of the women in her UK study consider that there is discrimination against women in their university. However among the Turkish and Portuguese respondents in the present study, although both men and women deny the importance of gender, there are contradictions in their responses, with gender being simultaneously ignored and valorised (see Chapter 3). Similarly Healy et al (2005, p. 257) highlight the fact that although women at professorial level in Turkey face ‘structures of gendered discrimination yet the perception of gendered disadvantage was not high among our respondents’. The majority of the Turkish men and women in the present study suggest that there are no specific barriers to women’s advancement in their University: ‘There is none’ (TR man 3); ‘barriers for promotion is the same for men and for women’ (TR woman 7); ‘I’ve never felt mistreated or neglected because of being a woman’ (PT woman 2). In this context, although the Rector is seen as extremely powerful, his role in relation to the gender profile of senior management is irrelevant.
since there is no perceived discrimination: ‘The Rector is very powerful legally. He is omnipotent. In Turkey there is no prejudice against women in senior management’ (TR man 8).

Among the Portuguese participants there is a general sense that the academic environment in Higher Education itself is likely to be a ‘a more neutral environment’ (PT man 22) in gender terms than the wider society; I don’t think that in the university, there is this feeling of harming someone’s academic career just by the fact of being a woman’ (PT man 15): ‘We are in a highly masculine society, we can’t ignore that. But I think that Higher Education, despite all, is more neutral and indifferent to gender issues’ (PT man 22).

Probert (2005, p.70) stresses the importance of specifying the practices involved in perpetuating a pro-male culture. Men’s relationships with other men are widely seen as a key factor in perpetuating such patterns (Hartmann 1981). This phenomenon is referred to in various terms that are variants of homosociability (Lipman & Blumen 1976; Hearn 2001; Kanter 1977; Witz & Savage 1992; Husu 2001a and 2001b; Collinson & Hearn 2005; Blackmore et al 2006). The essence of this process involves selecting leaders ‘with familiar qualities and characteristics to one’s self’ so that leaders effectively ‘clone’ themselves in their own image’, guarding access to power and privilege to those who fit in, to those of their own kind’ (Grummell, et al, 2009, p. 333; see also Witz & Savage 1992). Van den Brink (2009, p.224) notes that in The Netherlands ‘men tend to help their own sex in an unintentional ‘matter-of-fact’ way’, with obvious consequences as regards
the way in which gatekeepers and support systems operate (see also Bagilhole & Goode 2001; Yancey & Martin 1996; O’Meara & Petzall 2005).

In the present study respondents from the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Sweden and South Africa implicitly refer to homosociability as a key factor. For the UK respondents, collegiality is ‘a convenient cloak for forms of male sociability and patriarchal exclusion’; ‘men still prefer to work with men’, with references to senior management as ‘a boys club’:

Definitely the old boys’ network still exists. They like promoting people like themselves. They are not willing to take what are seen as a risk with women, who are seen as different (UK woman 16)

Among the New Zealand respondents there is a suggestion that when there are more men than women on a promotion panel: ‘There is a natural tendency for them to go for [candidates] who are the same as them’ (NZ man 13), indicating the way in which homosociability is reproduced and even seen as ‘natural’ although it is recognised that ‘they [women] may also perceive overt bias’ (NZ man 5). Among the Australian respondents it was suggested that:

One barrier for women is that when recruiting someone for a position, you have a particular sort of person in mind ... If you are a male, you might see very masculine behaviour as ideal for a manager (AUS woman 1)

Amongst the South African respondents reference is made to ‘the boys club’ as the main barrier to the advancement of women (‘although it will be denied’) and senior
appointments being ‘an opportunity to pay back my buddy’ (SA man 8). Amongst the Swedish respondents male networks were simultaneously seen as natural and problematic and as requiring intervention:

I think the male networks are an obstacle. I don’t think a lot of men sit around and plan to favour other men. ..But we do have a greater part of our acquaintances of the same gender. Most people do, don’t they? Since those in leading positions are mostly men, then their networks are mostly men (SWE man 8)

This is compatible with the trends emerging in Currie and Thiele’s study (2001) where among their Australian and American respondents pro-male attitudes of varying degrees of intensity are also perceived, particularly by women. Similar kinds of patterns emerge in the Irish, and to a lesser extent, the Australian respondents:

Most of the men that I work with, the bottom line is that they would be much more comfortable to be working with men. They vaguely put up with you, accept that you have a right to be there, but if it was up to themselves they are more comfortable around men (IRE woman 15).

Gherardi (1996) suggests that this reflects a positioning of women as effectively ‘guests’ within a male world in a context where they are simply not accepted as an equal. Such views are very strongly articulated by the Irish respondents: ‘You think are we in the 21st century or in the 18th. There is chauvinism to the Irish psyche’ (IRE woman 13):
One thing you can never be in this job is one of the boys … [there is] a certain place that other male colleagues can go with regard to one another that you won’t go (IRE woman 23)

Parker and Jary (1995) suggest that conformity characterises higher management in universities (see also Goode & Bagilhole 1998). Harris et al (1998, p.142) also find in their Australian study that what are seen as the organisational attributes of success include those who ‘don’t rock the boat’ and who show ‘a certain deference pattern’, whereas ‘if you speak up and you do things … that are seen to be threatening, you don’t get ahead’. Madden (2005, p.6) notes that ‘Direct language, disagreement….were less well received from women’. Irish and occasionally Australian respondents considered that being outspoken is problematic: ‘They have a vision of senior female managers as ones who do not speak (AUS woman 16); You are supposed … not to be outspoken on things you feel very strongly about. It is a very male domain’ (IRE woman 4). Gherardi (1996, pp.194 and 196) also refers to the ‘outsider who… refuses to conform to local traditions, who asks embarrassing questions’:

Sometimes you can find yourself looking at things slightly differently. If you do that quite a lot … You can get pigeon holed as the person who will always have a contrary view (IRE woman 14)

Hey and Bradford (2004, p. 697) also refer to the ‘antagonism of misogyny disguised as rational public discourse’ (see also Morley 1999). Deem (1999) and Whitehead (1998, p.209) draw attention to the ways that keeping ‘emotions under wraps’ is seen as important, reflecting the priority still attached to ‘the man/manager as the rational,
controlled and logical agent’. Indeed Morley’s (1999, pp. 84 and 86) respondents see the organisational culture in the academy as aggressive (see also Goode & Bagilhole 1998). References are also occasionally made in the present study to an aggressive management culture and, particularly in the UK, Ireland and Australia, one that is seen as effectively hostile to women: ‘Men don’t like female voices … There is an openly aggressive, anti-female environment in senior management and they don’t even realise it’ (AUS woman 16). Reference is made by the UK respondents to a ‘macho management culture’ (UK woman 1); an ‘aggressive male management style’ (UK woman 8) and ‘a testosterone fuelled agenda’ (UK woman 17). In one Irish case so real is the possibility of physical violence that it is officially recognised: ‘I was personally threatened. I was experiencing bullying by people who had been on senior management ... I was shouted at, screamed at, threatened’ (IRE woman 6).

The tension between leadership and gender roles (Eagly et al. 2003) is referred to by the South Africans and it is suggested that it is a lose/lose situation for women:

Sometimes the requirement is to be aggressive or competitive and if you cannot do that by virtue of your socialisation, then it is not in your favour and if you are able to do it, you get judged negatively, so it is a double whammy (SA woman 14)

Currie and Thiele (2001) also find that low profile, nurturing and housekeeping tasks are given to women that do not facilitate their subsequent visibility and success, thus raising questions of the differential value that is attached to activities undertaken predominantly by men/women (see also Kloot 2004; Bagilhole 1993). As one respondent notes: ‘There
is a habit of giving high teaching loads to women’ (AUS woman 1). Among Irish and New Zealand respondents there are occasional references to the fact that (as in Harris et al’s 1998 study), things are improving in a context where all male boards had been accepted in the recent past. There are references to ‘lack of transparency in the procedures: ‘No clear criteria for promotion’ (UK woman 15) and to other issues involving procedures and criteria:

One barrier is a very cumbersome and bureaucratic process … I think women are put off by the increasing focus on research, because they are in those discipline areas that don’t have a strong research background (AUS woman 9)

Overall then the denial of the importance of gender within the academy is most likely to characterise the responses of the Turkish and Portuguese respondents. Among the Irish, UK, Australian, New Zealand and South African respondents, there are references, particularly by women, to a pro-male culture, which is reflected in homosociability and in subtle ways of privileging men and marginalising women.

2) ‘The Problem is Women…and their Attitudes and Priorities’

Morley (1994, p.194) early identifies the danger of constructing women ‘as a remedial group with the emphasis on getting them into better shape in order to engage more effectively with existing structures’ (see also van den Brink 2009). More recently, Morley (2005, p. 115) notes that: ‘We need a theory of male privilege rather than female disadvantage’. However, many of the senior managers in the present study, particularly men, refer to women’s own attitudes, which they see as limiting possibilities as regards
change, thus implicitly depicting women as ‘the problem’. Such explanations have an element of validity, reflecting as they do ‘the psychological effects of living in a sexist society’ (Husu, 2001a, p. 38). To some extent this can be seen as effectively ‘blaming the victim’. However in so far as such attitudes reflect deeper constructions of femininity they can be seen as constituting cultural limits to the possibilities for change (see Grummell et al. 2008).

The men in both Bagilhole and Goode’s (2001) study of academics and in Davies-Netzley’s (1998) wider study of Chief Executives attribute their success to individual qualities, thus reflecting and reinforcing an ideology of individualistic success: ‘individualism is the myth while male support systems are the reality’ (Bagilhole & Goode, 2001, p.162). In the present study there is widespread evidence both of depicting women’s own attitudes as ‘the problem’ and of stressing their greater domestic and family responsibilities. There are even elements of seeing women as the problem in Australia, Sweden and South Africa, but in these cases such attitudes tend to be located within an appreciation of the nature of the wider cultural and social context.

It is widely recognised that women are poor at marketing themselves and taking credit for their achievements, such patterns reflecting cross cultural norms surrounding modesty concerning individual achievements (Eagly & Carli 2007; Yancey & Martin 1996; Bagilhole & Goode 2001; Doherty & Manfredi 2006; Davies-Netzley 1998) and contrasting with what Collinson and Hearn (1994) call the practical enactment of
careerist masculinity. These kinds of attitudes appear particularly but not exclusively among the Irish, New Zealand and South African respondents:

When you kick a goal, what do you do? You dance around and hug everyone. You make sure that everyone recognises that you scored a goal … Those that weren’t at the match you say I will buy you a drink. They [women] weren’t comfortable playing those games (IRE woman 5)

Women do not claim enough credit. They just get on and do the job with very little fanfare. So they are not strategic enough about their personal branding (SA woman 13).

Both men and women refer to women’s feelings of not ‘being valued’ (IRE man 12); ‘women do not even try because they don’t believe they are good enough, probably as a result of socialisation’ (SA woman 10); ‘Women often don’t appreciate their own worth and don’t push’ (NZ woman 23); ‘women are a bit more modest when it comes to holding up their own merits….and saying ‘I’ll take it. I am good and I can do it’. A little more self critical’ (SWE man 3). Bagilhole and Goode (2001, p.169) find that women have a ‘misguided faith in the idea that high quality work and demonstrated commitment would be recognised and rewarded’, and they want ‘to achieve in their own right and through their ability’. They suggest that this is ‘not just naivete’, but rather that it reflects a rejection of academic politics (Bagilhole & Goode 2001): ‘Promotion is a game. They [women] did not see it as a game and they thought the rules were unfair’ (IRE woman 5):
They [women] just won’t believe that men, and those who further men, work very much together. They really lobby. We as women don’t understand that we have to go in and act…you think it is tiresome (SWE woman 7)

References are made by the Australian and New Zealand respondents (both men and women) to women not applying for positions in the same proportions as men and/or doing so at a later stage: ‘Women want to be sure and not be rejected, and are averse to risk, whereas men will chance their arm’ (NZ woman 19); ‘Women clear the bar by a great deal when they apply … women wait until they are certain they can get over the bar’ (AUS man 21). Among Irish and South African respondents women’s insufficient career planning features as an explanation (see also Thomas & Davies 2002):

Males had planned … What they would need to do, how much funding, PhDs, publications … where females seemed to just keep doing these things[and thought that] I will at some point put it together and I will be promoted, much more passive (IRE man 12).

It is striking how often individual ‘private troubles’ in a South African context become presented as ‘public issues’ (Wright Mills 1970). Thus, for example, an awareness of systemic processes is evident in explaining women’s lack of advancement; their difficulty in breaking into established networks and being ‘politically savvy at institutional level’ (SA woman 11): ‘all marginalised groups do not always understand processes’ (SA woman 13).
For Acker (1998), as for Bailyn (2003), the gendered subculture in organisations ultimately rests on the fact that economic structures have priority over all other structures. This is ultimately premised on ‘the way masculinity is constructed as a care-less identity’ (Lynch & Lyons, 2008, p. 181). At the other extreme familial constraints are identified and accepted by both Turkish men and women. In a number of studies (Deem 2003; Currie & Thiele 2001) it is particularly men who are likely to see women’s academic careers as negatively impacted on by childcare. In the present study, among the Irish, Portuguese and the New Zealand respondents and to a lesser extent the Australians and South Africans, it is particularly men who think that family responsibilities must be a barrier: ‘This is what is the barrier for women … family is a huge issue’ (IRE man 18); ‘Ladies are the ones to give birth to children as well as the ones who take care of them … men can help in raising them, but for now, things are like this’ (PT man 14); ‘The barriers … are women’s different life experiences; taking time off for child rearing and bearing and career breaks are an issue’ (NZ man 8); ‘Career interruptions are still a major barrier for women. To the extent that women have time out of the workplace, it does create an extra hurdle’ (AUS man 11). In Sweden and to a lesser extent in South Africa there was a reflective problematising of family as a ‘normal obstacles- no I should not say normal- the frequent obstacles that exist in society with the difficulties in combining career and family’ (SWE man 3):

I don’t think it is home and children and such, like everybody says. ….What prevents us is that we live in a patriarchal society where what women do is not valued in the same way as what men do. Where people find it hard to see that a
woman may be a good leader….that men are scared of women. Or that they don’t have any respect for women (SWE woman 5)

The Australian as well as the Swedish respondents also occasionally link patterns to a wider societal or situational context: ‘There is a culture that women do not relocate because their partners will not move’ (AUS man 21); ‘Some of the most successful women here have retired husbands or stay at home husbands’ (AUS woman 12):

The barriers come with the holistic roles that women have- family demands, interrupted careers, managing motherhood. How their career interruptions are perceived by promotion panels … there are societal expectations that put women in complex and challenging roles (AUS woman 10)

Interestingly the South African respondents think it is possible to transcend these difficulties through familial support as well as through mentoring and systemic change.

Overall then, much is made, particularly but not exclusively by men, of women’s lack of career planning and poor ability to market themselves and their domestic and family responsibilities across the countries in the present study. Such explanations implicitly or explicitly define women as ‘the problem’ and so obviate the need to look at intra-organisational culture and procedures in explaining these patterns. However in the case of the Australian, Swedish and South African respondents, these explanations are likely to be located in a wider situational or societal context reflecting a recognition of the cultural construction of gender, including family responsibilities (Ely & Padavic, 2007).

3) Incremental Adjustment
Husu (2006, p.5) stresses that gate keeping has a ‘dual nature’; it ‘can function as exclusion and control, on the one hand, and as inclusion and facilitation on the other’. Chapter six differentiates between advancement into the academic professoriate and into senior academic management. Admission to the professoriate is typically presented as being purely meritocratic, although Van den Brink (2009) very seriously challenges that assumption. But, typically, to be considered for academic senior management, professorial status is seen as a pre-requisite, thus inevitably restricting the available pool of women because women are under-represented at this level (see chapter 2).

In the incremental ideal type, some women are admitted, not least to legitimize the system, but they remain ‘outsiders on the inside’ (Moore 1988, in Davies-Netzley 1998). Thus they are never quite accepted: ‘By choosing men as insiders, they are relegating women to outside status even when intentional gender bias is absent’ (Bagilhole & Goode 2001, p. 171). In this context, as Kanter (1993) notes, women are under considerable pressure to uphold the existing structures and culture and in particular not to support other women: ‘The price of being one of the boys is being hard on the girls’. Several New Zealand respondents focus on helping individuals in a context where the culture is seen as an ‘extremely conservative male mode ... You can’t legislate for change ... [instead] try and help individuals ... cultural change will take time’(NZ man 5) although there was a suggestion that things were changing:

The sciences continue to have a very chauvinistic climate ... [However] the further you go up, the less likely you are to get that kind of behaviour ... There are still traces of prejudice and a lack of role models (NZ woman 1).
There are occasional references to women’s ‘insider outsider’ position reflected in the differential perception of men’s and women’s failure: ‘If women fail this is seen as being much worse than if men fail and this could affect the situation for all women’ (NZ woman 22). There are references to women being excluded from the inner senior management team, and to not getting paid the same salary and bonuses as male senior managers (AUS woman 20). Blackmore (2002, p. 437) refers to a “glass escalator” that facilitates male academics (and managers) moving up higher and faster.

In Ireland there are some academic men (but no women) in senior academic management positions who are not at professorial level and this is completely ignored by the respondents. On the other hand, some Irish men present themselves as well intentioned and frustrated by the absence of ‘suitable women’ for senior academic management positions, saying of the absence of women: ‘It’s more through lack of opportunity and lack of potential candidates within the system than any design’ (IRE man 9). There is also a suggestion that being in senior management is ultimately not in women’s interests (Connell 2005):

We have a number of good women doing a great job … but I wouldn’t want to pull them out of what they are doing … to pull them into the management area, even from their own career path point of view they are better off … doing their own research, publishing papers, getting money in, getting very well known in their own area (IRE man 19).
This seems to reflect a kind paternalistic ‘heroic masculinity’ (Kerfoot & Whitehead 1998, p. 451) insofar as it purports to protect women, while at the same time reflecting and maintaining men’s own positional power. Similar kinds of attitudes are occasionally referred to by South African respondents: ‘it is still a very paternalistic set up’ (SA man, 12) and this is seen as being reflected in describing women always as ‘young and promising’ (see also van den Brink, 2009).

As noted in Chapter six, in New Zealand, Ireland, Australia and the UK, the presence of women in senior management is to varying degrees seen as important in terms of potentially influencing young people for the future and so contributing to incremental change (Bagilhole, 1993): ‘It says to junior females “if you choose to go into senior roles, you can”’ (AUS woman 16); ‘They have to see people in these positions for them to think ‘I might do that”’ (IRE woman 14); ‘there are [glass] ceilings all over the place. They have to be corrected [and to do this we] need role models’ (IRE man 12). Among the New Zealanders there is a strong feeling that having women in senior management makes a difference in terms of showing men that women are capable of undertaking these tasks: ‘Men know we are there’ (NZ woman 1); and that ‘it signals that this is a viable career option for women’ (NZ woman 22). This kind of change is essentially incremental and poses little threat to the current status quo.

Among New Zealand participants, references to incremental change are most obvious. The dominant culture is explicitly recognised as to varying degrees are the challenges this poses for those who are in a minority position. On the other hand, Irish and Australian
respondents suggest that women ‘would be better off’ accepting that they would remain outside it. Thus New Zealand, Irish, UK, and Australian respondents see the presence of women in senior management as important in terms of potentially influencing young people in the future, reflecting an incremental approach to change.

4) Commitment to a new culture

Sinclair (1998) suggests that the essence of this commitment is a recognition of the importance of fundamental change in the university organisational culture. Such tendencies are most obvious amongst the South African and to a lesser extent the Australian and Swedish respondents insofar as gender is taken seriously as a systemic issue. Probert (2005, p. 64) argues that in Australia ‘policies in support of equal employment opportunities and affirmative action have been effective’ although her focus on the almost equal representation of men and women on the executive of the University of Western Australia is very much on best practice.

The South African respondents are unusual in referring to the University as ‘a highly political space’ (SA man 6). Experiences in a racial context in South Africa transfer in some cases to a gender context: ‘the structure of gender and the structure of race are everywhere in the way that the University is organised’ (SA man 3). They are reflected in assertions that: ‘Issues of gender sensitivity are important ... we cannot treat them [women] as second-class citizens’ (SA man 7). However race supersedes gender: ‘If I cannot get a black person, at least it must be a woman’ (SA woman 13); ‘Race definitely
overrides gender in selection decisions’ (SA man 6); ‘In our country we see first race and then gender - It is a double whammy for a black woman’ (SA woman 10)

The South African participants see the culture as a predominantly white male one; it is a ‘tough environment for women’ who have to spend a ‘lot of emotional energy to think consciously and strategically about what position they are going to take over an issue, whereas men have only to think about the issue’ (SA man 3). In this context it is noted that ‘institutional cultures are not women friendly’, with the barriers to women’s advancement being seen as ‘very rigid philosophies, ideologies, beliefs and practices that are male dominated and are inherently women unfriendly’ (SA woman 15); ‘There are institutional cultural factors, discrimination (explicit and implicit) in selection processes’ (SA woman 14). It is stressed that the VC and the Deans should provide active leadership in improving the gender equity profiles of their faculties, with the VC in particular expected to be: ‘ A direct supporter of gender equity and that gender equity (with targets) form a central part of the Dean’s key performance areas’ (SA woman 15)

The barriers to women’s advancement include references to ‘a history of not promoting women, not enough change agents who were black or female’ (SA woman 10); ‘We need stronger policies. Then we need proper monitoring of implementation with consequences for non-performance’ (SA man 8). However, because of racial sensitivities, there is a striking willingness among South African VCs to ‘make a rigorous and conscious effort to appoint demographically representative individuals even if it takes much longer’ (SA woman 13); to reject short lists if they are ‘demographically unacceptable’ (SA man 12);
and to challenge the recommendations of selection committees which had not changed their composition, as such committees ‘remain in their comfort zone of appointing people like themselves’ (i.e. white males).

For Australian and Swedish respondents what is most striking is the taken-for-granted acceptance of the legitimacy of specific attempts to change the organisational culture:

The VC restructured the Executive Group and added two positions to it with the express purpose of getting two women in the group. It was very much an affirmative action initiative on the part of the VC (AUS man 5)

On two occasions the previous female VC quite deliberately gave two women the chance to act in senior management roles for substantial periods of time … so that they had sufficient track records to apply for the positions when they came up. That was a deliberate intervention that was successful (AUS woman 9)

The colleges elect…the rector decides. If it is very even she may decide to take the woman if there has never been a woman before…There is a policy to have a woman as pro-rector if the rector is a man and vice-versa (SWE woman 5)

He [the Rector] said that he wanted a female pro-rector…there is of course such a policy concerning leadership positions that you are supposed to look for women where it is male-dominated (SWE woman 1)
Blackmore (2002) outlines the changes occurring in Australian universities and highlights their negative gender consequences. In the present study there are suggestions that the ‘push’ in Australia in the 1990s regarding gender equity has eased off with some respondents specifically referring to the fact that there are more women in senior management in the past and that ‘now it is predominantly male’ (AUS man 8). However, others note that in particular universities the proportion of women in senior management still is ‘a corporate indicator’ (AUS woman 9). Hence although contra tendencies are recognised, the Australian participants suggest that there is still a commitment to a new culture. Similarly although there are particular areas that are seen by Swedish respondents ‘as unbelievably male dominated’ (SWE woman 2) there is typically an acceptance of the need for change in organisational culture. Such change includes implementation of specific measures for women such as, for example, ‘a power package for gender equality’ (SWE woman 1) including research grants for women in minority positions who are at risk of exploitation; additional supports for women who are near professorial level (SWE, man 8) as well as a leadership and coaching programme for women. It also includes a taken–for-granted acceptance that an active commitment to gender balance necessitates rigorous vigilance: ‘You have to co-ordinate if you are to maintain gender equality in these positions….The deans always forget to consult with one another and then in the last minute they have to make a replacement, for otherwise there will be four men standing there’ (SWE man 9).

There is also a strong suggestion particularly by the Australian, but also to some extent by the Swedish and South African respondents that such changes reflect the presence of
women in senior management in these countries and their role in keeping a focus on
gender: ‘the gender balance issue is invisible if you don’t keep reminding them’ (AUS
woman 13); ‘It is an advantage to have a woman rector who is alert to gender issues’
(SWE woman 6); ‘We have a strong equity focus here because of our female VC’ (AUS
woman 10); ‘Women rectors care about gender equality in all management positions…all
decisions must go through a gender scrutiny’ (SWE woman 4); ‘Being at the table as a
senior manager keeps people honest; people correct themselves ... we want to have
women doing this’ (AUS woman 14). Thus the presence of women is typically seen as
impacting on attitudes, including preventing ‘that footy club mentality developing’ (AUS
man 5) and ‘bringing in the human element … what are the important issues to people in
the organisation’ (AUS woman 13). Furthermore, the taken-for-granted presence of
women in senior management in Australia is reflected in the observation that:

To make a comment on whether women in senior management make a difference,
you would have had to be in an organisation where they weren’t there, so therefore
it is difficult to make a comment (AUS woman 7)

Interestingly in contexts where the systemic nature of the problem of organisational
culture is recognised, there appear to be a greater willingness to refer to variations
between women: ‘It probably matters which women you have got’ (AUS woman 20):

There are different types … of women in these positions. There are those who are
not very gender conscious or gender interested … But then there are women who
have taken their stand … and are working with gender issues very much (SWE
woman 1).
There are a small number of references by the South African and Swedish women to some women’s negative attitudes: ‘Women place a heavier burden on other women than men do’ (SA woman 14); and to women ‘who do their best to discourage and sabotage the efforts of other women’ (SA woman 15); ‘I am disappointed in many women. There is no network, no solidarity, nothing. There is rather competition and exploitation’ (SWE woman 5). Some men also suggest that women are not supportive of each other: ‘the female participants were not more positive toward the female applicants than the male ones were. Rather the opposite…if there was a difference at all’ (SWE man 3). There are occasional suggestions by the South Africans that the problem lies with black men rather than with white men, exemplifying a kind of ‘othering’ of hostility and a fracturing of patriarchy along racial lines that is reminiscent of a colonial perspective. These same phenomena are also occasionally evident amongst Australian respondents: ‘where there are more women on the panel, the tougher it is for female applicants’ (AUS man 17); ‘Some of the men have terrific qualities in relation to gender, others go by the book’ (AUS woman 3).

Among the Irish respondents, organisational culture characterised by gender discrimination (Husu, 2001a; 334) is occasionally seen as ‘old-fashioned’ (IRE, man, 9); and ‘Universities have lagged behind; the voices and the language are mostly male still’ (IRE woman 14). In that context the presence of women in senior management is seen as most legitimate in a discourse that stresses diversity, representation and equality:
If you are a team player why would you not have women in the team? senior and junior?… We talk a lot about access or disabled, disadvantaged… and it is a bit strange when people don’t think [that] 50% of the people are men 50% are women (IRE man 11)

However, reservations about the extent to which gender issues are salient are expressed by some respondents, particularly women: ‘It would be nice to think that there is some consciousness of it, I’m not so sure that there is (IRE woman 23); ‘in relation to gender, I just wonder are they gender blind? They don’t see it as an issue’ (IRE woman 15). For UK respondents, although gendered barriers to women’s promotion are identified, ‘men were perceived as the rightful owners of management positions’ (UK woman 8), and gender is not seen as part of the agenda of the VC: ‘He [VC] doesn’t have gender on his agenda’ (UK woman 16); ‘The gender profile is not seen as an issue’ (UK woman 17). Even in Sweden there were occasional suggestions that an earlier momentum is not being maintained: ‘the big effort was done about ten years ago’ (SWE woman 5); ‘Perhaps we have not come so far in twenty years after all. It is the same arguments that come back. New persons with the same arguments’ (SWE woman 7).

Thus, not only among the Turkish and the Portuguese, but also amongst the Irish respondents there is very little evidence of any willingness to think about new procedures to bring about that change. Indeed there is a good deal of ambivalence regarding the use of the VC’s/President’s power to create gender balance in the senior management team, with gender presented as very much a residual issue: ‘It is important, all things being
equal, that decisions that are at the margins they should go in the direction of gender balance’ (IRE man 20): ‘I think he [the President] is interested in equality issues … [but] I don’t think he would say to the Director of HR we need to get another woman on Senior Management’ (IRE woman 13). Some tentativeness also appears among the New Zealand respondents, although it is clear that some New Zealand VCs are ‘very pro-equity and diversity’ and interested in actively increasing the women in their management team. However, even these consider that they ‘could not push too hard with regard to Heads of Department in case there was a backlash’ (NZ man 20). For others, ‘political correctness’ is seen as getting in the way ‘of engaging properly with gender and leadership issues’ (NZ man 21).

Overall then a commitment to a new culture is most evident in the South African and to a lesser extent the Australian and Swedish respondents. Amongst the Irish and the New Zealanders a kind of tentativeness is identified reflecting an unwillingness to actually commit to the creation of a new culture.

**Summary, Explanations and Conclusions**

This chapter describes variation in organisational cultures at senior management level focussing on the gendered dimension. Denial of the importance of gender in universities is most obvious amongst the Turkish and Portuguese respondents. In Chapter four it was shown that these countries are most likely to have universities that are collegial rather than managerial. On the other hand, a commitment to a new culture is most apparent in
South Africa, Sweden and Australia - and the latter in particular is moving strongly towards managerialism.

As in Currie and Thiele’s (2001) research, women in the present study more often refer to systemic factors while men are more often in the denial category. The organisational culture that is depicted, particularly by the women respondents in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland, is one where men are, for the most part, generally comfortable working with other men, and which is conformist and homosocial. In most of the countries in the present study, there is some evidence of depicting women as ‘the problem’, either because of their attitudes or because of their perceived domestic and family responsibilities (although the systemic source of such problems is particularly likely to be referred to by the Australian, Swedish and South African respondents).

Such patterns are also identified in other studies (Whitehead 2001), although they sit uneasily with the fact that the proportion of women in senior management at less prestigious institutions is considerably higher than in universities even within the same country (O’Connor 2007; Bagilhole & White 2008). Incremental change is most obvious amongst the New Zealand respondents. However, although there is widespread acceptance that the VC/President can determine the gender profile of the senior management team, in New Zealand and in Ireland there is a marked reluctance to actually do this with references being made to lack of potential candidates and a paternalistic attitude that women are “better off” not being in management.
In understanding such variation, it is suggested that the role of the state is critical. The overall context of the Irish state is described as patriarchal (O’Connor 2008b). Thus the state structures in Ireland that interface with Universities provide little support or encouragement for gender change at senior management level (O’Connor & White 2009). In contrast, in South Africa, although gender is subordinated to race, the state is seen as having a very clear responsibility to transform the white male organisational culture within universities; while in Sweden the state is supportive of measures to actively promote gender equality. Similarly in Australia, the importance of state policies and particularly the role of femocrats in the 1990s in advancing a feminist perspective has been crucial in creating a commitment to a new culture there, although there were suggestions that this was waning.

In addition specific situational factors are also seen as important (Healy et al. 2005). Such factors may inhibit or facilitate challenges to the organisational culture. Thus, for example, in Ireland senior manager-academics are most likely to be internal: ‘It’s cheaper for them not to go out’ (IRE woman 13) and the tendency towards cultural continuity is exacerbated by ‘a lack of any tradition of mobility between institutions’ (IRE man 19) thus reducing the existence of possible change agents from outside the system. A similar pattern exists in Turkey (Neale and Ozkanli 2009). In contrast in Australia and South Africa, possibilities for advancement are seen as lying in a move ‘out and up’, a factor that is arguably not unrelated to the greater commitment to a new culture in university senior management in those countries.
Overall however, with the exception of the denial of the importance of gender by senior managers in Turkey and Portugal and a commitment to a new culture particularly in South Africa, Australia and Sweden, the similarities in this cross-national study are more striking than the differences, with homosociability and the perception of women as ‘the problem’ for various reasons occurring across all of the countries.
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Transactional, and Laissez-Faire Leadership Styles: A Meta-Analysis Comparing Women


