Title page

Different or similar: constructions of leadership by senior managers in Irish and Portuguese universities

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Abstract (125 words)

Despite over 60 years of research on leadership, few attempts have been made to ensure that the models of leadership are inclusive of women or other ‘outsiders’ (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalf 2005). This paper explores variation in the constructions of leadership, at a time of institutional change in higher education. Drawing on a purposive sample, including those at Presidential/Rector, Vice Presidential/Vice Rector level in Irish and Portuguese universities, it compares and contrasts such senior managers’ conceptions of leadership, as reflected in their descriptions of a typical President/Rector and those characteristics that they see as valued in senior management in their own university. Attention is particularly focussed on the identification and gendering of collegial/managerial characteristics, and the extent to which it reflects variation in these university contexts.

Keywords (5-6): higher education; gender; Ireland; Portugal; leadership
Introduction

Despite over sixty years of research on leadership, most research in the area still focuses on the business world and does not acknowledge the complexity of leadership in academia. To Yelder and Codling (2004), leadership in universities is vested in a person, with their positional authority ultimately rooted in disciplinary knowledge, experience, peer and professional recognition. A vast literature exists as regards the nature of leadership and management and the differences between them. Prewitt’s (2004) approach, which considers management and leadership as inseparable and complimentary constructs, was adopted in this study. In this paper, the focus is on constructions of leadership among senior managers within one particular context viz. universities. In that context it is concerned with exploring the differential impact of a then predominantly collegial context (such as Portugal) and a more managerialist one (such as Ireland) on such constructions and on the way in which they are intertwined with gender stereotypes. More specifically, it is concerned firstly with whether such senior managers see the characteristics of senior management in gendered terms; secondly with the extent to which such characteristics are implicitly defined in collegial/managerial terms; thirdly with whether such characteristics can be seen as ultimately reflecting gender stereotypes; and fourthly, with whether the physical embodiment of leadership facilitates the higher valuation of stereotypically female characteristics.

The university context is seen as a bureaucratic hierarchical one, with procedures and discourses characterised by ‘the cultural masculinisation of authority’ (Franzway, Court and Connell 1989, 46). There is no agreement on the extent to which bureaucracies are inevitably or historically masculinist (Connell 1995; Ferguson 1984). However, it has been suggested that even if women are moving into more senior
positions, bureaucratic organizations typically keep their masculinist underpinnings (Martin 2003). Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Mertcalfe (2005) conclude that few attempts have been made to ensure that the models of leadership are inclusive of women or other ‘outsiders’. Gender stereotypes, defined as ‘socially shared beliefs about the characteristics or attributes of men and women in general that influence our perceptions of individual men and women’ (Cleveland et al. 2000, 42-43), have been seen as one of the main reasons for the scarcity of women in leadership positions within universities (Martin, 2003; Carvalho and Machado-Taylor, 2010). In such stereotypes, men are seen as agenic, the ‘doers’ and hence suited to leadership positions, especially in bureaucratic structures, while women are seen as ‘communal’, good at relating to people and hence suitable for subordinate positions (Eagly and Sczesny 2009, 23). In university senior management, stereotypes can be seen as part of the symbolic structure that reflects and reinforces men’s managerial position (Acker 2006). Ely and Padavic (2007, 1126) argue that ‘masculinity and femininity are expressed in beliefs and expectations that people must reckon with and in this process these notions tend to become reified’. Such constructions of leadership can be seen as ‘idealised images’ that ‘exert subtle but very real pressure on women and men to ‘do gender’ by defining themselves in relation to these stereotypes’ (Fletcher 2011, 399).

Theoretically this article draws on Ridgeway (1997; 2011) and Ridgeway and Correll’s (2004) ideas about the importance of underlying gender status beliefs and their impact on interactional contexts, and ultimately on the perpetuation of gender inequalities. Implicit in their argument is the idea that in male dominated jobs such as senior management, greater competence is more likely to be expected of men than of women, and that even where both men and women are in fact equally competent, men
will be seen as more competent. They argue that such underlying beliefs change very slowly and over a long period of time, even where substantial structural change occurs.

A post heroic concept of leadership has emerged in the context of increasing criticism of the individualistic heroic model of leadership (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe 2005; Gronn 2003) and increasing disenchantment with heroic grand narratives (Grint 2011). Such post heroic leadership is seen as being characterised by a shift from an individual to a shared model of leadership; from control to learning; and from individual traits to a leadership process (Fletcher 2011). Potentially, implicit in it is a move from an idealised image of male leadership to an idealised image of female leadership: i.e. from a valorization of stereotypically male leadership characteristics to a valorization of stereotypically female ones. Nevertheless Powell, Butterfield and Parent (2002) noted that in their study, despite an increased presence of women in leadership positions, and despite a greater stress on female characteristics as useful in a management context, management stereotypes did not involve a positive valuation of such female characteristics.

Portugal and Ireland have many similarities, both in terms of their current financial difficulties and in terms of the ways in which men in both countries have managed to retain their dominance of key institutions. This has enabled them ‘to get a stranglehold on meaning (sic). What it means to be a man, what it means to be a woman’ (Edley and Wetherell 1996, 107). However in the university system, Portugal at the time the data was collected, was very much located at the end of the collegial continuum, with the Rector being seen as a ‘primus inter-pares’, with election being the basis for membership of the senior management team. In Ireland, although a collegial discourse remains a strong source of legitimacy in most of the public universities (O’Connor, 2014), Presidents, to a far greater extent than in Portugal, are in a Chief
Executive mould at least as regards control over the appointment of members of the senior management team. It is important to highlight that this paper refers to the situation in Portugal when the new legal framework for universities was still in discussion. In 2007 a new legal framework was passed in the parliament (RJIES) introducing new public management and managerialist perspectives in higher education. With this new legal framework, the collegial decision-making bodies were suppressed and there was a high concentration of power at the top. Collegial bodies such as the senate were suppressed or reduced to a consultancy status; the rector was not elected by academics but by representatives of the students, academics, administrative staff and stakeholders. The higher educational institutions had the possibility of becoming public foundations. The way this new legal framework was accepted by the academic community indicated the willingness of many academics to accept decreased academic collegiality in Portuguese universities. However the collegial framework still existed at the time the data was collected.

Women, although a minority in both contexts, have a greater presence in university senior management in Portugal than in Ireland. These differences offered the possibility of exploring subtle variations in the constructions of leadership. There have been some studies on gender and leadership within the new managerialist context (Morley 2005; Deem 1999; Carvalho and Machado-Taylor 2010; 2011; O’Connor 2011). However, little is still known about the impact of organizational and societal contexts on the constructions of leadership in senior management. A focus on Portugal and Ireland enables us to explore variation in the visibility of gender in universities in these two contexts (Acker 2006); as well as looking at the extent to which a collegial organisational context which has at least some presence of women in senior management positions (viz. Portugal) is more likely to identify and value stereotypically
female characteristics than one which is more managerialist, and where there are fewer women in senior management positions (viz. Ireland). However, none of these concepts are static. Furthermore, universities are not monolithic or devoid of resistance, and hence we will also briefly look at such resistance.

Methodology

The Irish and Portuguese studies were undertaken as part of a wider cross national study conducted by the Women in Higher Education Management Network (WHEM: Bagilhole and White 2011). The overall objectives were to analyse gender representation in university senior management and to provide an in-depth qualitative analysis of senior managements’ perceptions of that experience (Neale and Ozkanli 2011). Senior management was defined as those at dean level or above who are currently or who had been in senior management in public universities in the past five years.

A total of 46 interviews with male and female university senior managers, 23 in Ireland and 23 in Portugal, were conducted by the principal researcher in each country. Interviewees were chosen using a non-probability sampling technique because the researchers’ intention was not to generalize the results but to select those actors that were most involved in the process of senior management and, in this sense, were most able to answer the research questions.

The guiding principle for sample size was discourse saturation. By coincidence the number of interviews is the same in the two countries but they correspond to different strategies to select actors. In Portugal all the Rectors from the 14 public universities were interviewed and, in some cases, one other member of his/her team (at Vice-Rector level). In Ireland the study included both men and women from the
executive teams in all seven public universities. The interview guide included three sections: getting into and on in senior management; the dynamics of women and men working together in senior management teams, and perceptions of the broader management culture in universities. In the Irish study, interviews varied in length from 40 minutes to 90 minutes with the majority being over an hour and the Portuguese varied from 30 minutes to 120 minutes. All of the interviews were face to face and tape-recorded, with detailed verbatim notes being made during the interview. Following the interviews, the tapes were replayed and any additional material was inserted in these verbatim recordings by the authors. In the interests of confidentiality interview numbers and gender identifiers alone are used (e.g. PT or IRE, man/woman and number of interview), and features (such as level) that could identify those involved are obscured or omitted.

The researcher in each country selected major themes emerging from the data for analysis (Miles and Huberman 1994). Using local expertise and understanding in identifying such themes, contrasts with other cross-national studies and adds to the validity of those themes which emerged cross-nationally. The data analysed in this article derives from the cluster of questions relating to the second and third section. In asking respondents ‘to describe a typical Rector/President in your university’, the focus is on a stereotype, albeit one which is contextualised: ‘Descriptive stereotypes tell a story about how people with certain characteristics behave, what they prefer and where their competencies lie’ (Ely and Padavic 2007, 1136; Eagly and Sczesney 2009). In asking respondents: ‘What kinds of characteristics do you think are valued in senior management in your university? what about personal qualities and skills?’, the focus moves towards more prescriptive characteristics and competencies, again potentially reflecting underlying stereotypical constructions of gender (Ely and Padavic 2007).
It is important to stress that data analysis is not based on pre-defined hypothesis because the research, being qualitative, is not intending to be hypothesis-testing but, instead to be hypothesis-generating. Nevertheless the analysis is based on ideas derived from the theoretical framework: including a possible relationship between collegial/managerial models and senior managers’ constructions of leadership and the idea that the physical embodiment of leadership may facilitate the higher valuation of stereotypically female characteristics.

The gendering of institutional leaders’ characteristics

Although women make up only a minority of those in senior management positions in both countries, in Portugal, seven per cent of those in Vice Chancellor positions are women, as compared with none in the Irish universities. Furthermore, the proportion of women at Deputy President/Vice Chancellor level is twice as high in Portuguese universities as in their Irish counterparts (27 per cent versus 14 per cent) although there is little difference in the proportion of women at lower levels (Goransson 2011). Thus although women are very much a minority in such positions in both countries, the female embodiment of leadership positions is more common in Portugal than in Ireland. In this context, we look at the extent to which senior academic managers in universities, in both countries, refer explicitly to gender/ gendered disciplinary background or value stereotypically gendered styles of relating in their constructions of leadership.

In a context where maleness is valued and is the norm, it is typically invisible, other than to those who for structural or personal reasons are sensitised to gender (Deem 1999). Although all Irish University Presidents to date have been men, male embodiment was invisible (Sinclair, 2011) to the majority of the respondents, with only
a tiny minority referring to it as characteristic of a typical President in their university:
‘they have all been male of course. The typical President must embody a vision… and part of embodying is to do with the gender issue’ (IRL man 17)

In Portugal, gender was not referred to at all in describing a typical Rector. This reflected a wider lack of gender awareness among both men and women in the Portuguese interviews (O’Connor 2011; Carvalho and Machado-Taylor 2010). Thus, even though the majority of those in senior positions were men, this was not seen as a defining characteristic, indeed it was not ‘seen’ at all: ‘I think there are no differences between men and women. I cannot identify differences’ (PT woman 16).

In a context where women are a considerable proportion of those at the lower levels, Portuguese academics tend to believe in a ‘feminised future’, i.e. that women in the near future will ‘naturally and inevitably’ be at the top. Thus, women’s absence from these senior positions is seen as legitimate in Portugal. In the Irish study, gender is seen by the majority of such women as a systemic issue, and as such, one which explained the under-representation of women in senior management positions (O’Connor 2011).

President’s/VCs seemed to embody cultural expectations as regards the nature and purpose of a university education. Bargh et al. (2000, 55) found that in their study of VCs in the UK, an Oxbridge background was still disproportionately represented, leading them to conclude that there was ‘considerable continuity, even conservatism’ in the process. However, they also (like Bagilhole and White, 2008) noted that the majority of them were currently from a science background, whereas the majority had backgrounds in the arts in the 1950s. Anecdotally in the 1990s, the majority of the Irish university Presidents had an engineering or technology background. However the
current Irish pattern is more differentiated, with three of the seven Presidents having a medical background, a pattern that may not be unrelated to the importance of the pharmaceutical industry in Ireland (O’Donovan and Glavanis-Grantham 2008), and the increasing importance of the universities relationship with industry. The remainder are in the broad area of science, technology and mathematics, areas of predominantly male faculty employment. Only very occasionally in the Irish study was this link between gender and discipline made explicit in referring to the characteristics of a typical President as: ‘always a scientist, always a man, scientist or a medic, but always from that side of the house, not exclusively but nearly always had engineering/ science/ medicine as a background’ (IRL woman 14)

In Portugal most of the rectors also have an engineering or technology background allied with mathematics, medicine or law (the exception being a Rector with a background in educational sciences). So, in Portugal also, Rectors typically come from male dominated disciplines. The importance of disciplinary background was also only occasionally referred to by the Portuguese respondents. It was assumed that it was natural to have more men as Rectors because they were ‘selected’ from areas where men predominated. Thus, the gendering of the disciplinary area was recognised, but not of the Rectors themselves.

Both the Portuguese and Irish women managers valued a feminine management culture and referred to these characteristics as essentialist female attributes. In doing this women are ‘doing gender’, reinforcing feminine stereotypes as a way of ‘doing power’. However there was much more ambivalence about this among the Irish than the Portuguese respondents. If one accepts that the value of the characteristics is related to the power of the person enacting that behaviour (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003) it is
arguably not insignificant that Portuguese women are more likely than their Irish counterparts to be in university senior management positions.

In the Irish study (O’Connor and Goransson 2012), as in the Portuguese (Carvalho and Machado-Taylor 2010; White Carvalho and Riordan, 2011), stereotypically feminine management styles were more likely to be seen as relational: ‘females typically would be more people centric and would know the people in their departments and be also much more adept at understanding personalities’ (IRL man 11); ‘In a general way, women… give more attention to personal and human aspects and they are more attentive than men to day-to-day reality’ (PT woman 17). Feminine stereotypes are also used by Portuguese respondents: men use them to justify the lower number of women at the top and women to legitimize their presence in such positions. The Irish respondents, particularly the women, were generally comfortable with feminine stereotypical characteristics, drawing on essentialist views of women and reflecting women’s greater likelihood of being outside the established power hierarchy. In addition, female senior managers are seen, by both men and women, as more focused on the task. They are seen as less likely to engage in status related formulaic conversations; more likely to be concerned with outcomes and less likely to be bounded by convention in their search for solutions:

They have a different perspective, a low toleration of bullshit; cutting straight to the chase…women are less tolerant of everyone having five minutes of their say so they can say what everyone might expect them to say. There is not so much posturing…More of a willingness to embrace new ideas, to push the boat out, to do something different (IRL woman 21)

In the Irish study, there were aspects of the stereotype that the men saw as problematic: namely women’s greater ease in talking about their feelings and women’s attention to detail: the former because their emotionality might ‘make them unsuitable for these high pressure, competitive jobs’ (Wicks and Bradshaw, 2002:7); and the latter because
it was seen as an excessive form of control and micro-management (in Australia, this same characteristic was seen as more important than international experience: Sinclair 1998).

In summary, in both Ireland and Portugal, gender was largely invisible in the sense that there were few explicit references to gender or discipline. The disciplines from which Presidents/Rectors were drawn were in fact predominantly masculine (although the specific disciplines varied somewhat). Both Irish and Portuguese respondents identified and valued a feminine stereotype, although Irish men were most likely to refer to negative aspects of this stereotype.

Leadership and universities: Management/administration

Usually the literature presents the collegial and the managerial organising models as alternative models in a university context. Carvalho and Machado-Taylor (2011) suggested that a collegial orientation by those in senior management is most typical of Southern European countries (such as Turkey and Portugal). On the other hand, in countries influenced by the British Higher Educational system (such as the UK, Australia and New Zealand) senior management is more likely to be managerialist. Ireland is in a transitional position on this continuum.

It is suggested that a collegial model potentially legitimates post heroic feminine leadership. However, in a context where power is totally embodied in men, it may not do so, if it is not the characteristics as such that are valued, but their link to positional power. Furthermore, even if the characteristics that are valued are feminine, this may not suggest the legitimacy of women’s occupancy of senior management positions. Indeed, Fletcher (2011, 405) suggested that in these situations it would be difficult to
identify these valued characteristics as feminine (or for women to claim their ‘natural advantage’) since to do would be to implicitly devalue them. As power becomes more overt, as it does in a manageralist context, the characteristics that are valued may become more masculine, thus overtly privileging the legitimacy of men’s occupancy of these positions, although again their gendering may not be made explicit.

In the following section we reflect on if and how the existence of different universities’ organisational models are reflected in senior managements’ construction of the leadership role.

**The existence and gendering of collegial characteristics**

The characteristics of a typical President/Rector, as well as those characteristics that were valued in senior management involved aspects that could be regarded as collegial in both countries. Most of these characteristics can also be classified as reflecting a post heroic stereotypical femininity even if this was not recognised by the interviewees.

Democratic and consensual decision making processes are widely seen (Bush 1995; Ramsden 1998; Santiago, Carvalho, Amaral and Meek 2006), as distinguishing characteristics of a collegiality where: ‘Power is shared among some or all members of the organization who are thought to have a mutual understanding about the objectives of the institution’ (Bush 1995, 52). It is widely accepted that this is a somewhat romantic version of the actual decision making processes in collegial structures, which are typically hierarchical, with academic decision making frequently dominated by a male professoriate, and resource related decisions frequently made by a very small group at the top. There is vast statistical evidence showing that women were in a minority in academic and senior management positions in such universities.
Both in the Irish and Portuguese studies, references were made to what Ramsden (1998, 31) suggested was the distinguishing characteristic of a collegiate model viz. consensual decision making: being ‘responsive and democratic … responsive to democratic process… a typical President would be responsive to the college’s concerns and would be consultative in terms of getting decisions made’ (IRL man 11). Others referred to the importance of vision and the ability to influence others to translate that vision into a reality: ‘I think you need someone with a vision, who has clear ideas about what to do with the university in the short term and also someone with the capacity to develop teams and work with different people’ (PT, man, 14). Interpersonal skills, and particularly listening, are also commonly presented as part of a collegial stereotype (Priola 2007). Listening can be located in the context of shared consensual decision making, and this was the context in which it was valued in the Portuguese study. ‘I think one needs to have the capacity to listen, and to work with others….. We need time and work to consolidate, to discuss, to talk, to make people talk with each other and to gather consensus’ (PT man 18). In the Irish study, in a context where the routes to power are much less predictable and where power is centralised in the President, who directly or indirectly selects the members of the senior management team, listening was still seen as important: ‘being expected to listen above anything’ (IRL man 17), because it offered visibility to the speaker and hence possibilities as regards future access to power. Thus listening, a characteristics that has frequently been seen as a stereotypically feminine skill, was referred to by the Portuguese and Irish respondents, although it had somewhat different meanings in the two contexts.

Related to the building of a consensus is the importance that was attached by both the Irish and Portuguese respondents to being seen as accessible and personally
approachable: ‘If senior management was inaccessible, if people were not prepared to sit down with staff, particularly senior academics then they would get irritated and rightly so’ (IRL woman 13); I think you also need great relationship skills especially in my domain . . . I think the ability to form relationships is very important’ (PT woman 20). Bargh et al (2000, 158) also noted that in their UK study of Vice Chancellors the managerial style most frequently mentioned was ‘management by wandering around’, with much of this activity being of a routine/low level quality, reflecting the political nature of the position rather than its more managerial quality. Such accessibility can be seen as contributing to consensual decision making. Alternatively it can be suggested that it is valued in senior management to support the illusion that universities are not hierarchical organisations. Either way it can be seen as ultimately reflecting the importance of political skills. The Irish and Portuguese data echo Bargh et al’s conclusion that Vice Chancellor key skills are ‘those of networking, lobbying and persuasion, rather . . . than traditional managerial or administrative skills’ (2000, 161).

There were references to the typical President/Rector as someone who was ‘politically astute’ (IRL woman 1). In Portugal the most cited metaphor used to characterise the Rector or Vice-Rector’s work was that of a ‘magistracy of influence’.

The rector exercises a huge influence (a “magistracy of influence”) and, though his power doesn't seem virtual, it is . . . He needs to act with intelligence and political consciousness, in the institutional sense. And that is how the rector has been accomplishing his tasks . . . He needs to dialogue with the right and with the left; he needs to dialogue, talk and be firm whenever there's the need to be firm, but be able to dialogue. Above all, he needs to know how to dialogue. In this way, he will be able to exercise a great deal of influence (PT man 21)

It is this highly political component of a Rector’s/President’s role that can be seen as characteristic of leadership in universities (Bargh et al 2000), and it reflects the fact that whereas in business, the ultimate ‘bottom line’ is profit, there is much greater ambiguity about that bottom line in universities.
Implicitly reflecting a post heroic concept of leadership, Hatcher (2003:392) noted that there is increasingly ‘a stress on what were traditionally seen as more feminine styles of relating’. Collegial characteristics can be seen as reflecting traditional feminine stereotypes in both Ireland and Portugal. This is especially striking in Ireland, because it is a context where many aspects of the managerialism exist (such as for example, the increased power of the President in relation to the appointment of the senior management group). However this does not necessarily offer advantages to women in accessing senior management positions in male dominated organisations, such as universities. One of the reasons for this may be that: ‘if men deploy aspects of femininity to make them more caring managers, they are rewarded, if women employ femininity in the same way, they are just seen to be doing what they are expected to do’ (Skeggs 2004, 55). Furthermore, insofar as women are seen as ‘outsiders on the inside’ (Gherardi 1996, cited in Priola 2007, 30), being team players and symbolically representing the community may be difficult for them, yet these are also characteristics that are required of those in leadership positions. ‘I think the rector has a strong symbolic power and he has a strong ability to carry in himself, and to give voice to a set of elements of the university community’ (PT Man 18). Such references implicitly suggest that stereotypically feminine characteristics are not sufficient.

Resistance is always a possibility in organisations, not least through contestation i.e. challenging taken-for-granted attitudes and perspectives (Whitchurch 2010; O’Connor 2001). Thus, a minority of the senior managers were not totally supportive of those characteristics that they saw as valued in senior management in their own university, with, for example, some valorising more masculine characteristics, and depicting consultation as indecisiveness: ‘Part of our tradition is to communicate to
consult and to consult and talk things through...maybe that is part of our problem that we spend too much time talking to people’ (IRL man 20).

In summary then, in both the Irish and the Portuguese studies much was made of the importance of characteristics related to collegiality, including such people skills, listening, accessibility and consensual decision making. Many of these characteristics can be seen as stereotypically feminine, but they were not recognised as such. There were also differences between the two countries. Among the Portuguese respondents listening was much more embedded in the creation of consensus. In the Irish context, where power was much more volatile and centralised in the President, listening seemed to have more political properties. There was also much less ambivalence about feminine stereotypes among the Portuguese senior managers, arguably reflecting the greater presence of women at Vice Rector level in that context. Thus, as in Alvesson and Svengisson’s (2003) work, the value attached to a particular activity could be seen as affected by the power of those enacting it.

The existence and gendering of managerial characteristics

In this paper we have looked at the characteristics identified by Irish and Portuguese Blackmore and Sachs (2007, 59) suggested that managerialism: ‘privileged a particular managerialist discourse, leaning toward proven management and financial skills, rather than potential interpersonal skills’ (i.e. a valuation of stereotypically masculine over stereotypically feminine skills). The restructuring of the governance structure of universities under managerialism, results in strategic and political power being concentrated at the top. Presidents/Rectors are increasingly seen as Chief Executive Officers (CEOs: Carvalho and Machado-Taylor 2011). Such changes have been partly justified by the depiction of a collegial decision making model as being too slow.
Managerialism is also widely seen as reflecting wider neo-liberal processes with public organisations globally using business management policies and practices. In managerialist structures, power is more explicit internally, and is reflected in stronger line management systems, with ‘the loosely coupled systems compelled to adopt a vision of an integrated, unitary organisation’ (Carvalho and Santiago 2010). Indeed one could suggest that in this context universities are ‘political arenas…oligarchical (ruled by the few) and recruitment is at least partly done by co-optation (selection of successors by the elite themselves)’ (Ferguson 1984, 7).

Managerialism is ‘perceived as reinforcing ‘macho’ styles of leadership, as it is very outcome-oriented, with emphasis on targets, performance and measurement’ (Morley 2005, 419) and ‘encourages masculine practices and academic machismo’ (Priola 2007, 422). In an Irish context, a managerialist focus was frequently seen more or less as the antithesis of personal skills. ‘I don’t think that [personal qualities] gets a lot of air time in this university from the senior management team’ (IRL man 18). In Portugal, in line with a more collegial culture, the capacity to take decisions was seen as interrelated with the interpersonal skills: ‘[A Rector] must be a person with integrity, responsibility and who tries to bring everyone to participate in decisions (PT woman 1).

In a managerialist system, although power as regards internal appointments is centralised in the President, he/she is subject to external power, in a context where most of the funding (as in the Irish and Portuguese system) comes from the state, so that there is a delicate balance between maintaining university autonomy and being accountable to the state for financial support. In the Irish study there were some references to external stakeholders, although there was variation in whether compliance was seen as appropriate or not. In Portugal, senior managers tended to reject the notion that they should try to get financial support from external stakeholders (other than the state).
‘There are some higher education theorists who say Rectors must search for money and accept an American culture. I don’t agree with that’ (PT man 5).

Implicit in managerialist structures is the delegation of internal decision making. In the Irish study there were references to earlier Presidents who had been very internally focussed and ‘hands on’ down to school level, a pattern which was criticised. There were occasional explicit references to the tension between an internal collegial focus and an externally oriented managerial focus as they impacted on a typical President: [the challenge is] ‘to create a structure which values the traditional values of the University and at the same time you provide a mechanism so the funding agent can feel comfortable that money is not being frittered away’ (IRL man 20).

Managerialism was seen by Ramsden (1998, 32) as involving tight control ‘a crisis-driven, competitive ethos; decision making is political and tactical’ with a focus on ‘deliverables’. A culture of hard work, quick decision-making in line with the President’s priorities and getting the job done was valued in this context, and such a focus was evident in the Irish study: with a focus on ‘deliverables, energy, dynamism’ (IRL woman 23); ‘a person who can get an issue off my desk [is valued]. I value greatly the delegating of a decision and having confidence that it won’t come back to haunt me’ (IRL man 7).

In such a context the importance of relationships with colleagues was limited, and occasionally non-existent, with women being more likely than men to note the lack of importance attached to personal skills: ‘hard work and delivery, setting clear goals and delivering on them… not concerned about how you did it as long as the task got it done… a direct and impolitic form of management… human element was not seen’ (IRL woman 6). Thus effectively a stereotypically male style of interaction was
valorised. Thus ‘doing gender’ was equated with ‘doing power’ in a managerialist context, and the characteristics that were valued were stereotypically masculine ones.

It has been suggested that universities are increasingly moving to an enterprise focus (Ramsden, 1998). Reflecting this, the main characteristics that were valued at senior management level were: ‘being innovative…a capacity to innovate to solve problems and a capacity to deliver in management’ (IRL man 18). Such innovative structures can in some circumstances exclude women and other ‘outsiders’. In Portugal, even while recognising the challenges for universities and the speed of managerial decision making, the collective way of taking decisions was still seen as valuable. In Ireland the gap between senior management and university faculty in a managerialist system was recognised as a problem by senior managers: ‘there is a bit of a disjoint here between management and people on the ground. They don’t feel they have a communication channel to senior management, and that is a big problem’ (IRL man 21).

At the time of the interviews, managerialism was more embedded in the Irish than in the Portuguese context. Resistance however existed even among these senior managers in both countries:

there would be a very strong reactions here against managerialism, the corporatization of the University; the language that goes with that such as referring to students as clients does not go down well here (IRL man 9)

I am totally against managerialism in universities and I am totally against the notion of students as clients. ….Other countries have already had experiences that reveal to us how managerialism in universities can strongly affect some areas of knowledge that are not marketable, and for me the universities should be fostering all types of knowledge (PT man 14)

In summary, managerialism was evident mainly in the Irish study. Thus in that study, in referring to the characteristics that they saw as valued, these senior managers refer to a focus on deliverables, innovation and the absence of a stress on personal qualities and soft skills such as listening and communication. Power was much more
overt and was more stereotypically male, although it was not perceived by the respondents in gendered terms.

Thus there are different narratives concerning the construction of leadership by senior management, depending on the dominant organisational model. Since these models are aligned with different gender stereotypes, for different reasons and to different degrees, they appear to reinforce the relation between leadership and masculinity. However is important to notice that in both Ireland and Portugal there were suggestions that managerialism was being resisted to varying extents and for various reasons. This may be due to the fact that collegiality is a core aspect of an academic institution, regardless of the level of managerialism (Telken 2012, 276). Thus paradoxically although collegiality historically was not associated with women’s presence in leadership positions, the value it implicitly attaches to post heroic stereotypically female characteristics, when combined with embodied female leadership may offer interesting possibilities as regards the normalisation of female leadership.

**Summary and conclusions**

In this paper we have looked at the characteristics identified by Irish and Portuguese respondents as valued in senior management in their own universities. There was little evidence of explicit references to gender or discipline, with only a minority referring to male embodiment and/or disciplinary background as characteristic of a typical President/Rector in their university. However the disciplinary areas from which Presidents/Rectors were drawn were areas of predominantly male employment. Typically however such gendered patterns were not ‘seen’, reflecting wider patterns of invisibility as regards privileged characteristics (Acker 2006).
Distinct organisational models were identified (collegial/managerialist) and it was suggested that these could be identified with underlying gender stereotypes. Thus, in a collegial context the importance of people skills, listening, accessibility and consensual decision making was stressed. Indeed it is suggested that part of the appeal of the collegial model, to many who are disenchanted with managerialism, is its depiction of stereotypical images of idealized femininity in a socially acceptable way. However as in Powell et al (2002), valuing these female attributes does not legitimate women’s access to power positions. Indeed for those women who do access those positions, owning this valorization is complicated (Fletcher 2011) by gender status beliefs (Ridgeway, 2011) although it did occur among the Portuguese senior managers. There was much greater ambivalence around these characteristics among the Irish respondents, particularly the men, arguably reflecting the greater instability of power in general, and gendered power in particular, in that context.

The characteristics endorsed by managerialism are more in line with idealised images of masculinity, and in an Irish context were seen as the antithesis of personal skills. Thus both men and women saw what was implicitly a macho version of managerialism as being valued, one which valued outcomes and deliverables rather than any kind of personal relationships or skills. This created difficulties for women in simultaneously ‘doing gender’ and ‘doing power’ (Ely and Padavic 2007).

The contextual differences may reflect the greater influence of (hard) managerialism in Ireland: the fact that top leadership positions were even more male dominated than in Portugal, or the underlying instability of gendered power in the Irish context (reflecting women’s naming of gender, combined with the greater absence of women at senior management level). Thus, both context and the gender of the senior managers are important in affecting the value of stereotypically female characteristics.
However as Ridgeway (1997, 2011) noted because such beliefs advantage men, they are more likely to see such feminine stereotypical characteristics as problematic.

It is sobering to reflect that despite the increasing presence of women in managerial positions outside academia in both Portugal and Ireland, albeit at the lower levels, constructions of leadership seem to continue to implicitly value male characteristics. The analysis in this article highlights the way gender is constructed within particular organisational contexts in these two countries. As previous studies (Carvalho and Machado-Taylor 2010) concluded, neither collegiality nor managerialism facilitate the construction of gender relations that legitimate women’s access to power by broadening constructions of leadership. Embodying leadership positions seems to be the most effective way of underpinning the value of gendered constructions of leadership. Ridgeway (1997, 2011) highlighted the importance of experiences which undermined gender status beliefs about women’s lower levels of competence in jobs that are predominantly occupied by men. In that context it is at least theoretically possible that change can be initiated through making visible the relationship between power and gender since this ‘challenges current power dynamics’, and stimulates a greater awareness of the ways in which ‘doing power’ is embedded in ‘doing gender’ (Fletcher 2011, 408). The Irish university context, in transition to managerialism, highlights the limits of this strategy, with stereotypical male characteristics being implicitly valued. Collegiality, with characteristics that can be seen as reflecting feminine stereotypes, when combined with the presence of embodied female leadership can be seen as offering greater possibilities as regards the inclusion of post heroic, stereotypically female characteristics in constructions of leadership (although they are not perceived as gendered by senior managers in those contexts). Thus the presence of even a very small minority of women in senior management in the then Portuguese
collegial system at the time of interview highlights the importance of these in creating a more positive valuation of feminine characteristics. Further studies are needed in order to explore the potential impact of universities organisational models in promoting gender equality in senior leadership positions.

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