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7 Outsiders Reflecting on Invisible Institutional Gender Norms

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Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Literature Review

Coloniality

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

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

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

Normative Practices of Coloniality

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

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

Microaggressive Communication

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

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

Stress Process

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

Nordic Gendered practices

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mobility and Social Equity—Gender Not Included

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

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

Positionality

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

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

Research Design

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Survey Data Processing

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

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

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

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

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

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

Data Analysis

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

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

Findings

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

Reflection on Gender Inequality in HE

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

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

Composite Narrative: Research Experience

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

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

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

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

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

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

Composite Narrative: Teacher/Administration Experience

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

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

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

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

Composite Narrative: Work-Life Balance Experience

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

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

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

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

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

Composite Narrative: (Im)mobility Experience

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 7.1 Survey data chart – answers to closed questions

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

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

Related to Microaggressive Communication

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Related to Stress Processes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Related to Gender Stereotypes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusions

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

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

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

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

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

Recommendations Addressing Gender Inequality

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

First Recommendation: Raise Awareness in the Academic Community

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

Second Recommendation: Raise Societal Awareness

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

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

Third Recommendation: Decommodification of HE Practices

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

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

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

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

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