



ON BIAS, SEXISM,  
SUBTLE DISCRIMINATION  
AND MISOGYNY  
IN ACADEMIA

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# STRUCTURAL CHANGE

- Recent European focus on changing academic organisations towards gender equality: **structural change**
- Structural change GE interventions frequently clash with entrenched gender dynamics of academic culture(s)
- Gender equality policies and interventions frequently "fail" or have minor impact or low sustainability
- **Cultural change** of key importance

# WHY SO SLOW CHANGE, NO CHANGE OR EVEN BACKLASH IN GENDER EQUALITY IN ACADEMIA?

- Increased interest in the role of unintentional or implicit bias that impacts evaluations and decision-making
- “It is not lack of talent, but unintentional biases and outmoded institutional structures that are hindering the access and advancement of women”.
- “An impressive body of controlled experimental studies and examination of decision-making processes in real life show that, on the average, people are less likely to hire a woman than a man with identical qualifications, are less likely to ascribe credit to a woman than to a man for identical accomplishments, and, when information is scarce, will far more often give the benefit of the doubt to a man than to a woman.”
  - *(US National Academy of Science: Beyond Bias and Barriers, 2006)*

## BIAS: SYNONYMS

- **prejudice**, partiality, partisanship, favouritism, unfairness, one-sidedness
- **bigotry**, intolerance, racism, racialism, sexism, heterosexism, homophobia, chauvinism, anti-Semitism, discrimination, a jaundiced eye
- **predisposition**, leaning, tendency, inclination, propensity, proclivity, proneness, predilection
- **parti pris**

## RECENT EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES

- Bias in recruitment: **“Science faculty’s subtle gender biases favor male students”**, C.Moss-Racusin, J.Dovidio, V.Brescoli, J.Graham, J.Handelsman, **PNAS** October 9, 2012 vol. 109 no. 41 16474-16479.
- University students evaluation of their teachers (**“What’s in a Name: Exposing Gender Bias in Student Ratings of Teaching”**), MacNell, L., Driscoll, A. & Hunt, A.N. *Innov High Educ* (2015) 40: 291.

## MODERN SEXISM, RACISM AND MISOGYNY

“Typically, when one form of prejudice (such as sexism or racism) is labelled as unacceptable, it does not simply vanish; rather it tends to take increasingly subtler forms, thus protecting the prejudiced person from both social and legal accusations. “

(Paula Caplan: Lifting a ton of feathers 1993)

- Intersectional approaches: sexageism, gendered racism etc.

# 2016-2017 NEWS HEADLINES & SOCIAL MEDIA

- “Sexual harassment 'at epidemic levels' in UK universities” (Guardian, March 5, 2017)
- [http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/14292290.Female\\_academics\\_hitting\\_glass\\_ceiling\\_in\\_Scottish\\_universities/](http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/14292290.Female_academics_hitting_glass_ceiling_in_Scottish_universities/) February 23, 2016
- <https://www.nature.com/news/journals-invite-too-few-women-to-referee-1.21337>, 6 February 2017
- **Hanna Bercovici:** <http://risenews.net/2017/02/science-academia-is-still-sexist-as-hell/> February 2017
- <https://www.facebook.com/DontWasteFemaleAcademicTalent/>
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# MIRROR OF DOCTORAL STUDIES, SWEDEN 2016

(BY SWEDISH HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY UKÄ: DOKTORANDSPEGELN, UKÄ RAPPORT 2016:18;  
IN SWEDISH WITH A SHORT ENGLISH SUMMARY)

- Gender differences in doctoral study environment
- Women doctoral students more often on sick leave, work even during sick leave
- Women experience more stress and pressures
- Men more than women experience that parental leave is accepted
- Women experience more negative treatment because of their sex by other students, teachers, supervisors, administrative staff
- Men experience more negative treatment because of ethnicity and religious orientation by other students, teachers, supervisors, admin.
- Women experience more often sexual harassment



## ...MIRROR OF DOCTORAL STUDIES 2016

- Men receive more supervision (20h or more)
- More men than women have experienced the institutional milieu as creative in high or very high degree
- More men than women have experienced to be accepted by their research collective in high or very high degree
- More men than women have received support from their institution after graduation to continue a career in academia or outside academia
- More women than men are worrying about becoming unemployed after graduation

## CONTINUING EVIDENCE OF...

- Gender biases and stereotypes but also
- Homosociality in academic interaction, male-dominant or male-only networks
- All-male panels
- Sexual harassment of students, colleagues mainly targets women
- Resistance (latent, overt) of gender equality interventions
- Attacks on Gender Research, Gender Studies, feminist research

# CONCLUSIONS

- For academic leaders concerned with change towards gender equality, **gender balance focus not enough**
- Important to constantly monitor departmental, institutional, university cultures
- Training on implicit bias - but also training more broadly on inclusive, fair and supportive academic and study cultures
- Listen to voices of students, early career academics, LGTB faculty networks
- Ask how gender interacts with other power axis – ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation – gendered racism, gendered ageism etc.

