

Clare Burton Memorial Lecture 2003

**Sounds, Silences and Contradictions: Gender Equity in
Commonwealth Higher Education**

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Globalising Inequalities

The history of women's engagement with the academy has been characterised by exclusion and inequality. Seven decades ago, Virginia Woolf (1938:184) asked:

Do we want to join the procession or don't we? On what terms shall we join that procession? Above all, where is it leading us, the procession of educated men?

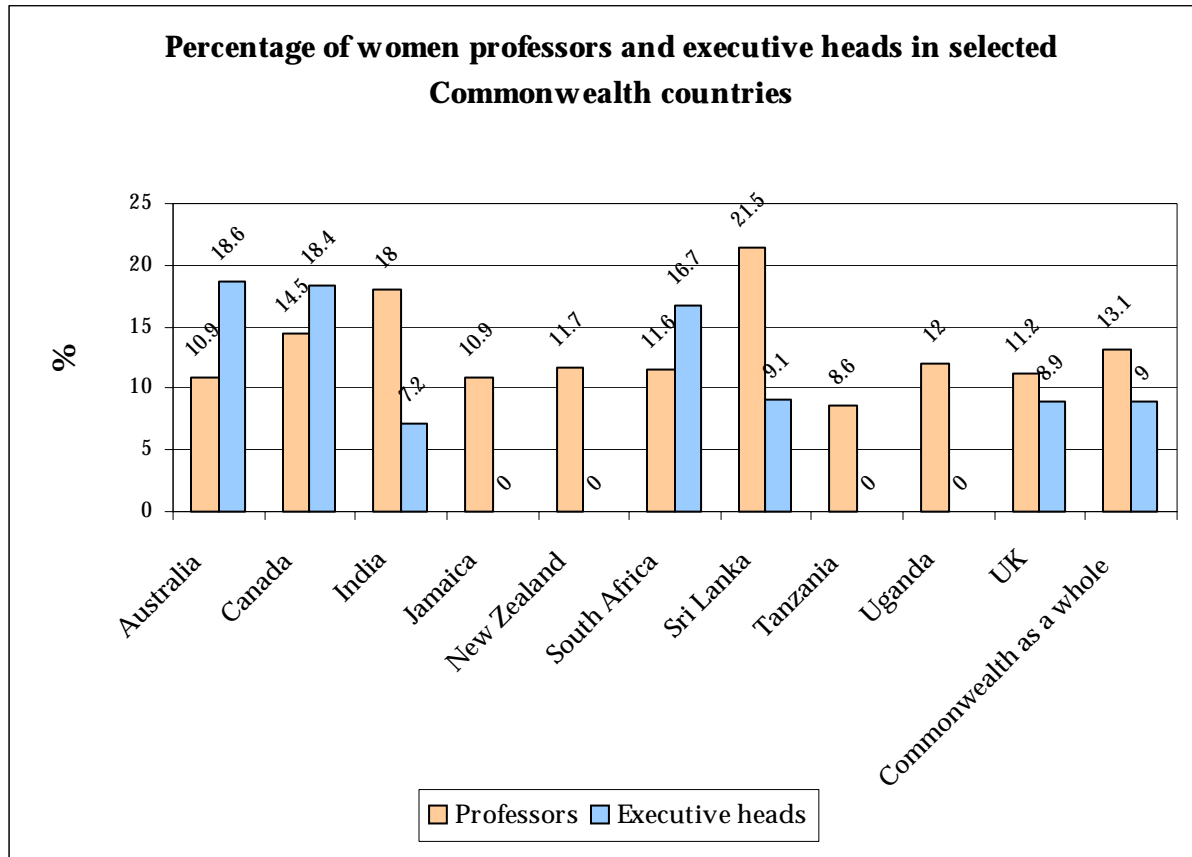
Many women globally are still asking the same questions about participation and more poignantly why, having decided to join the procession, they are still at the back of the parade. The devaluing of women has become a normalised social relation in the academy – even within the changing political economy of higher education (Morley, 2003a). As staff, they are more likely to be in junior positions and as students; their qualifications are worth less in the labour market (Hogarth *et. al.*, 1997). The academy forms part of a more complex matrix of gender relations, with gender inequality omnipresent in the wider civil society. For example, 66 per cent of the world's illiterates are women. On average, women's salaries are 25 per cent lower than those of men and politically and globally, women represent only 10 per cent of parliamentarians (UNESCO, 1999).

The political economy of higher education is rapidly changing, but generally women are still concentrated in the care giving and service areas and are a minority in the areas in higher education where power is exercised and decisions are taken. Despite potent advocacy and inquiry combined more recently with progressive legislation in many national locations, there is horizontal and vertical segregation in the academy on a fairly global scale. While there have been some equity gains in higher education - particularly in relation to women's access as students - the past and present look strikingly similar. So what is the way forward when universal patriarchal power appears so hard to denaturalise?

Mapping the terrain has been one strategy for change. In Europe, the issue of 'persistent inequalities' in higher education is frequently debated and documented (Husu and Morley, 2000). For example, in Britain, the first woman became an academic in 1893, and the first woman was appointed as a professor in 1894. By the 1970s, the proportion of women academics was virtually the same as in the 1920s. Scandinavia has some of the most sophisticated equity policies in existence, with quota systems, high state investment in childcare and careful monitoring of recruitment and promotion processes. However, women still only constitute 11.7 per cent of the professoriate in Norway and 11 per cent in Sweden (Husu, 2001). In the 'developing' world, gender equity is rapidly becoming encoded in national targets, supported and promoted by the international donor and policy context. Yet progress is also extremely slow.

Lund (1998) saw that there is no significant difference between high-income countries and low and middle-income countries in the Commonwealth regarding the percentages of full time women academic staff employed. In South Africa, authors note despite the fact that race and gender were areas that the government was keen to address via

transformative policies for equality, the situation has not changed much since 1990 (Martineau, 1997; Mabokela, 2000; Ndungane, 1999). Makehubu (1998) observes how Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland have women entering the academy as students, but not as academics or managers. Examples from across the Commonwealth demonstrate that women comprise less than a quarter of professors and executive heads.



(Singh, 2002).

Women’s under-representation in senior and decision-making roles is not merely symbolic. It is a form of status injury. The lack of women in senior positions is both cultural misrecognition and a material and intellectual oppression (Fraser, 1997).

We must consider what is to be equalised when we call for equality? (Sen, 1992). A key question is whether there is an ideal morphology of the gender equitable university and a collective dimension to gender equity globally. What are the aspects of gender inequality that universally disturb and discomfort? The globalisation of neo-liberalism and post-colonial formations and relays of power have resulted in policy borrowing and transfer across nation-states. Ironically, neo-liberal policies for quality assurance and the audit culture have been successfully globalised while policies for gender equity have not. However, globalised communication systems allow us to see both quantitative indicators and that similar questions are raised internationally about women in higher education. With gender equity, the notion of the global is contradictorily positioned as both a threat – for example, of the market eclipsing state welfarism - but also an opportunity for access

to new ideas, new contacts, new international resources and new forms of solidarity through international declarations. The role of international agencies in driving equity concerns is problematic- raising questions about whether the momentum for gendered change is organic, dynamic and indigenous or a form of contract compliance for international funding.

International events can serve to encode gender equity in policy priorities. An example was the first World Conference on Higher Education hosted by UNESCO in Paris in 1998. Representatives of 182 countries endorsed *the World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty First Century: Vision and Action* with its commitment to in depth reform of higher education throughout the world. Article Four of the Declaration is specifically concerned with gender (UNESCO, 1998). It was noted, however, that women comprised only 20 per cent of the delegates to the World Conference. (UNESCO, 1999).

The UNESCO conference was preceded by concern within the Commonwealth on this issue. Colonialism meant that elitist, patriarchal practices were exported and reproduced throughout the Commonwealth. The under-representation of women was seen by the Commonwealth Secretariat as one the most important issues facing universities (1994). It was perceived as a human rights issue. Research conducted by the Association of Commonwealth Universities (Lund, 1998; Singh, 2002) indicates that women are seriously under-represented in all sections of employment in HEIs. Studies have been undertaken of a number of aspects of gendered change, for example women's career development (Lund, 1998) or women as higher education managers (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999) or the gendered trends in student enrolment in particular regions (UNESCO, 1995).

This paper aims to examine the nature of writing on gendered change in Commonwealth higher education institutions and attempts to analyse some of the issues that have emerged from scholarship and practice relating to women as students and staff in higher education in the Commonwealth. In so doing, it aims to highlight some of the sounds, silences and contradictions that have emerged around gender equity.

Policy Drivers for Change

The global political economy of higher education is changing rapidly. Moves towards audit, accountability, user-pay and the enterprise culture have been accompanied by debates on democratisation and the relationship of higher education with globalisation and wealth creation (Morley, 2003a). National interests in Commonwealth countries are frequently articulated in the context of global formations. Some Commonwealth countries have experienced major political upheaval, civil war and militarism e.g. Nigeria and Sri Lanka. Others have had socialist governments ostensibly sympathetic to issues of inclusion e.g. Tanzania. The general political trend, reinforced by the international donor community, is towards democratisation. Democratisation is accompanied by an emerging sense of rights and entitlements. Although the contexts of higher education institutions vary considerably in different regions, generally in all regions over the last ten years, there has been a movement to a somewhat more inclusive orientation in higher education. Policy discourses vary. In some locations, the emphasis is on affirmative action (Manya, 2000). In South Africa, the policy focus is on redress and repairing damage/injuries to women - particularly black women (Samson, 1999). In Europe, the discourse used to be equal opportunities (Morley, 1999) whereas now it is more likely to be social justice and inclusion. Internationally, attention is being paid to gender mainstreaming (Bishop-Sambrook, 2000). Policy drivers in the Commonwealth include:

- public sector reform
- commitment to transparency in governance
- human rights
- economic and social development
- poverty reduction
- social justice and inclusion
- human capital theory
- the learning society and lifelong learning
- new markets and the enterprise culture
- international competitiveness
- international development targets
- partnerships with civil society
- multilateral collaboration
- state welfarism
- democratisation programmes e.g. in South Africa
- macro-economic management
- new social movements

Additionally, theoretical influences have challenged gendered hegemonies in the academy. Feminism, postmodernism and post-colonialism have all raised questions about the power/knowledge conjunction in so far as what is taught in universities and disqualified knowledges (Stanley, 1997; Spivak, 1999). Questions have also been raised about how power is implicit in how knowledge is produced and transmitted (i.e. methodologies for research and pedagogies) (see hooks, 1995; Ribbens and Edwards (1997). The power base of university governance, funding and management has also been

challenged. Neo-liberalism in general and new managerialism in particular have been interrogated by feminist theorists to uncover the gendered processes involved in the formation, governance and audit of universities (Brooks and McKinnon, 2001; Morley, 2003a). So, in the midst of considerable policy and theoretical development, what is happening to gender equity globally?

The Intellectual Beginnings of the Study

The intellectual beginnings of this study were the observation that gender, higher education, and development have rarely been intersected, leading to a silence in terms of policy, literature and research studies. Gender scholars across the globe are trying to account for the persistent inequalities in dominant organisations of knowledge production. However, there is some unevenness in the data that are being produced. The West has produced a sizeable amount of published qualitative and quantitative data and critical literature, whereas lower-income countries have had to rely on some gender-disaggregated statistics, quantitative studies - often funded by international organisations and lone, unfunded studies remaining in the grey literature domain. This was the starting point for the current research project that I am directing in London¹. International students come to London - many to study gender equity in higher education - and point out how the dominant literature in the field is from the UK, USA, Northern Europe, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Yet there is considerable gender equity activity also in low-income Commonwealth countries. But the nature of gendered change in higher education has not been systematically mapped across the Commonwealth and there has been an absence of multilateral dissemination. This led to the formation of a partnership with gender scholars in Nigeria, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Uganda and Tanzania to begin to map and evaluate interventions for gendered change in access, curriculum transformation and staff development.

A first step has been to undertake a search of the published and 'grey' literature in low-income countries.² The transcripts of women experiencing higher education, both as students and staff in Commonwealth remain relatively hidden. Lack of published literature does not imply lack of activity or lack of cultural capital. Rather, it can reflect the power relations and gendered and racialised gate-keeping practices embedded in publication and research awards. Salo (2003) notes how when African scholars are included in international debates on higher education, they are usually men who overlook feminist contributions. The absence of women's voices can also relate to different organisational priorities, performance indicators and cultural traditions. However, the lack of sustained published documentation of specific gendered interventions for change means that environmental scanning and widespread dissemination of initiatives for gendered change is impeded.

Lack of Intertextuality: Gender, Development and Higher Education

¹ The project is funded by the UK Department for International Development and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The website address for the project is: www.ioe.ac.uk/efps/GenderEqComHE

² This will be published as an annotated bibliography early in 2004.

There is a lack of intertextuality between three distinct bodies of literature. First, the literature on gender, development and education rarely considers higher education. Gender has begun to be a category of analysis at basic level education in lower income countries. For example, DFID's International Development Targets refer to 'universal primary education in all countries by 2015' and 'no gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005' (DFID, 1998:3). These targets are essential for poverty reduction; sustainable development and indeed creating a population appropriately qualified to enter higher education.

A human capital argument has been that past investment in higher education failed to yield the expected payoffs to national development in many regions of the world. Manuh (2002) describes how investment in higher education was downgraded in Africa in favour of basic education in the period immediately following Structural Readjustment Programmes in the early 1980s, whereas the development of learning economies has led to a recent massification of higher education throughout Africa. Gender is considered specifically in relation to rates of return for male and female students on university education. Brock-Utne (2000) points out that post Jomtien funding agencies have been encouraged to focus on basic education as this is where the greatest returns to education, and the greatest educational need is perceived to be. For example, twenty to thirty children can be educated at primary level for the cost of one year at higher education (Chapman and Claffey, 1998). There is a hierarchy of needs approach, with higher education being perceived at the 'luxury' end of the educational market. Yet the university has traditionally been a pivotal institution, linked to the reproduction of gender and class privilege.

Second, the literature on higher education in the 'developing' world tends to be characterised by a gender – neutral approach. Gender only tends to be a category of analysis in relation to access. While we are informed by World Bank estimates (2002) that by 2015 there will be 97 million students enrolled in higher education and that half of these will be in the 'developing' world, there is no attempt to gender these students. The qualitative experiences of women once entered remain largely unresearched and untheorised.

Within the Commonwealth, as elsewhere, new competitions, markets and new sites of learning including the workplace and the community are emerging. The enterprise culture and the rapid expansion of private education are providing opportunities and threats. Internationally, private higher education is 'one of the most dynamic and fastest-growing segments of postsecondary education at the turn of the 21st century' (Altbach, 1999:1). Yet few questions are raised about the social responsibility of private providers. In the mainstream literature in higher education studies, course content, pedagogies and organisational cultures have barely been examined for the extent to which they engage with difference, diversity and strategies for transformation (Morley, 1999).

The enormous expansion of ICT (Information Communication Technologies) throughout the 1990s began to change both the world economy and the place of higher education institutions in that economy. Debates on borderless universities, offshore, franchised,

satellite and on-line learning and the expanding global reach of higher education remain ungendered. (Morley, Unterhalter and Gold, 2003).

The third body of literature is that on women in higher education. There are few qualitative studies in the public domain denoting women's experiences and engagements with higher education outside the West. Gender has entered some higher education discourses in high-income countries. There is some literature on equity and higher education in the UK e.g. Bagilhole (2002); David, (2003); Eggins (1997); Howie and Tauchert (2002); Leonard, (2001); Morley (1999; 2003a) and Deem and Ozga (2000); in Australia -Blackmore and Sachs (2001); Brooks and MacKinnon (2001); Burton (1997); Chesterman (2002); Currie, Thiele and Harris (2002); Probert *et. al.* (1998), in Canada - Acker (1996); Wyn *et al.* (2000), in New Zealand – Brooks (1997), in South Africa - De La Rey (2001) and in Singapore, Hong Kong and Thailand -Luke (2001). All confirm the difficulties at the policy, institutional, organisational and micropolitical level of putting into place strategies for social inclusion in higher education institutions (HEIs).

The lack of intertextuality has created a policy gap. There are limited opportunities to theorise structural and cultural barriers or indeed to analyse qualitative experiences of women in higher education on a transnational basis. Writers across the Commonwealth draw attention to how lack of sustained qualitative data means that the complexities of organisational culture and gendered relays of power are unrecorded. Additionally, the lack of research on gender and higher education is having a serious impact on knowledge production and dissemination, scholarship and literature in the field.

Searching and Reading International Literature: Methodological Challenges

The lack of intertextuality, plus the lack of sustained publication of women's experiences of higher education outside the West, led the project to undertake a search of 'grey' *i.e.* semi or unpublished literature in the field. This has been analysed alongside some of the published studies. The intention is to begin a dialogue across different bodies of literature in order to enrich the examination of issues relating to gender and higher education in high, middle and low-income countries. The methods used are standard literature search techniques including a range of bibliographic tools, both text and web based, to identify writing and datasets in the field of gender and higher education. In addition researchers, writers, or project directors in this field were contacted to request assistance in identifying literature. The literature was analysed to identify major themes and trends. Significant gaps and contradictions were also noted.

While conceptual purity might be an unrealistic aspiration in international gender work, there are always dangers of Westerners misrecognising cultural and organisational practices and imposing inappropriate theoretical frameworks on to empirical studies from different national locations. It could be argued that all equity work involves values imposition. However, a major methodological challenge has been how one reads the traces of what gets spoken in diverse socio-cultural contexts without degenerating into orientalism and objectification (Meijer, Prins and Butler, 1998).

Themes have emerged in writing from a range of sources across different regions in the Commonwealth. Sometimes, these formulations and associated silences and contradictions articulate with international calls for gender equality in education. As these studies demonstrate, inclusivity has qualitative as well as quantitative implications. Some of the emergent sounds are reminiscent of Young's exploration of 5 faces of oppression: exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence (Young, 1990).

The Changing Purpose of the University

An example of cultural imperialism mentioned by Young (1990) can be seen in shifting notions of the purpose of the university. The notion of the purpose of the university has been contested in different periods and in different regions of the Commonwealth. The university has been viewed as ungendered, a site for knowledge to serve national interests and ungendered notions of citizenship. It has also been constructed as a Western import with distinct political and economic aspirations. The literature marks a shift in the purpose of the university in low-income Commonwealth countries away from elite formation in colonial times followed by nation-building (Makhubu, 1998), and towards the international knowledge economy. In low-income Commonwealth universities, the university was originally perceived as a vehicle to serve the interests of the Empire. Universities were outposts - Legon in Ghana, Makerere in Uganda and Ibadan in Nigeria were originally colleges of the University of London. Writing on Kenya, Manya (2000) observes that the development and purpose of European universities was used as a model for those in Africa. African universities were established to nurture an African male elite, who could relate well with the concerns of Europeans. Mwomonoh (1998) similarly describes African universities as Western imports grafted on to existing societies, rather than being in a historically organic relationship with local and national communities and indigenous knowledge.

Changing formations of the global have had an influence both on notions of the purpose of the university and on approaches to change (Barnett, 2003; Kenway and Langmead, 1998). Increasingly, higher education is being framed as a source of labour market training and there is a more explicit concern with universities producing new workers (Morley, 2003a). Hence, Commonwealth universities could be described as having been through 3 major phases: serving the needs of Empire; serving the needs of independence and nation-building, and more recently, serving the needs of the knowledge economy. But as gender scholars point out, all three phases have been permeated by male dominance.

All phases could also be constructed in terms of elite formation. In spite of major policy changes, the Bourdieuan debate on whether higher education is concerned with social reproduction or change (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990) is still apparent throughout the Commonwealth. A persistent question relates to the transformatory potential of higher education itself. This is a central aspiration in countries in transition such as South Africa. Higher education is seen to be a pivotal social institution and part of a rehabilitation process, raising consciousness and contributing to changing professional and social practices. While this can sound utopian and over-ambitious in a market

economy, the university has sometimes been a site for the articulation of democratic and progressive values including feminism and anti-colonialism (Morley, 1999). In Bernstein's taxonomy of symbolic control (2001), the school system is coded as reproductive, while universities are perceived as 'shapers' i.e. they form and influence, rather than merely transmit received knowledge. Feminist scholarship has also indicated how social movements have impacted on the academy. While the reproductive or change binary is often overdrawn, the past evidence seems to suggest that many Commonwealth universities were reproductive, but hopes for the future in countries such as South Africa frame them as transformative.

Yet throughout the Commonwealth the university is frequently constructed as an institution complicit with social divisions. Certain social class cultures facilitate the crossing of gender positioning and ease women's entry into elite organisations (Gunawardena, 1990; Lovell, 2000). Jayaweera (1997) indicates how the heavy investment in higher education in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh has allowed benefits to accrue to the affluent and middle class. This raises complex questions about whether widening access and participation are redistributive measures.

Counting Women In: The Access Agenda

Low participation rates are an example of marginalisation (Young, 1990). Paradoxically, neo-liberal constructs of enhancing participation in an enterprise culture have produced some greater demographic shifts than equity interventions (Morley, 1997). More recently, human capital theory and economic competitiveness have driven the access agenda. Concerns about inclusion have emerged at a time of the engagement of virtually all higher education institutions with issues of globalisation, marketisation, and increasing the quantity and quality of high level human resources because of economic policies concerning growth in particular sectors. Hence the access agenda is both democratising and economic.

However, the access agenda has gained international policy attention and raises questions about structures and mechanisms for inclusion. Some Commonwealth countries, notably Malaysia, South Africa, Nigeria, India and the UK have encouraged increased enrolment in higher education in order to underpin increased international competitiveness and national prosperity. Various structural inequalities have related to identities e.g. indigenous peoples in Guyana and Malaysia, to scheduled castes in India, to tribes in Kenya and to race in South Africa (Mabokela, 2000). Some access strategies have been reserved places, the use of district codes in Sri Lanka or postal codes in the UK or quota systems for women and scheduled castes in Indian universities, for Malay students in Malaysia, or the improved access to higher education through special programmes for working class undergraduates or for indigenous peoples in Australia, New Zealand or Canada. The UK initiated a major policy drive to increase participation to 50 per cent by 2010, with particular reference to the inclusion of lower socio-economic groups (HEFCE, 2001).

Changing quantitative representation requires a nuanced understanding of social context. Kwesiga's (2002) study of women's access to higher education in Uganda is a richly textured exploration of the complexity of factors that interconnect to create barriers for women to access education. She also reveals the importance of understanding the specific contexts in order to identify localised solutions to women's access to education. Kwesiga argues that change must begin at the familial level, involving parents and extended family. Also, important is change at the social level, including policy change and transformation of the educational system itself. Nawe (2002) comments on the slowness of change of the access agenda, with women's participation in higher education at the University of Dar es Salaam moving from 22.2 per cent in 1979/80 to 23.8 per cent in 2000/1. Several short term strategies were recommended for enhancing female access to higher education e.g. gender sensitisation programmes, counselling for confidence building, and outreach programmes to schools. Long-term strategies included role modelling, gender education at all levels, a gender-sensitive appraisal system and the creation of a friendly and secure environment.

There are at least 4 trends in the literature relating to the access agenda and incorporating practical and strategic approaches. The first documents and berates under-representation in higher education in general and in certain disciplines in particular, such as science and engineering. These arguments are framed in human rights or economic rationalities (Makhubu, 1998). The second deconstructs the barriers (Alele Williams, 1992; Kwesiga, 2002). The third identifies strategies for inclusion (Nawe, 2002) and the fourth links access to wider social transformation and detraditionalisation (Morley *et. al.* 2003).

It is questionable how far access is linked to social and organisational transformation and distribution of resources. Sexual differences are social practices and there are varying accounts of the impact of higher education on social change and detraditionalisation. New constituencies in higher education can still be formed by traditional gender power relations. There is an interconnection between the social and the psychic. The psychic operation of norms can impede political change (Butler, 1997). Weakened by the effects of externally imposed power, individuals can internalise or accept its terms. Oversocialisation can ensure social reproduction.

Jayaweera (1997) points out how, in spite of being university educated, many Asian women continue to internalise negative gender norms and passively accept oppressive social practices including dowry deaths, and female feticide and infanticide. Whereas Joshi and Pushpanadham (2001) describe how educational opportunities for women in India have brought transformational change in social and domestic relationships. Educational ambition is gendered. Biraimah (1994) notes that, once entered in universities, Nigerian men and women's career aspirations are vastly different. Male students, regardless of class, maintained extremely high educational goals, while females, who came primarily from high socio-economic status families, held less elitist goals.

Successful access policies mean that there might be some small expansion of numbers of students and of particular kinds of students, for example women or groups defined by social class, race, religion or ethnicity. However, there is still the notion of a particular 'body of knowledge', or canon, to be transmitted to an elite 'student body'. Gender equity is only within

set frameworks. It is concerned with women, not gender inequalities or feminism as theory or political practice. Women are included as students, teachers or managers, but the different forms of knowledge or practice, they or any similarly subordinated group might bring, is not given epistemic recognition. Power is not redistributed, even though the potential space for access to power might have been widened. As Lovell (2000: 27) suggests we need 'to challenge the terms of the game itself and not simply secure entry for women as legitimate players'.

Gender Mainstreaming

A strong argument, originally from feminist academics and women's studies scholars, but more recently from international organisations, is that access needs to be accompanied by organisational and curriculum change. Gender mainstreaming is now an initiative supported by international organisations including the European Union, the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO (Leo-Rhynie *et. A.al*, 1999; UNDP, 2002; UNESCO, 2002). It is a strategy that claims to make women's and men's experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes. It is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes in any area and at all levels. There have been specific interventions to introduce women's disqualified knowledges into the curriculum throughout the Commonwealth (e.g. Abdulwahid, 2000). One of the earliest initiatives for gender mainstreaming was undertaken in Makerere University, Uganda (Bishop-Sambrook, 2000).

Gender mainstreaming is highly controversial. One idea is that it is the successful integration of gender into institutional development. The curriculum, forms of pedagogy and 'best practice' have increasingly been perceived as value-laden, context-specific and norm-related. A contradictory view is that it is deradicalisation and a bland form of contract compliance. In this construction, feminism is no longer seen as a disruptive challenge to patriarchal organisations, but has been diluted to become yet another tedious example of new managerial regulation possessing diagnostic authority and suggesting formulaic solutions. There are also questions about areas of exclusion from gender mainstreaming. For example, in Britain, audit is conducted as a gender-neutral activity whereas in Sweden and South Africa gender is a performance indicator in quality assurance audits (Morley, 2003a). A question is how to challenge the gendered hidden curriculum of higher education.

The Gendered Division of Labour

A further example of marginalisation is the gendered division of labour in the academy. This has produced a lot of structures/agency debate. For example, Singh (1999) offers three categories of explanation for the lack of women in senior positions in Commonwealth universities: person centred relating to psycho-social attributes; structure centred focusing on the social structure; culture centred which links gender and organisational structure. These explanatory frameworks are apparent in different studies across the Commonwealth. Lamptey (1992) points out that, in Ghana, contrary to

expectations most women reported that they did not face discrimination, but could not advance because of the multiple roles that they perform. Teaching was perceived as compatible with traditional female roles but not research. Research was seen as insecure in terms of funding and requiring fieldwork, which would not be compatible with the roles of wife and mother. The career pathways open for women academics often work against their promotion prospects.

It is worth noting that many of the explanations for the gendered division of labour build upon domestic and private domains utilising norm-related discourses of heterosexuality. Mikell (1997) observes that African feminism is distinctly heterosexual and pro-natal. Kwesiga (2002) argues that forms of patriarchy and family structure differ in the developing world. Yet many of the explanations given for women's under-representation in senior positions are framed within western notions of nuclear families and women's domestic roles.

The division of labour is not merely about redistributing tasks, but is also about redefining the cultural meaning and value of different kinds of work (Hunter, 2000). Women's career ambitions can be more easily tied to domestic, rather than the worldly arenas. Entry into management can be both an opportunity and a form of exploitation of women. In my recent study on quality assurance in higher education, many women were being allowed to enter management to take responsibility for the domestic arrangements of audit - leaving male colleagues free to focus on their research (Morley, 2003a). There has been some sex role spill over, with women's socialised patterns of caring getting appropriated by higher education institutions. Women can get easily trapped in the world that ties them to organisational development, new managerialism, presenteeism and responsabilisation. They are then berated for lack of research productivity (Morley, 2001).

It Comes with the Territory: Gender Violence and Sexual Harassment

Symbolic capital leads to symbolic power, which can also lead to symbolic and actual violence (Moi, 1991). Gender violence incorporates exploitation and powerlessness (Young, 1990). The Panos Institute Report (2003) observes that sexual, physical and psychological violence causes as much of a burden of ill health and death among women aged 15-44 as cancer- and more than malaria and traffic accidents and that sexual violence in the educational sector is an unaddressed issue. Yet it can impede participation and achievement and contribute to drop out, illness and in some instances suicide. Studies demonstrate how gender violence is normalised in many African schools (Leach *et al.*, 2000) and thus continued in higher education. Gender violence takes on different forms across the Commonwealth. At one end of the continuum is the serious violence of cults, gangsterism or rape cultures. At the other end, are the initiation rituals involved in ragging in India and Sri Lanka that are more serious than they appear (Jayasena, 2002).

Sexual harassment is a ubiquitous area of gender power. It appears to be one of the many prices that women are expected to pay for entering traditional male reserve spaces. It marks out and reinforces gendered territory. Power accrued through time and the

historicity of force makes sexual harassment possible. It problematises women's bodies and sexuality in organisations traditionally dedicated to the life of the mind and the pursuit of abstract knowledge. The accountability that is so revered in the audit culture is not extended to sexual harassment. Speech in relation to sexual harassment remains a dangerous act. Sexual harassment is rife on campus, and is either mentioned or specifically studied in reports from across the Commonwealth (Bajpai, 1999; Durrani, 2000; Gender Study Group, 1996; Hallam, 1994; Mluma 1998; Omale, 2000; Simelane, 2001; Tete-Mensah, 1999). Yet action to combat it is uneven. In Zimbabwe, Zindi's study (1998) recorded that every one of the 2,756 respondents knew lecturers sexually exploiting female students. But 93 per cent said that they would not report sexual harassment and no person had ever been disciplined for sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment affects both students and academics. It can deter young women from applying to enter higher education (UNESCO, 2000). It can also deter women from attracting attention to themselves by occupying senior positions. Sexual harassment was frequently cited as an explanatory factor for women's reluctance to make themselves visible in the academy.

Organisational Culture and Micropolitics

Commonwealth gender scholars frequently note how organisational culture, negative micropolitics, and informal practices impede parity of participation (Morley, 1999; Onsongo, 2000). There are reports of a range of institutionalised patterns and evaluations that constitute women as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem. The hidden curriculum, gendered networks and homosociality are repeatedly seen to exclude and disadvantage women (Morley, 1999; Singh, 2000).

Power imbalances in the academy are both structural and played out in micropolitical struggles. Like many aspects of racial and gender oppression, bullying and sexual harassment at work, micropolitics can also be subtle, elusive, volatile, difficult to capture, leaving individuals unsure of the validity of their readings of a situation. What appears trivial in a single instance acquires new significance when located within a wider analysis of power relations. The attribution of meaning and decoding of transactions, locations and language is an important component of micropolitics (Morley, 1999). Informal practices contribute to women's marginalisation (Young, 1990). For example, in Onsongo's Kenyan study (2000) 69 per cent of women and 92 per cent of men felt encouraged to apply for promotion. She noted how the sources of encouragement for men and women are different. Women relied on heads of departments whilst men were able to garner support from heads of departments, senior colleagues and family and friends. This could be related to socialisation, with career ambition considered 'unfeminine', i.e. it is greedy, pushy, individualistic and competitive. In other words, it is agentic, rather than communal behaviour (Miller, 1976). It is worth noting, that in some non-Commonwealth countries, such as Finland, in spite of evolved policies and codes of practice for gender equity, a highly gendered invitational system for promotion exists (Husu, 2000). Micropolitical relays of gendered power are notoriously difficult to capture.

Women as Managers: Serving Whose Interests?

Strenuous efforts to facilitate more women's entry into management are accompanied by doubts as to whether this serves women's collective and long-term interests. In the context of the neo-liberal political economy and the rise of the audit culture, the token inclusion of women as managers accompanied by the absence of feminist politics may stand in the way of more profound equity transformations from occurring. It can be seen that what writing exists on women's aspirations for senior positions and work at this level stress how difficulties with the gendered nature of the institution are not overcome as women move up the career ladder.

Questions have been raised in the West about women's access to and engagement with power within hierarchical structures (Marshall, 1995; Morley, 1999). There is qualitative as well as quantitative lack, with women in leadership positions being perceived as impostors, second-rate and fraudulent (McIntosh, 1985; Morley, 1999). The psychic life of power means that negativity can get internalised. For example, the women managers in De La Rey's South African study (2001) frequently attributed their career success to luck, chance and factors external to themselves.

It is also debatable whether women managers are necessarily gender sensitive or politically committed to representing women's interests (Luke, 1998). However, there is the view that women managers can make a difference. Tete-Menseh (1999) believes that, in Ghana, in the interests of equity more women should be in management positions, this would also strengthen their collective position and be a catalyst for change. Manya (2000) suggests women are perceived as possessing potentially new management styles of use to higher education. Gill (2000) also explores gendered communication skills that could be useful as management tools. There is a tendency for this line of argument to be deployed by some writers to suggest that women innately possess more interactive, nurturing skills, and that women are a homogenous group. Lamptey (1992) tells how, in Ghana, women are perceived as lacking in the social skills and personality traits that make up an effective manager. The model is male biased. However, she believes that this situation seems to be changing as the manager's role expands to encompass elements such as good interpersonal skills and intuitive capabilities previously considered feminine. The gendering and essentialising of management styles and skills are themes in much of the Commonwealth literature.

Shah (2001) offers a more sophisticated analysis in her study of gender and higher education management in Pakistan. She observed how the discourse of equality encouraged women to enhance economic independence, career progression and social mobility but a counter discourse of gender difference imposed constraints. The author observed how patterns of power and subordination were not just gendered, but were also cut across and transformed by class and other social formations. Women's institutional power was constantly undermined by the powerlessness associated with their gender.

It is often around leadership issues where the naturalisation of power is most visible. Odejide (2001) argues that Nigerian society's definition of leadership is masculine. She

attributes this to Nigeria's history of militarisation that inextricably links leadership with authoritarianism, a quality that is not conceptualised as feminine. Odejide observes that the volatile nature of staff and student politics in Nigeria, which often involves physical and psychological violence, makes it easy for the community to designate university management as masculine territory. Leadership is frequently elided with control. In Sri Lanka, (2001) Gunawardena, notes how discriminatory questions are often asked at appointment boards for senior posts including 'Can they control trade unions, student unions?' While many women do not rise to leadership positions, those who do face many forms of discrimination.

Silences

We have seen that the dominant concerns across the Commonwealth are access, the absence of women in senior academic and management positions, gender violence, the changing purpose of the university, transformation and gender mainstreaming and the perception of hostile organisational cultures and negative micropolitics. Analysis of the literature also suggests some major silences in terms of what is not discussed or what is not applied as explanatory frameworks.

The concept of masculinities is rarely problematised outside the West (Hearn and Parkin, 2001). There have been major conceptual shifts from the women in development (WID) approach to the gender and development (GAD) approach that problematises gender relations rather than women (Morley 2003b). However, much of the literature on gender in higher education focuses on women, sometimes to the extent of creating a remediation ethos around them. However, I am not suggesting that we close down hard won spaces for women and replace them with concerns about men and boys at risk (Kabeer, 1994). In Western Europe and the Caribbean, there is now considerable concern about failing boys and the possibility of the feminisation of the higher education system as disaffected young men become more socially excluded. My concern is that gender sensitisation programmes might not be enough to dismantle and challenge deeply entrenched patriarchal practices.

This leads me to another silence or undertheorised area - that of backlash - gendered changes involve shifts in benefit streams. They can surface competing interests, resistance and backlash. Strategies of domination are vulnerable to displacement (McNay, 1999). Monitoring and promoting gender equity does not necessarily serve the self-interest of those individuals who are pivotal in effecting change. Backlash is sometimes reported in the literature but untheorised. For example, Ade Ajayi *et. al.* (1996) suggests that the earliest gender interventions (research and teaching) were made by 'female militant types' and has thus been condemned and restricted to an 'intellectual ghetto'. This expresses some of the negative perceptions of women in the university community generally. It is interesting that the study does not seek to dispute this assumption. The implication is that it is reasonable, and offers some explanatory power for women's marginalisation in the academy.

A further silence is the uneven intersection of gender with other structures of inequality. Whereas some studies mention social class, race, religion and ethnicity, there is little on disability or sexuality outside the West and South Africa. Even in the transformational policy context of South Africa, there has been a long painful struggle to incorporate sexual orientation into equality policies (see Cock, 2002). In countries with progressive institutional initiatives for gender equity, like Uganda, for example, lesbians and gays are still at risk. The President of Uganda – who opened last year’s international interdisciplinary conference on women in Kampala is reported to have said the he ‘would instruct Ugandan CID officers to round up and imprison every gay person in the country (Rodgerson, 2003: 18). Studies are full of normalised discursive framings of women in relation to their construction within the traditional Western family. Jeffery and Jeffery (1998) report a belief in India that women’s acquisition of a higher education degree is seen as adding to their value and hence their commodisation in the marriage market.

In some UK studies, questions are posed about the impact of women’s higher education on women’s choice of lifestyles and their economic independence. In Britain, one in five women are now choosing to remain childfree and single women are the biggest new group in the housing market (Ferri, Bynner and Wadsworth, 2003). Even Bourdieu, with his general lack of attention to gender, pointed out back in 1989 mentioned the correlation between women’s increased entry in higher education and declining fertility rates. While this argument has been used to link literacy campaigns with policies for reproductive control, it continues to locate women within traditional familial and heterosexual lifestyles. Challenging the normativity of women in familial roles is such a powerful gesture and is itself a form of impropriety that there are few attempts to denaturalise traditional lifestyles.

Contradictions

There have been sounds and silence in the literature. There are also some major contradictions, tensions and unresolved dilemmas. One is whether it is possible to ‘do’ gender work without a feminist analysis. A further question, is whose feminist analysis? There are multiple interpretations of gender inequalities across the Commonwealth, with different entry points into critical discourse and different understandings and engagements with the political economy of gender. For some, feminism is providing new critical tools for evaluating and promoting gender equity in Commonwealth HEIs and for others gender can be abstracted from a political analysis of power.

A dilemma is what theoretical tools are appropriate to interest representation and the analysis of injurious acts. For example, sexual harassment is widely reported and cited as a force that silences and disempowers women. On the other hand, while women in Africa express outrage at sexual harassment, some also feel that the vocabularies for naming these negative experiences are western (Tete-Mensah, 1999). This is evocative of Nussbaum’s (2002) observations that attempts by international feminists to use a universal language of justice and human rights ‘is bound to encounter charges of Westernizing and colonizing’ (p.51). As soon as feminists in ‘developing’ countries

express criticism of patriarchy in their own cultures, or advocate processes of detraditionalisation, they run the risk of being accused of ventriloquism.

Gender work in low-income Commonwealth countries is not always informed or sympathetic to feminism – particularly to western feminism. Nor is it perceived as integrated into intellectual and professional value systems. A source of disappointment is the gulf between gender as a burgeoning industry in low-income countries and the application of gender equity to the very institutions that house the gender scholars. For example, Manuh (2002) notes how 1000s of studies on gender have been conducted by African academics, but how this consciousness has not been applied to the African academy itself. She claims that African HEIs have not provided leadership on gender. Manya (2000) also notes that despite the fact that the university in her Kenyan study employs many of the country's leading advocates of gender equity (in the political and public sector), they are not vocal about the position of women within the university itself. This raises some important discussion points and interpretative challenges. If feminism is essentially deconstructive, can it relate to gendered change agency in dominant organisations of knowledge production? A further question is whether this is an example of strategic or contradictory consciousness – a disjunction between speech and act. A more cynical question relates to equal opportunism and possible contract compliance to the international donor agencies' agendas, with gender perceived as a lucrative new industry. This is a new variety of gender performance (Butler, 1999; Walkerdine, 1989). There are questions about what exactly is a 'gender expert'? Gender has begun to have a generalisable currency as a discourse that allows it to be taken up by almost anyone to sound convincing. Because it has traditionally been a disqualified discourse, with considerable shaming attached to it, now a whole range of values and expectations are projected on to anyone who uses the term.

A further contradiction is that when gender equity initiatives are successful in quantitative terms, and numbers of women do increase, this can be accompanied by a moral panic about the feminisation of higher education and the exclusion of young men as in the Caribbean. This is often a caution in gender mainstreaming guides (Leo-Rhynie *et al.* 1999). Singh and Gill (2001) argue that the worry now in Malaysia is that in higher education, women are now outnumbering and outshining men in undergraduate studies. I have named this process the equity paradox (Morley, 1997). If under-represented groups demystify the process and gain access to elite organisations, the value is diminished. As Bourdieu's has repeatedly pointed out in his work, the elite constantly find new badges of distinction for themselves. In the context of feminisation, the educational under-achievement of men and boys is the latest badge of distinction.

Summary: Theorising Gendered Change

The changing political economy of higher education suggests a logic of iterability, but certain aspects of universities as social institutions seem static. Higher education in the Commonwealth needs to be more equitable and democratic. While policy drivers for change are diverse, there is stability in women's under-representation from academic posts in general and from senior posts in particular. Women are entering the academy in

some locations as students, but the academy is slow to change in terms of equity whereas it has been rapidly transformed in relation to new managerialism and neo-liberalism.

The literature suggests that there have been both openings and closures. Gender equity work, while focusing on exclusion, can also exclude. This is noticeable in the western domination of the literature. Yet writers on gender equity in the Commonwealth are beginning to explore and expose the hidden conditions of existence and conditions of labour of intellectual communities. There is a strong sense of limits and counter-hegemonic challenges operating within powerful hegemonies. It is assumed by many writers and development assistance agencies that gendered change entails understanding women constructed within a norm-referenced framework. Many studies tend to perpetuate hegemonic, normative constructions of women and families. This is sometimes accompanied by an engagement with liberal feminism and the belief in the need to bring women into senior positions. The destabilising of conventional gender relations in the academy on very limited levels does not seem to have been accompanied by changes in the private domain. Nor has it always been accompanied by social and political transformation.

Women are also discursively framed as problem areas. With the exception of gender sensitisation programmes, men and masculinities are rarely problematised, or perceived in need of development and training. There are silences about the forms masculinity takes for initiatives to change higher education and the way in which resistance can constantly mutate.

There are still many essentialised observations about women's qualities and preferred styles of working (Lamprey, 1992). Sometimes a social constructionist approach is taken, particularly in relation to women's career development. Career progress, ambition and self-interest are sometimes seen as 'unfeminine' as they imply desire, greed and attention to the self (Walkerdine, 1990).

So what is the way forward? There is always a tension between feminist change agency and feminist deconstruction. It is not my wish to render all action so problematic that we collapse into powerlessness. Nor is it my intention to offer colonial certainty and authoritarian blueprints for action. I merely wish to make some modest suggestions for attention. Firstly, I suggest that advocacy needs to be accompanied by inquiry. Producing data and critical discourse legitimates women's lived experiences in higher education. The lack of sustained qualitative data in virtually all the studies analysed means that the complexities of alienating organisational cultures are not always recorded. There are major issues about the gendering of research opportunities. Many studies, while pointing to important areas for future work, were unfunded, lone researcher investigations. There is an urgent need for studies in micropolitics, the hidden curriculum, networks and homosociality, giving epistemic privilege to women's voices in Commonwealth universities. Furthermore, studies that do exist need better dissemination mechanisms. This could be achieved, in part, via more effective global networks of gender scholars that include low, middle and high-income countries.

While there are different discourses justifying change to be found in most accounts, there is very little work that utilises statistics to look at intersecting inequalities, or to track longitudinal processes. Gender is one modality in which class, race etc. are lived and there is a tendency not to intersect gender with race, ethnicity, disability, class and caste, or sexuality. We need to continue to develop theoretical frameworks for understanding the interlocking relationship of emancipatory struggles of various kinds in different national locations.

The accountability so beloved by the audit culture needs to be extended to equity and social inclusion, with more effective monitoring of international, national and organisational policies, research agencies and professional organisations.

In terms of higher education, we need to keep posing the question about social reproduction and/or transformation. Elite formation can function to produce multiple higher educations, with differential educational experiences and exchange rates for qualifications in the labour market for different social groups. Gender equity needs to go beyond cultural recognition and focus on the redistribution of resources inside and outside of the academy.

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