

INTERROGATING WHAT IS MALE PRIVILEGE IN THE ACADEMY

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

In order to explain gendered inequality among university teachers, recent research has shifted its focus away from women-centered analysis to approaches that focus on men and their privileged location in the academy. Drawing on similar perspectives, this research is premised on the argument that women-focused approaches are significantly limited in their ability to redress issues that have traditionally disadvantaged women. Male privilege include men's over-representation in academic positions, especially in the more privileged disciplines such as science and engineering, as well as in higher management and in decision making. Female-centered approaches to gender have often given a lopsided and an incomplete picture of the operations of gendered hierarchies in university settings.

This research argues that a more appropriate and strategic alternative is achieved by focusing on the mechanics of gender inequality construction, its maintenance and re-circulation in academic life through gendered relations of power. Working within a social constructionist theoretical framework, this study performs an analysis of women's under-representation in the academy through an interrogation of the over-represented, privileged position of the male academic. The contexts chosen for the research are academic institutions in Australia and Sri Lanka. This study examines male privilege in the academy using key secondary sources of staff statistics in higher education in the two countries and through life history-interviews with 27 male and 10 female academics for qualitative information. In analyzing these interviews and secondary statistics, the thesis advances arguments about the relationality of masculine privilege and feminine disadvantage in the academy and identifies the key features of gendered and contextual multiplicity of those constructions.

Broadly the findings reveal that male privilege manifests in academic ranks and progression and is gender relationally constructed within key academic activities. Further it reveals that pre-career experiences in terms of gender as well as class significantly shape academic career aspirations in a context of gendered privilege or the lack of it. The incidence of gender relationality within academic activities is evident specifically in academic career mentoring, research and micro politics. The incidence of privilege in this research is very strongly related to the everyday life of domesticity. Relatively limited gendered patterns are visible around teaching duties and service to university within this particular sample.

The socially constructed nature of the privilege-disadvantage duality also significantly represents itself as multiple, varied and fragmented in the lives of academics in both Sri Lankan and Australian academic settings.

The multiplicity of academic masculinities and femininities is influenced within this study by social class status, ethnicity, race or caste identities as well as by discipline orientations. Multiple academic configurations are strongly evident in research, performance evaluation and micro politics, whilst it is weakly manifest in teaching, service to university and domesticity. Within these latter categories, more similarities between contexts are evident. The research findings broadly indicate that the primary academic activities as well as everyday life are significantly encumbered with male privilege while it also provides some evidence for the multiple, varied and fragmented nature of those gendered realities.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACU	Association of Commonwealth Universities
ARC	Australian Research Council
BC	Before Christ
CENWOR	Center for Women's Research
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EO	Equal Opportunity
EOP	Equal Opportunity Policies
ERA	Excellence in Research for Australia
EU	European Union
FUTA	Federation of University Teachers Associations
G.C.E A/L	General Certificate Examination Advance Level
G.C.E O/L	General Certificate Examination Ordinary Level
GO8	Group of Eight Universities, Australia
HDI	Human Development Index
HETC	Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
NCAS	National Centre for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences
NCGP	National Competitive Grants Program
NTEU	National Tertiary Education Union

<i>OLTC</i>	Online Learning and Teaching Committee
<i>PG</i>	Post-Graduate
<i>Ph.D.</i>	Doctor of Philosophy
<i>PPLS</i>	Paid Parental Leave Scheme
<i>RAE</i>	Research Assessment Evaluation
<i>TAFE</i>	Technical and Further Education
<i>UG</i>	Under-Graduate
<i>UGC</i>	University Grants Commission
<i>UK</i>	United Kingdom
<i>UK AUT</i>	United Kingdom's Association of University Teachers
<i>UN</i>	United Nations
<i>USA</i>	United States of America
<i>USAID</i>	United States Agency for International Development