Doing the Ideal Academic

Gender, Excellence and Changing Academia

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Abstract

Academia is changing worldwide, shaped by capitalism and neoliberalism. Along with this comes notions of what constitutes good academic work and the valuable academic. Taking junior female academics embodied experiences as methodological point of entry the thesis aims to understand the construction of the “ideal academic” from this standpoint. More specifically, to investigate how the gendered social relations organise practices that make the ideal academic within changing academia actionable. The thesis draws on and develops Dorothy Smith’s Institutional Ethnography to understand how local everyday practices are shaped within larger translocal relations and macro processes, such as capitalism, neoliberalism, the drive for participation in “inevitable” globalisation and higher educational reforms. The thesis is based on qualitative empirical research. The empirical location of the research is changing higher education in Finland and the empirical materials - consisting of observations, interviews and textual gathering - are the result of three years of fieldwork at one Finnish University. Drawing on these, the thesis explores how texts, discourses and ideologies, mediated through standardised notions of quality and evaluation practices, make up an image of “the ideal academic” and shape local practice and experience. The thesis reveals the gendered social organisation of competence and potentiality as it is constructed in and around the institutional intentions of becoming “world class”, the textually legitimised practice of boasting, and the relationship between quality standards and discourses of love. Each chapter unpacks a layer of how gender inequality is produced and reproduced in academia through textual coordination of everyday practices. The thesis highlights how eligibility to engage in these practices, activate these discourses and approximate the prevalent ideal involves doing gender. More particularly, it shows how doing a particular form of global masculinity involving geocentrism, careerism and informalism, has entered into the social relations of academic work. Moreover, it, demonstrates how these operate parallel to and interconnect in complex ways with doing Finnishness, compulsory optimism, the individualised responsibilised self and willingness to be “taken away from home”. Indeed, the thesis illuminates a social organisation of academic work that increases the polarisation between those who succeed and those who do not on the standardised quality criteria. In doing so the thesis shows how dominant, so-called neutral and objective, textually mediated standards of quality contribute to the (re)production of inequality between both men and women, and indeed, women and women within changing academia.

Keywords Gendered social relations; gender in academia; junior female academics; quality of academic work; the social organisation of academic work; neoliberalism and academia; Finland; Institutional ethnography; feminist theory.
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Writing a doctoral thesis is not an easy task. Perhaps even less so when doing it in a country and department in which you are a stranger. There have
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On a sunny day in the Botanical Gardens of Copenhagen,
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1. Contextualising gender in academia

A junior female academic: ... a couple of years back our Dean sent a letter to everybody ... and it said something like research means 24 hour commitment to what you are doing... and I was just thinking oh my God [...] I don't like this culture where people are divided between those who will succeed and those who won't [...] there are people that they want to keep and people that they want to get rid of...

Everyday situated embodied experiences and voices of junior female academics, such as the one expressed in the extract above, are the point of entry for this doctoral thesis. Conversely, such experiences are the point of departure for studying the complex relational and material social construction of what counts as the good academic in changing academia. The thesis explores how people are differently positioned within the social relations in terms of living up to the prevalent ideal. More specifically, it shows how and in which ways the ideal is gendered. In order to “preserve” the voices and experiences of junior female academics as the turning point for discovery, the thesis develops a research approach that draws on Institutional Ethnography. Institutional Ethnography is a method of inquiry, a theorised practice for discovering how the social is coordinated. This method was originally devised by Dorothy Smith (2005), with the purpose of creating anti-objectifying sociology for and with people. The thesis demonstrates how this is achieved by explicating the large amounts of reflexive work the institutional ethnographer engages in to “preserve” the voices and embodied experiences at the centre of investigation.

The opening quote above is an extract from a conversation I had with a junior female academic a couple of years ago. Following the introduction of new managerial practices for measuring output and holding people, departments, schools and universities accountable to productivity goals and quality standards, her home institution and academic community had been undergoing a great deal of change. Historically, Finnish universities functioned under public law, were taxpayer funded and tightly controlled via legislation. Their core objective was to provide teaching and educate a competent workforce for the Finnish public and private sector. However, a number of changes during the late 1990s and 2000s have resulted in significant differences in the way Finnish universities operate today. Finland's
Recession in the 1990s resulted in public sector restructuring, welfare cuts and austerity measures. Finland became more dependent on global financiers, who, in return for their investment, demanded certain types of management: while collegial decision-making had previously been prevalent, new forms of managerialism were now part of everyday life in Finnish universities. Annual negotiations and performance agreements with the Ministry of Education regarding output were initiated and competitive project-based funding was introduced. The rising global popularity of New Public Management and neoliberal ideologies, as a means to increase quality and efficiency, became the basis of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) (2005) international review of higher education in its member countries, including Finland. OECD recommended explicitly standardised educational qualifications to make them comparable, transferable and facilitate/increase mobility and recognition between countries. OECD emphasised research output as the standard measure. These recommendations were aligned perfectly with the European Union (of which Finland had become a member in 1995), and its guidelines for self-assessment, benchmarking and international comparison with the stated purpose of increasing the quality of higher education (EU 1998). With the most recent reforms, “internationalisation” has emerged as a measure of competitiveness and target output and Finnish universities are to improve their competitive position in the global knowledge economy (Cimo 2009; Ministry of Education 2009). This involves registering the movement of students and faculty to and from Finland, international research partners, international funding, publications and citations in international top journals. Moreover newly passed 2010 University Act emphasised the need for promoting a more “entrepreneurial culture” in the Finnish Universities by increasing organisational autonomy and flexibility (Aarrevaara 2009) as a step to achieving the ambition of becoming a world-class provider of education and research. A flagship project in these reforms was the Aalto University merger that took place in 2010. Aalto University – the University that the above quoted junior female academic works for – was to become the first Foundation-based University in Finland and has introduced several HR and other strategic managerial measures as part of the effort to become world-class. Among these is the decision to implement a more competitive system for academic employment in order to attract the best and most talented scholars from around the world. Closely related to these reforms are changes in the priority of academic work tasks. New ideals in terms of what counts as a good academic, pertaining to text based and increasingly standardised notions of quality and excellence, are shaping the everyday lives of academics at Aalto and other universities in Finland.

The concrete everyday experiences of junior female academics provide one point of departure for describing and analysing the ways in which these reforms have changed how our universities are run and how academics are expected to work and perform. It provides an entry point for analysing these changes from the perspective of those who are disadvantaged as a result. Specifically, those who cannot commit themselves to research 24 hours a day,
those who do not manage well competitively and do not succeed in accordance to the standards of the institution.

A considerable volume of research has shown that men and women are differently positioned within academia in terms of climbing the academic career ladder and living up to standards of quality. Diverging approaches to gender have been utilised, and not all of these are critical or feminist in nature. One, and perhaps the most common approach, theorises men and women as two separate categories of people, who hold different preferences as a result of biological and psychological sex differences and gendered socialisation. This explains why many women choose to orient themselves towards the family rather than an academic career. As a result women frequently end up in subordinate positions to men in the academic hierarchy and they remain largely dependent on their husbands or partners within the home. (e.g. Long 1990; Valian 1999; O’Laughlin & Bischoff 2005; Bird 2011). The problem with such an approach is that it cannot explain the systemic nature of inequality, and, accordingly, why women with different orientations and priorities also experience being unfavourably positioned.

Explanations based on similar assumptions and theorisations of sex/gender difference may also be structuralist in nature. These explain inequality between men and women in academic careers through such factors as educational levels/quality/specialisation, union membership, full-time/part-time work, publication and patenting productivity, parental leaves and career breaks. (see e.g. EU 2005; EU 2009a; EU 2009b; EU 2013; Bentley 2011; Haataja 2009; Frietsch et al 2009; Moody & Light 2006; Ding et al 2006; Leahey 2006; Duvander et al 2005; Xie & Schauman 1993 and 2005; Fox 2005; Stack 2004; Moody 2004; Etzkowitz et al 2000). Such explanations do not, however, give much insight into the processes and practices that created these differences. Moreover, they do not allow us to understand why gender inequality persists despite changes in policies and possibilities in and around academia that would seem to work in its favour (see e.g. OECD Employment 2006). Furthermore, neither the individualist or structuralist theorisation helps problematize the neutrality claim of policies, organisational standards, nor the very assumptions on which notions of quality/success are based.

In response to the abovementioned shortcomings, many academics have suggested theorising gender as arising in historical relational processes among people embedded in patriarchal capitalist societies (i.e. capitalism and patriarchy provide the material basis for inequality and oppression). Gender is part of a dynamic and contested relational process within the “material production of social inequalities”. When particular ideologies, discourses, practices and processes achieve a taken-for-granted status, gendered oppression, subordination and gendered divisions of labour are (re)produced and become hard to challenge and change. The ongoing reproduction of gender inequality is a result of a division between the value producing activities that are recognised and rewarded within capitalist work organisations, and value producing (reproductive) activities that are often silenced and taken-for-granted, but nonetheless essential for capitalist
accretion. The latter frequently consists of emotional, care-related, and other feminised work within workplaces and homes, and it is usually conducted by women. The gendered division of labour is what constitutes women as women and men as men. (e.g. Hartmann 1979; Acker 1990, 1992, 1994, 2006 and 2008; Korvajärvi 1998; Meriläinen & Katila 2000 and 2002; Husu 2001; Kantola 2008; Van den Brink & Benschop 2011 and 2012; Bleijenbergh et al 2013; Thornton 2013; Fletcher et al 2007; Davies & O’Callaghan 2014; Maude 2014; Jenkins 2014). This approach has sometimes (and not always justifiably so, I would claim) been critiqued for not taking into consideration the different experiences of women (and men) along age, class and race divisions. Furthermore, the theorisation of the gendered division of labour as constituting women as women and men as men, would appear somewhat lacking when we consider the more recent developments in capitalism, whereby the feminine and the emotional is ascribed value (e.g. Hochschild 1987; Adkins & Jokinen 2008; Adkins 2008; Brunila 2012; Mäkinen 2012;). One may ask what, under such circumstances, constitutes women as women and men as men at the present time, and, indeed, whether and how gender is of continued relevance for explaining persisting inequalities within academia.

Other approaches have, by suggesting that we destabilise and theorise gender as “discursive processes and practices”, that are always in the process of becoming through their linguistic, historical and political construction, attempted to answer the above-mentioned problems. Differences are granted priority above similarity and analysis of gender discourses and dynamics within large/meta institutions of capitalism or patriarchy are replaced by analysis of micro-level local institutions. (see e.g. Metcalfe & Slaughter 2008). The problem with this approach is that as a result of its emphasis on culture, micro level processes, and rejection of experience and ideology, it is not able to explain the translocal and systemic nature of gender, class and race based inequality in academia (albeit more prevalent in some places than others). Therefore, it is not able to provide an analytical basis for collective strategies and political responses.

This thesis aims to respond to the shortcomings of feminist studies of academia and organisations by studying and revealing academic work as gendered social relations, produced in local/micro processes, and, in turn, shaped within larger translocal/macro processes. Social relations, as a concept, collapse the distinction between individual and structure by treating structures as relational and material organisers of people’s everyday activities and experiences. Through taking junior female scholars embodied experiences as a point of entry, the thesis seeks to understand the construction of the “ideal academic”. More specifically, it will focus on how the gendered social relations appear as organisers of practices that make actionable the ideal academic in changing academia. In order to achieve this, my second aim is to develop a research approach that draws on Institutional Ethnography (Smith 1987; Smith 2005; Smith 2006): a method of inquiry that allows me to respond to the above-mentioned shortcomings. Before defining the research questions I
will disentangle the context of this study; presenting my reader with a brief overview – of new capitalism, the rhetoric of globalisation, gender in the labour market and the ways in which these shape changes in higher education and gender in academia in Finland – should provide my reader with resources for making sense of my research questions.

1.1 New Capitalism and the rhetoric of Globalisation

Shifts within the capitalist economy and organisation are being detected and its scope and significance is, once more, a subject of keen debate. In the words of Nancy Fraser:

Capitalism is back! After decades in which the term could scarcely be found outside the writings of Marxian thinkers, commentators of varying stripes now worry openly about its sustainability, scholars from every school scramble to systematise criticisms of it and activists throughout the world mobilise in opposition to its practices [...] Nevertheless, the current boom in capitalism talk remains largely rhetorical – more a symptom of the desire for systematic critique than substantive contribution to it. Thanks to decades of social amnesia, whole generations of younger activists and scholars have become sophisticated practitioners of discourse analysis while remaining utterly innocent of the traditions of Kapitalkritik. They are only now beginning to ask how it could be practiced today to clarify the current conjuncture (Fraser 2014a, 55).

Although an orthodox Marxist conception and description of capitalism, and its internal contradictions, does not take the insights of gender, post-colonialism, ecology and political power “as structuring principles and axes of inequality in capitalist societies – let alone as stakes and premises of social struggle” into consideration, it still provides important conceptual and analytical resources and is not, in principle, antithetical to “being reconstructed from these perspectives” (Fraser 2014a, 56). Capitalism remains, in essence, characterised by four defining features. Firstly, private property is a central feature of capitalism and presupposes a class division between owners and producers. This was a result of the capitalist enclosure of the ‘commons’ (see also Federici 2004) and the transformation of shared resources into private property for a small minority. Secondly, the free labour market. People are formally/legally “free’ from enslavement or force and can freely move and enter into contractual employment relationships”. People are also, however, “free’ or ‘bereft of’ resources and means of subsistence that could entitle one to not take part in the labour market”. Thirdly, capitalism holds an “inbuilt directionality”, and human beings’ (owners as well as producers) efforts to satisfy their needs are

1 The welfare state does, to some extent, allow for this possibility, but usually only as a temporary solution based on the assumption that the person will (re)enter the labour market. To the extent the person is permanently incapable of doing so, this person may receive support from the state, but this position of
systemically engaged in capital’s “unending self-expansion” through expanding their own capital. Fourthly, capitalist markets work to allocate the “factors of production”, “land, labour and capital” as well as “real estate, capital goods, raw material and credit”, thereby transforming all of these into “commodities”, ultimately leading to a commodification of the world. Additionally, the capitalist market is based on the assumption that it is the market forces that ultimately “determine how society’s surplus\(^2\) will be invested”. This fourth point has often been critiqued by academics, who have postulated dystopian fantasies, while forgetting to take into account the “emancipatory aspects of markets” as well as living arrangements that are not based on a cash wage, but rather on self-sustenance and public welfare goods (Fraser 2014a, 58-59).

While this is certainly true, it is also, however, true that contemporary capitalism involves a number of developments that puts pressure on the arrangements that have previously served to counter the worst social consequences and effects of capitalism. This includes the expansion of economic logics and market exchange to domains that were not previously operating in accordance to such demands, including, among others, granting information and knowledge commodity-like status (e.g. Kauppinen 2013) as a competitive advantage. This includes Post-Fordist modes of production, new forms of multinational corporations and organisations, large scale global financial exchange and an international division of labour. It also involves the so-called feminisation of labour and of the economy, with an increased emphasis on emotions, affection and personal characteristics as being focal in defining the workers’ exchange value. Finally, it has proven to involve a growing insecurity and complexity of working life (Mäkinen 2012, 21) and an ever-growing demand for a flexible, perpetually available labour resource/work force, i.e. people who are desperate to find employment tend to work harder, are less organised, complain and demand less; and can be considered to have the “right attitude” (Sennett 2006). Inequality has, according to Richard Sennett (2006) “become the Achilles’ heel of the modern economy”:

> It appears in many forms: Massive compensation of top executives, a widening gap between wages at the top and the bottom of corporations, the stagnation of the middle layers of income relative to those of the elite. Winner-takes-all competition generates extreme material inequality. These inequalities of wealth are matched within certain kinds of firms by a widening social inequality. In bureaucracies in the throes of reorganization, the erasure of intermediate layers of bureaucracy can erase the communication chain by which power is interpreted as it passes downward, and information is modulated as it passes upward. Once reformed, the flexible firm can map out this more disconnected

\(^2\) Defined as the “collective fund of social energies exceeding those required to reproduce a given form of life and to replenish what is used up in the course of living it […]” (Fraser 2014a, 58). This involves questions about how one wants to live one’s life; e.g. balance “productive work” with family or leisure, or how to relate to non-human nature.
territory. The center governs the periphery in a specific way. On the periphery people are on their own in the process of laboring without much interaction up and down the chain of command. Those at the periphery are answerable to the centre only for results. This distanced relation is, in fine, the geography of globalization. At the opposite extreme, in a bureaucratic pyramid, would stand the paternalistic employer [...] The sociological idea here is that inequality translates into distance; the greater the distance – the less a felt connection on both sides – the greater the social inequality between them. (Sennett 2006, 54-55)

Strongly connected to the expansion of capitalist logics and market-like exchanges to new extremes and spheres is the rhetoric of globalisation. While globalisation is not a new phase of capitalism per se, it, to an increasing degree, is being used by national governments, the EU, various business and community organisations and powerful international agencies, such as OECD, IMF and the World Bank to “justify voluntary surrender to the financial markets and their conversion to the fiduciary conception of the firm” (Skeggs 2004, 83). Such conversions are not, as they are often politically claimed to be, inevitable, but rather the result of domestic political decisions that increasingly favour owners of capital and the privileged (see e.g. Bauman 1998).

1.2 Gender and the labour market

Gender-based wage differences and sex-segregation in working life, disfavouring women, is a global phenomenon that has been deepening with the new developments in capitalism (e.g. Acker 2006), although there are national, as well as race and class based variations in degree and extent (e.g. Mohanty 2003). Nonetheless, gender-based structural issues are to an increasing extent being acknowledged, assessed, reported and addressed on a national level. This is orchestrated through policy recommendations (largely ignoring class and race divisions) by international organisations, such as the OECD (e.g. OECD 2006) and World Economic Forum (e.g. Gender Gap 2014), and the European Union (e.g. European Commission 2010). Women’s inclusion into and participation in the labour market is considered an important indicator of a country’s existing or potential economic competitiveness, as well as a liberal, modern and progressive attitude deemed necessary for successful participation in the global market economy. (Acker 2006; Skeggs 2004; Eisenstein 2010). Reports developed by these international agencies show that, within the European Union, the gender gap is smallest in the Nordic countries (Gender Gap Report 2014). In these countries female employment is considered normal and the majority of women participate in the labour market. For decades, and until fairly recently³, it was noteworthy that women in the Nordic countries were not excluded from the

³ This is a tendency that has been changing within recent years – as I shall show.
labour market by entering motherhood. In fact, unlike many other European countries, a large majority of Nordic women, most notably the Finnish, with children below the age of three would participate in the labour market. (Rantalaiho 1997).

In Finland women’s labour market participation has increased. However, the starting point was different, because Finnish women have taken an active role in the labour market from the early 20th century. In 1950 Finnish women made up 41% of the labour force, 39% in 1960, 42% in 1970, 44% in 1975, 47% in 1997 and 45% in 2012 (Statistics from ‘Men and Women in Finland’). Furthermore, unlike other Nordic and industrialised countries, Finnish women have historically tended to work full-time. Finnish women fare well in international comparison in other ways too. In all the factors that would usually be proposed for explaining women’s subordination to men, Finnish women seem to have been doing remarkably well in surmounting them. In fact, in some ways, they are even doing better than men. They work full time, seemingly without having to choose between family and work, they are highly educated and they are organised in unions. Yet, Finnish women’s position in the labour market is not self-evident or as strong as that of men. Inequality, gender hierarchies and segregation persist in Finnish working life (see e.g. Rantalaiho 1997; Tuori & Silius 2002), and, more recently, there has been a rather dramatic shift in Finnish women’s opportunities for combining work/career with having children. The most recent statistical updates show that 45% of Finnish women with children below three years of age are not active in the labour force (Men and Women in Finland 2014, 40 and 50).

Finland is often considered to be a model country in terms of equality between the sexes; it is, for example, ranked 3rd in the 2010 Gender Gap Report of the World Economic Forum. However, a sharp horizontal segregation between sectors and jobs that are considered to be male or female remains in the Finnish labor market. Also, in the private sector in particular, organizations are marked by vertical segregation as men continue to dominate the upper echelons. The gendered wage gap is yet another sign of persistent inequality, as women tend to earn 10-20 percent less than men in equivalent positions. Gender equality is thus never a fait accompli (Meriläinen, Tienari & Lund 2013, 165).

The numbers and figures provide important insights, but do not explain how the “statistical reality” was produced. Nor do they give us insight into the complexity of processes that, despite the many advantages Finnish women have in relative terms, contribute to making gender inequality a persistent feature of Finnish society. In the following section I therefore consider some of the historical, cultural and political processes of the Finnish gender system. I will, in considering questions of gender equality provide an outline of the particularities defining, on a broader scale, Finland and Finnish working life and, more specifically in academia. In doing so I will also explore the manner
1.3 The gender system and state feminism in Finland

To understand the persistent gender inequalities, hierarchies and differences and how the Finnish gender system has achieved its current form, one must consider the way in which this is shaped within the logic of “compulsory heterosexuality” or “heteronormativity” (Rich 1980; Rantalaiho 1997), the binary categorisations the logic establishes and the resulting hierarchies. The “logic of difference” exists in the way gender is socially constructed in separate naturalised categories of male/masculine and female/feminine. The “logic of hierarchy” in the way in which the male or masculinity is treated as the norm within the logic of heteronormativity, against which the female or femininity becomes a position of deficiency.

In many ways the logic of difference is downplayed in Finland. Within Finnish working life men and women can largely meet within a rather “un-eroticised” work environment, characterised by a “strong work ethic”. In accordance with this motherhood, rather than being something idealised and sacred, is considered a matter of “work, everyday chores and responsibilities” and Finnish women’s identity is defined more by motherhood than by wifehood (Rantalaiho 1997, 21). Moreover, another interesting factor is that the Finnish language is quite neutral in delineating gender. Rather than she or he, the gender neutral hän is used. Also there is no distinction between gender and sex, but one word, sukupuoli, which translates as “kin-half”, indicating the logic of heteronormativity characterising the Finnish gender system.

All of this has its roots in the socioeconomic history of Finland (as well as other Nordic countries) where a working-oriented heterosexual partnership between men and women, although involving a gendered division of labour, was necessary for survival. The sparse settlement in pre-industrial Finland meant that sociability happened at home, involving men and women together. According to Liisa Rantalaiho this resulted in a “lasting cultural avoidance of presenting gender as conflictual” (Rantalaiho 1997).

The Finnish national identity is rooted in a belief in equality and the absence of difference of worth (value), either gender- or class based. Distinctions between male and female imagery and behavior clearly exist as defining characteristics, but they are perceived to be differences which exist as part of an interdependent relationship between men and women. (Marakowitz 1996, 56)

Women’s political citizenship has a relatively long history in Finland. The suffragette/women’s organisation Naisunioni (Union of Finnish women) and house-mother organisation Marttaliiitto (The Martha Organisation), were founded in the late 19th century by well-educated upper- and middle class
women. Influenced by the political landscape of the time – that is, the rise of national movements, the growing labour movement, the suffragette movement, increasing support to progressive political parties, the approach of Russian revolution – these organisations developed their political agendas in the face of, and in response to, the challenges related to poverty, inequality and lack of autonomous rule. Until 1917, Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy under the Russian Czar. Naisunioni was established with the purpose of furthering the political, economic and social rights of women through constitutional reform. Marttaliitto was initiated by the president and initiator of Naisunioni, Lucina Hagman, with the purpose of bridging class and political divisions. This was performed via the nationwide mobilisation and education of women in order to participate in raising the quality of life among the poor, and to empower women of all class backgrounds to promote the idea of a common Finnish culture and language within their homes. Indeed, the national enlightenment project was a gendered project from the outset, relying heavily on women’s efforts; it became a significant collective strategy in creating a women’s movement that spanned class and regional divisions. Partly as a result of the work of these two organisations, Finnish women were among the first in Europe to achieve not only the right to vote but also, in the 1906 constitutional reform, the right to take office (Marakowitz 1996). In 1907, in the first modern democratic elections of Finland, 18 women were elected and today (2015) women make up 83 of the total 200 seats in parliament. Therefore, the political concerns and agenda of the women’s movement were institutionalised and represented in the state administration from early on through women’s insider position. The Finnish state, unlike the German and American, achieved position as a defender and ally in working against “private patriarchy” (Rantalaiho 1997) and in furthering women’s independence of men and marriage for economic survival. This phenomenon is named “state feminism” (Holli & Kantola 2007).

Whereas corporate power structures, unions and labour market policies have traditionally been, and still are, dominated by men, Finnish women have been active in constructing the welfare state’s social policies and equal opportunities legislation (Rantalaiho 1997). By sharing family expenses and caring duties through family and child allowances, as well as child and elder care services, the Finnish state made an individualistic dual earner family model possible (see Tuori & Silius 2002, 76-77).

Furthermore, a number of legal political institutional arrangements have secured formal equality between men and women. In 1962 The Principle of Equal pay for Equal work was established in private and public sectors, though not incorporated in Finnish legislation before the ratification of the 1987 Act on Equality between Men and Women (Tuori and Silius 2002). Placing Finland as the last among Nordic countries to introduce a gender equality law (Holli & Kantola 2007). The Act on Equality, based on the guidelines of the United Nations and inspired by other Nordic countries, has

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three major goals: Firstly, the prevention of sex discrimination; secondly, the promotion of equality between men and women; and thirdly, the improvement of women’s status in working life.

In 1992 it became illegal to discriminate on the basis of pregnancy and family care responsibilities. Since 1995 work organisations with more than 30 employees have been obliged to promote and measure gender equality. Unfortunately, as Kaisa Kauppinen (1997) has remarked, this has turned out to be problematical in that large organisations have equality plans, while small organisations can simply, and often do, choose not to develop one. In 1995 a quota system was furthermore introduced to ensure that the proportion of either sex should not be below 40% in official boards and committees in municipalities. 5 The ban on employment-based discrimination includes discrimination in recruitment/hiring practices, wages, working conditions, sexual harassment, supervision and employment termination. (Tuori & Silius 2002).

Compliance with the Act on Equality is secured through a matrix structure of authorities. The Finnish parliament’s Employment and Equality Committee consists of 15 MPs that, among other areas, are responsible for handling matters related to gender equality. The Minister of Social Affairs and Health holds the key responsibility for overseeing and securing the implementation of equality law and policies. This Ministry has three independent bodies. (1) The Gender Equality Unit which, in collaboration with other Ministries, devises gender equality policy proposals for the Finnish parliament, deals with tasks related to gender mainstreaming and the coordination of cooperation on European and international levels. (2) The Ombudsman for Equality monitors the employers and higher education institutions’ compliance with the Act on Equality. (3) The Equality Board oversees compliance with equality legislation and resolves related issues. Beyond the institutionalised national policy level, various non-governmental women’s and labour market organisations also oversee matters of gender (in)equality. On a municipal level, working groups and committees have also been established to further equality.

Numerical data regarding gender is provided annually by Statistics Finland in the Naiset ja Miehet Suomessa (Women and Men in Finland) reports, an important source of information for decision-makers, intervention and debate regarding gender issues (see e.g. debate on “gender quotas” in Finland, Tienari et al 2009). Despite the importance of the equality legislation and principles, it has, as indicated, been hard to achieve gender equality in practice. Consequently, it has been argued that the social policies have played a more significant role than the equality legislation in terms of understanding the state’s involvement and effect on women’s position in the Finnish labour market (Tuori & Silius 2002).

Since the mid-1990s two significant changes have, in particular, influenced the development of Finnish “state feminism”. Firstly, the recession of the 1990s, and secondly, though not less notably, Finland’s EU membership (Holli & Kantola 2007). The recession, and the welfare state cuts that followed

5 There is no quota system for governmental or private organisations in Finland.
“affected women disproportionately” and “had a long-term impact on women’s labour market participation” (Holli & Kantola 2007, 83). Indeed, while unemployment “hit Finnish men earlier and harder than women”, women, more frequently than men, find themselves in a situation of “permanent temporariness” (Rantalaiho 1997, 20; see also Tuori & Silius 2002, 100-115; Men and Women in Finland 2014, 48).

There was a loss of public sector employment and women’s work now involves fixed short-term contract work as opposed to permanent jobs. Furthermore, there are tendencies towards feminization of poverty, resulting from the loss of redistributive policies for single parents. Several commentators suggest that the Finnish welfare model has undergone a shift from egalitarian to neo-familial model with increased women’s dependency on individual men and the state and men’s dependency on women’s poorly paid care work at home (Holli & Kantola 2007, 83-84).

As a result of the recession, the progress in gender equality achieved through decades of work suffered a setback, and strengthened/re-traditionalised the heteronormative logic on which the Finnish gender system and many social policies were based.

Membership of the EU since 1995 has also significantly shaped Finnish gender equality policies. This is particularly true in the form of improved individual rights and anti-discrimination legislation, the promotion of a gender mainstreaming agenda and, on the soft law side, gender equality recommendations, guidelines and action plans. Recently, the Act on Equality was extended in order to take into account “other markers of diversity”. Finland has, since independence in 1917, been “closed inward and open ed outwards” and only since the early 1990s has experienced a slow increase in immigration from post-communist Russia, Estonia, Somalia and Asian countries. Furthermore, Finland having the fastest aging population in Europe (EU 2010; Kommunförbundet 2009), has resulted in a very explicit participation in the competition to attract young, well-educated, talented, white-collar immigrants who can work and pay taxes in Finland. Questions of race, ethnicity, age and class, however, continue to “stir restlessness in contemporary Finland”, as recent developments have brought about varying forms of discrimination, subordination, marginalisation and exclusion. These have, however, largely been silenced, covered up and reproduced through prevailing taken-for-granted notions of “sameness”; i.e. the idea that particular skills, attitudes, language skills and cultural competence are necessary, and that there is equal opportunity to learn and fulfil these. It is seldom questioned whether these skills, attitudes and cultural competences are in themselves, based on gendered, raced, classed and age assumptions and, therefore, fundamentally sources of inequality (see e.g. Meriläinen, Tienari &

The European gender mainstreaming, anti-discrimination and progressive fatherhood initiatives improve, to a certain extent, both the quality of women’s participation and the inclusion of minorities in Finnish society and the labour market. However, it has been suggested that these initiatives are largely of benefit to those who are already privileged; that they are heavily shaped within the rhetoric of inevitable participation in the global capitalist economy (Eisenstein 2009), and that this has been used to legitimise social welfare cuts. The integration into the EU has put pressure on the Nordic welfare model in a number of ways through the promotion of neoliberal policies (see e.g. Bourdieu 1998; Jones 2012) and New Public Management (NPM) styles of governance. By calling for the primacy of free movement of people above social rights based on residence, it has the potential consequence of leading to cut in “national, redistributive, taxation funded social policies” (Holli & Kantola 2007, 83).

1.4 Higher education and gender in academia

Current changes, and continuities, in the purposes, role, management and organisation of higher education and universities are linked to such historical, economic and political processes, and the social and institutional developments that take place within them.

The last 30 years have involved a number of transformations and reforms with the purpose of making higher educational institutions and systems globally comparable and internationalised (e.g. Aarrevaara & Hölta 2008, 117). These reforms have been promoted globally by international organisations, such as the OECD; on a regional level by the harmonisation policies of the European Union; and, on national levels, by governments, industrial stakeholders, think tanks and the media. Higher Education institutions are being redefined into “systems” with “inputs” “through-puts” and “outputs” that should be measured and monitored for their quality (Ahola & Hoffman 2012, 11-12).

In a Finnish context academic pursuits and higher education have always been valued as a public good, and publicly funded through taxes. After the Second World War Finnish universities focused on teaching and research as a means of improving the living conditions of the Finnish people and supporting structural changes in business and society. Towards this purpose they achieved a formally equal status to serve particular regional economic and social needs. Up until the 1990s there was very little competition among them, and from 1974-2009, all university staff held civil servant status. Although there were different types of employment contracts for academic, administrative and other support staff, employment was relatively secure for the privileged and public service values prevailed. The emphasis with regards to academic staff was placed on the “input” side: it was demanding and

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Rebecca W.B. Lund "Doing the “Ideal” academic: gender, excellence and changing academia

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difficult to enter, but after entry the pressure on staff to produce research “output” would be minimal. The academic staff’s primary purpose was to provide the Finnish private and public sector with a well-educated workforce: the main focus was on teaching. International orientation was variable depending on the discipline or field in question. The natural sciences, medical sciences, technology and parts of economics and business studies were always published in English and were oriented towards an international audience. The social sciences and humanities, however, tended to focus on research for and about a Finnish audience, often in Finnish and with the Finnish standards and needs in mind. Academic staff would gradually have their salaries increased and climb the career ladder as a reward for their services, although achieving the status of Professor was, due to a very limited amount of professorships being available in Finnish Universities, difficult. While professorships were hard to achieve for anyone it was, nonetheless, more difficult for women than men. A collegial governance system prevailed at the universities: the head of department would be elected by his (or her) departmental colleagues and the rectors of each university were elected by the professors to serve for a fixed period.

The 1990s marked a turning point in Finnish higher education for many reasons. Significantly, the Finnish economy was affected by the economic and financial recession. Although having integrated itself to the Western market during the 1970s, Finland was, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, during the 1990s, able to align itself more explicitly (politically and economically) with Europe. Finland joined the European Union in 1995 and adapted itself to European initiatives, such as the thrust for evaluation of higher education, and for improving outputs and efficiency in higher education. As a result of the economic downturn Finland also became more dependent on different global/regional financiers, who expected certain types of management of their investments (Tainio et al 2003). These changes introduced new types of managerialism in Finnish universities.

The Finnish government established annual negotiations and performance agreements regarding outputs with each Finnish university. In these negotiations the point of departure was that the state provided funding, but each Finnish university had autonomy to manage it in a way that would both secure and increase outputs. Research initiatives that would further Finland’s competitive advantage and boost the economy were emphasised and rewarded. However, despite research activity increasing, there was no increase in funding for making more appointments. Instead, short term project funding was distributed through competitive funding application processes. As a result, Finnish universities began to experience a rapid growth in fixed-term project-based employments, and a related increase in the amount of time spent by academics managing projects and project staff, securing funding and keeping track of budgets. The performance agreements and the project-based competitive funding resulted in academics thinking about outputs in more quantifiable terms, albeit not to the extent we see now.
Meanwhile, in other industrialised nations, ideological shifts towards neoliberalism and New Public Management were observable. This was grounded in reactions to demographic changes and economic problems. Countries such as the UK, the Netherlands, and Australia were reducing direct state funding of higher education, while simultaneously invoking a strong understanding and rhetoric that higher education could contribute to national social and economic objectives. The policy makers demanded an increased efficiency and improved quality from higher education institutions. The concepts and tools for increasing efficiency and quality came from the large private corporations and their managerial practices, and were dependent on a market-oriented interpretation of motivations and activities e.g. supply, demand, cost. The popularity of these managerial concepts began, throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, to grow around the world (Dawson & Dargie 2002; Broadbent & Laughlin 2004). It was values along these lines that were to form the basis of OECD’s international review of higher education in member countries, in which Finland participated (OECD 2005).

The 2005 OECD recommendations explicitly commodified and standardised educational qualifications in order to make them internationally comparable and transferable. OECD members were expected to reach a mutual agreement on how to facilitate recognition and the mobility of academics. They emphasised monitoring research outputs that contributed to a nation’s knowledge base and the dissemination of research. These were in close alignment with and boosted the relevance of the European level guidelines that recommended measuring higher education quality through a high level of self-assessment by comparing one’s own quality with that of another nation state’s or institution (European Council 1998; ENQUA 2005).

‘Internationalisation’ also emerged as a measure of university competitiveness. In Finland, the government has taken concrete policy initiatives and formulated target outputs (CIMO, 2009; Ministry of Education 2009) for numbers of incoming and outgoing ‘international’ students, and their provision. Funding for research projects is increasingly tied to whether it can be proven to have ‘international’ partners in the project and arguments for its international relevance and visibility. Furthermore, as international companies are major sources of research funding in the fields of medicine, technology and business, these companies look at and compare universities all over the world. As a result the universities generally, and these disciplines in particular, wish to make themselves attractive and easily comparable for company investments. This is a shift that can be detected via a brief search of university websites. At the same time university graduates increasingly compete for employment on international labour markets, and therefore need to be able to evidence the international equivalence of their education. As a result Finnish universities now track and count the employment outcomes and the career paths of their alumni as a measure of the university’s quality. Finnish universities also track their academic staff’s ‘visits’ abroad, and their incoming international visitors. While there has, to date, only been a small amount of ‘international’ (i.e. non-Finnish) academic employees in Finnish
universities, and limited quantitative measures of the internationalisation of curriculum content, publications and citations in top international (i.e. English language) journals have become a key measure of both institutional and individual outcomes (Tienari 2012).

For Finnish national higher education evaluations, internal/external evaluations and international accreditations, the universities concerned have to compile and present evidence that they conform to standards in the way that they formulate and implement strategy. The processes involve the conscious and explicit construction, evaluation and revision of quality goals and criteria, as well as the practices and processes that will lead to their realisation. The standards by which the quality/-ies are judged are distributed through meetings at different levels of the university - on websites and posters, in emails etc. Through this, academic staff, become familiar with the standards to which they need to comply and aware of areas of possible improvement. A team of international colleagues visits the university/school/department to ensure, on behalf of the evaluating authority, that the reported evidence corresponds to the strategy. The team then writes a report on what they have found and also makes recommendations for improvements. Each university, school and department agrees to address the recommendations for improvement and to be checked again; generally in 5 year cycles. In this way the university can be seen to be marketing itself based on maintaining the standards of quality defined by international evaluations and accreditations.

Benchmarking and international comparisons are an integral part of the emerging managerial process. Comparisons with foreign universities considered world class demonstrated that a tenure track system of academic employment, corporate modes of operation, external board members from the private sector were commonplace. These benchmarks, as I shall return to later, should prove to have pivotal impact upon the most recent reforms in Finnish higher education.

Women’s right to education was, in the late 19th and early 20th century, promoted by Naisunioni and Marttaliitto as an important social right. Female education was considered central for improving the living conditions of Finnish families. Although, at that time, there were restrictions and only a few women gained academic degrees, research has indicated that male faculty in Finland generally maintained a rather positive attitude towards a female presence in academia due to being considered of significance in the nation building/national enlightenment project (Vainio 2012).

These days, as in other sectors, female academics with children are supported by social policies. The Act of Equality suggests that all universities should have equality committees, with an appointed secretary. However, the tendency has been for committees to be poorly funded and that the secretaries perform the equality related work in addition to other organisationally prioritised tasks (Tuori & Silius 2002).

The tendencies characterising the Finnish labour market and women’s position in it at large are mirrored in the Finnish higher educational sector and

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7 Both having a fair share of male members at the time
academia. A perusal of the Europe-wide gender statistics from 2010 (She Figures 2012) reveals that 46% of all PhD students in EU-27 where female. Between 2002 and 2010 there was an annual growth rate of 3.7% in female PhD students, compared to only 1.6% for male ones. In 2010 female PhD students equalled or outnumbered male PhD students in all fields except science, mathematics, computing and engineering. Despite this, the academic career paths of males and females look very different. Numbers from the same year indicate vertical segregation. While the amount of female students and graduates outnumbered the male, the proportion of female PhD students and PhD graduates was below that of male. The higher in academic employment the more evident this pattern gets, and women only account for 20% of full professorships. In the natural sciences and engineering this pattern is even more striking, women only counting for 11%. The proportion of women was highest in humanities and social sciences, with females respectively counting for 28.4% and 19.4%. Women were also less likely to hold decision-making positions, such as academic board memberships or academic managerial positions. Finally, and on a more positive note, cumulatively, the numerical data shows that between 2002 and 2010 there has been some success in closing the gender gap in terms of research funding success rates. (She Figures 2012)8

Compared to the rest of Europe, including its fellow Nordic countries, Finland fares rather well, although the ‘glass ceiling’ and ‘gender scissors’ follow the same pattern as that of the rest of Europe. In 2010, female PhD students accounted for 54%, compared to 48% in Sweden and 45% in Denmark. But while the annual growth rate in female PhD students has overall been lower in Finland than the European average, the growth rate has been negative when it comes to male PhD students. This suggests a rather pronounced feminisation of higher education in Finland, although that does not take into account that male PhD students still dominate in the natural sciences, computer sciences and engineering (She Figures 2012, 54-56). In 2012 women held 52% of the postdoctoral researcher and senior lecturer/researcher positions in Finland; 52% of the adjunct-, assistant- and associate professorships; but only 24% of the full professorships. Compared to most other European countries the Finnish numbers look favourable (She Figures 2012, 90). However, the progress in Finland is still very slow and it is not likely that this will be rectified any time soon (see e.g. Van den Brink & Benschop 2012). Recent socio-economic and political developments in Finland suggest that we may risk undergoing, if not a strengthening, then at least a reproduction of gender segregated academia.

Just as gender in the Finnish labour market at large resists straightforward explanation, the usual structural explanations invoked when questions of gender inequality arise in Finnish academia do not apply. Finnish women are

8All the reports, action plans etc. here: http://home.epws.org/filter/policy-debate/EU-Documents-on-Women-and-Science
just as, if not more, educated as men. Women make up about half of all PhD students and thus, in principle, should be just as qualified as their male counterparts for achieving positions and rewards in Finnish academia. The earlier mentioned social policies make an individualistic double earner family model possible and women do not, it seems, have to choose between work and children (although this has been changing somewhat recently). Women are as educated as men and should therefore, in principle, receive the same salary and job offers as their male counterparts. Female academics are organised to protect their interests in terms of wage and jobs. In fact, the level of organisation in associations for female academics, such as Tutkija Naiset, increases at times when women or gender/feminist/women’s studies are structurally and institutionally under pressure from political developments and reforms, as is currently the case (for experiences from elsewhere see e.g. Moscowitz, Jett, Carney, Leech & Savage 2014; Macoun & Miller 2014).

The insights into the social organisation of gender in academia that remain on the level of discrete categories, variables, statistical indicators and structural explanations have the limitation of not allowing me to move beyond the symptoms or effects of gendering processes. They do not elucidate how such categories or structures are produced, or how the processes creating differences and hierarchy work. Understanding these processes is, however, necessary for understanding how the gender system, despite policy efforts to overcome inequality, is reproduced in new and innovative ways. Gender inequality in Finland is “like a mythical monster: when you hack off its head, it grows two others” (Rantalaiho 1997, 20).

1.5 The focus of this dissertation: concepts and choices

I have chosen to utilise Dorothy Smith’s (1987) concept of “social relations” to understand how the gender system is (re)produced and changed in the context of academia. Conceptually, “social relations” serves to explicate that structures and institutions are composed of actions. Flesh and blood people’s actual doings and sayings articulate social relations, just as the social relations in turn shape the activities of individuals - sometimes in objectifying ways that are not in their own best interest.

My empirical studies and data production – ethnographic observations, interviews and texts material collections – have been carried out at one Finnish University, Aalto University, over a three-year period. Aalto University is an interesting choice for study because it is a flagship project in the current reforms of the Finnish higher educational sector. The Aalto University merger that took place in 2010. It is unique because it is one of the first foundation-based universities in Finland and has the goal of becoming a world-class university by 2020. A number of significant changes in the HR and management practices have followed the merger, among which is the introduction of the tenure track academic career system. These changes have turned out to be interesting turning points for unpacking the gendered social organisation of the good academic in changing academia.
I have drawn on Dorothy Smith’s (2005) and colleagues (2006) method of inquiry, Institutional Ethnography, as guidance for studying this. I shall go into more detail with this methodology in the following chapter, but, for now, simply mention that one of its defining characteristics is that it takes people’s everyday doings and sayings as the point of entry for understanding social reality and its social organisation. Drawing on feminist standpoint epistemology, and thus the notion that all knowledge production is ultimately value laden and a result of historical processes and socio-political epistemic struggles, Institutional Ethnography is an explicitly political mode of inquiry. It demands taking side with particular embodied experiences and ways of knowing, against the institutional realities that silence or downplay these experiences in their textual representation.

My study of gendered social relations does not simply offer a female perspective to the study of academic work and changing academia, it is explicitly feminist. But what does this imply? As a critical philosophical tradition and political movement, feminist research seeks to uncover and question the established dominant norms, ways of knowing and structures that favour certain groups of people above others, with the aim of creating paths for (hopefully) better alternatives. This:

...implies recognizing that organizations, as core institutions of society, are centrally involved in the production and maintenance of social relations of inequality and subordination (Calas & Smircich 2008, 247).

Following the methodological procedure of Institutional Ethnography, my entry point for studying the gendered social relations of changing academia will be from a particular standpoint within the social relations. I have chosen that of junior female academics as my point of departure. This draws attention to the fact that I do not believe in any unitary experience of women. All subject experiences are unique but also shaped by one’s position within the social relations, the institutions, and how practices and relations of gender intersect with those of race, class, age and so on. I am sensitive to the fact that explicating the social relations of gender means that one cannot neatly separate these from the workings of race, class or age (Smith 2009).

1.6 Research Questions

I think of the relationship between everyday embodied activities of academics and the institutional intentions and ideals related to changing academia as being politically, historically, socially and culturally constituted. The relationship can be understood as produced, among others, via shifts in gendered social arrangements, practices and material relations.

This thesis has two research objectives. My first is to understand the new notions and textual constructs of the “ideal academic”. More specifically, I
wish to reveal how the ideal academic is constituted in gendered material and social relations that take divergent expressions across local settings, one such being the everyday lives of junior female academics, as they are connected with and engage in ongoing coordination of activities with others within the institutional order(s) that make up changing academia. Therefore, my study is not merely restricted to illuminating the micro processes and local practices. Rather, it uses Institutional Ethnography to unpack how the local practices are shaped within the macro processes of translocal objectified social relations - also termed ruling relations. I investigate how discourses and ideologies, mediated through textualised standardised notions of quality and evaluation practices, create an image of “the ideal academic” and shape experiences and practices across diverging local settings.

The second, and closely related, research objective is to illustrate how Institutional Ethnography can be conducted. Doing research for and with people implies more than learning from their everyday experiences and work knowledge. It implies careful attention to the processes and relations that may distort such efforts i.e. hindrances to learning, understanding and grasping their experiences and knowledge. Smith has emphasised avoiding institutional capture, but, in addition to that, I claim that “preserving” the standpoint of the participant involves careful and on-going reflexivity - reflexivity in terms of the researcher’s subject position, the shifting and complex relations to research participants and the time and energy it takes to “preserve” the voices, knowledge and embodied experiences of those we study (Walby 2009). It also involves careful attention to how knowledge is co-produced within complex social relations that include relations of power (e.g. Homanen 2013) and sensitivity towards the context as well as the genre, mode or method of inquiry. Moreover, it must include attentiveness to how texts are read and interpreted differently by different people and also hold divergent shaping capabilities (e.g. Lund 2015). It is only by engaging in this that Institutional Ethnography can seriously consider the situated and context specific nature of experience without excluding the possibility of making broader claims on the basis of the generalising effects of objectified social relations. This is what makes the results of Institutional Ethnographic inquiry into gender relations within changing academia recognisable and transferable, but not generalisable, beyond the particular empirical context of my field work.

My study draws on and develops an Institutional Ethnographic perspective to learn from the experiences of junior female scholars – a perspective that is not very often taken up in studies of gender in academia (an exception is Nikunen 2014). By starting from their activities and perspectives on changing academia, I can obtain an overall picture of how they are interconnected and engaged in relations with the institutional order and other actors. Following the knowledge I garner through explicating the experiences of junior female scholars, I progress into the particular institutional sites of which they are part, and ask:
**How do ruling ways of knowing gender and quality shape and organise academics in changing academia?**

In order to reply to this my empirical investigations will be driven by two different, yet connected, questions:

1. **How are gendered social relations of academic work organised and enacted among scholars in changing academia?**

2. **How are the social relations coordinated and shaped by texts in and around the practices that define and evaluate the quality and potential of academic work?**

### 1.7 Outline of thesis

The thesis is structured as follows. In chapter 2, I outline the theoretical, epistemological and ontological foundations of Institutional Ethnography. I seek to enable the reader to develop a sense of the critique of objectification that was the point of departure for Dorothy Smith’s development of Institutional Ethnography; I spell out the ontology of the social that Smith subscribes to, defined as people coordinating activities, as well as Smith’s version of feminist standpoint epistemology; I then show how the social is coordinated and organised locally and translocally, and how the active text is central for understanding how these two relational modes are connected, and how coordination happens across space and time. Finally, I show what makes Institutional Ethnography significant and different from other approaches, such as the Foucaultian study of discursive practices. In chapter 3, I offer a multiple layered review from the standpoint of Institutional Ethnography. Firstly, I spell out three diverging feminist ontologies of gender and experience, and their connected epistemological strategies: liberal, Marxist/socialist and postmodernist/queer/poststructuralist. Secondly, I show some liberal feminist contributions to our understanding of gender in academia, followed by an explication of the limits of this approach both in terms of its assumptions and explanations, as well as the methods used for producing data. Thirdly, I illustrate different conceptual, theoretical and empirical contributions to understanding gender in academia and other work organisations. I show which social relations would need to be unpacked further in order to understand the significance of gender within changing capitalism and academia. Fourthly, I argue that Institutional Ethnography and its concept of ruling relations provides a possible solution to the ongoing debate between socialist/materialist/Marxist feminists and Queer/Postmodern/Post-structuralist feminists, when considering the questions of whether to invoke material or relational concept of power; the status of ideology and discourse; whether to start research from experience or an event; whether to focus on micro or macro processes; and so on. In chapter 4, I offer an outline of my data production process, dilemmas, subject positions,
standpoint, methods and analytical choices. Chapter 5 marks the first of my three empirical analytical chapters, and here I analyse the construction of the ideological code “the ideal academic” in and around the texts of a new and competitive tenure track system of academic employment. I show how particular types of academic work, such as publishing in top journals, is flagged, whereas other academic work, such as teaching, is downplayed, illustrating how these texts transport and organise certain discourses, and how it is activated in local settings and socially organised along relations of gender in ways that do not work in the interest of junior female scholars. In Chapter 6, I investigate how the ideology of becoming world class and the ideal academic is further activated through the work of boasting, the activation of language of excellence. I focus on how the boasting is socially organised, how some can legitimately engage in boasting and use it as a resource, while others cannot. I explicate how competent boasting is not only a question of what you boast about, i.e. publishing in the right places, but when, where, and indeed also how you do it, i.e. you must display that you are driven by authentic, non-instrumental, motivations and passion and not by instrumental concerns for rewards and recognition. In chapter 7, I look more at the how of the ideal academic, showing how it is not simply a question of accumulated knowledge, work experience and a ostentatious CV, but also a much more indefinable ability to display the right attitude and signal potential. I look at how the ruling relations of quality and love shape the work of writing article manuscripts. I argue that the discourse of love works against the interests of junior female scholars because it downplays the link between standardised notions of quality and excellence, defined in the texts around the ideal academic, and the status granted particular epistemic, ontological, methodological and theoretical positions. The discourses of love uphold an image of the university as a place that is more interested in knowledge than in its position on international ranking lists. In the concluding chapter 8, I summarise my findings in terms of reaching my research objectives and replying to my three research questions. Related to this I reflect on my choices, and discuss the transferability of my findings to other contexts. Finally, I discuss social relations of class, as well as the practices of resistance towards ruling ways of knowing. These grew out of my data and analysis of the “ideal academic” but were not within the scope of this thesis.
5. The ‘ideal academic’: the work of becoming excellent

Tenure track evaluation criteria are based on the principles of predictability, transparency, and comparability with international standards. (Careers at Aalto, Aalto University Website)

In this chapter I document how my discovery of an ideological code, “the ideal academic”, embedded in a new tenure track career and competence evaluation system, has helped me in exploring the social organisation of junior female academics’ lives. I demonstrate how the ideological code is a product of particular social and historical processes. How it, despite supposed neutrality, functions as a gendered social organiser, including some experiences and people, while excluding others. I evidence how people themselves are actively producing, reproducing and changing the very social and ruling relations that organise them. The focus is not on the activity of evaluating a candidate for a position per se, but rather on how the tenure track system, and the notion of the ‘ideal academic’ embedded in it, is holding people within as well as outside the system accountable to a specific measurable and comparable notion of quality and excellence.

5.1 The making of a new University

Over the past two decades a number of higher educational reforms have been carried out in Finland, provoking a gradual shift in the focus, function and internal governance of higher educational institutions. Currently, these institutions, precipitated by OECD policy recommendations, play a central role in producing knowledge and innovation to further Finland’s competitive position globally, and annually substantiate their international comparative standing through participation in increasingly standardised performance measures. A key element in the most recent reforms (2009/2010) was the granting of legal and financial autonomy to universities – either as public corporations or as foundations under private law with their own profit and loss

28 This chapter can be found in Norwegian in a similar but not identical form in the book: Widerberg, Karin (ed.) (2015). I hjertet av velferdsstaten: En invitasjon til institusjonell etnografi. Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk. The chapter is named: “Idealakademikeren” og kvinnelige akademikeres hverdag”. 
accounts – combined with a shift in the management and decision-making structures of the universities. The objective was to create a foundation for universities to be more international and entrepreneurial, to improve their ability to compete in terms of obtaining international research funding and diversifying their funding base. The universities would continue receiving basic funding from the state, but this would be allocated primarily (75%) on the basis of indicators of “quality, effectiveness and extent” with a smaller portion (25%) due to scientific and educational policy priorities (Kuoppala & Näppilä 2012).

A central feature in the reforms were the three major mergers carried out in Turku, Kuopio and Helsinki. The flagship project was the amalgamation of three old Helsinki based universities: the Helsinki University of Arts, Helsinki University of Technology and Sciences and Helsinki School of Economics. The new foundation-based institution was named Aalto University. The merger was to create the basis for a Finnish “world-class” university, operationalised as featuring on the QS and/or UK Times Higher Education top 100 ranking list, by 2020.

Through a Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), named “Striving for Excellence”, conducted and concluded in 2009 — just before the actual merger took place in January 2010 — the cornerstones of the Aalto University strategy were forged (Aalto University, 2009). RAE measured the performance and “research outputs” of staff and units – measured in terms of publication data, bibliometric data from ISI and Scopus databases and other research results – assessed by nine panels consisting of experts from 20 countries. The main conclusion drawn from the RAE was that all units had remarkable Societal Impact, but that this did “not correlate with the strongest scientific impact and scientific quality”. Units were advised to reduce the quantity of short-term research projects as these did not result in high quality/high impact articles. It was also suggested that they should implement more research leadership. Moreover, they should prioritise the recruitment of people with higher ambitions in terms of research impact and with more international experience. The decision to employ a competitive US style Tenure Track System was seen as central in achieving these goals (e.g. Herbert & Tienari 2013).

In US the tenure track system is explicitly competitive: academics enter and progress on the basis comparable and competitive evaluation and performance criteria. The primary focus is on international top-journal publications and teaching portfolios. A competitive evaluation takes place every few years, and, based on the outlined criteria, the best performing candidate progresses, ultimately being rewarded with a tenured professorship.

On Aalto University’s internal as well as external webpages the tenure track system is presented as a linear model that only allows a linear progression in the academic hierarchy.
The tenure track system criteria of evaluation has been implemented with the purpose of finding the best candidates for the job. The criteria include research and/or artistic work, teaching, activity in scientific community and academic leadership. The understanding of what counts as top quality and what is most important, can, however, only be revealed through engaging in indexical and inter-textual reading - by drawing on other texts and additional knowledge of how things transpire. Recruitment to, as well as progress within, the tenure track system occurs through “systematic evaluation” on the basis of principles of “predictability, transparency and comparability with international standards”.

With the exception of a few invitations to people who are, in the words of one academic manager, “without any doubt competent”, and those who already hold permanent professorships, the recruitments for tenure track openings have been carried out on the basis of open calls. However, the implementation of the system and the recruitment processes have been slower than expected. It was initially suggested that the short-term teaching or researcher contracts would be phased out within a couple of years and replaced entirely by tenure track and a so-called lecturer track. However, the continued reliance on project funding, as well as the necessity of being able to provide courses, has led many departments to extend already existing, or devise new, fixed term teaching or project researcher contracts.

The criteria of excellence outlined for the tenure track system has affected the whole university and faculty at all levels, both within the system and externally. The PhD system has been restructured. Lecturer track recruitments must also be based on the evaluation of a publication portfolio. Each PhD student and member of the faculty is evaluated and receives advice as to how to adjust their practices and priorities in accordance with the criteria defined in the tenure track system.

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29 Taken from the Aalto University website, Careers.
5.2 The textual representation of academic work and everyday actualities: a disjuncture

Maija (pseudonym) is a white middle-class Finnish woman with a husband and two children. She completed her doctoral studies a couple of years ago and was, at the time of the interview, working as a lecturer. Her experience conveys the disjuncture from which I investigate the social organisation of junior academics’ everyday lives.

She is very upset about having to ask some students to leave an overbooked course (room for 15, but 19 had signed up) and seems tense. She throws her pen against the wall, leaves it lying on the floor. Her facial expression, her trembling mouth, tells me that she is on the verge of tears. She contains herself and holds them back. We walk together to the kitchen area to boil water for tea. When the tea is ready we sit down together and she tells me about her day and how she had met the Dean for a career development talk, named development talks at Aalto. He is currently meeting and speaking to all faculty members about their personal career aspirations and how they can contribute to making Aalto world class by 2020. When she had booked the meeting she had (as required) sent her CV to him. She tells me about her experience. He starts – on the basis of her CV – to give her advice: that she must write in English – which, as she puts it, “if he had bothered to ask, I already do” – and she must publish in international top journals. He had commented on the fact that she had no such publications. She said that she only graduated as a PhD a few years ago and had been teaching a lot ever since. She had wanted to publish something in a top journal based on her PhD studies, but had simply not had the time because of teaching duties, and on top of this also had children to attend to at home. He had commented that in international top ranking universities it was normal that professors would teach six courses a year and at the same time publish in top journals. She had replied to him that professors may be listed formally as providing and teaching a course, but in reality they would have others, lower ranking (positioning herself as one of those), teaching for them which would be the only reason why they could be listed as doing both. Furthermore, she pointed out that her interest in doing ethnography severely limited the number of top journals available to publish in on a particular international ranking list (the list of publications that one has to have published in, in order to be eligible for a tenure track position at her school). He asked her what her future ambitions were – she answered that she would like to do ethnographic research and was not interested in the tenure track. He replied to her that within the next two years there would be no researcher or teacher positions left – everything would be on the Professor or Lecturer tracks. That is, he did not in fact provide any reply to what she was saying. She interpreted his reply as meaning that if she didn’t want to live up to the defined criteria of excellence formulated in the strategy she could not stay.

The experienced disjuncture between what type of work activities gain textual representation, such as publishing in particular international ranking listed journals, and the actual work carried out on a everyday/everynight basis. The
latter includes teaching, taking classes for professors when they are overburdened, communicating with students, handling administrative problems, conducting meaningful research, writing for publications and taking care of her children. It also includes the frustrating and emotionally challenging knowledge that it is hard, if not impossible, to do it all, and the work it takes to attempt at striking a balance is given little regard. While Maija’s experience is unique, the disjuncture within it replicated the experience of the majority of junior female academics interviewed during my doctoral thesis work. They find teaching rewarding and sometimes necessary in order to manage financially, they care about their students, are happy to assist professors in teaching and administrative work even when they themselves are under time-pressure. They often perform research that is underrepresented in the journals applicable to the international journal ranking lists, and they often (but not always) have spousal or parental duties. What they “should” do would often be at odds with what they “want” to do, and a great deal of work goes into attempting to achieve a balance.

What does Maija’s experience reveal about the ruling relations that shape her unsuccessful attempts at striking a balance? How is she held accountable to these, how does she participate in them and whose interests do they serve?

5.3 Enter the ‘ideal academic’

In order to map out how Maija’s experience became organised the way it did I will here utilise Smith’s notion of the ‘ideological code’ and Foucault’s concept of discourse as adapted by Smith as central, albeit different, elements in the ruling relations. Smith, drawing upon Foucault, conceives discourses as text-mediated social relations that coordinate multiple particular and institutionally various local sites, as people read, write or speak them. These discourses organise the social; but are themselves socially organised. Micro-level specialised discourses are also embedded in complex, historically specific, larger scale professional, political and economic discourses that also change through shifts in ruling practices and institutional ordering. Ethnography of the text will show that texts differ; some will allow for more interpretation, negotiation and agency to resist than others at particular points in time. In contrast to discourses that we activate and produce ourselves, Smith suggests that ideologies are something we are made subject to:

...ideologies, concepts, theories and the like [...] insert their ordering capacities into specialized sites operating otherwise independently [...] [They] generate texts and constitute their internal organization; they regulate intertextuality and interpret texts at sites of reading. [...] Texts generated in different settings [...] are coordinated conceptually, producing an internally consistent picture of the world and providing the terms of [talk and decisions]. (Smith 2004, 157)
The concept that Smith terms ‘ideological codes’ operate in more universalising or standardising ways than discourses. They have the ability to “organize texts across discursive sites, concerting discourse focused on divergent topics and sites, often having divergent audiences, and variously hooked into [...] practice”. It is not a:

...determinate concept or idea, though it can be expressed as such. Nor is it a formula or a definite form of words. Rather it is a constant generator of procedures for selecting syntax, categories, and vocabulary in the writing of texts and the production of talk and for interpreting sentences, written or spoken, ordered by it (Smith 2004, 158-159).

Joan Acker’s (1990) analysis of work organisations in the context of a patriarchal and capitalist system how gender (race and class) inequality is reproduced though a disembodied, asexual, abstracted, textual construct of “the ideal worker” able to fully dedicate him/herself to the organisation. The “ideal worker” – here converted to the “ideal academic” - is an ideological code such as postulated by Smith.

The texts in and around the tenure track system come to organise which work and experience should be flagged and made visible and, implicitly, which should be downplayed from the textual and institutional translation of academic work. The organising effect of the text means anything defined as “defective” or “lacking” can be translated into an “objective” for action. It creates a movement of people who work to evaluate themselves and each other in accordance to the criteria and decide which activities to engage in. This process was exemplified through the career development talks that formed the basis for the experience related by Maija. It is, of course, somewhat unusual that her school’s Dean would take the time to both speak individually to one hundred faculty members and collectively to all faculty members with PowerPoint presentations. However, such talks take place annually across the different schools and departments between each faculty member and their superior. Each faculty member will receive an email with a form that with specifies the purpose of the conversation and suggests topics to be discussed during the development talk as well as preparatory questions. The questions in the form would include, but not be restricted to, stating academic accomplishments and levels of alignment with the university, school and department strategy.

The definition of academic work in the texts, activated in this context by the Dean and academics, are of a particular abstracted, asexual, non-gendered and disembodied form. Jobs, duties, hierarchies, strategies and purposes within capitalist work organisations are defined and structured textually and in a standardised manner. The underlying purpose in this is to ensure that they are quantifiable and comparable, thus creating an easier point of departure for managers to decide on compensation in terms of salary and promotion and/or
prove to internal and external stakeholders that they are able to detect problems and point to solutions (Knights & Morgan 1991; Townsley 1993).

Acker’s notion of the ideal worker becomes applicable to academia as capitalist, managerial, economic logics and discourses are expanded to include and organise higher educational institutions and academic work (Ciancanelli 2010). The core of the university strategy is an ongoing evaluation of performance and how people should work to achieve the organisational goals/institutional intentions — organising social consciousness around what counts as “world-class quality” and a “world-class academic”.

Some of the most important texts outlining the ideal academic are presented below, guiding the activities on all levels in the academic hierarchy.
Cartography of texts that comprise the ideal academic

**SAB/RAE report** used by university to negotiate funding with Ministry

**SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY BOARD** (each school has its own independent board): BIANNUAL RESEARCH ASSESSMENTS EXERCISE (bibliometrics and publication data) of school, departments and units, focus: how well the school, departments and units are doing in terms of reaching strategic goals.

**UNIVERSITY STRATEGY**

**REPORT WITH ADVICE:** What should be done on school and dept. level in order to accomplish goals.

**‘Strategy Engagement Process’**

**INDIRECT TEXT MEDIATION:**
- Engage faculty; provide more information and space for Q&A sessions; power point presentations; official gatherings with speeches; dean’s coffee/glögi sessions.
- Career development talks (between boss and faculty/staff member) and coaching services.

**DIRECT TEXT MEDIATION:**
- Weekly news letters on latest changes, challenges, recruitments and decisions hard copy version of strategy.
- Delivered directly to all with a pigeon whole.

**UNIVERSITY PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS**

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE** basic funding allocation: on the basis university performance: publication quality and efficiency, internationalization, diversification of funding etc.

**RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENTIFIC POLICY PRIORITIES**

**UNIVERSITY PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS**

**TO TOP 100 OF TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION**

**INTERNATIONALIZE AND BECOME ‘WORLD CLASS’ BY 2020**

**STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT TOOL: TENURE TRACK SYSTEM AND IT’S EVALUATION CRITERIA**

**QS UNIVERSITY RANKING LIST**

**RESEARCH/ PUBLICATIONS**

**PUBLICATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL TOP JOURNALS AND BIBLIO METRICS**

**TEACHING**

**ACTIVITY IN SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY/SCIENTIFIC LEADERSHIP**

**JOURNAL RANKING LISTS:**

**DEPARTMENT/ DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE CALL FOR APPLICATIONS/ EVALUATION OF APPLICANTS**

**DEPARTMENT/ DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE CALL FOR SHORTLIST**

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE (INCLUDES VICE DEAN, ONE REPRESENTATIVE FROM EACH DISCIPLINE AND TWO FROM UNIVERSITY HR) EVALUATE SHORTLIST**

**UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE: FINAL DECISION**

**Process of Tenure track Evaluation: Matrix structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Submit shortlist</th>
<th>Submit final recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dean or committee call for new short-list</td>
<td>Rector or committee can demand re-evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In one of the first pages of the *Introduction to the Aalto University Strategy*, distributed to all staff and faculty members in hard-copy pocket format, it notes, as if speaking to a generalised and disembodied crowd: “Without the people of Aalto, there is no Aalto. We all have our role in writing the next chapter of Aalto’s success story” (Introduction to Aalto Strategy 2012, p. 3). These calls for the abstract and disembodied ideal academic are repeated in various places. At one HR career information event attended by PhD candidates and faculty members it was stated: *Everyone* can enter the tenure track as long as they: “Don’t give up! Work hard! Write good papers! Find money and students! Learn to teach! [Remain] active in the scientific community, in Society and at the University!” The virtual realities of such texts and representations resonate with the ‘images’ people would paint when asked to describe the type of academic the University was looking for, and how evaluate themselves in relation to it.

Rebecca: ...what do you think is the ideal Aalto academic?

Liisa: that’s a good question...they’ve definitely done a pretty good job constructing that idea of, with the practices that they’re introducing and *the way they describe it*... but the ideal Aalto academic is someone who’s very active, first of all, you have to be good in, in all the areas of academic work in the sense that both the research and teaching, and, and then probably some... if not consulting, but you know this, all this other, sort of the third task of universities, of also dealing with the rest of the world in a way.. Teaching is sort of, they say that you know, "this is something that we need to work on" and "we have to have really world class pedagogical systems” or whatever, but research is what, what counts, and what you’re supposed to do is you have to publish a lot in good, good journals of course. And, uh... mostly work with international colleagues, you know, anything to do with Finland or whatever doesn’t count, so you should write in English. And it is necessary to network with various, important, big name universities, probably so that it, you know, looks good and looks like you’re doing world, world class research. And it also seems that just being international, you know, that... that it's not Finnish people in a way that they want... now when they announced some of these new jobs, I paid attention to the fact that they're so proud if most of the applicants are from abroad. And the assumption is that because they're from abroad they must be better than anybody here. In a way. So the international aspect is certainly there. And, what else. I mean, you have to be really devoted and, and... I mean, if you think about it, all the things that are sort of expected... then you do really have to give it, your all to the...to the career... and also in the sense that I think that, that you will have to, if, in order for you to be able to do this, you do have to sort of understand the game and make extra efforts all the time. Because if I think

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30 One academic manager told me how teaching and other activities would not be taken into consideration unless the candidate first and foremost had the right amount of publications in the right places. "If a person has 2 or 3 publications in [that particular ranking] list there need not be much discussion about whether the person is at the right level...but then if there isn’t that then we need to look at achievements of the person in other ways...we do of course make a holistic evaluation of the person anyway...but its hard to have a person tenured without any clear evidence of research excellence”. When asked whether it had ever been possible to recruit someone without publications in journals occurring on that particular list, she replied “no”.

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about it, I can easily immerse myself in some of this work, and, network with people. But, but just purely because I really want to meet those people and learn about new things and whatever, but this system emphasises these outside things so much that I can see that people go, start doing this more kind of instrumental type of networking, and, and certain activities, they're just like... you know, that are not necessarily connected to the, just the joy of doing the research. You know. I'm, I'm not sure if that would happen, but it just seems that the requirements are quite, quite high.

Rebecca: Mm. Do you feel like this construction that you've [just described], the construction you feel that they have made on the Aalto side... do you feel you can live up to that? Do you feel it's realistic for you?

Liisa: [sighs]

As with Maija, ‘Liisa’ experienced challenges negotiating between what was important and meaningful to her – writing her monograph, researching, reading, learning, developing the curriculum, Master’s programs and engaging in teaching – while simultaneously playing the linear instrumental game, described in the strategy and related texts. A strategy that would secure her future position through means of publishing in the right journals, working with the right people, being internationally minded and so forth. On top of this, her time spent working outside academia before embarking on her PhD, her years on maternity leave and the wish to spend time with her family were also related as causes for concern. She worried that she was too old or not considered dedicated enough to be taken into consideration for post doc funding or the tenure track.

Liisa: people of my age, if they get their PhD, you know they've already said that, well, you know, like, post-doc funding is not given because, you know, you're sort of late starting, and getting into the professor track...

Her story, not dissimilar to that of many other junior female academics, compelled me to try to clarify the overall picture regarding division of labour in terms of parental leave and work focus in academia and whether any overarching gender patterns could be detected.

5.4 Categories: the effects of ruling relations

The most common method for HR management teams in academic organisations to comprehend gender and diversity is to categorise and produce statistical breakdowns by faculty, thereby creating an overview of gender, nationality, age, etc. According to such figures, women at Aalto University, enabled by Finnish law and welfare policies, comprise the vast majority, 83%, of all child-care and parental leave (Aalto HR 2012). While there has been a positive development nationally in the last 15 years, with progressive fatherhood inducements and more men taking parental leave, this change has been remarkably slow. The periods taken off from work by fathers have been
significantly shorter in comparison to mothers and have recently been declining (Haataja 2009; Hausmann et al 2011). Moreover, women at Aalto University are much more likely to be employed on part-time contracts than men, and this group of part-time employees is also generally below the age of 40 (Aalto HR 2012). Women, on average, also receive lower salaries and less funding than men at AU, a fact that may be due to fewer women being in the highest income group: the professors (Aalto HR 2012). Across Europe women generally have a more difficult time obtaining competitive research grants compared to their male counterparts. This has been explained by the fact that scientific boards and grant awarding bodies are dominated by men. However, such an explanation does not hold for Finland, since 47% of the board members here are women (Mapping the Maze 2008, 20). The Aalto University statistics do not provide any breakdowns by gender on teaching and research, however, EU statistics show that women (in Finland as well as other countries) are more likely to be involved in teaching than men and have larger teaching loads than men (She Figures 2009).

Out of 85 tenure track appointments made at Aalto University in 2010-2011 (Aalto HR 2012), 18% of the applications received were from women, and 16% of the appointments were of women (Aalto HR 2012). While the share of Finnish female PhD graduates in 2006 stood at 47% (She Figures 2009) the proportion of women decreases significantly at the upper echelons of the academic hierarchy. This phenomenon has been named “the academic scissor” (Mapping the Maze 2008). Women held 23% of Professorships in Finland in 2007 (ibid), though the proportion of women holding junior positions was higher the proportion holding professorships. The statistics show an increase in the percentage of women pursuing an academic career over the last ten years, but their positive progress is slow.

These statistical breakdowns provide an important insight into the effects or symptoms of gendered cultural, societal and organisational life and ruling relations (e.g. Wahl 1992; Wahl 2013a). However “categories are not enough” (Smith 2009). In order to understand how these occur and are produced through the daily activities of people, I must engage in analysis that goes beyond categories. This must be undertaken to gain an understanding of how the doing of gender becomes an essential part of the everyday work for achieving ruling purposes/institutional intentions related to the production of ‘ideal academics’.

5.5 Beyond categories: doing excellence, doing gender

Through the experiences of my research participants it has been observed how certain academic work activities gain visibility. These are the activities that gain representation in the documents and strategic texts that describe what kind of work is considered significant and expected in Aalto University. While certain activities are foregrounded, others are downplayed.

The kind of work that counts are those Liisa describes as streamlined, instrumental and ‘game-like’ networking, publishing and careering. This does
not mean that you cannot, in principle, undertake work that does not count or does not gain textual representation, but it demands a lot of navigation. Those who are successful are usually those who dedicate their lives to their career. This is something the statistical breakdowns suggest that many female academics below the age of forty are generally not in a position to do. Not only do they take the vast majority of parental leave, they also occupy the majority of part-time positions, they deliver the majority of teaching and teaching preparation hours, and only a few of them apply for and reach the top academic positions. These issues were mentioned in many of my conversations with junior female scholars, but perhaps more clearly in one of my interviews with my friend and colleague, Liisa. Without me asking explicitly, she brought up “gender” in connection to the topic and content of a seminar that had been arranged by some other junior female academics:

Liisa: I actually thought about it this weekend... the whole thing had to do with gender. It had a lot to do with gender. I mean the women who organised the whole thing started out in this very powerful way. They had written this narrative about their own experiences and how they have been trying to deal with the demands that are placed upon them ...and the time they have available. I noticed that I can really relate to them a lot, because they have the same issues that I have had ...basically the whole time. They have children and they just have a certain number of hours per day they can devote to this work and then comes all this measurement stuff. You know they are expected to produce ...it's not only the courses they have to take but then there is more and more pressure on them to produce publications and conference papers and that sort of thing ...and I think I was able to bring into the discussion that you know how I can clearly see the change that has happened.

Seminars, such as the one referred to above, played, for a certain period of time, an important role for discussing the challenges and problems in connection to the organisational changes. Liisa, being my friend and a key informant in my study, someone whom I spoke to a lot to over the years, may have been able to name what was occurring as gendered for a number of reasons: firstly, because she herself is a feminist and interested in gender in her own academic work; and secondly, because she is of course familiar with my work and therefore perhaps comfortable about speaking openly about her perspectives. In her account of what she means by “gendered”, it is clear that she, unknowingly and despite her otherwise very reflexive and critical engagement with these issues, is quite emotional. She is reproducing the taken-for-granted expectation that women are the ones taking the main responsibility for finding an appropriate balance of work and family. However, her thoughts about what was transpiring, and of finding that she shares experiences with other junior female scholars constitute an approach by which start to problematize the claimed objectivity and neutrality of ideal academic, including the very organisational processes and intentions related to the
activation of the ideal and the excellence discourse. I could therefore begin looking at these as gendered (see e.g. Acker 1990).

In the Western world Liberal feminist ideas have become mainstream and also widely-embraced by capitalist organisations as benefitting capital. This includes, for instance, the notion that women can and should be allowed to participate and compete on the job market on an equal footing (see e.g. Eisenstein 2009). In Finland liberal gender equality, the long history of female participation in the public sphere and the high representation of women on the labour market, is part of the national self-understanding. (See e.g. Marakowitz 1996). State feminism in the form of individualist dual-earner family supporting welfare policies, the Finnish ‘Act for Equality between Men and Women’, combined with the ratification of EU anti-discrimination acts, have, despite implementation problems (Holli & Kantola 2007), contributed to the institutionalisation of liberal gender equality. Equally, an outspoken or overtly paternalistic or authoritarian masculinity is not considered comme il faut in contemporary Finland. Perhaps this is particularly so in the context of academia where a relatively progressive self-understanding is evident. The merit-based evaluation promoted by several high standing people within the university as being fair and neutral and as overriding the problems of the previous system, can be seen as forming a part of this. It is often acknowledged by academic managers that the previous recruitment system was gendered and systematically favoured white, upper/middle-class, men. Against this so-called old fashioned and irrational recruitment system the tenure track and its clearly defined evaluation criteria are considered more in alignment with a progressive self-understanding rendering explicit gender discrimination irrational, unenlightened and unacceptable (Holgersson 2012). Gender equality and egalitarianism is treated as a taken-for-granted “Finnish Value” and has been called upon by Scientific Advisory Boards (SAB) as well as by the university management as a possible competitive advantage that the schools and university should highlight in its self-branding.

In March 2012, a Friday emailed newsletter received by all staff members at the Aalto school of Economics, had attached the report and also summarised the main points of the evaluation and recommendations. These included: a need for rebranding the school by changing its name, with the purposes of “increasing international visibility”. Further, it was suggested to consider strategic use of “Finnish values, such as egalitarianism” and the forging of a “unique Finnish identity” in branding; although it was suggested to be cautious about the tensions that may be implied between the brand and reality when it comes to attract top faculty from abroad and using pay differentials as a means.

Gaining eligibility to participate in the discourse of excellence connected to Aalto University’s ‘ideal academic’ is central for furthering both the university’s international aspirations and Finland’s global competitive position, but requires, nonetheless, doing a particular form of masculinity. Going
through the evaluation criteria and profiles constructed of employees considered Aalto’s public face, I find that they portray a certain masculine discourse. This is strikingly similar to the masculinity discourses dominating contemporary transnational corporate management and business elite connected with neoliberal agendas of globalisation (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, 849). This is perhaps due to universities increasing international orientation, engagement in market-like competitive behaviour and internal governance forms adapting HR and strategic management forms known from the corporate world, not entirely surprising (Kuoppala & Näppilä 2012; Parker & Weick 2013; Connell 1998; Connell 2005; Willmott 1995).

In order to document the textually mediated discourses of masculinity, activated or referred to by my participants, I have analysed texts related to the tenure track evaluation criteria. These have further revealed an intertextual hierarchy informing the ways in which people (standing within as well as outside the tenure track system), units, departments, schools and the University as a whole are measured in terms of reaching the 2020 goal.

The texts are standardised - not in the sense that they ignore differences among formally, and textually vested, categorised schools or departments, but that they are largely indifferent to differences within those schools or departments, differences that seldom gain representation in institutional documents. Departments and schools have been restructured several times since 2010 with the purpose of making such standardisations more actionable. The texts become a point of reference across different settings for people in different social, economic and life circumstances. The complexity of everyday life, human relations and interaction become mediated and organised by the texts, seemingly able to:

...speak in the absence of speakers; meaning is detached from local contexts of interpretation; the same meaning can occur simultaneously in a multiplicity of socially and temporally disjoined settings" (Smith 1990b, 175).

The normativity of the ideal academic is not so much expressed in the textually mediated discourses, as it is a normative organisation that becomes accomplished and re-accomplished through it. The texts organise the social in a way that leads to the demarcation of certain aspects of academic work as important, and the deprioritising of others, making them invisible in the textual representations of work (which is what is considered when evaluating the performance of people, units and departments). In the process of this foregrounding, and A-classifying, certain types of workers, and relegating, B-classifying, other workers. The textually mediated discourses “supply codes [and] procedures for reading of the locally produced [...] presentation of self in everyday life” (Smith 1990b, 176; Goffman 1959); hence providing the codes and procedures for evaluating oneself and others eligible for enacting the excellence discourse.
Texts and images in and around the tenure track system mediate global masculinity discourses that are differing yet also entwined. These include masculinities of geocentrism, careerism, and informalism. The masculinity of geocentrism involves international or global orientation in one’s choice of work and work place. The masculinity of careerism involves commitment to organisational goals, to the extent that it may well lead to sacrificing one’s private or personal commitments (because this kind of commitment to work is based on the assumption that people have no commitments beyond work). Careerism also involves focusing on particular types of tasks, necessarily involving the classification of some tasks as being of less importance than others for furthering one’s career. The masculinity of informalism involves homosocial bonding and networking between excellent and equally geocentrically minded men and women across the globe. These global masculinity discourses are connected to the rhetoric of inevitable participation in global capitalism (see Connell 1998; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Tienari & Koveshnikov 2012).

Related to the geocentric and narrow ‘ideal academic’ is the naturalisation of English as the language of publication and internal communication in Finnish higher education following the recent reforms, and perhaps particularly at Aalto University (Saarinen 2012). Internal communication, teaching and writing in English is part of the internationalisation strategy. The vast majority of journals appearing in the journal ranking lists that count in evaluations for tenure track only publish in English31. Rather paradoxically, this strategy equates ‘international/foreign languages’ with ‘English’ and furthermore assumes that all people within the organisation to be equally well positioned in terms of mastering the English language (Saarinen 2012). The position may very well disadvantage certain types of research that require sensitivity to linguistic particularities. Furthermore, it speaks from an invisible standpoint which favours a generation who were educated after English became institutionalised and more systematically promoted at all levels of education, and within all fields of research, in Finland. Indeed, despite the fact that age-based discrimination is illegal, the textual requirements mean that the ideal academic tends to be a relatively young. Although the creation of a strong international environment is part of the strategy, it is a particular kind of international, involving people who speak and write fluently in English, and who are educated to make their work publishable in the appropriate journals.

In the texts, documents, brochures, websites, PowerPoint presentations and talks at the university and in the media, these young masculinity discourses operate in subtle ways. They are not openly named masculine. The texts, and the stories they tell, make certain activities and work visible, while downplaying or silencing others, in a manner that is based on treating masculine ways of knowing as taken-for-granted, naturalised and unproblematic. One example was an image of a young white serious looking male who was recruited for a tenure track position in one of the schools of technology and science. Below the image there was a question, in English,

31 See e.g. level 3 ranking journals in http://www.tsv.fi/julkaisufoorumi/haku.php?lang=en
posited as if asked by him: “Are you on the right track?” We have no way of knowing whether it was in fact him who asked this question; what conversation, if any, formed the basis of the quote, if it was indeed a quote; and, if it was a quote, what type of questions had led him to respond with that question. The selection procedures, activated by the nameless and faceless person who engaged in the work of constructing the text and image, are hidden. However, when I, and my colleagues, see the image and read the text connected to it, we make sense of it by activating the ideological code and the discourses connected to it. We all know how to read, interpret and answer “Are you on the right track?” This image and text were distributed in two formats: on the front page of a hard copy brochure, that if opened contained additional information about the tenure track system and criteria of evaluation, and on the internal websites where a link to this tenure tracked CV could be found. The question as to whether you are on the right track implies that there is a wrong track and that it is possible to get derailed. Knowing what counts as the right track is that which is indicated as important in the institutionalised tenure track evaluation criteria and made concrete and actionable in the CV. That which does not gain textual representation there is not of importance, and not being there is being on the wrong track.

Plenty of discursive ‘images’, can assist in deciphering what being on the right track and making actionable the ideal academic means, as is evident on the university websites and reproduced at official gatherings and events. The university websites ‘Meet our Faculty’ section is a good example. In spring 2014 six people received a face in the form of a picture and a short presentation. As readers and viewers we get a sense of who is appreciated as permanent and visiting faculty and academics, what type of work is foregrounded and which is downplayed. The presentation is a mixture of citations and narrative conveyed by an author who, once again, remains nameless and faceless. A visiting male professor from Iceland gets presented as “one of the leading economists in Iceland”, whose work and knowledge of the failed policies that led to the economic crisis is presented as beneficial for evaluating Finnish economic policies. The professor is cited for saying that “this has been an excellent community for doing research and I have also managed to do a lot of work”. A female tenure track professor from Finland, is presented differently, with no direct citations, by listing facts about her age, a prize received for her doctoral thesis, research interests, previous positions held, and the fact that she has published in more than “25 international peer-reviewed journals and books”. There is a link to a YouTube video of her installation lecture and a CV listing all of her publications. A Finnish male Professor who is “recognised for his persistent and distinguished work”, and “one of the leading scholars in the world” within his field, is cited expressing how Finland is a particularly good place to empirically study his area of focus, investor behaviour, but also claiming that the “majority of partners in my research work are in foreign universities, and I am almost in daily contact with them”. The anonymous and voiceless narrator then explains how travelling all over the world to give presentations and “international networking is
important for top-level research”. Because the competition in his field of study, and the required resources has accelerated over the years, it is central “in order to meet the publication threshold” that “a study [is] at least as innovative but more comprehensive and methodologically more accomplished than, for instance, ten years ago”. As readers, we are relieved, however, to learn that “despite its demands, he finds research work rewarding”. One female professor from China, who gained her doctoral education in USA, explains that the university’s Tenure Track System appealed to her because “it places sufficient value on high quality research.” In particular, she finds that not having to spend an unreasonable amount of time on administrative tasks gives her “the freedom to really concentrate on her own research.” Similarly, she is cited as saying that “this enables me to focus on the development of professional skills in the early stages of my career”. It is claimed that the system is not intended to encourage competition between faculty members, but only with oneself and the Chinese professor supports this, saying, “the evaluation is based on personal performance and outcome, which promotes collaboration and reduces competition between colleagues.” In addition to enjoying life in Finland, she also has future career aspirations: the new assistant professor expects flexibility in the implementation of teaching and research and enough support for conducting her own research. She also has one suggestion for how to improve things: “[she] hopes that [the] university would invest even more in internationalisation, and that the English-speaking staff would be more effectively accounted for as regards language used at the university. ’But I know that Aalto is getting there’, [she] adds confidently”,32

The heteronormative order and relational nature of gender means that ruling ways of knowing masculinity are always defined in “contradistinction” to subordinated masculinities and to some models of femininity (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, 848; Connell 1998; Connell 1987). In the same manner as doing a particular form of masculinity is subtly invoked for gaining eligibility to the excellence discourse and evaluating oneself, and others, as being, or not being, on the right track; doing femininity enters as organiser in the invisible work. To clarify, the work that does not gain textual representation but nonetheless is an assumed subtext to the ideal academic. The teaching, curriculum planning, student care, emotional work at the university and in the department, and the care duties in the home must also be performed. This is necessary in order for the institutional reality of the university strategy and ideal academic to become actionable. Some of this work is mentioned, but not problematized from a gender perspective, in some organisational texts (such as the SAB reports or committee reports on how to further improve teaching), and completely absent in others (such as the tenure track evaluation criteria).

The femininity discourses include a caring discourse that emphasises the importance of one’s family commitments, but also collegiality and emotional work in terms of providing encouragement, advice, comfort, support and help

Accessed April 4th 2014
to solve tasks or ameliorating workload burdens. Furthermore, it involves ensuring that the learning experience of students paramount through expending considerable time and effort in preparing classes and delivering feedback.

Both men and women in this context can and do engage in activating these masculinities and femininities. What makes them masculine and feminine is that they are based on hidden binary categories and universalising heteronormative assumptions about gendered divisions of labour at home and at the university (e.g. Smith 1990b; Smith 2004). Indeed, certain stereotypes continue being reproduced in subtle and often unconscious ways, connecting certain practices and expectations to certain sex-categorized others and themselves (and myself – for I am certainly not free of participation in this practice, as becomes obvious in some of the questions I pose and the way I pose them in some of my interviews). The process of applying these is part of the movement involved in positioning oneself in relation to the ‘ideal academic’.

In my fieldwork I found evidence of how both men and women engage in doing masculinity and femininity and how it required a lot of balancing - particularly by women. One female professor from the male dominated field of technology and sciences divulged:

Maarit: ...I think that if I was quiet or more formal and um ...I think they [my male colleagues] expect me to behave like their wives would behave...but I am equal here ...so I mean why can’t I speak out when everybody else speaks out...but it’s harder ...and its funny it’s almost like going to their homes and I could imagine their wives ...they want to control women here the same way they control their wives ...maybe they have a very nice relationship but it’s like a role...we go back to no academic roles [...] I think my personality is a challenge here because I am very outspoken, I laugh a lot, I don't take things dreadfully seriously...I speak out when I feel like speaking out sometimes maybe too fast ...um but I never insult anyone, I don't want to argue with anyone ...that's my personality this is the way I am um I think my gender has certainly NOT been an advantage because a woman who is outspoken is the worst thing in [a] community dominated by men um because you are a threat if you are a little bit too crazy and a woman [...] where it has been a disadvantage and where I can see it is in all of these committees that are sort of like ...right now the tenure track committee we have here there is not one single woman on those and the men there they don’t deliberately make this choice but because it is simply much easier for them [...] they don’t think about it they don’t even consult and say do you have the time because there aren’t that many women in the faculty so we don't necessarily have the time but ...I am asked at the last moment I am always the one to say hey I think we should have women here I always have to remind them...and you know you get excluded they still have this good old boys network here and it works extremely well [...] it has always worked that way ...I think also we had this discussion about three years ago when we had this department head who’s a man and I had been the vice deputy head for three years and when we were going through this discussion I suggested that I could be the deputy because if we have a man ...who is very well qualified...who is the
head then I could you know because its fair...not because I am a woman but
because we had the deal that one would be from [one discipline] and one would
be from [another discipline] and we are equally qualified ...scientifically it
makes no difference...and it was a major issue and I mean it’s not as if the
deputy has a lot of influence it’s not like I am going to blow up the whole place
by being too crazy um now we have the same thing...the department head has
already been asked whether he will continue for the next three years ...but I
have not been asked and I have a feeling that a younger male professor will be
ominated as deputy head although I am twice or three times as qualified as he is...

‘Maarit’s’ story indicates firstly that she assumes, in accordance with the
textual constructs, that organisations and (academic) work is a gender-neutral
space: that she is “equal here”, an assumption that itself contributes to the
ongoing reproduction of masculine advantage in this setting. Furthermore, her
story exemplifies the idea of double bind (e.g. Gherardi & Poggio 2007). A
woman in this community cannot be too feminine, because then she would not
be taken seriously by her male or female colleagues: she has to be vocal, show
her worth and highlight her qualifications. However, she cannot be too
masculine, too informal or “crazy” in manners similar to her male colleagues,
either because then she does not comply with the stereotypical gender
expectations. Similarly, she immediately elaborates that, despite speaking up
and laughing a lot, she does not try to “insult” or seek to “argue” with anyone.
This desire for clarification would appear to rest on an assumption that I
would draw the conclusion that she deliberately seeks conflict by not living up
to the feminine stereotype referred to as the “non-academic role”. Stories such
as Maarit’s could be validated by similar stories, at varying degrees, from other
departments and schools. One male academic related how the young women
in his department played a central role in creating a feeling of community by
arranging coffee and cake sessions once a week and finding the time to discuss
emotional issues and work-related stress. When they were not there, e.g.
because of maternity leave or travel, faculty members tended to keep their
doors shut in order to be able to focus on their own work, the sense of
community and solidarity was, to his disappointment, lost. However, he did
not himself try to precipitate such sessions, because he was too busy with his
work.

Maarit’s experience of the gendered hierarchies and social relations within
her department is also reproduced through homosocial rituals (e.g. Holgerson
2012). Indeed, various informal networks in and across the schools (e.g.
basketball teams, hockey teams) exist through which older and more
experienced men, higher positioned in the academic hierarchy, can pass on
advice, culture and opportunities to younger less experienced men. While the
younger men, and progressive elder men, may be critical of such practices –
for indeed, if and when I asked, most men in this context would consider it
unfair – it can be hard to object to them due to fear of exclusion and
disadvantages. Such networks, in time come to normalise gender based
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segregation and exclusionary practices. Women, such as Maarit, therefore should not object to, but rather silently accept and take part in reproducing them as unproblematic, natural and given. To paraphrase, that both men and women will find it hard to live up to the ideal academic, gendered stereotypical expectations and different access to informal networks make it harder for women than for men to build a CV that would render them eligible for tenure track.

There are other interviews where female professors had managed to do gender differently and with success. One woman reported to me how she and her husband had an “untraditional” division of labour at home, but also regarding their jobs. They had reversed the hetero-normative roles so that she was the travelling and career minded, and he more insular and home oriented. This fact was often, she explained, in representational situations related to her work, met with “awkward silences” which she interpreted as people disapproving. Of course, she could only interpret the awkward silences in that way and categorise her and her husband’s way of doing things as different because she is familiar with and able to read back from the institutional language of hetero-normative gendered divisions of labour to her own situation.

However, the division of labour is not only gendered and sexualised. I referred to this with my description of the narrow elitist masculinity that becomes a central part of doing the ‘ideal academic’, excluding not only most women but also most men. The tenure track texts convey explicit references that both paternal and maternal leave should be taken into consideration in evaluating a candidate. The texts are thus aligned with notions of progressive fatherhood. However, these measures when locally adopted are interpreted selectively in a manner that is, in some ways, reproducing gendered and classed social relations. My conversation with one academic manager, ‘Inga’, illustrates this:

Rebecca: …how do you think you would best reach or create the foundation for equality…at least within recruitment for professorships?

Inga: Well um …I think the academic job is ideal for females in a way…because you can in many ways …at least I…I mean I was extremely productive when I was at home with the children …luckily they were both healthy and slept rather well …but still I really enjoyed… I was three years at home with my son and then I had a research project and so on and then with our daughter I then had a part time research post …but anyways in that sense that choice of a career path it should be a wonderful way of combining family with what you like …research and teaching and the flexibility of schedules and so on…so in many ways I think its um attractive for women who want to have both and I think many of us want to have both …rather than have to select … on the other hand I have lots of my colleagues…there are lots of single women or women who don’t have children and eh I often find it …I mean if you ask me personally … I often find that I am struggling because I have the family and I still want to publish and I find that sort of…I am always lagging behind and they are so extremely efficient …they might be better time managers but also they don’t have this sort of eh you know
this constant balancing act and if they then have a husband who is a great chef...it makes life a little easier I think...so um I think I have always tried to create a flexible work environment in a sense that you can work from home and I think that our research environment as such encourages that...

Rebecca: Do you think the tenure track system encourages that?
Inga: No! No I don’t think so...but I must say I never thought of it from a gender perspective...as you put it now...so its eye-opening actually to see that...and as you pointed out with the age...where that decision and commitment [to your academic career] should be made is where you also make other important decisions in your life [e.g. family]...it’s something I should have thought of myself but I didn’t...

From this extract we get a sense of how questions of equality in this context are automatically connected to gender (see also Meriläinen, Tienari & Lund 2013) and of the gendered expectations embedded in work-life balance and equality measures: it is expected that women are the ones who undertake child-care and housework. Equality measures are there to benefit women with children. Women with children are positioned as those who need to be enabled to strike a balance, and it is expected that most women would prefer to have both a family and a career. Single women (assumed not to have children), women without children, married men with children, or women with a husband who cooks, do not need such measures to the same extent. Academic work is seen as allowing freedom and flexibility for women to combine family and work. Inga, as an academic manager, explains how she has always encouraged women in her department to work from home if needed. Her own experience of working part-time in order to stay home with her children when they were young, is taken-for-granted as an option available to all women. Her position is based on a number of assumptions and a particular standpoint within the social relations that she is not fully aware of. Indeed, she speaks from a white, middle-class and hetero-normative standpoint: It is possible for her to stay home for three years and work part-time because she has a husband who has sufficient income to provide for them without her working full-time. It is founded on the assumption that women with children in academia are not single and that a woman’s independence in terms of structuring her work can be substituted with dependence upon her husband. The standpoint is one that is also embedded in and for long has been reproduced through the Finnish welfare system, free public education and state feminism. The system, while having certainly created a foundation for social mobility and more equality, has also led to a downplaying of the question of class-related inequality within historically ‘middle-class’ work organisations such as academia. Class-based equality has largely been considered a mission accomplished as a result of such social mobility measures, leading to the reproduction of status quo in a number of ways and under current economic changes and political reforms perhaps a strengthening of such gendered and classed inequalities (see e.g. Meriläinen, Tienari & Lund 2013). Initially Inga did not problematize the tenure track system and the related excellence standards, but rather, earlier on during our
conversation, indicated that she sees it as a fair and neutral system of evaluation, which leads to the recruitment of the best candidates. However, her earlier statements, when combined with her statements above, seem to suggest something different. The standardisation of criteria for excellence, competence and academic leadership may very well provide less space for the flexible work environment she hitherto has encouraged. In the attempt to be progressive and pro-gender equality, Inga reproduces the very basis of the current gender, sex and class order.

Many of the junior female academics, including the earlier quoted Liisa, would invoke the Finnish egalitarian and politically correct self-understanding – a self-understanding that is also mediated in the university texts related to using specifically Finnish egalitarian values to make work and life in Finland attractive to foreign applicants – that their male partners were equally involved in domestic duties. They would engage in the ‘feminine’ work of covering up and making invisible their own extra work on which the position and priorities of others depend but which does not gain textual representation. Interestingly, statements about how egalitarian they were at home or how equal the relation and division of labour between men and women in the department would often follow or precede (un-problematized) elaborations that signalled a rather non-egalitarian division of labour. It included elaboration on how most of the lecturers in the department were women and most professors were men. How they had very little time for research due to teaching obligations and meetings with students. That they – because of their partners’ business travels and less flexible work schedules – would arrive to work late because they had to take their children to day-care and leave work early in order to pick them up. Or, finally, if they were single parents or their partner had insufficient income, had to take extra teaching or administrative work. The widely activated politically correct discourse serves to regulate the experiences in a way that de-politicises and makes invisible the gendered, sexed and classed subtext of the ideal academic: “It operates to reaffirm the authority of the established and to discredit” alternative interpretations and critique (Smith 2004, 179).

Although there are many different discourses of femininity and masculinity at work here, a particular and increasingly narrow elitist masculinity must be activated, by men as well as women, in order to be eligible to participate in the discourse of excellence connected to the textually defined ideal academic. It is difficult, if not impossible, for anyone to live up to the ideal. But it would seem more difficult for some than others and increasingly so, not only explaining the low percentage of women achieving tenure track positions but even applying for them. Its realisation depends on a particular gendered and classed division of labour in the work organisation as well as in the home, that people within the university participate in reproducing, against their own best interest.

People had different ways of approaching the ideal and the particular discourse of masculinity related to it: some embraced it; some making use of it instrumentally without fully accepting it; and some utterly resisting it through
various activities – such as arranging critical seminars, writing blog posts or, in other ways, protesting. Despite the different approaches they, nonetheless, are held accountable to it regardless of whether or not they are on the tenure track.

5.6 Meta-discourse of neoliberalism: Holding schools, departments and people accountable

Every second year a Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), consisting of eight professors from overseas universities and one representative from Finnish corporate life, visit and engage in evaluating the schools and their levels of achievement in terms of implementing the strategy and institutional goals of becoming world class by 2020. The evaluations of research quality are carried out in order

- To support and encourage the departments in their activities
- To support the Dean in managing and developing the School and in revising and sharpening the School’s strategic plans
- To provide the President with tools for developing the whole University

The reports are “utilised by the Aalto University Board in preparing and revising the Aalto University Strategy and in negotiations with the Ministry of Education and Culture” relating to funding (SAB Biz 2012, 2). Before the 2012 visit all departments were asked to collate and report on their faculty members publication activities; an excel sheet with information on each faculty member’s publications and bibliometrics was distributed via email. Some people, independently from each other, commented on the email, explaining how they were in favour of the transparency agenda, yet felt that it was yet another way of putting pressure on people to be more competitive. Also relating to competitiveness, texts regarding the evaluation system would once again invoke Finnish Values in order to distinguish Aalto University’s system from the American one: in Aalto people do not compete with each other, only with themselves. This becomes another politically correct way of obscuring the gendered and classed effect the access to individual faculty members’ productivity has on their evaluation of themselves and each other regarding how closely the ideal academic was approximated.

While there has always existed, and still exists, various and competing discourses of excellence within academia, these measures were not always as aggressively institutionalised as they are now. In a conversation with one department head, ‘Keijo’, I uncovered how, if these accountability steps are not followed, it has concrete consequences for the funding of the department and, thus ultimately on the amount of pressure put on existing staff.

**Rebecca:** Okay so you would have to create an identity *here*... around these topics, which would make it possible for you to fit into the Aalto strategy

**Keijo:** Yeah, and make an *impact* from...*based on our own* kind of drive...what we *feel* is the relevant thing to do and then to show that it is *in international*
comparisons kind of world class...which is some kind of slogan...but it implies that we have to be involved in this kind of scientific research dialogues [in journals – via publications] and that we get interesting visitors and get applications from abroad and um whatever kind of criteria we can in a way show that we are moving ahead...and so that a lot of measurements will be used on our activities and we have to make in transparent what we are doing and based on this kind of evaluations and comparisons and benchmarks will be made...and those that are in a way are better than the others will receive this leverage funding from central Aalto.

Rebecca: I am wondering ...you tell me that you here on department level have to create a certain level of transparency, so it is possible to compare the various departments...have you as managers put in text how you want to measure quality in your department

Keijo: No we haven’t done that yet...of course we know what the Aalto management team is thinking and they have made some proposals ...but it is still rather vague ...it is in Tuula Teeri’s [Rector of Aalto University] slides ...you can take a look what is in a way their proposal...but that’s related to these A journals ...bibliometrics...and eh indicators and European research councils grants and so forth

Rebecca: Okay so do you also use those although they are vague...use them as a reference.

Keijo: Yeah we have to use them...that's ...this measurement...bibliometrics ...we can’t avoid it anymore ...its coming...it has been here ...but it has been more institutionalised in mathematics and natural sciences and those areas so...they put the pressures on others to have this system [...]
in the “leftovers” of an old irrational employment system, outdated patriarchal structures and old boys networks that the meritocratic neutral and objective tenure track system claims to render redundant.

5.7 Summary

In exploring these issues, the focus has not been on tenure evaluations per se, but rather on the ideological code of the ‘ideal academic’ from the standpoint of particular junior female academics. This ideal is mediated by the texts related to the university’s strategic goals and the tenure track evaluation system. These standards are taken up, interpreted and activated by people within, as well outside, the tenure track system, in the evaluation and production-of-self. I have shown how gender, age, sexuality, particular academic orientations, and class enter as organisers in the work of activating the ‘ideal academic’ in the evaluation of oneself and others. This ideal renders certain types of work visible and others invisible, but also how some people’s ability to make the ideal actionable depends on the invisible gendered feminised work. Eligibility to participate in the discourse of excellence connected to the ‘ideal academic’ necessitates the activation of a particular geocentric masculinity discourse involving entrepreneurialism, informalism, and careerism. While everyone can, in principle, participate in this discourse and the practice connected to it, it would seem to work better for some than for others.

I have illuminated how, when made actionable, the textual ideal is not only reproducing an already existing gendered social organisation and inequality but actually reinforcing it. Furthermore, although people are shaped rather than overruled by it (although they engage in negotiation with it, and at times resist it), people are held accountable to it by a meta-discourse of neoliberalism and the managerial techniques of accountability, connected to its (discursive) practice, and currently rendered a position as if inevitable. There are concrete consequences at university, school, departmental, unit, and ultimately individual level, if one does not activate it.
Appendices

Appendix 1: example of interview guide for professors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Age, nationality, ethnicity, gender/sex, position, civil status, children</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Background: parents, schools, education</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current family situation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current Job situation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More detailed description of the particular event that caused me to ask her for an interview</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Describe a normal day/night (e.g. yesterday), from when you get up until you go to bed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Describe the type of work you are involved in, e.g. by looking at your calendar</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Has she/he experienced changes in her/his department and in her everyday working life in academia</th>
<th>When and how did she notice changes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How did the changes show</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How has the changes affected her community and her relation to PhD students, project researchers, students, colleagues</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How and to what extent have the changes affected her work priorities and daily schedule</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How does she manage to balance home/university; does she</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has he/she ever experienced his/her own (or PhD students, colleagues) gender (and/or other) to be an issue in academia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How and why</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| How does she/he evaluate herself; how does she feel about her/his opportunities in academia; the opportunities of her/his more junior colleagues and PhD students | Does she feel that she can live up to the expectations; would she/he want a tenure track position (does she/he already have one?)

Why/why not?

What are the standards she/he uses to decide the quality of her own work/the work of PhD students/project researchers

How and where did she/he learn about these standards/expectations she uses to evaluate herself/himself, her/his opportunities and the opportunities/potential of colleagues/junior colleagues/PhD students |

References to concrete material texts that mediate quality standards (e.g. strategy; email conversations; indirectly/directly via seminars and meetings and committee work; the tenure track evaluation criteria)

How did she/he learn about this

When and where did she first come across this text

How and to what extent do these standards have an effect on her/him, and the department/community |

References to discourses (e.g. gender; excellence; the politically correct discourse of gender egalitarian/gender equal division of labour)

How and to what extent does the discourse “speak” her/his own embodied experience/actuality

How, why and to what extent does she/he question the discourse |

**Appendix 2:** example of interview guide for managers
| Introduction | Age, nationality, ethnicity, gender/sex, position, civil status, children  
| Background: parents, schools, education  
| Current family situation  
| Current Job situation  
| Describe a normal work day/night [e.g. yesterday], from when you get up until you go to bed  
| Description of her/his manager position and responsibilities as manager on a daily/weekly/monthly/annual basis; who does she/he report to  
| Describe the type of work you are involved in as a manager |
| Changes in the department/school/university and in her/his everyday work as a manager | What would she/he describe as the main changes happening in the department/school/the university following the merger  
| What is her/his role in implementing these changes  
| How does she/he manage the concrete implementation of the strategy  
| How does it work structurally; who is she/he accountable to and how does it happen  
| Would she/he say that there are challenges related to the implementation; which challenges  
| How has the changes affected her/his work and relation to the local academic community  
| How does she/he manage to balance home/university; does she?  
| What is her/his position on securing equality e.g. in recruitment  
| What are the standards by which she/he evaluates whether her work as a manager, securing the implementation of the strategy, is successful or not |
| References to concrete material texts that mediate quality standards (e.g. strategic texts; committee meetings that draw on texts; meetings with Dean or Rector who oversees implementation of strategy; the tenure track evaluation criteria) | How did she learn about this  
| When and where did she first come across this text  
| How and to what extent do these standards have an effect on her/his work, and the department/school/university |
| References to discourses (e.g. gender; excellence; the politically correct discourse of gender egalitarian/gender equal division of labour) | How and to what extent does the discourse “speak” her/his experience of academia
How, why and to what extent does she/he question the discourse |
---|---|
**Appendix 3: example of interview guide for administrative personnel**

| Introduction | Age, nationality, ethnicity, gender/sex, position, civil status, children
Current Job: describe position and responsibilities,
Who does she report to and how does that work
Describe a normal work day/night [e.g. yesterday], from when you get up until you go to bed |
| Changes in the department/school/university and in her/his everyday work | What would she/he describe as changes happening in the department/school/the university
And what is her/his role in these changes
Who does she/he interact with (e.g. scholars, managers, other administrative personnel) and about what
Would she/he say that there are challenges related to her/his work; which challenges
What are the standards by which she/he evaluates whether her/his work is sufficiently well or not |
| References to concrete material texts that mediate quality standards (e.g. the type of calculative systems that are used in budget planning; texts that define the factors on the basis of which funding is allocated; meetings with managers, the Dean or Rector who e.g. interferes with budget allocation) | How did she/he learn about this
When and where did she/he first come across this text
How and to what extent do these shape her/his work at the department/school/university |
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