# Globalisation and the Restructuring of Higher Education for New Knowledge Economies: New Dangers or Old Habits Troubling Gender Equity Work in Universities?

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## Abstract

*This article undertakes a feminist critique of the restructuring of the modern university in Australia. It considers the interaction of the processes of globalisation, corporatisation (through the twin strategies of marketisation and managerialism) and the social relations of gender, and their implication for gender equity work in the academy. The paper locates the reform of Australian universities within their Western context, and considers the gendered effects of the new disciplinary technologies of quality assurance and online learning on the position of women academics. It concludes with some comments about the shift in language from equity to diversity which has accompanied corporatisation, and how this has effectively coopted women's intellectual labour to do the work of the entrepreneurial university.*

There is now significant debate as to whether universities are in crisis, in demise, or merely being restructured to meet the needs of knowledge-based economies. Globalisation is seen to be the driving force for unsettling the 'idea' of the modern university. This article seeks to explore from a feminist perspective the restructuring of the modern university in some Western nation states, particularly Australia, with some reference to the UK, New Zealand, Canada, USA and the European Union. In it, I consider how universities are addressing the demands of new

knowledge economies and the impact on the social relations of gender within the academy. I conclude by asking what this means for gender equity in the university and suggest some strategies for ongoing gender equity work in knowledge-based economies. The paper considers these issues within the context of two interconnected ideological shifts – the corporatisation of higher education, together with a new social conservatism and economic radicalism in politics. These have, ironically, put gender equity work of the late twentieth century under threat again, despite seemingly equity-oriented discourses now circulating about new knowledge-based economies, interdisciplinarity and diversity: discourses that would appear to open up new opportunities for women.

Globalisation should be treated as a problematic rather than as a descriptor. Taylor et al. (1997) suggest that internationalisation may be a better way of describing what is happening, as globalisation implies some homogenous experiences and effects. Certainly, universities have historically been transnational, adhering to notions of an international community of scholars in research and amongst students. Universities have also been the first to adopt new technologies of e-communication, another driver of internationalisation or global communication in terms of intellectual property and knowledge production. Most agree that globalisation has produced a 'speeding up' of time; a collapse of space, which some experience more than others in specific localities; and rapid flows of people, ideas, goods, information, images and money. But there are differential, uneven and unpredictable effects between and within nation states, between and within university systems and universities and for different populations.

Feminists work from the premise that the structures, processes and identities that constitute, and also are constituted by, these 'globalising discourses' reproduce old, and at the same reconstitute new, forms of identity, race, ethnicity and class. Depending upon their geographical, epistemological and ideological location, feminists have depicted globalisation as both dangerous and seductive (Blackmore, 2000): dangerous in the sense of exacerbating old or introducing new inequalities; in its capacity to undermine past equity gains installed by the welfare or developing nation state; and in its universalising and homogenising cultural tendencies that deny the cultural specificity of women's experiences. Globalisation, for developing and some developed nations (such as Australia and New Zealand), has provided a rationale for restructuring education to better meet the needs of the national economy, linking them more closely as part of the wider shift to vocationalise education. Reductions in public expenditure on education have

led to a privatisation of universities, and a shift to 'user pays', creating new social and gender inequalities.

Globalisation discourses are seductive in that new local, state, transnational and international formations can provide new governance frameworks through which issues of equity can be mobilised, as is the case for the European Union. These new political formations promise both the 'idea' of a world polity that allows for appeals to notions of universal human rights and a capacity to mobilise external pressures upon nation states which are oppressive of women and others. The idea of being a member of the global polity, and the capacity of the IMF and World Bank to link economic policies to raising the standards of education and training of women and girls, have significant impact on national identities in that female participation rates in higher education are now a major indicator of being a modern state (Stromquist and Monkman, 2001; Blackmore, 1999).

Universities themselves have always presented possibilities and problems for women – being the sites both of the reproduction of modernist patriarchal and colonial relations as well as of the production of feminist, postmodern, postcolonial critiques of the universal. Feminists have, from within the university, promoted debates over difference and against universalising the category of 'women', that have been central to globalisation. While white feminist academics can no longer claim to represent all women, MacDowell (1999) suggests that rejecting the notion of the universal can have strategic and analytic problems. Rejecting 'woman' as a political and analytic category means denying ongoing patterns of inequality. These gender patterns of inequality are continually regenerated, even exacerbated, in terms of the gendered, unequal distribution of power and resources locally and globally. Even within the elite location of the academy, academic women, who constitute part of that elite, can be subordinate although not necessarily subservient. For example, the UNESCO report in 1996 on *Women in Higher Education and Management* stated: 'With hardly an exception, the global picture is one of men outnumbering women on a ratio of five to one at middle management and at about twenty to one at senior management level' (quoted in Currie and Thiele, 2001). While this may not be the case in all institutions, the statistic reflects the pervasiveness and embeddedness of the wider gender regime in which men dominate mainstream institutions and in which particular masculinities are the norm in management and academic work, a norm which legitimates this ongoing pattern. MacDowell argues that 'it is not necessary to give up on wide-ranging notions of structured relationships in order to theorise

complexity.' Feminists need to develop 'both ways' of theorising, and to theorise difference but still recognise structured inequalities between groups (MacDowell, 1999, pp. 20–21).

## Confronting challenges

The last point is important when considering universities, historically sites of exclusion and elitism, but confronted in recent times with new pressures. These include the changing social relations of gender and familial arrangements; a new work order with the rise of an information society; internationalisation and economic globalisation; and culturally diverse and mobile student populations. For academics, this means increased demands for innovation and productivity for the institutional and national good, at a time when employment is insecure. Meanwhile, deregulation of student and research markets is changing the relations between academics, their students (clients), their 'partners' in research and their stakeholders (professions, government, business). Finally, the internet, e-learning and e-commerce are changing the processes of knowledge production and dissemination.

The discursive construction of globalisation, as a key motivator and driver for university reform in the 1990s, has produced both international and external pressures on universities. Externally, information has become the source of national wealth in knowledge-based economies of many Western nation states seeking to re-position themselves in the fast capital and information flows of global knowledge economies. The role of universities as the primary sites of knowledge production and dissemination has been challenged around issues of legitimation, the ownership of intellectual property as a result of the commodification and commercialisation of knowledge, the proliferation of new knowledge sources with new information and communication technologies, and new knowledges arising out of new social movements (Castells, 1997).

Internally, the new social movements of the 1970s, together with increased cultural diversity arising from migration flows and internationalisation challenged the white Western liberal canon and foundational knowledge. Feminism and all its 'post-modern' trajectories have been central to the proliferation of new knowledge bases in the academy and to critiques of foundationalism, caught between the need to be 'made legitimate' by the established university, and the desire to gain the recognition and valuing of feminism and difference that postmodern times outside the academy require. Furthermore,

> The 1990s [have] witnessed a radical restructuring of relations between individuals and the state produced by successively more conservative governments as education has been increasingly seen as a positional good, a commodity, and an industry. It has also been a period marked by a form of backlash politics arising from the conjuncture of contingent discourses that impact on equity, discourses about privatisation, marketisation, managerialisation and commodification. These discourses have produced a new emotional economy of organisations around self performance, optimisation of individual gains, competitivism and survival. These discourses have reframed the terms and set the conditions under which women academics teach, research and lead. Furthermore, [they have] shaped how equity workers develop and deliver equity policies and how they strategically deal with inequality in the academy. (Blackmore and Sachs, forthcoming)

This is a moment of historical discontinuity for universities, where the idea and status of the university are under reconstruction. The next section will consider some of the elements of change that inform key shifts in gender relations within the academy.

## Universities, the changing role of the state in global economies and equity

Australia is situated geographically, as is New Zealand, on the edge of the new regionalised economies: the Asia Pacific Economic Community, North American Free Trade Alliance, and the European Union. As such, Australia is more open to the uncertainties of international markets and more likely to bow to the pressure of international monetary markets. During the 1990s, both Labor and Coalition (Liberal/National) education policies adopted the IMF and World Bank orthodoxy of structural adjustment policies that promoted privatisation and marketisation; reduced government expenditure in public education, health and welfare to balance national budgets; instituted labour market and financial deregulation; and focused on export not domestic markets. Australia, like New Zealand and other developing nation states such as South Africa, is outside the new regional formations. These marginal nation states have gone down the structural adjustment path more rapidly and radically, whereas those closer to or at the core of these new regional identities, strong advocates of free market forces, have been more protected.

The trend to vocationalise, privatise and commercialise public education was already evident in Australian Labor's federal corporatism. It was federal Labor that drove in the policy wedge with the rationalisation of higher education institutions through amalagamations

of colleges with universities after 1987 to form the unified sector. These reforms also introduced 'user pays' through the deferred-tax Higher Education Contribution Scheme, separated funding for teaching from funding for research, reformed university governance to produce leaner and meaner corporate management, created the Open Training Market that meant all public and private education sectors competed for clients, and encouraged the internationalisation of education markets.

At the same time, Labor deregulated the sector financially and devolved responsibilities for management of finance and staffing down to universities by imposing the principles of the 'new public administration' or 'corporate managerialism' onto university governance. In part, some of these measures were to fund Labor's policy of mass, and therefore arguably more equitable, higher education. The conservative Coalition after 1996 had no such equity orientations. Universities are now 'fast forwarding' towards 40–50 per cent self-funding with a reduction in federal recurrent funding since 1998–99 of 12 per cent (Allport, 2001, p. 9). This impacts most on particular equity groups: e.g., indigenous students and mature students, mostly women, returning to study. The Coalition's policies signal a return to elitism with access contingent upon the capacity to pay, or scholarships based on merit.

Although school education is a state responsibility, higher education became a federal election issue in 2001 because Australia was perceived to have failed to reinvent itself to meet the needs of a knowledge economy. This was signalled externally by the lack of public investment in education (reduced from 4.3 per cent to 3.8 per cent of GDP, well below other Western nation states), the lack of investment in the knowledge production industries, and the reduction by 6 per cent in real terms since 1998–99 of research funding to universities (*The Age*, 2001, July 12). This crisis has been internally mobilised as a crisis in science and technology that leaves little scope for sociological or historical debates about other modes of knowledge and work, or the importance of social capital building for cultural as well as economic growth and the related issues of access and equity. Knowledge, identified as science and technology, is seen to be the new site of production and national capacity building.

Both party policy texts – the Coalition's *Backing Australia's Ability* (DETYA, 2000) and the ALP's *Knowledge Nation Task Force* (2001) – present higher education as a growth industry rather than as a desirable public investment in a democratic state. Already, an emergent education export industry has produced a return to the national economy from higher education of $22 (billion) for the investment of $9b and

government returns of $5b. In addition, $33b for teaching in 1997–98 have returned in the form of higher incomes to graduates of $8b (Allport, 2001). The Labor Opposition's response to the dual problems of financing higher education and promoting access/equity has been a 'technofix', through online learning to increase access that will also be the new export education industry, converting academic content into high-quality online courses. The enterprise university is now central to national competitiveness and the growth of capitalism in the new world order, and this has implications for gender equity.

## Equity: past gains, present losses

Equity work has always been fragile in universities. But Australia provides an interesting counterpoint to other Western states on issues of equity in higher education. During the 1980s under Labor, Australia modelled, through a range of strategic alliances between the second phase of the women's movement and the state, how to develop strong policy frameworks and practices in gender equity, particularly in education. There was a complementary mix of prescriptive, downward state policy interventions and more uneven, bottom-up local activism (Hancock, 1999). Interestingly, the equity principles being built into the processes of the European Union have a similar framework. The premise of the EU is that equitable work practices and familial arrangements are productive, both socially and economically. The EU has extended to a 'regionalised state' level what Australian and Scandinavian feminist bureaucrats (femocrats) learned about working from within the nation state during the 1980s. The Australian 'state' under Labor governments was perceived to be a space from within which femocrats could strategically inform wider social policies while retaining a strong sense of policy activism within the community (Yeatman, 1998). The strategy was adopted and enhanced by multicultural and indigenous movements during the late 1980s.

This particular strategy has collapsed under the recent social conservatism and backlash of the Howard Coalition. Many of the femocrats have fled the chilly climate, facilitating the dismantling of the equity infrastructure that underpinned the implementation and monitoring of equity policy down through the state. There has been a similar re-positioning or freezing out of multicultural and indigenous bureaucrats (Hancock, 1999). Indigenous bureaucrats installed by Labor in a move towards self-determination were re-positioned by the New Right. They oversaw the dismantling of state health and welfare provision during the

1990s, 'nullifying thirty years of policy development', while being held responsible for the poor equity outcomes for their people (Libesam, Pearce and Kelly, 1999). The assimilationist neo-colonial tendencies of the Howard government were most evident, for example, with the collapsing of Abstudy (student support for Indigenous higher education students) into mainstream Austudy, and a simultaneous tightening of regulations. The effect over the last two years has been a radical reduction in indigenous students entering university, as is the case for mature women re-entering study.

The other side of this cultural backlash is a structural backlash, mobilised through the corporatisation of higher education, that has shifted the underlying values of a public system towards managerial and market principles. There have been significant changes in modes of governance, and in the patterns of relations between academic staff, their students, their colleagues, their employers and their professions. New forms of educational governance have also changed the focus and nature of equity work.

## Changing governance

Processes of corporatisation characterise restructured universities in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, USA and Canada, changing the nature of their governance as the principles of the market and new managerialism permeate into their everyday practices. The restructuring of higher education into a 'unified national system' was achieved through the amalgamation or subsumption by universities of colleges of advanced education and the incorporation, in some instances, of Technical and Further Education Institutes as university 'arms'. At the same time, the 'new public administration' or new managerialism invoked discourses of efficiency and effectiveness. This discursively repositioned academics, legitimating reduced staff representation on University Councils, and increased executive prerogative and the devolution of responsibilities for financial and staff management down to Faculties and Schools. The effect was to impart 'more power to the powerful', thus undermining any small feminist gains or moves to democratic collegiality most evident in the newer universities where many women were located (Blackmore, 1992).

The 1990s saw a redistribution of power upwards and a 'separation' of decision-making from academic collegial practices, producing a division of labour between academics and managers (Poole, 2001). Indeed, the core work of universities is becoming the management of knowledge

work by generic non-academic managers, managing the academic work of production, dissemination and legitimation of knowledge. The professoriate is valued less for its expertise or capacity to inform management decision-making and direction and more for its capacity to attract funds, grants and students. Australian universities, under pressures of the 'bottom line' from the federal government and the new managerialism, have paradoxically adopted the worst and not the best practices of private sector management, becoming neo-bureaucratic corporations rather than learning organisations. So, while the discourse is about diversity and equal opportunity employment, the practices encourage new forms of academic performativity which exacerbate the worst aspects of old hierarchies, but with significant shifts that raise new problems for equity.

As was found in a case study of women middle managers (Blackmore and Sachs, 2000, 2001), universities have dispersed management down and across all levels, but located it largely at the middle management level. In the USA, Canada, Australia and the UK, women are moving into middle management in greater numbers, as Deans and Heads of School, and are often positioned as change agents (Yeatman, 1998; Ozga and Deem, 1998). But middle managers in devolved systems now 'manage' all aspects of the life of academics and knowledge within tight policy and financial frameworks of 'consensus' driven mission statements, university priorities and strategic plans. Many, but not all, women seek to enter management with the anticipation that they can change institutional practices and their effects. Once in middle management, they find the space for discretionary movement or change management is severely limited. Yet institutional expectations and feminist discourses position women as change managers. The evidence continues to point to women's valuing of their role as cultural change agents, their responsibilities for more open collaborative and collegial reforms, and their worries about *macho* entrepreneurial behaviours (Ozga and Deem, 1998; Blackmore and Sachs, 2000). Yet there is a high level of corporate loyalty expected from above, often one that endangers the type of collegial loyalty that they had previously valued and enjoyed, which is the basis of relationships at the interface of research and teaching where most women are concentrated in universities. In that sense, these women in middle management are trapped by competing discourses that expect radical change in dominant ways of doing things on the one hand, and loyalty to management on the other. With reduced income, they ultimately opt for survival as they undertake the emotional labour of institutions under stress (Blackmore and Sachs, 2000).

## New disciplinary technologies: quality assurance, research audits

At the same time, new disciplinary technologies have been installed so that the Australian State can steer more efficiently, and seemingly effectively, from a distance, by devolving the difficulties of daily management down to the institutions. These disciplinary technologies include research and student funding regimes, institutional profiles, quality assurance, accountability to management, and market forces. At the same time, the State is withdrawing funding and raising expectations of increased nationally-focused productivity. Universities simultaneously experience regulation and deregulation. The survival of the self-managing enterprise university is increasingly dependent on the uncertain proclivities of education markets (professional training, international, industry, government), another mode of external accountability. Yet government regulates through institutional profiles negotiated between the institution and the State that determine student numbers and priorities. On the one hand, there is a hidden process of setting national research priorities, which is advantageous to some universities, and on the other, there are demands for increased accountability (e.g., The Australian University Quality Assurance, commencing 2001). The tension of centralised decentralisation is echoed within universities between faculties and the centre, where flexibility is premised upon flexible academics. Equity agendas in this context are often seen to be too difficult, too expensive and too dangerous.

Quality assurance has both upsides and downsides for equity. It has the capacity to make processes and procedures (e.g., performance appraisal, promotion) more transparent, and therefore more open to contestation (Luke, 1997). But quality assurance or audits, with the emphasis on procedure, do not ask difficult questions about practices, ignoring implementation failures and the limited effects of equal opportunity policies. Feminists now are critical of the liberal feminist focus on procedural justice as a seemingly neutral practice. Stromquist has argued that the focus of gender equity work on legislative, procedural and policy approaches in the USA has meant that 'Women have obtained more symbolic than real benefits from the state and have certainly underestimated the ability of education in the reproduction of conventional gender identities' (quoted in Heward and Bunwaree, 1999, p. 9).

This has significant messages for feminist academics within the academy who now realise procedures must link to substantive issues in order

to get equitable outcomes. This requires questioning dominant values and cultures. As Burton concluded in her report, *Gender Equity in Australian University Staffing* (1997), 'Women's experiences of organisational reality suggest to them that the fundamental issue which needs to be addressed is the pervasiveness of the masculinity of organisational cultures'. Quality assurance can too easily reduce to just another 'performativity' exercise that requires considerable investment of energy and time, often by women as Morley (2001) points out in the case of the English auditing process. Auditing can in itself increase fabrication management, as the emphasis is on 'being seen' to be doing something rather than actually doing it. Middle managers often struggle to 'match' standardising performativity exercises to the complexity of the core work of teaching and research.

Reed (1995) argues that the new managerialism entails interrelating organisational, managerial and cultural changes into a tightly integrated regime of managerial discipline and control: for example, the regime of external accountability that is about auditing of performance and quality. In Australia, this is evident in the ways in which research is measured, which in turn impacts on funding. With key shifts in funding, new institutional differentiations are emerging between research and teaching universities, between older, more established universities with more institutional 'fat' and the newer 'wannabe' universities; between regional and urban universities; between 'hi tech' universities linked to industry and 'low tech' regional universities; producing groupings of Wannabes, Utechs, Redbricks and Sandstones (Marginson and Considine, 2001).

This differentiation has another perspective, as research has become the key signifier of quality in a market-oriented university sector. Female academics tend to be concentrated in the newer universities, with legacies of poor research cultures and more hierarchical rather than collegial management. These legacies are being reinvigorated as research funding gets tighter, academic support leaner, and management meaner (through enterprise bargaining that requires increased productivity to be gained by reducing staff through redundancies) in return for wage increases. The resulting rise in staff:student ratios, largely borne by female academics at lower levels, is counterproductive given that the intensification of labour undermines research capacities, as well as the potential quality issues that arise.

Additionally, current research training funding formulae, calculated by a measure that counts research input in dollars and research output in terms of publications and research graduations, favour older, established

universities with medical and science faculties. Most of the newer 'wannabe' universities will be without research graduates within two years, relegating them to becoming 'teaching universities'. These are the universities with the large nursing and education faculties, where women faculty and students are concentrated. This has roll-on effects for the fields of education and nursing as these universities have a reduced capacity to undertake research to inform policy and practice in the field, at a time when public policy research is increasingly being undertaken by large private management companies and accountancy firms. Paradoxically, educational research could be expected to be an area of increased, not decreased, investment for nation states as they seek to move into a knowledge-based economy. The new work order and globalised society are expected to require new types of workers and citizens, as knowledge becomes a commodity and site of production.

Other differentiations arising from globalisation are occurring within universities. Based on a limited view of a knowledge economy that equates powerful knowledge to science and technology, there has been a reassertion of dominant models of science in research and priority setting, and therefore in institutional profiles. The humanities and social sciences, the locations of many female academics and students, once again have to justify their value and existence, as arguments about a liberal education are seen to have little immediate use value for either individuals or the nation. Science and technology are perceived to be the solution for national productivity. The very nature of what research is done, by whom and for whom, has shifted with a growing reliance of universities on consultancies and sponsored research for income. Policies stress short-term economic gains, research bids have to be couched in commercial gains, and governments seek quickly-produced reports that give simple answers to complex issues. Governments increasingly rely on 'quick and dirty' market research to inform policy. This trend values quantitative research which claims high levels of generalisability and predictability over qualitative action research projects that are time- and labour-intensive, positioning feminist research as of less value.

The privatisation of knowledge production in academic publishing is also well under way with an increased concentration in the hands of fewer US/UK book publishers, a significant factor for marginalised nation states. Again, science and technology have greater cross-cultural transferability, which are most attractive to international publishers; Australian ethnographies and social and cultural studies are less attractive to the ethnocentric American market.

Paradoxically, as the flows of information get greater and market research increasingly informs policy, what counts as research in universities is under tighter surveillance. This arises, on the one hand, from the move to narrow medical models in ethics committees due to fear of litigation, and on the other, from the dominance of the research quantum in determining what counts as research. This quantum values publications in prestigious international journals, but does not recognise publications in professional journals. This produces particular contradictions for the largely female educators and social scientists in terms of their relationship to their professional communities. On the one hand, they are expected to increase their research output in international journals, and on the other to work with professional communities to inform practice in a dialogue premised upon the collapse of the theory-practice divide that could be expected in a new knowledge economy.

These disciplinary technologies, in the context of resource scarcity and institutional and individual competitiveness, have a number of effects. First, there is a focus on being seen to perform, or 'performativity', rather than on substantive issues of content and value. Academics and managers spend considerable time and effort recording and reporting upward to management for accountability, and performing outward to the market to attract students and money. Studies of women managers comment on how they feel this detracts from the time, resources and energy spent on teaching and research, and gives academics a sense of dissonance between the work they are required to do and what they want to do and see as their core work (Blackmore and Sachs, 2000, 2001). Second, in remaking themselves to meet the institutional needs and consensus-driven assumptions of corporate and strategic planning, academics internalise the university's priorities and, in so doing, manage themselves better. Casey (1995) refers to this as becoming 'designer employees'. Here, loyalty to the organizational aims has primacy. This has significant implications for those whose academic identity is tied up with a sense of public responsibility and social justice, advocacy and activism within the wider public, as is the case for many feminists.

### Shifting pedagogical relations

Finally, Australia seeks to obtain greater access to international student markets (dominated by Americans and Europeans) as a new source of income for universities and the national economy. Australia has been more rapid in its move to on-line learning, a consequence both of its

geographical size demanding alternative modes of access to local students, and of its location close to emergent student markets in Asia. The move to flexible learning has significant implications for equity. First, flexible learning increases student access, but at the cost of the intensification and extension of academic work. Work now invades academics' private time and space. Flexibility means teaching anytime, anywhere, anyplace. Online course production and teaching online are time-demanding. Women still constitute the largest element of the academic teacher workforce, with 76 per cent of all women academics being at level B and below in 1996 (Level E Tutor – Level A Professor). There is less time for them to build the necessary research profile if they are preoccupied with teaching (Probert, 1998). Furthermore, workplace diversity is in the context of devolution and employer flexibility in hiring and firing – for example, academics being made redundant in areas of low demand, most often in 'unpopular' areas of arts and humanities.

Second, flexible delivery is in the context of client-driven demand and increased pressures to measure quality through student evaluations, another disciplinary technology. Here, issues about professionalism and pedagogy become blurred as courses or content that are not 'popular' are dropped, regardless of the pedagogical rationale for their inclusion, or the professional rationale in terms of preparation for a profession in a disciplinary field. Fee-paying students have higher expectations. This increased instrumentalism, evident in student attitudes to higher education in general, creates tensions over the theory–practice balance, with a pull towards practice. Third, there is a trend to standardisation in terms of content, assessment and evaluation that denies the full range of pedagogy and content that may require different modes of evaluation.

Trends towards casualisation, flexibility, standardisation and increased accountability to client and management produce new dangers for feminist academics. Feminists during the 1980s focused on pedagogy within the academy as a site of activism and also of academic research. Pedagogy, feminists have argued, should make one feel uncomfortable not comfortable if it is to challenge beliefs and ways of viewing the world. Being contentious is now risky for teachers evaluated on the grounds of student satisfaction. Less acceptable in a client-driven academy are arguments about universities as sites of formation of critical professionals or citizens, where criticality is the key aspect of new knowledge work.

Finally, working on-line has a range of implications for the disaggregation of the pedagogical process – with increasing moves towards

instructional designers producing course materials and websites, local casual tutors doing the teaching on-line, and evaluators doing the assessment off-shore. This division of labour is based upon outsourcing labour off campus and is legitimised by the intellectual capital of a shrinking core of tenured academic staff. This process should be mapped onto the rise of casual staff in Australian universities since 1996 from 7 per cent to 14 per cent, the majority of whom are women. The academic labour market now reflects the new work order with a new core-periphery division of labour, of a casualised, feminised, marginal workforce servicing the hard core of tenured, largely male, academic workers and researchers; this is a core-periphery model that will be echoed in the new division between research and teaching universities. These marginalised educational outworkers have little access to an academic career that is contingent upon developing over time a sustained research profile and a capacity to innovate and design courses rather than just 'deliver' (Blackmore, 1997).

In terms of academic careers, women continue to dominate the casual research or teaching staff where there is limited access to professional development and other benefits; they are recruited at lower levels than equivalent males; they are less likely to apply for promotion, although they are more likely to get it once they apply. Men are more likely to be involved in consultancies and to gain more research income. Women are more likely to be tenured in the newer universities and Utechs, and less likely in the Sandstone universities where casualisation levels are greater. Only 34 per cent of women had tenure in Sandstones in 1996 (Probert, 1998, pp. 33–37). The main block to promotion for women academics is the assumption of long-term experience required to build up an academic profile, which ignores time out for child bearing and rearing.

Collectively, the effect is one of slippage in the very role of the university in educating future professionals, citizens and workers, and the role of academics in developing strong epistemological and professional arguments about valued knowledge and pedagogy. This is in a context in which professionalism itself is under threat, as is the role of the intellectual as an advocate and activist (Brint, 1995). It is particularly risky for feminist academics who have been policy activists in the area of gender equity (Yeatman, 1998; Siraj-Blatchford, 1995). Glazer-Raymo (1999), in her analysis of the position of women academics in the USA, comments that in the corporate university, there is an erosion of faculty professionalism arising from the positioning of academics within contradictory management discourses: 'They couch their critique in the

language of flexibility, diversity and the conservation of scarce resources on the one hand, and faculty productivity and accountability on the other' (p. 203). For academics seeking to be both good academics and good teachers, flexible and accountable, there is little space for professional autonomy and judgement.

## Academic identity at work

These material, cultural and professional conditions of academic work are changing the relations of that work and shaping academic identities in new ways. Walker (1997) refers to the identity work that academics now do in the entrepreneurial university; and how the corporate university requires new embodiments of academic work that have particular gendered readings and possibilities. This new corporeality links physical performance with capacity for highly communicative embodied selves who are discursively flexible. For that reason, many women find the new university provides them with a chance to display their entrepreneurial skills outside the boundaries of traditional academic work, not dissimilar to women academics reported in UK studies (Deem, 2001). For many women who become middle managers, the shift in values is great and they either exit, or struggle at great personal cost with the dilemmas that middle management creates for them (Blackmore and Sachs, 2000, 2001; Ozga and Deem, 2000). Women academics in middle management referred to the dissonance they felt, the need to remake themselves constantly to meet the corporate requirements, to dress, behave and deliver in particular ways, while simultaneously desiring to change what was being done and how it was done. They 'found that their gender identities were an issue in the way their performances were judged, particularly if their image was not conventionally "feminine" but also did not fit the "macho cowboy regimes" that operated in many universities' (Ozga and Deem, 1998, p. 146).

In the neo-bureaucratic corporate university there was little space for the democratising practices that could be expected from the discourse of managing diversity, flexibility and flatter organization which is found in populist management discourses. Indeed, it is not wise as a manager to raise the issue of equity or social justice in a discursive context where these matters are seen to be treated unproblematically by 'delivering' good customer service and client satisfaction. Entrepreneurialism has allowed old masculinities to remake themselves in order to retain male advantage (Eveline, 1998; Hearn, 1999; Kerfoot and Knights, 1999). The new work (world) order of the restructured enterprise university

provides new global opportunities for mobile, transnational masculinities (Connell, 2000). At the same time, this fluidity of gender identities provides contextual possibilities for new discourses about gender equity work in universities.

## Managing diversity: the new equity discourse

A fundamental linguistic shift has occurred at the equity policy level – both national and institutional. The new equity discourse that dominates in many Western nation states is about managing diversity (Sinclair, 2000). Diversity now replaces access and equity in university mission statements. The language of equal opportunity and, even more so, of social justice has dropped from the management lexicon. Diversity is now linked to notions of productivity with terms such as productive diversity. This linguistic shift was evident with the review of the Australian Affirmative Action Agency in 1998, established with the terms of reference to 'assess the costs and benefits of the legislation for the community, to business and to the economy generally'(Sinclair, 2000, p. 237). Equity is not a valued principle as part of a democratic society, but is only justifiable if it contributes to national productivity, and is thus stripped of moral and ethical justifications. Furthermore, the review indicated that equity was a human resource management issue, not one that requires its own infrastructure. The review appropriated the strategy advocated by femocrats about the need to mainstream equity on the one hand, and on the other, ignored the need for specific proactive equal opportunity units to continue within the state and institutions to provide commitment, strategies, research and policy to inform the mainstream.

This shift signifies fundamental changes in the ways in which equity is addressed within universities and in workplaces more generally. The discourse of managing diversity, originating in the USA, is one way that management can harness the equity agenda through co-option rather than resistance. Whereas valuing diversity discourses sees recognition and tolerance of diversity as central, managing diversity is about 'capturing the gender, racial, cultural and other differences to create a more dynamic and competitive organisational culture' (Sinclair, 2000, p. 239). In so doing, it simultaneously captures postmodern discourses about responsiveness to client diversity, while adhering to legislative requirements to deal with equal opportunity. It also signals how gender equity workers – the equal opportunity (EO) officers appointed by legal requirements within universities – have been repositioned within

university hierarchies. Previously, many EO officers had been appointed relatively high within the university hierarchy, with direct access to the executive. There has been a weakening of the monitoring and sanctioning powers of the federal Affirmative Action Agency after Howard's attack on its infrastructure and role. Within this policy frame, universities have, supposedly on the grounds that they are 'mainstreaming' equity principles throughout all management practices, incorporated EO officers into Human Resource Management (HRM), thereby nullifying their strategic power. This produces a tension between being an employee of HRM and also being responsible for EO. In this way 'affirmative action has been tamed through its institutionalisation' (Bacchi, 1999, p. 3).

The discourse of managing diversity has some key aspects that have implications for gender work. For one, it is as much about assimilation into the dominant culture of 'the way we do things around here' as the recognition of difference and diversity that is the basic premise of a social justice perspective. The management perspective tends to view diversity as an individual characteristic, as a preference which the organization has no obligation to address; the social justice perspective views it as a group characteristic that arises from historical inequalities that have organisational responsibilities. The former can be viewed as best practice in that addressing individual diversity will make employees and clients happier; but the latter requires deep-seated rethinking and a redistribution of power. The notion of managing diversity neglects power, trivialising systemic sources of disadvantage and recasting diversity as an individual issue that is solved by individuals making choices; implies that all differences can be managed according to an equivalent process; and the managing diversity model locates itself inside managerial privilege, converting diversity into a matter of managerial discretion, and failing to question the very values and assumptions of the managerial ideology itself (Sinclair, 2000, p. 240).

At the same time, managing diversity is a soft discourse competing with the harder managerialist discourses of performativity circulating around universities. This limits the possibilities of utilising academic collegial processes in which women can be seen as equals and in which the experiences of women can be absorbed into a collegial process through democratic and collegial structures. Such discourses are readily ignored given the sidelining of such collegial practices by the wider management practices of the corporate university. Diversity discourses are being promoted in the context of workplace deregulation, and a general weakening of any legislative framework.

### Gender equity in the corporate university?

So what of equity, and equity for women academics in particular, in the postmodern university? What discourses can be mobilised around new directions in equity work?

Feminism within the academy is itself caught up in defending programs that have historically served gender equity well, such as women's studies. Even with interdisciplinarity all the go, women's studies programmes (often depicted as major challenges to masculinist knowledge hierarchies wherein science and foundational disciplines dominate) are ironically under threat. In part, this is due to their own destabilisation of the legitimacy of the canon, but also a reflection of changing gender relations within work, the family and education. Their student base is also changing, now constituted of third-wave feminists who were educated in more competitive and less political times, who are more instrumental and individualised, who are into change and enjoy living multiple lives as the new knowledge workers.

But this also signals the need for different strategic approaches informed by feminist analyses of the reconstituted gender regime arising from globalisation. For example, it may mean theorising the social relations of gender through postcolonial and postmodern perspectives. One strategy is to work through a strong interdisciplinarity that focuses on gender studies. While a seemingly 'neutered' term compared to women's studies, gender studies further legitimate feminists exploring the social relations of gender, and in particular how male privilege works through the gendered priorities, processes, practices and structures of universities (Eveline, 2000). It focuses the feminist gaze on the 'glass escalator' that facilitates male academics (and managers) moving up higher and faster (better than metaphors of the glass ceiling, sticky steps or slippery floors holding women down) (Kerfoot and Knights, 1999; Hearn, 2001). It then requires such analyses to inform equity policies and practices.

This provides some possibilities of reforming dominant masculinities and masculinist cultures that continue to be reconstituted through new conceptualisation of the university. Currie and Thiele (2001, p. 94) analysed male and female academics' responses to the questions about how women are being treated in universities. They concluded that most women tended to consider they were treated negatively and that there were still significant barriers, some women and men felt their opportunities were the same, and many men considered women were advantaged by affirmative action and there was not a 'woman' problem

anymore. There was no mention of the advantages that accrue to men being in a male work culture. Yet institutions value rules, roles and understandings which tend to favour the dominant culture and groups. In universities, this has largely meant white male academics, but increasingly means white male managers.

Joan Eveline (2000) argues that feminists have rarely addressed the issue of male advantage. Perhaps the strategy is to use anti-discrimination to focus on relations of advantage – to recognise that one party may have significant advantage over the other, thus turning the gaze away from discourses about women's disadvantages, often constructed as only women's problems. To move in this direction also requires us to consider not only how gender works, but also how whiteness and class impart privilege. It means recognising marginalised feminist voices and indigenous, immigrant voices in ways that hand over ownership and recognise difference (Walsh, 1995). The dilemma here is how to work towards acknowledging women as a group, but also how that is marked internally by differentiation along class, racial and ethnic, age, ability and sexual preference lines (Bacchi, 2000).

A second strategy is to work through the dilemmas of the institutionalisation of equity work. Val Walsh (1995) points out how feminists and gender equity workers were previously the transgressors, but have now been domesticated through the institutionalisation, for example, of feminist research, women's studies and EO. Mainstreaming of equity or indeed feminist theory and research, without a political commitment to equity, leads to its dilution. Walsh talks about the need for such politics to derive from 'flexible coalitions of change agents' to shift organisational cultures to make them more responsive to socially, economically and environmentally sustainable and equitable practices (1995, p. 87). Catherine Marshall (1996) refers to ways of working with marginalised, pro-feminist, male academics. Such alliances mean networking with both the powerful and the powerless, across age groups, and working on all fronts (pedagogy, research, community, policy and management) through institutional and extra-institutional alliances to put internal and external pressures upon management.

A third strategy is to challenge the stories that indicate women 'go limp' when under the stress of leadership and management, that they are incapable of the hard decision, and lack the necessary drive, ambition and testosterone to get to and stay at the top. Castleman et al. (1995) found many academics and managers in universities believed that women lacked continuity and concentration of effort, made the wrong choices, had the wrong attitudes. The same study indicated that

successful men had lower qualifications than women applying for the same positions. What our and other research shows is that women who tend to progress are those who emulate stereotyped career paths, acting like a man so that 'maleness triumphs over merit' (Burton, 1997, p. 176). Bacchi (2000) argues that merit is always put in opposition to special treatment. Yet merit is itself a construct that tends to reflect the characteristics of those in power. This requires a closer consideration of notions of merit, and of the pathways available with new institutional formations, a difficult task in a competitive individualistic climate.

Fourth, Sinclair (2000) argues that feminists simultaneously need to critique the discourse of managing diversity in the internationalised and globalised university, and to use the power, resources and access which diversity can bestow to broaden understandings within management, because diversity as a softer discourse has opened up new doors within management. The discourse provides some opportunities to focus on how organisational cultures impact on women by getting resources focusing on difference and discrimination, by reducing a sense of immediate threat, by equipping managers to identifying systemic forces and by identify systemic problems that halt individual actions. As Burton (1997) argues, these problems are many in the case of universities, ranging from wider cultural issues of what is valued in research and teaching, and research over teaching, as well as in the structures and processes of recruitment, appointment, and promotion.

Finally, in a 'globalised' context, there is a capacity for gender equity workers to appeal to new forums and to exert external pressures on government through public embarrassment, as in the case of UNESCO and the UN with respect to the Howard Government's poor reporting to and compliance with the Women's Committee. For feminist academics, this is a strategy for which they are well prepared; and it is a space in which the wider global feminist polity can act as a sounding board against which government and institutions are measured and held accountable.

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