

WOMEN INTO RESEARCH

Perceived barriers
to becoming
research active
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AIMS

- **Barriers/ Threats to becoming research active**
- **Sharing experiences**
- **Opportunities and suggestions**

THIS SESSION'S GUIDING QUESTIONS

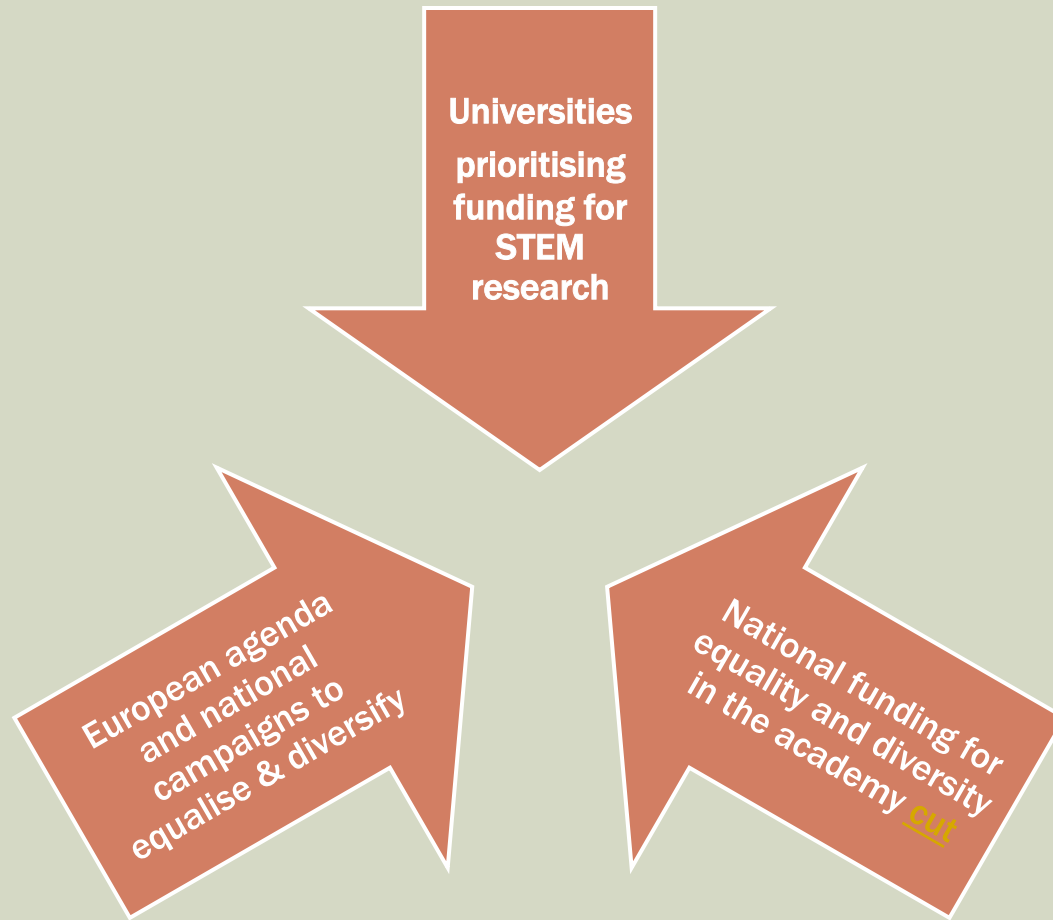


ACADEMIC MEN EXPLAIN THINGS TO ME

*Where women recount their experiences of being mansplained, in
academia and elsewhere.*

- Find out confidentially what is **stopping women from pursuing research**.
- How do women view research as part of their **role** within the university?
- Are women choosing **other areas** of university life to 'fill in their time?'
- What **barriers are perceived/actual** surrounding pursuing research?
- What forms of collegial **support** are required?

CURRENT CHALLENGES



IT'S STRUCTURAL: GENDER POLITICS AND DISCRIMINATION

- organisational culture and politics
- hegemonic masculine networks (career and recruitment)
- intimidation, sexism, harassment and misogyny
- gendered epistemologies and disciplines
- unequal power relations
- lack of recognition and respect
- built environments
- care
- fear, insecurity, lack of confidence, 'imposter syndrome'
- 'passing' to succeed
- inexperience with career management

HISTORICAL LEGACIES

- 'In the early 1970s, only 1% of [UK] professors were women. Halsey & Trow's survey of the academic profession published in 1971 reported that women academics were concentrated in the lowest ranks and made up only 10% of the academic staff.' (Coate, 'Feminist knowledge and the Ivory Tower: a case study', 1999: 143)
- European Research Council advanced research grants awarded to women in 2012: 12% (EU 2012)
- UK professoriate, women members of: 22% average (from 7-8%)
- **Female academics submitted for the REF 2014: College of Social Science, 35%; Art, 50%; Science, 15%; 34% university overall**

HIDDEN COSTS OF BEING A FEMALE ACADEMIC

Research demonstrates that the often gendered experiences of **career support**, **family circumstances** and **collegiality** influence productivity and ambition (Baker, 2010).

[Deiana, 2013: p3]

Source: Research Report: Hidden Costs of Being a Female Academic.

3 BARRIERS MENTIONED BY COATE ET AL:

'Quiet Desperation' of Academic Women

June 12, 2008

By [Scott Jaschik](#)

Interviews with 80 female faculty members at a research university -- the largest qualitative study of its kind -- have found that many women in careers are deeply frustrated by a system that they believe undervalues their work and denies them opportunities for a balanced life. While the study found some overt discrimination in the form of harassment or explicitly sexist remarks, many of the concerns involved more subtle "deeply entrenched inequities."

While the study was conducted, with support from the National Science Foundation, at the University of California at Irvine, the report's authors and most of those who were interviewed for the research state that they don't believe the problems discussed are unique to Irvine. The women interviewed who had worked elsewhere or discussed such issues with colleagues elsewhere portrayed their concerns as entirely typical of what goes on at research universities. And the authors -- also at Irvine -- stress that they don't view the campus as exceptional.

Career planning

Gendered motivation and prestige

Children, caring and work/life balance

Kelly Coate, Camille B. Kandiko Howson and Tania de St Croix (2015) *Mid-career academic women: Strategies, choices and motivation*. Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. London. Available at:

<https://www.lfhe.ac.uk/download.cfm/docid/00E690E7-E494-4F93-8981F9D2CE86200C>

BARRIERS TO BECOMING RESEARCH ACTIVE

The 'star' academics are so often white and male

At what point does the trend of filling senior posts without advertising them breach diversity laws?



Prof Michael Wood, appointed by Manchester University for his 'unique skills and background'. Photograph: BBC/Maya Vision

In October 2012, the University of Birmingham was faced with a common dilemma. A tenured lecturer in the history department had resigned, and the authorities had to decide whether to replace her. Members of the department were relieved when news came that the post she held, in modern British history, would be filled. They waited for a job advert to appear, and anticipated the usual process of long-listing candidates and then shortlisting a handful for interview.

- Exercise with barriers: Bulls-eye
- Start with barriers given in the opening discussion
- Add any additional ones
- Discussion about perceived and actual barriers
- Practical actions/collegial support

At times, [women] may need encouragement, a 'push' or simply a lack of barriers in order to aspire to the next level. At other times, they may need to be valued for their current work without any implied or explicit pressure to aim for more prestigious roles. It is also important to think further about the **individualistic** nature of academic careers. This individualism exacerbates the sense of having to be **ambitious**, to **strategise** and **make plans**, and to juggle everything. It also reinforces the belief that it is the responsibility of the individual as to whether progression is achieved or not, thus downplaying the role of structural inequalities and barriers that are related to gender, class, 'race' and ethnicity.

(Coate et al, 2015: 12)

Perhaps what is most important is that [...] academic women are given **regular space**, encouragement and **support** to assess their career goals and aspirations as they change and develop. Women should not be pigeonholed as being either ambitious or not, as they are very likely to change their priorities at different times, and need to be supported in their current roles as well as in their plans to develop themselves and **aspire to new roles**.

(2015: 12)

PROVOCATION

- ‘What happens when women and racialized minorities take up “privileged” positions which have not been “reserved” for them, for which they are not, in short, the somatic norm? What are the terms of coexistence? This is an encounter that causes disruption, necessitates negotiation and invites complicity.’

Nirmal Puwar, *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place*, 2004

WRAPPING UP

- Any opportunities to be shared?
- Any practical advances that we can make as a cohort?

FURTHER RESOURCES: LIST OF BARRIERS

- Role models
- Expectations/ rate of publishing
- What metrics are valued?
- Expectations about pastoral roles (thus time for research)

- Additional demands that take time away from research
- Temporary contracts (thus, emphasis on teaching, implied need for research, but no time)
- 'normal' academic is male

- gender differential in how people sell themselves (visibility)
- Inadequate Mentorship

- Male dominated disciplines (Athena Swan)
- Ratio of men: women in professorships

- Family/ Childcare/ caring responsibilities
- Balancing act
- Presumptions of what kind of attitude/ approach/ is necessary
- Needing to prove oneself