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# BEHIND THE SCENES OF SCIENCE

Gender practices in the recruitment and selection  
of professors in the Netherlands

Marieke van den Brink

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# 1

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## The black box of academic appointments

It is a phenomenon that has been grasping academics for decades: there are too few women in science.<sup>1</sup> Despite fairly high and still increasing numbers of women among students and PhD holders, women continue to be in a minority position among university teachers and researchers, and are severely under-represented at the top of the university (Valian, 1998; Fogelberg, Hearn, Husu, & Mankkinnen, 1999; Rees, 2002; Benschop & Brouns, 2003; EU, 2008). The under-representation of women in senior academic positions persists at an international level, regardless of the variation in the history of science in different countries and regardless, too, of their varying equality policies (Osborn et al., 2000). Even those countries with the highest proportion of female full professors, such as Latvia (27%), Finland (21%) and Portugal (20%), are not even close to reaching gender equality in higher education (Husu, 2000; EU, 2006). At every stage of the academic career path, the number of female scientists decreases and, as a result, the percentage of female full professors does not reflect the number of educated women. This phenomenon, known as the 'leaky pipeline' (Pell, 1996; Osborn et al., 2000; Rees, 2002), can clearly be seen in the Netherlands. At 11 percent, the proportion of female full professors in the Netherlands is one of the lowest in the European Union, as is the proportion of

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<sup>1</sup> I use the notion of science and academic synonymously and include both the natural sciences and the (liberal) arts in the notion of science.

associate professors (17%), and assistant professors (30%) (WOPI, 2007), even though Dutch female students outnumber male students in several academic fields and on average complete their Bachelor's degree in less time (CBS, 2007b).

The under-representation of women in science is an undesirable situation not only from an ethical viewpoint, but also because it means that we are failing to make optimal use of the academic talent available to us (Bosch, Hoving, & Wekker, 1999; AWT, 2005). The quality of academic research and education can only be maintained by constantly attracting new talent and ensuring that talented newcomers are trained and provided with opportunities to develop. The continuous drop in the proportion of women in each stage of the academic career implies that academia is still losing female talent. In Europe there is a real need for researchers and scientists to meet the aims of the declaration of Lisbon – to make Europe into one of the most competitive knowledge societies in the world (EU, 2005).<sup>2</sup> Increasing the level of female participation in academia is fundamental to achieving European innovation goals. To strive for a balanced workforce is referred to as the “business case for gender diversity” (Dickens, 1994; Bilimoria, 2000; Brouns, 2006). The quality and diversity of organizations would improve if full use were made of a wide range of talents. In recent years, some studies have shown that the better performing business companies were those with a gender-diverse senior management (Bredero, de Bruin, van Doveren, ten Hove, & van der Vegt, 2003; Kochan et al., 2003; Catalyst, 2004; Smith, Smith, & Verver, 2005; McKinsey, 2007). According to these studies, mixed teams perform better in terms of innovation and creativity than homogenous teams. Teams with a more equal gender balance can contribute to new perspectives, new products and the development of a new culture (Turner, 2006). Furthermore, an EU report (EU, 2008, p.5) stresses that “the scarcity of women in senior positions and in bodies such as boards and committees inevitably means that their individual and collective opinions are less likely to be voiced in policy and decision making processes”, which may lead to biased decision making when it comes to future research and development. This would also mean that women contribute less than men to shaping the major research questions of the day. As long as women have a limited position in the power structure, their influence in setting the research agenda will remain equally limited. Furthermore, if women academics are not visible and not seen to be succeeding in their careers, they cannot serve as role models to attract new women into academia or retain those already in academic professions (EU, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Since the Lisbon declaration in March 2000, heads of state and governments across Europe have been stressing the need to increase the number of men and women entering science and technology careers. In terms of human resources, it is estimated that an extra half a million researchers (or 1.2 million research-related personnel) are needed to meet the Lisbon goals.

The academic career paths of men and women have been investigated to unravel the complex set of interactions between institutional arrangements and personal preferences which could explain the under-representation of women, especially at the highest academic levels (e.g. Harding & McGregor, 1995; Sonnert & Holton, 1995; Valian, 1998; MIT, 1999; Schiebinger, 1999; Etzkowitz, Kemelgor, & Uzzi, 2000b; Osborn et al., 2000; Probert, 2005). In the Netherlands, too, extensive research has been carried out to focus attention on the problem (Bosch et al., 1999; AWT, 2005) by describing and analyzing the academic careers of men and women (van Doorne-Huiskes, 1986; Portegijs, 1993, 1998; Willemsen, 2002; Timmers, 2006; van Engen, Bleijenbergh, & Paauwe, 2008). Many Dutch scholars have approached the problem from different perspectives – from a historical perspective (Beekes, 1991; Bosch, 1994, 2002), in relation to productivity rates (van Vianen, Ottens, & van Schie, 1997), the motherhood ideology (Wesseling, 2001), the Dutch university culture (Dekker, 2000; Brouns, 2001; Benschop & Brouns, 2003; Stobbe, Brink, & Duijnhoven, 2004), the academic structure (Hawkins & Noordenbos, 1990; Noordenbos, 1990; Hawkins & Noordenbos, 1991/1992; van Balen, 2001), gender-stereotypes in the evaluation and promotion system (van Vianen, 1987; van Vianen & Willemsen, 1992; Ellemers, Van den Heuvel, De Gilder, Maass, & Bonvini, 2004), gender bias on the part of funding organizations (Brouns & Scholten, 1999; Noordenbos, 1999; Brouns & Spits, 2001) or university policies (van Emmerik, Dekker, & Claringbould, 2000; Timmers, 2007).

This line of research has generated a good deal of knowledge and understanding concerning the ‘gendering of academic careers’ and has shown that the processes that give rise to inequalities are complex and multi-faceted. The US scholars Valian (1998, p.54) and Schiebinger (1999, p.33) argue that the under-representation of women in science is the result of an accumulation of advantages received by men because the image of the ideal scientist is more in line with men and masculinity. Over time, those advantages have mounted up, meaning that men reach the top faster and in greater numbers than women do. A greater understanding of the individual, structural and cultural elements that lead to the accumulation of such advantages or disadvantages for one gender or the other could help to change and counter gender inequality in the higher education system.

One of the elements that may result in a disadvantage for women and femininity are biased decisions concerning academic promotions and appointments. Although academic appointment and evaluation criteria are on the agenda of many scientific communities, the process of recruitment for senior academic positions is relatively undocumented and under-researched (Eustace, 1988; Evans, 1995; Husu, 2000). This is probably a result of the sensitivity and confidentiality of these procedures; it is hard to access information about professorial appointments

because of the duty to protect the privacy of applicants, and also because academic organizations are reluctant to reveal their practices in such a sensitive area. Yet academic promotions and appointments are crucial when it comes to the gender balance within academic organizations because they are effectively a reflection of the standards that govern and organize academia, and of the prevailing construction of scientific quality. For that reason, this study focuses on the selection and recruitment practices of the most senior and influential scientists: the full professors.<sup>3</sup> My research aims to open the 'black box' of academic appointments and to investigate whether the practices involved are gendered. I will go 'behind the scenes' of the most important and confidential of academia's practices and examine whether and how gender plays a role in the functioning of the appointment system.

### 1.1 Point of departure

In this dissertation, I will analyze academic appointments by combining insight and theoretical concepts from science studies, organization studies, and gender studies. The role of gender in academic organizations is so complex and persistent that it is necessary to search for the points where various scientific disciplines meet. The field of science studies is concerned with the history of scientific disciplines, the interrelationships between science and society, and the alleged covert purposes that underlie scientific claims. The field poses questions about the fairness and reliability of the construction of scientific quality and the criteria used for measuring it (e.g. van Raan, 2005; Lehmann, Jackson, & Lautrup, 2006). Organization and (critical) management studies have provided insight into both the structural and informal aspects of recruitment and selection, and the way power processes come into play (e.g. Collinson, Knights, & Collinson, 1990; Harris, 2002; Khurana, 2002; Bozionelos, 2005). Finally, gender studies explore the way social and cultural images of men and women, masculinity and femininity, order our society and affect identity formation. Power processes are crucial in studying these ordering principles of gender (Scott, 1986; Acker, 1992; Alvesson & Billing, 1997; Calás & Smircich, 2006). Because of the interdisciplinary character of the research, it will contribute to shedding light on previously underexplored areas at the interface of these three disciplines. In this section, I will give a short overview of the existing literature regarding gender research in academic evaluation and appointment procedures and on the informality of recruitment and selection in

<sup>3</sup> In the Netherlands, only full professors carry the title of 'professor'. The term 'professor' in this dissertation will therefore only refer to full professors.

organization studies, thus revealing the theoretical relevance of this research in relation to previous studies.

### State of the Art

The process of recruitment and evaluation for academic positions and grants has been identified as a key to understanding the reproduction of gender segregation and discrimination in academia (Wennerås & Wold, 1997; Van der Burg, Siegers, & Winter-Ebmer, 1998; Steinpreis, Anders, & Ritzke, 1999; Husu, 2000; Lindberg, Riis, & Wallin, 2003; Winchester, Chesterman, Lorenzo, & Browning, 2004). In 1997, Wennerås and Wold published their groundbreaking Nature article on sexism and nepotism in the peer review of research grant applications to Sweden's Medical Research Council. The article showed that the peer review system was not as 'neutral' as it claimed to be. Male applicants and researchers who were affiliated with one of the evaluators were more successful in their applications for post-doctoral research grants than other applicants. The article concluded that, while the scientific quality of the proposal was an important factor in assessing the applicants for research grants, gender and affiliation with one of the members of the evaluation committee also played important roles.

This research was a starting point for many other studies on academic research evaluation. The results of the Swedish study have since been partially confirmed by other research (Ginther & Hayes, 1999; McDowell, Singell, & Ziliak, 1999; Bornmann & Daniel, 2005) but refuted by others (Grant, Burden, & Breen, 1997; Bazeley, 1998; Ward & Donnelly, 1998; Boehringer Ingelheim Fonds, 1999). Experimental research by Sonnert and Holton (1995) found that grant applications made by women were, on average, actually evaluated better than those made by men. In other words, there is no universal conclusion about the way gender influences academic evaluation decisions; this varies according to the type of grant, nationality and academic subfield. For example, a study of the assessment system of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) showed that the ostensibly almost equal success rates of male and female applicants on a general level in fact masked significant variation between disciplines (Brouns, 2000). In some disciplines – the natural sciences – women received remarkably positive evaluations and had higher success rates than men. The study showed that not only were these women very well qualified, they also appeared to receive a bonus unrelated to the quality of their work. In a few disciplines – biology and earth sciences – on the other hand, there was evidence of a negative gender bias. In these fields, women's lower success rates could not be explained by any difference in quality because there was no substantial difference in the track records of the



unsuccessful female applicants and the successful male applicants. The study also showed that while men were assessed according to merit, these findings and correlations could not be confirmed for female applicants. Brouns (2000, p.198) concluded that gender plays a role in the evaluation of women and men, although this process operates differently in the various academic fields.

The research on gender bias in academic evaluation thus provides us with ambiguous conclusions. However, the processes and practices that actually bring about unequal outcomes in academic evaluations have remained largely under-researched in these studies. Statistical evidence alone does not sufficiently show the processes involved. Further analysis is necessary in order to understand how and when gender plays a role in academic evaluation and appointments. The research which aims to explain gendered outcomes can be broadly classified into research that focuses on women's lack of human capital, structural barriers and research on gender stereotypical judgements.

One stream of research points out the levels of human capital available to men and women (Ward, 2001), and links this to different choices made by men and women concerning career and parenting. These studies focus on the differences between women and men both in terms of success – academic position, tenure, salary – and the individual characteristics of women to which these differences may be attributed – productivity rate, self-presentation and family composition (van Sanders, 2004; Probert, 2005). These studies argue that women are biologically predisposed to prioritize child-rearing and family roles over their career (Kimura, 1999), lack ambition, publish less work in scientific journals and therefore lose out competitively to men (van Sanders, 2004; Probert, 2005). This line of research argues that the outcome of gender bias in academic evaluation reflects gendered choices rather than unequal treatment (Hakim, 1996). This argumentation is strongly refuted by other researchers who question whether women's alleged predisposition to caretaking is a sufficient explanation. They argue that women are less likely to advance, regardless of whether they have children or not (Long, 2001; Brouns, Bosman, & Lamoen, 2004). American research has shown that women with children who remain as full-time academics publish the same volume of work, on average, as women without children (Valian, 1998; Long, 2001), and have careers that are very similar to those of childless women. These researchers point to structural barriers to explain women's lack of success in terms of academic evaluation and promotion.

Another stream of research explains the lower success rate of women by a number of structural aspects, including the absence of a female potential (van Emmerik et al., 2000), the reorganization of the academic rankings (Noordenbos, 1990, 1995) and the small number of full professor positions which results

from this (van Balen, 2001). Other scholars suggest that the absence of a critical mass of women in senior positions, such as on university boards and committees (Konrad & Pfeffer, 1991; Noordenbos, 2002; Chesterman & Ross-Smith, 2006) also contributes to the lower success rate of female candidates. This explanation stems from Kanter's famous and often-cited token theory (Kanter, 1977b), which describes how in a situation in which one group outnumbered another one to a large extent, the smaller group – the token – is strongly visible, and is not evaluated as individual but as representative of a group. Although often refined (e.g. Ott 1985) and scrutinized (Bratton, 2005), Kanter's theory is an extremely useful reminder of the risk of being stereotyped in socially and culturally different groups. It is precisely these stereotypes that are focus of attention of researchers exploring the symbolic and cultural barriers that women come up against.

Research into symbolic and cultural barriers reveal that gender stereotypes result in a preference for male candidates over female candidates for promotion, even when assessors are aware of the fact that the applicants are equally qualified for the job (Paludi & Bauer, 1983; van Vianen & Willemssen, 1992; Foschi, 1996; Valian, 1998; Foschi, 2000). For instance, Paludi and Bauer (1983) indicate that academic articles were perceived and evaluated differently according to the name of the author. They found that the same paper was evaluated much more favorably when the author was given a male name than when a female name was used. Steinfeld, Anders and Ritzke (1999) conducted a study on the impact of gender on the review of résumés of job and tenure applicants. It showed that both women and men were more likely to appoint a male applicant than a female candidate with an identical record. Surprisingly, both male and female assessors showed a gender bias in the evaluation process. Research in real-life contexts has confirmed these findings. Cole, Field and Giles (2004) examined the effect of the gender of both the recruiter and the applicant on the evaluation of applicants' qualifications, as reported on the applicant's résumé. While male recruiters' perceptions of applicants' work experiences did not differ according to the gender of the applicant, female recruiters perceived male applicants' résumé as reporting greater work experience than those of female applicants. These findings are in line with Icelandic research on selection reports for full professorships (Thorvaldsdottir, 2002). Using a critical discourse analysis of 35 appointment reports of staff appointments, her study showed that gender-biased language or gendered characteristics were among the factors that affected the evaluation process. Female candidates received less attention than male candidates, and women's qualifications were named differently than the same qualifications related to men.

Social psychological research, meanwhile, also shows that gender is clearly a factor in assessment procedures, largely because of unintended stereo-

typing (van Vianen & Willemssen, 1992; Banaji & Greenwald, 1995; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Greenwald et al., 2002). The Implicit Association Test (IAT) shows that achievements and scientific excellence are strongly connected to the stereotypical image of men, whereas social skills and family lead to images of women. These implicit stereotypes are highly similar for men and women – they do not result from any ‘in’ or ‘out’ group effects. In selection interviews for female academics, Dutch scholars indicated that men are perceived to be more similar to the ideal candidate than women are, they are more often hired, even if they have exactly the same background and capabilities as the female applicants (van Vianen & Willemssen, 1992; van Vianen et al., 1997). These results would suggest, then, that gender is a factor in academic evaluations, and that both female and male assessors are prone to biased evaluations.

The existing research has thus led to some understanding of the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions by pointing out individual preferences and the structural and cultural barriers that female academics come up against in academic selection and evaluation. Yet questions concerning why those barriers are there to begin with, who benefits from them and who maintains them, as well as questions concerning when and how stereotypical images may actually affect appointment decisions, have not yet been addressed. Furthermore, the studies have mainly been carried out in experimental settings and do not deal with daily situations in which power relations may lead to idiosyncratic appointment decisions. For research on the organization of selection and evaluation in relation to the power processes involved, I turn to studies in organization and (critical) management studies.

Some research relevant to this study which explores the process of recruitment and selection in organization and (critical) management studies has also been conducted. A key and consistent finding of this literature is that informality continues to pervade selection practices, and that it is also a major mechanism in the reproduction of gender inequality (Collinson et al., 1990; Martin, 2001; Dick & Nadin, 2006). Several researchers point out the critical effect of the widespread use of informal recruitment systems which create an unintended gender bias (Harris, 2002; Khurana, 2002; Teigen, 2002). Critical management studies take the explicit and implicit power processes involved in hiring decisions into account (Powell & Butterfield, 1994; Bozionelos, 2005) and reveal that appointment decisions are often made by those in power within the organization as a means of determining the continuing form of the organization, by recruiting and promoting only those individuals who most closely conform to organizational norms (Jewson & Mason, 1986; Windolf, 1986). Furthermore, members of committees try to advance their own interests by lobbying for the candidates whose background and values accord

most with those interests (Bozionelos, 2005, p.1605). Informal recruitment, micro-political power processes, and the suggested answers of transparency and accountability will be considered as crucial elements in this study.

To conclude, the questions of gender in recruitment and selection have been and continue to be vigorously debated, though little empirical evidence in this area is available. Research that focuses on the outcome of the process reveals little about the way gender is actually practiced in a real-life context by agents, does not take power relations and control into account and cannot make recommendations for change. Empirical research on the complete process of academic recruitment and selection is still extremely rare. An illustration of this contextual neglect is that many empirical studies of academic evaluation have been conducted in (quasi-) experimental settings. Dichotomous variables in the form of sex lack a more sophisticated conceptualization of gender since they leave little conceptual room for how men and women would actually act in organizations. Hitherto, only a few studies have shifted their focus to more social constructionist and post-structuralist notions of excellence and quality, and included a broader concept of gender. Such conceptualizations can be found in the ‘gender equality in higher education’ literature (Fogelberg et al., 1999; Husu, 2001; Brouns & Addis, 2004; EU, 2004; Blättel-Mink, 2008). This relatively young field of research ties gender to organizing and organizational identities with the assertion that gender is a socially constructed practice of distinguishing between female and male, femininity and masculinity. In other words, I have to go beyond the concepts of men and women and turn to the organizational practices which are related to mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in order to understand the subtle power mechanisms that produce, reproduce or counteract gender inequality in the academic appointment system. The next section will explain how this research contributes to filling the void just described.

#### Refinements of the Art

This research contributes to the field of academic selection and recruitment by examining how new professors are recruited, how candidates gain credibility and recognition, which qualities mean they are deemed an ‘excellent candidate’ and how these issues interrelate with gender. It is thus a unique opportunity to gain an understanding of the core of academic organization: the appointment of ‘the best’. The research contributes to existing literature in a number of ways. It will: 1) focus on the appointment of ‘elite’ full professors rather than of ‘general’ faculty, 2) show how formal policies of gender equality have been put into practice 3) analyze the role of formal and informal networks in recruitment, 4) unravel the notion of

'scientific excellence' and how it is constructed, and 5) uncover similarities and differences between academic subfields.

First of all, most of the studies conducted on academic recruitment and selection have not focused on the highest levels of academia, but rather on lower faculty positions (Foschi, 2000; Bornmann & Enders, 2004). In experimental evaluation research, assessors have invariably been undergraduates, not members of the academic 'elites'. According to Burke (1988, p. 12), studies on 'general' university recruitment are in no way comparable to appointments to senior academic positions. Professorial appointments are among the most important academic and financial investment decisions taken by universities. The selection of new professors has far-reaching consequences for the research lines that will be developed, which research is prioritized, and which research receives less attention. The recruitment and selection of the most powerful people in academia can inform us about the prevailing values within the academic system.

Secondly, this research will allow us to understand better the complex and dynamic interplay between equality policies and their implementation in academic recruitment and selection. Despite decades of equal-opportunities legislation and affirmative action initiatives, progress towards gender equality in academia remains slow. Winchester et al. (2004) identify the crucial elements of promotion policies that have affected gender equality at Australian universities, but their work did not reflect on how these gender equality practices have been taken up by academic agents. In this study, the way in which academic members actively negotiate, resist or appropriate the available gender equality policies will be scrutinized in the light of the slow increase in the number of female professors. In this regard, I will also take up the suggestions of feminist researchers who point out the need for research into undoing gender and change (e.g. Butler, 2004; Nentwich, 2006; Pullen & Knights, 2007).

Thirdly, this dissertation will examine the informal power processes that are involved in the recruitment of academic personnel. Organizational researchers have indicated that processes of inclusion and exclusion and the role of networks are crucial in the understanding of gender segregation (Harris, 2002; Khurana, 2002; Teigen, 2002). In the academic world, Husu (2000) has shown that in the Finnish recruitment system for professors, female professorial applicants were appointed twice as frequently through open competition as when the informal invitation procedure was used. Also in the Netherlands, the role of being part of formal and informal networks to advance in academia has been emphasized (van Balen, 2001). An examination of how recruitment is organized, and how networking plays a role in gendered outcomes in recruitment and selection is clearly urgently needed.

This study will also make an extensive analysis of the construction of 'scientific excellence'. The assessment of scientific excellence has recently been the subject of much debate in the Western academic community (KNAW, 2005). Scientific excellence is predominantly linked to matters such as productivity, peer review, citation indexes and internationally refereed publications (e.g. Tijssen, Visser, & van Leeuwen, 2002; van Raan, 2005; Basu, 2006). However, Bourdieu (2004, p.38) and other researchers point out that the criteria used to evaluate academic work cannot be completely articulated; there is always an implicit, tacit dimension. In fact, there is insufficient insight concerning the factors that influence those evaluating the notion of scientific excellence. As Eustace put it two decades ago, in a way which is still applicable today: "there is rhetoric about criteria, but little about those that are actually applied" (Eustace, 1988, p.69). We know too little about how the definitions or constructions of scientific excellence are transferred into the requirements set for new academic professors. The report 'Gender & Excellence in the Making' suggests that existing systems of defining and evaluating scientific excellence are not as gender neutral as is claimed (EU, 2004). The way in which scientific excellence is defined and operationalized is rooted in social meanings and practices that are not free of associations with masculinity and femininity. The academic norms and ideals of meritocracy and objectivity seem to privilege masculinity, but we hardly understand how or why this happens. In this research, I will question the prevailing definitions and assessments of scientific excellence from a gender perspective.

Finally, when studying academic recruitment and selection, it must be acknowledged that there is no such thing as 'general' science; science is not a monolithic entity. In most of the studies on academic evaluation, little distinction is made between academic subfields. Academic subfields vary in their core activities (research, education or applied services), financial resources, career patterns, epistemological issues and publishing strategies (Cownie, 1998; Knorr Cetina, 1999; Becher & Trowler, 2001). One exception is Kekale (1999), who has studied academic leadership in the context of various disciplinary cultures. He shows that disciplines construct their own preferred patterns of leadership and management. It seems reasonable to assume, then, that academic subfields organize their recruitment in different ways and have their own definitions of the 'excellent scientist'. There are indications of differences between subfields when it comes to gender (Brouns, 2000). An important point of departure for this study is, therefore, the acknowledgement of differences within the academic field and the production of situated knowledge for different academic subfields in the Netherlands. This study will investigate the dynamic character of gender by making a situated analysis of gender practices in various subfields.

## 1.2 Framing the problem

The overall research aim is to reveal gender practices in professorial appointments in order to come to a better understanding of the slow progression of gender equality in the higher echelons of academia. This study contributes to our knowledge of a crucial and under-researched area of academic organization, knowledge that is essential if we are to tackle persistent gender inequalities in academia and organizations (Fasang, 2006). On the one hand, it is universally accepted that academic appointments should be based on meritocratic principles, meaning that only individual qualifications and proven ability should be considered in promotion and appointment decisions. Yet, on the other hand, rumors of opaque practices, covert deals and gender bias are very common in the scientific community. Earlier research (Husu, 2000; van Balen, 2001; Brouns et al., 2004; Stobbe et al., 2004), suggests that it is not meritocratic principles alone that determine academic appointments; it is not always the candidate with the best credentials which is nominated and the justification behind final decisions is often ambiguous and opaque. This dissertation challenges the view of an academic world governed, in its allocation of rewards and resources, by the normative principle of meritocracy. It will highlight the interplay between the 'ideal' ethos of science and how the evaluation of academics actually works in daily practice. To accomplish the main research aim, I will answer the following research question:

*How is gender practiced in professorial recruitment and selection in the Dutch academic field?*

To examine gender practices, I will distinguish three interrelated elements of academic recruitment and selection: procedures, channels and criteria (Collinson et al., 1990). These elements translate into the sub-questions of this research study and are completed with a sub-question pertaining to the main differences between appointment practices in academic subfields.

1. *How are Dutch universities responding to the call for more transparent appointment procedures and greater accountability on the part of decision makers as a means to achieving gender equality? (procedures)*

The first research question concerns the formal organization of recruitment and selection and the various ways it is put into practice. The call for transparency and accountability and the rise of the new managerialism (Webb, 1999) have forced universities to formalize their promotion activities. Calls for more transparent procedures have been reflected in policies and protocols concerning research

evaluation and appointment systems which attempt to promote gender equality. These protocols can be seen as formal practices and, as such, can reveal something of the formal and ideal methods of organization and the values of the organization behind them. However, there is more to recruitment and selection than formal practices. In reality, these formal policies are altered or distorted. I will analyze how the norms of transparency and accountability are translated into practice in a micro-political environment in different stages of the professorial appointment process.

2. *How is gender practiced in the gatekeeping process for professorial candidates? (channels)*

The second research question examines how and through which formal and informal channels these influential professorial candidates are recruited. Recruitment procedures can be classified as 'open' (the job is advertised in the media) or 'closed' (applicants are selected by nomination). Previous literature on recruitment and selection has attributed a significant role to informal networks in appointments to top positions, implying a significant role for academic networks and the social capital of candidates. According to Husu (2004), this informal power, which allows access to some while excluding others, is interpreted as a gatekeeping process. Little empirical evidence has been uncovered concerning the relationship between women's success rates and the nature of the procedures and the role of gatekeepers. On the basis of tentative research findings to date, women could be expected to be more successful in open competitions for professorships than in the more closed invitation procedures (Portegijs, 1993; Academy of Finland, 1998; Husu, 2000; van Balen, 2001; Benschop & Brouns, 2003). I will investigate how men and women behave in networks, to provide a better understanding of how the supposed disadvantage for women comes about.

3. *How is gender intertwined with the definitions and criteria of scientific excellence that feature in professorial recruitment and selection? (criteria)*

This research question focuses on how the notion of scientific excellence is constructed and evaluated when appointing full professors. The construction of scientific excellence lies at the heart of the micropolitics of sciences as a social institution. Indicators of scientific excellence reflect a certain position and vision of the scientific field (Benschop & Brouns, 2003). Previous literature has suggested that hidden attitudes and stereotyping underpin informal ideas of quality and excellence (EU, 2004). This can influence both promotion decisions and perceptions about career success and commitment. I will unravel the notion of scientific

excellence by examining the criteria involved in the assessment of male and female candidates and analyze possible gender connotations underlying the construction and criteria of excellence.

4. *Which dynamic gender practices characterize professorial recruitment and selection in the various academic subfields? (disciplines)*

As academic contexts may differ, various academic subfields will be analyzed. I expect different subfields to have their own way of organizing professorial appointments and constructing scientific excellence. I will compare four academic subfields (humanities, natural sciences, social sciences and medicine) in terms of how appointments are organized, candidates are sought and identified, how a notion of scientific excellence is constructed and gender is practiced. This will not include a detailed description and analysis of each academic discipline, but I will highlight differences in practices and the perceptions of science in the context of the subfields, to show how the role of gender varies according to the academic context.

### 1.3 Central concepts

This section will develop a framework to analyze the social practice of recruitment and selection, including the notion of scientific quality, and relate it to the way gender is inscribed in these practices and in the perceptions of science. This theoretical framework is informed by the social constructivist perspective. This perspective rejects the notion of the social world as a fixed or objective entity which is external to individuals and impacts on them in a deterministic way. Instead, social constructivism views the social world as constructed by individuals through their social practices (Cohen, Duberley, & Mallon, 2004). From a social constructivist viewpoint, the concepts of 'gender' and 'scientific excellence' are not conceptualized as a form or structure that inhibit individuals, but rather as context-specific social constructions that are shaped and reshaped by daily interactions (Jansen, 1987). Many approaches within social science are labeled as social constructionist, but in this case my particular interest lies in the opportunity social constructivism provides to unearth that which is taken for granted and illuminate how broader social processes of power and ideology are deeply embedded in what we take to be 'common sense' (Dick & Nadin, 2006, p.482). This will provide the opportunity to show the multiplicity of gender practices – some of which are reflexive while others are unreflexive – from the normative and formal discursive practices of gender equality to the way gender is intertwined with networking, the construction of scientific excellence and, ultimately, the assessment of professorial candidates.

This approach reflects what has been recently termed the revival of the 'practice turn' in organization studies (Schatzki, Knorr Cetina, & Savigny, 2001). The analytical focus of this approach is on organization or work practices – that is to say, on what people say and do in their social interaction within organizations (Yanow, 2006, p.1746). This 'practice turn' builds on a long tradition of participant observation in anthropology, as set out long ago by Bronislaw Malinowski. The emphasis on the real-life context makes practice-driven theorizing possible. Such an approach means that concepts can evolve from the lived experiences of academics rather than from objectivist studies that are often detached from both worker's and researcher's experiences and contexts (Yanow, 2006, p. 1745). In my view, organizational practices operate on multiple levels and, as such, are sometimes inconsistent. I use a broad conceptualization of organizational practices and include discursive practices articulated in policy papers or appointment report as well as personal reflections on how academics recruit and select candidates. The practice perspective is therefore useful in describing the complex and dynamic interplay between the formal policies of organizations and actual daily practice among the members of that organization (Mescher, Benschop, & Doorewaard, 2008, p.2). This can help me to understand how organization members actively use, resist or alter the norms and formal policies available.

Using a practice-based approach has a considerable impact on the research methodology (Poggio, 2006; Yanow, 2006). This approach demands "fine-grained observational, conversational, and/or documentary detail" (Yanow, 2006, p.1746). How this demand is dealt with will be elaborated in the methodology section. The remainder of this section will introduce the central concepts of this study: gender, power, recruitment and selection, and the academic field. Although these concepts are of a different analytical order, they are interwoven in such a way that recruitment and selection in the Dutch academic field brings together the concepts of gender and power.

#### Gender

In recent years, researchers have sought to shed light on the 'blind spot' of gender in organization and management studies (Wilson, 1996; Martin & Collinson, 2002). These studies have provided empirical insight into the various ways that gender is inscribed in organizations, as well as adding to our knowledge of gender as a theoretical concept (e.g. Acker 1990, 1992, Benschop 2001, Gherardi 1995, Poggio 2006). In this research, I will rely on Benschop's (2007) definition of gender as a complex, multi-layered social practice which distinguishes between men and women, masculinity and femininity, and which involves both informal and

formal power processes. The epistemological tradition in which this gender concept can be contextualized is 'social construction feminism' (Lorber, 2005, p.241). Social construction feminism looks at the structure of the gendered social order as a whole and at the processes that construct and maintain it (p.242). It is based on a theory of gender that connects face-to-face interaction with institutional structures and cultural symbols. The theorization of gender has shifted from the essentialist conception of gender as an ascribed individual characteristic to gender as a socially constructed practice. The majority of research in this epistemological tradition now focuses on how gender is constantly redefined and negotiated in every-day practices and interaction, on how men and women 'do' gender, and on how men and women contribute to the construction of gendered identities (Kondo, 1990; Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio, 2004; Butler, 2004). Several researchers have conducted research into gender processes using ethno-methodological approaches. One of the earliest and most important contributions to this shift was made by West and Zimmerman (1987), who introduced the notion of 'doing gender'. In this approach, 'doing gender' is seen as a situated social practice which produces different outcomes in different social and cultural contexts. This interpretation emphasizes the mutual inter-relational construction of femininity and masculinity, as well as the importance of contextual and processual aspects in the construction of gender (Gherardi, 1994). In 2006, a special issue of the *Gender Work and Organization* journal was dedicated to the 'practice turn' in gender studies which brought this debate into the spotlight. Nentwich and Kelan (2007) presented a useful overview of the 'doing gender' or 'gender as a social practice' approach and called for a clearer conceptualization in empirical research to refine and develop this theoretical approach.

Conceptualizing gender as a situated social practice reflects the notion that (individual) agency and (social) structure should be conceptualized as a duality; each presupposes the existence of the other (Giddens, 1984). Social structures are both the medium and outcome of the actions they recursively organize. In other words, we draw on social structures when we do something and - while doing it - we are also, simultaneously, reproducing those same social structures. Social structures can, then, be both enabling and constraining; they can be mobilized to achieve our goals, but they can also restrain us from achieving them. By drawing attention away from the individual (voluntarism) and the structures (determinism), I make social interaction the focus of attention and the point at which structure and agency converge. Martin (2003; 2006) introduces the distinction between gendering practices and practicing gender to underline the duality of 'doing gender'. She makes a distinction between practices, which are culturally available to 'do gender', and the literal practicing of gender, which is constituted

through interaction. In her view, human beings are capable and knowledgeable agents who are conscious of their own interests and can reflect on their actions. At the same time, however, most actions - gendered or otherwise - are characterized by routines and, as such, are unintentional or unconscious (Martin, 2006), and almost invisible even to their practitioners (Gherardi, 1994; Fletcher, 1999; Martin, 2001). In other words, gender is 'done' or practiced quickly, directionally (in time), and often without reflection, but at the same time it is based on tacit and internalized images (gender practices) which are relatively stable and inert. The possibility of change becomes apparent only when we disclose the tacit and internalized images and reflect on them. In other words, if we recognize that 'doing gender' is affected by both the aspect of routine, as well as being a reflexive practice, this will allow me to analyze the persistence of the existing gender order, as well as the possibility of changing this order.

This research will discuss how recruitment and selection are interwoven with gender practices at universities. In my conceptualization of gender, three aspects are central: 1) gender as an integral part of organizational practices, 2) gender as a multiple practice 3) the inclusion of men and masculinity. Firstly, I consider gender as an integral part of organizational practices (Benschop, 2001; Martin, 2006; Poggio, 2006). The way universities are organized - and the appointment process in particular - affects women's opportunities (Schiebinger, 2006, p.20). It is about basic principles, rules and processes in organizations that create and recreate differences between men and women, masculinity and femininity. I will examine various levels of organizational practices such as gatekeeping and networking, the construction of scientific excellence as a notion, the implementation of policies, and the dynamics of subfields.

In these organizational practices, I will focus on multi-level gender practices as well as equality practices. The concept of gender equality is defined broadly, following authors like Booth and Bennett (2002), Verloo (2005) and Walby (2005), in terms of an interconnection between the equal treatment perspective, the women's perspective and the gender perspective. The first perspective considers gender equality as giving women the same access to opportunities as men in the public sphere. The second perspective values and acts to support the qualities of women. The gender perspective, meanwhile, recognizes the varying needs of women and men, as well as the need to broaden responsibility for equality at work to all services and providers, hence involving men in the process of social change (Booth & Bennett, 2002, p.433-434). These three perspectives function together in order to achieve gender equality in organizations and society. My interest lies in how gender equality and inequality practices intersect, collide and anticipate each other. I will therefore make an analytical distinction, in

line with Chia and Holt (2006), between on the one hand conscious and deliberate actions, which are designed to make something happen (gender equality practices), and on the other hand the intentional or unintentional and often unreflexive way of distinguishing between women and men, femininity and masculinity in daily practice (gender practices) that can lead either to gender equality or to gender inequality.

Most research in (academic) organizations which considers gender continues not to gender men explicitly, and does not explain the role of men in reproducing gender (Hearn, 2004, p.61). Gender inequality in academic top positions not only concerns women, but also men, male-female and male-male relations. In this study, I will also take into account the many ways that men and masculinity are interwoven with power processes, networking and notions of excellence and the academic world.

#### Power

Power processes play an important role in the reproduction of gender inequality in organizations (Acker, 1992; Alvesson & Billing, 1997; Calás & Smircich, 2006). Power processes are related to organizational structure, positions and the distribution of rules and resources and, at the same time, to processes of identification and subjectivity (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Phillips, Courpasson, & Clegg, 2006). The first view of power conceives of it as the property of a person and as a mechanism of regulation. According to Giddens (1984), power is linked to agency and the ability to mobilize rules and resources. On the basis of this definition, then, power relations between men and women are characterized by structural inequality leading to a concentration of women at the lower levels of the organization and an unequal ability to mobilize rules and resources.

A second view of power concentrates on meaning and subjectivity; power does not have a central source but circulates in everyday practices. These power processes are also labeled 'implicit' or 'hegemonic' power (Gramsci, 1971; Mumby & Stohl, 1991; Connell, 1995; Doorewaard & Brouns, 2003) and are often concealed in verbal and non-verbal expressions such as common-sense statements, expressions of identification and consensus, and legitimizing rationalities (Doorewaard, Benschop, & Brouns, 1997, p.15. author's translation). A growing body of literature shows that implicit power processes play an important role in gender reproduction within organizations (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998a; Stobbe, 2005). In this study, it is not only the classical view of power – power as the capacity to mobilize rules and resources and power as a possession – but also power as a product of the meanings that circulates in everyday working practices that will be taken into account.

Studying gender practices that are shaped in interaction requires a specific theoretical conceptualization of power which focuses on how people actually use power. By seeing recruitment and selection and gender as social practices, I will focus on how power processes are related to everyday working practices in organizations – in other words, my focus will be on micropolitical power processes (Morley, 1999). I adhere to Blase's (1991, p.11) working definition:

Micropolitics refer to the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organizations. In large part, political actions result from perceived differences between individuals and groups, coupled with the motivation to use power to influence and/or protect. Although such actions are consciously motivated, any action, consciously or unconsciously motivated, may have political 'significance' in a given situation.

The central focus of the micropolitical perspective in its understanding of organizational behavior is the idea of a variety of interests among members of an organization (Ball, 1986; Blase, 1991; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). It is my presumption that practicing gender also serves a variety of interests in academic recruitment and selection. Micropolitics, then, refer to the strategies and tactics used by individuals and groups in an organization to further their interests (Hoyle, 1982; Morley, 2006). However, it does not refer exclusively to tension and conflict, but also to cooperation and coalition building to achieve certain values (Blase, 1991). It includes a broad spectrum of how people influence, network, collide, lobby, resist or use other personal strategies in order to effect or resist change or assert their own interests (Morley, 1999, p.4). I contend that a micropolitical perspective is particularly relevant to the study of gender practices in recruitment and selection because recruiting and selecting new professors is not simply a technical endeavor which involves judging which scientists are the best. It is, equally, a political endeavor involving negotiations between multiple actors.

This research will therefore focus on where power, in the classical sense, resides (who is able to mobilize rules and resources), which micropolitics are used to further the agents' interests, and what are the implicit, hegemonial images concerning science and gender.

#### Recruitment and selection

Recruitment and selection are seen as a set of organizational practices which, on one level, are of a distinctly practical nature but which, on another level, are an arena in which values are applied and conflicts between values and group

identities are enacted (Evans, 1995, p.263). These practices represent an essential ritual in perpetuating academic culture and play an important role in establishing and reproducing the gender order in the academic world (Husu & Morley, 2000). In other words, recruitment and selection are a set of micropolitical activities during which those involved practice gender in social interactions.

Firstly, the difference between recruitment and selection needs to be clarified. Recruitment is the process concerned with finding and identifying potential employees, or how individuals become applicants (Jewson & Mason, 1986); selection is the process of choosing one candidate from the applicants on the basis of certain criteria. This whole process is also referred to as the 'appointment process'. Although there is no clear understanding of the way (general) recruitment and selection practices actually occur – this is still a proverbial black box – there are managerial handbooks and protocols which prescribe how these processes ought to occur (Searle, 2003; RU, 2004).

This research will subdivide the entire appointment process into six phases, to make it more accessible for my research. It comprises the phases: 1) establishment of the chair, 2) framing the profile, 3) functioning of the appointment committee 4) recruitment, 5) selection and 6) recommendations and reporting. In this research, the process will begin with the decision of the university board to create a new chair or that an existing vacant chair will be reoccupied, and end with their decision to appoint a specific candidate. A more detailed description of the standard procedure and the way this is carried out is given in chapters two and three. The focus is on recruitment (with the importance of networking and gatekeeping), selection (in which the notion of 'excellence' is constructed) and the differences between the subfields. I also will compare how the recruitment and selection process is standardized and how it runs its course in daily reality.

#### The academic field

Clearly, academic recruitment and selection practices do not occur in a vacuum, which means that the (inter)organizational context must also be considered. Gender is a situated social practice and this requires an investigation of the broader context (Martin, 2006; Nentwich & Kelan, 2007). For the purposes of this research, the concept of the field provides the frame of analysis. Bourdieu (2004) claims that only through an overall theory of scientific space – which understands it as a space structured according to both generic and specific logics – is it truly possible to understand a given point or practice within this space. By speaking of 'fields' rather than of populations, groups, organizations, or institutions, I want to draw attention to the latent patterns of interest and struggle that shape the existence of

these empirical realities (Swartz, 1997). Although the location of agents and institutions within a common field presupposes a minimum level of agreement around basic principles, the academic field is in fact not a product of consensus, but the product of permanent conflict. To speak of a field is to break with the idea that scientists form a unified, or even homogeneous group (Bourdieu, 2004, p.45). When academia is analyzed as a field, the focus is on conflict; the field is conceived as an arena for struggle in which two of the important issues at stake are the core characteristics of science and the scientist (Bourdieu, 1988) and the struggle for control over valued resources, such as the different forms of capital. This struggle does not just concern the possession of capital but over how capital is defined and what kind of capital is valued. According to Swartz (1997), a field analysis directs the researcher's attention to a level of analysis capable of revealing the integrating logic of competition between opposing viewpoints. "It encourages the researcher to seek out sources of conflict in a given domain, relate that conflict to the broader areas of class and power, and identify underlying shared assumptions by opposing parties" (p.126). The recruitment and selection practices of the most influential academics can be seen as the arena for a fundamental struggle, in which the validation of academic capital takes place.

The concept of the field, with recruitment and selection practices being situated within this field, and Bourdieu's emphasis on the struggle for legitimation (of what is a good scientist) are highly appropriate to this research. I will use the concept as a wider structural and cultural context which will, in turn, enable me to view the internal logics of the (sub)fields better. In describing the field of study, attention is drawn to the institutional system in which Dutch universities operate, but also to the internal structures of governance. Within the academic field, I will distinguish four subfields – humanities, natural sciences, social sciences and medical sciences – which represent a broad academic spectrum (this choice will be further explained in the methodological section).

#### 1.4 Methodological Approach

In 2004, the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science commissioned a research report entitled 'Gender and Excellence' on appointment procedures for professorships in the Netherlands. The objective was to reveal any mechanisms for gender bias in selection procedures and improve the professionalism of selection systems in higher education. It was in this context that I was appointed by the project manager for the University of Groningen, Dr. M.L.M. Brouns, to conduct this research. The research resulted in the report "Gender and Excellence" (van den Brink & Brouns, 2006), which was presented to the then Dutch Minister of



Education, Culture and Science, Maria van der Hoeven. For this dissertation, I have made ample use of the data and the first analysis of the report. This dissertation is the result of theoretical reflections and further analyses of the data carried out at the Radboud University Nijmegen.

#### The fields of study

This study was carried out within Dutch university institutions. In September 2004, a letter was sent to the university boards of all thirteen universities in the Netherlands inviting them to participate in the research. Only one university responded positively, while two declined the invitation. The reasons given for this refusal were the privacy agreements with candidates and the lack of available auxiliary personnel. Informants at the universities gave an additional reason. They stated that the universities resented government interference and were suspicious of what the Ministry would do with the information obtained (research notes, October 2004). Due to the low response rate, the project manager of 'Gender and Excellence' decided to emphasize the need for this study by presenting the research goal and methods at one of the monthly meetings of HRM directors organized by the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU). In addition, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences sent a further letter to all university boards, stressing the importance of this research and requesting their full cooperation. Some universities gradually began to change their opinion towards the research, thereby also encouraging others to follow suit and participate. Eventually, seven universities agreed to participate. The seven universities that were willing to participate in the study represent a cross-section of all thirteen Dutch universities including some of the largest, a traditional university, a newer university and also a university of technology.

Within the academic field of universities, I selected four academic subfields which include various disciplines. On the basis of previous research, some differences between the recruitment and selection practices in academic subfields were to be expected, since each field exhibits both homologous features to the wider social structure and has its own specific structure and logic (Maton, 2005, p.689). For instance, subfields vary considerably with regard to the gender composition of students and staff, career patterns and the possibility of gaining additional funding. Four subfields have been distinguished: humanities, natural sciences, social sciences and medical sciences. These four fields have been selected because they represent a wide range of the academic spectrum. This qualification is based on the subdivision made by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO): humanities (alfa), natural sciences (beta & techniek), social sciences (gamma), and medical sciences (medisch).

#### Data collection

The lack of any empirical studies in the Netherlands or elsewhere in Europe on actual appointment practices in academia meant that a combined quantitative and qualitative approach was needed. This study is able to benefit both from the advantages of statistical methods (quantification, representativeness and attribution) and the advantages of the qualitative and participatory approaches (capture the diversity of opinions and perceptions, unthinking actions). Quantitative research gave me the opportunity to find 'hard evidence' on recent practices and created a broad overview, while the intensive qualitative data allowed an examination of academic appointment practices in greater depth. My main focus, however, is on qualitative methods, since this research seeks to unveil gender practices in academic evaluation, and analyze how these practices reproduce or counteract gender inequality in Dutch academia. These practices are largely routinized and usually taken for granted, and this necessitates a qualitative approach (Walsh, 1998; Hirsch & Gellner, 2001). Qualitative research aims to acquire an understanding of human behavior and the reasons behind human behavior; it investigates the 'why' and 'how' of social phenomena, not just more basic questions of what, where and when. The introduction stated that this research seeks to go beyond gender as a variable and understand the way gender comes about. To this end, it is not only quantitative analysis, but also in-depth qualitative methods that are used to answer the research question.

The most suitable method for examining gender practices is observation – actually seeing and recording what people say and do in professorial appointment practices (Martin, 2006; Yanow, 2006). However, access to recruitment and selection practices, though repeatedly requested, was never granted on the grounds of privacy. This study therefore focuses instead on how respondents reflect on those practices, in writing (documents) and speaking (interviews). Five complementary data collecting sources are used: 1) statistics concerning recent appointments at all 13 universities, 2) 971 appointment reports, 3) official recruitment and selection protocols, 4) interviews with 64 committee members and 5) research and field notes. Using a variety of methods to research the same issue with the same unit of analysis (triangulation) – thus cross-checking one result against another – will increase the reliability of the result (Seale, 1999). The data was collected between October 2004 and January 2006.

#### *Figures of recent appointments (study A)*

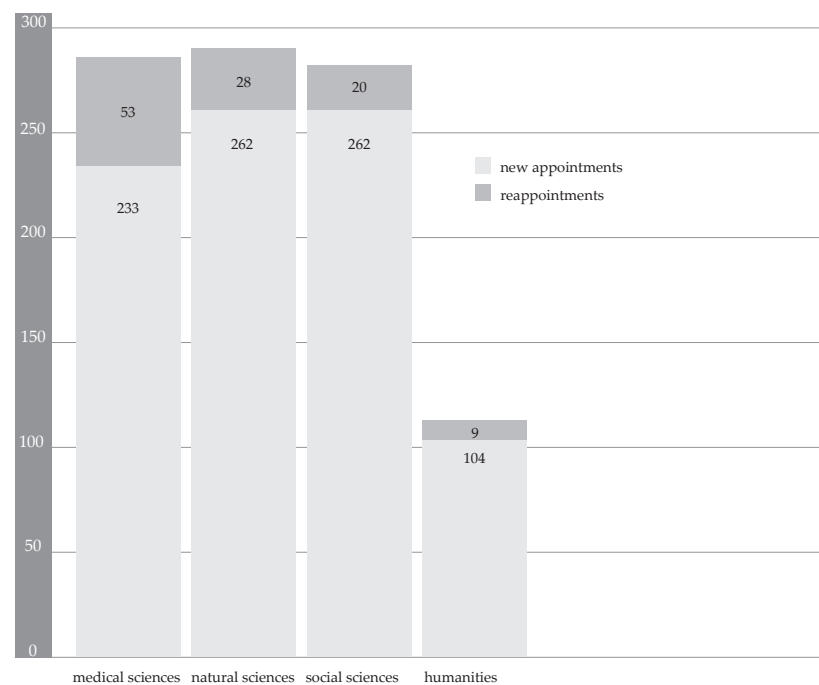
All thirteen Dutch universities were asked to deliver figures of the number of recently appointed professors in the period 1999-2005. Although it took most universities almost a year to gather and submit this data, all thirteen universi-

ties eventually provided the information requested, including the type of chair (ordinary or endowed) and the gender of the appointee for all new appointments. The quantitative data of appointments between 1999-2005 provided an understanding of the appointment dynamics. It was also possible to conclude whether the number of female professors was in line with the number I expected on the basis of the female potential (see chapter 2).

#### *Appointment reports (study B)*

The analysis of 971 appointment reports covered almost all the appointments of full professors at the seven Dutch universities which were willing to participate, for the period 1999-2003. I did not include appointment reports concerning endowed professorships as these are funded – fully or partly – by external sources and the appointment procedures follow a different line. After collecting the data, I filtered out and excluded reappointment reports (N=110) – reports of chairs which are continued – as these are information-poor (a single candidate, no committee, no competition). Figure 1.1 gives an overview of the number of appointment reports per academic subfield, including the number of reappointment reports.

Figure 1.1: Overview number of appointment reports per subfield N=971



The analysis was based on the following written documents which make up the appointment report: the basic profile, the vacancy announcement, the list of applicants, recommendations from related faculties, the composition of the committee and the final nomination of one or two candidates to the dean. The reports varied enormously in scope and style: some gave detailed considerations relating to all the applicants for the position and the criteria by which they were assessed, while others simply reported the name of the person who 'was obviously the most suitable candidate'. The collection and analysis of data at the first university was conducted by two researchers to enhance the validity of the research by attuning the different definition and values ascribed to the variables. A research assistant facilitated the data collection in the second and largest university. To guarantee the complete privacy of the respondents and candidates in the appointment reports, the following steps were taken. First of all, I signed a privacy agreement at all universities which allowed me to view appointment reports. This included a guarantee of secrecy in relation to the academics involved in the reports. Secondly, the appointment reports were not copied or taken outside the university. Finally, I showed the data matrix (SPSS) to the relevant member of staff from each participating university.

#### *Official recruitment and selection protocols (study C)*

The analysis of recruitment and selection protocols included documents from seven universities. Some of these protocols are publicly available on the internet, whereas others were obtained from HRM managers at the participating universities. Different stages of the recruitment and selection process were identified and compared on the basis of these protocols. This enables me to show the various ways in which these protocols are implemented, used and counteracted in daily working practice.

#### *Interviews committee members (study D)*

Of the seven universities that were willing to participate, two faculties per subfield – humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, and medicine – were selected. In total, I interviewed 24 women and 40 men in the function of chairpersons (deans, vice-deans, directors of research and teaching institutions), members and HRM advisors. Some members were also questioned in their role as former applicants; they reflected not only on their role and experiences in the committee, but also on their experience during their own recent appointment procedure. It was not possible to interview equal numbers of respondents in each of the subfields due to cancellations in one field and unexpected opportunities to interview other committee members in the other.

Table 1.1: Selection of interview respondents and their gender

Subfields	Interview respondents	Gender
Humanities	13 committee members	7 M, 6 F
Social Sciences	14 committee members	9 M, 5 F
Natural Sciences	16 committee members	14 M, 2 F
Medical Sciences	21 committee members	11 M, 10 F

The interviews were semi-structured and in-depth in nature – the first term meaning that I had a general checklist of points to be raised, but allowed the respondent's interest and the discussion to dictate the order and form in which these points were introduced. The second implies that the interview was extensive enough and the degree of 'rapport' strong enough for respondents to discuss complex and sensitive issues if they were so inclined. The committee members were asked to describe the process followed when a professor is to be recruited, and to illustrate this with cases from their own experience. I encouraged respondents to talk about critical incidents, rather than in generalities, when discussing the search process and the construction of scientific quality. In an attempt to capture as much detail as possible about the appointment process, I asked the respondents to focus on recent appointments. I also presented the respondents with quantitative data results and vignettes in the form of a fictive résumé of a professorial applicant. This helped the respondents to discuss systematically the way they judge the applicants' résumés during the process.

The interviews lasted between ninety minutes and two hours, were recorded and fully transcribed. Seven of the interviews were not taped because respondents preferred not to or due to equipment failure. Those interviews were reconstructed from detailed notes. The details of names and universities have been changed or omitted to ensure anonymity and protect the identity of interviewees. To validate the transcribed text, the interviews were sent back to the respondents for verification. Three respondents made minor adjustments, while two respondents wanted substantial parts of the text deleted because they feared being recognized.

#### *Research and field notes*

In addition to the above described empirical data, I made a number of research and field notes during this study. At the beginning of the process in particular, obtaining access to and participation of universities was hard and required various strategic choices and alliances. I therefore kept a research diary to keep track of the process, and the difficulties and the break-throughs we encountered. In addition, during study B (the appointment reports) and study D (the interviews), I

noted additional observations to evaluate the completeness or lack of information in the reports. I also made personal field notes after the interviews, to reflect on the process, especially when interviews had been difficult. The research and field notes were useful when reporting on the methodology and reflection of the research and are occasionally used in the argumentation in the chapters.

#### *Data analysis*

To analyze the data from study C – the appointment reports – I designed an analytical framework which included the following variables: gender of appointee, total number of applicants, gender of applicants, number of applicants interviewed, gender of applicants interviewed, subfield and discipline, nature of the recruitment procedure and the number of women on the committee. Information about the number of male and female applicants, the composition of the appointment committee, the type of recruitment (open/closed) and the type of chair were imported into a SPSS database and analyzed with descriptive statistics. The analyses were conducted along two strands. First, I determined the success rates of the male and female applicants for each subfield. Secondly, I tested my predictions concerning the type of recruitment (open/closed) and the gender composition of the committee. These latter analyses were conducted at an aggregate level; no distinctions were made here between subfields.

The analysis of the interview data was based on the phenomenological, ethnographic and interpretative tradition, in which the capacity to put oneself in the position of the respondent is the core element (Walsh, 1998; Hirsch & Gellner, 2001). The ultimate goal of this strategy is to present the meanings and experiences of the group researched as truthfully as possible. To analyze the interviews, I used holistic content and categorical content analysis (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). I investigated whether and when gender was practiced which meant that gender categories and descriptions became relevant in the interviewees' accounts and descriptions of organizational practices (see Smithson & Stokoe, 2005, p.152). The categorical content analysis was carried out by breaking the text into relatively small units of content on the basis of areas of interest. I started by scanning the text and underlining essential words and phrases relating to 'search and recruitment process', 'statements about quality' and gender-related topics. By giving open codes to different sections in the text, the first descriptive coding produced insight into the common patterns and themes of these research areas. This open coding resulted in a code book, which can be seen as a transparent that is laid upon the interview data and through which I searched for congruent codes. I checked whether it was possible to corroborate the initial findings and determine whether there was any inter-subjectivity among the themes and patterns.

However, it was not only commonalities that became evident, but also differences between subfields. These were analyzed in greater depth. Then, I shifted to a more holistic content analysis in order to interpret parts or categories of the text in the light of the rest of the text. In this way, it was possible to find ambiguities, differences and paradoxes within and among the stories of the interviewees, particularly concerning discrepancies between ideology and practice. A computer program called Atlas-Ti was used to systemize, code, compare and explore my data – this mapping method is suitable for interpreting large numbers of interviews.

### 1.5 Limitations and reflections

This study analyzes the complex interactions between gender practices in professorial recruitment and selection, and how these lead to the perpetuation of gender inequality, or even gender equality. To reveal these practices, I have applied various quantitative and qualitative methods, each with its specific strengths and weaknesses. This section will address the methodological limitations and reflections. In the last chapter, the limitations of the entire research study will be discussed.

The study of the appointment reports (study B) includes a quantitative data analysis of the success rates of men and women applicants in the appointment process. As most appointment reports did not contain information about all the applicants involved – only the actual track records (résumés) of the nominated candidate(s) – it was impossible to reconstruct individual qualifications or make a systematic comparison of the track records of men and women candidates. ‘Quality’ therefore remains unquantifiable in this study. Nevertheless, it would have been possible to compare the résumés of nominated candidates and determine whether there was a systematic difference between the track records of the nominated men and women. However, I have deliberately chosen not to do this, because it would have necessitated a distinct research aim and question. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, research into the outcomes of applications made by male and female candidates has already been completed (e.g. Wennerås & Wold, 1997; Brouns & Scholten, 1999; Steinpreis et al., 1999) and the aim of this study is to build on such literature by focusing on the organizational practices that contribute to our knowledge on how the gender differences in academic evaluations come about.

Another methodological restraint of my study of appointment reports was the fact that I was not allowed to copy reports or return to the universities later on to re-examine or check the reports again. All the data had to be gathered in a short period of time and all the data had to be collected in one sitting. This meant that it was not possible to make an ongoing comparison between empirical data and the theoretical concepts – an approach that is common in a grounded, iterative

and interpretative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). To cope with this restriction, a detailed format was developed to search for the right information systematically and relatively quickly. Furthermore, anonymized research notes were made about both exceptional and more general events in the reports.

A widely used and recommended method for research into social practices is participant observation (Poggio, 2006; Yanow, 2006), since interviews imply the possibilities of ‘hindsight bias’. An opportunity to observe the personal interviews with applicants or to observe the deliberations of the appointment committee would have provided an excellent basis for making definite statements about how male and female candidates are assessed and how scientific excellence is constructed. Unfortunately, numerous efforts to arrange an observation of the interactions during committee meetings were in vain; such access was not granted due to privacy issues. In my opinion, discursive reconstructions (interviews) and information from appointment reports represent the next-best way of making a situated reconstruction of the appointment process and to analyze how gender is integrated in channels and procedures and the cultural interpretations of the criteria used.

Furthermore, I have to reflect on some key ethical questions faced by researchers when conducting fieldwork, especially with regard to the relationship between the researcher and those being researched. I would argue that the researcher’s position and biography directly affect fieldwork and that fieldwork is a dialogical process, structured by both the researcher and the participants. Feminist scholars often refer to ‘intersubjectivity’, meaning a reciprocal sharing of knowledge and experience between researcher and the researched and an understanding that the researcher is part of the production of knowledge (Shields & Dervin, 1993; Bourdieu, 2004; Essers, forthcoming). All data are ‘collaborate products’ created in accordance with “the practical procedures and background assumptions of the participating actors” (Knorr Cetina, 1981). Power is involved in the relationship between researcher and research subjects, and research practices also embody power processes (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). Reflecting on the relationship between researcher and those being researched, but also on the researcher and the field of study, is therefore crucial.

This research involves interviews with academics from the highest ranks of academia – the academic ‘elite’.<sup>4</sup> An elite is that small group of people who wield particularly great influence, authority, or power, and who generally have the highest prestige within what was already prestigious to begin with (Zuckerman, 1992). For me, as young female academic, relating to such people was challenging

<sup>4</sup> With exception of some HRM managers, all respondents were full professors.

from time to time. Sometimes, it was difficult to guide the conversation and to find the right attitude to create ‘rapport’. Not only was our relationship that of respondent-interviewer, but other dynamics came into play during the interviews caused by differences in age, gender, experience, and hierarchical status.

First, my identity as a PhD candidate conducting academic research played a role in the social interactions. On the one hand, being ‘just’ a PhD candidate meant that I was relatively ‘harmless’ and may have encouraged the disclosure of sensitive information which was contrary to the formal rules and regulations governing appointments. This made many respondents surprisingly frank, and some even boasted about moments when they had deviated from formal policies. On the other hand, some of them placed themselves in the role of PhD supervisor by interrupting me and questioning my methodology and research questions.

Secondly, most of the respondents, whether male or female, were highly aware of the sensitivity and controversy of the research topic. They therefore tended to ascribe a feminist identity to me and had a strong preconception of my standpoint towards the subject. This can be illustrated by the reaction of one of the respondents: “I am a psychologist, if I am totally honest with you, of course I know that you are looking for sex indicators or every kind of information that has to do with sex discrimination”. Probably because of this awareness and sensitivity of the topic, the first reaction of the interviewees was predominantly rather defensive. In some cases, interviewees cut down the allotted time from ninety minutes to a maximum of one hour because of time constraints, which I sometimes perceived as a disinterest in the topic. The majority of the interviewees were designated to function as respondent by the faculty board because of their experience on appointment committees. In other interviews, I sensed that respondents had an urge to give socially desirable answers. “Of course gender does not matter, but we are doing everything to give women opportunities to develop an academic career”. To break through this wall or to open up the discussion, I started to ‘perform’ my role as an interviewer and junior researcher. On occasions when respondents remained aloof, the best strategy often turned out to be playing ‘innocent’. For example, after a respondent’s story about the frequent occurrence of closed procedures, I responded: “Is that allowed? I thought that recruitment should be open”. This forced the respondents to be more explicit about how they ‘played outside the book’ and used their micropolitical influences. In other cases, when respondents were open and boasted about tricks they had pulled, I could act like an accomplice and encourage them to tell me more about the specific subject. My aim here was to maximize the depth and quantity of the information. Yet this also means, of course, that an interview with the same respondent, but a different researcher, may not have yielded exactly the same results.

Furthermore, the positioning of the scientist in an academic field is crucial to the way research is conducted and knowledge is produced. Bourdieu (2004) claims that intellectual work is inextricably linked to viewpoint and functions as strategy within fields of struggle for recognition and legitimation. The academic field was defined as a whole of interconnected social practices, meaning that the field under study cannot be separated from the field I am simultaneously building a career in. In other words, it is impossible for a researcher to have an exterior observational point, since the researcher is part of what she or he tries to understand (Barad, 2003). Working in the same field as that under study, my PhD project can be seen as a social practice in the academic field itself. As a researcher, I am searching for recognition in my own field and struggling for an academic career myself. To prevent a tunnel vision, I have intentionally tried to falsify the data and search for other interpretations in all phases of the research from formulating the research questions to analyzing results and writing the dissertation. This was done by discussing the findings with other researchers and academics, including researchers from other camps such as quantitative sociologists and management scientists, and university board members as well as sharing information and results at national and international conferences. Furthermore, constant reflexivity was ensured by making research and field notes, which made it possible to reconstruct the way the analyses are developed.

## 1.6 Outline of the book

To contextualize this research, I will first localize this study in the current situation of the Dutch academic field. Chapter 2 will give a short overview of the Dutch university system and recent information on the appointment of full professors in each subfield. A large part of this chapter is dedicated to the situation of women in Dutch society and academia. Chapter three then describes the procedures of recruitment and selection and the way these recruitment and selection protocols contribute to gender equality in higher education. Due to the opaque professorial recruitment process, relatively few readers of this book will be familiar with the mechanics of the hiring process. Those who are may see the process in a new light when it is laid out in detail from start to finish, or note the differences with the procedures as followed in their fields. When gender comes into play during this process, it is analyzed profoundly. Chapter four will elaborate on the channels of recruitment and selection, in other words, the way applicants for professorial positions are recruited. I will show how scouts function as gatekeepers for professorial positions, and that gatekeeping is a multiple gender practice. In chapter five, the construction of excellence is the central concept.

By 'unpacking' the notion of scientific excellence, an insight is given into the selection criteria for appointing new professors. The disciplinary differences in recruitment and selection practices are elaborated in chapter six. I will show how the context of the subfields influences academic appointments and show that each subfield has its own internal logic by which gender is organized and constructed. Finally, the concluding chapter will unmask some of the persistent myths that surround the debate on the under-representation of women in senior academic positions on the basis of the material presented in the preceding chapters, and the theoretical and societal contribution of this study will be discussed.

## 2

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### The academic field in the Netherlands

Professorial recruitment and selection practices are embedded in the specific field of academia, which is a relatively autonomous configuration of networks with its own logic (Bourdieu, 1988). Mapping the field means identifying which set of actors and institutions are directly and tangentially relevant to understanding appointment practices. The question addressed in this chapter is: how can the academic field in the Netherlands be described in terms of specific actors and rules concerning career progression, recruitment and selection and policies to increase gender equality?

The first section of the chapter will describe the institutions, relationships and actors within the field which influence recruitment and selection practices, starting with universities and their relationship with the government, followed by the funding structure and the internal organization of academic institutions. The second section discusses the typical academic career trajectory in the Netherlands, and describes the variety of academic positions and professorial chairs. Section three then gives an impression of the formal standard procedure for professorial recruitment and selection. Section four outlines gender norms in Dutch society, because to examine the role of gender in academia, we must also take into account how gender is constructed from a more general perspective. The final part of this section focuses explicitly on the position of female academics at different academic levels and in different subfields. The fifth section concludes with a short overview

of special programs and policies for the upward mobility of female academics at national and institutional level.

## 2.1 Dutch university system

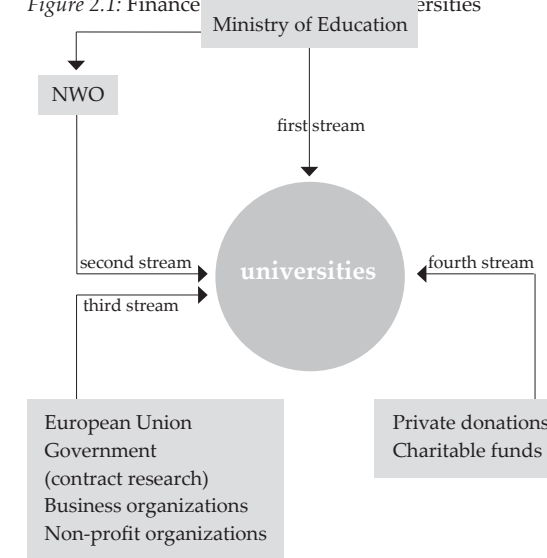
Higher education in the Netherlands is divided into two distinct tracks: the academic, university track and the higher vocational institutions (Hoger Beroeps-onderwijs, or HBO) (De Weert, 1999). The HBO sector constitutes an important part of higher education, and consists of about sixty institutions which provide a wide range of vocationally oriented courses (De Weert, 2001; OCW, 2007a). The university sector, meanwhile, includes thirteen universities and some institutions with 'university status' such as the institutes of theology and the University for Business Administration (Nijenrode). In addition, the Open University offers distance-learning courses which also lead to degree level qualifications. This research will concentrate on the thirteen regular universities. Nine of them undertake teaching and research in a wide range of academic disciplines, three offer courses mainly in engineering sciences, and one specializes in agricultural sciences. The universities vary considerably in size due to the maturity and range of the disciplines they teach. There is a tendency for universities to stress their distinctive features, but there are no significant differences in terms of academic standards and all Dutch universities can to all intents and purposes be viewed as equal (De Weert, 2001, p.80; OCW, 2008).

Since the 1980s, universities have been expected to operate more in accordance to a free market system (Maassen & van Vught, 1989). Government management has been restricted to more global and macro issues, and has focused on developing a framework within which universities could operate more autonomously (Maassen, 2000). This approach, known as 'managing from a distance' entails increased institutional autonomy and responsibility in exchange for more accountability in terms of quality control, output productivity and effectiveness (De Boer, Maassen, & De Weert, 1999; De Weert, 2001, p.78). The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science organizes and facilitates the academic system and universities are responsible for setting their own strategic research lines for the longer term. Government and the universities draw up contracts which stipulate what is expected from the universities and enter into agreements on performance, conditions and accountability. In return, the universities carry out their tasks and receive funding.

Dutch universities spend approximately €2.3 billion on research annually (NWO, 2007a). Funding for this research at universities is derived from various 'funding streams'. The 'first stream' consists of the basic grant from the Ministry

of Education, Science and Culture and aims at financing general teaching and research infrastructure, and the payment of staff on fixed contracts. The division of these financial resources among universities is linked closely to performance indicators such as the number of diplomas and PhDs awarded, the number of students enrolled and research performance (KNAW, 2007). In general, university boards have the authority to determine the internal allocation of this budget, including how much is allocated to teaching and research activities. The 'second stream' originates from the Dutch research councils which distribute government funding for research on a competitive basis. The main distributor of indirect government funds is the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), with an annual budget of €523 million (NWO, 2007a). Another important distributor of funding is the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), with a yearly budget of €88 million (KNAW, 2006, p.31). The 'third stream' refers to all revenues acquired by means other than regular governmental funding, including revenue from contract research with government (other than first stream), business organizations, non-profit organizations, and funding from the European Union. Funding from private non-governmental organizations is labeled as the 'fourth stream'.

Figure 2.1: Financing of Dutch universities



Source: Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW, 2007)

There has been a slow but steady change in the proportion of funding originating from the various funding streams. The importance of the second and third stream

has increased enormously to the point where, currently, half of all university researchers are paid from the second and third stream (AWT, 2005). Total funding from the first stream has not increased at all during the last ten years. In autumn 2007, new plans from the Minister of Education, Culture and Science included transferring €100 million from the first to the second stream. The rationale given for this was that it would stimulate and reward high-quality research. Of the total research expenditure of the universities, the share of these streams is 75 percent, 12 percent, 7 percent and 2 percent, respectively. The remaining 4 percent originates from foreign investors (NWO, 2007a).

#### Internal organization

The university board is responsible for the general university policy, with the chair of the board representing the highest authority (Tillo, 2005, p.37). All universities – except the University of Agriculture – are organized into faculties which are managed by the faculty board, headed by a dean. Deans now function as professional managers with a large degree of budgetary responsibility, and authority over staffing matters is delegated to them. It is the deans who oversee new appointments and personnel assessments (De Weert, 2001, p.79). The faculties also include various, interrelated organizational divisions (departments or capacity groups), which are often further subdivided into smaller organizational units (chair groups or sections). Since this pattern of organizational units is not uniform across all Dutch universities, in this dissertation the terms department and (chair) group will be used to refer to these subdivisions. The head of department (HOD) is head of a number of university staff and responsible for the managerial and administrative tasks of the department. Chair holders organize the research within their own group.

Since the early 1990s, an additional structure has been in place: the research and teaching institutes. General overall responsibility for organizing research is in hands of the management of the research institutes. These institutes are mainly organized at the national level, although individual universities have also established research institutes (Tillo, 2005, p.39). This has given an important role to teaching institutes, which are linked to the research institutes. Through the rise of these institutes, a dual authority structure has come about, with the faculty board representing the university board and the management of the research and teaching institutions.

Previously, medical faculties had always been an integral part of university structure in the form of a university faculty like any other. Since the 1990s, though, some universities have begun to incorporate the medical faculties into the academic hospitals. These new academic centers have their own governance structure with a separate university board. In some cases, the head of this board

also functions as the dean. Other universities have chosen a structure in which the dean is a member of the hospital board but also has autonomous responsibilities (UvA, 1994; RUG, 2005b). Universities and academic hospitals have opted for this structure mainly to advance the academic activities of research and education in health and medical sciences.

## 2.2 Academic career development

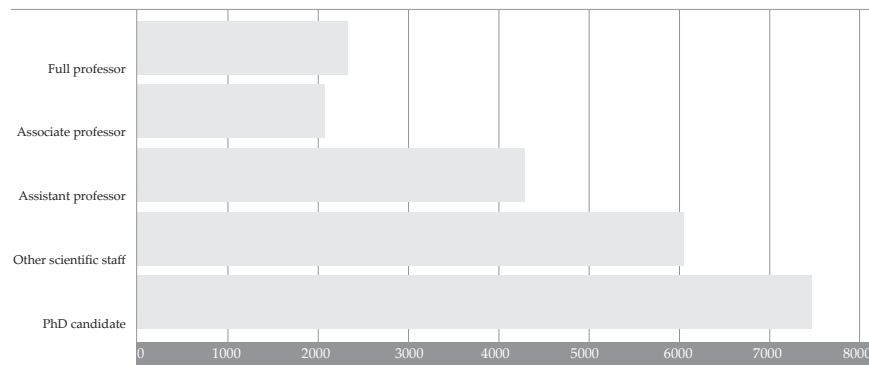
The Dutch academic career trajectory begins with a doctoral diploma. After a three-year Bachelor's programme and a one or two-year Master's programme, it is possible to begin as a PhD candidate at a university or research institute. In the Netherlands, PhD candidates are not considered 'students', but university staff with a temporary contract. Some academic fields, such as natural and medical sciences, often have many vacancies for PhD candidates while in other fields, such as humanities and social sciences, these positions are scarce (van Balen & van den Besselaar, 2007). In 2006, the natural sciences accounted for 4,365 PhD-candidates, as opposed to 564 PhD candidates in the humanities (WOPI, 2007). In general, the number of doctorates per 1,000 inhabitants in the Netherlands is among the lowest in Europe (OCW, 2005, p.1). Although that figure is rising, there are signs that fewer students are interested in pursuing a doctorate. Factors such as the salary system and the lack of career prospects exert a large influence on their decision (van Balen & van den Besselaar, 2007). After a PhD title is obtained, doctoral graduates can be hired as post-doc researchers or assistant professors (universitair docent, abbreviated to UD). Unlike the post-doc researcher, the position of assistant professor generally has a permanent contract, although the percentage of fixed-term assistant professors has risen from 11 percent in 1999 to 22 percent in 2007. The next step is a position as associate professor and the highest position that can be reached is the level of full professor.

The structure and composition of the academic career system in the Netherlands can be seen as a pyramid (van Balen, 2001, p.15). The number of lower and temporary positions is high (PhDs and other scientific staff, such as lecturers) but the number of higher academic ranks decreases step by step. Only the number of associate professors is lower than that of the professorate. In a recent study, Van Balen & Van den Besselaar (2007) illustrate that the pyramid is flattening due to a decrease in the numbers of assistant professors, and an increase in full professors. Figure 2.2 shows the numbers of academic positions in 2007.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The majority of medical academic staff is not included in these figures, because of the recent reclassification of the medical faculties within the academic hospitals (see 2.1). It is estimated the medical academic staff concerns about 2.500 fte (van Balen & van den Besselaar, 2007).



Figure 2.2: Academic positions in FTE (full-time equivalent) at Dutch universities



Source: WOPI-figures 2007

Although I have translated the Dutch ranks as if they corresponded directly with the US system (i.e. assistant, associate, and full professor), this is not in fact the case. There is no promotion system to progress from one rank to another. Traditionally, an upward career trajectory to the highest academic position in the Dutch system depends not only on the individual merits of an academic, but also on the available positions (*formatiebeginsel*). The number of full professors a certain department can hold, is described in the faculty's chair plan. Due to cutbacks in first-stream finance and the number of permanent positions for senior academics, there is little flexibility to create new chairs outside the chair plan. This means that associate professors can only become full professors by applying for such a position when there is a vacancy. At almost every career step, competition increases as the number of available positions becomes more limited. This lack of professorship positions means that talented academics who meet the official requirements for a professorship are more likely to have to content themselves with a lower position (van Balen & van den Besselaar, 2007). The number of available positions is hardly increasing, because it is only academic fields with second and third-stream finance options that have the flexibility to create new positions (van Balen & van den Besselaar, 2007). The relatively new strategic and personal chairs (see section 'professorate') were introduced to create more flexibility in the upward mobility of talented academics.

In line with this flexibilization of academic positions, a transition to the American model of tenure track has been discussed in recent years. Being tenured means that an academic is granted a permanent position at a university or research institute. Tenure is not offered immediately, but after a formal trial period: the tenure track. This track often takes between five and seven years, after which the

decision about whether to give tenure is made (Fruytier & Brok, 2007). Tenure track offers (young) academics the possibility of climbing to higher positions provided that their performance is good, irrespective of the positions available. In the Netherlands, departments of natural and medical sciences have been the first to explore the possibilities of this career system. At some universities, it has become an official component of personnel policy.<sup>6</sup> However, the system has been implemented differently to the US system, in which academics are tenured at the level of full professor (Fruytier & Brok, 2007). In the Netherlands, academics are usually tenured at the level of assistant professor (van Balen & van den Besselaar, 2007). However, only a limited number of talented academics are taken on through the tenure track system and most positions are still dependent on formal vacancies (De Weert, 1999).

### The professorate

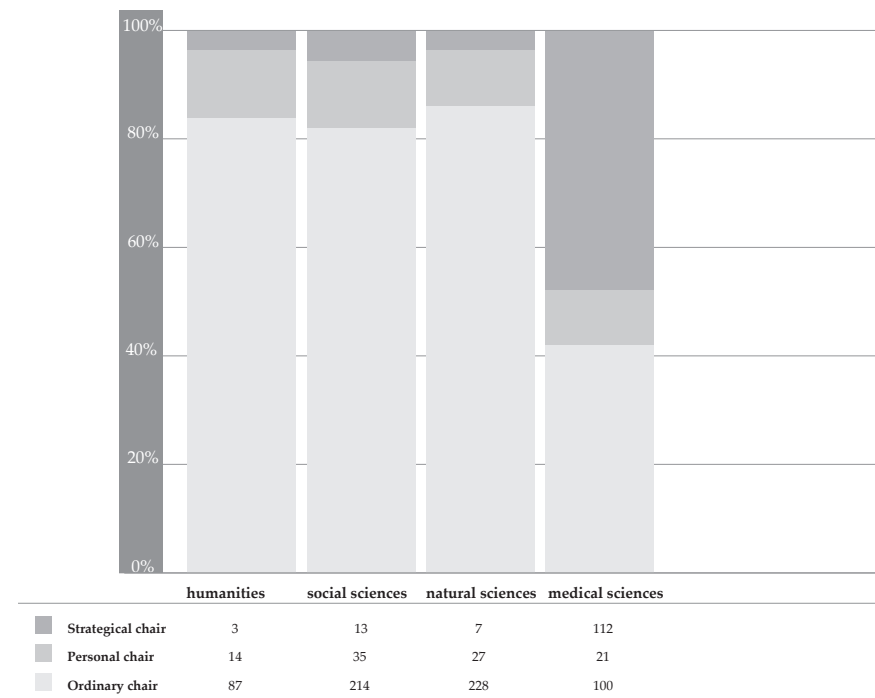
In the Netherlands, the highest academic position that can be obtained is the position of full professor. Although there are various categories of chair at Dutch universities, I can generally speaking divide them into ordinary, endowed (*bijzonder*), strategic and personal chairs.<sup>7</sup> Ordinary chairs are granted to professors with a permanent contract or the prospect of a permanent contract (UT, 2004; RUG, 2005a). In 2007, only seven percent of the ordinary professors had a fixed-term contract (WOPI, 2007). Ordinary chairs are part of the faculty's overall plan for professorial positions and the majority of these chairs are maintained when a chair holder is accorded emeritus status or accepts a position elsewhere. As chair holders, ordinary professors are head of a group and responsible for the development of their own area of study. They normally have research, teaching and considerable administrative tasks. My research finds that the majority of ordinary chairs (62%) are full-time, but a significant minority are part-time. Ordinary professors differ from endowed professors in that the latter are fully or partially funded by external sources and the appointment procedures follow a different course. The role of endowed chairs is to create a link between a societal organization and a university. Endowed professors usually have part-time positions and their main contract is with a business or non-governmental organization.

<sup>6</sup> Faculties that have incorporated the tenure track system in their career policies are the University of Technology Eindhoven, the medical faculty of the University of Groningen and the faculty of natural sciences at the University of Leiden.

<sup>7</sup> Besides the ordinary, endowed, strategic and personal chair, universities can distinguish for example visiting professors, honorary professors and university professors. These are mostly relative small positions, with less influence on the research and teaching policies, and are therefore not taken into account in this research.

Strategic chairs are created to explore scientific or societal fields of study which are deemed interesting or innovative (RUG, 2005a). The focus is on setting up or conducting research, or disseminating expertise on a specified issue. This type of chair does not therefore usually entail an extended research group, and involves fewer management tasks. Professors are generally appointed to a strategic chair for five years with the prospect of a permanent contract if there is a positive evaluation. A personal chair is often ascribed to applicants who are individually qualified to become a professor, though no formal vacancy is available. Professors holding a personal chair are also appointed on a temporary five-year basis, again with the prospect of a permanent contract if there is a positive evaluation. In most cases, the personal chair is not continued when the individual leaves the university.

Figure 2.3: Division of chairs between the subfields



Source: 861 appointment reports (study B) <sup>8</sup>

My analysis of recent appointment reports at seven Dutch universities shows that the majority of appointed chairs between 1999-2003 (study B) were ordinary chairs

<sup>8</sup> The discrepancy between the total number of appointment reports (N=971) and the number in figure 2.3 and table 2.1 (N=861) is caused by the fact that not all reports gave information about the type of chair.

(73%), followed by strategic chairs (16%) and personal chairs (11%).<sup>9</sup> The high number of strategic chairs in the medical sciences (48%) is particularly striking. All subfields have a comparable share of personal chairs, between 13 percent (humanities and social sciences) and 9 percent (medical sciences).

Table 2.1 gives an overview of the division of chairs between the sexes. There is a significant gender difference: there are proportionately more women holding personal chairs than holding strategic chairs.

Table 2.1: Type of chair by gender of appointee

	Ordinary	Personal	Strategic	
<b>Men</b>	548	78	124	<b>750</b>
	(73%)	(10%)	(17%)	(100%)
<b>Women</b>	81	19	11	<b>111</b>
	(73%)	(17%)	(10%)	(100%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>861</b>
	(73%)	(11%)	(16%)	(100%)

Source: 861 appointment reports (study B)

This gender effect could be related to the subfields: the high level of strategic chairs in medical sciences (with a low number of female professors) and the high percentage of personal chairs in social sciences (with a relatively high percentage of female professors). One in five female professors was appointed to a personal chair in this period (1999-2003). Personal chairs are, in contrast to strategic chairs, aimed at individuals and are more often part of university-level policy measures to promote more female academics to higher positions. I will discuss these special programs for women in section 2.5. In the next section I will focus on the standard procedure of Dutch professorial recruitment and selection.

### 2.3 The standard appointment process

Academic appointment processes differ considerably from country to country (Musselin, 2002; Özbilgin & Healy, 2004; Schmitt, Arnhold, & Råde, 2004; Hubrath & Jantzen, 2008). For example, in Finland professorial vacancies are always announced publicly, after which external referees draw up a short list of the applicants on the basis of their track records. This shortlist is then usually adopted

<sup>9</sup> As mentioned earlier (chapter 1), endowed chairs are not included in the quantitative data collection of this research.

by the appointment committee of the university (Husu, 2000; de Milliano, 2005). In Italy, full professors are formally appointed by the Ministry of Education and a committee with internal and external committee members will select three eligible colleagues, from among whom the faculty will appoint one (Moscati, 2001). In view of this variety, it is important to give an overview of the standard method of making professorial appointments in the Netherlands.

An examination was undertaken of the protocols of academic recruitment and selection in the Netherlands, and recruitment committee members were interviewed. The findings were that there were minor differences between Dutch universities. Nevertheless, the main aspects are broadly similar. The procedure described below relates chiefly to a standard situation in which an existing professorial post becomes reoccupied. The procedure begins with the drafting of a basic profile and ends with the decision of the university board to appoint a specific candidate. Next, I will elaborate on these different phases.

#### Establishment of the chair

The (re)installment of professorial positions and the basic profile for the full professorship are based on the faculty's plan for professorial positions. In drawing up a basic profile, major considerations will include the strengths of academic staff already in position, and the age structure and gender balance within the faculty. Ordinary chairs usually fall vacant due to the departure or emeritus status of the existing chair holder. These ordinary chairs are seen as the 'pillars' of the department; they represent the main chairs of the faculty and often become fixed features. An ordinary chair is not, however, continued automatically when it becomes vacant. In fact, the number of reappointments made is under pressure from budgetary constraints and the rationalization of the university system. Sometimes the department takes the composition of the staff into consideration and decides that the department is too 'heavy' – meaning there are too many full professors in relation to other staff – and use the vacancy as an opportunity to reorganize. For example, the department may decide to appoint two assistant professors instead of a full professor. Generally speaking, the dean and managers of the research and teaching institutes will check whether a continuation of the chair is strictly necessary and financially possible. If it is decided that the chair will be reoccupied, they also have to decide whether its basic profile needs any adjustment.

#### Framing of the profile

After the position has been approved for continuation, the basic profile is drawn up by a small committee (dean, managers research and teaching institutes) or a

more extensive committee including external members. It is the responsibility of the chair of the department most closely concerned with the new professor's field of study to compile the basic profile and oversee the recruitment and selection procedure. The chair will involve others in the drafting of the basic profile, including the manager of the relevant research and teaching institutes, the staff with whom the new professor is to work and, in some cases, a representative of the students and PhD candidates. The basic profile requires the official approval of the dean of the faculty. Sometimes pre-advice is requested by a 'scientific committee' of the faculty or university.

#### Functioning of the appointment (advisory) committee

The dean appoints the members of the appointment advisory committee<sup>10</sup> and the dean's proposal must be approved by the university board. This committee will give an advice to the university board. The membership of a specific appointment committee will represent a range of expertise and roles, including subject specialists, faculty members, an external referent and an HRM manager. The appointment committee uses the basic profile for professors to draw up the relevant criteria – such as experience – against which candidates for the position will be assessed.

#### Recruitment

To recruit candidates, the appointment committee will sometimes draw up a 'wish list' of suitable candidates, who are then approached, either directly or indirectly. The usual method of recruiting is via advertisements in newspapers, academic journals and/or on the Internet. Following an initial exploration of the market, the appointment committee may also decide to bring the vacancy directly to the attention of potential candidates on its own initiative (either directly or via intermediaries). They will also arrange for an announcement of the vacancy and the basic profile to be sent to relevant faculties elsewhere, together with a request to nominate suitable candidates by a set date.

#### Selection

After the recruitment phase, the committee will find itself with a list of potential candidates who have either been selected by the committee itself, responded to advertisements, or been nominated by other faculties. On the agreed date, the appointment committee will scrutinize this list of candidates and select candidates

<sup>10</sup> From here referred to as appointment committee.

from this list for interviews. The grounds on which this selection will be made are laid down in the basic profile. Based on the initial interview, the purpose of which is primarily exploratory, the appointment committee will draw up a final shortlist of candidates.

The appointment committee will conduct an interview with every short-listed candidate. During the interview, issues such as the candidate's track record, the profile and longer-term aspirations of the candidates will be discussed. Checking references is an essential part of the appointment process, and this often takes place when several candidates are placed on the shortlist. In the Netherlands, the candidates' prior consent must be given for this.

#### Recommendation and reporting

The appointment committee's advice will usually lead to the nomination of one clearly suitable candidate (and preferably a second possibility as well). The committee can also advise the dean to undertake further investigation into the suitability of two or three well-qualified candidates. The appointment committee will send all the unsuccessful candidates written notification of its decision regarding their application and the reasons behind it at this stage.

In the appointment report it submits to the dean, the committee details the procedure it has followed and the reasons for its recommendations. The dean will study the report and then, if he/she agrees with the recommendation of the appointment committee, proceed to interview the candidate(s). This provides an opportunity to form a personal impression of the candidate and discuss issues such as terms of employment and facilities. If the interview with the candidate proves satisfactory, the dean will add his/her own views to the report along with details of any agreements made with the candidate, and forward the report to the university board. If the dean decides not to accept the candidature, he/she will send the candidate immediate notification of this decision and the reasons behind it.

The university board will normally hold a meeting with the nominee for the post before reaching its decision regarding the appointment. If the university board decides to appoint the candidate, the board will proceed to make a formal appointment. The dean will reach agreements of the duration of the appointment, grade, salary and supplements, facilities and support.

## 2.4 Women in Dutch society and academia

### Dutch Society

Gender norms in society influence what goes on in institutions such as academia, and the role men and women play within them. Organizations therefore need to

be understood in the context of wider society; the gender division of labor and the cultural norms supported by legislation that favor mothers (and/or fathers) taking care of the children (Bussemaker, 1998). A low rate of female participation in the labor market has traditionally characterized the Netherlands. In 2005, approximately 59 percent of all women between 15-64 had a paid job, as against 77 percent of men. Yet this figure is misleading, since 61 percent of Dutch women worked part-time (less than 30 hours a week) (Portegijs, Hermans, & Lalta, 2006). When the volume of the female labor force is taken into account, the Netherlands has an unusual pattern of part-time employment compared to other Western countries (Van Wel & Knijn, 2006). Several researchers have tried to account for this phenomenon, exploring the lack of childcare facilities at a societal level (Plantenga, Schippers, & Siegers, 1999), the lack of acceptance of the work-family balance and the degree of flexibility at the organizational and institutional level (e.g. Lewis, 1997, 2001), and finally the care ethic of Dutch mothers at the individual level (Den Dulk, Van Doorne-Huiskes, & Peper, 2003). However, this individual level refers back to a debate relevant to society as a whole concerning what constitutes 'a good mother', or as Hays (1996) calls it, the 'motherhood-ideology'.

Although the idea that mothers may work as well as looking after a child is becoming more widely accepted, there is still a strong care ethos, characterized by an ideology of intensive mothering, in which mothers are advised to spend large amounts of time, energy, and money in raising their children (Bassin, Honey, & Mahrer Kaplan, 1994; Hays, 1996). This is shown by the latest figures of the Emancipation Monitor (Portegijs, Hermans and Lalta, 2006, p. 123), indicating that the proportion of men and women that believe that women are better suited than men to bringing up young children has been rising since 1996 (33 percent of the women and 54 percent of men). A majority of men and women think that working two or three days a week is ideal for a mother, regardless of the age of the children (Portegijs et al., 2006).

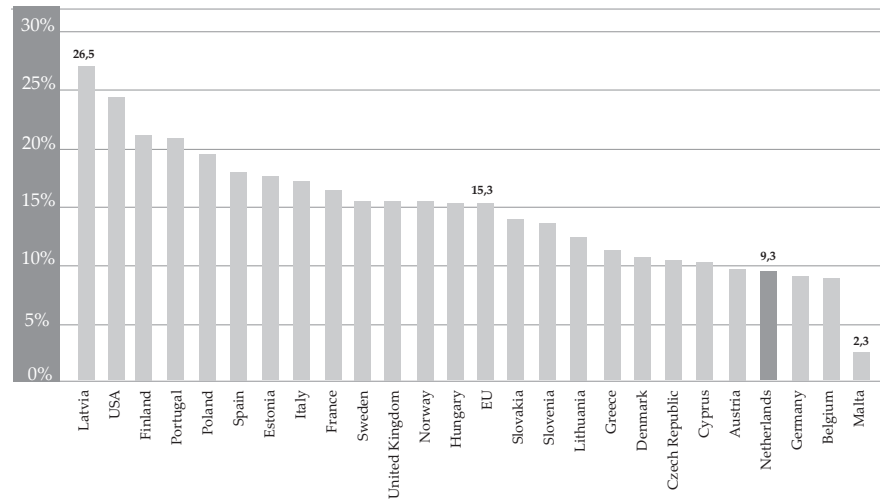
In 2005, the Dutch government reduced the cost of childcare by offering tax deductions to parents for using formally recognized childcare facilities, after a disappointing scheme which attempted to share these costs with employers. Resistance to formal childcare fell somewhat, perhaps partly due to these financial benefits. However, this financial incentive did not lead to an explosive increase in female labor market participation (Portegijs et al., 2006). Thirty percent of the Dutch population holds the opinion that a mother who works outside the home is harmful for children if this means the child has to go to a daycare center (Portegijs et al., 2006, p.123). Currently (2008), the Dutch government is debating whether refunds for childcare costs should be lowered again, since the costs of childcare have risen more than they had planned and there is widespread public concern

about how this could affect female labor market participation in the Netherlands. Organizations, on the other hand, are still not geared for non-standard work arrangements, especially in the higher ranks. The prevalent attitude is that holding a senior position is incompatible with working part-time. Working arrangements are often outdated or provide no flexibility. Women who want to work in part-time jobs to combine paid labor and child care are seen as problematic.

Academia

While the number of female academics is still very low in all Western countries, the Dutch situation still represents something of an exception (Bosch, 2002). The ‘She Figures 2006’ (EU, 2006) show that the proportion of women in the academic top in the Netherlands is near the bottom of the European league table (see figure 2.4). The number of female professors in the Netherlands, at only 9.3 percent in 2004, is significantly lower than the average percentage of female professors in the European Union (15.3 percent). The most recent figures are little different, with 11 percent of full professors being female (Korsten, Visser, Willemsen, & van Zwol, 2006; WOPI, 2007). Due to this overrepresentation of men in the higher academic functions, some scholars have even described Dutch universities as ‘modern monasteries’ (van Balen & Fischer, 1998).<sup>11</sup>

Figure 2.4: Percentage female professors in the EU member states and USA in 2004

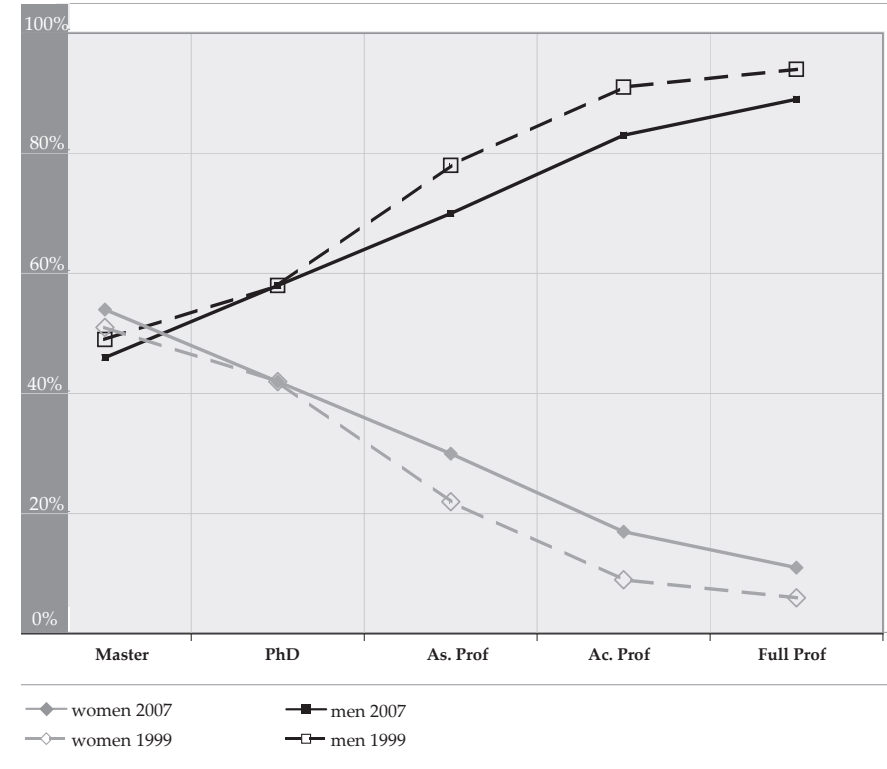


Source: She Figures 2006, AAUP Association of American University Professors 2006 (West & Curtis, 2006)

11 See for an analysis of the historical under-representation of women in science in the Netherlands “Women in Science in the Netherlands: A Dutch Case?” by Mineke Bosch 2002.

The slow progress of women in academic careers has famously been illustrated with the metaphor of a leaky pipeline (Pell, 1996; Osborn et al., 2000; Rees, 2002). The presence of women declines disproportionately at each stage of the academic ladder: the higher the position, the fewer women can be found (see figure 2.5). This description can be applied across national boundaries and different disciplines (Martin, 1994; Rees, 2002).

Figure 2.5: Scissor diagram of proportion academics M/F per academic position in 1999 and 2007 at Dutch universities



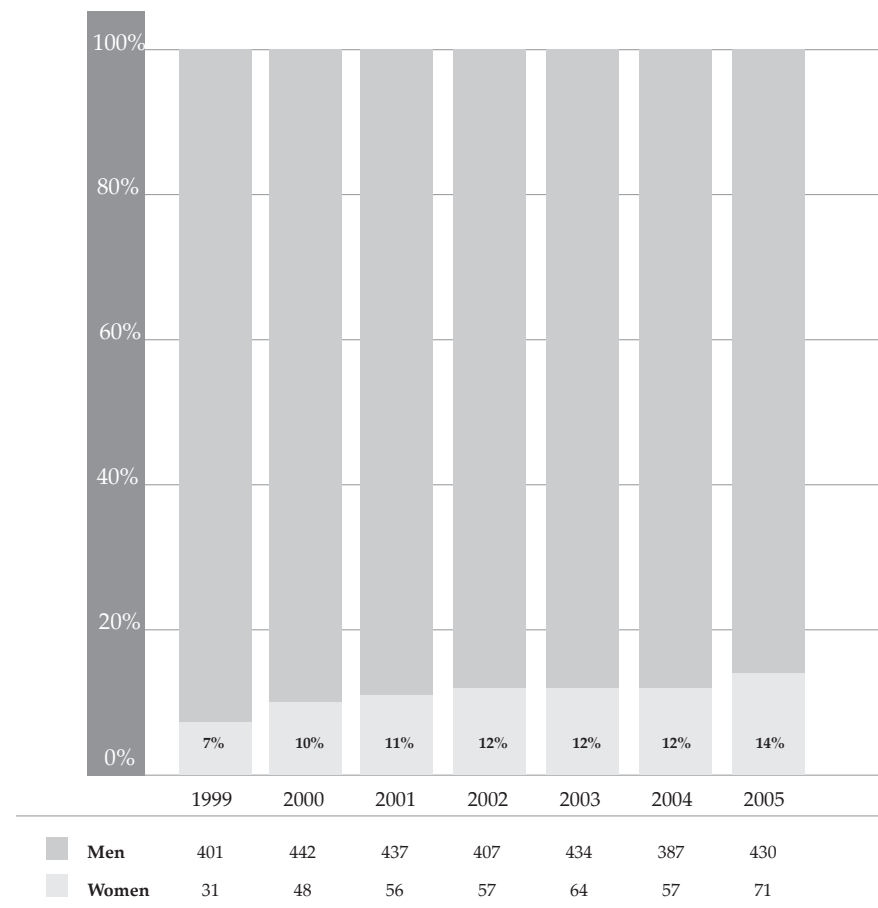
Source: WOPI-figures 1999-2007 & (CBS, 2007a)

Figure 2.5 shows that the percentage of female professors increased from 6 percent in 1999 to 11 percent in 2007. In both years, the percentage of women university graduates at Master’s level was already substantially higher than the percentage of men. However, from the next academic step – doctoral degree – onwards, the number of women drops substantially. I can conclude that the gap between men and women towards the end of their career is decreasing – compare 1999 with

2007 – but that this process is occurring much slower than can be expected on the basis of longer-term developments in the population.

The figures for the current number of academic staff do not give a complete view of the appointment dynamics, however. In other words, to estimate the time that may be needed to change the gender order, information is needed concerning the number of recently appointed female professors and whether these in fact correspond to the potential of the female candidates available. With information about the number of recently appointed professors (provided in study A), I will scrutinize two widely held perspectives on this subject.

Figure 2.6: Number and percentage of newly appointed professors by gender 1999-2005



Source: data collected from 13 universities (study A)

First, it is commonly claimed that large numbers of ageing (male) full professors are preventing, or 'blocking', young ambitious women from being promoted to the limited number of professorial positions available. However, my study shows that this claim is unfounded. According to my data, 3,322 new ordinary and extraordinary professors were appointed at thirteen Dutch universities between 1999 and 2005 (study A), of which 2,486 were ordinary professors.<sup>12</sup> The total number of ordinary professors in FTE (full-time equivalent) at the end of 2005 was 2,238. This suggests that almost all the professorial staff were renewed between 1999 and 2005. Yet there is a difference between the calculation of 2,486 full professors (in persons) and 2,238 FTE (full time equivalent) and this is because the latter does not include the substantial field of medical sciences. Nevertheless, these numbers indicate substantial mobility in the upper echelons of academia and those new positions are available to talented men and women. Furthermore, data shows that while there was a small rise in the number of female appointments, women were on average appointed to only 12 percent of these new appointments between 1999 and 2005. Therefore, it would seem reasonable to conclude that 'lack of opportunity' (the 'blocking' argument) is not a sufficient explanation for the slow progress made by female academics.

A second reason often cited when accounting for the under-representation of women in the higher ranks of academia involves the 'lack of female potential' argument. In other words, academia is short of women with the required education and experience. However, since the 1970s an increasing number of women have been on the academic career ladder; currently, about 40 percent of the academics obtaining their doctoral degree are female (WOPI, 2007). For the purposes of this study, the available female pool of talent for full professors will be defined in two ways: 1) the proportion of female doctorate holders (PhDs), 2) the proportion of female associate professors.

Female holders of doctoral degrees constitute the female potential – the 'feeder pool' from which future academics are likely to spring (Zuckerman & Cole, 1991). The average time between obtaining a doctoral degree and gaining full professorship is thirteen years; therefore, women who obtained a doctorate between 1986 and 1992 (an average of thirteen years ago) can be considered part of this female potential for new professorial appointments in the period 1999 to 2005. The ability to become professor is not likely to vary between men and women, so with no gender effects, the male/female ratio between PhD graduates and current professors should stay approximately the same. National figures will

<sup>12</sup> The data were collected from the 13 'regular' universities and included all type of chairs.

be used as a starting point for calculating the female potential, since the inclusion of international figures is too complex here. This means that international exchange – which is very important in some subfields – is not taken into account. The national figures concerning the female potential were obtained by Statistics Netherlands (CBS, 1986-1992). Table 2.2 gives an overview of the female potential for each subfield, based on the doctoral pool. In contrast to what is commonly claimed, there is substantial female potential in the social sciences (26%), humanities (24%), medical sciences (22%). Only the natural sciences lag behind with a female potential of 11 percent.

Another, more conservative way of calculating the female potential is to look at the percentage of associate professors in the period 1999-2005. In reality, new professors are likely to be recruited from this group. Table 2.2 shows a substantial number of female associate professors in the humanities and social sciences. Again, the number of associate professors in the natural field lags behind.

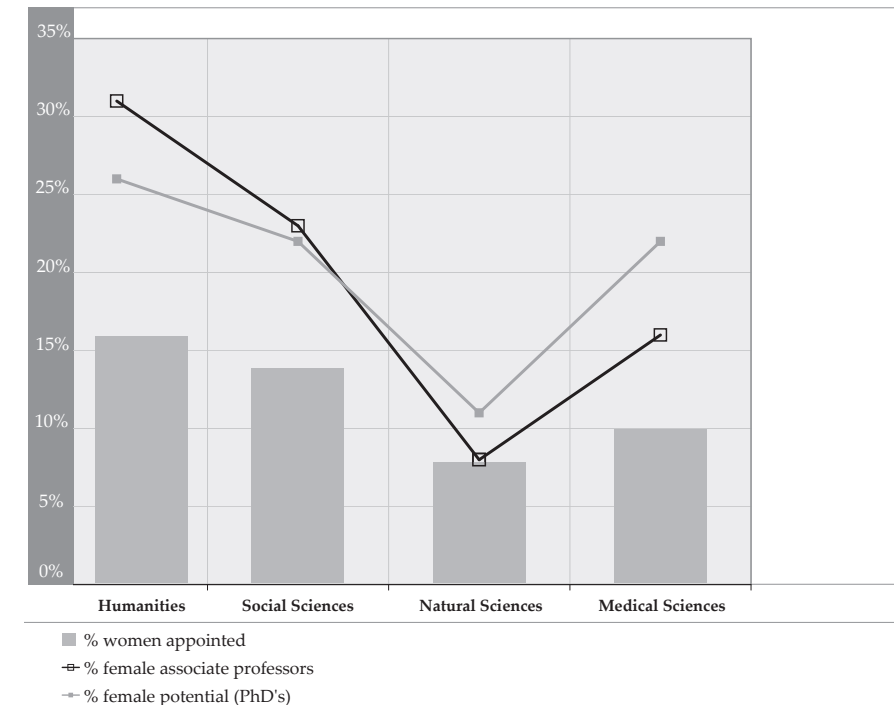
Table 2.2: Percentage of women among potential (female PhDs and associate professors) and appointed full professors (1999-2005)

Subfield	Female PhDs 1986-1992 (%)	Female associate professors 1999-2005 (%)	Female appointments 1999-2005 (%)
Humanities	26.3	31	16.5
Social Sciences	22.2	23	14.0
Natural Sciences	11.1	8	7.9
Medical Sciences	21.8	16	9.8

Source: Statistics Netherlands (CBS, 1986-1992), Wopi (1999-2005), data collected from 13 universities (study A)

The combination of the national data and my own research data (figure 2.7) shows a substantial gap between both female potential and the percentage of associate professors on the one hand, and the proportion newly appointed female professors on the other. This gap is particularly striking in the humanities, social and medical sciences, which implies that the gender issue varies between fields of education. This failure to make use of the female potential could imply a gender bias, whether intentional or unintentional, in the recruitment and selection of academics. Surprisingly, in the natural sciences, the discrepancy between the number of female professors appointed and the female potential/associate professors is the smallest. A possible explanation for this could be the high number of foreign professors appointed in this field in the Netherlands (Stobbe et al., 2004).

Figure 2.7: Difference between % appointed female professors and % female potential per subfield



Source: Study A and Study B

My data shows convincingly that both the 'lack of mobility' and the 'lack of potential' arguments fail to explain completely the 'leaky pipeline' for female academics in the Netherlands. This leads me, then, to the question of what does account for this leaky pipeline. And what causes the differences between the subfields? How can the discrepancies between some disciplines be explained? The remaining chapters of this book will provide answers to these questions. The next section will outline the policy measures taken by government and universities to deal with the under-representation of women in science.

## 2.5 Policies and measures for gender equality

The publication of Wennerås and Wold (1997) created a sense of urgency surrounding the under-representation of women in academia in the Netherlands, as it did in almost all Western countries. Meanwhile, the Dutch report 'Future for Talent, Talent for the Future' (van Vught Tijssen, 2000) added impetus to the

development of new policies at the national and institutional level. However, the figures in the former section show that the creation of specific positions or grants for women have not been enough to ensure a gender balance among university staff. The regular recruitment and selection procedures still create difficulties and barriers for women, as shown by the evaluation reports of these measures (Bosch & Potting, 2001; Visser, Dierdorp, & Van Emmerik, 2003; Stobbe et al., 2004). I will briefly describe the policy measures and affirmative action that have been introduced and evaluated in the Netherlands over the last decade.

#### Governmental level

National policy concerning gender is coordinated at governmental level – currently by the minister of Education, Culture and Science – and each ministry is responsible for mainstreaming gender in its own policies. The Department for the Coordination of Emancipation Policy – which was part of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment from 1981 to 2007, and is now part of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science – is the key component in the emancipation effort of the central government. This unit is responsible for developing a cohesive emancipation policy and has also been charged with bringing emancipation issues onto the political agenda. According to their latest document, the Dutch Multi-Year Emancipation Policy Plan 2006-2010 (DCE, 2005), the aims of the gender policy include increasing the number of hours worked by women, and utilizing their talents and qualities better. This issue is particularly relevant in the Netherlands where the number of women working part-time is high when compared to other European countries. The policy plan stresses that “the unique talents of both men and women are of critical importance for the quality of society in all its aspects: social, economic and moral” (p.3). Several projects have been launched to promote the upward mobility of women, such as the ‘network of ambassadors’ (Ambassadeursnetwerk), in which senior CEOs commit themselves to increasing the participation of women in top positions and (board) committees, and the ‘glass wall’ (glazen muur) for decreasing gender segregation in professions. The total estimated emancipation budget of the Ministry of Education for 2008 is €15 million (OCW, 2007b).

In 1998, the Dutch government introduced an act promoting the proportional representation of women at higher positions in higher education, particularly regarding women in science. The act made university boards responsible for ensuring greater representation of women, requiring the boards to set specific targets. Although universities were free to determine the targets and methods of achieving them, they were also obliged to publish the results every four years. In

an evaluation report in 2005 it was concluded that the percentage of women in higher positions in academia is increasing steadily, but has not yet reached the targets set (Gemmeke, Olsthoorn, & Righter, 2005). The researchers stated that it was hard to meet the targets because it was hard to find female candidates in certain areas (p.54). In 2006 the act was withdrawn.

One of the most radical policies for increasing the number of women in science was the governmental program *Aspasia*, launched in 1999, which was designed to encourage female assistant professors to become associate professors. This program has boosted the proportion of women among associate professors from 9 percent in 1999 to 14 percent in 2003 (Visser et al., 2003). The *Aspasia* program enables female academics to apply for a grant by writing a research proposal for themselves and for a PhD candidate or post-doc researcher. It was an initiative of the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) and the Association of universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. When such a grant was awarded, the university committed itself to promoting the women from assistant to associate professor while the NWO would finance the PhD candidate or post-doc. Those female academics who had been rewarded were positive about this program since it encouraged them to develop their own research and they viewed it as recognition for their scientific efforts and performances (Bosch & Potting, 2001; Visser et al., 2003). Furthermore, the program has drawn attention to the substantial surplus of ambitious and capable women working at universities nowadays. As such, it has served to disprove claims that there was a lack of ambitious and capable women in universities.

However, the program was not without controversy. Some university departments were unwilling to participate because they regarded the program as a violation of their right to determine their own personnel policy. Other institutes did not want to risk ‘*Aspasia*-success’ because they had a lack of permanent positions and did not want to be obliged to fill those scarce positions with ‘*Aspasia* women’ (Stobbe et al., 2004). In 2002, the *Aspasia* program in its initial form came to an end. Now, the funding organization NWO has integrated *Aspasia* into the general funding program the ‘Innovational Research Incentives Scheme’ (Vernieuwingsimpuls). This funding program is directed at individual researchers at various stages of their careers, and includes three forms of grants: *veni* grants (for researchers who obtained a PhD less than five years ago), *vidi* grants (for experienced researchers) and *vici* grants (for researchers of professorial quality). Universities receive a bonus if they promote female academics who have been awarded this grant. The success rates among men and women awarded a grant between 2002 and 2006 were quite similar: respectively 22 percent (m) and



23 percent (f) for young academics (recipients of *veni* grants), 24 percent (m) and 25 percent (f) for recipients of *vidi* grants, and 18 percent (m) and 18 percent (f) for recipients of *vici* grants (Bongers et al., 2007, p.50). This would seem to imply no gender bias at a general level.

Because the number of female professors was the lowest in the natural sciences (3 percent in 1999), the government-supported funding organization Fundamental Research on Matter (FOM) launched a special women's program in 1999 to stimulate the upward mobility of female physicists and encourage women physicists to remain within the scientific community. The five-year program had a budget of over €4.5 million. In addition to (co)financing research projects and academic positions, the program aimed to increase the number of women sitting on committees and boards, and make the combination of work and care more manageable. The FOM program has been successful in several ways. It has helped to increase the number of women physicists working at Dutch universities and institutes, particularly in terms of the appointment of women to permanent positions and senior academic positions. In 1998, there was only one woman on an endowed chair, whereas in 2003 there were ten ordinary female professors of which four had full-time positions (Stobbe et al., 2004, p.1). The program was evaluated in 2004 and it was concluded that financially supporting women academics is a good start, but that it is also crucial to fight the cultural images that cause women to drop out and discourage women from an academic career in physics (Stobbe et al., 2004, p.29). According to the evaluation study, cultural processes such as stereotyping play a significant role in the persistence of gender inequality at universities. It also showed that some women were unhappy with how they were viewed after being awarded a female grant. An additional problem reported by female respondents was that, even if they would have been hired anyway and therefore would have received the funding through the regular channels, their male colleagues now directed them to the special women's programs (Aspasia for example). In this way, women report becoming trapped within the women's funds with the result that no additional women are hired.

#### Universities

A growing number of universities are aware of the fact that an active policy is needed to enable women to move up to senior positions. Nowadays, nearly all Dutch universities pay attention to 'the upward mobility of female academics', at least on paper. Annual reports or rectors' speeches often emphasize the urgency of greater diversity among academic staff (e.g. TUE, 2006; UM, 2007; RU, 2008). An evaluation study of the measures taken at all Dutch universities to promote equality between 2000 and 2007 showed that the approach and implementation

of equality policies varies considerably between universities (Timmers, 2007). The various policies implemented also have different aims. One category of policy measures aims to develop the skills and experience of female academics by means of mentoring, coaching, workshops and courses. Other universities, meanwhile, have put in place policy measures to increase the upward mobility of women, for example a financial bonus for faculties when they promote a female academic to full professor. Two universities have created special tenure track positions for excellent female academics, who will be promoted to full professor if they receive good evaluations. The second category of measure addresses the impediments to female promotion caused by institutional factors, such as lack of transparency or professionalism in the recruitment practices. Chapter three will give a more detailed discussion of the special policies to enhance gender equality in this area. The last category is the most challenging: those policies which target cultural impediments within the university. This is the level of norms, values and stereotypes. Finally, some universities have commissioned research on the reasons for the under-representation of women in their academic staff (Timmers, 2006; van Engen et al., 2008). Both research reports have led to agreements on the measures that ought to be taken to enhance diversity in academia.

Although most universities have taken policy measures to increase gender equality, there has been a general lack of monitoring and evaluations of these policies and their effectiveness. Target figures often lead to window dressing unless pressure can be brought to bear on those responsible for meeting them. Chapter three will fully elaborate on this issue. These dynamics are also noted in the evaluation study by Timmers (2007), who indicates that policy measures have not, in practice, had the intended effect as the support at departmental level often is lacking (p.69). Administrators are eager to see quick results but disinclined to develop the policies that could be effective on the longer term. For that reason, measures are implemented inconsistently or ended prematurely. She also stresses that the implementation of policies in all faculties and institutions is highly dependent on some, or often just one, committed initiator in a position powerful enough to put pressure on his or her peers.

Within the framework of the European Equal project (1999-2008), several Dutch universities have been working together to encourage greater involvement by women in science. The project brings together universities and organizations that play a role in determining policy on science and research, and representatives of the target group. By sharing information and experiences from different perspectives, they have developed solutions such as best practices for retaining women in science and kept the issues on the agenda of university boards and the government.

## 2.6 Conclusion

The academic field in the Netherlands is the context within which academic appointments in the Netherlands must be considered, and as such it forms the backdrop to the analysis presented in the next chapters. This field includes thirteen universities which have a relatively autonomous relationship with the national government, meaning that universities are responsible for setting their own strategic research lines for the longer term. Due to long-term budgetary reductions and the rearrangement of government funding, financial resources obtained through research councils (second stream) and through contract research for organizations (third stream) are becoming ever more important. The scarcity of resources, in combination with the rigidity of the Dutch academic career system (formatiebeginsel), means that not all those academics eligible for a professorship can actually be appointed. The introduction of strategic and personal chairs and the upcoming tenure track system are two ways in which the Dutch system can be made more flexible. Although there is some variation between different universities and faculties, the recruitment and selection system for full professors has three basic phases: preparation, recruitment and selection, and nomination and appointment. The subsequent chapters will provide more detail about these phases.

Female academics are under-represented in all academic positions, except at the level of (under)graduates and PhD candidates. The Netherlands is towards the bottom of the EU league table in this respect, with only 11 percent female professors in 2007. This percentage is rising very slowly (Korsten et al., 2006; WOPI, 2007; VAWO, 2008), despite the fact that mobility within the highest echelons is substantial, as is the availability of female potential in most academic subfields. Special policy measures put in place by the government, research councils and universities have encouraged the promotion of female professors, but this has not been enough to ensure a gender balance among university staff. Additionally, current evaluations of these measures show on the one hand that these policy measures are seldom fully applied throughout all the faculties of a university, and that they are highly dependent on an enthusiastic initiator which reduces the chance of long-term successful implementation still further. Supporting women financially by means of special funding or mentorships and coaching is a first step, but will not address the structure of the academic system. The revision and/or transformation of existing policies and procedures is necessary to counter the cultural attitudes and perceptions that cause drop-out and discourage women from taking up academic careers. The following chapters will reflect on recruitment and selection practices and will offer some ideas for change.

# 3

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## Transparency and accountability as tools for gender equality

The academic professorial appointment system is often described as an opaque process in which an inner circle of elites selects new professors by means of an informal, closed decision-making process (e.g. Evans, 1995; Fogelberg et al., 1999; Husu, 2000). Recently, the emerging culture of 'managerialism' in academia (Webb, 1999; Borum & Hansen, 2000; Deem, 2003) has increased pressure on university organizations to make their policies and practices more transparent and accountable to internal and external stakeholders (West, Pennell, & Noden, 1998). Such calls have been further amplified by the findings of gender research: women would also benefit from more open and transparent appointment procedures (Allen, 1988; Academy of Finland, 1998; Husu, 2000; Ledwith & Manfredi, 2000; van Balen, 2001; Brouns & Addis, 2004; Rees, 2004; EU, 2008). Transparency and accountability are thus advocated as key instruments to improve the gender balance, and most Dutch universities have indeed taken measures to regulate the recruitment and selection process and clarifying it by means of clearer protocols and criteria (e.g. UvA, 2001; RU, 2004). This chapter presents a critical reflection on how transparency and

accountability contribute to gender equality and discusses the problems associated with achieving these goals in practice. The main question addressed in this chapter is: How are Dutch universities responding to the call for more transparent appointment procedures and greater accountability on the part of decision makers as a means to achieving gender equality? I will analyze the diverse problems that universities face when applying these tools at various stages of the appointment process. This will enable me to assess the value of these tools and offer advice about how they could be applied more effectively.

My theoretical framework is informed by feminist theory on gender equality and the concept of micropolitics. Gender equality can be conceptualized very differently, according to the context. Some of these conceptualizations tend to perpetuate the existing gender order rather than changing it (Magnusson, 2000). This study will draw upon a broad and comprehensive definition of gender equality which goes beyond simplistic notions of 'equal treatment' or 'difference' (Booth & Bennett, 2002; Verloo, 2005; Verloo & Lombardo, 2007), and focuses on changing those organizational practices and norms that are inherently gendered (Meyerson & Kolb, 2000; Nentwich, 2006). I use the notion of gender equality practices to refer to formal policies which aim to bring about gender equality, as well as to the actual application of these policies in recruitment and selection.<sup>13</sup> Gender equality is one way of practicing gender, but there are many other intentional and unintentional gender practices, some of which go against these equality attempts. I therefore make an analytical distinction between intentional gender equality practices and the often non-reflexive gender practices. I will examine how gender equality and gender practices intersect with, conflict with and anticipate each other. In this way, we may increase our understanding of the slow rate of change brought about by gender equality policies in higher education.

Furthermore, I draw upon the concept of micropolitics to account for the role of power in shaping and implementing gender equality policies. As mentioned in the first chapter, micropolitics concern the strategies and tactics used by individuals and groups in an organization to further their interests (Hoyle, 1982; Morley, 2006). These micropolitics must be considered when describing how policy plans are incorporated into daily practice.

To illustrate the role of micropolitics and gender practices in the implementation of transparency and accountability within academic recruitment and selection, I will draw on a qualitative content analysis of appointment protocols

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<sup>13</sup> Although the use of the term 'practice' for both the policy (norm) as the implementation of that policy may cause some confusion, I hold the opinion that both the articulation of a norm in a policy plan is as much a practice as the application of that norm.

(study C) interviews with committee members (study D), and supplement this with the statistical analysis of 971 appointment reports (study B). Protocols are seen as intentional practices which inform us about the formalized, ideal method of organizing the appointment system and the values of the organization behind them. The interviews and appointment reports provided information about the multiple ways in which these protocols were put into practice, and how they enhanced or counteracted gender equality.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section will outline how the concepts of transparency and accountability are debated in the academic literature and their relationship with gender equality. The second section will analyze the measures and protocols which universities are using to respond to the call for transparency and which have been enacted within the recruitment and selection process, and how these measures foster gender equality. The third section will focus on how these policies are used, evaded and altered within a highly micropolitical environment in order to reveal integrated gender notions and effects.

### 3.1 Transparency, accountability and gender equality

#### Transparency and accountability in organizational context

Although the terms 'transparency' and 'accountability' can seem ubiquitous these days, they are rarely defined with much rigor. One significant difficulty is that there is as yet no consensus on either the importance, or the precise meaning of these terms. Some authors see transparency and accountability as complementary goals. Other authors argue that an organization need not be transparent and yet can remain accountable (Siklos, 2003, p.280). Part of the vagueness of the terms stems from the fact that they are used in so many different issue areas (Florini, 1999, p.4). However, the roots of most definitions of transparency and accountability are found in the literature of political sciences and governmental institutions (West et al., 1998; Siklos, 2003; Neyland, 2007). These studies stress that governmental organizations should be transparent, meaning that organizations are called upon to make internal aspects of organization activity externally visible. By providing insight and internal information, the idea is that openness will reduce the scope for corruption or unethical practices. Siklos (2003) defines transparency as "a function of the quantity, type and clarity of information provided to the public", which stresses that it is not only about providing information but also about how the information is provided. In this study, I define decisions or practices as 'transparent' when information is accessible to outsiders, and when that information is accurate and comprehensible. The purpose of transparency is closely connect-

ed to enabling outsiders to hold organizations accountable for their policies and performance (Florini, 1999, p.5). We can see transparency as when institutions release information that is relevant to holding them accountable. In relation to accountability, I adhere to Giddens who states: 'to be accountable for one's activities is to explicate the reasons for them and to supply the normative grounds whereby they may be justified' (Giddens, 1984, p.30).

There are good reasons to believe that increased transparency and accountability in organizations would frequently be beneficial and often indispensable when the expenditure of people's taxes or savings is involved. Openness to the public means that procedures and decision making can be scrutinized by organization members, external observers, journalists and other interested academics and citizens. This reduces the likelihood of any suspicion or speculation with respect to the proper handling of (academic) decision making and public funds. It also encourages objective treatment within the process, and discourages nepotism and other inappropriate behavior (Svensson, 2007, p.127).

#### Multiple perspectives on gender equality

The concept of gender equality is frequently used in theoretical and societal debates in various ways, a range of contexts and with reference to a variety of problems and solutions (Verloo & Lombardo, 2007). These different conceptualizations can be traced back to three analytically distinct perspectives in feminist theory (Squires, 1999; Booth & Bennett, 2002; Verloo, 2005; Calás & Smircich, 2006; Nentwich, 2006). The first perspective has been named the 'equal opportunities' or 'equal treatment perspective' and is based on sameness or liberal feminism; the idea that women and men are equal and therefore have equal rights, as well as equal access to and equal representation in public life (Calás & Smircich, 1996, p.222). From this perspective, the aim of gender equality is to enable women and men to compete as equals in the workplace and the labor market and to create equal opportunities by eliminating structural and procedural barriers to women's success (Meyerson & Kolb, 2000, p.560). In other words, its aims are the inclusion of women into the existing social order without questioning the masculine, white, elitist, hetero-normative assumptions that underlie it.

The second perspective on gender equality has been called the 'difference perspective' and is based on standpoint feminism (Harding, 1986; Smith, 1987). It is based on the notion that men and women are different from each other, but that difference should not be read as inferiority. Masculine and feminine identities are ways of being that have been shaped differently for men and women by their different life experiences and social roles. From this point of view, the route to

gender equality is not to attempt to eliminate these differences, but rather to recognize and celebrate them (Meyerson & Kolb, 2000, p.562). Whereas equal opportunities theorists argue for women's integration into the world as it is, the aim here is to lessen the power of the male order, rather than to 'join the ranks' (Squires, 1999, p.117-118).

The third perspective is called the 'post-equity' (Meyerson & Kolb, 2000) or 'transformation' (Squires, 1999) approach and originates from post-structuralist feminism (Butler, 1990, 1992) and social constructionist feminism (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Lorber, 2005). According to this approach, gender is not a characteristic, but a social practice that constructs norms with white, heterosexual, class-privileged men as the neutral and objective standard. It is the whole gendered world itself that is problematized, not simply the exclusion of women or the existence of the male norm (Verloo & Lombardo, 2007). The focus for initiating change lies within disrupting this gendered world. "Once we identify the particular ways in which certain organizational, discursive or social practices produce gender inequities, they may become potential targets for experimentation and change" (Nentwich, 2006, p.503).

These three perspectives are not mutually exclusive (Squires, 1999; Verloo, 2005), and in this study, I use these perspectives as an analytical frame to indicate what kind of approach underlie university endeavours to increase gender equality. Therefore, I focus on gender equality practices that refer to the intentional, formalized policies that aim to bring about gender equality, as well as their actual application in recruitment and selection. My interest lies in how gender equality and inequality practices intersect with, conflict with and anticipate at each other. I will therefore make an analytical distinction in line with Chia and Holt (2006) between conscious and deliberate activities that are intended to cause something to happen (gender equality practices) on the one hand, and the often non-reflexive way of distinguishing between female, male, femininity and masculinity in daily practice (gender practices), on the other. Gender practices can lead to either gender equality or gender inequality.

Transparency and accountability as tools for gender equality  
It is widely recognized that co-optation and biased or gender-biased judgments are more likely to coincide with the presence of opaque and secretive practices. The transparency of selection procedures and the accountability of advisors and decision makers can therefore be seen as an important strategy to guard against the bias and arbitrariness of secret processes, and against the perpetuation of gender inequality in universities. Gender equality programs frequently set great store on transparent appointment processes; transparency is seen as a way of

increasing the likelihood of a fairer process and reducing bias. Studies on gender mechanisms in organizations emphasize that transparency enhances women's chances in promotion decisions and decreases the chance of bias (Allen, 1988; Martin, 1994; Academy of Finland, 1998; Husu, 2000; Ledwith & Manfredi, 2000; van Balen, 2001; Ziegler, 2001; Brouns & Addis, 2004; Rees, 2004). All these studies argue that (gender) bias is more likely to occur if assessments are based on obscure criteria and if the process of evaluation is kept confidential. However, few academics back up this hypothesis with empirical evidence.

A study by Van Balen (2001), which compared the position of women in the higher echelons of three universities in different countries – the Netherlands, Norway and the USA, provides some evidence that lack of transparency in selection procedures coincides with low success rates for women. According to Van Balen (2001, p. 65), non-transparent selection procedures leave room for decisions based on informal network connections or on the similarity of the candidates to the assessors themselves. She argues that in comparative terms, the university recruitment procedure for new professors in the Netherlands is one of the least transparent and also results in the lowest proportion of women in academic senior positions. A direct correlation between the degree of transparency and the success rate of women can, however, not be made (p.153). Another study involving the Netherlands, this time investigating nominations made by the universities for a prestigious research award, concluded that the transparency of procedures seems to be the key aspect (Brouns & Spits, 2001). The research, which focused on one Dutch university, showed that humanities and medical sciences were the only faculties in which the gender ratio of nominees was comparable to the gender ratio of successful applicants. These were also the faculties with the clearest reporting on selection procedures, criteria and outcomes. Visser and Heessels (2007) found similar research results when they conducted research into the assessment of research proposals in the Netherlands Organization of Science (NWO). Although no causal relationship was established, they remarked that the academic fields with the most transparency in their procedures were also the fields with better success rates among women.

Scholars in management and organization studies, too, argue that the chances of success for female candidates in selection procedures decrease when there is less guidance from concrete criteria and there is room for subjective judgments (e.g. Nieva & Gutek, 1980; Teigen, 2002). Some researchers have argued that women benefit to a greater extent from formal and quantifiable selection criteria – it seems that the more discretion is allowed in the selection process, the more susceptible these processes become to gender-discriminating recruitment practices. The more formalized, rigorous and systematic selection approach may, then, be

less discriminatory than the more informal methods because of the reduced scope for subjective interpretation.

Regarding accountability, Foschi (2000) shows that the effects of gendered double standards decrease when the assessors are required to make the assessment public and known to the assessed, thus holding them accountable for their decisions. She carried out several experiments, having the participants review the files of applicants for junior positions and make hiring recommendations (Foschi, Sigerson, & Lembesis, 1995; Foschi, 2000). She found that different standards are applied to men and women when assessing competence. These gender-biased judgments appeared to be pervasive: both men and women applied these double standards when evaluating themselves and others. These experiments also showed that providing hard and fast standards, rather than allowing assessors to generate and use their own criteria, reduces the gender bias. Double standards flourish when assessments, assessors, and criteria are not made public, leaving substantial scope for subjective and uncontrolled judgments. Evaluators who have to explain their assessments are more likely to assess men and women in equal terms.

Transparency and accountability are advocated as key instruments for achieving gender equality. Yet, it is striking that almost none of the studies mentioned provides empirical evidence or comprehensible guidelines on what constitutes transparency in the appointment of academic staff, and nor do they suggest how academic organizations might make recruitment and selection more transparent. The next section will examine such intentional gender equality practices.

### 3.2 Formal practices of transparency and accountability

Increasing prominence given to transparency and accountability within public organizations and within the scientific debate has led to a more urgent awareness of these issues at Dutch universities (e.g. OCW, 2002; VSNU, 2007). Many university policy makers have taken suggestions on board and argued for more transparent appointment procedures of academic staff. One significant difficulty in achieving transparency in appointment procedures in Dutch universities is the issue of privacy. It is difficult for most academic decision makers in the Netherlands to tread the fine line between transparency and confidentiality. Increasing the transparency of recruitment and selection practices requires disclosing information about the agents, criteria and decision-making process involved. At the same time, departments must maintain the right to confidentiality of professorial candidates.

According to the majority of the committee members interviewed, some candidates will not apply if their privacy is not guaranteed. Anonymity seems to be very important as the information from appointment reports show that candidates

who finish in second position on the shortlist often withdraw their candidacy at the moment the report is sent to the dean – and thus will be formally archived. In such a situation, it seems that the norm of transparency conflicts with the demand for privacy. Transparency, which as stated in the previous section means allowing outsiders access to documentation and decision making procedures, is therefore not feasible. The aspiration of transparency is not realized as universities prioritize the maintenance of privacy. Proceedings and appointment reports are not available to the academic community at large, but remain in files marked ‘confidential’. Only the faculty dean and the board of the university will receive appointment reports written by the committee including information about the candidates nominated and a summary of the process. The limited number of professors from other universities who are asked to confirm the choice made by the committee usually only receive the résumé of the candidate who is finally nominated. All the committee members and board members involved are required to maintain the privacy of the candidates and are therefore not allowed to discuss the proceedings with outsiders. The selection of professorial candidates is clearly, then, a matter of ‘bounded transparency’ since access is limited and only available to a very narrow section of elite academics.

In some other European countries, transparency in academic appointments and promotions is required by law. Swedish law, for example, requires that almost all the documentation and information on decision-making procedures is available to the public unless specific reasons exist to exclude this (Svensson, 2007). A chapter of the Swedish Higher Education Act provides an overall framework for appointments and promotions in higher education institutions, while locally determined provisions set by the higher education institutions themselves lay down the details (including the evaluation criteria). Although these criteria and provisions vary between different universities, they must work within the legal framework. In Finland, too, there are stricter requirements for transparency in procedures (Husu, 2000; de Milliano, 2005). Although the documents pertaining to the professorial appointment procedure are not made public, the short list of the nominated candidates is.

One possible explanation for national differences in legal requirements concerning transparency is the fact that government steering in the Netherlands is restricted to more global issues (see chapter 2). Universities remain responsible for setting their own strategic policy lines for the longer term and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science does not exercise its power to intervene at that level. The Freedom of Information Act (*Wet Openbaarheid van Bestuur*) or the Equal Treatment Committee (*Commissie Gelijke Behandeling*) do not include provisions equivalent to the Finnish or Swedish powers to enforce transparency. The fact that

other countries deal with transparency differently illustrates that there is a range of ways to deal with these privacy issues in academia.

The importance attached to privacy is demonstrated by the difficulty of collecting data for this study. Despite many requests to be present at the meetings of the appointment committees, such access was not granted because the privacy of candidates would be at stake (see chapter 1). To be allowed to investigate appointment reports, I was obliged to sign a privacy statement declaring that I would maintain the confidentiality of the information and conceal the identity of those involved. For some universities, the privacy of the candidates was given as the main reason for not participating in this research. Privacy is used as a justification for the failure of universities to be fully transparent and for not making information publicly available.

#### Professorial chair plans and protocols

Rather than allowing the general public access to documentation and decision-making procedures, universities have responded to the call for transparency concerning evaluation and promotion primarily in the form of professorial chair plans and appointment protocols. These documents set down the guidelines to be observed by the decision makers and committee members involved in recruitment. A professorial chair plan is a guidance document for decisions relating to continuing, reorienting or creating new professorial chairs. Such a chair plan usually sets out the guidelines for educational and research developments for the next five years. They give an overview of the professors currently in position and describe the requirements and wishes for the future. Appointment protocols prescribe how recruitment is to take place and which - regulated - steps are to be followed. Some universities have special protocols for professorial positions, while other protocols focus on the recruitment of all academic personnel regardless of seniority. “The function of the protocol is to inform the parties involved of their role so they can cooperate easily. This will contribute to a recruitment and selection process that runs correctly, transparently and decisively” (protocol, university 6, p. 1). Although protocols – sometimes used in conjunction with checklists – differ from one university to another, and sometimes even between the faculties of the same university, it is possible to identify six common phases in the appointment of full professors, which relate – explicitly or implicitly – to the issues of transparency, accountability and gender equality. The majority of the protocols address gender equality in some way, and sometimes more contain explicit and concrete policy statements “to the upward mobility of female academics” (e.g., protocol, university 1, 2, 6, 8.). The next section gives a fuller description of the protocols and how they address gender issues.

### Establishment of the chair

Before a chair falls vacant, a number of decisions relating to the continuation, reorientation or creation of a new professorial chair have to be made. This first phase in the professorial recruitment and selection procedure is not usually included in the protocols. Only three protocols (universities 2, 6 & 8) explicitly discuss the origin of the professorial chair:

A vacancy may result from a change in circumstances as stated in the faculties' strategic professorial chair plan, which includes all expected changes. The vacancy can also occur unexpectedly as a result of internal or external circumstances, for example a change in the views of the faculty or personnel developments. Circumstances concerning an incidental vacancy will be explicitly stated to the university board in the motivation. (protocol, university 8, p.1)

As this protocol indicates, the establishment of the chair is generally formalized in the professorial chair plan which serves as a guidance document for decisions on the continuation, reorientation and creation of new professorial chairs. Only one protocol mentions explicitly that when a decision is made about a vacancy, it "has to be decided if a vacancy initially should be 'reserved' for women" (protocol, university 2).

### Framing of the profile

The protocols aim to enhance transparency in the appointment process by clarifying the general criteria and the research area of the professorial chair. These elements are part of the basic profile, the drafting of which is commonly the first step in the appointment process described in the protocols. The idea is that if the requirements for the job and role are stated objectively and accurately, a better match between the individual and the organization can be made when it comes to making the selection. One protocol states that:

It is important both for the candidates and the appointment committee that the profile is sufficiently specific. The basic profile will form part of the appointment report and therefore also play a major role in the formulation of the duties eventually agreed upon with the successful candidate. (protocol, university 1, p.27)

In general, the basic profile consists of a structure report and a job description. The structure report provides information about the name, extent and level of the chair, a brief description of the field, the way the chair fits in with the existing academic staff and why the vacancy is open. The job description includes the tasks and

responsibilities will need to fulfill and also the skills a new professor should possess. The protocols make no explicit reference to gender equality.

### Functioning of the appointment committee

After the university board has authorized an appointment to the vacant chair, the faculty board will form an advisory appointment committee in consultation with the heads of the departments and managers involved. To ensure that the appointment committee is well-balanced, the recruitment and selection protocols provide guidelines for its composition in terms of the number of members and their function, position and gender. In general, the appointment committee is made up of five to nine people: the chair (either the dean of the faculty or the head of department), the manager of the research school, an external professor, a student or PhD candidate, a member of the department (often a professor) and a secretary or HRM advisor. One protocol states the following on the subject of the committee's gender composition:

The appointment committee must include several women. Only in exceptional circumstances may the number of women be reduced to one. (protocol, university 5, p.2)

Most other universities are less explicit about gender requirements, stating in their protocols that at least one of the committee members should be female but that if it is not possible to find a female committee member, they can decide not to (protocol, university 6). It is, however, stressed in the protocol that a female member of the same level is preferable, in other words a full professor.

### Recruitment

Firstly, in all the university protocols that were analyzed, hiring agents are strongly encouraged to fill positions by means of open recruitment in order to make the process transparent and fair. This implies that advertisements should be placed in scientific journals, daily newspapers, on the internet or other public media. In this way, every potential candidate has the opportunity to learn about and/or apply for the professorship.

When professorial vacancy arises, the vacancy must always be announced in the media as well as on the internet site. (protocol, university 6)

Means other than open recruitment are possible in exceptional cases, but must be discussed with the university board in advance. (protocol, university 8)

When committees wish to deviate from the policy of open recruitment, they must make this explicit and ask permission of the dean or the university board. Open recruitment is seen as one of the most important elements of guaranteeing a transparent appointment process.

In relation to gender equality, some protocols stress that the search for female applicants should receive explicit attention. “The basic principle is that regarding every top position (associate professor, full professors and management), specific action should be taken to recruit women. This could include special recruitment bureaus, unorthodox search mechanisms and international candidates. The committee is to detail the efforts that were made to search for female candidates in the appointment report” (protocol, university 7).

Another point made in the protocols which concerns gender equality is the explicit urge to encourage female candidates to apply in the advertisements (in the case of open recruitment). For example: “The faculty X is striving for an equal representation between men and women in all academic functions. Applications from women are actively encouraged”.

#### Selection

The protocols stress the importance of assessing the candidates according to clear criteria. Selection criteria describe the skills, knowledge, qualities, experience required for the role and are used as the basis for interview questions, evaluating candidates and short-listing applicants. According to the protocols, these criteria should be clear and objective and known to every candidate and committee member. It is therefore vital that everyone involved on the appointment committee understands the list of selection criteria and focuses on these throughout the assessment. The grounds for the selection should be included in the report of the committee’s activities. One of the protocols states:

Since candidates rejected at this stage are entitled to lodge an objection against the decision of the appointment committee, it is important that decision-making is transparent and defensible. (protocol, university 1, p. 31)

Some protocols provide checklists of the qualities or skills to be considered when assessing the professorial candidates. The main criteria are research, teaching, management and administration, and links with broader society. In none of the protocols is explicit attention given to gender equality in the appraisal criteria. Correction for time investment in scientific output is not officially included as an element in the recruitment and selection policies and protocols. One university indicated that it measures not only the quantity but also the quality of the research

output by assessing publications of the candidate. Only four universities which had introduced protocols including ‘gender-neutral recruitment’ (see next section) reflect on the use of selection criteria by asking the committee to reflect on whether the criteria had been properly appraised.

#### Recommendation and reporting

In the last phase of professorial recruitment and selection, the protocols state that the recommendations of sister faculties and the science committee are to be taken into account. The process finally results in an appointment report that is sent to the university board for approval and followed by an appointment. The protocols require informative and unambiguous appointment reports to be written by the committee, which describe the process and its outcome for the benefit of the university board. On the basis of this information, the board (or scientific committee) can determine whether this procedure was conducted properly and whether the decision to appoint the nominated candidate was justified. The protocols also mention that the university board has to return the reports to the chair of the committee if there is ambiguity surrounding any of the steps in the process (UvA, 2001).

Four universities have developed a ‘protocol for gender neutral selection procedures’ – a checklist to force the appointment committees to state their criteria clearly and justify their selection decisions in relation to gender. Each committee must fill in the checklist and submit this to the university board.

#### Gender equality in the protocols

Few direct references to gender equality are made in the appointment protocols. When analyzing these policies from the three perspectives on gender equality, gender equality is mainly conceptualized from an ‘equal opportunities’ approach in these appointment protocols, since they draw on equal access and equal representation in senior academic functions. According to this approach, it is structural and procedural barriers that obstruct the advancement and success of women, and women therefore need help to overcome them. Most policies are affirmative action policies, then, such as extra attention for women during the establishment of the chair and during recruitment, or including more women in the appointment committee. The intentional gender equality practices in the protocols consist mainly of mobilizing more female candidates and female committee members. In some protocols, it is stressed that explicit attention should be paid to the search for female applicants or that at least one woman should be appointed to the appointment committee. Many women have been appointed to personal chairs



in this way, by means of specific funding or by individuals who were aware of the under-representation of women, and adding women has had some effect. Nevertheless, as important as these measures are, when implemented alone as the primary solution to the problem of gender inequality among full professors, they have a limited effect on the structure, norms and practices within academia. They are based mainly on including women in the current order, but this approach is blind to the social structures of academic life and the power relations that actually produce inequality. Yet, this approach deals with the symptoms of gender inequality rather than the sources of inequality itself (Meyerson & Kolb, 2000, p.234). The ‘male’ model of the ideal academic does not appear to be under discussion. Female faculty members should be able to follow this model with a little extra help. Yet, the approach addresses neither the way men are ascribed quality, nor the way networking practices exclude women. The four universities that have developed and/or implemented a ‘protocol for gender neutral selection procedures’ have gone slightly further. These protocols address not only the numbers of female candidates and members on the appointment committee, but also potential gender bias in the criteria and the method of recruiting candidates.

The next section focuses on how the various protocols, the intentional practices, are dealt with in actual practice and gender is ‘done’ during the procedure.

### 3.3 Practicing transparency and accountability

Despite all the expected benefits, practicing gender equality by enhancing the transparency of the recruitment and selection process is hard to accomplish. In this section, I analyze the stories of the respondents and appointment reports to investigate how norms and formal practices involving transparency, accountability and gender equality are actually realized, contested, counteracted, and negotiated by the agents involved. In addition, the various ways in which micropolitics and gender come into play will be analyzed.

#### Establishment of the chair

In the first phase of recruitment and selection, the establishment of the chair, the professorial chair plan is designed to guarantee transparency and accountability, but this plan is not always followed. Protocols and the chair plan already leave scope for variation when they point out that the establishment of new chairs can be a result of “internal or external circumstances”. There is thus some flexibility in the creation of ‘personal’ and ‘strategic’ chairs since these are not necessarily included in the chair plan. According to respondents – mostly from natural and

medical sciences – deans or managers of teaching and research institutes regularly perceive a lack of expertise in their research group or note that one of their most brilliant associate professors is being approached by another university or medical centre. To rectify that lack of expertise, or retain the rising star for the own institute, the university may choose to create a new chair and the candidate in question is offered a professorship.

Yes, the professorial chair plan can be reoriented if the dean or the university board wants to appoint a particular candidate. (social sciences, man 10)

Then people will say ‘isn’t it about time we appointed this person, otherwise he [sic] will leave.<sup>14</sup> They will try to include his specific research area in the strategic chair plan. (medical sciences, man 1)

In some cases, respondents even argue that chairs are being created as a reward for ‘services rendered’.

R: You can imagine that someone has been very valuable for the hospital, someone who is not really ‘eligible’ [professorabel] for a professorship, but people really value him [sic]. It is possible it has to do with patient care, or that someone has established or reorganized the educational system in the faculty.

I: *Then it is some kind of reward?*

R: Yes, absolutely.  
(medical sciences, woman 13)

These quotes imply that the formal chair plan leaves scope for the creation of new chairs and that men and women can be appointed even when there is no official vacancy. The majority of committee members argue that the plan only represents a guideline that allows for the reorientation of a chair or the creation of a totally new chair. When explaining why the chair plan may not always be strictly adhered to, those interviewed mentioned not only personal qualities of a particular candidate or the need to employ him or her, but also the unexpected rise in student populations or the rise of new, innovative fields of study. The formalized professorial chair plan is, then, a less transparent and less important guideline for future vacancies than may initially be supposed.

It is not remarkable that the faculty chair plan is not a blue print but serves more as a guideline which is subject to change. A certain amount of

<sup>14</sup> Note those quoted constantly use the male pronouns ‘he’, ‘him’, etc. Chapter 4 elaborates further on this unreflexive connection between masculinity and professorship.

flexibility in policy plans ought to be expected. What is interesting, however, is under what conditions and circumstances the plan can be altered. Respondents' stories illustrate that adherence to the plan depends on the financial resources available, the status of the department and subsequently on the lobby skills of the head of the department, the division chairs or managers of research institutes. They can lobby the faculty board or the university board directly when they wish to nominate an (internal) candidate outside the chair plan. The next example shows that the possibility of establishing a chair may depend on the way managers are able to play this particular political game.

I: *And how does it work? Who is the one who 'fixes' these chairs?*

R: Mostly it is the department which says: 'Well, we have someone who is really good. We have to keep this person and we are going to take care of that'. It is an interesting game. Actually our university, our faculty board, takes the opinion that my department should not appoint more professors – we already have too many senior staff. If someone is really good, he [sic] meets the criteria and we can pay him, then the battle starts. It is a permanent battle. At the moment my department has two full professors. I want to increase that number to five, but then I have to arrange the money myself and organize all that. These are certainly some political and strategic games we have to play. (medical sciences, man 18)

This head of a medical department describes the creation of a new chair in the department as a "game" he has to play with his faculty and the university board. His depiction of "a permanent battle" is in line with the majority of respondents who also spoke of "a game", "being strategic" and "acting at the right moment". Respondents state that it is necessary to use strategic skills and the 'right' connections to establish or reorient a chair. This would indicate micropolitical activities such as cooperation: "I suggested renaming the chair and combining the expertise of those two chairs, which was an easy solution" (social sciences, man 2); competing interests: "There was only money for one chair in the department, and everyone wanted it so we had to pull it to our group" (humanities, woman 4); conflicts: "The university board did not want to approve our proposal for a chair because it was a internal candidate" (humanities, man 1); and speedy action: "We had to be very quick and I consulted and convinced the dean personally" (natural sciences, man 8). Below, two female professors illustrate how they used their political and negotiating skills when establishing a new chair.

I had to lobby quite a lot to bring this particular chair in. I talked about it with the dean at all sorts of social gatherings and receptions. Finally, the dean presented a

proposal, I convinced him and he was very eager to create a chair because the research area of this chair has a large student population and he also had some internal candidates in mind, which fit the position very well. (humanities, woman 8)

At that moment, there was a project running in which this candidate was put forward by the board to initiate a joint project with another medical hospital. That was when I said to the chairman of the university: "It is going very well, now we have to make sure that he stays with us. And I would like to talk with you about that, because he is really unique and we have to keep him". So, I brought it up on the right moment... that deal was struck by using subtle persuasion. (medical sciences, woman 11)

Both heads of departments lobbied their superiors using subtle persuasion during informal gatherings, which illustrates that deals are predominantly made behind the scenes. Most respondents are, as the quotes from the female professors illustrate, very pleased with their political negotiation skills, which they present as a capacity that a professor needs to have. They argue that political and strategic skills are essential for a full professor to uphold the interests of the research group in a competitive, academic community. A professor needs to keep an eye on the developments of the department and should deploy his/her diplomatic and persuasive skills to gain personnel and resources.

The lack of information in the appointment protocols and the accepted deviations from the professorial chair plans both allow micropolitical practices to come into play. This tends to detract from the transparency at the start of the appointment process, as the active invitation and negotiation role of a few academics is not reported. Information about this first step is not included in the appointment reports – in other words, no one is held accountable for this stage.

#### Gender in the establishment of the chair

For this first phase of appointment, the protocols contain hardly any guidelines to avoid unwanted gender effects. Only one protocol explicitly mentions that when a decision is made concerning a vacancy, it "has to be decided whether a vacancy initially should be 'reserved' for women" (protocol, university 2). According to those interviewed from this university, however, this element in the protocol is almost never considered by committee members. One exception was made when this university appointed several women at once to small part-time chairs to "juggle with the figures in order to make them more gender-balanced" (social sciences, man 13). Although, gender equality goals are ignored in the remaining protocols, some other universities have established special chairs for women, for

example the ‘Katrien van Munster Chair’ at the Radboud University Nijmegen, ‘Rosalind Franklin chairs’ at the University of Groningen and the ‘Opzij Chair’ at the University of Maastricht. These chairs were established following personal initiatives or lobbying by external funding organizations, not due to efforts of committee members in the early stage of a vacancy. Resistance to the suggestion of reserving or creating chairs for women is mostly prompted by the strong ideology of meritocracy: one should be appointed on the basis of merit and not gender. In social sciences and humanities particularly, special positions for women are seen as an outdated emancipatory method. Critics further argue that appointing women on account of their gender would also be disadvantageous for and contested by women themselves. In short, to rule that a vacancy is only to be filled by a woman beforehand is only a formal suggestion, not much taken up in practice and only half-heartedly followed up by one university. So, when this tool is used as a means to create greater gender equality, it is not done so as a matter of routine, but only in exceptional cases to reach target figures set by the university board.

Although intentional policies to increase gender equality are either absent in this phase or implemented only reluctantly, other gender practices are integrated in the establishment of the chair that can lead to either gender equality or gender inequality. In their use of political and strategic skills, I detect no differences between male and female respondents; they both shared an acute awareness of political power processes and the need to lobby for more positions when the opportunity arises. Yet it cannot be forgotten that lobbying can only be successfully achieved from a certain position of power within the academic system. The academics in positions of power are mostly men, especially in the Netherlands where 93 percent of the deans and 89 percent of all professors are male (Equal, 2006; WOPI, 2007). Women are, therefore, in a disadvantaged position when it comes to evading rules, mobilizing resources and becoming involved early on in the decision-making process. Chapter 4 will describe the lack of women in positions of power (gatekeepers) in greater detail.

In line with the policies of gender equality, although not included in formal policy, a stronger desire to appoint more women in senior positions can be detected, particularly in those fields where women are under-represented. In some fields – especially natural sciences – there also seems to be a stronger desire for female candidates who can act as role models to attract more (female) students.

I think it is much nicer. In our department, we have two women and one of my older colleagues, who has just retired, came by recently and he said: ‘It is much nicer now!’ And it is much more natural. It is not good that the physics community consists only of men. We have a big problem attracting younger people to the natural sciences –

we have this ‘nerdy’ image. Women were kept out or were not willing to enter this field. Why should you exclude half of our society if you want to have more people in science? (natural sciences, man 3)

Adding more women was perceived as the only way to break the circle of not having examples to emulate (role models) and help to lose the unfashionable image of the natural sciences. In this case, adding female scientists seems more of a means than an end.

These stories from the natural sciences contrast with most of the stories in the medical sciences, where the competition for candidates is also high. In this sub-field, the majority of the respondents talk about ‘scouting’, ‘lobbying’, ‘good deals’, ‘offers’ and ‘buying candidates from other medical hospitals’. It is common that for internal candidates who are eligible for a professorship, a chair is created to retain them at their institute. However, as one some respondent said: “This circus does not concern women”. According to a female manager of an academic hospital: “They do not expect women to leave if they are not offered a professorship. Men do, they go.” (medical sciences, woman 6). Furthermore, as the two quotes given by medical scientists above show, the respondents implicitly have a man in mind when they think of individuals who are valued and need a reward. This indicates that in this field, the lobbying activities of deans, head of departments and managers of research and teaching institutes concern primarily male candidates.

In the discussion concerning the creation of special women’s chairs, the meritocratic ideology and the maintenance of the status quo prevail. Combining equality policies based on an ‘equal rights’ with a meritocratic construction based on quality seems problematic (see chapter 5). Gender is practiced through the unequal gender distribution of the positions of power needed to negotiate chairs for one’s department successfully. What is more, even when the protocols make no mention of gender, it can still be actively practiced either by deliberately setting out to attract female candidates (as in the natural sciences) or, at the other extreme, by unintentionally excluding female candidates by explicitly retaining male candidates (medical sciences).

#### The framing of the profile

Appointment protocols recommend that the basic profile should provide a clear description which will provide transparent and unambiguous guidelines for candidates and committee members alike during the selection process. The basic profile includes the list of selection criteria that will be used to assess the candidates and is officially framed by a smaller committee – including the head of

department and/or managers of research/teaching institutes – or by a more extensive appointment committee. Although all protocols stress that basic profiles should be ‘sufficiently specific’, both in terms of formal job criteria (see the section entitled ‘selection’) and the disciplinary field, it is not clear what this means precisely in practice and how the profile committee can make the profile more specific. As far as specifying the disciplinary field is concerned, the only clue sometimes given is the reference to the type of chair; the profile of an ordinary chair is typically more general while a strategic/or personal chair is more specific. However, a lack of clarity means that committee members are free to decide how broadly they want to frame the academic field. For example, a university could open a vacancy in the broad field of marketing management or in a specific area of marketing such as customer-related marketing. According to the respondents, defining a profile in a broad or narrow sense affects the number of candidates, the quality of the candidates and will also impact on who makes the selection decision and at what point in the process.

#### *Broad profile*

When the profile is framed in broad terms, the disciplinary field is not specified in one type of bounded research area. Consequently, more candidates are considered eligible to apply. “You give yourself the opportunity to choose the best out of a large pool of applicants. The applicant who gives you the feeling that ‘you fit into our organization and into what we would like to achieve here’” (humanities, man 6). In line with this respondent, a small majority of the committee members argue that the decisive criterion is unlikely to be candidate’s specialization, but the fit between the candidate’s skills and the existing department. They are looking for academics with a certain track record in the general area in which the department or research group is operating. Subsequently, the successful candidate will have the opportunity to define his or her own research specialization.

I don’t think you can say: “We want a professor in clinical psychology that is going to focus on this particular area”. That is not important. You can’t expect that from a good professor. A new professor will join the department and do the things he [sic] has always done. And with the change the new professor brings about, you will see change in the rest of the staff. People will shift in the direction of the ideology of the professor. Not dramatically, but to a certain extent, yes. We search for an excellent researcher, first of all, and the specialization that that researcher brings along is quite another matter. (social sciences, man 10)

We are not defining the research topics ourselves. I mean, we want people with a

certain status, and they will bring a specific research area along with them. Fine. That means that we are going to develop a whole group of people that is going to be focusing on that area. Simple. (natural sciences, man 9)

The references to ‘good’ and ‘quality’ are interesting. According to these interviewees, excellence needs competition. A small majority of the respondents mentioned that keeping the profile broad is important because otherwise the number of candidates who will fit the profile is very limited, while some excellent candidates would be discounted. The underlying idea seems to be that when a department or group is searching for quality, the specific field which the new professor specializes in is of secondary importance. The broader the pool of applicants, the more excellent candidates can be found.

One consequence of a broad profile is that fewer discussions about the candidate’s exact specialization take place in the beginning, but the selection deliberations take place at a later stage of the process in the committee meetings, when members have to compare a diverse set of applicants. Appointment committee members do not have specific criteria against which to assess the candidates, which increases the scope for personal and political choices. My respondents claimed that broadly defined profiles can lead to disagreements, power struggles and even conflicts during the selection phase, as they provide fewer guidelines on which to base the final decision. Some members argue that a broader profile leaves room for personal preferences in terms of research topic and/or the personality of a candidate. Research specialisms can constitute spurious grounds for committee members to favor a specific candidate, besides the formal criteria stated in the job profile. Committee members will always have their own interests and preferences and micropolitics come into play when committee members see their own interests reflected in different candidates. For instance, one respondent stated that: “I didn’t want another professor in that specific field, because then they could form a power block in our department” (humanities, man 5); or: “That candidate was rejected because the subject was too close to the current professor’s research and he didn’t want the competition” (humanities, man 1); and: “That candidate had no chance at all, because his paradigm was completely different from our research group” (social sciences, man 8). Hence, a close relationship can be seen between the research subject, or the methodological and epistemological approach, and the construction of quality or suitability. According to Knorr Cetina, (1999) epistemic cultures function as a primary orientation and research style characterizing research groups and research fields. These preferences function as a frame of reference within which ‘scientific quality’ is constructed. Similarity or dissimilarity of research topic can be a major influence on the framing of the profile.

*Narrow profile*

Another possibility is framing the profile in a narrow way, specifying in which academic field a new professor will work. In this case a department searches for a specialist or wants to fill a certain gap in expertise. Such an approach limits the scope of the research area for which candidates are being searched, meaning that fewer candidates are eligible. It could be claimed that a narrow profile is more transparent than a broader profile since the committee will have more specific criteria when recruiting. Thus a narrow profile may, at first sight, look more transparent and reflect the requirements of the protocols, but it can also mean losing the broader view of talented people. Furthermore, a narrow profile is also frequently used to conceal a hidden agenda. The reports and interview data provide ample evidence of situations where a narrow profile has been used to legitimize the selection of a certain preferred candidate. This candidate had in fact already been singled out and the profile had been formulated in such a way that the committee would be very likely to appoint that candidate. This leads to a predetermined and almost undisputable outcome.

Some profiles are ascribed to certain candidates. You see people with the potential and quality in a field we would like to attract to our university. Then you formulate the profile in such a way that they will fit into it. (social sciences, woman 1)

Once they have singled someone out, the next step is to draw up an official announcement for the newspaper. To put it bluntly, 'okay, we want Mr. Johnson. What is Mr. Johnson good at? He is good at a, b, c, d, so let's write an announcement with characteristics a, b, c, d. Then you get 40 or 50 applications, but of course Mr. Johnson fits best. That sort of thing happens frequently. (natural sciences, woman 16)

When a candidate has already been picked, and no other candidates are in fact required, the group or department is usually not informed or invited to participate in the decision-making process. The actual selection has already taken place in a preliminary phase but the appointment committee often provides a semblance of transparency. Then the profile is informally framed behind the scenes by influential academics – the head of department, managers teaching and research institutes – and goes directly to the dean or the university board for authorization. The person who drafts the job description determines the focus of the search. These academics in positions of power are able to manipulate the profile frame in a certain direction.

The potential for influence is enormous. For example, I can propose installing a chair for this fellow and then we arrange the paperwork and everything fits perfectly well

into our policy. I lobby the dean and some other colleagues and after that leave it with the head of department and the university board. Then it is almost a done deal. Only after that, the committee is formed and it will mostly be an 'open' procedure, but if somebody is prepared well and fits the profile perfectly, you will not find a better candidate. (medical sciences, man 14)

This respondent in medical sciences explains how he is able to influence the process according to his own preferences. He has to make a plausible argument to the dean and other full professors that the nominated person is the best qualified person for the job, and then the candidate is presented to the university board. Since the university board does not have the same knowledge of the field of potential candidates, they will invariably accept the decision of the professor in that field. Even if other colleagues in adjoining fields suggest other candidates, the profile will still fit this particular candidate best. Here, too, the quality argument is advanced: committee members argue that if one really wants good quality candidates, one has to attract them to the university and not make them compete with other candidates. It could also be argued that 'quality' is constructed in these cases (see chapter 5). The whole procedure seems transparent and open, but is in fact preconceived and engineered by only a handful of people.

*Gender in the framing of the profile*

In this second phase of recruitment and selection, no reference is made to gender issues at all in the protocols. However, gender practices in this phase are ambiguous. On the one hand, a broader profile increases the chance of female candidates applying, especially since several committee members contend that women tend to apply only when they completely fit the profile. An example is given by a medical scientist:

In my opinion, men apply for the position even when they are doubtful about whether they fit the profile, whereas women only apply when they are completely sure. (medical sciences, man 3)

On the other hand, a broader profile means that the selection decision becomes less transparent since there are fewer criteria on which to base the appointment decision. As a result, there is more opportunity for micropolitics, and strategic or personal choices by committee members. Various scholars have indicated that the scope for gender bias increases when the criteria are not transparent or are open to wide interpretation (Martin, 1994; Ziegler, 2001). Because clear performance criteria and

standardization are factors which help to combat discrimination, this would appear to make the case for a narrowly framed profile. However, a narrow profile means that talented female academics may be overlooked or rejected because they do not fit the profile. What is more, the data from the appointment reports confirm that a procedure with a particularly narrow profile limits the number of eligible candidates and increases the scope for one or two influential individuals to manipulate the process. Furthermore, strategic choices are made in this phase in the framing of the profile or the make-up of the appointment committee which can prove decisive for the final nomination. Women are under-represented in these committees. The next section will expand on the importance of a gender-balanced committee.

#### Functioning of the appointment committee

The recruitment and selection protocols give guidelines for the composition of the appointment committee to ensure the creation of a well-balanced appointment committee. These guidelines cover the number of members and their function, position and gender. In practice, the data from the appointment reports indicate that a committee is not set up in all procedures; nine percent of the procedures investigated involved no committee at all. These cases primarily involve the appointment of internal candidates or when quick action is needed to appoint an international candidate. In this type of case the dean seeks direct approval from the university board. Study B shows that this occurs particularly frequently in the scientific disciplines of Economics (19%) and Law (13%). Although the reasons for these 'quick appointments' are mainly explained in the appointment reports, the lack of transparency created by the absence of an appointment committee to verify the quality of the candidate is remarkable, particularly given the considerable importance attributed to the role of the committee in the protocols.

Additionally, some committee members reason that the appointment committee is sometimes 'purely decorative':

It was an internal candidate who had already been spotted, and had written a profile himself which was sent to the committee. In that profile, a lot of political and strategic choices had already been made. And then the résumé was included. In this specific case I was not impressed at all, but the decision had already been taken. It was self-evident that this was going to happen. My opinion was not going to change that (medical sciences, woman 13)

I was a committee member and committees have to consist of a certain number of members, and then suddenly I was in. And of course you don't say no. These things

are simply jobs that have to be done. And those were quick procedures with a favored candidate. It was a nice conversation and then you would look at the résumé and say that it looked good, and then it was all settled. And of course there was a draft of the appointment report which I glanced through politely and moved a comma so that it was clear I had read it. (medical sciences, man 3)

In such cases, the only task of the committee is to formalize and legitimize the decision. These 'decorative' appointment procedures occur mainly when the decision to appoint a certain candidate has already been made, as illustrated in the section concerning the framing of the profile. Although these interviewees realize that it is a 'done deal', this does not seem to trouble them. Loyalty to the chairperson or key academics who have arranged the deal is, according to these respondents, a reason to accept the nominated candidate without question. This would suggest that micropolitical processes are at play in the composition of the committee. The chairperson – in consultation with the dean, head of department and manager of research institute – could strategically choose certain members whom he or she knows will favor a particular candidate. Some committee members appeared to reflect on these strategic coalitions in their stories about 'not upsetting the boss', 'returning a favor', 'loyalty' and 'putting the right people in position'.

During the last procedure I was involved in, there was a kind of theatrical performance for the candidate [the selection interview]. That is when a committee member could formally obstruct the whole process. Well, I know better than to do something as ill-advised as that. It's your boss and the university board who have decided to nominate this particular candidate. So you would have to be very argumentative or have other problems to want to do something like that. (social sciences, man 12)

R: Well, I have to say, these appointment procedures are highly political and are used to return a favor to someone.

I: *What do you mean by that, exactly?*

R: For example, two internal candidates were recently appointed to another department in our faculty. They were both members of each other's committees. You see? Of course, the first one knew he had to approve the nomination because the other would be in his committee too. And this works the other way around as well. Simple. (natural sciences, woman 15)

The composition of the committee can be manipulated to ensure a certain outcome and members play a strategic role in this process. In this political game, the power positions of committee members can vary enormously. The influence of the student or PhD candidate – whose presence is meant to guarantee democratic

selections – and the HRM advisor is minimal compared to the chairperson, who has a decisive say. I will elaborate on two different roles within the appointment committee: the chairperson and the HRM advisor.

Some of the respondents that had chaired appointment committees used words such as ‘guide’, ‘influence’, ‘control’, or even ‘manipulate’ to show that they have room for maneuver in the decision making process. A chairperson in natural sciences confided:

When I see an excellent candidate before me, as the chair I can manipulate the process so that in the end, that candidate is nominated. That is how it works. It is a question of pitting people against each other, controlling the meeting, and choosing the right moment to make very positive noises about that specific candidate. That much is true. But, again, this is only the case when the criteria are not clearly formulated at the beginning of the process. I could do it as chair; I think I could do it as chair. (natural sciences, man 11)

This respondent is convinced that he is able to help his favored candidate in the appointment procedure by playing strategic games and persuading other committee members. This means that the chair of the committee has a real opportunity to influence the outcome of the process, especially when he or she has a direct link with the dean or the university board.

The protocols also stress the importance of the presence of an HRM advisor whose role is “to advise the chair of the committee concerning job profiles, the internal career trajectory, the use of assessment centers and so on” (protocol, university 9, p.3). Policies concerning gender equality are also mostly the responsibility of the HRM advisor. The HRM advisor should monitor the progress of the procedure, but is not an official member of the committee and therefore has no authority. The appointment reports show that despite the emphasis in the protocols, an HRM advisor is not always included on the committee. Only few committee members notice the absence or recognize the value of the HRM advisor’s presence.

Nobody from the personnel department was involved. I think that is strange, that such crucial decisions are made by people who in fact have no idea about how you should assess people. (medical sciences, woman 20)

When a HRM advisor is present on the appointment committee, they often lack the power and inside knowledge to detect political games and favored candidates. The influence of the advisor depends on how much support the dean or committee

gives for suggestions and interference. Research carried out at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam (Vriens, 2006) showed that HRM advisors stress the lack of transparency in the procedures, but often do not have the power to persuade the committees to manage the procedure differently.

#### Gender in the functioning of the appointment committee

In order to promote gender equality, formal rules about the number of women on the committee are usually included in the protocols. My data showed, however, that this is not systematically followed up in practice. Table 3.1 shows the number of female committee members in relation to the gender of the appointed candidates. It shows that 44 percent of professorial appointment committees in the period 1999-2003 were exclusively male. This means that requirement for the inclusion of at least one woman, as laid down in the majority of the protocols, is ignored almost half of the time. The majority of the appointment reports do not clearly explain why no woman was included. Other reports simply state: ‘no woman available’.

Table 3.1: Number of female committee members per committee and gender of appointee

Female members	0	1	2	3>	
Appointed men	305 (93%)	235 (86%)	102 (78%)	18 (78%)	660
Appointed women	24 (7%)	37 (14%)	29 (22%)	5 (22%)	95
<b>Total</b>	<b>329</b> <b>(44%)</b>	<b>272</b> <b>(36%)</b>	<b>131</b> <b>(17%)</b>	<b>23</b> <b>(3%)</b>	<b>755</b> <b>(100%)</b>

Source: 755 appointment reports (study B)<sup>15</sup>

This table further shows that there is a significant relationship between the number of women on a committee and the gender of the candidate appointed. The chance of female applicants being appointed increases significantly when more women sit on the appointment committee ( $p < 0.05$ ). Mixed gender committees with at least

<sup>15</sup> The N of this analysis does not match the total number of analyzed reports (N=971) as the ‘missing cases’ for the variable ‘number of women in appointment committee’ are taken out of the analysis.

two female members generally appoint more female professors: the number of female candidates appointed grows from 7%, 14%, 22% and 22% for committees including 0, 1, 2 and 3 or more women respectively. The formal rule of having at least one female committee member in the appointment committee would appear to make sense, therefore. It is not clear, though, that the chances of women candidates are directly affected by the presence of women on appointment committees. The academic subfield can act as an intermediate variable for this significant relationship. Both phenomena (more women in committee and more women nominated) may be influenced by the percentage of women working in these subfields. Analyzing these subfields separately, in social sciences I still find a direct correlation between the participation of women in the committee and the percentage of women nominated. Meanwhile in subfields with a low percentage of women, such as the natural sciences, the correlation is much smaller since there are fewer women to choose from.

Another significant factor is the relative power position of the committee members. When I examine the actual position of the women participating in the committees, the female member is a student or PhD candidate in one out of five cases. Making the – usually female – HRM advisor responsible for guarding the gender equality policies is also problematic given that these advisors lack authority. Only five percent of the female committee members were present in the capacity of chair. There are far fewer female heads of department than male, and even fewer female heads of research or teaching institutes or faculty deans, which means that women are less likely to be in a position to successfully negotiate a professorate or to become chair of the appointment committee. As shown above, the interviewees attributed substantial influence to the committee chairs when it comes to determining the final outcome of the appointment procedure.

In addition to the intended equality consequences of the formal policy of including more women – women of a higher position than student, PhD candidate or HRM advisor – on the committee, gender is also practiced in the way committee members conceive of the effects of these measures. I detected three ways of looking at gender in the committee's composition: 1) by arguing that women make a positive difference, 2) by denying gender relevance and 3) by arguing that female committee members are more critical assessors.

The majority of the respondents argued that participation of female committee members changes the atmosphere. It would be “less competitive” (medical sciences, woman 6), “a more friendly environment” (natural sciences, man 9), “aimed at consensus” (humanities, man 1). Women would pay more attention to social and personal criteria “not only to the number of publications and the scores in the citation index” (medical sciences, woman 4) and “take the candidate's

life history into account” (social sciences, man 13). Several respondents, both men and women, indicated that a committee which includes women is not only more pleasant for female candidates, but for most male candidates, too. This argument seems to fit the statistical analysis that women have a better chance of being appointed by a more gender-balanced committee.

A small number of committee members contended that a gender-balanced appointment committee is of no relevance at all to the search for quality. In their opinion, the gender of the assessors makes no difference at all, because a female candidate with the necessary qualities will be identified by both female and male committee members alike. These respondents base their argument on the objectivity of the selection criteria and the principle of meritocracy: “It is a question of counting. You want the person with the best research qualities, man or woman” (natural sciences, man 14); “It is nonsense to think that men and women make different judgments. They both search for the best person for that position and both want quality” (social sciences, woman 1). These academic respondents reject the notion of any difference in the positions of male and female committee members and also ignore all evidence of the way in which gender stereotypes invade assessor's evaluations, as demonstrated by various scholars (van Vianen, 1987; van Vianen & Willemsen, 1992; Valian, 1998; Cole et al., 2004).

Some respondents also argue that having more female committee members by no means guarantees a change in the prevailing atmosphere or attitudes on the committee. Women are not necessarily expected to speak in favor of women, and the presence of a female committee member is no guarantee of a ‘female friendly’ committee. A few respondents even contended that they had experienced the opposite and that the presence of female committee members had actually been counterproductive. According to them, women would be more critical or less willing to voice their opinion during the decision-making process. They gave examples of women being critical or even hostile towards female candidates.

Women adopt an extremely critical attitude towards each other, and that doesn't make it any easier. I don't know why, but this is the case. Men are also critical towards each other, but there is no solidarity between women to build on. (humanities, man 6)

This finding is in line with the findings of other research that women do not necessarily make more gender-neutral assessment decisions, and that women are not automatically more favorably disposed to giving other women more opportunities (e.g. Graves & Powell, 1995; Foschi, 2000; Cole et al., 2004). It is even claimed that women judge female applicants more negatively than male applicants. One



explanation involves the so-called ‘queen bee’ effect among female assessors. Recent research by Ellemers et al. (2004) shows that female academic members of staff adopt gender-stereotypical perceptions. For instance, faculty members at one Dutch university perceived female students to be less committed to their work, and female staff endorsed these gender-stereotypical perceptions more strongly than men (2004). Other research has explained women’s mutually critical attitude in terms of social identity: individual upward mobility involves distancing oneself from the group stereotype, and taking on stereotypical views from the in-group members. In other words, the token (Kanter, 1977a) tries to distance herself from the group she perceives as the out-group. A woman in a senior position will therefore be less likely to address women’s or emancipatory issues. Particularly in cases where only one woman is appointed in the committee, she could run the risk of tokenism: visibility due to her gender rather than her professionalism. In an attempt to redress this imbalance, she may in some cases be stricter in her judgement of female candidates.

Despite this ‘queen bee’ effect, tokenism or other possible backlashes to gender equality practices, an analysis of my quantitative and qualitative data enables me to state that the presence of women in the committee significantly increases the chances of female applicants and improves the atmosphere. Feminist scholars have used the concept of ‘critical mass’ as a term to describe how the effect of increasing numbers of women enhances gender neutral decision making. Kanter (1977a) sets the figure for critical mass at 40 percent. Moreover, it is equally important that the female committee members hold positions of authority, such as chair, full professor or dean, and to avoid the risk of tokenism by including more than one woman. The inclusion of a diverse group of academics in terms of function, position and gender will enhance the transparency of the appointment committee.

#### Recruitment

All recruitment and selection protocols stress the importance of open recruitment in a transparent and fair process. Deviation from the open recruitment system is only permissible in ‘exceptional cases’. What constitutes an exceptional case, however, is not clarified in the protocols and it seems that precisely those ‘exceptional cases’ are very common in professorial recruitment. My analysis of the appointment reports revealed that 64 percent of all newly appointed professors in the period 1999–2003 were recruited through a closed appointment procedure. This high number of closed procedures appears to indicate that universities are less strict in following the formal policies and protocols, in spite of the importance of these for transparency and accountability. There is a discrepancy between the official standards concerning ‘open recruitment’ and the reality of practice. Policy

makers and committee members were surprised when confronted with the high number of closed procedures for vacancies. The majority of committee members described an open procedure when asked about the way in which professorial recruitment was generally organized. However, when asked to describe the last procedure they had been involved with, they often began by saying: “Well, that was a different story” (natural sciences, man 5); “That was not a standard procedure” (social sciences, man 13); or: “We had to organize that a bit differently” (medical sciences, man 16). The closed procedures are not considered standard, but rather slipped through the system.

In principle, all recruitment is open, but in fact we often make a one-on-one arrangement. (social sciences, man 13)

When you have spotted a talented scientist in your field, you are not going to tell him [sic] that he has to wait in line to apply here together with other, less qualified, candidates. He has to be sure that we prefer him. (natural sciences, man 3)

As a result of the novelty of the field of study, a closed procedure was chosen. We consulted three external references and a candidate who was already related to the institute. For this chair, Dr. X was the only candidate available. The main task of the appointment committee is to establish whether Dr. X satisfies the requirements and the basic profile. (appointment report, university 10, nr. 24)

These quotes illustrate that committee members and board members often find it necessary to make exceptions to the open system, mainly because they have a favored candidate. A small number of committee members confided that there was ample opportunity to deviate from the protocols. This was also reported in research by Van Balen and Van den Besselaar (2007, p. 22) on university careers in the Netherlands. They illustrated that search committees are free to scout even though open recruitment on the basis of a broader profile is suggested in the protocols. The reasons behind the widespread use of a closed recruitment system, as described by my respondents, and the consequences of using such a system are elaborated in chapter four.

Despite the fact that recruitment by invitation is common practice, the procedure preferred by university boards remains open recruitment. In some appointment procedures, an advertisement is placed due to pressure from the dean, the board or the HRM advisor. The respondents, and also the appointment reports, reveal that the consequence of this pressure to make the vacancy public can lead to a veneer of ‘transparency’. Vacancies are advertised in media, but in

reality the preferred candidate is already known and other academics who might apply for the position are part of a “purely decorative” appointment procedure. At one university (appointment report, university 1, nr. 90), for example, a position became vacant because the former full professor had passed away. The head of the department had spotted a young female candidate from outside the department. This female candidate was not willing to come to the university as an associate professor, so he wanted to offer her a strategic professorship. After discussing his plan with the university board, they insisted on open recruitment for the position. The position was then advertised and the selected candidate was invited to apply and appointed. At department or faculty level, agents use their strategic skills to alter or bend the rules to their own advantage. There is an apparent conflict of interest between the university board or policy makers, and the committee members who have to carry out those policies. The way in which they conceal their actions for the university board is evident in the following quote:

Sometimes we place an advertisement even though we already have a candidate in mind. But you never know if everything will work out the way you planned it. It is important not to create the impression that you had planned everything beforehand. For the board, it is important to project the image that we recruit in an open way and did nothing underhand. Everything was visible and transparent for everyone.’ (medical sciences, woman 6)

There were only a few cases of my respondents complaining about or questioning the use of closed procedures. Two retiring full professors sent a letter to the dean to express their concern that they were worried about the proceedings of a particular appointment procedure.

We have become aware that a number of new candidates have been invited outside the normal channels. One specific individual, who is totally unknown to us, appears to have been approached for the vacancy. We would like to urge you to put an open procedure in place, so that the proposed candidate can be considered along with the rest of the candidates. (appointment report, university 13, nr. 46)

#### Gender and recruitment

Two protocols explicitly require committee members to consider female internal candidates that may be eligible for the position before proceeding to an open recruitment. It is not clear, however, whether these ‘eligible’ candidates must subsequently compete with other candidates recruited through an open procedure.

An explicit search for women in parallel to the open recruitment procedure is stipulated by one protocol: “The committee will also try to find suitable candidates – particularly women – through its own networks” (protocol, university 8). However, this suggestion also came under scrutiny from my respondents, who stressed that quality should be the first consideration in making appointments. They claimed that selecting the best candidate is about quality and not about gender. As a project leader of the Equal project stated: “They are not interested in arguments like ‘this isn’t fair’” (social sciences, woman 2).

Another way in which the protocols promote gender equality is by requiring advertisements for vacancies to encourage female candidates to apply (in the case of open recruitment). Research into gender policies (Timmers, 2007, p.23) has indicated ten universities have adopted such a policy. In practice, the composition of the text in the vacancy announcement is determined at the departmental or faculty level, so whether such a phrase is included in the advertisements depends on the personnel department of the faculty. Some of my respondents were mildly positive about this policy measure: “We really need more women (natural sciences, man 3)”; or: “It can do no harm” (social sciences, woman 14). However, a majority of the committee members were not convinced of the necessity of preferential treatment.

The guidelines in the protocols concerning an open recruitment process, it seems, are ignored in two-thirds of all recent professorial appointments. Deans and the university board give permission to committee chairs to deviate from the guidelines given in the protocols, or committees do so without formal approval. This significantly reduces the transparency and accountability of recruitment procedures, and can lead to all kinds of gender effects. In closed recruitment procedures, candidates are invited through formal and informal networks, which means that not all eligible candidates have the opportunity to apply. This excludes eligible men as well as women. The case of the preferred female candidate mentioned above indicates that women are not necessarily systematically excluded, but the repeated references to ‘he’ when mentioning about talented new candidates who need to be ‘snapped up’ quickly by means of a closed procedure would appear to be revealing. There is a pervasive tendency to see the professor as male. Committee members tend to select applicants who share their own characteristics, including gender (e.g. Martin, 1994; Özbilgin & Healy, 2004, p.678; Bozionelos, 2005). Coupled with the importance of mainly male-dominated networks in these closed procedures, this gives men a head start. However, pressure from the board to open up these procedures and announce the vacancies publicly often leads to the mere semblance of transparency. One could argue that closed procedures or less transparency could also lead to greater gender equality by privileging women.

Some protocols make explicit mention of the search for female applicants within the internal organization or via networks of the committee members, even before the vacancy is officially advertised. The majority of the protocols also recommend the inclusion of a special invitation to women or a phrase about preferential treatment in advertisements for full professors. In practice, these measures are often not implemented. The special search for women is often cursory, and the formulation of the advertisement is left to individual departments, who are less concerned with formal gender policies. Even when advertisements do mention the preferential treatment of women, this is not necessarily followed up in the selection process because committee members disagree on the need for preferential treatment.

### Selection

In this phase, the appointment committee conducts its actual assessment of the candidates. Protocols mostly describe a general list of criteria: the quality of the candidate's research, the candidate's experience in research, teaching, management and administration, and sometimes the candidate's practical experience (patient care, consultancy) and contributions to the wider societal debate. Such general criteria are made public in the job advertisement. Respondents argue that these criteria, listed according to the guidelines of the protocols, constitute the first selection mechanism which determines which applicants to invite for the selection interviews (the short list). Candidates with insufficient significant scientific output, teaching or management experience are filtered out immediately.

Appointment reports show that three to five candidates are typically invited for interview with the appointment committee. All shortlisted candidates meet the standard criteria and, it might be assumed, are similar in terms of quality. However, committee members contend that it is often very hard to make appointment decisions between candidates who are ostensibly of a similar standard. There can be subtle but significant differences: one may be an established senior academic who is often abroad; another may be a promising young talent with less experience in management and administration; the choice may be between a generalist and a specialist. The official criteria are often not laid down in such detail and do not provide detailed guidelines on which to base the decision on, especially when the profile is framed in a broad sense. The following quotes illustrate this:

Once a candidate has a certain number of excellent publications, it ceases to matter whether he [sic] has 20 or 40 publications. (medical sciences, man 1)

Last year, we had a procedure where we were torn between two candidates. One of the candidates was, scientifically speaking, very good – a man. The other one was a

woman whose fewer scientific credentials were not quite as good, but she had much better social skills. Was his superior scientific ability large enough to pass over his lack of social skills? Well, we were not comparing like with like. (natural sciences, man 12)

In this phase, the criteria become more tacit and are often described in very abstract terms. For instance, committee members talked of a candidate that “had a strong vision, knew where the field was going”, “was creative”, “innovative”, had “a certain level of ambition”, “an excellent academic reputation”, or “was an internationally renowned scientist”. The vagueness of the term ‘excellent reputation’ will be elaborated in the next chapter. The findings revealed that committee members based their decisions on multiple criteria – and interpretations of criteria – and that those meanings were characterized by confusion, contradictions, and even conflict.

Recently we had a discussion because I wanted someone who was able to manage and inspire younger people, you know. We have one member of staff here who is a terrible manager, really terrible, but he is a good scientist. That was why he was appointed some years ago. I do not want anyone else like him in this department, but I know others have a different opinion about that. (natural sciences, man 3)

Some colleagues thought he was not ‘orthodox’, and I argued that he was a good mathematician! He has an eye for other disciplines. Well, he didn’t make it. (natural sciences, man 5)

This lack of transparency in the selection criteria means that the selection phase can serve as an arena for micropolitics. It appears that the interview is the phase of the appointment process that enables the most powerful, and maybe the least unproblematic, forum for influencing the outcome of the process. This stage is prone to manipulation (in order to filter out or favor certain candidates). Because the criteria are flexible and dependent on context, it is possible for the criteria to be shifted during the appointment procedure. This happens because committee members change their opinion or obtain new information, but also as a result of power games. Earlier in this chapter, it was pointed out that the power position of the chair is of vital importance since the chair is able to influence the outcome. Other committee members are also able to influence the process, however.

R: Of course, I have seen committee members manipulating the outcome of the interview... hmm... this is hard because of the anonymity... One of the committee members was put forward by his team to achieve a certain outcome. They [this specific team] absolutely didn’t want candidate A.

I: *Why not?*

R: I'm not sure, but I suspect the head of department had worked with this person, and they weren't actually friends, you know. But putting the head of department in the committee would be too obvious, would have aroused suspicion. That sounds like it was set up. (humanities, man 1)

In this specific case, a committee member was added to the committee by the head of department to prevent the selection of candidate A. The committee member in question was told to filter out that candidate, whose entry to the organization was perceived as a threat to the power network of the head of department. I subsequently asked this respondent how this committee member had manipulated the rest of the committee.

For me, it was quite obvious; he [committee member] argued that he [the candidate] was not an inspiring teacher. But he had plenty of publications. And teaching was not that important. It was just a premise on which to criticize him. (humanities, man 1)

By playing down the abilities of the 'undesired' candidate or making an inflated evaluation of the performance of the 'desired' candidate, committee members can manipulate, or at least influence, the outcome. In this phase, it is hard to compare candidates objectively, and there are no standard criteria available to evaluate them.

### Gender in selection

Standard protocols do not contain equality policies to mitigate any gender effects in the selection phase. Only the universities with the protocols for gender-neutral recruitment and selection pay any attention to the nature of the criteria (not only research criteria) and the way they are used (taking into account actual research time). But even at these universities, this issue is often neglected.

If it [fewer publications as a result of career interruption] is clear from the résumé, then one does not reason: 'But she had a part-time position for many years', or 'she did not work for two years'. That is not presented as a valid argument. They simply check whether you meet the required standard or not. The bottom line is you have to take care of how much work you are publishing, otherwise you are not eligible, no matter what. (social sciences, man 5)

Well, the committee does not take that [women leaving academia to bear children] into account. They simply count the number of scientific publications. While if you were being really fair, you would consider the time someone has been working in that particular field and the extent of the hours worked during the week and relate that to the SSCI and impact scores. (social sciences, man 6)

We only have one criterion: the list of publications. If women want to work part-time, that's fine. But when you apply for a position here and you have half of the number of publications you should have had, the committee will never invite you for an interview. (social sciences, man 11).

However, part-time work or spending time outside academia results in lower publication rates and less experience in important areas such as teaching and management. This disqualifies academics without a regular – 'masculine' – career path. In a climate in which each publication counts, women (and men) who have worked part-time during a period when they had small children, will easily lose out (van Engen et al., 2008). Although this applies to both men and women, the adverse effect was detected more strongly among women. Women have more temporary and part-time contracts during their career (Korsten et al., 2006; WOPI, 2007). The fact that women lack research time (a significant criterion in recruitment for senior academic positions) is also demonstrated by Visser and Heessels (2007) in their study into applications for grants from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research.

Another important set of gender practices in the selection interview are gender stereotypes. This will be elaborated in chapter 5.

### Recommendations and reporting

After the appointment committee has nominated one or two candidates, the protocols stress the importance of checking the selected candidate(s) externally with relevant faculties at other universities, the 'sister faculties', and – when available – internally with a science committee. This measure is taken since the university board, which has to make the final decision, does not have a sufficient knowledge of the relevant field and therefore relies on information and opinions from internal and external experts. Since there is no public openness in the process – due to privacy – this is the crucial point at which 'outsiders' are allowed to see into the proceedings of the process and the criteria used. This stage concerns the accountability of the decision makers to their peers. To be held accountable for one's decisions is to explain the reasons behind them and supply the normative grounds on which those decisions may be justified.

### *Sister faculties*

After the committee has selected a candidate, the protocol requires that the nomination and the basic profile are approved by relevant sister faculties at other Dutch universities. The opinions of the sister faculties should be included in the final

report which is sent to the dean. An examination of these reports showed that most lists of nominated candidates are not scrutinized in detail and approved without any difficulty. Should any negative advice be given by sister faculties – mostly as a result of doubts about the scientific quality of work – this hardly ever influences the nomination. In none of the 971 reports was the nomination of the candidate affected because of negative advice from sister faculties. Although this requirement for external advice increases the accountability of the process – other parties can evaluate the decisions made – respondents confirm that it has a limited influence on the process. One example of this relates to the nomination of a male professor. The appointment report is rather vague but the criticisms of the sister faculties are specific and unequivocal, particularly concerning the applied closed procedure.

As far as we know, no advertisements were placed and the sister faculties were not asked to recommend names for the chair in question [beforehand]. Also, we regret that the appointment report was not included, so we could only evaluate the appointment on the basis of the enclosed résumé (appointment report, university 2, nr. 102).

In the case of another appointment, a sister faculty argued that the appointment report was not clear and that they considered the candidate unsuitable for a professorial position. They stated: “The nominated candidate does not fit the profile. Furthermore, he has not published many recent articles in international journals. This does not convince us that the nominated candidate is capable of initiating and leading an important research line.” Another sister faculty argued that the same nominee was “completely unknown in this area”. They subsequently recommended the names of other potential candidates which were – in their opinion – more suitable for the position. The final sister faculty expressed their concern after reading the letter of recommendation. However, despite this disapproval, the dean decided to appoint the candidate without further explanation.

The disregard of the advice of sister faculties was verified by a large number of respondents. They argued that the approval of sister faculties is now of minor importance. Several people even expressed their doubts about this practice because of the increased competition between institutions, the time-consuming nature of the procedure and the fact that it is not an objective tool for assessment.

The consultation of sister faculties is not a neutral advisory instrument. It depends on who is asked to give an opinion of the nominated candidates. Sometimes a number of people are asked to give their views on the candidates’ capacities. I have also been asked to give my opinion and I have to tell you honestly that if I think someone is good, I give my subjective impression and I do not check the track record. [...] There are no rules, so everybody does it differently. (humanities, woman 3)

The fact that ‘everybody does it differently’ is also the reason for large discrepancies between the recommendations of sister faculties.

Another point which must be noted is that the candidates themselves are not allowed access to the sister faculties’ recommendations. The external advisors cannot be held accountable for their advice and the candidate is not able to react to the advice given. The recommendations of sister faculties may therefore increase accountability in professorial appointments, but they hardly affect the final decision.

#### *Science committee*

Some universities and faculties have a science committee which monitors the decisions made by the appointment committee at the beginning and the end of the process. For example, they check that the basic profile corresponds to the recommendations in terms of completeness and scope and that the profile does not resemble one individual too much. This committee is also responsible for approving the appointment committee’s nomination for the post. Not all universities and faculties have science committees, or use them in recruitment and selection.

#### *Final appointment report*

The last section of the protocols concerns the appointment report which is submitted to the board of the university. The board decides on the basis of this report whether procedures were followed properly and the decision for the nominated candidate can be justified. This report will detail the proceedings of the selection process and on what basis the appointment committee ranked and nominated the most relevant candidates. Some universities even have checklists for the use of the appointment committees when they are preparing such reports. Most of the protocols provide a list of items which the report is to include: the basic profile; letters from sister faculties recommending candidates; the deliberations of the appointment committee; a résumé of the nominated candidate(s); the recommendation of the science committee; the recommendations of sister faculties concerning the nominated candidate(s); a letter from the dean; and, if necessary, letters from experts/referents.

My study of 971 appointment reports revealed that they varied enormously in scope and style. Some gave detailed consideration to all applicants for the position and the criteria against which they were assessed, while others gave only the name of the person who “was obviously the most suitable candidate”. In the majority of the reports, one or more of the items listed above was missing. This variety in the reports is explained by the varying requirements which the dean

of the faculty or the board of the university imposes on the appointment reports. Some universities and faculties are stricter and more accountable than others. In medical sciences, in particular, the reports contained a minimum of information. At one university, a number of reports were missing entirely, without any clear reason. Upon closer inspection, it became clear that most reports were written as a matter of routine. The qualities listed in the original announcement of the vacancy or the basic profile are often simply repeated in the written accounts with no further elaboration or argumentation about why the nominated candidate – as opposed to other relevant candidates – had proved to be the most suitable candidate for the position. When a professor is recruited on the grounds of competence, the abilities of the nominee are typically presented as self-evident. Equally typically, however, what merit or competence actually mean remains unspecified. In many reports, the final choice is barely justified. A description is given of the first nominee and – where applicable – of the second on the list and this choice is then elaborated very briefly. In some universities the protocols stress that it is important to clarify why female candidates were not nominated, but more often these arguments were not given or limited to a cursory statement such as: “There were no female academics for this position available” (e.g. appointment reports, university 2, nr. 2, 6, 9, 14, 17, 18, 24, 37, 39). There were respondents who stressed the importance of accountability in the process.

Imagine a situation like this: there are two candidates – a good one and a bad one. But you want to appoint the bad one, for whatever reason. Then it is not that complicated to write the advisory letter in such a way that the bad candidate was the best you saw. [...] In those reports, you usually only see the story of one candidate. That is strange. [...] When I ask those people what grounds they have based their decision on – questions like ‘why was this candidate nominated and the other one wasn’t?’ – then a lot of people say: ‘well, I don’t know, but when I read the résumé it didn’t look convincing’. When hard criteria play no role, or are not elaborated, then I am afraid that many candidates are eliminated unfairly. And not only women. I would like more accountability in the whole procedure. If you do not take care, you will end up with a number of candidates while some other candidates have dropped out. The question is whether those candidates have fewer qualifications than the others. (natural sciences, man 11)

This candidate stresses the necessity of being accountable for the choices made during the selection process. He argues that, if committee members are held accountable, the likelihood of unjustified decisions, or decisions based only on ‘gut feeling’, is reduced. In this respect, the fact that sister faculties, scientific commit-

tees and finally the board are asked to approve the nominated candidate, increases the likelihood that the selection of candidates is properly considered.

#### Gender in the reporting phase

Four universities have experimented with protocol guidelines or checklists for gender neutral recruitment and selection. None of them have been properly evaluated so far, hence it is not clear if they have actually been implemented. Under pressure from the equal opportunities committee, the university that introduced the special checklist for gender-neutral selection planned to evaluate the use of this checklist (research notes, December 2005). Unfortunately, they were unable to do so as only five percent of all checklists were actually filled in and sent back to the university board. Additionally, the majority of the committee members interviewed were not keen on the introduction of such protocols or checklists specifically for gender-neutral selection. This resistance was mainly motivated by the fear of more rules and bureaucracy. Protocols and checklists regarding gender-neutral selection criteria or special action for female academics only add new rules to the current protocol. These key figures view the call for transparency as involving an increase in bureaucracy and even a violation of their autonomy.

This is not the way it works. And it all ends up in a new kind of bureaucracy in which we have to add some rules or comments about why we did this and why we didn’t do that. Really, the system is self-regulating and it all works fine. Others should not endlessly interfere. (social sciences, man 3)

Look, every strategic plan for universities of course includes terrific target figures for the proportion of women. If I see that, I laugh my head off over and over again, as target figures do not change a thing. You have to go further and say: ‘We have target figures and we will also provide the incentives to achieve them.’ Then, something would actually happen. (social sciences, man 6)

Where protocols and policy measures are not actually put into practice, we can speak of a ‘paper tigress’. Since there is no sanction for failing to returning the checklist, most committees see it as bureaucracy and find that it takes too much time to fill in. As one member of the equal opportunity committee stated: “We are not able to evaluate this measure because departments do not return these protocols – there is no sanction on not returning the protocol. Such procedures often require powers to induce disclosure, either by coercion or by incentive.

### 3.4 Conclusion

It is commonly supposed that transparency and accountability foster gender equality. This research contributes to our knowledge of how far that assumption is actually valid by examining how this the call for transparency and accountability have been translated into policy plans by universities and how these plans have been implemented in practice. This chapter has provided insight into the multiple ways in which the notions of transparency and accountability are put into practice in academic recruitment and selection, and how this has enhanced – or hindered – gender equality.

I can conclude that transparency and accountability are widely acknowledged to be important. However, the absence of a law to force the public disclosure of appointment decisions allows universities to use arguments about the protection of privacy to refrain from making recruitment and selection procedures more transparent. In the Netherlands, the goal is mere semi-transparency or ‘bounded transparency’ and, in practice, recruitment of academic staff is becoming still more opaque. Instead of allowing real access to the appointment procedure, university managers and policy makers try to make the process more transparent by formulating protocols concerning academic recruitment and selection which provide steps and guidelines to be taken into account by the decision makers and committee members involved.

Some of these protocols explicitly refer to gender equality. The gender equality practices mentioned mainly pertain to the mobilization of (potential) female candidates and the inclusion of female members on appointment committees. These protocols, then, mainly adhere to gender equality from an ‘equal opportunities’ perspective – helping women to adjust to the male world. As important as these measures are, when implemented alone as the primary solution to the problem of gender inequality among full professors, they have a limited effect on the structure, norms and practices within academia. Only four protocols take the concept of gender equality one step further by drawing attention to potential gender bias in recruitment practices and selection criteria. This approach of gender equality in the protocols comes the closest to the ‘transformation’ perspective of gender equality, which is needed to evoke change in organizational practices.

The implementation of these protocols seems to be a different matter. At all stages of the appointment process, I have observed micropolitical dynamics and gender practices which go against the regulations for transparency, accountability and gender equality. The various actors in the process have their own agendas which interfere with the goal of increasing the openness and formalization of procedures. Furthermore, I detect a difference between – on the one hand –

the university boards and policy makers who stress the importance of a more professionalized approach, and the committee members on the other hand, who are critical or even cynical about the policies concerning transparency and/or gender equality, and tend to dismiss them as bureaucratic. The policies that explicitly address gender equality issues – such as ‘searching for women’ and ‘reporting the number of women in the process’ – seem to cause particular resistance and are often ignored. The reason that academics do not support gender equality practices is related to the underlying ideology of merit. According to these key academics, meritocracy is hard to reconcile with measures to increase gender equality. Again, I can detect an ‘equal opportunities’ approach to gender equality – men and women are equal and therefore it is not fair to help one or the other.

Due to a lack of commitment on the part of key figures and a lack of pressure from the university board, the protocols mainly remain a paper tigers. In the most extreme case, the policies to promote transparency and accountability have been countered, for example by committee members using techniques and strategies to appear to be transparent or to be following the gender equality regulations while manipulating the system in their interest behind the scenes. Because increasing transparency and accountability generally require institutions and individuals to release information that they are accustomed to withholding, transparency and accountability will rarely come about unless pressure – from the university board – can be brought to bear.

As well as the fact that policies on transparency in general, and on gender equality in particular, have barely been implemented, it was possible to detect that some elements in the process of recruitment and selection inherently are almost impossible to formalize or to make transparent. As the academic field is a political arena, micropolitics interrupt some of the good practices and attempts to make things more transparent. In this murky field, gender practices in the form of stereotypical ideas about male and female academics and unintended consequences of the gendered academic structure, will inevitably come into play. In the initial phase of the academic appointment process, the tasks of job creation for protégé(e)s, acquiring permission to establish chairs, and the drawing up of long and short-lists – including the assessment of references, are all usually done behind the scenes. Then, during the actual recruitment, the process tends to be conducted more openly, particularly when defining the job specifications and assessing candidates’ presentations and interview performances. However, the justification of the final selection in the appointment reports is very uneven and seldom fully transparent. Even if all those policies on transparency and accountability in recruitment practices that have been proposed had actually been implemented, the process would always retain for a certain degree of opacity. In other words,

the standardization of academic appointments in protocols and the guidelines for transparency and accountability will never prevent committee members from continuing to select applicants who share their own characteristics and who are thus more likely to be male than female.

Paradoxically, the introduction of policies to increase transparency and accountability has actually legitimized the reproduction of gender inequality in recruitment and selection practices by veiling possible gender inequality practices in a certain spurious 'objectivity'. By claiming that appointment procedures are rather transparent, certainly in relation with the ideology of merit, the claim of possible gender bias in appointments is almost unattainable. Although universities emphasize the importance of the issue of gender equality, we seem to have reached a point where it has been 'dealt with', although the policy goals have barely been achieved. The fact that this lack of implementation is often in visible also tends to close down any further debate.

## 4

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### Practicing gender in academic gatekeeping

To understand how gender is practiced in professorial appointments, it is necessary to examine the formal and informal methods used to recruit new professors. Recruitment is the process concerned with finding and identifying potential candidates (Jewson & Mason, 1986). The previous chapter showed that the majority of new professors are recruited through closed procedures, whereby candidates are invited to apply by scouts. Scouts are academics in key positions of influence who are actively involved in the search for candidates; they determine which candidates are nominated and which remain excluded. This power to grant access can be termed a gatekeeping role. Gatekeeping is, following Husu's definition (2004, p.69), an institutional process that can control or influence entry to a particular area, the allocation of resources, information flows, the setting of standards, the development of a field and its agenda, or the external image of a field. This chapter will focus on gatekeeping as the dominant process in closed recruitment practices. The main question here is: How is gender practiced in the gatekeeping process for professorial candidates?



In order to address this question, I will draw on social network theory and critical studies of men and masculinity. The gatekeeping process involves a great deal of networking, which is a dynamic gender process (Benschop, 2009). Network studies have shown differences between men and women, both in the structures and the outcomes of networks (e.g. Ibarra, 1993, 1997; Podolny & Baron, 1997; van Emmerik, 2005), but further understanding of actual networking practices is needed to understand how these unequal gender outcomes come about. Furthermore, theories on gender including men and masculinity studies are highly relevant, here, because almost all gatekeepers are men in influential positions, recruiting new professors through their formal or informal networks. In critical studies of men and masculinity, men are gendered, and the hegemonic power in men's positions is the focus of attention (Collinson et al., 1990; Kimmel, Hearn, & Connell, 2004). This study also includes men and masculinity in the gender analysis by making men and masculinity explicit, and questioning their extensive power and control in recruitment and selection. To illustrate multiple gender practices in gatekeeping, I will draw upon the empirical data gathered from the appointment reports (study B) and interviews (study C). The appointment reports provided information about the type of recruitment (open/closed) and gender of the appointee. The interviewees were asked to describe the most recent procedures and were asked about 'the initial recruitment', 'the search for candidates', and 'formal and informal networks'.

This chapter is organized as follows. First, I will view the concept of gatekeeping through the theoretical lenses of social network theory, critical studies of men and masculinities, and the potential – but largely unexamined – links between the two. In the second section, the empirical data will be presented which will shed light on how new professors are recruited and the justifications given for active scouting. The identity of these gatekeepers, who are assigned to identify and invite eligible applicants, will also be explored in greater depth. Finally, the third section will argue that practices of gatekeeping and gender are closely bound together, by outlining four interrelated ways in which gatekeeping is gendered.

#### 4.1 Organization network theory and critical studies on men and masculinities

##### Academic gatekeeping

Merton (1973) describes the gatekeeper role as the 'fourth major role' or function of academics, alongside those of researcher, teacher and administrator. He argues that the operation of the gatekeeper role affects contemporary science in different

ways. First, with regard to the allocation and distribution of personnel, gatekeepers are "asked to evaluate the promise and limitations of aspirants to new positions, thus affecting both the mobility of individual scientists and, in the aggregate, the distribution of personnel throughout the system" (1973, p.522). Second, the gatekeeping role is present in the peer panels which determine the distribution of fellowships, research grants, and honorary awards. Husu undertook a research project in 2004 concerning gatekeeping positions in Finnish research funding. She argues that gatekeeping may be used by some individuals or groups in gatekeeping positions to promote their own or their reference group interests while excluding or holding back certain other groups (Husu, 2004, p.70). The third gatekeeping role is organized principally through the sub-role of referees – those charged with assessing the validity and value of manuscripts submitted for publication – and of editors and editorial staff making the final decision of which work will be published in scientific journals. In this area, some research has been carried out concerning the peer review process and journal reviewers (e.g. Hojat, Gonnella, & Caelleigh, 2003). Journal reviewers have a vital role, not only in influencing the journal editor's publication decisions, but also in the very nature and direction of scientific research. Because of their influence on the outcome of peer reviews, journal reviewers have been aptly described as 'the gatekeepers of science'. In this research, I concentrate on the first gatekeeping role – that in which scientific elites are asked to nominate, evaluate and promote professorial candidates, because that role is most closely linked to recruitment and selection, the topic of this study.

To analyze to what extent gatekeeping is a gender practice and gatekeepers practice gender, it is necessary to focus on social practices within recruitment where the processes of inclusion and exclusion by gatekeepers are constantly occurring. Earlier research uncovered institutional mechanisms that reinforce women's exclusion from the academic recruitment process. Some researchers indicate that women are more successful in open competitions for professorships than in the more closed invitation procedures (Portegijs, 1993; Academy of Finland, 1998; Husu, 2000; van Balen, 2001; Benschop & Brouns, 2003). Husu (2000) examined the outcomes of the different procedures for academic professorial appointments in Finland from 1997 to 1998 (N=179) and found a clear pattern: women were appointed twice as frequently in open competition as in the invitation procedure. Harris (2002), meanwhile, examined the status of women in international management. A key finding of her study was that the selection system used for international assignments had a critical effect on the outcome: the predominant use of closed, informal selection processes created unintended gender biases. The influence of informal processes was evident in the directors' responses concerning selection procedures. These included the use of informal networks by either decisionmakers

or potential applicants in order to secure their desired outcomes, which usually included male candidates. On the other hand, recent research on Dutch male and female physicians (N=78, 39 male, 39 female) (Kaandorp, 2005, p. 817) indicated that female professors (69%) were appointed in recruitment by invitation significantly more frequently than male professors (51%). Thus, the research outcomes on the effect of the type of recruitment – open or closed – on women’s chances is not univocal. Statistical analyses of the relationship between recruitment methods and the proportion of women and men appointed do not show that women always fare better when recruitment is open. In this study, it is necessary to go beyond the statistics of men and women appointed and turn to the organizational processes and practices which relate to mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion.

#### Mobilizing masculinity

The majority of research in (academic) organizations which takes gender in consideration, refrains from gendering men explicitly and overlooks men’s part in reproducing gender (Hearn, 2004, p.61). Gender inequality in academic top positions concerns not only women, but is also about men, male-female and male-male relations. Considering men as gendered means that previously taken-for-granted powers and social practices of men can be considered (Hearn & Collinson, 2006). Critical studies of men have documented that academia privileges a particular form of masculinity, based on the devaluation and exclusion of women and femininities (Knights & Richards, 2003). They also demonstrate that there is not one type of masculinity; and that it is not only women who are excluded or discriminated against. Therefore, the concept of hegemonic masculinity was introduced: a cultural and historical variable and ideal typical form of male heterosexuality fixed on dominance over women and other – peripheral – masculinities (e.g. Connell, 1987; Connell, 1993). This hegemonic masculinity functions mainly as an ideal stereotypical model of masculinity which, in the academic context, involves making oneself available full-time or more, and an aggressive, combative and self-promoting attitude (Holton, 1999).

Martin (1996) has recorded many ways in which men maintain managerial power within the appointment and selection process. She builds on the concept of ‘doing masculinity’, developing the concept of ‘mobilizing masculinity’ – “practices wherein two or more men concertedly bring to bear, or bring into play, [hegemonic] masculinity/ies” in their subsequent work (Martin, 2001, p.588). In her research project, Martin distinguishes two types of masculinities that are mobilized in this way, contesting and affiliating masculinities. The first relates to men acting in concert to distance – differentiate or separate – themselves from

others by showing their superior rank or status, obtaining control over others, or deriving benefit from the work done by others. The second way of mobilizing masculinity relates to men who align – connect, link – with others in ways that benefit self, others or both (ibid, p.604). This concept of mobilizing masculinity is extremely relevant to the way in which men form, use and maintain network connections when selecting candidates for predominantly male committees. However, the mobilization of hegemonic masculinity is not only something men do; in my opinion, women also perform or mobilize hegemonic masculinity and in that way produce and reinforce gender inequality in academia. The following section will analyze gatekeeping in relation to men and women mobilizing hegemonic masculinity and femininity in their search for candidates in informal networks.

#### Organization network theory

Organization network theory is also essential to any understanding of gender practices in gatekeeping. Here, I build on Benschop’s work (2009) that argues that networking and gender are intertwined, that networking is a gender practice and gender is being practiced in networking. Networks are defined as a set of nodes (or actors) and the set of ties (or relationships) between those nodes (Brass, Joseph, Greve, & Tsai, 2004). The total number of network connections is also called a person’s ‘social capital’ (Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 1998). Abundant empirical research has demonstrated that participating in (scientific) networks is essential to a successful career (Granovetter, 1974; Ibarra, 1993; Kemelgor & Etzkowitz, 2001) since these networks can provide access to certain positions, information and support. Gatekeeping implies being part of or having network connections with the dominant coalition. Because gatekeepers use their formal or informal networks to attract and gain information about potential candidates, a diversity of network connections becomes extremely important. The literature reveals that women experience difficulties in gaining access to networks, especially in organizations where those in power are predominantly male (Adler, 1993; Rubin, 1997; van Balen, 2001; Harris, 2002). This is largely explained by the mechanism of homophily. Homophily (i.e. love of the same) is the principle that contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001, p.416). A related phenomenon is homosociality – seeking, enjoying and/or favoring the company of the same sex – and the ‘similar-to-me-effect’ (Byrne, 1971; Rand & Wexley, 1975).

The existence of homophily has been discovered in a vast array of network studies. In their extensive review paper, McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook (2001) cite over one hundred studies that have observed homophily in, amongst

others, age, gender, class and organizational group roles. Homophily results in personal networks that are homogenous in terms of many socio-demographic, behavioral, and intrapersonal characteristics (ibid. p.415). Individuals in homophilous relationships share common characteristics (beliefs, values, education, etc.) that make communication and relationship formation easier. To test the relevance of homophily, researchers have distinguished between chance or baseline homophily and choice or inbreeding homophily. The former refers to homophily that could be expected to occur by chance, while the latter is the amount of homophily over and above this expected value. Chance homophily represents a bias that leads similar people to associate more often than average, given their relative numbers in the opportunity structure. Demographic similarity leads to perceived similarity in attitudes and values, which in turn leads to interpersonal attraction (Graves & Powell, 1995, p.86). Chance and choice homophily can negatively impact on women's – but also peripheral men's – opportunities in male-dominated organizations. This study will not simply take homophily as an explanation for the exclusionary effect of networks, but it will demonstrate how homophilous networks affect the recruitment decisions made by gatekeepers.

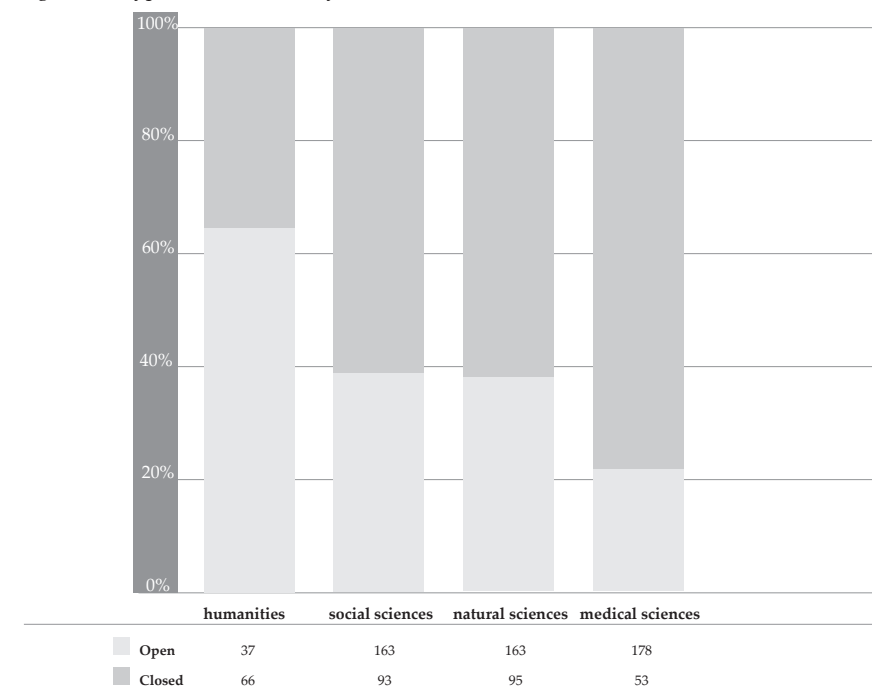
In organization network studies that include gender, gender is seen predominantly as a variable (Alvesson & Billing, 1997). These studies have shown the substantial differences between men and women both in the structures and in the success of their networks (Smith-Lovin & McPherson, 1993; Ibarra, 1997; van der Hulst, 2004; van Emmerik, 2005). They demonstrate that networking is crucial in the development of one's career and that women have fewer connections to the dominant coalition, but they do little to address the question of how these negative consequences for women come about (Benschop, 2009). There is still much to learn about how people behave in networks, about their actual networking practices (Shaw, 2006). This research contributes to the theory of gender in networking by going beyond mere sex differences and using a conceptualization of gender in relation to gatekeeping that is considerably broader than the categories of 'men' and 'women', extending gender to processes and practices as well. I will investigate how men and women mobilize specific forms of masculinity (or masculinities) and femininity (or femininities) in the gatekeeping process. First, I will expound on the recruitment process of full professors.

#### 4.2 Professorial recruitment in practice

Gatekeeping processes notably take place during the recruitment phase, in which a university department publicly announces a vacancy and/or starts the search for eligible candidates. As shown in chapter 3, the various ways of recruiting new pro-

fessors can be situated on a continuum between the extremes 'open' and 'closed'. In an open recruitment process, an advertisement is placed in scientific journals, daily newspapers, internet or other public media. In this way, everyone with appropriate qualifications and experience has the opportunity to apply for the vacant position. The actual selection decisions are made in a later phase by committee members through consensus. In a closed recruitment process, however, the vacancy is not announced publicly; instead, academic scouts invite 'suitable' candidates to apply through formal or informal channels. In the Netherlands, these closed procedures predominate, especially for the recruitment of more senior personnel. From 1999 until 2003, the majority (64%, N=848) of newly appointed professors were recruited by closed procedures. Figure 4.1 shows that only in the humanities are the majority (64%) of the appointments made formally and through open competition. All the other academic subfields recruit mainly by closed procedures; natural sciences (63%), social sciences (64%), and medical sciences (77%).

Figure 4.1: Type of recruitment by subfield



Source: 848 appointment reports (study B)<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> The N of this analysis does not match with the total number of analyzed reports (N=971) as reappointments and 'missing cases' for the variable 'type of recruitment' are taken out of the analysis.

My data did not, however, confirm an unequivocal relationship between the gender of the appointed candidate and the nature of recruitment. Table 4.1 shows very small gender differences – women were appointed slightly less often through closed procedures – but the differences are not significant. The vast majority of both male and female professors were recruited using closed procedures (64 and 60%).

Table 4.1: Type of recruitment by gender of the appointee

	Open	Closed	
<b>Men</b>	265 (36%)	478 (64%)	<b>743</b> <b>100%</b>
<b>Women</b>	42 (40%)	63 (60%)	<b>105</b> <b>100%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>307</b> <b>(36%)</b>	<b>541</b> <b>(64%)</b>	<b>848</b> <b>100%</b>

Source: 848 appointment reports (study B)

In practice, however, both closed and open procedures show many variations and this makes the division between open and closed recruitment more ambiguous. In some recruitment practices, for example, a department has scouted a particular scientist and is willing to create a chair for this candidate. In some of these cases, no appointment committee is installed to assess the candidate but the decision is made by the head of department and the dean (closed). Another form of a closed procedure involves searching for several candidates within networks of key figures or among the colleagues of adjoining faculties. In such cases, candidates still have to be nominated, but – when several candidates are involved – a competition between different candidates takes place during the selection phase (semi-closed). In open recruitment, a certain number of candidates are informed about the vacancy by an advertisement or through formal or informal networks. All these candidates compete on an equal footing for the professorship (open). Recruitment by invitation can also take place alongside the open process. The vacancy is advertised and people can apply, but academics are invited to apply simultaneously through networks (semi-open). Although this more subtle distinction between open and closed recruitment cannot readily be seen from the appointment reports, it is possible to provide information about the type of recruitment and number of candidates.

The table shows that in no less than 61 percent of all the appointment reports which mentioned the number of candidates, committee members assessed

only one invited candidate in a closed procedure. Six percent of newly appointed professors were also invited through formal or informal networks, but were selected after competing with several other invited candidates.

Table 4.2: Number and % of candidates in closed and open recruitment

	1 candidate	>1 candidate
<b>Open</b>	19 (2 %)	237 (30 %)
<b>Closed</b>	473 (61 %)	50 (6 %)

Source: 779 appointment reports (study B) <sup>17</sup>

Although several hybrid forms of recruitment exist, this data shows that scouting currently predominates as a way of recruiting candidates. In this study, I use the term ‘scouting’ when applicants are actively invited to apply through the formal or informal networks which occur in closed – but also in some open – recruitment. The next section will develop the notion of the scout-principle and the reasons given for scouting for professorial candidates.

### The scout-principle

Scouting for future candidates is a continuous process which begins long before a professorial chair falls vacant. Scouts keep a constant watch on the academic field, looking out for eligible candidates. In addition, committee members are charged with looking within their own network, asking colleagues to recommend names and searching the internet for candidates. Cautious approaches are made to these candidates with a view to them accepting a candidacy. Given that the retirement of a professor is a fairly public event, an active search of possible successors can be undertaken some years in advance. However, talent is also scouted with no formal vacancy in mind. Departments are willing to create a – mostly personal or strategic – chair when they find a brilliant external candidate or an internal candidate who is being scouted by another university. The head of department then has to lobby the dean or university board to create a new chair (see chapter 3). If scouted applicants

<sup>17</sup> The N of this analysis does not match with the total number of analyzed reports (N=971) as reappointments and ‘missing cases’ for the variable ‘number of candidates’ are taken out of the analysis.

lack the seniority to become full professors immediately, special arrangements can be made with candidates. For example, a scout finds an ‘excellent’ candidate who is not yet ready or too junior to be appointed full professor at this point in time. The candidate is then hired on the agreement that ‘if the candidate performs well the next two years, the department will appoint him [sic]’<sup>18</sup> (medical sciences, man 1). This method of recruiting resembles the tenure track system in which young scientists are hired as assistant professors with the prospect that, given a good evaluation, a promotion to associate professor and finally full professor will follow (see paragraph 2.4). In these cases, no formal vacancy is needed for the senior positions.

Then I started to search for suitable candidates myself. And I have to say, they are not always easy to find. A great deal of luck is involved and you need a lot of contacts. [...] I used to get the documents back (from the university board) with comments like: ‘Did you place an advertisement? Did you do this, did you do that?’ And then we had to explain. That wasn’t very hard for me, I went to the university board and they said to me: ‘Yes, we understand, you did the right thing’. But nowadays, it is embedded in the procedure. Those questions are not asked any more. The important thing is that the appointment report of the committee states: this man [sic] is absolutely eligible and is one of the best in his field. I think the turning point was 15 years ago, when they [the university board] said: this is how we do it, we have to scout more often. (natural sciences, man 5)

This respondent states that his university board no longer requires him to justify choosing a closed procedure; in fact, this has become standard procedure. Officially, the policy of the majority universities is that recruitment for a professorial position should be open, but they simultaneously encourage scouting. This discrepancy between policy and practice has already been outlined in some detail in chapter three.

#### Reasons for scouting

According to the respondents, the main arguments for scouting for professorial candidates are the opportunities to attract the best scientists (the quality argument) and the fact that the fields are small and easy to survey (the overview argument). The quality argument is based on three elements: flexibility, control, and personal approach.

First of all, committee members and scouts argue that, when compared to an open recruitment process, inviting candidates personally is more flexible, saves

18 The references to male candidates or professors are highlighted in this chapter. In section 4.3, I will discuss this male image of the full professor.

the costs of an advertisement and reduces the time invested by the committee and the candidate. In the majority of cases examined, the whole hiring process took at least one year from the establishment of the chair to the signing of the contract by the nominated candidate. A rapidly growing field of study with plenty of financial resources or a department from which a number of professors leave simultaneously, may need to fill positions with some urgency. In some subfields, the demand for specialists outstrips the number of candidates available, there is intense competition for qualified scientists and applicants often have a number of career opportunities open to them. The risk of a candidate being ‘poached’ by another university means that scouting for academics is more effective than the regular appointment procedure.

We sometimes do it [open recruitment], but then only in fields where there is less competition from sister faculties. [...] It is about the speed you can get hold of someone. If you know someone is interested in your organization, you have to try to bring him [sic] in as soon as possible. You certainly do not start a whole procedure with advertisements and letters of recommendation. Then you are risking that someone else will get ahead of you. (medical sciences, woman 6)

Similarly, other interviewees refer to “getting hold quickly”, “long-lasting procedures” and “being ahead of the competition”. It seems that being flexible and vigorous enhances the chance of attracting the ‘best’ candidate.

Another quality-argument given for scouting candidates is the influence that a university board or committee has on the pool of applicants. If one only places an advertisement, the committee members, deans and university board do not know who will apply. Scouting offers the possibility of actively inviting desired candidates who they are already keen on:

Ultimately you find the best people through your own network. (social sciences, man 10)

Certainly, if it’s quality you want, you have to make a conscious decision to call, write or go to conferences and ask: ‘Who are the good people, who should we approach?’ You have to do that, always, even when it is an open procedure. (natural sciences, man 3)

I remember them [the university board] saying at my application that they wanted quality and they wanted to search for that themselves, so as far as they were concerned, no open application. That was explicitly stated when I came here to apply. And of course, I had to talk to the appointment committee, but that was only a formality. (medical sciences, woman 7)

I have the impression that in our organization, vacancies are not made public most of the time. Instead, they actively search for candidates themselves. I think they were under the impression that they could not attract the quality they wanted. I can imagine that if you scout, you have more control over the kind of people who apply than if you place an advertisement and wait to see who responds. (medical sciences, man 1)

These respondents are convinced that actively searching for candidates is necessary to attract the best academics.

Thirdly, senior researchers, or candidates who already occupy professorial chairs will often only take a position seriously into consideration when approached personally. These academics are therefore often unaware of any vacancy because they are not searching for a position. They want the certainty of being the only nominated candidate or at least the first choice. By competing with other candidates, they could lose status and their current university and research group could become aware of his or her candidacy. In some fields, especially medical sciences, applying for a professorial position is simply 'not done'.

In the medical community, advertising a position really makes no sense. Nobody would ever react to an open ad. It is totally unthinkable that a suitable candidate would write a letter of application to say: 'I would like that position'. That does not happen. Absolutely inconceivable, it just doesn't work that way. If I were in that situation and had ambitions in that direction, then I would know about the vacancy years in advance, so I wouldn't need an advertisement to find out. And if there were an advertisement, I certainly would not react to it. I would wait for them to approach me. I know from colleagues that they ask others 'you have to tell them that I am interested in the position'. That happens, but you should definitely not respond to an advertisement which tells you to 'send a letter to our personnel department'. No way, that definitely does not happen. (medical sciences, woman 5)

According to this respondent, candidates articulate their ambitions to influential scientists within their network. In this way their name circulates and hopefully the right people will come to hear of them. Influential scientists have the connections and are asked for advice or to nominate candidates. However, according to this female physician, to present yourself directly to the searching party is absolutely out of the question. She argues that, if you apply and no other influential people have mentioned your name, your chances are minimal. This would indicate that the searching party is highly dependent on advice from the scouts. In other academic fields, this mechanism of promoting yourself through others because applying is not done, is less widespread.

As well as the quality argument, the other reason put forward for using scouts was the respondents' claim that the subfields are small and easy to survey – the 'overview argument'. Proponents of scouting argue that an advertisement will yield no more applicants than those they were already considering. Scouts are convinced that they are best qualified to recognize quality, and are able, directly or indirectly, to survey the whole field of eligible candidates.

Our field is small and it is almost inconceivable that we could forget someone at that level. (social sciences, man 10)

I was not the only one looking for candidates – two of the other heads of department were searching as well. The field is not that large and together, we can get a fair impression of the eligible academics in the Netherlands with potential or of academics that know potentially suitable candidates. (medical sciences, woman 7)

Since there is a limited number of eligible candidates for this chair and an adequate number of possible candidates are known in the circle of committee members, I suggest opting for a shortened, closed procedure. (Letter from dean to university board, appointment report, university 2, nr. 45)

In my field, it is easy to predict who will be full professor in ten years. (social sciences, man 10)

All the committee members quoted referred to "small fields", a "limited number of candidates" and mention that possible candidates are "known". They believe that they have the right network connections with people in the field who can recommend the best candidates in that particular field. Since they feel that this enables them to survey the whole field of potential candidates, there is no need to announce the position publicly. In their eyes, there is a scarcity in the applicant pool; national candidates are known, and international candidates will not easily be reached by an advertisement. Some respondents refuted this argument, however, and section 4.3 will deal with this issue in greater depth.

In summary, academic boards and committees are convinced that scouting for candidates enables them to attract the best candidates. They are equally convinced that they are capable of recognizing quality, and that they are able, directly or indirectly, to survey the field of eligible candidates thoroughly enough. Scouting for candidates for new professors means that the initial selection of candidates takes place at an early stage, with scouts controlling who is nominated and who is invited to appear before the appointment committee. In other words, it is in the power of scouts to decide who is and who is not sufficiently talented for the position. In this way, scouts function as gatekeepers to professorial positions.

### Scouts as gatekeepers

The gatekeeping process is mainly a selection process; the initial selection of candidates takes place in an early stage as scouts control who is nominated and who is invited to appear before the appointment committee. By using scouting as the main instrument of recruitment, scientists can create opportunities for some candidates to access professorial positions, while denying access to scientists who are – in their estimation – unsuitable. They thus determine who is allowed into the professorate and who remains excluded (Becher & Trowler, 2001, p. 85). Cole (1984) points out, ‘the stars’ of a particular discipline occupy the main gatekeeping roles. Through their actions as gatekeepers and evaluators, they determine which work is considered valuable and which is seen as unimportant.

Gatekeeping is not a full-time task. Academics may be asked more or less frequently to recommend names or to search for new talent. In general, I can distinguish various categories of gatekeepers on the basis of their formal power position and expertise. Some academics are involved in the scouting process due to their power position and seek to influence the procedure and which candidates are nominated. Sometimes, these academics seem to be acknowledged as being ‘entitled’ to influence the applicant pool. The dean, the head of the department, and affiliated directors of research and teaching institutes fall into this category. At a higher management level, one can assume that academics are always thinking about future plans and how to enhance the university, department or research group. Most often, these academic managers are already involved in the establishment of the chair. Bourdieu calls this type of power ‘academic capital’. “Academic capital is obtained and maintained by holding a position enabling domination of other positions and their holders [...] this power over the agencies of reproduction of the university body ensures for its holders a statutory authority, a kind of function-related attribute which is much more linked to hierarchical position than to any extraordinary properties of the work or the person” (Bourdieu, 1988, p.84). The circle of influence in the decision process for a professorial appointment depends on the size of the university, the institute and the importance of the chair. When a full professor or a professor on a central chair is to be appointed, strategic and political interests come into play and the number of professors and managers who want to be involved in the process increases. Sometimes even members of the university board are directly involved.

Other kinds of gatekeepers are scientists who are involved as experts in the field (almost all full professors). These could be scientists from adjoining fields. For example, if a full professor in educational sociology is needed, staff in the fields of pedagogy, sociology or social psychology are likely to be consulted. When

this expertise is not available within the same department or university, external experts are asked to propose candidates. These experts are expected to have a broad knowledge of the academic field in which they operate, be familiar with future areas of research, be able to assess the quality and reputation of other research groups, and know the emerging talents in their field.

Well, I think that, informally, it still works that way. The full professors meet on many different committees. They know who is leaving, who is retiring and where a position is going to become vacant. They all know that. [...] If a current professor is leaving, he [sic] will discuss it with his [sic] people: ‘Well guys [sic], I will be leaving next year.’ And I can imagine very clearly that, collectively, they will then keep a closer eye on what is happening at the training centers, who looks promising and who might be suitable and literally ‘check him [sic] out’. Because in the end, a university board, whether mine or from another university, will ask the leaving professor how the recruitment is going. ‘Where can we find good people?’ But that isn’t a formal part of the procedure. These are informal scenarios. (medical sciences, woman 6)

The experts are often commissioned by internal gatekeepers in more senior positions in the hierarchy, who follow the proceedings from a distance. In this example given above, the university board takes no important part in the decision process; they keep themselves informed and have the right of veto. In most cases, the dean or board of the university leaves the decisions to the experts in the field, department or research group, who are presumably the best qualified to evaluate the quality of the candidates. However, sometimes the university board interferes with the decision of the experts. An example was printed in a university magazine and described the appointment of a female full professor.

Professor X mentions how a prominent external member of the appointment committee obstructed the appointment of Y [female candidate]. ‘Vigorous intervention’ on the part of the chair of the university board and the dean saved her appointment, he says. ‘This kind of measure is still needed as long as every time a female top candidate is nominated, someone comes up with a counter-argument and puts her second on the list’. (Professor X in University Magazine, 2007)

In this example, the chairman of the board overruled the decision made by a prominent external member of the appointment committee. In appointment procedures, the different categories of gatekeepers are in different power positions, and the gatekeepers in higher managerial positions (deans, board members) usually have the final say in the decision-making process.

### 4.3 Gender practices of gatekeeping

In this section, I explore how the theoretical framework developed sheds light on the gender practices of gatekeepers. Four practices are analyzed to gain an understanding of how masculinities and femininities are mobilized: the homophilous networks of male gatekeepers, the selective search activities of gatekeepers, the ways of increasing academic visibility, and the problematic combination of femininity and quality.

#### Homophilous networks of male gatekeepers

According to the ETAN report (Osborn et al., 2000), gatekeepers are generally middle-aged, male academics. In the Netherlands, women are clearly under-represented among gatekeepers, due their under-representation in the power structures of academia. My data material does not allow me to give exact information on the share of male and female gatekeepers,<sup>19</sup> but it does allow me to calculate the number of male and female committee members. In chapter three, I showed that in 44 percent of all procedures, solely male committee members were involved in the appointment procedure. Moreover, gatekeeping positions are often occupied by members of the university board (eight percent female), deans (five percent female) and managers of research institutes (four percent female), see Table 4.3 (Equal, 2008).

Table 4.3: Number of women as member of university boards, deans and managers of research institutes 2008

	University Board	Deans	Managers research institutes
University of Leiden	♀♂♂	♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂	♀♂♂♂♂
Radboud University Nijmegen	♂♂♂	♀♀♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂	♂♂♂♂♂
University of Amsterdam	♀♂♂	♀♀♂♂♂♂♂♂	♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂
University of Utrecht	♀♂♂	♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂	♀♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂
Wageningen University	♂♂♂	♂♂♂♂♂	♂♂♂♂♂
University of Groningen	♂♂♂	♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂	♂♂♂♂♂♂♂
University of Tilburg	♂♂	♂♂♂♂♂♂	♂
Technical University of Twente	♂♂♂	♂♂♂♂♂	♂♂
Free University of Amsterdam	♂♂♂	♀♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂	♂♂♂
Erasmus University Rotterdam	♂♂♂	♂♂♂♂♂♂♂	♂♂♂♂♂♂
Technical University of Delft	♂♂♂	♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂	♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂
University of Maastricht	♂♂♂	♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂	♀♂♂♂♂♂♂
Technical University of Eindhoven	♂♂♂	♂♂♂♂♂♂♂♂	♂♂♂♂♂

Source: Equal (2008)

19 Almost all respondents acted as gatekeepers to a certain extent due to their role on the appointment committee. In that role, they are all asked to recommend names of potential candidates once in a while. As I explicitly ‘over-sampled’ the female committee members, a reliable indication of the numbers of male and female gatekeepers cannot be given.

This under-representation of women amongst gatekeepers has gender consequences due to the fact that in environments where men are in the majority, men tend to have more homophilous relationships than women (e.g. Ibarra, 1997; Burt, 1998; Brass et al., 2004).<sup>20</sup> Ibarra (1997) found that men’s networks are more homophilous than women’s, whereas women had more close interpersonal ties, and developed more external ties with women outside their direct subunits. As a result of this chance homophily, the likelihood is greater that a male candidate will be selected when predominantly male gatekeepers search for candidates in their networks. Below, female and male professors reflect on this mechanism of homophily in recruitment.

Very recently, we had a discussion about the low percentage female full professors at our faculty. Then one of the men, a full professor, said: “Well, men do prefer to work with men”. (medical sciences, woman 21)

When men maintain their traditional mindset in which [they think] women are not so interested or they don’t even think about it [the possibility of female candidates], they will take other men, because they have always known men in this profession. They know what men can do. Some day women will have children or whatever it is they think women do. If men do make a conscious effort to think ‘she is a woman and she is equally good’ or whatever, then I think that without thinking they would just take the man, because they think that they can rely more on the man – ‘he is like me’. (natural sciences, woman 16)

Men prefer to work with men – that is a sound explanation. In the medical departments, women are a relatively new phenomenon. [...] However, I am an arch-optimist and I think it [women’s under-representation] will solve itself; it will be okay. (medical sciences, man 2)

Men have been working with men for ages. That is natural. It is easy. (humanities, man 1)

The respondents state that men not only work and form networks with men because of the opportunity structure – there are more men available – but because they actually prefer working with men over women because of a perceived similarity. Therefore, my data not only illustrates chance homophily but also choice

20 In a study of 63 male and female middle managers in four large US companies, Ibarra (1997) found that men’s networks are more homophilous than women’s, whereas women tended to have closer interpersonal ties, and to develop more external ties with women outside their direct work circle.



homophily. The next step is to analyze this choice homophily; why do men actually prefer men in recruitment situations?

The first explanation of why men select other men lies in the inextricability of the image of the academic professor with men and masculinity. Most of the full professors are, and have always been, men. Women, meanwhile, are seen as “a relatively new phenomenon”. This is illustrated by the references to ‘him’, ‘he’, and ‘guys’ constantly made in the interviews by both male and female respondents, when referring to professorial candidates (see also chapter 3). The quote on page 123 provides another clear example of the cultural and symbolical associations between masculinity and full professors. Previous research on gender in academia shows that the most important factors that produce and perpetuate gender inequality at universities relate to the hegemonic images of science and full professors that are usually associated with men and masculinity (Valian, 1998; Smelik & Bosch, 1999; Benschop & Brouns, 2003; Knights & Richards, 2003; Krefling, 2003; Benschop, 2007; Bosch, 2007). Masculinity and hegemonic power are intertwined to such an extent that men represent the standard. In fact, I might adapt Schein’s observation (1996), ‘think manager, think male’, and state: ‘think professor, think male’.

The second explanation of why men prefer men over women has to do with the perception of male committee members that women are a risk. Due to recognition and trust, male gatekeepers are more likely to identify with male candidates and value male candidates more highly. The respondents used phrases like ‘men prefer men’, ‘rely on’, ‘he is like me’, ‘easy’ and even ‘natural’. Other committee members refer to this by saying: “You cannot predict their [women’s] behavior” (natural sciences, man); “They know what men can do” (natural sciences, woman 16/p.123). Women are sometimes seen as odd, unpredictable and risky, which places women and femininity on the margins. This applies especially to the management capacities of female candidates in male-dominated areas such as the medical and natural sciences. Unless female candidates have a visible reputation and experience, committee members seem to be hesitant about their abilities. In all the interviews with committee members, the issue of inadequate management skills in male candidates only arose twice – and in both cases the candidate was described as having too much of an ego – in comparison to eleven cases of female candidates that were rejected because of reservations about their management capacities. Here is an illustration:

I: *That person excelled on all aspects?*

R: Yes, although I do not know if he had much management experience.

But we had confidence in that. (medical sciences, man 2)

Often it came down to the fact that the committee lacked confidence in the management skills of the female candidate as head of department. (medical sciences, woman 6)

As a consequence, the following respondent argues that women have to perform better to gain the trust of gatekeepers or have to be more senior to be scouted. Scouts seem to perceive less risk in male candidates. Kanter (1977a) concluded long ago that the desire for social certainty leads decision makers to prefer to work with individuals like themselves. Her findings still appear to apply more than thirty years later, as the next quotes illustrate.

From the moment we all find out that [...] there is a vacant position and people sit around the table to talk informally about who the interesting candidates in the field are, then it is possible that the name of a female candidate comes up. And it could be that the university board, or the head of a medical division, makes a conscious decision to figure out how we might be able to attract this lady to our university. But that only occurs because she already has enough of a reputation to be considered as a serious and interesting candidate. So, she already has to be someone [...] to appear in the spotlight at all. (medical sciences, woman, 6)

It has a great deal to do with trust. Essentially, women always have a harder time than men and always have to prove themselves to be beyond all doubt. And this is never really sufficient. (humanities, woman 2)

According to the first quote from the female respondent who attended committee meetings as an advisor of the board, young men are often intensively prepared for a professorship by their superiors. Talented women, on the other hand, need their excellence to be fully acknowledged by their peers and the bar therefore seems to be set higher for them. Ample studies have shown that double standards are set for men and women, and that women have to perform to higher levels in order to be considered as qualified as men (e.g. Foschi, 1996; Wennerås & Wold, 1997). Examples from my data illustrating this mechanism will be outlined in chapter 5. Thus, women might only be considered by male and female gatekeepers once they are – beyond doubt – outstanding scientists and have achieved an impeccable reputation. This finding is in line with abundant research that documents the need for women to prove themselves or to over-perform (Bartram & Shobrook, 1998; Jackson, 2001; McCrea, Hirt, & Milner, 2007) to be considered equally competent. It is however important to notice, that ‘risk’, too, is a social construction. Whoever controls the definition of risk, controls the solution to the problem (Slovic, 1999). If risk is defined one way, then one option will come to be considered the safest or

best. Define risk another way and one will likely arrive at a different preference. Defining what is 'normal' and 'who you can trust' or 'who is a risk', is thus an exercise in power. Men mobilize masculinity by basing feelings of trust on (perceived) similarity and risks on (perceived) dissimilarity.

Another factor brought up by the respondents which makes it 'easier' for men to prefer and thus appoint other men is the heterosexual tension between men and women. Not many respondents reflected on this issue, but some of them were convinced that it plays a role. Those involved may be reluctant to raise this issue because sexual behavior is generally considered unacceptable within professional organizations (Burrell, 1984; Hearn & Wendy, 1987; Riach & Wilson, 2007). An example of how sexuality can influence decision making was given by a male professor who had a joint part-time position as a full professor with another man.

I: *This person was also a man?*

R: Yes, he was male. Yes, and otherwise it would not have been possible. My wife would not have approved, if it had been a woman. Yes, that would have been very delicate. Sometimes I say 'he is my professional spouse'. I spend more time with him than with my wife. It can be very complicated. You have to be very careful, I think.

I: *Is that something that matters? Being in male-female relationships at work I mean?*

R: I never noticed that, honestly speaking. No, I don't think so. Although, of course [...] but you should pose this question to my partner, she probably thinks once in a while: 'What is going on there?' Given that my field consists entirely of men, I can tell her at home, and I always do, that there were only other men at the conference and we had an extremely pleasant time. But I think that she would find it difficult if I were to go abroad for some weeks with a nice thirty-year-old post-doc. And I can understand that perfectly. So, I do not think I could have shared this role very easily with a woman, no. Precisely for those reasons. And that had nothing to do with men's and women's comparative abilities, but it would have been a little delicate. (humanities, man 6)

This respondent reflects on the difficulties of male-female work relationships and the possibility of sexual undertones. He states that it has nothing to do with men's and women's capacities, but with feeling at ease and avoiding awkward situations. Whatever the motivation, however, women are excluded from male formal and informal gatherings and networks in this way. Martin (2003) gives the example of a male executive that – even when confronted with the exclusionary effect of not inviting female managers to informal dinners and gatherings – maintained this personnel policy as a means of avoiding sexual innuendos.

It is rare for men to reflect upon a mechanism such as homophily while searching for candidates from within their own male-dominated networks. The

respondent quoted on page 126 working in the natural sciences stresses the subconscious way that men choose other men. It is a subtle mechanism that does not amount to a conscious exclusion of women, but a natural reproduction that does not necessarily find expression in the conscious mind. This is not a phenomenon which is only found in my data; other researchers have also found similar mechanisms. Martin (2001) states: "men need not invent schemes for excluding women from daily work processes in order for women to experience exclusion. As men engage in gendering practices consistent with institutionalized norms and stereotypes of masculinity, they nonetheless create social closure and oppression" (p. 589). It is interesting to note that in this research, the scientists who are aware of the homophilous processes are women, while men seldom mentioned it. This also seems to provide further evidence of the unconscious way in which men select their successors by mobilizing masculinity; excluding women by including men.

However, it must be noted that exclusionary masculinities are not only practiced by men, and homophily does not explain the low percentage of female recruits conclusively. Some female gatekeepers play their part in mobilizing masculinity, too, being more ready to trust male candidates or confirming the automatic link between masculinity and professorial candidates.

#### Incomplete search activities

The second way gender is practiced in gatekeeping is the exclusion of potential candidates through an incomplete search. In a system where professors are increasingly nominated by invitation, candidates are increasingly reliant on being informed about career opportunities and job vacancies. Since there is often no public announcement, potential candidates depend on gatekeepers who control the flows of information; they provide information about vacancies directly to potential candidates, or to other agents in gatekeeping positions who may know potential candidates, such as full professors from adjoining research groups, faculties or subfields. Again, being a part of the network of gatekeepers is key. Abundant empirical research documents that limited access to the network leads to a range of disadvantages, including restricted knowledge of the latest developments in organizations and difficulty in forming alliances (Granovetter, 1974; Ibarra, 1993; Lai, Lin, & Leung, 1998; Flap & Völker, 2004). To reach the entire pool of suitable candidates and select the 'best' from this pool, the network of gatekeepers therefore needs to cover all fields, institutes and universities in the national and international context. As I illustrated in section 4.2 on the scouting process, gatekeepers strongly believe that they have contacts across the entire field and are best qualified to identify the candidates' merits.

If you are around for a while, you know who is operating in the Dutch field at that level. I can't imagine that somewhere there is a researcher working at another university about whom we think afterwards: 'Oh, we entirely forgot that person'. (medical sciences, man 10)

This respondent claimed to know all potential candidates in his field. In this way, he controls the recruitment process by calling those individuals who have – in his estimation – the appropriate qualities. However, some data also seems to suggest that the principle of bounded rationality (Gigerenzer & Selten, 2001) may be at work here: constraints of time and resources mean that the search for candidates is in all probability based on incomplete information, and is therefore not exhaustive.

Firstly, as far as time is concerned, appointment decisions often have to be made very quickly due to the competition between institutions (see paragraph 4.1), and a brief search among the most important network connections is seen as sufficient. As a female respondent in medical sciences remarked earlier: "If you are interested in someone, you have to bring him [sic] in as soon as possible". In such cases, the university board only has to be convinced of the quality of that particular scientist, and is not required to compare him or her to others who might be equally well-qualified. These outcomes correspond to the findings research into the recruitment of senior managers. Harris (2002, p.192) showed that senior managers who know one or two people with the potential to do the job well will not stop to ask themselves if there are other candidates. An incomplete search due to time constraints seems a logical conclusion, then.

Secondly, full professors in a specific field are likely to know each other, but it is less common, especially in larger fields, that a full professor will know all the talented associate professors or senior researchers working at other Dutch universities. Since associate professors tend to have less extensive networks than full professors (van Balen, 2001), they sometimes have to rely on the networks of their superiors who might have a direct link to scouts. It is therefore implausible that gatekeepers have a sufficiently comprehensive knowledge of academics at all levels, all over the world. Gatekeepers and their agents may not know the entire field, and new people in less senior positions may easily escape their attention. For example, the respondent in the last quote refers to knowing people at 'a certain level'. It seems, then, that a suitable candidate may not be found in the direct network of the scouts because they tend to restrict their search to a small pool of potential candidates within their own network. The following quotes show how potential candidates can be overlooked.

I: *You are the chair of the committee. Do you know all people in the field?*

R: No, not sufficiently. That is one of the points we have to work on. You have to explore

the field and that is not very easy. You have to know certain people and I will call them and ask: "Do you know people for this position? Can you give me any names?" In this way, you use your network and an appointment committee consists of several people, and they all do this. So we try to get a couple of names. (medical sciences, man 18)

In every procedure [...] you come across a lot of people, names, among the letters of application, including very serious and interesting candidates who you do not know, or people you never expected to be interested in the position. So, in that sense, I think those advertisements, especially mailing lists, are exceptionally productive. Because in that way, you make contact with people whom you hadn't thought of in the first place. [...] But it is never totally comprehensive. (humanities, man 4)

There was once a case when there was a letter from an applicant whom we had totally overlooked, who had not been mentioned by any committee member and who was eventually appointed to the position. That person had written a letter himself. He had had a low profile for a while, but as soon as you saw his résumé, it was clearly a good one. That can happen. Because he had been working in a peripheral hospital for some time, we had totally forgotten him. (medical sciences, man 14)

These respondents show the value of open recruitment: advertisements and mailing lists can produce an additional pool of potential candidates. This additional pool of candidates can include academics that have had a 'low profile' for a while because they have been working elsewhere or abroad, were not expected to be interested in the job or were seen as less promising candidates.

Furthermore, many professorial chairs are situated on the crossroads of multiple disciplines, and some candidates may be overlooked because their activities are outside the scope of the field concerned. One respondent argues: "It is easy to think you know the field, but your own field hardly ever overlaps exactly with the profile of the vacant chair" (social sciences, man 13). When only one or two scouts from a certain field are actively mobilized to recruit candidates, some specific fields can be neglected. The following quote illustrates this point.

My supervisor drew my attention to this vacancy. He said: 'This position is made for you and I think you should apply. It looks like they had you in mind for this position'. Of course, I am still very grateful to him. He said: 'Well, it is a bit difficult for me, because I hate to lose a fantastic member of staff, but this is really perfect. You should go for this'. And my supervisor had received the information about the position from another contact in another subfield, who had forwarded the vacancy announcement. So the information came to me in a roundabout way. I never actually saw the announcement myself. (social sciences, woman 7)

This female professor had received no information about the vacancy until her supervisor (who was, at that time, playing a gatekeeper role for that position) informed her about the vacancy. She was active in an adjacent field and therefore fell outside the scope of the gatekeepers' attention and was not nominated, informed or invited to apply.

As stated in the previous section, gatekeepers tend to search for candidates within their own predominantly male networks. This implies that the control of information flows can lead to certain candidates on the margins – mostly women – being overlooked. Gatekeepers do not always scout all the available potential. A lack of time and resources will often lead them to take the quickest and cheapest course of action. However, the assumption among gatekeepers that they 'know them all' is so strong, that it raises the possibility that some candidates are not taken into account. Potential candidates can be overlooked as a consequence of the homophily already discussed, information flows through localized networks, and the fact that gatekeepers rather arrogantly assume that they have a detailed knowledge of the field and consequently call a halt to their search once they have a certain candidate in mind. Again, this is a striking example of mobilizing affiliating masculinities, as male gatekeepers have a certain blindness towards 'others' and a strong conviction that they 'know who is excellent in the field'.

#### Ways to gain academic visibility

Successful recruitment by gatekeepers relies on the candidates in the academic field being visible to a certain degree. Without this visibility, a candidate will not be invited to apply or will not be informed about a professorial position. Influential gatekeepers must, somehow, be made aware of the quality and ambition of a candidate. Interviewees argue that there is a large element of public relations involved: "you have to make yourself known, to sell yourself at meetings" (humanities, woman 8), "you have to put your work across to the right people" (social sciences, man 12), "you become a professor not only on the basis of what you know, but also who you know" (natural sciences, man 12). Opportunities are therefore crucially dependent on the reputation a candidate has acquired among prominent people in the field. There are two ways of increasing one's visibility within the academic community: 1) making yourself visible, 2) others making you visible.

A few, mainly male respondents, argue that women are sometimes less visible due to behavioral differences: male candidates tend to be more extrovert, self-confident, and convinced of their own qualities and merits. In their opinion, male candidates are more explicit about their ambitions, while women are more "modest" and "reluctant" to promote themselves. Especially in case of asking for recommendations.

- I: *Is it possible that people who haven't promoted themselves or made themselves visible enough are not mentioned when people are asked to recommend names?*
- R: Or they do not name themselves. And that is something of a problem, I think. It probably illustrates the difference between the sexes. Men tend to put themselves forward more easily than women and also make sure that their name is put forward by those with influence.
- I: *How do they do that?*
- R: By asking the dean: 'Would you recommend me for that position?'
- I: *Can you ask for that in this way?*
- R: Yes, and women never do that. (medical sciences, man 18)

This male respondent indicates that men promote themselves more explicitly and ask their superiors to recommend them for a certain position. As I illustrated before, in some medical fields it is unusual to apply for a position, so it is crucial that one has influential contacts within one's network to obtain a recommendation. Even in fields where one can apply, candidates that are recommended are favored over other candidates.

However, what further evidence is there that these gender stereotypes of women being more modest and reluctant to promote themselves? It was certainly striking that female candidates tended to believe that their qualities would speak for themselves and that they did not need to 'dress up' their merits.

I think that quality will always shine through. I think it's quite clear who is suitable, and that often means being able to combine various activities within an academic department or activities as medical practitioner, having good organization skills. (medical sciences, woman 5)

A small majority of the female academics interviewed relied on a meritocratic approach. This is also confirmed by research of Ledwith and Manfredi (2000) in the United Kingdom. More men seem aware of the necessity of self-promotion: almost all male respondents explicitly note that being visible or prepared to take on a high profile is essential to pursuing an academic career. Men, but also some women, promote their talents, skills or accomplishments during conferences, meetings, and informal gatherings. In this way, they actively build up a certain visibility in their academic field. On the other hand, some female respondents reason that it would not be 'appropriate' or 'appreciated' for women to promote themselves explicitly. One female candidate from social sciences reflected on this topic: "I think it would not be appreciated if women boasted about their achievements. It is stupid, but men can". Gender practices are active here, as it seems that it is less appropriate for women to be explicit about their achievements and ambitions, and women

seem to have less scope for building up a certain image of themselves (cf. Rudman, 1998; Guadagno & Cialdini, 2007). Chapter 5 will elaborate further on the limited ways that female candidates can present themselves during committee meetings.

It is not only academics themselves who are responsible for their visibility and reputation. Their profile is also enhanced by other academics, mostly gatekeepers (also, see the effects of social capital in chapter 5). In order to enhance the visibility of candidates, influential academics can recommend a candidate when names are requested, encourage candidates to apply and help to make their name. According to the interviewees, it is essential that potential candidates are encouraged to apply or explicitly directed to the vacancy by colleagues and superiors. In the experience of some of the female respondents, women are nominated to a less frequently than men.

My own promoter [...] has always supported me when I asked him to. But he never supported my career on his own initiative, as far as I know, and nominated me for things. Never never. It is not something he usually does, but I know he has done it for some men around him. [...] Actually, he has never understood that I have just as much ambition in this area as men have. And that is not because he isn't the sweetest man, or doesn't care about me. That is not the case. But he doesn't realize that all this is as important for me as it is for my male colleagues. He once told me this honestly, that the penny hadn't dropped. (humanities, woman 7)

Women are recommended less frequently. That is very common. It's noticeable. (medical sciences, woman 20)

The female professor from the humanities states that it was never her supervisor's intention to hold her back from a higher position, but that he never consciously supported her. For him, she was not visible as a candidate for a professorship due to his preconceived notions about her ambitions. When he was asked to recommend names, he simply never thought of her. Research by Stobbe et al. (2004) and Bagilhole and Goode (2001) has documented that men tend to be encouraged to apply for positions more by their male-support network. In conclusion, then, women have less scope to promote themselves, while men mobilize their masculinity by supporting and assisting other men in ways that advance their career goals.

#### Femininity and the aspect of quality

Earlier in this chapter, it was concluded that women are almost evenly appointed to men in closed procedures (see figure 4.1). The advantage men receive in closed recruitment systems by men mobilizing masculinity is counteracted by men and women mobilizing femininity by explicitly searching and inviting women.

Spurred on by equal opportunity policies, male and female gatekeepers actively search for female candidates. The number of female professors in the Netherlands is so low (11%), and in some subfields even less than five percent (WOPI, 2007), that most university boards are willing to search explicitly for female candidates when a professorial vacancy arises. Table 4.4 shows the numbers of male and female professors appointed to each type of chair in closed procedures. A significant percentage of those women appointed through closed procedures – through formal or informal networks – are appointed to personal chairs (30%); this represents a significantly higher proportion than the number of men appointed to the same type of chair (16%).

Table 4.4: Type of chair by gender of appointee in closed recruitment

	Ordinary	Personal	Strategic	
Men	293 (61%)	75 (16%)	110 (23%)	478 100%
Women	35 (56%)	19 (30%)	9 (14%)	63 100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>328</b> <b>(61%)</b>	<b>94</b> <b>(17%)</b>	<b>119</b> <b>(22%)</b>	<b>541</b> <b>100%</b>

Source: 541 appointment reports (study B) <sup>21</sup>

The significant number of women in personal chairs and the comments made by my respondents both seem to demonstrate that female candidates are promoted in this way. Some universities or funding organizations make special funding available to promote female scientists (see for an overview chapter 2) in order to take advantage of the large potential and to provide role models for female students. The majority of the respondents supported the idea that women should be appointed 'whenever possible' and that the university board should sometimes search explicitly for female candidates. These activities can be characterized as 'mobilizing femininity' because men and women single out femininity explicitly as bringing added value in the academic context.

Both men and women mobilize femininity in the search process, but female gatekeepers seem extremely conscious about the role they play in the active search for female candidates.

<sup>21</sup> The N of this analysis does not match with the total number of analyzed reports (N=971) as reappointments and 'missing cases' for the variable 'type of chair' are taken out of the analysis.

Men always say: 'They [women] are not available; there is a lack of potential. I always respond: 'That's rubbish'. I searched high and low for a woman for that position, and found one, of course. I notice that in our field there really ought to be more women. (medical sciences, woman 20)

The only person who deviated [from men selecting men] was my female predecessor. She was an old acquaintance of mine. I knew her from another university and I worked with her. That's why I came here. Indeed, I owe a lot to other women, I am very aware of that. (humanities, woman 7)

These female gatekeepers are mobilizing femininity when they set out to find female candidates and in their awareness of female support networks. However, mobilizing femininity is 'marked' and more problematic than mobilizing masculinity.<sup>22</sup> This is because the explicit search for women is constructed as a challenge to quality and, when women search for other women, this is often perceived as a form of nepotism. Female gatekeepers argue that it is harder for women in a minority position to recommend or push forward a female candidate because it smacks of favoritism or they are 'blamed' for making feminist choices. It is easier for men to put forward a female protégée, while putting forward their male protégé would not as easily be viewed as 'nepotism'. In other words, mobilizing masculinity, as described earlier in this chapter, conventionally conflated with the universal standard and is thus 'unmarked' and remains a practice that is hardly scrutinized by either men or women.

Furthermore, despite their willingness to scout for female candidates, both male and female gatekeepers often fall back on their opinion that quality is gender neutral and therefore gender should not play a role.

In my opinion, the faculty board has to make every effort to appoint women to vacant chairs, if it is possible in any way. And search for them explicitly. So we will have a more balanced professorial staff. But, I don't think you should appoint a woman at any price. If only because it's very unpleasant to be nominated on a chair when everyone thinks 'well, she only made it because she is a woman'. That doesn't serve the cause. [...] One should always give priority to quality so that less qualified women do not get positions that otherwise could have been given to better qualified men. This will only make women look bad. (humanities, man 1)

<sup>22</sup> Thanks to Stefan Dudink for the suggestion and idea on this topic. For the introduction of the linguistic term 'marked' and 'unmarked' into cultural and social studies, I refer to Laclau (1990, p.33), who argues that 'women' and 'black' are marks (i.e. marked terms) in contrast to the unmarked terms 'men' and 'white'.

This respondent illustrates the opinion of many committee members who – while convinced of the need to prioritize the search for women to appoint – often vent their concerns about the quality of the candidates: "We are not interested in gender, only in appointing the best qualified candidates" (social sciences, woman 2). Controversy surrounds the search for female candidates and special women's chairs as these methods could mean that less qualified women are hired. This quality argument is however hardly mentioned in relation to the appointment of male candidates. The visibility of women appointed to special women's chairs or using special funding is far more problematic and marked than the unreflexive production and perpetuation of male advantages within their informal circles or masculine support systems.

To conclude, despite the emergent discussion of special women's program and the quality of candidates, gatekeeping processes do not only lead to men appointing men, but can also provide opportunities for women in their competition to strive for a balanced professorate. These strategies are however, often marked and under scrutiny.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has described the gatekeeping process in the recruitment for professorial positions. In a closed recruitment system, which is the predominant way of recruiting full professors in the Netherlands, an invitation to apply for the vacant position is essential. According to the respondents, scouting represents the most effective way to attract the best academics in the field and the fact that subfields are small and surveyable also makes scouting practical. Scouts occupy a gatekeeping position as they control the flow of information and access to the vacant positions; they determine which candidates are nominated and which remain excluded.

This chapter showed four gender practices in academic gatekeeping by men and women mobilizing masculinity and femininity. Drawing on organization network theory and critical men's studies, it has been demonstrated how gatekeepers help produce and perpetuate the gender imbalance – or, at times, counteract this imbalance – in academia. Three gender practices – the homophilous networks of male gatekeepers, an incomplete search, and the methods of increasing academic visibility – occur in 'regular' appointment procedures which lead to disadvantages for women as men mobilize masculinity in homophilous networks. As gatekeepers are mostly middle-aged white men who search for candidates from within their own networks, the process results in recruitment being closed off to open competition and confines the pool of potential new candidates to a very small and homogeneous social group. The advancement of men through closed

invitation recruitment is related to male networks and the academic sociality of men, the limited 'visibility' of women in relation to their male colleagues and the mutual support systems of men. Of course, discourses of masculinity that operate to disadvantage women can also operate to disadvantage certain men. Nonetheless, it is my contention that, overall, women are more disadvantaged than men are.

My data would therefore appear to confirm the argument of Husu (2004) that the dual design of gatekeeping functions are exclusion and control, yet at the same time may also facilitate the distribution of resources, information, and opportunities. In the fourth gender practice I have distinguished here, gatekeepers explicitly search for women to appoint them to chairs (often personal chairs) as part of special women's programs or affirmative action policies. This approach therefore provides opportunities for women academics and helps raise the number of women in senior positions. I describe these actions as mobilizing femininity because they classify women and femininity as distinctive features with added value in academia. Generally speaking, female gatekeepers have a greater awareness of gender and know more women in their networks. In contrast to the predominantly unreflexive mobilization of masculinities, mobilizing femininity is marked and can provoke resistance because the explicit search for women – affirmative action – conflicts with the ideology of merit. This implies that women have to be brilliant whereas a satisfying strategy is used routinely for male applicants. This theme is further elaborated in the next chapter.

In summary, the conventional route to a senior academic position presents obstacles to women in the form of the homophilous networks of male gatekeepers. Special programs to promote women or search for women have been established to add women, and this demonstrates that the issue is indeed on the agenda of policymakers. However, such programs appear to be more of a sticking plaster than a permanent solution. The creation of special women's chairs has not been sufficient to tackle the gender disparity among full professors. Although women also benefit from the gatekeeping process, these benefits do not counterbalance the disadvantages women encounter in regular procedures. The figures may look better, but nothing has been done to bring about structural change. Attention should therefore be focused on the gender practices occurring within the regular procedures where male networks and support systems are unconsciously responsible for the reproduction of gender disparity at the highest levels in academia.

Gatekeepers not only control access, information and support networks, but also the construction and definition of scientific quality. How the criteria for scientific excellence are defined is the subject of the next chapter.

## 5

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### The symbolic capital of excellence

The most important thing is, I think, the reputation of the applicant. That is the starting point, whether one has an excellent reputation. You only come to the objective criteria afterwards, and then you can establish whether he or she really is that excellent. But, in most cases, you already know that through the grapevine. (natural sciences, man 5)

This respondent articulates the widespread opinion that the most decisive criterion during the process is whether a candidate has 'an excellent reputation'. Throughout all the interviews, committee reports and protocols, continuous references were made to 'excellence', 'a sheep with five legs'<sup>23</sup>, 'a star', 'promising talent', and 'outstanding scholar'. The standard of 'excellence', therefore, seems to be the prevailing benchmark for professional appointments. This corresponds with the discourse of the national and international academic world, which prioritizes the identification of scientific excellence and the most talented researchers. The strategic policy plans of almost all Dutch universities include phrases like 'learn to excel', 'participating in and belonging to the international top class' or 'striving for excellence' (e.g. RUG, 2003; UvA, 2007). The Minister of Education, Culture and Science meanwhile states his aim of establishing 'centers for excellence' (Minne, Rensman, Vroomen, & Webbink, 2007), and most of the programs of the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO 2008)

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23 A sheep with five legs is a Dutch idiom, meaning an impossible combination of ideal qualities.

stress the importance of ‘excellence’ and ‘top-quality research’ in successful applications for funding. Furthermore, the website of the European Research Council and its guide for applicants states prominently that “scientific excellence is the sole criterion in the peer review evaluation for grant proposals” (ERC, 2007). ‘Excellence’ undoubtedly appears to be equated with the highest achievement on the continuum of scientific quality, or the highest level of scientific performance.

This chapter is dedicated to the notion of ‘excellence’ and its application in professorial appointment decisions. Current standards of excellence are derived from the meritocratic principle: that individual performance determines and reflects one’s position, that it can be measured objectively and that gender does not play a role. Bourdieu has referred to this claim to objectivity and impartiality as one of the most persistent myths of contemporary science (Bourdieu, 1976); its function is to mask the specific interests of individual scientists and scientific communities. Gender neutrality has been part of the myth of meritocratic impartiality, as many feminist reflections on science have demonstrated (Fox Keller, 1985; Harding, 1998; Brouns, 2004). Previous research indicates that the meritocracy is based on a conception of masculine reasoning or values (Benschop & Brouns, 2003; Knights & Richards, 2003). This chapter focuses on gender practices in the construction and assessment of scientific excellence in the appointment of full professors by examining the criteria used to evaluate male and female candidates. The main question addressed here is: How is gender intertwined with the definitions and criteria of scientific excellence that feature in professorial recruitment and selection?

The analytical framework within which I will ‘unpack’ the notion of scientific excellence is based on Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic capital. Symbolic capital relates to the way in which one is valued by others. It is found in the form of the prestige, renown, reputation, and personal authority possessed by a person or organization (Bourdieu, 1986, 2004). Symbolic capital is thus closely connected with the concept of excellence, since ‘excellence’ seems to be the highest and most important form of symbolic capital. This chapter will analyze how other forms of capital – professional capital (track record in terms of education and publications), individual capital (personality) and social capital (connections) – relate to the development of the symbolic capital of excellence.

Analyzing the discursive practices in interviews and appointment reports will tell me more about how excellence is constructed. In the analysis of the appointment reports, I will focus on the criteria mentioned in the job description and the criteria reported during the final nomination phase. Furthermore, I will analyze the criteria that were deemed ‘decisive’ when distinguishing between the rejected and nominated candidates in the reports and interviews. Finally, five fictitious résumés will be used to gauge how committee members assess

professorial candidates and which criteria are prioritized. The question of what excellence is will be addressed explicitly here, and I will attempt to unravel the forms of capital of these fictitious individuals.

First, I will outline the concepts of excellence and symbolic capital, and how these notions can be unpacked by the use of different forms of capital. Second, each form of capital used to evaluate candidates will be systematically examined and analyzed from a gender perspective. Reflections on the criteria for excellence will reveal which certain conceptions of science and gender dominate during appointment practices. The fifth section will show how these forms of capital form part of the reputation of academics and demonstrate that attributing symbolic capital in the form of excellence is a gender practice because the symbolic capital of excellence is less frequently attributed to women.

### 5.1 Excellence and symbolic capital

How to define and measure scientific excellence and how to use particular performance indicators are the subjects of much debate within the international scientific community (Brouns & Addis, 2004; KNAW, 2005, p.38). Although the issue of gender and excellence represents a relatively recent field of research (Brouns & Addis, 2004, p.11), a growing number of studies have addressed the current definitions and usage of the term (e.g. Knights & Richards, 2003; Morley, 2005; Deem, 2007; Schacherl, Schaffer, Dinges, & Polt, 2007). A workshop organized in 2003 on “Minimizing gender bias in definition and measurement of scientific excellence”, held at the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence, Italy concluded that academic excellence is extremely difficult to define (Brouns & Addis, 2004). Meanwhile, Schacherl et. al. (2007, p.1) conducted a small survey in Austria and found that academics are beyond precise definition: “...You can’t define excellence, but you know it when you see it”. According to social constructivist theory, scientific excellence is not a ‘universal fact’ or ‘a natural given’ and it would be misleading to treat it as a simple, easily measurable attribute. Rather, it can be seen as a composite of many skills and qualities – meticulousness, originality, clarity, complexity, and so forth – which are achieved through a process of training, networking and accumulation of resources (Brouns & Addis, 2004, p.18). Furthermore, these skills and qualities must have been used for acknowledged achievements before the notion of excellence can be said to apply. It is therefore necessary to examine the criteria used by committee members and the importance attributed to each of these criteria. Although scientific excellence is ostensibly determined by quantifiable criteria such as productivity, peer review, citation



indexes and internationally refereed publications (Griffin, 2004), Bourdieu (2004, p.38) points out that the criteria for evaluating work cannot be entirely articulated; there is always an implicit, tacit dimension.

To 'capture' the notion of excellence practiced in professorial selection decisions, I draw upon the concept of various forms of capital. Any academic field is the arena for struggle for control and legitimation over valued resources. Bourdieu conceptualizes these resources as forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1988). Academic scholars compete for symbolic capital in the field of science and compete over the very definition of what is to be considered the most valued resources in the field (Swartz, 1997, p.123). In other words, they continuously attempt to define and 'discover' excellence. According to Bourdieu (1996, p.225), symbolic capital is used to capture what a social group acknowledges as most valuable. Symbolic capital can be referred to as the honor and prestige accorded to a person within a specific field, as defined strictly by and among peers. Symbolic capital is found in the form of prestige, renown, reputation, and authority accorded to an individual within a particular field (Cronin, 1996). Excellence can be interpreted as the highest level of prestige ascribed to an academic in his or her field and is undisputedly acknowledged as valuable. I therefore consider excellence to be an important form of symbolic capital. Symbolic capital is obtained by successfully exploiting other forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1990, p.122; Swartz, 1997, p.92). It is a composite form of capital created by the input of other forms of capital (Brouns, 1993; Everett, 2002). Although Bourdieu distinguishes several forms of capital (economic, cultural and social) that can lead to the construction of symbolic capital, I have chosen to use a slightly different distinction between the forms of capital, namely professional, individual and social capital. This categorization can be linked more closely to the empirical data in this research. The remainder of this section will operationalize these forms of capital, linking them to specific criteria.

First of all, professional capital can be defined as experience and achievements in the area of research, teaching, management,<sup>24</sup> practical experience (patient case, consultancy) and contribution to the broader societal debate. This form of capital is based on the evidence of scientific endeavor (publications, rewards, grants) and is widely seen as the most direct and legitimate way of assessing excellence in the academic world. I will investigate how professional capital is operationalized when assessing male and female candidates, and discuss possible gender practices in this form of capital.

<sup>24</sup> Management experience and academic leadership are often viewed together when assessing candidates. Nevertheless, these are two different skills. Management experience is the experience of candidates on committees and boards, while academic leadership is the ability to manage and inspire a (research) group. Since management experience constitutes a form of professional capital, I see academic leadership as part of individual capital.

Secondly, individual capital includes an individual's personal traits, such as skill, creativity, courage, commitment and leadership. Individual capital is sometimes also referred to as human capital (e.g. Becker, 1993; Toren, 2005), personal capital or embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1997).<sup>25</sup> I will focus on the individual attributes that play an important role during selection decisions (personality, leadership skills and ambition) instead of the more classical notion of human capital or embodied cultural capital that include elements such as education and lifestyle. Brouns (1993, p.128) argues that individual capital cannot be an independent variable in relation to the labor market. Other forms of capital can 'activate' individual capital. For instance, a form of individual capital like 'ambition' only becomes valuable when it is capitalized through a form of professional capital such as publications or grants. My analysis of individual capital will examine the role of personal traits in selection decisions.

The third form of capital is the widely used and contested concept of social capital. Bourdieu defines the concept of social capital as "the totality of the actual or potential resources that may be called upon by sole virtue of being part of a network of durable social relations...not simply connections, but the added value which membership in a group brings" (Bourdieu, 1986, p.256). The notion of added value is important: social capital can transform individual and professional capital into something that becomes relatively detached from its individual components. Social capital thus acts as an accelerator, transforming the other forms of capital into desirable symbolic capital; social capital consists of an aggregation of networks and these networks provide access to certain resources and positions of power. The work of the sociologist Lin (1999) is helpful in operationalizing social capital. He distinguishes three major features of social capital. First, social capital provides an individual with useful information about opportunities and choices that would otherwise not be available. These network connections may alert an organization and its agents that have professorial vacancies about the availability and interest of an individual that would otherwise have remained unknown. This feature of social capital was elaborated in chapter 4. Second, social capital exerts influence on the agents (e.g. recruiters or managers of the organization) who play a critical role in decisions (e.g. hiring or promotion). Because of their strategic locations and positions, some academics in social networks carry more valued resources and exercise greater power over the decisions of organizational agents. 'Putting a good word in' can affect the decision-making process regarding an individual. Third, social relations reinforce identity and recognition. Being recognized as a

<sup>25</sup> The closest equivalent to individual capital in Bourdieu's analysis is embodied cultural capital, which is defined as the habitus of cultural practices, knowledge, and demeanor learned through exposure to role models in the family and other environments (Portes, 1998).

worthy individual and a member of a social group who shares similar interests and resources not only provides emotional support but also a public acknowledgment of one's claim to certain resources. My analysis of social capital will examine the network connections that candidates utilize to establish their reputation and to enhance their chances of being nominated.

The next section will draw on these various forms of capital and determine which criteria are used during the appointment phase.

## 5.2 Professional capital as a starting point

Committee members emphasized the decisive role of professional capital in the assessment of professorial candidates, and indeed it is professional capital which is formally stated in the job profiles. The official criteria for professorial positions foremost include points as quality of research, quality of teaching, and experience in management and administration.

### Quality of research

According to almost all the committee members, the quality of a candidate's research is the main criterion on which the candidates' excellence is judged; it functions as a pre-condition for professorial selection. Respondents linked the quality of research mainly to matters as productivity, peer review, citation indexes, internationally refereed publications and scientific awards. In addition, most job profiles indicated that the frequency of high-quality research was a requirement, but the definition of both 'frequent' and 'high-quality' depended on the academic subfield. Nevertheless, particularly committee members from natural and medical sciences argued that quality of research was a quantifiable and objective criterion since it is simply a matter of counting: the candidate's name is entered into a scientific database (e.g. pubmed) and the committee is able to view his or her scientific output directly. Research schools and committees therefore often apply strict publication guidelines for the position of full professor.

At our institute, the criteria are very clear. Concerning research output, you have to publish in international top journals, and there is no doubt about which journals you need to be published in and how many articles. You have to obtain a certain number of points in our points system. That is very well-defined. We try to attract excellent researchers, and they have to meet minimum requirements. A full professor is expected to meet these criteria convincingly. (social sciences, woman 1)

This quote shows that there is a strong belief that scientific excellence is relatively easy to quantify. One simply has to 'count the points', and how these points

are obtained and what they represent is seen as self-evident. Measuring scientific excellence using bibliometrics is clearly anchored in the publication tradition of the natural and medical sciences, and this has come to represent a model for all scientific research (Brouns, 2004, p.155). Social science has adopted similar standards, having introduced these standards as grounded in the practice of natural sciences: publication in peer-reviewed, international (preferably American) journals. However, these strict research criteria are less common and more frequently contested in the humanities and some fields of social science. Chapter 6 will elaborate on this subject.

Another factor in assessing the quality of a candidate's research is the candidate's ability and track record in attaining additional funding for research projects. As the 'first-stream' funding decreases (see chapter 2), it has become essential to bring in additional research funding from the second and third streams. Acquiring additional funding from the Netherlands Science Foundation (NWO) is seen by peers as a clear sign of scientific excellence. Attaining additional research funding is a formal selection criterion, but the type, amount and size of projects candidates must have to their name remains unspecified and thus open to interpretation.

### Quality of research and gender

The majority of committee members were of the opinion that criteria to assess candidates' research qualities are universal and gender neutral in the sense that men and women have to comply with the same bibliometric standards and that these are relatively easy to measure.

Even the 'alpha males' [manneljessputters] only take criteria into account. What type of professor do we need? Who will help us score more points? Does he or she help us to raise our profile with the KNAW [Royal Dutch Academy of Arts and Sciences]? Then, it really is unimportant whether it is a man or a woman. (social sciences, woman 1)

I can't come up with a fairer system. We simply use the same measuring stick for both sexes. (natural science, man 4)

These quotes are examples of respondents who claimed that the evaluation system is fair and non-discriminatory since men and women are assessed in the same way. Such beliefs seem to be based on a strong belief in meritocracy. Men and women are seen as the same, and the responsibility for unequal outcomes is thus passed back to the individual (Sennet & Cobb, 1977). At first sight, this meritocratic system would seem to imply gender-neutrality, but it can be disadvantageous for academics when differences in contracts or career paths are not taken into account.

Such apparently objective criteria could blind assessors to possible gender bias in evaluating the quality of research. I distinguish four gender practices in evaluating the quality of research.

First, chapter three demonstrated that the standard set by the research institute, department or committee must be met and career interruptions are not taken into account. This means that academics with career interruptions are at a considerable disadvantage, and this applies predominantly to women.

- R: I have an excellent PhD candidate; she has not even finished but has already seven publications. [...]
- I: *If she gets pregnant and works part-time, say four days a week, for several years... what happens?*
- R: Well...she'd have to keep up publishing, so I don't know. I could loose her. (social sciences, man 5)

This last respondent illustrates that quality of research is not only about being an excellent researcher, but more importantly about the number of publications. He is willing to let a gifted researcher go if she does not meet the formal standards. Stories from other respondents indicate that research excellence is often about quantity rather than quality; the number of publications is equated with excellence. However, when the smaller number of hours worked is taken into account, the volume of work published by either gender is the same, generally speaking. International research shows that the gender differences in research productivity can be attributed predominantly to gender differences in structural locations, and as such they correspond to the slow improvement of women's position in science (Bordons, Morillo, Fernandez, & Gomez, 2003; Xie & Shauman, 2003). Dutch scholars such as Noordenbos (1992), Vianen et al. (1997) and Portegijs (1998) have also shown that, given equal conditions, men and women produce an equal number of publications. Nevertheless, appointment committees often only look at the total number of publications and the total years of experience when evaluating the quality of a candidate's research, without taking note of the research time available to produce them.

A second issue I have to consider in the assessment of the quality of research is the fact that there can be a gender bias in evaluating work conducted by women, as was shown by Wennerås and Wold's research (1997) in Sweden, and by Brouns and Scholten (1999) in the Netherlands. Both men and women rate the quality of women's work as lower than that of men when they are aware of the gender of the author. When the person's gender is unknown, no such effect is found. Double standards in performance evaluation will be discussed further in

section 5.5. Thirdly, when academics who have had career interruptions meet the standards required, they often are older and therefore lose out again because appointment committees often prefer younger candidates with equivalent qualifications. Some male and female respondents argue that women often do meet the criteria regarding the number of publications, but are generally older before they reach the same number of publications on their résumé.

After a certain point, it is too late for promotion. Then they [female applicants] have done everything that is required and they are qualified for the job, but they simply aren't the right candidate any more, they are too old. There is a certain window during which you have to enter the circuit. In medical sciences, you have to become professor between 40 and 50. Women are not that fast – that is where they fall short. They cannot do it that quickly. (medical sciences, woman 4)

However, I do see women that are qualified for the job. Unfortunately, they are somewhat older on average, you know. Committees prefer younger candidates, as they have a longer future ahead of them ... or, I don't know, seem more energetic or something. (social sciences, woman 7)

Here, the social inequalities of gender and age intersect. There seems to be an, often unspoken, age range in which professors should be appointed and the system advantages academics that follow a traditional masculine career path. Palomba (2004) showed that the most productive period in terms of publication for men occurs earlier in their careers than for women in Italy. She found that the most productive publishing period for women is when they are aged 45-49 and, to a lesser degree, under 35. Men's most productive age is 35-39, and to a lesser degree 40-44. It seems that women may overcome the first hurdle – a lack of publications – and then loose out as a result of age discrimination.

Fourthly, it is not only merit that determines whose articles will be published; social capital also plays a role (Brouns & Addis, 2004, p.22). Publications have to be read, discussed and cited, and a wide range of network contacts will help the dissemination of one's work.

Publication strategy can be seen as a game. You know, when you go to conferences and people know you personally, they tend to cite you more easily. You are in the picture. (natural sciences, man 9)

International publications and high citation scores may, then, be an indication of the quality of research or the by-product of participation in larger networks. Association with decision makers for publication and research funding may,

logically, affect the likelihood that academics will have their work published and openings for new research. Social capital raises the profile of one's work in the academic community, along with the number of grants, prizes, publications and resources for academic advancement. An extensive network can also lead to more possibilities to cooperate or co-author articles. Social capital can have a snowball effect: publications can lead to a better position at the university and this higher position subsequently leads to a greater number of network contacts, more prestige, more funding, which can all result in more publications (see section 5.4 social capital). In chapter 4, I have argued that women tend to wield less influence with elite academics in positions of power. In their work on the under-representation of women in science and technology, Etkowitz, Kemelgor and Uzzi (2000a) also ascribe the difference between the performance of female and male academics to differences in social capital and the density of network relationships.

These four gender practices concerning publications are not usually taken into account when evaluating the quality of research of male and female candidates.

#### Teaching quality

Another criterion for assessing the professional capital of the candidate is teaching quality. In most academic subfields, stories of committee members and information from the appointment report show that teaching experience does not play a decisive role in assessing professorial candidates.

We want excellent researchers, and if he [sic] is a failure in front of the class, we don't mind. (social sciences, man 3)

According to my respondents, quality of teaching alone does not make someone excellent or even compensate for shortcomings in research output. Full professors are never appointed only owing to their quality of teaching. Although some disciplines speak of 'teaching professors' (as in the American system), these professors are still primarily appointed on the basis of their research qualifications, which they can pass on to their students. I detected, however, that the importance of teaching experience varies between contexts. Faculties and subfields with large student populations need professors in certain fields to organize the curriculum. In the social sciences and humanities, teaching experience is valued more highly than in fields with a smaller teaching load. In natural sciences, candidates who are able to enthuse students about research are likely to be favored. This relates to the general goal of attracting more students to natural sciences and presenting it as an attractive field (see chapter 6). Although the main focus remains research

experience and output, teaching skills are increasingly valued. Under pressure from quality assessments in higher education, teaching inspections and accreditations, it is becoming more important that full professors have a range of teaching experience and teaching management.

Quality of teaching or an affinity with education is more difficult for committee members to operationalize as a selection criterion than quality of research. The majority of respondents indicated that there are no reliable parameters for assessing teaching criteria with the exception of rewards for 'outstanding teacher of the year' or a candidate's involvement in committees concerned with doctoral or post-doctoral education. They argue that the system of student evaluations is not mature enough to function as a trustworthy indicator. Some respondents from the medical sciences even argued that it is 'not done' to enclose student evaluations with a letter of application. In the humanities and social sciences, student evaluations are asked for more routinely, certainly during the last five years. If student evaluations are unavailable, teaching skills are informally assessed by colleagues.

As well as student evaluations, another way to judge the teaching capacity of a candidate is to organize a lecture for the committee members. With the exception of the medical sciences, this is becoming an increasingly common method of assessing the teaching abilities of short-listed candidates. Some groups have standardized this method in their protocols, while others have continued to doubt its representativeness and confidentiality. The Netherlands is a small country and candidates can be identified very easily.

#### Teaching quality and gender

Just like quality of research, quality of teaching may appear to be a gender-neutral criterion. However, some of the respondents confirmed that women and academics on fixed-time contracts expend significantly more attention and substantial energy on their teaching duties. A medical scientist expressed this as follows:

Women are more loyal, I think. They do not shrug it off too lightly; they put a lot of time and effort into the teaching part. I know a lot of men who have been giving the same lecture for the past 20 years. (medical sciences, man 1)

This man argues that female academics devote more time to teaching than their male counterparts. This could mean that male academics have more time to spend on research and/or management tasks. Recent research in the Netherlands confirmed that female academics have fixed term contracts to a higher degree and that women are over-represented as lecturers (Timmers, 2006; van Engen et al., 2008).

One female respondent explained that the division between research and teaching responsibilities plays an important role when working part-time. When women and men work part time, there is very often no corresponding decrease in the teaching workload. Since teaching responsibilities still have to be met, this eats into valuable research time. However, good scores on teaching do not compensate for a shortage of research output. Some researchers (Rothblum, 1988; Castleman, Allen, Bastalich, & Wright, 1995; Wesseling, 2001; van Engen et al., 2008) echo the assumptions of my respondents that women are more involved in and committed to teaching work and the transfer of knowledge in both the Dutch and the American context. In international research, it is regularly claimed that women are less successful in gaining promotion because of their commitment to teaching. Because research productivity throughout the course of an academic career is paramount for appointments, the cumulative effect of prioritizing teaching over research could generate a significant difference between the genders in terms of promotion. Self-report data show that men devote a greater proportion of time to research (Valian, 1998; Bellas & Toutkoushian, 1999). Women's dedication to teaching could, then, become a handicap in achieving the excellence required for a professorship.

#### Management quality

During the analysis of the reports and the interview data, it became clear that management skills are also becoming crucial and often formalized criteria in the selection of full professors in all subfields. Faculties have become dependent on well-organized operational management for the generation of external funding.

Ten years ago, you could say: "Well, maybe you will learn that during your professorate". But now, it is an important requirement. Really, if you do not have experience, you are simply not considered. A couple of candidates were rejected from their application letters because we already knew: good researcher but no leadership skills. That is not acceptable any more. (humanities, woman 9)

Management ability involves having experience in management and administrative tasks, and committee work. A candidate is expected to 'know how the game is played' and should be able to act in their department's best interests. A candidate's experience in managerial, administrative work or service is stated on the candidate's résumé – this could be experience in the management of research institutes, participation in national or international committees, boards and professional groups.

#### Management quality and gender

Respondents openly complained about the limited management experience of female candidates.

We are talking about management experience here. This is an aspect on which women do not always live up to their potential because they have not been on that many boards and committees, not having had time for that. That can be a weakness. And it is something you want to know, because, well, the largest part of my day consists of attending meetings of one sort or another. It would be stupid to appoint someone who was undiplomatic or incapable of that kind of task. That kind of colleague would actually be a burden because that would really mean – nice additional colleague, but is not able to take on some of my [managerial] tasks. And I have enough colleagues already who do not take on my tasks. So management experience is important. (humanities, man 6)

This last respondent adds that women do not have the same management experience as men do, because they have generally spent less extra time on boards and committees. He is not the only one who remarked that women spend less time on these extra-curricular activities. However, all the recently appointed female professors interviewed were convinced of the relevance of managerial tasks and had taken this into account when planning their career and building their résumé.

Two further factors can also influence the women's perceived lack of management experience. Women in top positions are often overstrained by the various management, administrative, committee and board duties that they are expected to take on because there are so few women to share them (Bown, 1999; Stobbe et al., 2004). This could explain why male respondents argue that they often receive a negative answer when asking women to be engaged in committee work. However, female respondents indicate that they are often asked for duties on a lower or middle management level. The more prestigious management positions or committee activities, as illustrated in chapter four, require an invitation from other academics in positions of power. Since women are under-represented on these kinds of committee in boards, their lack of social capital may mean they are overlooked when new academics for prestigious management tasks are invited.

Management ability does not, however, include only management experience, but is also about leadership skills and the attribution of authority. The next section will deal with these subjects.

5.3 The tacit dimension: practicing individual capital  
Officially, the criteria in the job profile function as guidelines for assessing the candidates. These formal criteria essentially correspond to the professorial capital described above; experience related to research, teaching and management. My analysis of appointment reports and interviews shows that these official criteria are decisive mainly in the process of selecting application letters (see also chapter 3, 'selection'). However, during selection interviews the process becomes more than a selection of printed résumés, but focuses on the assessment of candidates in social interaction with committee members. During the final ranking of shortlisted candidates, my data reveal that other criteria come into play, especially when the professional capital of the candidates is very similar. Committee members indicated – either explicitly or implicitly – that during the selection interview the candidate's individual capital (or rather their impression of the candidate's individual capital) functions as an additional, informal criterion which is in fact enormously important. My analysis reveals that individual capital impacts on the assessment of the candidate's excellence in two ways: 1) as a qualifier – due to 'likeability' and 'blending into the status quo'; or 2) as disqualifier – due to a marked personality (too difficult, too modest, not committed). The following section will demonstrate how these qualifiers and disqualifiers are strongly gendered.

#### Positive individual capital

##### *Likeability*

According to my data, one element that influences the opinions of assessors about the suitability a candidate is the likeability of that candidate.

You know that this shouldn't be the case, but sometimes you have a better connection with one individual. It could be that this happens more often with someone you already know or an internal candidate. Well, it gives a feeling of trust; often you have already seen someone working, and then you will unconsciously prefer that person. (social sciences, man 4)

There also needs to be some chemistry. I am convinced that the ability to cooperate productively is essential, so it has to be a person who fits you well. I don't think that is a minor detail, I think it is one of the main criteria. (humanities, woman 7)

These committee members admit that preference on the basis of likeability or affiliation can be an influencing factor. A number of respondents confirmed the impact of likeability in appointment decisions, but also stressed that a candidate

is not nominated solely on the basis of a 'positive connection' between candidate and committee member. They explicitly avoided any notion of nepotism, as can be seen in the statement of the male respondent, above, who claims that the effect of likeability occurs "unconsciously" and "shouldn't be the case". Here, too, I see evidence of the widely held academic opinion that evaluation should be based solely on scientific merits, and "not influenced by irrelevant personal attributes" (Salthouse, 1991; Andersen, 2001).

The influence of likeability is particularly strong when candidates are already known by committee members. This means that candidates who have a history of positive cooperation with committee members, often internal candidates, have an advantage. Research shows that there is a link between affiliation, cooperation and likeability (Hogan & Shelton, 1998; Sonnentag, 1998). However, it should not be forgotten that 'knowing' a candidate in advance can also have a negative effect, when a candidate is disliked or perceived as 'difficult' (see the next section about negative individual capital). Other empirical evidence by Wennerås and Wold (1997) shows that applicants who are affiliated with one of the evaluators are more successful in their application for a research grant than other applicants. The article concludes that while the quality of the proposal was an important factor in assessing the scientific quality of applicants, affiliation with one of the committee members (as well as being of the same gender) also played an important role.

Beyond knowing the person, the ability to identify strongly with a candidate also increases likeability, according to respondents. A commonly heard claim, especially among female academics, is that male full professors identify more strongly with younger men. The older professors 'recognize themselves' in these male candidates when they appear before the committee and approach them with a sense of fraternity.

I know about the 'Van der Leeuw chairs' – a lot of people from the same group are appointed.<sup>26</sup> They appoint their own doctoral students and I see that a lot of professors have a soft spot for their own students. Then you get a stronger man-to-man relationship. That is a self-reinforcing process and it is partly why most of the supervisors or chair group holders have always been mostly men. (humanities, woman 7)

What strikes me is that there were four speakers [at the conference], of which three were men and one was a colleague of mine. And at the end of the day, the star of the conference [...] thanked a couple of people and said "I found my 'cosmic twin' during this conference" and "X, the famous historian, is a kind of forefather to me ...".

<sup>26</sup> The 'Van der Leeuw' chair was especially brought into existence for young professors (<45).

That sense of brotherhood between those men, it is not a conscious exclusion like 'we don't want women'. It is more complex and subconscious. It is a combination of sentimentality and achievement, and that is given a lot of weight. They mix it up with the concept of quality. Because that 'important' speaker had enjoyed the presentation of the other men enormously, they seem to have a kind of homo-erotic bonding. 'A spiritual twin!' You can't get involved in that [as a woman]. I said to my female colleague: 'What is going on here?' (humanities, woman 8)

These last quotes show the gender practices in the attribution of 'likeability' by men who are mobilizing affiliating masculinities. In chapter 4, it was substantiated that likeability can be linked to the gendered concept of homophily – preferring one's own sex. Women run the risk of being excluded because appointment committees are predominantly populated by men, and men tend to prefer men (see §4.3). Furthermore, the female professor quoted also argues that men tend to link likeability with quality. Although likeability is not seen as a decisive criterion for appointment, it would appear to give a candidate certain 'excellence points'. Perceptions of excellence are intertwined with likeability, as Sonnentag claims (1998). Her study on identifying high achievers through peer assessment in the software industry shows that the performance of 'likeable' peers is evaluated more positively than the performance of less likeable peers. A Dutch study found that female academics that did not behave like 'old boys' in selection interviews, were disadvantaged in the assessment of their abilities (van Vianen, 1987). This mechanism is still at work today and while it may make cooperation easier in the short term, it also leads to a lack of diversity in the longer term. The next section will elaborate further on this subject.

#### *Blending into the status quo*

A second important qualifier, in addition to the personal chemistry between a candidate and a committee member, is the fit between the candidate and the culture of the chair group. Several respondents mentioned that they looked for candidates that could easily blend into the status quo. The quotes below demonstrate the search for someone who will integrate easily.

I: *What was the most important reason, can you indicate that?*

R: I would say that was the candidate who, certainly for the majority of the group, gave the impression that he would integrate easily into the existing structure. He wasn't a totally new element. It was thought he would fit into the group without difficulty.

I: *And the rest of the candidates, would they have fitted in less easily? How did you know that?*

R: They were relatively well-known [to the committee]. However, I think they would have more of a problem integrating if you take the current situation as a starting point. There would be many new elements to be brought in. (social sciences, man 10) Not someone who would be a new and potentially disruptive element [within the research group], with all kinds of uncertainties, but someone who gives the impression of being able to fit into the existing culture. You have to be able to think along with the organization, identify with the organization and be able to cultivate the corporate identity. Well, that results in a completely different type of full professor. The new generation of professors is made up of ambitious managers who have no problem blending into the status quo. That is a cultural difference compared to the 1970s, when the establishment was by definition something you had to oppose to. (humanities, woman 2)

These respondents argue that candidates are assessed on the likelihood they will continue the current way of practicing science and blend easily into the status quo. The emphasis is on fitting into the group without causing too much of an effect and thinking along with the current elites in positions of power. In chapter 4, I already illustrated that women can be seen as more risky, have to overcome more barriers to gain the trust of the assessors, and are more likely to be seen as not fitting into the group easily, especially all-male groups.

Moreover, the – often unconscious – preference for similarity suppresses innovation and creativity. By constantly attracting the same people, it is not necessarily the best academics, but those most similar to the recruiters who are selected. It is striking that candidates are not generally allowed to upset the status quo, yet innovation is also demanded of the candidates. It seems questionable whether appointing 'more of the same' actually advances creativity and innovation in science.

In addition to positive individual capital, my data also reveal that negative individual capital plays an even more important role. The next section will discuss negative capital.

#### Negative individual capital

##### *Too difficult*

The first disqualifier for gaining a professorial position can be seen as the opposite of 'blending into the status quo'. The respondents made clear that, when the final nomination has to be made, candidates who display difficult behavior often lose out to the competition as they could jeopardize the group cohesion.

We have serious doubts about [the appointment of Dr. X]. To us, it does not seem plausible that he will make a vital contribution to the development of this field in the Netherlands. This is chiefly due to his personality. Cooperation with colleagues inside and outside his own group does not proceed smoothly to the extent that, in our humble opinion, this is known to almost all institutions. We therefore advise categorically against the appointment of Dr X. (appointment reports, university 1, nr. 113). Of course there are also social-emotional components such as when a candidate starts arguing straight away at the selection interview, then that person is unsuitable, or when a candidate has an authoritarian attitude – that kind of obvious thing. (social sciences, woman 14)

This female professor perceives a difficult personality as a valid criterion that can overrule formal criteria since it is ‘obvious’ that a candidate is not suitable if the candidate displays aggressive behavior. This illustrates the tacit character of individual capital, which is not formalized in the job profile, but appears to function as a common-sense criterion in nomination decisions. This quote also shows that a candidate who demonstrates an aggressive or authoritarian attitude during the selection interview is simply considered ‘unsuitable’. Other respondents characterized a ‘difficult personality’ primarily as authoritarian, egotistical or extremely demanding (in terms of salary, laboratory facilities, assistants etc.), and used words such as “arrogant”, “wrangler”, “bighead” and “dictator”. When asking the respondents about why difficult candidates with (perceived) difficult personalities are rejected or considered unsuitable, they all argue that they foresee “difficulties in future cooperation” (social sciences, woman 14) and “problems because the candidate could step on someone's toes” (humanities, man 5) or even “lead to imbalance” (humanities, woman 3). Such candidates are seen as disruptive elements to the group which do not contribute to a ‘healthy and productive working environment’.

The characteristics ascribed to difficult candidates – such as being arrogant, authoritarian, demanding – seem to contain elements of stereotypical masculinity. Arrogance, arguing and big egos all have strong masculine connotations, but are not evidently and consciously linked by the respondents to men. Difficult behavior is linked to both genders in the interview data, as well as in the appointment documents. However, I noticed that stereotypical masculine behavior is interpreted differently when witnessed in men and women. This is illustrated by the following quotes where female and male committee members reflect on masculine behavior displayed by either a man or a woman.

At that time, I would never have thought ‘I can apply for the professorship’. But it is striking that all the men are convinced they are ready. I notice that. When you have

an attitude of: ‘I am good and here I am’, this really makes a difference and I think they accept this kind of behavior more easily in men. You are perceived as a bitch very easily when you act like that [as a woman]. So you have to disguise it a little. You still have to be that nice girl. (humanities, woman 7)

In general, women do not ‘bang their fists on the table’ and say ‘we are going in that direction’. No, that is not the case. However, there are a few who do, but those women are exceptions. And when they do display that kind of attitude, then you’ll immediately get the reaction [among committee members] of ‘no, not that one’. That is pretty clear. When a man acts like that, it is more acceptable, he is still in the race. But when a woman displays that behavior, she is out. (natural sciences, man 11)

The situation here seems paradoxical. The respondent from the natural sciences describes how candidates need to express their qualities explicitly, but simultaneously demonstrates the different consequences of this behavior for men and women. He states that men who exhibit this kind of masculine behavior are ‘accepted’, while women face the risk of being rejected, since it repels committee members. Women seem to be punished harder for displaying aggressive, arrogant or overconfident behavior. Doing this kind of ‘masculinity’ is perceived in a different way when displayed by men and women. Yet, for male applicants it is sometimes seen as an advantage when acting in a highly masculine environment:

Committee members may find it too risky to hire a woman, or they may think that women have less authority as head of department. Because in medical hospital there are a lot of men [mannetjes] with enormous egos and then the committee thinks: ‘Let’s take the one with the big mouth and he [sic] will be able to stand up to them. (medical sciences, man 2)

This quote illustrates that a candidate sometimes has to be authoritarian, because that candidate is then able to handle the other big egos in the group. This suggests that masculinity practiced by men is valued in a masculine environment.

The existing literature supports the notion that when men and women display a similar behavior or personality, they may be perceived differently due to gender role expectations. Women who behave in a more assertive, masculine manner – for instance engaging in self-promotion rather than modesty – are violating normative expectations based on gender roles and this may lead to a negative evaluation (Rudman, 1998; van Engen, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Bolino & Turnley, 2003). Furthermore, Van der Raad & Stobbe (2007) show that women managers often have their hands doubly tied since displaying a masculine leadership style, or trying to be one of the guys in order to achieve the status of successful manager, can lead to a reputation as ‘excessively strident’ or ‘aggressive’,



because masculine behavior is not expected from a woman and is therefore judged negatively. On the other hand, if a female manager employs a more stereotypically feminine leadership style – being sensitive, supportive, expressive and accommodating – this can be perceived as demonstrating vulnerability, which is not valued positively either. I will return to this more feminine style of behavior in the next section. In short, this mechanism can be read as an example of double standards in professorial assessments. Whether femininity is also acceptable in a masculine environment will be discussed below.

### *Excessive modesty*

Another disqualifier related to a candidate's individual capital is being 'too modest'. Excessively modest behavior is most visible in how the candidates present themselves, and can be seen as evidence that the candidate lacks the confidence to become an excellent professor. According to committee members, candidates should be able to present themselves, be confident about their qualities and give the impression that they can manage a department. Although this disqualifier clearly applies to women as well as men, almost all the examples given by my respondents concerned women. Some male respondents in particular voiced the opinion that women present themselves too modestly in front of the committee. Compared to the notion that 'being difficult' is seen as disadvantageous for both sexes, excessive modesty is ascribed exclusively to women and femininity.

Committee members argue that women do not present themselves confidently. In their view, women just present their work, do not exaggerate and do not go beyond a realistic view of their competencies.

How candidates present themselves before the appointment committee is important. I assume there are differences in how men and women present themselves in front of a committee. Or, possibly, it is the committee that perceives men and women differently. We recently appointed a male candidate who was very confident and does not suffer from any insecurity about his own talents. It is not the case that all women are insecure, but it is a more common trait in women than in men. (humanities, man 11)

Women tend to stick very closely to the skills they can prove during the interview [...] It seems a little like – or at least I get the impression that they are carefully maneuvering themselves towards the committee. That does not mean that they are not excellent. Recently, we had a vacancy for a professorial chair and we had a woman on the shortlist, the other two were men. She was a very good researcher, but she lacked practical experience, while the advertisement explicitly stated that research

qualities and also practical experience were both required. Well, what do you think those men did? They exaggerated their practical experience, so that could not be a reason for some committee member to say: 'Well, this candidate is not suitable'. (natural sciences, man 11)

They [women] might have been less vigorous in the selection interview, or be more ambivalent about their application: 'Yes, I have my PhD and people told me to apply, so maybe I should try it this time.' (medical sciences, man 3)

The female candidate in the second quote failed to exaggerate her practical experience in the same way as the male candidates. She was rejected although the practical experience of all the candidates may have been similar. Overstating one's own abilities, boasting and exaggerating seem to be advisable when interacting with an appointment committee. In addition, committee members appear incapable or unwilling to look beyond a candidate's own impression management. Good self-presentation is seen as one of the necessary traits in a candidate. Nevertheless, there is a – continually changing – line between what is acceptable self-promotion and arrogance or over-confidence, which is not appreciated in candidates of either gender (see 'too difficult' section). Generally speaking, committee members were not impressed by how female candidates promote or present themselves. This echoes the finding of chapter 4, which showed that gatekeepers argue that women do not make themselves visible enough to be seen by scouts, and the behavior women demonstrate during the interaction with the appointment committee is also seen as problematic.

When a candidate is perceived as too 'nice', a committee can have the idea the candidate would not be capable of surviving in the competitive culture of academia.

R: With regard to female applicants, I easily get the feeling that they are not going to make it because they are too nice or too kind. And that is just not possible. They have the qualities of a good scientist but you think: 'This is not how it works, you won't survive in this way'.

I: *Why shouldn't they survive?*

R: Well, they do not feel comfortable with academic culture. The exceptions are, generally speaking, a lot tougher, more willing to fight for it like men do. If you do not fit in with this culture, you're disregarded for a position. [...] Committees consider it as – we could give this chair to a female candidate, but within a year she would end up in the gutter. And in a male-dominated surroundings that is something that works like a filter. (natural sciences, man 8)

Being 'nice' is presented as a reason for not nominating this female candidate despite "her good qualities". This male committee member loses confidence in female applicants when they exhibit feminine traits because they would not be tough enough to survive in the male-dominated academic culture. So, the discourse about women and certain qualifications is not about 'excel' but 'survive'. Displaying benevolent behavior towards others is, however, not a typical disqualifier for men. Although insecurities can be disastrous for both sexes, men are seldom disqualified on the grounds of being 'too nice'. In women, it is seen as evidence of indecisiveness and a lack of vigor, which results in the perception that they cannot stand up for themselves in the hierarchical academic environment. This can even be connected to their physical appearance:

Once I heard the story of a very competent candidate, a woman, small in size, fragile, and a [male] member of the university board said: "Well, should we take that girl?" So physical appearance is something crucial. (medical sciences, man 2)

This quote illustrates that the physical appearance of this candidate affected how the committee assessed her competence to be given a full professorship. Her petite feminine appearance – in contrast to a larger, masculine one – influenced the perceptions of her behavior and the abilities ascribed to her. The member of the university board cast doubt on her suitability by referring to her as 'girl', the implication being that a 'girl' would certainly not survive in a competitive academic environment. The problematic relationship between feminine traits and scientific excellence is demonstrated in a variety of studies (Krefting, 2003; van den Brink & Stobbe, forthcoming). Van den Brink and Stobbe show that 'being a competent earth scientist' is assessed predominantly in terms of physical fitness and masculinity. In order to be seen as competent, women students try to become 'one of the boys', acting and dressing in a masculine way and constructing a gender identity that concords with these hegemonic values and beliefs. Women with long nails, skirts or make-up were not taken seriously and were found to be unsuitable for positions by staff, male and female students alike.

Another point is that committee members perceive feminine behavior as being incompatible with being a strong leader. A full professor is, in the eyes of the respondents, also a manager who has to represent the chair group and make crucial decisions when the group is adrift. The academic leadership style visualized by committee members is of a strong, charismatic – though not authoritarian – masculine style.

I can remember, there were certain concerns about her appearance. Actually, it had to do with leadership. I do not have the feeling that that was because she was a woman.

I mean, if it had been a man, those concerns would have been there as well. However, those concerns were emphasized a little more because she was a woman, that is possible. (natural sciences, man 3)

In this quote, the respondent reflects on the question of whether it would have been different if the candidate had been a man. The way the candidate came across was enough to disqualify her as a candidate, particularly in view of the fact that this was a female candidate. The skepticism and lack of confidence in women's ability to provide academic leadership is not related to the relational or social elements of academic leadership (which are not in doubt), but the ability to defend the interests of the research group in tough negotiations with university boards and committees.

People say women are very suitable [for a professorship] but on the other hand, academics often wonder if a woman can 'knock heads together' and make sure that the department is running properly. A woman would have to learn that. I think being able to knock heads together is less important, but you should inspire confidence in people to feel that it is a pleasant and safe environment. (humanities, woman 8)

A professor also has a kind of ritual function. This could mean, and this wouldn't be completely irrational, that the selection is based on the characteristics required to fulfill this ritual function – so, it is not only about meritocratic principles. And there are plenty of examples to prove that. Departments which are totally disorganized and the head of department is leaving – then they, quite rationally, search for a candidate who can take full control of the situation. Maybe that person is, in that situation, the best candidate. And if you do not have the personality to do that, you might ask yourself whether you should really aspire to that position. (medical sciences, man 3)

This last quote also confirms the idea that individual capital can, in certain contexts, be more important than meritocratic principles – that the best candidate is the candidate who gives the impression that he or she is capable of managing an academic department. The respondent speaks of 'a ritual function' which seems closely linked to the image of an academic, a strong male with authority.

Traditional masculine characteristics are valued above traditional feminine values such as kindness, benevolence or modesty. Respondents argue that women's behavior consistently accords with their female gender role (e.g. apologies, modesty, and hesitation). As a consequence, men may gain the respect and trust of committee members more readily than women do. My analysis shows that a female candidate who presents herself in a feminine way, in fact confirms

the stereotypical representation of women. She will be perceived as less self-confident, less assertive and less competent. This is exactly the opposite of the 'too difficult' style of behavior: while being 'too difficult' is interpreted as masculine behavior, being 'too modest' is often interpreted as feminine behavior. It is possible that in medical sciences these masculine traits are valued more highly than in humanities, where strategic behavior is more important (see chapter 6). Women are placed in a double bind. The situation becomes even more complicated when I take perceptions of commitment and ambition into account.

#### *Insufficient commitment*

The last element of individual capital which is often a disqualifier during the professorial selection process is the perception of a candidate's commitment. In some cases, my respondents were very explicit about the need to 'devote one's life to science'. Being a full professor is often seen not simply as a job, but as "a vocation", a "way of life", or even "an identity". This view of academic life is shared and indicated by many scholars in the field of the academic work ethos (see Brouns, 2000). Candidates who fail to live up to those expectations or are unwilling to cultivate such devotion are at a considerable disadvantage.

Look, carrying out research is extremely competitive, and it is not possible that you just – well, I have done it myself – sometimes you really have to work very hard to set something up, to gain results because you know that colleagues elsewhere in the world are on the same track. That is part of the fun, to win that battle. That kind of [competitive] element is essential in a candidate. People have to be passionate, and ambitious – most of all ambitious. In my opinion, people in the Netherlands lack ambition. [They think] it has to be fun, and they even want to be able to have a full social life! But you can have that social life in science! You can meet regularly with your colleagues from all over the world. If you have good results, you can go abroad very often, and you will be invited and have friends from all over the world. (medical sciences, man 16)

Although a rather exceptional view, the astonishment expressed by this (older) professor that (younger) academics 'want a complete social life' and the lack of ambition among Dutch scholars demonstrates the notion of academic life as a vocation. In his eyes, ambition is a vital ingredient for achieving something within the academic world. A female respondent articulates this same notion by contesting the way that committee members assessed her dedication during her selection interview. According to her, the committee members voiced the opinion that "you have to feel that same sense of calling, that this is your whole life, and it has to

be your whole life, too, otherwise you don't belong here" (humanities, woman 2). This means that not all respondents share this condition of total dedication as strongly. There is a tendency towards a better work-life balance among younger academics. Nevertheless, the tacit norm of great dedication is still strong among committee members.

This assumption of a complete devotion to a scientific career is strongly gendered. The commitment and ambition of women are more often points of debate in the academic world than those of men. Analysis of the interviews showed that many committee members – men and women alike – voiced the opinion that women lack a certain amount of ambition in terms of wanting to reach the most senior positions, since they make different choices during their career, mainly due to family responsibilities.

I have been a supervisor of both men and women for 20 years now, and you can see it happening. Women have children and sometimes make very conscious choices, such as 'I do not want to work anymore; I consider other things important in life as well'. Few women follow the male career trajectory, whereas almost all men do this. It is easier for women to give up their career, have children and take care of them. This sounds like lame excuses. As a man, your career breaks down; as a woman, you do not fail, but 'you didn't get the opportunities' or 'you wanted to do something else'. (social sciences, woman 1)

I think they [women scientists] sometimes have less 'blind ambition' and that women tend to say 'it is not worth it'. (medical sciences, man 9)

Men can strive for their careers and if other things have to be sacrificed, then that's a shame but so be it. I think that attitude is less common among women. They will find it easier to say 'I do not want to give things up'. I shared that opinion myself: I do not want to work 70 hours a week, or 80. I think 50 is fine, and sometimes 70 is no problem either, but I often see a lot of my colleagues, mostly men, going home with bags full of work for the weekend or the Christmas holidays. I don't know whether they really do anything with the work they carry home. I don't know – I doubt it. (medical sciences, woman 11)

According to the male and female respondents in the first quotes, women are less single-minded in their ambition to make science the most important aspect of their lives. The perception is that women do not aspire to an academic career and lack that extra dedication which is really necessary to reach a top position (working far in excess of standard full-time hours, at weekends and during holidays). The

female respondent even argues that it is easier for women to drop out of science and that this is almost expected, given that women – especially in the Netherlands – assume the bulk of care-taking responsibilities. A large majority of male respondents linked the low number of female academics in some way to the care responsibilities women have, and the fact that part-time working is almost automatically linked to that. They expressed the view that part-time work and an academic career are incompatible and that full-time work is one of the prerequisites for reaching a senior position. Hence women (and men) who work part-time are less likely to reach senior positions.

R: We do have some women working in this department; also some young people – doctoral students. But they will not become professors.

I: *Because they are too young?*

R: Well, I don't think so. They have not been willing or able – due to all kinds of family responsibilities – to develop or make progress [in their scientific careers]. They do not have the ambition to belong to the elite. (natural sciences, man 5)

Our female professor in gynecology argued that if women wished to have a part-time medical education program, then she would provide that. So she is giving the message that another way of working is also possible. But that is the head of education of this specialization. It does not mean that you can become a full professor. If we really want to maintain our academic medical centers in the Netherlands at the highest level, then we need to set high standards in science and in publications. That is a long-term aim and you have to start building up to that very young. If there is a career interruption of five years, it is really hard to fight back in. (medical sciences, man 16)

This last quote illustrates that a transition to a part-time job can end your career. After a career interruption, academics are not considered capable of regaining their place within the system and fighting their way back to the top. To become a professor on the basis of a part-time career is very hard, according to the majority of the respondents – on the verge of being impossible, in fact.

As I showed in chapter 2, in the Netherlands it is very common for women to work part-time; 33 percent of women have full-time jobs compared to 86 percent of men (Portegijs et al., 2006). How do these figures compare to the academic field? Contrary to expectations, the majority of female professors are appointed to work more than 0.8 FTE hours (see table 5.1), slightly more even than male professors. There are also more male professors in part-time appointments than female professors.

Table 5.1: Overview of appointed professors (m/f) and contracted hours<sup>27</sup>

	< 0.4 FTE	0.5 - 0.7 FTE	0.8 - 1.0 FTE	
<b>Male professors</b>	215 (30%)	61 (9%)	441 (62%)	<b>717</b> <b>100%</b>
<b>Female professors</b>	29 (27%)	11 (10%)	69 (63%)	<b>109</b> <b>100%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>244</b> <b>(30%)</b>	<b>72</b> <b>(9%)</b>	<b>510</b> <b>(62%)</b>	<b>826</b> <b>100%</b>

Source: 826 appointment reports (study B)<sup>28</sup>

One explanation for this apparently contradictory outcome is a selection effect. Women who consciously choose a career in science try to maximize their chances of achieving that by following a traditionally masculine career path: impeccable dedication, full-time work, no care responsibilities. Another conclusion, which would seem to reflect the findings of my research material better, is that there is not such a large difference between the commitment of men and women striving to become senior academics, but rather that women need to demonstrate their ambition and commitment more unquestionably. Other research conducted in the Netherlands seems to validate this explanation. Korsten et al. (2006) calculated the part-time factor that revealed only a slight difference between male scientists (0,88) and female scientists (0,85).<sup>29</sup> Van Engen et al. (2008) also revealed hardly any differences between the formal number of working hours of male and female academics at a general level.

The level of ambition is also reflected in the willingness to work abroad. Many respondents indicate that women are less willing to spend a substantial time – such as two years or more – at a research institute abroad, or that their (male) partner is not willing to join the female scientist to go abroad. In natural sciences, special partner programs have been developed, whereby the partner of the appointee is also offered a job (dual career arrangements). According to interviewees, the importance of international experience as a selection criterion has been increasing in recent years (Berger & Klein, 2001). The overall impression given by

<sup>27</sup> The shorter part-time contracts (< 0,4 fte) are most common in the disciplines of Engineering (58%), Law (50%) and Economics (43%). In these disciplines, a professorial appointment is often combined with a position outside academia.

<sup>28</sup> The N of this analysis does not match the total number of analyzed reports (N=971) as reappointments and the 'missing cases' for the variable 'contracted hours' are taken out of the analysis.

<sup>29</sup> Total amount of FTE / total number of staff

committee members is that women have less international research experience. This is most clearly shown in the responses to a fictive résumé presented to the respondents by the interviewer, in which the gender of the candidate was blanked out. One of the respondents assumes this résumé belonged to a woman or a man without family responsibilities due to the time this person has spent abroad.

R: This is someone who has worked all over the world. How is one able to do that with two small children? That is quite unrealistic. You can't possibly manage that.

I: *Okay, you think 'this is a woman without a family'. Could it also be a man with a family?*

R: Unfortunately the answer is yes, that's possible. Yes, that is simply the way it is, I'm afraid. That's not politically correct, but it does work that way in my opinion. Partly because these are the traditional gender roles we grew up with, but it's partly the choice of women themselves. If I ask my female colleagues – not only full professors, but also post-doc researchers – whether they will leave their kids alone for three months and go to Paris and then to MIT for a month and afterwards to Prague for six weeks, no, they won't do that. They would flatly refuse. To be honest, my wife, who isn't a scientist, wouldn't do it either. But I did it. Well, not that frequency, but I went. (humanities, man 6)

This respondent argues that women are less willing to go abroad. He emphasizes that a scientist has to do this. However, he himself states that he did not do it 'at that frequency'. If women were not obliged to do it 'at that frequency', it may be less problematic.

This example appears to demonstrate the existence of double standards. Gender is practiced in such a way that having children only presents a problem for women. It seems that women are rejected on the basis of their lack of willingness to go abroad. However, data from the appointment reports simultaneously shows that men with little international experiences are appointed. A criterion that effectively blocks women out of the system is thus not applied to men in the same way. Furthermore, Dutch research has shown that the assumption that women lack international experience is no longer valid. No gender differences were found between male and female PhD candidates and post-doctoral researchers, and with regard to associate professors and full professors, women even proved to have more international experiences than men (Berger & Klein, 2001). So the assumption that women are less willing to go abroad or have less international experience is not corroborated by figures.

To conclude, a strong discourse about women's lack of ambition and commitment is still evident and shows the persistence of gender stereotypes, notwithstanding equal working hours and international experience. This strong perception still exists, despite the fact that ample research has found no evidence

of a lower level of ambition among female academics in the Netherlands (Need, Visser, & Fischer, 2001; Brouns et al., 2004; AWT, 2005). A 'hegemonic female academic', that does not in fact exist, appears to have been constructed on the basis of the average Dutch woman. These stereotypical interpretations of events and behavior mean that the competence of female academics is underestimated. There remain deeply rooted notions of women's duty of care in the family, women's wish to work part-time and hence their lack of ambition to reach a professorship, and these factors affect the decisions made by committees. A male respondent illustrates this by arguing that a woman with care responsibilities has to convince the committee that 'work will have priority', while a man with family responsibilities is seldom asked about how he plans to combine them with work. The following quote shows how a particular type of strategic communication and interpretation can take place.

It is possible that women are more often put on the defensive because they have a family with young children. It shouldn't be happening but the committee will wonder whether it can – or should – demand dedication of 100 or 150 percent of somebody with three children. You shouldn't be doing that as a committee, but if someone takes that into account without saying it, you will not find out. That is why as a woman, you should try not to be put on the defensive. If you have three children, you have to make it clear to the committee how you think you are going to manage that. You really have to think thoroughly about how you are going to address that. You have to be one step ahead and say: 'I have discussed it with my husband, we have been thinking for a long time, and I think that if I arrange it like this, for ninety percent of the time, I will have all my hands free for this job'. So, it is possible that women are not equally represented because of behavior by the committee that is not entirely appropriate, but also by the attitude of the candidate. But everyone has a different agenda, so things like this can play a role. (medical sciences, man 2)

This quote also illustrates that a committee sometimes tries to be protective towards women, wonders whether they 'can ask this of a woman'. So if committee members take a traditional view of care responsibilities, the chance that they will assume that a woman will have trouble managing her work is reasonable. Martin (2006, p.262) calls this 'paternalistic masculinity'. Although well-intended, it perpetuates the stereotypes upon which it is premised: women's role is to take care of the children. Care-taking responsibilities are seen exclusively as women's problems since these arguments are never discussed with male candidates. Men do not have to justify the arrangement of their family responsibilities. This means women have to counteract stereotypical images on the part of committees with traditional attitudes towards gender roles.

#### 5.4 The dynamics of social capital

It is not only professional and individual capital that are decisive in the nomination of professorial candidates. Brouns and Addis (2004, p.22) argue: "It is not only talent and merit that decide whose papers will be published or whose application will be approved; this is also affected by social capital". In section 5.1, social capital was defined as an aggregation of networks that can provide certain resources and positions of power. Chapter 4 showed that social networks are of vital importance during the recruitment phase; they can facilitate information about vacancies – especially in situations where positions are not openly announced – and provide social support. It was explained that networking is a gender practice which can lead to disadvantages for women compared to men who mobilize masculinities in homophilious networks (see § 4.3). Similar mechanisms of exclusion also apply in defining and attributing 'excellence'. This section will discuss the features of social capital applied when building an 'excellent' reputation: 1) social capital as a criterion and 2) social capital as an accelerator.

##### Social capital as a criterion

One of the criteria used to assess a candidate's 'excellence' is the density and extent of a candidate's national and international network. Committee members are interested in how someone is known in the professional networks within and beyond the Netherlands. International networks are extremely important in the academic world given that the candidate's recognized relationships with other renowned academics can open up new network connections for the chair group or department. According to Lin (1999, p.31), the network connections of an individual are viewed by the organization as indicative of the individual's social credentials. These credentials "reflect the individual's accessibility to resources through social networks and relations"(p.31). In this way, a candidate can contribute resources to the future department or chair group. International network connections with influential and renowned scientists in the field 'reflect' on the chair group, department or university. Excellent academics, according to the respondents, have a certain 'aura of quality' which is expected to reflect on the chair and his or her group. Renowned scientists are invited to a university department specifically to add social (and symbolical) capital to the chair group.

This gentleman has been nominated because he is a scientist with an international reputation who, through this interdisciplinary approach, is capable of giving new impetus to academic developments which transcend traditional disciplines. He will be able to expand the proposed initiatives for cooperation with a prominent university in X. (appointment report, university 2, nr. 62)

The range of a candidate's network is visible in the résumé – information such as whom a candidate has cooperated with, in which research group he or she has worked, who the candidate's PhD-supervisor or chair group holder was, which research groups the candidate has participated in, whether the candidate is active on committees or edits scientific journals. It is not only contacts in the academic field that are valuable; connections in business and industry are also appreciated. Contacts outside academia are especially valued in disciplines such as engineering, applied natural sciences, law and business administration. My data show that these contacts can lead to the appointment of a certain candidate.

Dr. X is, however, an excellent candidate, given his networking initiatives and his connections in the business world. These connections could be very useful for our department and university. (appointment report, university 4, nr. 26)

The social capital of a candidate functions not only as an additional criterion, it also helps to boost the candidate's professional and individual capital, since the reputation of a candidate can be enhanced by recommendations from influential scientists. I argue that social capital functions as an accelerator for other kinds of capital.

##### Social capital as an accelerator

Candidates' social capital not only serves as a criterion for professorial appointments, it can also exert influence on the selection decision. This occurs through the provision of references and through unsolicited recommendations. To evaluate candidates, committee members collect information from different sources: a candidate's professional capital is evaluated on the basis of the résumé and publications while a candidate's individual capital is judged from an impression of their personality during the selection interview. In addition, my analysis reveals that committee members often seek the opinion of an expert or background information from a colleague or supervisor. For example, the candidate's reputation is checked by committee members through their formal and informal networks.

I: Does the dean know the academic reputation of the candidate?

R: No, I don't think so, he doesn't know everything. But he will find out very easily – just one telephone call to a colleague. Deans have very wide networks. It is mainly just a matter of confidence. (natural sciences, man 5)

It's not only other professors that you approach for information. You talk to people you know from all over the field. These are not conversations that take the form of:

'I am interested in a candidate and I want your opinion.' It is not done like that, but in a broader sense it is quite obvious what it is about. But they do not state it explicitly. (medical sciences, woman, 5)

It is often about personal impressions and sensitivities. Of course, it is a very small world and everyone knows everyone. This means that ad hominem judgments are given very quickly, over and above the purely formal or intrinsic qualifications that are mentioned in the application letter. (humanities, man 1)

Of course, even if you are not a committee member, someone might drop by and say: 'We have someone applying from Germany. You know the German scene – can you check what the situation is?' But officially I think that asking for information is only allowed with the permission of the applicant. Then you have a problem, because the applicant will never suggest the name of a referee who will talk negatively about the candidate or say 'we are glad we got rid of him'. As far as candidates from the Netherlands are concerned, you do not need to inform, you already know [the candidate's reputation]. Gossip spreads like wild fire. (social sciences, man 6)

These quotes all show how the reputation of an applicant is checked in an informal circle. In the last quote, questions are asked about 'the situation', meaning who the candidate is, what his/her reputation is and why he or she is applying? Are there conflicts in the current group or are there simply no positions? Academics rely more on the opinions of their colleagues gained through their own informal networks than on the formal letters of reference, since these are initiated by the candidates. Furthermore, committee members argue that they have greater confidence in the quality of a candidate if he or she is known by eminent colleagues or gatekeepers. They often base their point of view on the opinions of colleagues that can inform them about the eligibility of the candidate. Academics that are recognized as excellent in their own field exercise particular power in building the reputations of candidates and have an impact on the professorial decision-making process. When a candidate is known by eminent scientists, this reflects on the quality of the candidate. This phenomenon is called 'basking in reflected glory' (Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Freeman, & Sloan, 1976). According to Cialdini (1984, p.195), links with the powerful influence how committee members feel about candidates – and candidates try to exploit this to their advantage. The academic's individual and professional capital is enhanced through their affiliation with institutes and scientists of high standing.

As well as recognition from referees, it is even better when a candidate is recommended by renowned scientists or decision makers on their own initiative.

"Putting in a word" carries a certain weight (Lin, 1999, p.31) and adds value to the candidates' individual and professional capital. In some subfields, candidates can ask people to recommend them.

When a candidate aims for a professorial position, of course he [sic] is not going to shout 'hello, take me!'. No, he will arrange for other people, academics whom he thinks are influential, to recommend him. This often happens. (medical sciences, woman 5)

Committee members who have to make decisions rely heavily on the opinions of eminent academics or colleagues from prestigious institutes because it is assumed that they know the candidates best. Having the right connections thus adds value to a candidate's performance and reputation.

Social capital can enhance the effectiveness of one's individual and professional capital, and this mechanism is supported in the literature. Cole et al. (1978) illustrate that an academic who acquires a position in a highly ranked department may experience a corresponding rise in the perceived quality of his or her work. This effect can work the other way around, too. If a candidate is not known by eminent colleagues, this also affects committee members who decide that the candidate is not of a sufficient caliber. This mechanism shows clearly that excellence is a social construction; it is not something a person has, but something which is created. Chapter 4 revealed that gatekeepers have a crucial voice in the reputation building of academics – in other words, it is chiefly they who decide who is deemed to excel and who is not. One of the most revealing quotes was: "If I do not know them, they are not excellent". A brilliant academic who lacks an elaborate network runs the risk of being overseen or ignored. It is therefore important to have an extensive network of renowned academics who can help by "putting in a good word" or spreading positive information.

Chapter 4 stated that women do not tend to ask for recommendations in the same way as men do (4.3) and that women have fewer contacts with gatekeepers and influential academics. It can therefore be assumed that the networking practice of checking references and asking for recommendation has some gender consequences as well.

## 5.5 Gender practices in the attribution of symbolic capital

The symbolic capital of excellence is obtained by successfully exploiting other forms of capital: the combination of professional capital (e.g. publications),

individual capital (e.g. personality, leadership skills) with a successful social capital (network connections). For instance, a likeable personality – individual capital – can affect the evaluation of professional capital. Social capital can enhance the effectiveness of individual and professional capital. In other words, the reputation of an academic depends on how these individual forms of capital are assessed. The previous section showed how gender practices are at work in the assessment of the individual forms of capital of men and women, masculinity and femininity. As for the evaluation of capital, it seems quite clear that they are applied differently to men and women. As a consequence, women but also certain men (non-hegemonic male academics) are less likely to be deemed ‘excellent’. In other words, the capital of the hegemonic masculine scholar is, systematically, seen as more legitimate.

Furthermore, apart from the fact that all forms of women’s capital are seen as less legitimate, the bar for ‘excellence’ is set higher for women. The next section will elaborate on these double standards.

#### ‘Excellence’ - or suitability?

The majority of respondents indicated that a candidate must excel in all forms of capital to be attributed the symbolic capital of ‘excellence’. They argue that an ‘excellent’ academic is an extremely successful researcher with an outstanding reputation, an inspiring and innovative teacher, a strong but facilitating manager with substantive administrative experience, a sympathetic personality with an extensive and varied international network who fits into the faculty, is ambitious, willing to work in excess of full time hours and spend time abroad.

You can be excellent in research, but if you are a terrible manager or organizer, and unable to hold a department together, then you should not occupy such a position. The risk is substantial – you can’t afford the collapse of a hospital department. So we really are searching for a ‘sheep with five legs’ – a candidate who masters all these skills in research, education, management and patient care. And you have to be able to get along together as well. (medical sciences, woman 4)

This female manager from a medical faculty states that a full professor should be a ‘sheep with five legs’. This Dutch idiomatic expression means someone with the ideal – and impossible to find – combination of skills and experiences. This concept is articulated by many respondents, and with a variety of terms: “jack-of-all-trades” (medical sciences, woman 5), “mix of qualities” (humanities, man 1), “brilliant in all ways” (natural sciences, man 4), “having it all”, but most frequently a “sheep with five legs” or “excellent in all respects” (several respondents). Excellence thus represents a strong ideology and core rhetoric in academic selection.

However, excellence is by definition a scarce good, and it would seem to stretch the bounds of credulity to assume that all 2,486 newly appointed ordinary professors were ‘sheep with five legs’. The analysis of the appointment reports shows that only a few of the appointed professors ‘had it all’, while the vast majority did not. Hardly any were ‘excellent’ in all respects and it has to be recognized that the standard of ‘excellence’ is often difficult, or even impossible, to achieve. In many appointment procedures, there is no time to search for that elusive candidate who excels in all the required areas. Committee members are compelled to compromise by appointing a professor who is excellent in one of the chosen areas, or who meets the basic standards adequately rather than with distinction. For example, if a committee is able to attract a distinguished researcher, committees are often willing to accept weaknesses in the areas of teaching and management. The section ‘teaching quality’ (§ 5.2) gives an example of a committee that wanted to appoint a renowned researcher and subsequently assessed his “failure in front of the class” as a minor detail. It is not only research qualities that can compensate for weaknesses in other areas. Several candidates with an extensive societal reputation or social network were appointed without meeting the basic criteria on publications. The following quotes give some examples.

One candidate had put a lot of effort into build up the teaching institute. He worked on it for years on end with a great deal of success. That is why he was one up on the others, even though he only had a couple of publications to his name in that area. It seems that the criteria used when assessing a candidate – how many publications you have in a certain area – are transparent and everyone knows them. But when they simply want to appoint someone else, for whatever reason, they just put that [the publication norm] aside. (humanities, woman 3)

We do not mind if he [sic] is autistic, as long as he is brilliant. (natural sciences, man 7)

R: In the humanities, people are often appointed without having any notable publications. It could be the protégé of someone in a position of power, a kind of reward for loyalty of some kind.

I: Does that hold for men and women?

R: Hmm... actually mainly for men.

I: Why is that?

R: I don’t know... maybe it is true, but I do not see it happening very often. (humanities, man 1)



The first quote illustrates that professors can be appointed as a reward for their teaching efforts or management duties. The professorship was offered as a kind of reward for seniority or loyalty. The (male) professor did not have an outstanding publication record, which is officially an absolute requirement in order to be appointed full professor. The second quote illustrates the opposite. If a candidate is brilliant – referring to research qualities – insufficient individual capital can be disregarded. In the third quote, the respondent argues that appointment decisions can be based on even vaguer criteria. He also mentions that this occurs more often with male than female candidates. I will return to this issue later on. The appointment reports also reveal that often only a few candidates are eligible for the position, and it is necessary to compromise standards of quality, or an internal candidate is appointed although the profile states that an external candidate was sought.

The appointment of professors whose capital is not evaluated as ‘excellent’ in all areas is not problematic in itself. My data suggest that most candidates are not in fact appointed as a result of their excellence, but because of their suitability. Scientific excellence can only be defined in a specific context and within the boundaries of the objectives of the respective institution or faculty (Schacherl et al., 2007). Depending on developments in the discipline or subfield, the scarceness of candidates, the type of chair, the current composition of the staff, the atmosphere and cooperation in the group, the ambitions of the board or the student population, it may be necessary to attract a renowned researcher, an experienced manager or a teaching professor, for example. The definition of excellence is therefore highly context-specific. The committee has to decide which criteria will be decisive in a specific situation. The consideration of which criteria are valued the most highly is precisely the central theme of most committee deliberations. This corresponds with HRM research which indicates that committees search for the most suitable candidate (Jewson & Mason, 1986; Rittenberg, 1998; Searle, 2003). According to psychological research, most people employ one of two strategies when choosing: satisfying or optimizing (Byron, 1998). The satisfying strategy is the most efficient and commonly used strategy, because an optimizing strategy – searching for the absolute best – involves a considerably higher investment of time and money, even though the issue of what is ‘the best’ choice will continue to be a subjective judgment. Satisfying is therefore the most reasonable strategy for gatekeepers and committee members to use when searching and selecting professorial candidates.

Nevertheless, the ideological and rhetorical power of ‘excellence’ still prevailed in the accounts of the respondents, especially as far as female candidates were concerned. In the appointment reports and committee interviews, it is often mentioned that women lose out in the competition with men because they are perceived as less equipped or are not labeled excellent in all areas. My notes from

the analysis of appointment reports reveal some examples of how women’s qualities are called into question:

Final nominees: a man and a woman. Because this case involves a chair position that requires strong administrative qualities, the final two candidates are assessed professionally. The man gains better results than the woman concerning leadership skills. At the chair’s final interview with the candidates, the arduous management duties involved with the position are emphasized. Consequently, the male candidate withdraws his candidacy. Some committee members suggest initiating a new procedure because one of the candidates has dropped out due to a lack of management experiences, and candidate A [woman] does not excel on this point either. This was done accordingly. (notes appointment reports, university 3, nr. 32)

This note from an appointment report shows that even though the female candidate was shortlisted, the committee decided to initiate a new procedure when the male candidate withdrew. Another example of the problematic relationship between gender and excellence is the appointment of a professor in economics. A woman on the shortlist was rejected because “the committee evaluates her thesis as adequate, but by no means excellent”. Subsequently, a male candidate was hired who had not obtained his PhD at all. There could have been many reasons for the committee’s decision to choose the man rather than the woman; however, the fact that this woman was rejected on the basis of a ‘less than excellent’ thesis and a man is hired having written no thesis at all appears to be a clear example of double standards. Double standards were also identified when discussing international experience in the section concerning individual capital. The fact that women, in the eyes of some committee members, are not willing to go abroad or have less international experience is often seen as a reason for women losing the competition with men. At the same time, there are ample cases of men with little international experience being appointed, even though the profile listed this as an important criterion.

The ‘sheep-with-five-legs standard’ is a reason for a woman to be rejected and lose the competition. The problematic relationship between gender and excellence appears to set the bar higher for women; they are all required to be excellent and ‘have it all’. It seems that committee members are reluctant to let go of the ideology of excellence and feel that standards are lowered when women are involved, though they are – unconsciously – willing to do so with men. At the same time, committee members want to avoid the impression of iniquity in their appointments. A comparable mechanism was found in chapter 4, which showed how the special search for female candidates and special women’s chairs are

controversial and perceived as resulting in the appointment of less qualified women. The visibility of the women appointed to special women's chairs or with special funding is far more problematic and marked than the reflexive perpetuation of male advantages through their informal male circles or the masculine support system.

One way or another, many recently appointed female professors have to prove that they have been appointed because of their qualities, rather than because of their gender. This also seems to be connected with the mechanism described in chapter 4; women are only hired when they are excellent beyond all doubt. The following quote illustrates this.

Women who want to become professor, in particular, still have to outperform men. [...] It all has to do with images and sense making. The essence is that women, no matter what, face more difficult situations than men and have to prove themselves beyond doubt. And we never really succeed. (humanities, woman 2)

This female respondent from the humanities emphasizes the double standard that applies when the performance of men and women are evaluated. There is a quantity of research showing that women have to outperform men to prove themselves equally capable and suitable. Brouns (2000) showed that in competition for a prestigious grant for talented young researchers in the Netherlands, more male applicants obtained the label 'excellent' in relative terms, although men and women were rated similarly in terms of their scientific qualifications, as derived from the number and quality of their publications. The majority of female applicants were labeled as 'good', instead, though no evidence in the applicants' personal files supported this considerable discrepancy between the genders. Empirical evidence can also be found in a set of experiments conducted by Foschi among graduate students in Canada (1996; 2000). She found that standards for competence were stricter for female applicants than for male applicants. This gendered double standard is a mechanism through which women are routinely evaluated as less able than men, even though there are no differences in qualifications or performance. The attribution of excellence, which is grounded in meritocracy, seems to work for men, but less fairly for women. There is a growing recognition that 'excellence', as it has been defined and measured in academia, is tied up with aspects of gender and privileges men (Asienberg & Harrington, 1988; Valian, 1998; Bailyn, 2003). Excellence is based on a conception of masculine reasoning and values. Women may therefore be disadvantaged because they embody these values to a lesser extent, or are not perceived as 'excellent' scholars.

## 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the gender practices in the construction and assessment of scientific excellence in the appointment of full professors. To unpack the notion of excellence, I have built an analytical framework based on Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital. Excellence is considered a form of symbolic capital because it captures what the academic community acknowledges as most valuable. This standard for academic employment is frequently portrayed by respondents as neutral and objective – a universal standard of merit. The reluctance to consider gender as relevant factor in career opportunities promotes firstly the notion that the university is an objective and gender-neutral institution where meritocracy predominates and, secondly, the norm of equality that appears widespread in most academic fields. Due to this scientific ethos, the influence of gender practices in academic evaluation is completely denied.

However, this chapter has demonstrated that the evaluation of different forms of capital and the final attribution of the symbolic capital of excellence is a gender practice. By analyzing how other forms of capital – professional capital (track record in terms of education and publications), individual capital (personality and leadership style) and social capital (network connections) – are related to the development of symbolic capital, I was able to show – following Delhaye (1991, p.138) – that men's capital is systematically viewed as more legitimate, and generates more symbolic capital than women's capital.

First, gender practices were revealed in the allocation and accumulation of different forms of capital: professional, individual and social. Concerning professional capital, the emphasis on research and the quantity of publications in international peer-reviewed journals may lead to the undervaluation of other academic skills such as teaching, management and professional activities. Because teaching and professional activities are usually undervalued, the heavier teaching loads that are associated with temporary contracts and positions serve as a source of gender inequality. Criteria that appear to be gender neutral (counting publications and citations) can disadvantage female academics if it does not take differences in career trajectories and research time into account. My data have shown that differences in careers are not taken into account: women are often older by the time they reach the required number of publications, the evaluation can be biased, and the amount of professional capital is also affected by social capital. The evaluation of individual capital also involves gender practices. Individual capital is seen as a collection of criteria related to the candidate's perceived personality. These criteria are not included in the job profile; rather they are 'common sense' criteria used by committees. Gender is practiced through the

image of a 'hegemonic female scholar' which influences committee decisions. This stereotypical image of the female scholar is a part-time worker with family responsibilities who lacks ambition to reach a top position, will have a hard time managing a research group with autonomous scientists, is not willing to go abroad, is too kind or benevolent and insufficiently strong-willed, and presents herself too modestly. This image is embedded in the culture of academic institutions. This image of the hegemonic female scholar persists even though in practice, as my data showed, female senior academics work the same average number of hours as men do, express their ambitions confidently and engage in self-promotion. What is more, other research shows that women do not lack international experience in comparison to men. However, the hegemonic female scholar contains such a powerful image that assessors tend to underestimate the qualifications of female candidates. As a result, women are not perceived as excellent, they are overlooked, perceived as less ambitious, constantly have to prove themselves and demonstrate to a committee how they can meet their family responsibilities.

The evaluation of candidates depends not only on professional or individual capital – social capital also plays a role. Social capital is defined as an aggregation of networks that can provide certain resources and positions of power. Social capital can provide extra value in the form of social credentials. These credentials reflect the individuals' access to resources through social network connections. A candidate's social capital reflects that individual's influence and status in the international community. Affiliation with gatekeepers was shown to affect the opportunities of academics positively. Social capital also helps to boost professional and individual capital. This is the acceleration effect of social capital: success leads to greater visibility, which then leads to new successes; an enhanced reputation leads to more citations and greater success in receiving grants and subsidies. In this research it was argued that strong male support networks are present in daily academic life. Since men tend to form social bonds more easily with other men, and the majority of academics in a senior positions are male, this could imply that female academics with no extended social capital in academia have a disadvantage in building an academic reputation.

Not only are the different forms of capital gendered, but the way in which symbolic capital as a whole is attributed to women is also gendered. I have shown that female or male academics that do not fit the current elite, hegemonic masculine standard, need more capital to be attributed the symbolic capital of excellence. Because they are new and suspected, they have to meet the impossible 'sheep-with-five-legs standard', whereas my data shows that these standards are regularly lowered for male candidates. It seems that male candidates are easier to trust and have confidence in because of the mechanisms described in chapter 4.

Their nomination is often based on suitability. Women, on the other hand, must achieve excellence every time. The attribution of excellence, which is grounded in meritocracy, seems to work for men, but it is not clear whether it does likewise for women.

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that excellence is a social construction that takes different forms in various contexts. How cultural and structural contexts impact on the organization of the appointment procedure and the construction of excellence will be shown in the next chapter.

# 6

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## Gender dynamics in the subfields

So far, no distinction has been made between gender practices in academic fields. Only the broad differences have been emphasized where necessary. However, previous literature has documented that academic subfields vary in terms of their structural and cultural contexts, such as the structure of the research groups or the opportunities for obtaining additional research funding (Cownie, 1998; Knorr Cetina, 1999; Becher & Trowler, 2001; Musselin, 2002). Research has also shown that academic contexts shape organizational practices and processes such as recruitment and selection. My respondents, too, indicated that the specific characteristics of the subfields affect the way the recruitment is organized and which criteria are decisive during selection. Interestingly, a closer examination of the subfields showed that these different academic contexts produce similar gender effects. In other words, while gender practices are likely to vary at different times and in different settings, the percentage of female full professors remains behind the share of female potential in all fields. In this chapter, I will analyze the dynamic of gender practices and adhere to scholars who argued that various gender practices contribute to the emergence of gender inequality (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998b; Tienari, Quack, & Theobald, 2002) and contribute to our knowledge of the gender dynamics in specific academic contexts. This chapter investigates the dynamic character of gender by means of a situated analysis of the

academic structural and cultural context. The question of this chapter is: Which dynamic gender practices characterize professorial recruitment and selection in the various academic subfields?

By focusing on different subfields, I will be able to unravel the complex and various ways in which gender inequalities are reproduced in and through the academic system, and indicate how appropriate measures and interventions can be found that are attuned to specific academic subfields. To analyze the differences observed, I will take into account the cultural and structural context of the subfields. I will draw upon Becher and Towler's (2001) operationalization of academic context and select the aspects that can be related to recruitment and selection. The following aspects of context are taken into account: opportunities for obtaining additional research funding, labor market, core activities, cooperation between research groups, and epistemic and knowledge culture (see table 6.1).

Table 6.1: Aspects of cultural and structural context, partly based on Becher & Towler (2001)

Context factor	Operationalization
Opportunities for obtaining additional research funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of money allocated by NWO and private firms to this field</li> </ul>
Labor market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National or international</li> <li>Buyers or sellers market (level of competition for positions or candidates)</li> </ul>
Core activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Main tasks (research, teaching, management, service, patient care or consulting)</li> </ul>
Cooperation between research groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structure of the research groups (individual scientists, or conglomerates of research groups)</li> </ul>
Epistemic and knowledge cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Methods and fundamental aims</li> </ul>

The context factors 'opportunities for obtaining research funding', and 'labor market' will be taken into account when describing the differences between subfields of the organization of the appointment (section 6.1), while the other factors – 'core activities', 'cooperation' and 'epistemic and knowledge cultures' – will be taken into account when describing the construction of the excellent academic in each subfield (section 6.2).

I started to explore the various structural and cultural aspects in four academic subfields: humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and medical

sciences, since these represent a wide range of the academic spectrum (see chapter 1). In analyzing the predominant patterns, it emerged that some social sciences tend to resemble the humanities (in particular qualitative oriented studies such as anthropology, cultural studies and gender studies) while other social sciences tend to resemble the natural sciences (in particular quantitative studies such as psychology, sociology and economics). The social sciences have therefore been regrouped accordingly and my analysis will consist of three fields instead of four. The statistical material from the social sciences that emerged from my data will, however, be included separately in section 6.3, which reconstructs the recruitment and selection pipeline.

Although the distinction between scientific fields is not unambiguous, it enables me to interpret the way academics in different subfields organize their practices and construct their image of the ideal candidate, and to identify specific gender practices. I am aware of the fact that subfields overlap and do not exist in a pure form. The subfields are different by degrees, and no sharp distinctions exist. For example, a discipline in the subfield of natural sciences may correspond better to the contexts of the medical sciences. In addition, subfields are by no means coherent entities: huge variations exist within the subfields. The dominant patterns within each context – stemming from my data – will therefore be described, producing three archetypical contexts that overlap approximately with the academic subfields.

The next section begins by comparing how the appointment process is organized in the various academic fields. Section 6.2 describes the criteria used during the selection of the 'excellent academic' in the subfields of the humanities, natural sciences and medical sciences. Subsequently, I will analyze the different gender practices in these contexts to show gender as a dynamical process and how similar gender effects are produced through differing gender practices in the various subfields.

## 6.1 Organization of the appointment process

In relation to the organization of the appointment process, I will elaborate on the differences observed between the methods of recruitment (open/closed), the framing of the profile, the degree of transparency and the origin of the candidate (internal/external), and relate these to their cultural and structural context. Context aspects that influence the organization of the appointment process are the opportunities for obtaining external funding and the labor market, including the degree of competition.

### The humanities

In this subfield, the majority (64%) of new professors are appointed by open competition; advertisements are placed in newspapers, on the internet and in academic journals. According to respondents, the main reason for choosing to recruit by open competition is the extensive pool of candidates. The analysis of appointment reports showed that in the humanities, the average number of professorial candidates applying for an ordinary chair is 13.<sup>30</sup> It is clearly a 'sellers market' characterized by large numbers of educated professionals, abundant junior staff and a scarcity of top level positions. As a result, there is strong internal competition between academics and academic groups for the senior positions available. A lack of financial resources has been the main cause of the scarcity of staff positions and low mobility in the upper ranks. Disciplines in this field have to cope with severe financial cutbacks (RUG, 2003; OCW, 2007b). The situation is worsened by the fact that, apart from direct funding from the government (first stream finance), additional funding in this field is hard to come by. In total, the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) provides the humanities with subsidies worth approximately seven percent of the funds for disciplinary programs (second stream) (NWO, 2007b). This means that the scope for creating new positions is extremely low.

Another reason for the extensive pool of candidates is the way the basic profile is framed in the humanities. My analysis of the appointment reports showed that the basic profiles in this subfield are defined in a broad and diffuse way, meaning that one is searching for example for a 'professor in ancient history', 'media studies', or 'cultural studies'. As a result, many potential candidates fit the profile. Committee members commonly argued that the chair of the committee tried to prevent epistemological conflicts by initially keeping the profile as broad as possible. The basic profile is essentially a compromise between the members of the chair group in relation to the content, and methodological or epistemic approach. When the selection criteria are not clearly defined in the profile, the odds are high that the discussion about the direction of the chair will begin during the committee deliberations. Because additional professorial positions strengthen the power position of the research group, group members compete with each other to survive in the field.

It is a small world where there is a lot of envy. Tribalization, academic tribes competing with each other – it does happen. It is a pluralistic society, with autonomous value systems. And they could live peacefully next to each other if there were no

<sup>30</sup> Only ordinary chairs, so without strategic and personal chairs.

cutbacks, but the ongoing cutbacks have destroyed certain research areas. (humanities, woman 2)

Don't forget the interests at stake here. Sometimes in a faculty, there are discussions about 'what does it mean to have this profile? Does this mean that the position of the other chair group decreases? [...] What effect will it have on your own position? (humanities, man 11)

Due to the pluriformity of the humanities society, committee members argue that there are great interests at stake in order to reinforce their own research line. These 'battles' take place during the deliberations of the appointment committee: "defending your own group" (man, 11), "thinking about the best interest of your subject" (woman 8), and "competing for the 'best' epistemic approach" (man 9). Hence the decision-making process is very often a time-consuming, difficult and most of all political one.

This highly political environment does not promote transparency. Committee members indicated that open procedures occur on a regular basis and this was supported by the data from the appointment reports: 64 percent of all procedures in the humanities were advertised. However, some interviewees also indicated that although a vacancy might be publicly announced, the favourite candidate would already be known. The consequence is a fake process with a pro forma appointment committee, which plays a strategic game to appoint the favourite candidate. Many applicants complained about the lack of transparency in these semi-open procedures. A recently appointed professor exemplifies this:

I was involved in an appointment procedure that was publicly advertised, and I had applied for the position. [...] Afterwards, it became clear that they wanted a specific person, who had been invited. I would rather not have wasted my time. [...] You can require that they may not have someone in mind beforehand, but it will happen anyway. It's inevitable. (humanities, woman 8)

According to several – mainly female – respondents, this lack of transparency in the appointment system originates from the old academic tradition of this field where positions were assigned to a 'crown prince'. Professors would 'nurture' their successors from the beginning of their career and teach them the informal rules of the field.

Eventually, she will – well, I will not be in this position for ever – have to be positioned as an excellent professor with experience in management, and so on. Therefore she will have to follow all these courses, and spend many hours on research. She

has to have that [experience] by the time I leave in about five years [...] so, we put those people [prospective successors] into position. (social sciences, man 13)

This ‘crown prince’ mechanism, or in this case ‘crown-princess’, is also illustrated by the relatively high number of internal candidates in the humanities (43%). When a professor retires, the most suitable successor is then mostly one of his or her senior staff members. Nevertheless, an advertisement is placed in the media after all because the university or faculty board requires ‘open’ recruitment (see chapter 3). On the other hand, the final appointment reports are relatively informative about the number of candidates, the first selection and the final discussion concerning the candidates on the nomination list compared with other subfields.

#### Natural sciences

In the subfield of the natural sciences, candidates are generally recruited through informal networks of gatekeepers (see chapter 4). The main reasons for scouting rather than using an open competition are – as the respondents argued – the high level of competition for academics, sometimes even termed ‘the war for talent’, and the lack of an extensive pool of candidates. In other words, the natural sciences can be described as a buyers market in which candidates are scarce and have to be scouted. Universities even try to ‘buy’ academics from other national and international universities and the competition to attract and retain talented scientists is considerable.

Well, one is constantly monitoring – ‘that person will go to that university and so we...’. A lot of things are taken care of informally. On the other hand, a tough competitive struggle starts when someone hears ‘university X has their eye on Dr. Y’. Well, then we really pull out all the stops if it is someone we really want to keep, offer that person a position. And then university X thinks: ‘Well, I’ll be darned’. (natural science, man 9)

It is usually hard to persuade a renowned candidate to change positions without highly favorable conditions (a higher salary, more staff, and more equipment). The prestige of the university and the research group is therefore very important in the search for new candidates. An outstanding research reputation or extensive financial resources will increase a candidate’s interest in the department. Simultaneously, when the research group’s reputation or department is less sound, it will be hard to attract top scholars.

If you really want to attract someone good with his [sic] extensive group, well, you really need a lot of money. That can run to several millions. But then we are speaking about someone we would call a top scientist. Those are often bought by American universities, but sometimes, you can try to buy them back. (natural sciences, man 4)

You have to have an outstanding reputation in your field to attract international top scientists. Otherwise, they are really not interested in coming to the Netherlands, when they also get offers in the USA, France or England. (natural sciences, man 14)

Mobility between professorial positions is relatively high since there are extensive external funding opportunities for the creation of new or additional professorial positions. Disciplines in this academic subfield can access extensive national and international financial resources for research projects. At least 65 percent of all NWO funding goes to the natural sciences for reasons that the NWO refers to as “the higher economical value” and the “capital-intensive character of this research area” (NWO, 2007b, p.42-43). Newly emerging trends in the natural sciences subfield are quickly reacted to by appointing a new professor to a strategic chair.<sup>31</sup> The creation of a personal chair is often possible to attract a renowned academic. My data show that 25 percent of all professors appointed in the natural sciences in the period 1999-2005 were appointed to personal or strategic chairs. In this subfield, the number of full professors (362) in 2007 is substantially higher than the number of associate professors (222) (WOPI, 2007).

As a result of the scouting process, the basic profile is often relatively specific or even tailored specifically to the favored candidate. In reality, the selection moment has already taken place during conferences, meetings and research seminars. If a top scientist is willing to accept the post, the profile is made to fit to that particular candidate. Moreover, other respondents indicated that research groups must be well-balanced, and the lack of research expertise in a particular well defined area can be overcome by appointing a new professor in that particular area. This scout-principle often causes a lack of transparency at the beginning of the recruitment process. My data indicate that in 63 percent of the appointed procedures in the natural sciences, only one candidate was invited to apply. However, unlike in the humanities, the favored candidate in this field is often an external candidate: 32 percent of all new appointed professors in this field were already working at the same institution. Furthermore, in the appointment reports,

<sup>31</sup> Strategic chairs are created to explore an interesting or innovative scientific field. The focus is mostly on research (see chapter 2).

it is often difficult to distinguish who was invited and who was not, how extensive the search for candidates was, how many people were involved and on what grounds the selection decision was made.

#### Medical sciences

This subfield is characterized by a closed recruitment system in which candidates are scouted and invited to apply. A statistical analysis of the appointment reports indicated that 77 percent of the appointed professors appointed in the period 1999-2003 were recruited through a closed procedure. In common with the natural sciences, respondents from the medical subfield argue that it is hard to find professorial candidates, which results in a strong competition for available candidates. The field of medical sciences is another buyers market, with a scarcity of candidates and ample positions available. The mobility in staff positions and the opportunities to create new (strategic) chairs are substantial because of the many ways to obtain financial resources: work in this area such as the search for new cures for cancer are of enormous international scientific and societal relevance. At least 13 percent of the NWO funds are received by this subfield. This is less than NWO funding of the natural sciences, but a great deal of additional research money comes in the form of 'third-stream funding', often from the pharmaceutical industry and from charitable funds (NWO, 2007b, p.42-43). This additional funding makes it relatively easy to establish a new chair, which results in a high number of strategic professors (48%). Scouting is not only driven by the 'search for excellence', as in the natural sciences, but because of an old academic tradition of inviting candidates personally.

It is kind of an unwritten rule that for this type of job [professorial] you are invited. Extremely hypocritical, but that is the way it is. So, if you are not known, nobody thinks of you. The chance that you will be the one is almost zero. [...] The composition of the committee is important. Your network is essential. [As a recruiter] you suppose that you're working with company of people who know the field well. And then we say: 'John [sic] is not responding – we will call John about the vacancy'. (medical sciences, man 9)

Other respondents from the medical field add to this by saying: "it is common sense", "it is a gentlemen's agreement" or "that it is just unheard of to apply for a position".

Since the fields of medical specialization are relatively narrow, the profiles are also defined exceptionally narrowly with vacancies for full professors in for instance 'oncological radiology', or 'gastro intestinal endoscopy'. The positions

of head of department form one exception to this; these are broader in scope, such as 'internal medicine' and 'cardiology'. The fact that the job profile is framed rather narrowly is also part of the reason for the scarce potential; only a few specialists have the required expertise in these particular fields. Furthermore, the profiles are often tailored to an already known candidate. My data indicate that in 75 percent of appointed procedures in the medical sciences, only one candidate was invited to apply.<sup>32</sup> There are also stories that candidates are asked to write their own profile. As a consequence, selection takes place before the committee is even installed. The committee's function consists solely of advising the university board as to whether the candidate is ready to become a professor. In fact, this too is often a foregone conclusion.

As for transparency and accountability, the high number of closed procedures already indicate a 'behind the scenes' mentality and an opaque process. As far as accountability is concerned, applicants' qualifications are often presented as a conclusive argument in the report, although the comments on this point are often vaguely formulated. The recruitment of professors on the grounds of competence is typically presented as needing no further justification, although – equally typically – the precise meaning of 'merit' or 'competence' is left unspecified. For example:

Dr. X is been nominated because the head of department took the view that in and outside the Netherlands, no other known candidate had the specific combination of expertise, experience and creativity in teaching and education". (field notes appointment report, university 1, nr 48)

The committee is of the opinion that aside from Dr. X, no other candidate is available who meets our criteria. (appointment report, university, nr 95)

Finally, in the medical sciences a high number of internal candidates are appointed (64%); no other subfield appoints more internal candidates (the average is 40%). The medical sciences field is characterized by a high risk of social failure and due to a strong uncertainty reduction, a large amount of internally trained specialist are promoted.

#### Overview

To sum up, table 6.2 and 6.3 give an overview of the contextual factors and the differences in the way the subfields organize the appointment process.

<sup>32</sup> This is not the same as the percentage of candidates by invitation (77%), which can imply that more people can be invited for the same position.



Table 6.2: Overview characteristics of each subfield

	Humanities	Natural sciences	Medical sciences
<b>Opportunities for external funding</b>	Minimal	Extensive (second stream NWO)	Extensive (third stream, industry)
<b>Labor market</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sellers market: competition for positions</li> <li>• National</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buyers market: competition for candidates</li> <li>• International</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buyers market: competition for candidates</li> <li>• National</li> </ul>
<b>Framing of profile</b>	Broad	Narrow	Narrow

Table 6.3: Overview differences in organization of the appointment process<sup>33</sup>

	Humanities	Natural sciences	Medical sciences
<b>Dominant method of recruitment</b>	Open (64%)	Closed (63%)	Closed (77%)
<b>Transparency</b>	Minimal	Moderate	Minimal
<b>Origin candidates</b>	Internal candidates (57%)	External candidates (67%)	Internal candidates (64%)

## 6.2 The best scientist: excellence in context

Chapter 5 showed that in all subfields professional, social and individual capital are basic components with which to assess the quality of professorial candidates. However, differences between subfields can be derived from the interviews in the weight attributed to each of them and the notions of the 'ideal academic'. The context of the subfields affects the image of the 'excellent' scientist and the form of capital that is decisive in selection. Context factors shaping the image of the 'best' candidate are the core activities of the field, the cooperation between and the structure of the departments and research groups, and the epistemic or knowledge culture. These elements differ between the subfields and are thus considered to shape the recruitment process. Besides the culture and structure of the subfields, other factors can also play a role in defining what constitutes a 'good' candidate (Musselin, 2002). For instance the composition of the current staff ('which quality is lacking'), the status of the department (having a bad research reputation will not

help to attract top scientists) and the type of chair (ordinary, strategical and personal). The first two components affect recruitment decisions at all times, regardless of the academic context or subfield, and are therefore not considered in this analysis. Concerning the type of chair, I will only discuss the criteria for ordinary chairs, a chair for which a full range of competencies is required.

### Humanities

In this subfield the core activities of a full professor are research and academic education. Teaching tasks occupy a substantial amount of time because of the large student population. As a consequence, the importance of teaching experience is relatively high within candidates' professional capital. Faculties and disciplines with large student populations need experienced lecturers, but these should also conduct research in the same subject areas as the curriculum of the department. The director of a research institute gives an example of this:

The primacy of teaching activities in the humanities is widespread. I mean, why do you appoint people? Well, because the division between teaching and research is 70-30. I can give an example. At the moment, there is a vacancy for a professorial position. From a research perspective I might want to fill this vacancy with a professor specializing in for example Italian culture. But the amount of students interested in this area is minimal, so the faculty board would never approve such a nomination. The influence of the director of the teaching institute is a little bit bigger than mine, I am afraid. (humanities, man 11)

It is very important that someone has some kind of teaching experience, is also really good at it, and has demonstrable evaluation reports. It can be a reason to put someone on the A-list.<sup>34</sup> (humanities, woman 7)

Although most respondents agree that teaching experience and pedagogical skills are important, the humanities are comparable to other fields in the dominance of research skills in the assessment of professorial candidates. However, research skills are not 'sacred', and are simultaneously put into perspective: "Of course, it is important to publish a book with an important publishing house or university press, but in the end I find my own judgment [of the candidate] more important" (humanities, woman 9). Furthermore, the criteria used to measure research excellence are less strict and standardized.

<sup>33</sup> The extent of transparency according to the respondents.

<sup>34</sup> After comparing the résumés, the committee draws up a list of applicants to be invited (A-list), applicants that will be rejected (C-list) and applicants to be put on hold (B-list).

We do not yet have A, B and C journals. So, it is hard to identify the best journals. We are working on this kind of system, but it is still in progress. And when this is implemented, it will be very controversial. Because you always will struggle with the question of what 'international' is, as most of the 'international' journals in our field tend to be rather nationally oriented if you take a closer look. That really is a point of controversy. (humanities, man 6)

In our field, there are hardly any peer-reviewed journals. (humanities, man 12)

We have a tradition of publishing in books in other languages like Italian, German or Spanish. These publications are not included in the citation indices. (humanities, man 1)

Well, there is a strict hierarchy among international publishing houses, but it differs greatly between disciplines [which are important]. (humanities, woman 5)

The quotes illustrate that the use of bibliometrics (see chapter 5), standard in natural and medical sciences, is less easy in the humanities. The research criteria concerning publications in refereed international top journals and high citation scores are followed less strictly and rather more contested. As the respondents indicated, simply 'counting' publications is problematic as there is a tradition of publishing in books, national journals and in other languages than English. In 2000, the humanities committee of the European Science Foundation (ESF-SCH) concluded that the Arts and Humanities Citation Index is not yet a valid measurement instrument. The Social Sciences Citation Index, meanwhile, has been criticized by Glänzel and Schoepflin (1999) because of its overvaluation of English and American publications. The definition of an excellent researcher in the humanities is thus much more debatable and contested than in the natural sciences, for example.

As well as professional capital, the individual capital of a candidate – especially in terms of personality and leadership style – takes a prominent position in the selection process. This can be related to the specific culture of the humanities that could be described as individualistic and fragmented. This is due to the individualistic orientation of the field which consists of small units that all try to survive, rather than conglomerates of research groups. The small groups all tend to defend their own field, because they are threatened by continuous cutbacks. Several respondents even relate to the academic field as "idiosyncratic", "political", and "traditional". They argue that the combination of the scarcity of positions, the large number of potential candidates and the power of the current scientific elite make the appointment process highly political. The recruitment and selection

process can be compared with a tactical game of chess; one has to act strategically and influential contacts must be fostered. When operating strategically, it is important not to step on other's toes. Being a marked personality represents a high risk; it can lead to fewer opportunities. In this individualistic and idiosyncratic culture, a communicative leadership style is valued the most highly; the chair group holder or full professor has to be able to strategically maneuver between autonomous groups in the faculty. An authoritarian leader is difficult to accept among humanities scholars, who strongly value their autonomy by stressing their "own decisions" (man 1), "no top-down interference" (woman 5) and "freedom of research" (man 4). Leadership is ascribed to an academic on the basis of behavioral traits: a charismatic personality that can represent the group or faculty convincingly.

These 'rules of behaviour' are not formalized, but remain highly tacit and must be learned from the current elite. This being the case, the possession of social capital – good support networks and support of influential scientists – is highly valued. By maintaining a support network of influential academics, candidates gather knowledge about the explicit and implicit requirements of becoming a full professor. Because chairs are 'handed over' to crown princes and princesses, a candidate with an extensive and influential network can count on good references and support during his or her career. In the humanities, candidates are assessed chiefly for their ability to hold their own in an environment of scarcity of funding opportunities, many autonomous units and ambitious individuals.

#### Natural sciences

The core activity of full professors in natural sciences can be seen as conducting and managing research activities. Of course, the natural sciences have teaching duties as well, but teaching skills are considered less important due to a smaller teaching load. In a large number of departments, student numbers have decreased while the number of professorial chairs has remained equal. This leads to a more one-dimensional approach to assessing the quality of candidates; the dominant criterion is research quality which is assessed through publications, track record on obtaining grants and the international reputation of candidates. The respondents all argued that professional capital, especially research experience and output, predominates.

It is a matter of counting, and we essentially look at the type of publications. Conference proceedings are not taken into account. Good professional publications in Physical Review Letters, or articles in Nature and Science, those are the ones that count the most. In this way, you decide if someone meets the quality norm. (natural sciences, man 4)

The quality criterion is that you have to have an established reputation in this discipline. In practical terms this means, well, the number of publications. The quality and number of publications, and the number of citations. (social sciences, man 12)

There is a strong belief in objectivity and that research quality is easy to measure. The paradigm in the subfield of natural sciences is described as follows by Traweek (1988, p.162):

An extreme culture of objectivity: a culture of no culture, which longs passionately for a world without loose ends, without temperament, gender, nationalism or other sources of disorder – for a world outside human space and time.

These beliefs about the neutrality and objectivity of science make their impact felt on professorial appointments. Committee members are convinced that objective and quantifiable criteria – numbers of publications, citations and impact scores – are the best and most honest way to select candidates. Significant discoveries are easy to identify, and criteria are less open to subjective interpretations and dispute. The system of bibliometrics is used as the standard measure with which to assess the research qualities of academics. Respondents claim that it is obvious which journals take precedence for the publication of research. These research outcomes ought, preferably, to be attained within a certain amount of time. The interviews disclosed that in order to be successful in for instance physics, following a strict career path is essential. This path means finishing one's studies quickly, passing through the PhD period in four years (and starting before one is 26 years old), going abroad during the post-doc period and being appointed to a permanent position at a university or institute before the age of forty. The idea exists that a scientist has reached his or her 'scientific peak' when (s)he is forty years old. In addition, academics from the natural sciences become professors at a very young age – between 30 and 40 (Stobbe et al., 2004).

As illustrated in chapter 5, by means of an extensive international network – social capital – professional capital can be accelerated. An applicant's reputation is predominantly built on professional capital and visibility. Talent and merit are not the only factors that determine whose papers will be published or whose application will be approved; these judgments are also affected by social capital (by which I mean access to resources and positions of power), especially in view of the surplus of publications which currently exists. Publications alone are insufficient to distinguish oneself as a scientist; publications must be read, discussed, and cited. A work needs to be visible to achieve a wide readership (Mählck, 2001). Because publication requires personal representation within the

scientific community, participation in academic networks is important. Having the right formal and informal connections is apparently crucial to a successful career trajectory (Kemelgor & Etkowitz, 2001; Gupta, Kemelgor, Fuchs, & Etkowitz, 2004). Reputation, or symbolic capital, is crucial in this international job market. All respondents confirm that going abroad is very important for building up and maintaining an international network. One respondent explained:

Well, when you have been in MIT, then you understand how money is spent. That is the way it goes. If you have not seen anything else than Groningen and Nijmegen, sorry I have to say this, or Utrecht, then... You have to have seen it once, how it works internationally. (natural sciences, man 9)

Simultaneously, you are building on your network [by going abroad]. When I am considering the résumés, I always check how someone has built his [sic] career and whether he [sic] has been in several places. Even though I do not have that experience myself, I consider it an advantage, because that person has had the opportunity to look somewhere else and got to know people all over the world. (natural sciences, man 12)

Having international experience is the norm; no experience abroad is a handicap. The respondents emphasized that going abroad is important for gaining this international experience, broadening one's views, seeing how things are done in other laboratories and learning different ways of thinking. However, probably the most important aspect of going abroad is the opportunity to build an international network.

Having the 'right' type of individual capital and strategic political skills are of minor importance in this field, except for the criteria of leadership qualities in the case of a position as main chair or department head. In general, a pragmatic, straight-forward leadership style is valued. Research groups are small conglomerates operating within an international network of scientists which cooperate in large research groups facilitated and supervised by a project leader. Leadership and authority is ascribed to scientists with an outstanding academic reputation – in other words, an impressive track record in publications and acquisition of funds.

In the natural sciences, characterized by relatively ample sources of funding and a strong international competition, the selection is aimed at those with the best and longest publication list. The decisive criterion is professional capital, and specifically success in obtaining grants and high publication and citation records in combination with social capital in the form of broad international network connections.

### Medical sciences

In medical sciences, staff members are not only involved in research and teaching, but also in the health care of patients in academic hospitals. The teaching load is substantial, but the number of staff is substantial as well. Research is important but an academic physician has to maintain activities in what is seen as the most important element of the core activities: patient care. Since most of the medical professors also have to communicate with their patients, candidates who speak Dutch are favored and the job market is predominantly nationally oriented. Experience and talent for managing research activities and patient care are considered crucial too. Therefore, the ideal candidate is described as a ‘jack-of-all-trades’ – a professor in medicine has to excel on all forms of academic capital. However, in practice, compromises need to be made. As for measuring research quality, this is assessed in a highly quantitative way, similar to the natural sciences.

Professional capital is a prerequisite, but the actual selection is often based on individual and social capital with leadership style being one of the particular criteria on which a candidate is nominated. The culture of medical sciences can be described as hierarchical, professional, and competitive. Cooperation is a standard concept, as different specialists must work together to answer questions and solve problems in this scientific context. Due to the high risk factor, the hierarchical line of cooperation is clear: responsibilities are centralized and departments need good management. A female professor recalls about her own selection interview:

They asked me whether I had had problems in the department that I was heading and how I had solved those situations. I had to say something about that. They also take into account whether you are a good organizer, because a department is like a small business organization which has to run smoothly. You have to have good social skills, be able to a broad overview in mind and not panic too quickly. So, it’s not only publications, no... that clearly is not enough. (medical sciences, woman 7)

The practical, professional culture goes hand in hand with the need for an assertive leadership style, which is shown in the remarks of the respondents: “Making difficult decisions”, “decide the direction of the department”, “overcome conflicts”, “rule with an iron fist” and “bang one’s fist on the table”. Furthermore, staff members have to be confident that their head of department will be able to promote the interests of the group and resolve internal conflicts adequately. Leadership is mostly ascribed on the basis of behavioral characteristics and seniority. In other words, candidates are judged on their ability to manage the competitive and stressful practice of science and medical care.

### Overview

Table 6.4 and 6.5 show an overview of all contextual factors and their influence on the construction of the excellent scholar.

Table 6.4: Overview of the characteristics of the subfields

	Humanities	Natural sciences	Medical sciences
<b>Core activities</b>	Education and research	Research	Research, Patient care
<b>Cooperation</b>	Individual projects / small units	Conglomerates of research groups	Multi-disciplinary teams
<b>Knowledge/ epistemic culture</b>	Subjectivity / diffuse subjects, concerned with particulars, qualities, complexity	Objectivity, concerned with universals, quantities, simplification	Objectivity, purposive, pragmatic, concerned with mastery of physical environment
<b>Subfield culture</b>	Idiocratic, pluralistic, loosely structured, personally oriented, political	Science as vocation, egalitarian, task-oriented	Practical, dominated by professional values, role-oriented

Table 6.5: Overview differences between constructions of the excellent scholar

	Humanities	Natural sciences	Medical sciences
<b>Criteria of excellence</b>	Multi (teaching and research)	Mono (research)	Multi (research and management)
<b>Decisive type of capital</b>	Individual	Professional	Individual
<b>Leadership style</b>	Strategic	Facilitating	Assertive

### 6.3 Gender practices in the subfields

This section will address the variation in gender practices between the subfields. This first of all implies asking questions about the variations in the sex ratio. Analysis of my statistical data will show the realization of the female potential in the subfields. Subsequently, I will reconstruct the path from potential candidate, to applicant (in general and on the shortlist), to being appointed as a professor. The specific moment at which male and female success rates diverge in the various fields will be identified. Secondly, combining this data with the interview material will yield insight into the dynamics of gender practices in the accounts of the respondents. I will analyze to what extent gender matters in the eyes of the respondents and which specific problems women face in recruitment and selection practices in relation to the academic context.

To what extent is female potential realized?

The number of appointed female professors in each field must be viewed in the light of the available pool of female potential: women with the requisite education and experience. The supply of female doctorate recipients markedly influences the gender composition of the faculty and accounts for much of the variation between fields in the gender balance among full professors. In chapter 2, table 2.2 already showed the female potential for each subfield in terms of the share of female doctorates, alongside the current percentage of female associate professors.

In the humanities, the share of recently appointed female professors is the highest of all subfields at almost 17 percent. This means that in recent years, one out of six appointment procedures involved the appointment of a woman. Although the humanities manage to appoint the highest share of women in comparison with other fields, this is still not in line with the share of the 'former doctorates' (26%) or the percentage of female associate professors (31%). The field of social sciences also displays a wide discrepancy between female potential and the number of female professors. Just as in the humanities, women have made up a substantial part of academic staff in this academic field. The 22 percent of doctorates awarded between 1986 and 1992 – the cohort that can reasonably be considered eligible for professorships now – corresponds approximately with the percentage of current associate professors (23%), but not to the percentage of appointed female full professors (14%).

In comparison with other subfields, natural sciences do not have an extensive pool of female potential. Although the share of female doctorates rose to 32 percent in 2006, in the period 1986-1992 women received only ten percent of the doctorates. Although there is a smaller discrepancy between female potential and the number of professors appointed, female potential is not fully realized in this field. Moreover, the percentage of recently appointed female professors may be distorted to some extent by the high number of foreign professors in this area. Stobbe, Van den Brink & Duijnhoven (2004) document that the majority of recent appointed female physics professors in the Netherlands are foreign academics. This means that the leak in the Dutch pipeline could be more serious than the figures in the present research might suggest.

In the field of medical sciences, the gap between female potential and appointed professors is the widest. Although there is a substantial pool of female talent (22%) – a figure comparable with the humanities and social sciences – the share of female professors appointed (9%) falls well short. In this field, the gender balance in the lower ranks is shifting the most rapidly towards a more equal gender balance. In recent years, even more female than male students have been graduating as physicians (De Jong & Lagro-Janssen, 2004; Verdonk, 2007) and 51 percent of

all academic staff are female (WOPI, 2007). The absence of senior female academics is therefore even more unexpected. As well as strong vertical gender segregation, the medical field is known for its horizontal gender segregation: women are under-represented in the prestigious fields of urology, surgery and cardiology. Female physicians work mainly in the fields of medical science of general practitioners, paediatrics and social medical sciences (Takkenberg, Visser, & Kenter, 2005).

To conclude, the 'leaky pipeline' effect is apparent in all academic subfields: there is a discrepancy between the size of female potential and the number of female full professors appointed.

#### Success rates of male and female applicants

Having demonstrated the gap between available female potential and recently appointed women, the next question is where exactly the pipeline leaks? For this purpose, I will reconstruct the path from female potential, through the applicant stage to final appointment, to address the specific gender practices of each subfield.

First of all, I will discuss the overall success rates of male and female applicants. A candidate is someone who has applied for a position or who has been nominated by related faculties or a member of the appointment committee, and who has notified the committee that he or she is interested in the position. The success rate is the probability of an applicant being actually appointed and has been calculated on the basis of the number of male and female applicants registered in the appointment reports. The number of male and female candidates per recruitment and selection phase and the success rates are calculated by the SPSS-software program. Table 6.6 provides an overview of the number of applicants and the number of appointed professors.

Table 6.6: Male and female applicants (number and % of total) and success rates by subfield<sup>35</sup>

	Applicants			Appointments		Success rate		Difference M/F
	M	F	F (%)	M	F	M	F	%
Humanities	421	155	27%	65	16	15.44%	10.32%	-5.12%
Social sciences	703	166	19%	179	38	25.46%	22.89%	-2.57%
Natural sciences	540	47	8%	180	11	33.33%	23.40%	-9.93%
Medical sciences	355	35	9%	176	17	49.58%	48.57%	-1.01%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>29.72%</b>	<b>20.35%</b>	<b>-9.37%</b>

Source: 682 appointment reports (study B)

<sup>35</sup> The appointment figures are not exactly the same as the appointment figures of 2.2. Table 2.2 includes all appointments of full professors in the period 1999-2005. Table 6.6 and 6.7 comprise figures of the number of appointment reports that gave information about the number of applicants. N= 682.

The overall success rates of male and female applicants reveal a significant gender difference. The figures show that almost one in three male applicants is appointed, compared to one in five women. Focusing on the subfields, I can see a reasonable share of female applicants in humanities (27%) and social sciences (19%), unlike the medical (9%) and natural (8%) sciences. However, once women manage to reach the shortlist stage in the medical sciences, they have the same chance as men of being finally appointed. What also stands out immediately is the high success rate of all applicants in the medical sciences. Both male and female applicants have an almost 50 percent chance of being appointed full professor. In all the other subfields, the gender disparity in the success rate is more substantial and women have lower success rates than men varying from social sciences (2.57%), humanities (5.12%) to natural sciences (with a difference of almost 10%). This means that female applicants are leaking from the recruitment and selection pipeline at a disproportionate rate.

As mentioned in section 1.5 about the limitations of the methodology used, my data did not allow me to relate these findings to ‘quality’ indicators for individual applicants. However, none of the committee members interviewed mentioned that female applicants were in their eyes less qualified to begin with. In fact, they implied the opposite: in their view, women would only apply if they fit the profile exactly and had all the necessary qualities, whereas men would tend to apply without hesitating. An even more reliable way of examining the possible differences in success rates may be found by focusing on applicants who have been invited for the next step of the process: an interview with the appointment committee. After all, these shortlisted applicants had passed the first stage of selection and committee members regarded them as serious candidates for the position. Table 6.7 presents the success rates for shortlisted candidates.

Table 6.7: Male and female shortlisted applicants (number and %) and success rates per subfield

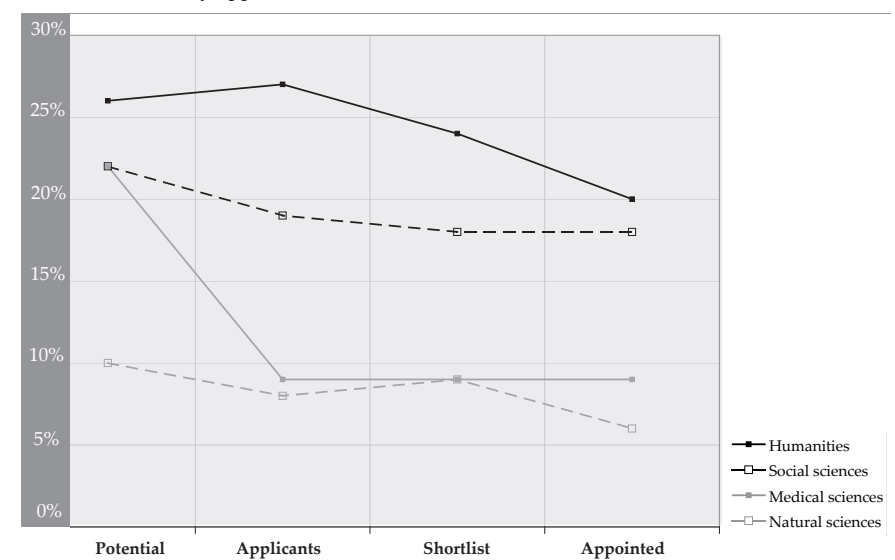
	Short list			Appointments		Success rate		Difference M/F %
	M	F	F (%)	M	F	M	F	
Humanities	142	46	24%	65	16	45.77%	34.78%	-10.99%
Social sciences	344	73	18%	179	38	52.03%	52.05%	-0.02%
Natural sciences	224	22	9%	180	11	80.36%	50.00%	-30.36%
Medical sciences	234	23	9%	176	17	75.21%	73.91%	-1.30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>944</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>63.56%</b>	<b>50.00%</b>	<b>-13.56%</b>

Source: 682 appointment reports (study B)

Once again, there are substantial differences in the success rates of men and women. Sixty percent of the male applicants interviewed were successful, compared to almost 50 percent of the female applicants on average, but with wide differences between the subfields varying from virtually zero up to 30 percent. Focusing on the female percentage of shortlisted applicants, the same trend as among the general applicants could be detected: a substantial share of women in the humanities and social sciences, and less than ten percent shortlisted women in the natural sciences and medical sciences. Furthermore, as with the success rate among general applicants, the success rate of shortlisted male and female applicants in medical sciences is fairly equal. In the social sciences the gender difference on the shortlist is minimal. In the humanities and natural sciences, however, the gender difference is even more pronounced than in the other selection stages at 11 percent and 30 percent respectively. This means that in the humanities and natural sciences, short-listed women are 10 percent and 30 percent less likely, respectively, to be appointed full professor than their male fellow candidates.

Combining the information on the percentage of female candidates at each stage of the recruitment and selection process, figure 6.1 shows the ‘leaky pipeline’ for each subfield.

Figure 6.1: The proportion of female academics as potential, applicants (general and on the shortlist) and finally appointed, for each subfield



Source: analysis appointment 682 reports (humanities N=81, social sciences N=217, natural sciences N=191, medical sciences N=193) (Study B)

The female potential is the highest in the humanities (26%), and increases further to 27 percent among female applicants but declines towards the later stages of the selection process: the proportion of women on the shortlist and in final appointments tails off. The pipeline leaks at the moment when selection begins and undergoes a more dramatic decline in the final selection. The same applies to the procedures in the social sciences: it shows a discrepancy between the pool of female potential and the proportion of female applicants. The number of female applicants falls rapidly as we move towards professorial appointments. At every stage of the recruitment and selection process, women drop out at a disproportionate rate. The situation in the natural sciences is rather different: the proportion of female applicants is slightly less than the female potential, but the proportion of women who making shortlist rises slightly. The percentage of women finally appointed drops again. In the medical sciences, the proportion of female applicants and appointments is low (9%) despite a large proportion of female potential (22%). The difference between the female potential and expected female applicants is immediately obvious. Once invited to appear before the committee, however, female applicants have the same chance of being appointed as their male counterparts.

What these figures show, then, is that success rates of men and women vary considerably between academic subfields, but in all subfields the success rate of women is lower than that of men. Since the patterns based on a reconstruction of the 'leaky pipeline' also differ, bringing me to the question of the specific gender practices in these fields which account for the lower success rate of women – each field's specific 'pipeline'.

Does gender matter?

*Humanities: the ideology of merit*

In the humanities, the majority of respondents consider the 'gender issue' to be outdated because of the relatively large share of women among academic staff members and students. Gender is not seen as something that matters in the selection of a full professor. The following respondents' account epitomizes this premise of gender neutrality.

Recently, some female professors have been appointed. And [in those appointments] being male or female wasn't an issue at all. They were simply good candidates. I am convinced that we are not discriminating women. (humanities, man 5)

In the case of quality, man or woman, then everyone has an equal chance of being appointed. It is more likely to be the other way around because of affirmative action.

The idea that 'we also have to hire women and should not be short-sighted', that is something they are aware of. So, it is not the case that people intentionally avoid hiring women. On the contrary, they are open to it, I think. If she is good, then they will definitely appoint her. My idea is that when you do not see a high proportion of women in some fields, they are also less ready. In the meantime, a lot of is happening in the pipeline. (social sciences, woman 1)

These quotes illustrate the predominant belief that all candidates have an equal opportunity, and that if and when gender does play a role, it could even be to the advantage of female candidates. Affirmative action policies are not entirely welcomed and special women's programs or chairs are not supported by most of the committee members interviewed. They argue that this could even give women a bad reputation. The academic recruitment system is assumed to be gender-neutral and to afford equal opportunities to all candidates insofar as they are equally meritorious.

However, national statistical data (WOPI, 2007) and my data from the appointment reports show clear gender difference in the composition of academic staff. In the humanities, 83 percent of the professorate is still male (WOPI, 2007). In addition, my data show that there is a significant difference between the success rates of male and female candidates in the final phase of appointments (see figure 6.1). There is thus a discrepancy between the perception of gender equality and the practice of gender inequality. This paradoxical combination of persisting gender inequality with a predominant perception of equality can be described as the ideology of merit (cf. the ideology of equality by Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998a). The rhetorical dominance of merit is a typically characteristic of myths of equal opportunity when in fact organizational practices continue to categorize and hierarchize between men and women, masculinity and femininity. This ideology renders the discrepancy between academic values (merit) and actual practices and outcomes (the unequal share of women appointed) invisible. Due to this process of hidden inequality, the academic system goes unquestioned: standards for promotion and appointments are seen as gender-neutral, offering the same chances to all candidates. In the eyes of the majority of respondents, gender inequality is therefore automatically related to women's personal choices. According to the committee members and others, women lack track record or experience to be appointed, but this has nothing to do with the organization; the system is beyond reproach. But is such blind faith in the meritocratic values of the humanities justified? Should we view gender inequality in the most senior positions as the result of women's deficiency? I argue that merit is a problematic concept in the humanities, and that the definition of scientific excellence is subjective in this highly political context.

First, basing appointments on merit would suggest that likeability and personality are not relevant, and that only ability and track record are decisive. However, particularly in the humanities, profiles are broadly framed and committees face difficulties in defining excellent science and the excellent scientist. The committee must therefore start the appointment procedure by defining the decisive criteria. If those criteria are not explicitly formulated in the beginning of the procedure – and this is often the case – the criteria can easily shift during the process (see section 3.3). In contrast with the natural and medical sciences, bibliometrics are less widely used and often contested as a valid measure of scientific merit. In the humanities, appointment committees have few tools to measure scientific quality ‘objectively’.

Secondly, the subjectivity of evaluation is reinforced by the highly political context, a result of the ‘crowded house’ of the humanities. This is a highly competitive environment with many qualified candidates, many autonomous units and, compared to other fields, fewer professorial positions. Section 6.2 described the culture in the humanities as relatively political and because of the small number of senior positions, the stakes of appointments are high. Power struggles between subfields, disciplines and epistemic cultures can come to the fore in the final decision making. The selection of new professors can be analyzed as a reinforcement – or reconstruction – of the predominant epistemic culture. As profiles tend to be broadly framed, it is easier to strategically ‘manipulate’ the appointment decision.

Although the ideology of merit predominates, some critical respondents did identify gender inequality practices. Some male but mostly female scholars claimed that inequality or even sexism was tied in with the academic culture and hiring system and that this will only change very slowly.

I can imagine that existing power structures play an important role in appointment decisions. Because traditionally there have always been more male professors and there could be a certain bias present. I think certain disciplines have their own traditions that are responsible for a particular allocation of power, and that will affect our system for a longer period of time, that doesn’t change very quickly. (humanities, man 12)

My interpretation is that the humanities are rather sexist. To put it bluntly, the potential is enormous in the humanities and that has to do with the fact that more girls study humanities than boys. But something is going wrong in these employment interviews that finally lead to the appointment decision. I think, the higher the position, the bigger the chance that a man will prevail. I am really concerned about that. (humanities, woman 3)

The first quote is from a respondent who relates to gender inequality in a more subtle way; he refers to underlying mechanisms that may advantage male candidates. In the second quote, the gender discrimination is described more bluntly. This female professor claims that the humanities are a sexist field and that mechanisms of evaluation and promotion favour men. Although there is a difference in perception, both refer to the culture of this subfield. Particularly in disciplines where women are greatly under-represented – such as in history and philosophy – it is claimed that gender plays a role. These are fields with an old academic tradition. Some of the respondents argue that the academic setting is managed by academic elites – an old boys’ network – with informal rules that have to be followed. These gatekeepers have a strong exclusionary effect. Because of the large influence of invisible connections, it is hard for newcomers and outsiders to be a member of this inner circle. These elites ‘nurture’ their successors so that they will know how to survive in the highly political culture, in which candidates have to maneuver between competing groups. Network connections are important in obtaining information about how to play ‘the game’. In order to know how to play it, it is beneficial to have a mentor or contacts with this ‘old academic tradition’. A female respondent explains: “When you are not on the dance-card [balboekje] of a mighty professor, then you can forget it” (woman 2). Often, women do not have access to these elites and are unaware of the tacit rules involved (see chapter 4). Unofficially required criteria can be difficult to identify for a candidate who does not know the existing arrangements. As a consequence, women are viewed as not operating strategically enough to survive in this highly idiosyncratic environment. A male respondent illustrates this with the statement “women are not slick enough”.

Female candidates tend to explain exactly what they want, thereby laying all their cards on the table. Then, when this game is played, they come off worst and lose the game. (humanities, man 11)

One respondent stresses the perceived differences between subfields and indicates that women have greater opportunities in the natural sciences because “you simply have to work very hard, and then, eventually, you will reach your goal. We have less political games and such, we are not bothered by colleagues when we have to publish in international journals or apply for grants” (Natural sciences, woman 16). She implies that the formal criteria applied in natural sciences in the form of strict publication norms are more objective than the informal criteria such as likeability. Formal criteria (bibliometrics) are seen as more reliable in the sense that counting publications is not influenced by who is counting, thus avoiding implicit subjective judgments.



Thus, the availability of female candidates in the humanities is substantial. They also often have the required professional capital and are seen as competent of assuming a position as full professor, but are rejected in the final selection decisions in competition with men because of their individual or social capital. They are deemed too extravagant, too modest or their leadership style is judged as insufficiently political, strategic or tactical. They often lack a good mentor who can learn the tacit rules of the specific field. In other words, they are insufficiently similar to the existing, male elite. In short, they are seen as competent, but unsuitable.

*Natural sciences: the ideal scientist*

This subfield exhibited the smallest discrepancy between female potential and appointments, meaning that a large proportion of female potential is realized. However, both female potential and the percentage of female professors is considerable lower than in other subfields. As a consequence, women find themselves occupying a token position (Kanter, 1977a) and are therefore extremely visible. This can bring benefits: there is willingness to support female talent, to search explicitly for female candidates and to put extra effort in when a female applicant is eligible. In general, respondents from natural sciences appreciated the urgency of appointing more women on senior positions: “Women have a different leadership style, which we really need here”; “They have to serve as role models for our female students” (man 3); “we need to attract more female students into physics and chemistry” (man 7); but also: “It could change the atmosphere in a positive way” (man 12); and even: “It would be more natural” (man 11). Hence, committee members argue that the faculty board should strive to appoint more women to accomplish a more balanced composition in the professorate and continue to monitor equality policies such as the inclusion in advertisements of the additional text: ‘preference in case of equal suitability’ and ‘applications from women are particularly welcome’. Most of the respondents also reflected on their own responsibility. They believe that it is necessary to encourage women to choose an academic career in the natural sciences. This encouragement is needed to exploit the available potential to the full. Adding more women is the only way to break the viscous circle of the absence of female models for the students and staff. They therefore support special mentoring and coaching programs for women, scouts try to find female candidates in their networks, and committee members often take the token position of women into account during the selection phase:

When there are also female candidates in the race, I think the committee will be inclined to, at least I would be inclined to, well..., bear in mind that there are not many women in physics. (natural sciences, man 4)

I have been in the fortunate circumstance that in some important appointments there have been some high-quality female applicants. And I can say that I fully supported the nomination of those women. In fact, in case of one of the professorial vacancies I certainly did my best, and succeeded, to create an additional professorship for the second [female] nominee who was not appointed to the original post. Those women are role models for the students and more diversity is good for our organization anyway. But I attach a certain value to address the fact that both women were not appointed only on the basis of their sex or race, but because they were very well qualified. Otherwise it wouldn't have been possible. (natural sciences, man 10)

So, in general, the accounts of most respondents displayed a willingness to appoint more women and an awareness of the importance of more female scientists. Chapter 3 discussed gender-equality practices in the various stages of the appointment process, and remarked that these gender practices pertain to the mobilization of (potential) female candidates and removing certain barriers. These practices are mainly based on the notion of gender equality as ‘equal opportunities’ – helping women to adjust to a male world. In chapter 4, I called this ‘mobilizing femininity’; men and women bring femininity into play as ‘added value’ in the academic context. Unlike in the humanities, gender matters during appointment decision making in the natural sciences, and respondents actively welcome female applicants.

However, the female candidates the respondents refer to are always exceptionally bright candidates whose excellence is beyond question. Their exceptional position in a male-dominated field attracts extra attention, and it is noticed when they perform well (see the concept of show pieces Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998a). When women ‘prove themselves’ and their professional capital is extensive, they have a good chance of moving up to the upper echelons. This effort and special attention is reflected not only in the smallest discrepancy between female potential and female appointments, when compared to other fields, but all along the recruitment pipeline as a whole: more female candidates make the shortlist than may be expected on the basis of the number of female candidates. Some of the respondents argue that female candidates in the B-category are often put forward to the shortlist even though they do not fit the profile completely (see figure 6.1). The number of women ultimately appointed to professorial chairs is still not in line with the potential and in fact, the difference between the success rates of men and women are the largest in this subfield (10% lower for female applicants in general and 30% lower for female applicants on the shortlist) (see table 6.6/6.7). In other words, women lose the competition in the final stage. The respondents suggest a possible explanation: the short-listed women are under-qualified, put on

the shortlist regardless, and lose competition to better qualified men. The fact that women lose the competition to men is confirmed in the appointment reports and interviews reveal that women often lose the competition because of a lack of 'quality points'. Although committee members seem to have the best intentions, they argue that they are not willing to lower the standards. Respondents argue that they are willing to appoint women, but that these often lack the required number of top publications or international experience.

Chapter 5 discussed gender practices in the evaluation of publications and citation indices. Academics who work part-time at some point in their career – even temporarily – miss elements in the building of their professional capital and eventually lose the competition with others with more publications to their name. Again, good intentions do not create a level playing field and appointment committees are unwilling to take into account different life styles and choices. Women are welcome, but only when they conform to existing image of the ideal scientist (Acker, 1992), meaning more than full-time devotion and willingness to spend long periods abroad. The 'male' model of the ideal academic remains unquestioned. Female faculty members are expected to be able to follow this model with a little extra help, with mentoring and coaching. The assumption is that women who follow this model will be as successful as their male colleagues (Bailyn, 2003).

It is questionable whether women lose the competition because they lack quality or because decision makers perceive a lack of quality. Women in a token position are visible, but also have to deal with prejudice and stereotypes (Kanter, 1977a). Kanter suggests that the sex ratio of a group determines perceptions of behaviour and the position of tokens within the group. While members of the majority are regarded as individuals, tokens symbolize the minority they belong to and are considered representative of that minority. Committee members' perceptions and evaluations of competence and performance cause women to be consistently underrated and men consistently overrated. To achieve the same competence rating as a man, a woman must have a significantly superior résumé. The 'intrinsic' ability of women to excel in natural and technical sciences is often questioned (Fox Keller, 1985; Schiebinger, 1989). In these contexts, masculinity and power are intertwined in such a way that men represent the standard; they naturally represent the norm against which the performance of women is measured. In other words, the attributes stereotypically labeled as masculine – such as technical ability, physical strength and being goal-oriented – are valued more highly and taken as the natural norm. Women in this masculine subfield may experience increased pressure to perform in order to counter stereotypical images. A more profound approach which scrutinizes and challenges the masculine notion of the 'ideal scientist' is needed.

#### *Medical sciences: women as 'the other'*

Of all subfields, the medical sciences display the largest gap between female potential and female scientists appointed (see figure 6.1). Despite extensive potential (22%), the share of women among professorial candidates is substantially lower (9%). Although it is possible that more women opt for another career than men – which is suggested by some respondents – this argument does not hold entirely because of the substantial share of female associate professors (16%). Chapter 4 showed the reasons why female talent may be overlooked by gatekeepers: women are not expected to have the same level of ambition or escape gatekeepers' field of vision. I discern two gender practices in the medical field that lead to an underestimation of female talent: 1) making gender irrelevant 2) viewing women as different with regard to their priorities in life and leadership style.

Unlike respondents from the humanities, respondents from the medical sciences were certainly aware of vertical and horizontal gender segregation in their field, but did not seem very concerned about it. Because of the substantial and increasing influx of female students, the majority of respondents were convinced that gender inequality would resolve itself over time. The interviewees believed strongly in the 'natural growth theory'; since a substantial number of female students are now graduating from medical school, this will be reflected in the share of female senior staff in future years. This belief was expressed by a male professor:

In the medical departments, women are a relatively new phenomenon. [...] However, I am an arch-optimist and I think it [women's under-representation] will resolve itself; it will be okay. But I think it needs time. (medical sciences, man 2)

The argument of the shortage of female potential, however, does not hold. For some time now, women have made up a substantial percentage of medical students. In 1990, the number of female graduates [basisarts] in the medical field was 42 percent and has been around 50 percent since 1995 (CBS, 2008a). Additionally, female doctorates made up around 25 percent of the total in 1990 and recently passed 50 percent (CBS, 2008b). This rise in the number of female students and doctorates has hardly been reflected by the increase in female full professors in the medical field – from two percent in 1992 to nine percent in 2007 (WOPI, 2007). Despite these revealing figures, the under-representation of women in the medical field is seldom seen as a problem.

Besides referring to the lack of female potential as a cause of women's under-representation, a majority of committee members – including female respondents who tended to differentiate themselves from 'women in general' –

explicitly and implicitly see women as different from men due to the different choices they make in their lives and careers. The most important reason for women's low mobility to top positions, they argue, is the fact that women have children and as a consequence begin to work part-time. The profession makes it impossible – or very difficult – to combine a career and part-time work.

I think the most important thing is that women have children, and the division of household labor is not equally divided between the sexes. A job such as full professor, that can be very hard in daily practice. (medical sciences, man 2)

Many women work part-time, and then it is more difficult to make all the career steps. The work will be reduced to very minor projects and things if you work part-time. (medical sciences, man 4)

Sometimes, it is really impossible to combine. And only women with families who are incredibly good at delegating tasks can manage to become full professors. Many women are ambivalent about whether they want to be with their families or children. And in that case, they will not make it. Then they stay behind in their career development, and at a certain moment in time, it is too late to come back in. They have done everything, are qualified and are definitely up to it, but it simply doesn't fit anymore. They are too old. (medical sciences, woman 5)

Our society still fails to prioritize gender equality on the job market sufficiently [...] You can see that many women really have the talent, honestly, I have to tell you, I have the impression that for a longer period of time, the best students have been women. It is as if the smarter men started to do something else than medical science. There is definitely something going on in our field. However, the question is whether women can manage to develop scientifically, and also with children. In this field, that is a hell of a job. You see a lot of women drop out. And that has to do with our society. Nevertheless, the demand for personnel is so huge, one will finally move up the ladder. That does not worry me at all. (medical sciences, man 17)

A number of – mainly male – committee members shared the opinion that being a full professor is very hard for women because it is a demanding job and a vocation rather than an occupation, and candidates have to be 'sheep with five legs', excelling in all forms of capital, including teaching, research and management.

Being a full professor in medicine is not only an academic position, but involves a lot of patient care and management. You can be an excellent scientist, but if you

cannot manage a department, you should not get the position. The risk is very high; a department full of patients cannot collapse. We are looking for that ideal person who has it all and is excellent in research, management and patient care. (medical sciences, woman 4)

Implicitly, these committee members believe that the demanding requirements of a professorial occupation in medical sciences are hard to combine with a family – which is usually the responsibility of women in the Netherlands. 'Having it all' is considered incompatible with women having a family life. Only 'certain' women that can delegate and do not have ambiguous feelings towards their 'responsibility' are able to cope with the work. It even involves the rather paternalistic view that "it is impossible to combine" (woman 5), "can be hard in daily practice" (man 2) and "you shouldn't place such high demands on female candidates with family responsibilities" (man 18). Male committee members feel the need to 'protect' women from this heavy duty by not appointing them. By 'protecting' women, male and some female doctors also feel they are protecting themselves, because women are seen as a risk.

Women are a risk because, according to respondents, they make lifestyle choices that prioritize family responsibilities and lack loyalty to the profession. The quote of man 17 also implies that the advancement of women in medical science is considered a risk. The training of medical doctors lasts an average of eight to ten years and therefore requires an extremely significant investment. Committee members argue that women fall out of the system more easily because of the heavy demands that the profession puts on individuals. The underlying argument is that women will ultimately make other choices on account of family responsibilities, resulting in the view that educating and promoting women might lead to a loss of investment. Their willingness to work flexibly is seen as lacking. In comparison, no connection is made between male professors and family responsibilities. The demands of patient care outweigh any claim on work-life balance. As a result, both male and female committee members tend to have less confidence in women's devotion to medical science.

As well as the fact that women are seen as less committed, women are seen as different from men when judged alongside the stereotypical ideal of the strong, authoritarian, masculine leader. In medical sciences, the high risk factor means that an important talent for a full professor is the ability to manage the competitive and stressful combination of science and medical care. The interview material and the appointment reports showed that women's leadership skills were regularly questioned. Women made – so was said – too modest an impression and it was not believed they could survive in the tough, hierarchical medical field.

That woman, who was one of the final four candidates, had a great résumé, sufficient, more than sufficient publications with some experience of supervising PhD candidates, experience with contract research. She met most of the criteria. But she failed on academic leadership. I had my doubts and the other committee members as well, including the women. We thought that she was too diffident, not vigorous enough, not capable of managing the group, to be the boss. I just thought she was too sweet [lief]. (medical sciences, man 12)

Judgments are made about the management capacities of men and women on the basis of personal characteristics. Women are not seen as qualified because of the unusually high standards required. Men are treated as the reference point and women as the 'other' that derives from this reference (Oppenheim Mason, 1986; Czarniawska & Höpfl, 2002). Women tend to be seen as 'other' because their appearance fails to inspire predominantly male committee members with confidence that she would have the kind of leadership skills needed in the medical sciences today. This issue was discussed in greater depth in chapter 5.3. Thus, in the medical sciences, being female is mainly a disqualifier.

#### 6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that gender is not a static entity, but a dynamically situated social practice that operates differently in various structural and cultural academic contexts. Gender is intertwined with organizational practices, and organizational practices are in turn shaped by structural and cultural context factors. The organization of the appointment process differs substantially between subfields. The image of what constitutes an 'excellent candidate' varies also greatly from one field to another and affects the criteria taken into account and their respective importance in the final appointment decision.

Concerning gender practices that can lead to inequality, these have different dynamics in the contexts as well. By analyzing the local gender practices and how initiatives to promote gender equality are dealt with, I localized the leaks in the academic pipeline. In each context, the gender practices that eventually led to an under-representation of women have a different focus. Ideas and stereotypes about men and women differ between the fields. For instance, in the natural sciences women are praised for their leadership qualities, while in the medical sciences, leadership skills are the reason women often lose out in the competition with men. In the natural sciences, the special attention given to the search for women is considered necessary and positive, while in the humanities, academics distanced themselves from this because it is seen as 'old-fashioned positive

discrimination'. To show these different gender practices, I distinguished three dynamics: the ideology of merit, the ideal scientist, and the woman as 'the other'.

In the humanities, the construction of the recruitment and selection pipeline shows a significant fall in the percentage of women who begin as candidates and the numbers who are finally appointed. Despite this fact, the majority of respondents claim that the academic recruitment system is gender-neutral, giving all candidates an equal opportunity insofar as they are equally meritorious. This contradiction is possible because of the strong ideology of merit, which masks the discrepancy between academic norms and values (merit) and practices of inequality. Yet, the highly strategic environment and the difficulty of assessing the quality of candidates' professional capital objectively hardly allow 'fair' or 'meritorious' decision making. As a result, the construction of the ideal candidate is more open to question and the importance of individual and social capital increases significantly. Affiliation with the current elite that can give an introduction to tacit rules, support and opportunities are vital in this area. The structural 'leak' of women from the pipeline of the appointment process seems to be the result of women lacking the desired individual and social capital. Respondents argued that women do not know how to play the game or how to 'behave' (individual capital), and this is often related to their exclusion or limited participation in formal and informal networks (social capital). The professional capital of women does not appear to be the problem – this is not where women lose out. Rather, women are seen as competent, but ultimately not suitable.

In the gender dynamic of 'the ideal scientist' which characterizes the natural sciences (and part of the social sciences), women fare better. At first sight, the 'war for talent', international orientation and focus on output in terms of publications and obtained grants do not necessarily seem to harm women. The discrepancy between the female potential and the percentage of women appointed is the smallest in this field. The main problem is the lack of potential; women are tokens at all levels in the natural sciences. This means women are mostly welcomed because their important role in attracting more students, creating a more natural atmosphere and because they are seen as good communicators and managers. However, to achieve the same competence rating as men, women need a significantly superior résumé. Men represent the standard and women have to overcome stereotypes concerning women in science and technology. In the final selection stage, many women seem to lose out because there is no level playing field and they suffer from stereotypical images. They are considered suitable, but eventually less competent.

A third dynamic which causes women to disappear from the recruitment pipeline is that of seeing women as 'the Other'. In the medical sciences, there is an exten-

sive pool of female potential which is not reflected in current numbers of female professors at all. Bearing in mind that, particularly in the medical field, the actual recruitment process takes place before the committee is installed, it seems clear that gatekeepers are not putting enough effort into scouting female applicants. Women are overlooked because of the dominant methods of recruitment in combination with embedded notion that women are different or 'others', and therefore considered less suitable. The gender disparity is hardly considered problematic and the main line of reasoning is: 'If women could invest the same amount of time and had the same blind ambition, they would have an equal chance of reaching senior positions'. Women are blamed for making other choices in life, resulting in the image of women as 'different'. In a context of such strong gender segregating discourses which define women as lacking the criteria needed for being a full professor, it becomes difficult for women to construct a professional identity. The image of a strong leader is difficult to reconcile with women and femininity. Moreover, male gatekeepers are reluctant to nominate female candidates because they believe this cannot be expected of a woman with a family. Needless to say, this gender practice not only harms women, but also some men. Women are considered neither competent, nor suitable.

Having indicated the specific gender practices, that affect women's chances for the professorate by subfield, the question remains of how it is possible that despite differences in context and various gender practices, outcomes are unchanged? Many different gender practices work in shifting combinations with each other. Sometimes one gender practice dominates while in another situation another practice prevails. There are also positive gender practices, but these are not strong enough to counteract the stronger gender inequality practices. Positive practices are too limited to change the structures and cultural context. Moreover, all the causes given for women's under-representation and therefore gender equality practices are more or less targeted at women. The under-representation of women is women's problem, and though university boards are willing to work to address gender inequality, in doing so they focus chiefly on women. Future policies should be targeted on changing organizations and taking into account the different gender dynamics in the various subfields.

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## Conclusion: Unmasking the myths

This dissertation has discussed the appointment practices of the most influential people in the academic world – full professors – in order to contribute to our understanding of the system of academic evaluation and the slow progress made on gender equality among the professorate. Professorial appointments are considered to be crucial in the reproduction of gender inequality in academic organizations, since they represent the point at which the standards that govern the academic field are determined, standards such as the prevailing construction of scientific excellence and the meanings of masculinity and femininity. Simultaneously, academic appointments can contribute to changing the gender order. Research into academic appointment and evaluation is rare (Eustace, 1988; Evans, 1995; Husu, 2000). This can presumably be ascribed to the secrecy and confidentiality surrounding these processes: academic organizations are reluctant to reveal their practices in such a sensitive area. The little research that has been conducted into systems of academic evaluation usually ignores gender or focuses on sex differences in outcomes, at best. Only reporting on gender disparities, however, neglects the question of why these disparities come about and who or what is perpetuating them. This research created a unique opportunity to look 'behind the scenes of science' of the academic appointment system. I have developed a multi-disciplinary approach to analyzing professorial appointments drawing on insight and concepts from three academic disciplines: science studies, organization studies and gender

studies. New insight is being generated at the crossroads of these three disciplines. The conceptualization of gender as a social practice is key; gender is seen as an integral part of organizational practices (Gherardi, 1994; Benschop, 2001; Martin, 2006; Poggio, 2006). Gender practices are studied in an academic context in which questions about the nature of 'excellence', what constitutes the best academic and how talent should be recruited and identified are topics of heated debate. The main question of this dissertation was: How is gender practiced in professorial recruitment and selection in the Dutch academic field?

This dissertation has shown the various ways in which gender is practiced in academic appointments. Supposedly gender-neutral organization processes, such as the implementation of transparency policies, the search for talent and the construction of scientific excellence, have been exposed as being based on hierarchical conceptions of masculinity and femininity. These gender practices are an integral part of recruitment and selection and operate at various levels of the appointment process. To reveal these gender practices, this dissertation has drawn on quantitative and qualitative empirical material including the recruitment and selection protocols of seven universities, 971 appointment reports and 64 interviews with members of appointment committees. Quantitative data concerning appointments of professors between 1999 and 2005 and appointment reports of the period between 1999 and 2003 have provided an understanding of the appointment dynamics, the discrepancy between the amount of female potential and the number of female professors appointed, the success rates of male and female candidates and the course of the appointment process. The qualitative element of the research enabled me to analyze the gendering of the appointment system, show the complexity of gender practices, their integration with academic practices and the involvement of power processes.

This concluding chapter is structured as follows. First, I will summarize the main findings of the study by revealing a number of persistent myths related to recruitment and selection which are often used to explain away the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions in the Netherlands. These myths are unmasked by revealing the various gender practices tied in with professorial recruitment and selection. Then, I will elucidate the theoretical contribution made by this study to filling some blind spots at the crossroads of science, organization and gender studies. Next, I will discuss its contribution to the societal debate by shedding light on the effectiveness of current policies and providing some leads to challenge the current gender order (Gherardi, 1994). Finally, I will examine the limitations of this study, and provide some suggestions for future research.

## 7.1 Myths

My data shows that despite gender equality policies and programs designed to promote the upward mobility of women, only 12 percent of all newly appointed professors between 1999 and 2005 in the Netherlands were women. This number is less than would be expected on the basis of long-term trends among female doctorates and the percentage of women in less senior academic positions (see chapter 2). Both in the general debate and in the current scientific literature, many reasons are given to explain the low number of female professors. This research has revealed some of these explanations as myths: believed by many, but not in fact true, or only partly true. I am able to unmask these myths by showing that gender is an integral part of recruitment and selection. Gender practices are often not recognized as such or reflected upon by the academics involved because these practices are mostly justified by the ideal of transparency and meritocracy. This dissertation challenges the view of an academic world where the allocation of rewards and resources is governed by the normative principles of transparency and meritocracy, and highlights the distance between these principles and the actuality of social interaction in daily working situations.

**Myth 1: There are too few professorial positions available**  
While it is commonly claimed that large numbers of aging full professors are blocking the upward mobility of young men and women (UU, 2001), my data reveals enough mobility to grant new generations of academics, including women, the opportunity to obtain a senior academic position. According to the data, 3,322 full professors were appointed in the Netherlands between 1999 and 2005 at the thirteen Dutch universities, 2,486 of them being ordinary professors. These numbers indicate substantial mobility within the upper echelons of university institutions and demonstrate that new positions are available for talented men and women. In the medical sciences and natural sciences in particular, the respondents stated that second and third-stream funding creates ample opportunities to create new professorial positions. This results in a high number of strategic and personal chairs in these subfields. Furthermore, increasing numbers of universities are experimenting with the tenure track system, which guarantees academics a professorial position if they receive good evaluations, irrespective of whether there is a vacancy. There are ample professorial positions and opportunities to create new positions. I can therefore conclude that a lack of available positions is not a sufficient explanation for the lack of women's progress.

### Myth 2: There is too little female potential

Another explanation often used to account for the under-representation of women in full professorships points to the lack of female potential on which there is to draw. According to this claim, the current professorial staff reflects the graduation numbers of several decades ago. In other words, academia is currently short of women with the required education and experience, but it is simply a matter of time before the women that are now 'in the pipeline' gain enough experience to be appointed as professors. The argument of the shortage of female potential, however, does not bear closer scrutiny, as shown in chapter 2. For quite some time now, there has been a substantial pool of women students, doctorates and staff. This rise of female students and doctorates has barely been reflected in the number of female professors. To demonstrate the gap between female potential and appointed professors, I approximate the available pool of female potential by the proportion of female doctorates and associate professors.

First, women who obtained a doctorate between 1986-1992 can be viewed as the pool of talent for new professorial appointments between 1999-2005. Calculation from 971 appointment reports showed that, on average, full professors were appointed thirteen years after obtaining their PhD (see chapter 2). National data demonstrate that a substantial percentage of women obtained a doctorate in the social sciences (26%), humanities (24%), and medical sciences (22%) in the period 1986-1992. Only the field of natural sciences lags behind, with a female potential of 11 percent. On the basis of fully equal opportunities and conditions, I may expect that the same proportions would be reflected among professors after a lag of approximately thirteen years. However, there was a significant discrepancy in the sex ratio of prospective and recent appointments in all subfields (see figure 2.7).

Another, more conservative way of approximating female potential is to look at the percentage of associate professors during the period 1999-2005. Associate professors can be considered as the primary feeder pool for professorial positions. As I showed in table 2.2, the percentage of female associate professors is also substantial. This means that despite a substantial pool of female potential, universities are failing to realize this potential. This applies to all fields, but in the natural sciences the female potential is almost realized and the largest discrepancies can be found in social sciences, humanities and medical sciences. In conclusion, the lack of female potential cannot explain the low representation of women among full professors.

### Myth 3: Professorial appointment practices are transparent and decision makers are held accountable

The findings of gender research have led to calls for more transparent procedures and accountability among decision makers in order to remedy the bias and

arbitrariness of opaque appointment processes, and guard against the reproduction of gender practices that hamper the career progression of women. This dissertation has revealed the diverse problems faced when attempting to apply the ideals of transparency and accountability at the different stages of the appointment process. Although the call for transparency has been answered by universities to some extent, I have to conclude that the policies developed in this area have hardly been implemented and are therefore having little effect in their attempt to achieve gender equality. A close reading of protocols and committee reports shows that transparency in appointment decisions is a matter of "bounded transparency": access is limited and can only be achieved for a very strict selection of academics, protocols often remain not implemented and the appointment process takes place in a highly micropolitical context.

In contrast to European countries like Sweden and Finland, the Netherlands has no law forcing academic appointment decisions to be made public. Proceedings and appointment reports are not available to the general public or fellow academics due to strict confidentiality rules. Only a specific kind of 'outsider' – a highly narrow selection of elite academics – are allowed access to appointment decisions. Rather than allowing public access to appointment decisions, universities are attempting to make the process more transparent and decision makers more accountable by drawing up protocols for academic evaluation. These protocols provide guidelines and agreements which the decision makers and committee members involved have to follow. The protocols contain a few explicit references to gender equality, and those mentioned mainly pertain to the search for (potential) female candidates and the inclusion of female members on appointment committees. Four universities take gender equality one step further in their protocols by calling attention to potential gender biases in recruitment practices and in selection criteria.

The implementation of these protocols, however, appears to be problematic. In all phases of the appointment process, micropolitical dynamics and gender practices can be observed, which run contrary to the regulations for transparency, accountability and gender equality. The interviews contain many examples of political games and flexible interpretations of the rules and regulations. For instance, the protocols are easily overruled when decisions have to be made fast to appoint or retain candidates deemed to be 'excellent'. My analysis of the appointment reports shows that almost half the committees (44%) consisted solely of male committee members and no women took part in those strategic coalitions. In another twenty percent of committees, the female member was a student or PhD candidate. Although the effects of a gender-balanced committee were vigorously debated by my respondents, I showed that increasing the number of female committee

members does in fact make a difference and indeed increases the chances of female applicants to be appointed. Furthermore, several of the appointment reports contained minimum information on the criteria used, candidates evaluated or decision making process, meaning that committee members hardly can be held accountable for the appointment decision. A final example pertains to the importance of open recruitment: the protocols only allow deviation from open recruitment in exceptional cases. The analysis of appointment reports, however, shows that 64 percent of procedures are judged to be exceptional in some way, and a closed procedure is used. Closed procedures significantly reduce transparency and accountability and have various gender effects (see chapter 3).

The poor implementation of the appointment protocols can be explained by resistance towards more bureaucracy, the appeal to meritocracy, and the lack of back-up by the university board. A difference was detectable between the university boards and policy makers on the one hand – who stressed the importance of making the procedures more transparent and increasing gender equality, and on the other hand the committee members – who were critical or even cynical about the policies and rejected them as bureaucratic. Policies that explicitly address gender equality issues such as ‘searching for women candidates’, and ‘reporting the number of women in the process’ evoked particular resistance and these policies were often neglected. In the most extreme case, policies designed to increase transparency were even counter-productive, leading committee members to use micropolitical techniques and strategies to ‘stage’ transparency or gender equality while manipulating the system in their interest. Moreover, in the opinion of the interviewees these policies to increase transparency, accountability and gender equality are not always compatible with the aim of selecting and recruiting on the basis of merit. Due to the lack of commitment from key figures and the lack of pressure from the university board, the protocols remain a paper tigris. Because promoting transparency generally involves requiring institutions and individuals to release information they are accustomed to withholding, transparency can rarely be achieved without pressure from above – from the university boards in this case.

In addition to the fact that policies regarding transparency and accountability in general, and gender equality in particular, have not been followed through sufficiently, I detected that some elements in the process of recruitment and selection were almost impossible to formalize or make transparent. Since the academic field is a political arena, micropolitics inevitably detract from some of the good practices and the attempts made to expose gender practices. Each of the various actors in the process has their own agenda which can interfere with the goal of increasing the openness and formalization of procedures. The blurring of priorities and interests means that gender practices in the form of stereotypical ideas about

men and women academics and the unintended consequences of the gendered academic structure continue to have their effects. The standardization of recruitment in protocols and the guidelines for transparency and accountability, including those on gender equality, cannot prevent committee members from continuing to select applicants who share their own characteristics and who are thus more often male than female.

To conclude, my analysis has revealed that current appointments are hardly transparent and decision makers are barely held accountable. Paradoxically, the efforts to achieve these goals have actually legitimized current methods of recruitment and selection practices by lending gender practices a spurious ‘objectivity’. Due to the fact that these transparency and accountability policies exist on paper, the hegemonic discourse among committee members on fairness and meritocracy in the appointment process is strengthened still further. As a result, the rhetoric is that gender no longer plays a role. Meanwhile, since it is a matter of ‘bounded transparency’, measures are hardly implemented or even actively resisted, and gender and micropolitical mechanisms continue to influence appointments but are hardly acknowledged. The norms of transparency, accountability and gender equality veil the practice of inequality; the norm is conceived as the practice and the fact that this norm is routinely ignored in practice is hushed up. However, the lack of transparency and accountability – for whatever reason – clearly restricts the access of women to senior positions.

#### Myth 4: Professorial recruitment is a level playing field

The search for excellent candidates is carried out under the guiding principle of meritocracy and should be open to all talent. However, I discovered that the entrance to the full professorship is not a level playing field. Although university boards stress the importance of open recruitment to increase competition and bring about a fair process, this dissertation has shown that in the Netherlands the majority of new professors (64%) are recruited by means of closed procedures involving formal and informal networks of scouts. These scouts are academics in key positions of influence who are actively on the look-out for candidates for senior academic positions. Scouts function as gatekeepers since they decide which candidates are nominated and which remain excluded before the official process even starts; they exercise considerable control over flows of information and access to vacant positions (Husu, 2004). This scout system is justified by academics and universities as necessary in the ‘war for talent’. Gatekeeping is tied in with several gender practices.

First of all, gatekeepers claim they have sufficient knowledge of their entire field to “recognize excellence when they see it”. The fact that excellence has



to be recognized implies that if excellence does not come to the attention of scouts, it will remain unacknowledged and unrealized. Despite best intentions, appointment decisions are often based on an incomplete search, personal preferences and internal logics of academic subfields. There is a significant chance that certain contiguous subfields will not be included, and that potential candidates will simply not be recognized because they fall outside the network of the academic scouts.

Furthermore, predominantly male gatekeepers collectively and reflexively base their recruitment decisions on perceived similarity (homophily). Due to recognition and trust, male gatekeepers are more likely to identify with male candidates and value them more. Male candidates – or female candidates showing characteristics close to hegemonic masculinity – are preferred because of the strong ‘natural’ link that most gatekeepers make between masculinity and full professors: ‘think professor, think male’. Women are outliers that are unconsciously seen as different, unpredictable and risky.

As with the preferential treatment of men, masculine support networks offer advantages to the academic who seeks to raise his or her profile and build a reputation as an academic. Excellence is not something one is born with, but is nurtured and developed. It is the outcome of a stimulating work environment, infrastructure, and social capital which has to be given meaning and valued in a certain context. Influential academics can help candidates to raise their profiles or allow them to bask in reflected glory (Cialdini et al., 1976; Cialdini, 1984). In order to increase their visibility, influential scientists can recommend candidates when names are asked, encourage candidates to apply and help them make their name. It is essential that potential candidates are encouraged to apply or that the vacancy is explicitly pointed out by colleagues and superiors. Due to the same ‘homophily’, or ‘masculine relationships’, men tend to help their own sex in an unintentional, ‘matter-of-fact’ way. Women receive less reflexive ‘help’ from these influential support systems.

These three gender practices occur in ‘regular’ appointment procedures, in which men mobilize masculinities – bring hegemonic masculinities into play – in homophilous networks. However, gatekeeping is not a one-dimensional gender practice; gatekeepers have the power to exclude, but on the other hand, they can provide chances and can facilitate inclusion too. The fourth gender practice is thus a gender equality practice and includes men and women mobilizing femininities by regarding women and femininity as added value. Some male and nearly all female gatekeepers search specifically for female candidates, partly due to pressure from the university boards. In such cases, when influential agents within the recruitment process actively engage in the search for women, the scout system can also work to the advantage of women.

However, this gender equality approach does not fully counteract the advantages that men enjoy in a closed recruitment system, and moreover, it involves specific problems of its own. Gender inequality practices may be mitigated by gender equality practices to a certain extent, but they still address the symptoms rather than the cause. They do not modify the established route to the professorate sufficiently or address the bias caused by homophilous networks of male gatekeepers. Inequality will not be dissipated as long as women continue to be excluded from the ‘regular’ procedures, where both men and women compete, and are instead put into a side track reserved for ‘women only’. Special attention makes the figures look better temporarily, but does not lead to change in the long term. For that, gender inequality practices, where male networks and support systems are responsible for the reproduction of gender disparity in the highest levels of academia, must be addressed directly. Additionally – and contrary to the predominantly unreflexive mobilization of masculinities – mobilizing femininity is marked as a result of the negative connotation of women receiving extra help, and the discourse of meritocracy. This can be described as a ‘support paradox’ (see van den Brink & Stobbe, forthcoming). Mobilizing masculinity is the norm and therefore not questioned by men or women. The fact that men are continuously and frequently supported and helped during their career therefore remains unremarkable. Mobilizing femininity, on the other hand, is marked and leads to the perception that women cannot succeed on their own merits; women who are invited are suspicious because of their gender. While men receive support during their academic careers, women have to do it on their own individual merits.

All these practices demonstrate that the recruitment of full professors does not occur on a level playing field.

Myth 5: The concept of scientific excellence can be defined  
and is gender neutral

Mainstream ideas about how scientific excellence should be assessed relate to meritocratic principles which claim objectivity, impartiality and gender neutrality. These values are rooted in the history and culture of academia and can be seen as cornerstones of the system of scientific norms (Merton, 1973). This research has revealed a powerful meritocratic ideology: the belief among the majority of respondents that selection decisions are based solely on individual qualifications and the ability demonstrated, and that gender does not matter in the assessment of men and women applicants. In this system, talent will prove itself, and excellence will ‘surface’ automatically. This dissertation has adhered to Bourdieu (1976), who

called this one of the strongest myths of contemporary science as early as three decades ago. Meritocracy functions as a mask for the specific interests of individual academics and scientific communities and allows the blame for failure to be shifted to the individual (Sennet & Cobb, 1977). By analyzing the discursive practices of committee members, I was able to show that excellence is in fact a problematic concept, difficult to objectify or assess and inherently gendered.

The recruitment of excellent academics is an honorable goal, but excellence as a social construction is fluid and shifting, only possible to define in a specific academic field and within the boundaries of the objectives of the institution in question. This was shown by respondents who often stated that they were unable to define excellence, but referred to it by saying 'you recognize it when you see it' (see also Schacherl et al., 2007). It would therefore be misleading to treat excellence as a universal, easily quantifiable characteristic. Rather, it is a composite of many qualifications and characteristics that is achieved through training, networking, accumulation, and resources. These qualifications must lead to visible and recognizable achievements (forms of capital) before they can be judged and assessed (Brouns & Addis, 2004, p.18). Only some indicators of scientific excellence can be quantified, however, such as the number of works published, the amount of research funds acquired, extensive networks or teaching capabilities. Whether excellence is attributed to a candidate depends on the weight given to each of these characteristics. Some of these indicators remain tacit. According to Scully (2003), meritocracy can only work when merit is a well-defined and quantifiable basis for selecting individuals for positions. When neither of these conditions are met, those in positions of power are left to define what excellence is as they see fit.

The analytical framework used to 'unpack' the notion of scientific excellence was based on Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital. Symbolic capital relates to how one is valued by others. It is found in the form of the prestige, renown, reputation, and personal authority of a person or organization (Bourdieu, 1986, 2004). Symbolic capital is therefore closely connected with the concept of excellence, since scientists at the highest levels of scientific performance enjoy prestige, renown and status. Symbolic capital is a composite form of capital created by the input of other forms of capital (Brouns, 1993; Everett, 2002). This study has addressed the question of how other forms of capital – professional capital (track record in terms of education and publications), individual capital (personality) and social capital (network connections) are related to the development of symbolic capital. In line with Delhaye, (1991, p.138) it was argued that the transformation of other forms of capital into symbolic capital is a gender practice: "Men's capital is systematically seen as more legitimate, and produces more symbolic capital than women's capital" (author's translation). This study has revealed gender practi-

es in the allocation and accumulation of different forms of capital – professional, individual and social – and the attribution of symbolic capital in general.

First of all, gender is practiced during the assessment of candidates' professional capital. Indicators that appear to be gender-neutral (such as counting numbers of publications and citations) still produce gendered results when applied to a gendered system – by not taking actual research time into account, for instance. Furthermore, the relatively monolithic standard model of professorial capital – involving bibliometrics and peer review as the dominant measures – does not fully coincide with the heterogeneity of scientific activity. Because teaching and professional activities are usually valued less than publications, the heavier teaching loads associated with temporary or part-time contracts and positions serve as a source of gender inequality.

Secondly, individual capital is seen as a collection of criteria related to perceived personality. These are not criteria listed in the job profile, but are rather 'common sense' criteria used at the discretion of the appointment committees. Gender practices in the assessment of individual capital are strongly related to gender stereotyped judgments. The stereotypical image of the 'Dutch female scholar' is a part-time worker, with family responsibilities who lacks the ambition to reach a senior position, will have difficulty managing a research group of autonomous academics and presents herself modestly and sensitively. This hegemonic image persists even though in practice, as my data shows, women senior academics work the same number of hours as men, express their ambitions confidently and engage in active self-promotion. The concept of the ideal professor conflicts with the hegemonic female scholar, with the result that assessors tend to underestimate the qualifications of female candidates.

Thirdly, both professional and individual capital depend on the accumulation of social capital. Social capital was defined as an aggregation of networks that can provide certain resources or positions of power. It is not only talent and merit that determine who is appointed; this is also affected by social capital, especially in the currently prevailing system of recruitment by invitation. In order to distinguish oneself as an excellent academic, professional capital is not enough. Affiliation with the decision makers affects the opportunities of academics. Social capital also helps boost professional and individual capital. This is the acceleration effect of social capital: success leads to greater visibility and new successes, and an enhanced reputation leads to more citations and more success in receiving grants and subsidies. Since in the male-dominated academic world, men tend to have broader networks and the majority of academics in senior positions are men, women academics with no extended social capital in the academic world suffer a disadvantage when building a reputation.

It is not only the evaluation of candidates' professional, individual and social capital that is gendered, but also the attribution of the symbolic capital as a whole. Generally speaking, men are able to establish a reputation more easily than women. This research reveals double standards in the attribution of excellence to men and women candidates. A close reading of the appointment reports revealed that the standards are kept high for women candidates, who have to be 'sheep with five legs' to avoid any association with affirmative action. It would be unrealistic to expect all 3,322 newly appointed professors to excel in all areas, which implies that exceptions are routinely made for male candidates. The data provides several examples of the appointment procedure of male candidates who did not excel in all respects, whereas women were often rejected because they fell short of excellence in some areas. This suggests that the discourse of excellence in fact becomes one of suitability in the case of male candidates, while women have to be excellent after all.

**Myth 6: Gender practices are similar in all academic subfields**  
Common policies designed to address the under-representation of women academics tend to generalize all academic subfields of the humanities, natural sciences, social sciences and medical sciences. However, this dissertation showed that different gender dynamics are at work in different subfields; every subfield has its own particular point where women 'leak out of the pipeline'.<sup>36</sup> The ineffectiveness of current university policies can also partly be explained by the fact that these differences should be taken into account. I have distinguished three gender mechanisms: the ideology of merit, the ideal scientist and woman as 'the other'.

Despite the fact that female candidates in the humanities drop out of the system in disproportionate numbers at every step during the professorial appointment process, the majority of respondents in this subfield claim that gender does not matter in academic evaluations. It is widely held that the gender issue has been tackled, and an 'ideology of merit' renders the discrepancy between academic values (merit) and actual gender inequality practices invisible. However, the discrepancy between female potential (26%) and female professors appointed (20%) is substantial (see table 6.3), and indications of gender practices are widespread. First, in the humanities there is not yet consensus about a reliable system of evaluating research quality. The current system is under scrutiny for not

<sup>36</sup> Social sciences are not dealt with specifically in this overview of gender dynamics in the subfields, since by analyzing dominant patterns it emerged that some social sciences are more similar to humanities (in particular studies such as anthropology, cultural studies, gender studies) while others resemble natural sciences (in particular psychology, sociology and economic sciences).

including books, national journals and languages other than English. As a result, the construction of the ideal academic is more open to discussion and personal interpretation. The humanities are thus characterized by their political culture; since the criteria to assess the professional quality of candidates are more equivocal, candidates draw on their individual and social capital to a larger extent. Social capital is crucial since there are many candidates for only a few positions, resulting in fierce competition between applicants. Affiliation with the current traditional, masculine elite can lead to a higher chance of being appointed on the basis of the 'crown-prince model'. In addition, the nominated candidates have to be tactical and strategic scholars who have the right connections and know the subtleties of the game, and whose personality fits the group (autonomous groups). Female candidates lose out during the whole selection process, when judgments are made about whether their personality fits the culture of the department. Women are more likely to succeed in new disciplines such as media and technology or visual anthropology which do not have a traditional academic culture.

The smallest discrepancy between the female potential and the number of female professors appointed can be found in the natural sciences, where a large proportion of the relatively small female potential is realized. This corresponds to the positive attitude towards women generally found in this subfield. Hence, female candidates are more often placed on the shortlist than would otherwise be expected on the basis of the percentages among candidates. They receive a certain 'bonus' on the basis of their gender. However, the success rate of women shortlisted for professorial appointments is substantially lower than among men, and according to respondents, female academics mainly lose out to men because of a – perceived – lack of professional capital. Women suffer in part from the fact that the evaluation of professorial capital does not produce a level playing field. In the natural sciences, international competition is high and quality is mainly quantified through international peer-reviewed publications and citation indices. Academics without a traditional masculine career trajectory suffer from a lack of publications and therefore experience more difficulty being ranked as excellent. Women are on average older, or have less social capital. Furthermore, women in this male-dominated subfield may experience increased pressure to perform to counter the stereotypical images. The image of the 'excellent' or 'ideal' scientist is based on masculinity, which leads to the fact that women often have to have a superior résumé to be achieved the same competence rating.

Nowhere is the 'leak in the pipeline' more obvious than in the subfield of the medical sciences. Although there is a substantial pool of potential (22%), the percentage of female applicants drops towards nine percent. The explanation that women do not apply for professorial positions can be countered, as 77 percent of

all appointed professors were appointed through a closed procedure, and therefore invited by the current gatekeepers. Analysis of interview material revealed that female talent is overlooked. The subfield of medical sciences is characterized by a high risk of social failure and the availability of fairly substantial funding. Candidates are judged on their ability to manage a competitive and stressful combination of science and medical care. Women are not seen as obvious choices for professorships and the paternalistic view of some male respondents leads to the notion that the role is too much to expect of a woman. Furthermore, women do not correspond to the image of the ideal manager.

Universities try to create policies to advance female academics. However, these policies still focus on women rather than on reforming the system and do not take sufficient account of the differences between the subfields. Gender practices are not similar in all academic fields. In section 7.3, which discusses the contribution of this research to the societal debate, I will give specific recommendations for each subfield.

## 7.2 Implications and theoretical contributions

This section clarifies the implications of the present research findings and discusses the theoretical contribution of the present study. These contributions start out by combining insights and theoretical concepts from three academic disciplines: science studies, organization studies and gender studies.

### Bringing gender into organization and science studies

By combining science and organization studies with a gender approach, supposedly neutral practices can be revealed as gendered. Although scholars in science studies (Fox Keller, 1985; Harding, 1986; Schiebinger, 1999; Mählck, 2001; Bosch, 2002) and organization studies (Gherardi, 1994; Benschop, 2001; Calás & Smircich, 2006; Martin, 2006; Poggio, 2006) have frequently suggested that gender should be an integrated part of organizational theory, the mainstream of organization and science studies has ignored the gendered nature of (academic) institutions, theories, practices and principles. The literature has shown little interest in applying this theoretical lens or continues to consider gender as a variable (Alvesson & Billing, 1997). Research on academic evaluation and appointment systems in particular focuses primarily on sex differences in the success rates and outcomes of competitions. Even though such studies have played a part in initiating a debate on gender disparities in academia, they mainly focus on individual and structural barriers for women and are unable to explain how this process of distinction works and fail

to integrate the organizational context into their explanations. In recent years, the 'gender equality in higher education' literature has used a more social constructionist and post-structuralist notion of the construction of excellence and assessment, and included a broader concept of gender (Fogelberg et al., 1999; Husu, 2001; Brouns & Addis, 2004; EU, 2004; Blättel-Mink, 2008). This relatively young field of research ties gender to organizing and organizational identities with the assertion that gender is a socially constructed practice of distinguishing between female and male, femininity and masculinity.

This dissertation has introduced the practice approach into a field where questions about the origin and involvement of power processes in academic evaluations and appointments had scarcely been addressed. By considering gender as a social practice, the centre of analysis is no longer a static object (men or women), but rather a fluid process or situated performance (Jansen, 1987; West & Zimmerman, 1987; Acker, 1992; Alvesson & Billing, 1997; Poggio, 2006; Jansen, 2007). By adopting this approach, I have been able to show how organizational practices, and specifically recruitment and selection practices, are tied in with intentional and unintentional, mainly unreflexive gender practices. This dissertation has shown how organizational practices such as networking, the implementation of transparency policies and the construction of excellence constitute multiple gender practices (as recapitulated in the previous section). This insight is also essential to the debate about how to enhance gender equality in academia. Previous studies in this field have mainly suggested adding women to the system without changing the structural and cultural context, but considering organizational practices as gendered calls for more radical change (see section on contributions to societal debate).

By the same token, this dissertation specifically contributes to the growing body of organization network literature. Organizational scholars have shown that involvement in (scientific) networks – or an abundance of social capital – is important for a successful career since networks can provide job opportunities (Granovetter, 1974; Bourdieu, 1986; Lin & Dumin, 1986; Burt, 1992, 2005), support (Bagilhole & Goode, 2001), influence (Mehra, Dixon, Brass, & Robertson, 2006), and overall career success (Podolny & Baron, 1997). Some network studies reveal substantial differences between men and women, both in the structures and in the usefulness of networks (Smith-Lovin & McPherson, 1993; Ibarra, 1997; van der Hulst, 2004; van Emmerik, 2005), but we know surprisingly little about how these differences come about and how they might promote or counteract gender equality. Conceptualizing gender as a social practice introduces a new perspective into organization network research. This dissertation focused on how academics behave in networks, on their actual networking practices and how these are

gendered. A detailed understanding has been gained of how various networking practices create, reinforce or counter gender inequalities in academic organizations and the way power was involved (see chapter 4).

The majority of research into networks concentrates on their beneficial effects, such as social support, resources, information and status (Debackere & Rappa, 1995). This research has illuminated both the inclusionary and exclusionary networking practices; gatekeepers control or influence entry into the professional field through informal networking. Exclusion is mainly brought about by male and female gatekeepers mobilizing masculinities by preferring male candidates due to their perceived similarity, and the strong male support networks. These networks produce advantages only for insiders, and demarcate organizational insiders from outsiders (see Benschop, 2007). Inclusion, meanwhile, was achieved through explicit searches for female candidates. Interestingly, mobilizing femininity in networking was found to be marked and more problematic in comparison with mobilizing masculinity. While mobilizing masculinity occurs unreflexively and is hardly scrutinized by men or women, mobilizing femininity is marked because the explicit search for women is constructed as challenge to the meritocratic principle. This leads to an interesting paradox: when men receive support during their academic careers, this is a sign of their quality; women on the other hand have to achieve success on their own individual merits to avoid suspicion related to quality and preferential treatment. These mechanisms reinforce the status quo of gendered networking practices in academic recruitment.

#### Introducing the concept of hegemonic power processes into science studies

Introducing conceptualizations of power from critical management studies and gender studies into science studies has shed light on the often neglected power processes embedded in academic procedures, channels and criteria. Most science studies concerning the measurement of excellence regard scientific quality as objective, merit-driven and gender neutral (e.g. Tijssen et al., 2002; van Raan, 2004; Basu, 2006), which leads to a narrow discussion of the functioning and effectiveness of peer-review systems, bibliometrics and citation indices. What is more, these scholars assume that there is a rational context where transparent decisions can be made by unprejudiced and impartial scientists. It is also important, however, to look at the more tacit criteria – since many factors other than bibliometrics and citation rates in fact influence who is labeled ‘excellent’ in the selection of professors – and at who has the power to deem another academic to be

‘excellent’. Although a few voices have been raised which counter the mainstream view (e.g. Bourdieu, 1976; Brouns, 2004; Rees, 2004; Münch, 2007), the social construction of academic excellence and the political process of recruitment and selection are relatively new issues in debates about the quantification of excellence and the functioning of the academic (evaluation) system. This dissertation has clearly illustrated that the objective measurement of scientific excellence is an illusion; excellence is a social construction and the power to define it is in the hands of academics who are in the position to decide which forms of capital are relevant, and who have the possibilities to invite successors and the resources to nurture or develop excellent scientists.

The power processes tied up with academic recruitment and selection were made visible by using the concept of micropolitics that refer to the strategies and tactics used by individuals and groups in organizations to further their interests (Hoyle, 1982; Morley, 2006). More specifically, this perspective revealed that gender in recruitment and selection is not simply a technical endeavor, but also a political process involving negotiations between a range of actors. Elite scientists in gatekeeping positions consistently use micropolitics to achieve their goals; they deliberately lobby for or construct new positions, framing the profile to suit a particular candidate and resisting or undermining the policy measures of administrative staff. However, their power relations are mainly deployed to preserve their monopoly on scientific authority, prestige and recognition. They not only have the power to decide who is excellent and who is not, but also make explicit claims about their knowledge of excellence and the talent pool. Any talent not ‘seen’ or ‘recognized’ by them is therefore not considered excellent. These judgments concerning excellence are made by scientists who are already eminent, and those at the top of the various informal scientific hierarchies exercise great power over the standards which govern their fields. Candidates who wish to advance their careers and produce results accepted as significant contributions to knowledge must comply with the standards set by these leaders. Elites have a vested interest in representing recruitment and selection as meritocratic; this gives them an air of objectivity. Because of this belief in meritocracy, both men and women often resist gender equality measures. The powerful rhetorical device of meritocracy helps legitimizing existing power structures and resource inequalities.

As well as being excluded from power positions, the most important factors in producing and perpetuating gender inequality in universities relate to the images of science, scientific practice, and the ideal scientist; these images are usually associated with men and masculinity. Men, but also women who resemble those in powerful positions and behave according to the masculine traditions of full-time devotion, enjoy a ‘bonus’ that allows them to be assessed as better

academics. Masculinity and power are intertwined in such a way that men represent the standard; they constitute the natural norm against which women's performance is measured. In other words, the attributes stereotypically labeled as masculine – such as an authoritarian leadership style and full-time devotion – are valued highly and taken as the standard norm. In real life, these attributes are perceived as innate to men and experienced as inevitable and normal. There is thus a natural association between senior academics and masculinity and men, as if these attributes were inscribed into the male body. In the Netherlands, female academics suffer from the prevalent stereotype that women are not ambitious and make other life choices that cannot be combined with an academic career. Hegemonic femininity is working part-time, not aiming for higher positions and having a more modest style of leadership. Female academics aiming for a top position suffer from this hegemonial female image.

#### Contribution to gender studies

The 'practice turn' in gender studies has yielded revealing empirical and theoretical insight into the field of gender, work and organization (Poggio, 2006). The conceptualization of gender as a practice has enabled me to show the fluidity and situatedness of gender in various academic contexts. Chapter 6 showed clearly that different gender practices contribute to the emergence of gender inequality in various academic subfields. This means that notions of gender are likely to vary between different times and in different settings, although they will all lead to a similar gender effect: the exclusion of women.

From here, I will take the conceptualization of gender practice a step further. My research has shown that organizational practices are intertwined with a myriad of gender practices that reinforce, counteract, mitigate, or contradict each other in different situations and in various contexts. This also implies that not all gender practices are equally relevant; there is a gradual, contextual relevance. For example, the gendered way that scientific excellence is constructed reinforces the possibility that female academics will be overlooked by gatekeepers searching for potential candidates. This gender practice is strongest in the medical sciences, where the competition for senior academics is severe and rather stereotypical images of masculinity and femininity predominate. However, the explicit search for female candidates mitigates the dominant practice of support of men by male gatekeepers. A contradiction is found in the way that women refuse to take positions that are installed for them, out of fear of being marked out as an 'affirmative action' case.

This leads me to the second point. Gender practices are multi-dimensional and include practices that bring about gender inequality, but also

explicit practices that work towards gender equality. Recently, feminist theorists have argued that current models of gender emphasize the perpetuation of gender inequality but pay less attention to the changes achieved or to situations where gender is less – or not at all – relevant (Butler, 2004; Lorber, 2005; Deutsch, 2007; Pullen & Knights, 2007; Kelan, 2008). This can be termed to as the 'undoing gender' debate. Although there is theoretical agreement on this topic, this knowledge is difficult to apply in empirical research in terms of actually finding these situations where gender is undone. In my opinion, this is a result of the dominance of gender inequality practices which cover up, change the direction of, or even hijack intentional and unintentional gender equality practices. This has been shown by the conflict between those practices that are intentionally meant to increase gender equality and stronger gender inequality practices that hinder, alter, or transform gender equality practices. Transparency policies, deployed to counter gender discrimination, can be counterproductive when they are used to cloak gender discrimination in 'objectivity', for example; in fact, this silences the debate rather than achieving more transparency in the procedures. Furthermore, the use of micropolitics predominates among committee members who resist equality policies on the basis that they lead to an increase in bureaucracy. Another example is the establishment of chairs for women, or other programs to promote the upward mobility of female academics. These frequently lead to questions about the female appointee's quality which is suspect when not tested in competition with men or measured against male competitors.

In short, this dissertation has contributed to our knowledge of the mechanisms that prevent attempts at gender equality from succeeding as a result of various unreflexive gender practices that hijack these attempts, pull them off course and keep them from being effective. Gender equality practices are still unable to counter gender inequality practices. This explains why it is often so difficult to increase gender equality, because of simultaneous multi-faced gender inequality practices and gender equality practices which lack 'teeth', especially in a traditional masculine academic environment with 'thick', ponderous traditions and values. I can therefore conclude that the 'gender as a social practice approach' can provide an understanding of the working of gender in organizations. By giving insight into the gender practices in academic evaluation, this dissertation contributes to the growing body of knowledge concerning the mechanisms that produce or perpetuate gender inequality in academia, but also those that produce gender equality and how these influence each other. I suggest not only focusing on mainstream gender practices, but also on gender inequality practices and how these multiple gender practices affect each other.

This is in line with the approach of Hearn (1998) and Van den Brink & Stobbe (forthcoming), who suggest emphasizing the interaction between multiple layers of gender, ambiguities and paradoxes. Paradoxes – such as the paradox of transparency or the support paradox – do not only enable me to reveal how gender in organizations is practiced, but they could be used as a political tool to contest and change gender inequality in organizations. An analysis in terms of paradoxes highlights the ambiguous and contradictory nature of how gender is practiced, leaving room for the individual agency of women (and men) reproducing as well as challenging and changing gender relations and practices in organizations. Moreover, it enables me to uncover multiple forms of masculinities and femininities and explore the fluidity of gender identity further (Linstead & Brewis, 2004). Finally, it may also help me to disrupt the hierarchical nature of the gender binary, because it allows for a constant reflection on ambiguity and contradictions in theorizing as well as in practice. In other words, paradoxes combine analytical and political purposes and indeed represent fertile ground for future research. The next section will elaborate further on the contributions of this research to the societal debate.

### 7.3 Contributions to the societal debate

The results of this research contribute to our understanding of the under-representation of women, shed light on the effectiveness of current policies and give some clues about how the existing academic gender order could be challenged. The contributions to the societal debate are threefold: the shortcomings of current policies are exposed, our understanding of the persistence of gender inequality is improved and potential routes to change are opened up by reflecting on influential gender practices.

#### Shortcomings current policies

Due to the presence of female under-representation on the agenda of policy-makers, the percentage of female professors increased from 6 percent in 1999 to 11 percent in 2007 (WOPI, 2007). Recent policies have at least had a positive effect, but this attention needs to be actively sustained through further policy measures if this positive trend is to be accelerated. Chapter 2 showed that most of the policies and actions implemented by the government, universities and funding organizations have focused on special funding for women or measures to equip women to compete with men. Such measures include mentoring and coaching or the establishment of special women's chairs or tenure track positions to give women the chance of raising their profile and 'proving' themselves. These interventions often

derive from liberal feminist theories, which focus on the barriers women encounter in organizations and focus their solutions on women (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). Although, these interventions often result in significant and necessary changes in organizations, they are "not sufficient to disrupt the pervasive and deeply entrenched imbalance of power in the social relations between men and women" (Ely & Meyerson, 2000, p.589). Structural change within organizations themselves is not attempted. If we really want to bring about change, the system itself must change and gender must be practiced differently. Academics ought therefore to reflect on why these gender imbalances persist in higher positions, how they come about and who is benefiting from keeping them in place. More structural action should include interventions that disrupt the gender order and "the way we do things here". Such changes from within the system may be more effective in the long run. Male and female academics as well as university administrators need to be prepared to invest in the future. Reflecting on the power of cultural images could prove an important strategy to optimize appointment practices. In the next section, the findings of this research will be used to provide clues as to how the selection process can be made more effective. The following challenges need to be addressed if real progress is to be made in achieving gender equality in science.

#### Reflect on current practices

By opening the black box of the academic evaluation system and revealing the subtle gender mechanisms at work, potential routes to change become apparent. Gender practices and how they are integrated into organization practices can serve as a starting point to challenge how academic life is organized on a daily basis and could serve as a framework to further improve and professionalize universities' recruitment and selection. Changing these practices will not be easy, especially if careful thought is not given to how they impact on gender inequality measures.

#### *Awareness of the power of the gatekeepers and their construction of excellence*

Training male and female gatekeepers to function as agents of change to overcome stereotypical thinking on gender would provide a starting point. Agents in the recruitment and selection process should adopt a more critical stance towards knowledge and ideas which are taken for granted – about the hegemonic notion of the female scholar in the Netherlands, for instance. Stereotypical images of excellence, masculinity and femininity can mean that female talent goes to waste ('false negative') but also to the over-representation of male talent ('false positive'). Both situations are unproductive in terms of development of the sciences. Assessors and gatekeepers should be made aware of how they interpret differences in

presentational style between men and women: do they allow themselves to be impressed by masculine displays of self-confidence and do they look beyond the quieter, more hesitant presentation of women? Knowledge of stereotyping and unintentional gender practices is essential for good selection processes. Assessors and gatekeepers could be trained to be more aware of these potential differences, to reflect on them and be more aware of how they influence their assessments. A greater understanding of stereotyping, tokenism (Kanter, 1977a) and other forms of bias would lead towards more transparency and an adequate appointments process. In other words, the existing rules of the game need to be questioned and transformed. Reflecting on cultural stereotypical images can be an important strategy in optimizing selection and evaluation outcomes. It is therefore advisable to have a critical reflection on the socially constructed nature of 'excellence'. The universities have a duty to reflect on the unintentional effects of their selection procedures: What talent remains hidden and unexploited? What barriers do talented women and other 'outsiders' or newcomers face?

Gatekeepers should also reflect on the consequences of the scouting system. Candidates who best correspond to current norms and values are invited more often. Elite academics often select candidates congruent with their own personal and scientific preferences. The wish to 'clone' (Essed, 2004) oneself is understandable, and has some merit, but may not serve the long-term interests of science. Diverse perspectives can and do add value to science. Gatekeepers search for talents in their networks and invite 'appropriate' candidates and consequently it is not necessarily the best academic, but the most suitable or the one most similar to the recruiters who is selected. I have seen that candidates are generally not allowed to disrupt the status quo, and yet at the same time a strong urge for innovation is asked of the candidates. It seems questionable whether 'more of the same' advances creative and innovative science.

#### *Accountability and transparency*

Accountability and transparency are seen as tools to promote gender equality in higher education but this is dependent on these measures being properly implemented and micropolitics being taken into account. It has been demonstrated that transparency and accountability policies encounter considerable resistance due to the perception of increased bureaucracy. Focusing on professionalization could help counter resistance towards gender-related policies since they are often seen as outdated. Continuing to professionalize appointment committees, such as training one or more of the members, can contribute to the quality of the selection process.

The assessment of procedures for unintended effects on women is another important element in continuing to improve recruitment and selection procedures.

This means that a training course for some committee members – preferably the chair – would enhance the transparency of the selection process. Attention could be paid to the sex ratio in the pool of academic potential, the positive gender effect of a gender-balanced committee and reflection on definitions of quality. Universities that have already formulated gender-neutral recruitment and selection protocols can be pioneers in this regard.

Finally, the most important issue concerning transparency and accountability is solid support of these policies on university boards. This study has shown that transparency policies have hardly been implemented, and only through greater pressure from the boards and deans can these policies be made more effective.

#### *Recognizing of diversity in the subfields*

Academic policy and academics need to realize that academic subfields are gendered differently and that tackling the under-representation of women requires a variety of measures, tailored to the specific discipline or subfield. Based on the data in this research, the implementation of very general policy measures targeted at academia as a whole would not be the only or best way to achieve a gender-balanced workforce in the upper echelons of the universities. Measures that take the differences between disciplines into account would appear to be more promising in the long run. The academic context is not the same in every discipline and subfield, which means that demands on organizational processes and candidates vary. Each of these subfields involves specific difficulties for women. In addition to these general points, I would like to suggest some specific recommendations for the different subfields.

In the humanities, women drop out during every phase of recruitment and selection. Although they have the right amount of professional capital, they lose out during the selection process. Female academics often lack the support of senior academics in influential positions which can serve mentors, teaching them how to 'play the game' in this political environment. A good mentor learns the codes and opens up networks.

In the natural sciences relatively plentiful financial resources are available, there is strong international competition, and selection is based on which candidate has the longest publication list and the highest citation scores. Women need social networks that accelerate their professional capital, which is extremely important in this field. This is particularly relevant in relation to careful career management. To limit the damage to their careers, it is important to keep people in part-time positions at the heart of faculty activity – that is to guarantee their research time.



The subfield of medical sciences is characterized by a high risk of social failure and fairly plentiful funding. Candidates are judged on their ability to manage a competitive and stressful combination of science and medical care. Female talent has to be scouted more extensively. Gatekeepers must be aware that female talent is available and women (including mothers) can harbor the same ambitions as their male counterparts. They should not be overlooked simply because existing senior academics hold a paternalistic view that combining a career with family responsibilities is too hard for women.

#### 7.4 Limitations and suggestions for further research

This study has focused on the role of gender in recruitment and selection in order to understand gender segregation in academia. By focusing primarily on gender, the possibility exists that other sources of inequality are neglected. Gender practices do not occur in isolation, but are closely linked to other forms of social inequality that could be relevant in this respect, such as inequality based on ethnicity, social class, age and sexuality. Gender is an especially useful concept to 'think' the ways inequality can come about and a good starting point to find out how various social inequalities not only intersect, but actually constitute each other. More categories could be taken into account when studying the appointment practices. However, these other social inequalities were not explicitly considered as research topics in this study due to its focus on the complexity of gender practices. For future research, it would be interesting to further develop the use of the concept of intersectionality in academic appointment practices. The concept of intersectionality was developed to stress the importance of simultaneous categories of oppression that constitute differences in power (Crenshaw, 1997). Intersectionality reveals the complexity of lived experiences and the actions of marginalized groups at neglected points of intersection (McCall, 2005). Intersectionality could add an extra layer to our understanding of the complex processes by which changes in social inequality occur. As I argued that different gender practices are integrated into organizational practices, they are most likely to intersect with other forms of social categories. Czarniaswka and Sévon (2008), for example, showed how being identified with two different categories 'woman' and 'stranger/foreigner' is not a cumulative disadvantage, but that these two categories can cancel one another out, giving these 'double strangers' a greater degree of success than native women academics. This may mean that by being an 'exotic' foreigner, their female identity is overlooked since it does not correspond to the local standard of femininity. It would be interesting to investigate this phenomenon in the Dutch academic context: if the powerful hegemonic image of the Dutch academic scholar is taken into account,

foreign professors could be less imposed by this burden. Indications might be the large number of international female professors hired in the natural sciences in the Netherlands, a subfield with a traditional masculine career path.

Another social category which merits further exploration is age – for instance, the difference in the amount of experience of younger female professors and women who reach the professorship at a later stage in their lives. Chapter 5 showed that male and female candidates can have the same amount of experience, but that women are disadvantaged because they are generally older when they reach that level of experience.

Bronwyn Davies (1989) stresses that the social construction of gender is not only a cognitive process: it is also the bodily awareness of masculinity and femininity through practices (see also Butler, 1992). Practicing gender has both discursive (speech-acts) and non-discursive (bodily-acts and appearances) elements and it is generally directed towards the reproduction and normalization of stereotypical differences between men and women. In this research, the bodily appearance of male and female candidates was mentioned in some interviews, but issues concerning bodily messages and interpretation of the body were not explicitly addressed. This is not only interesting in the abilities to read each other's body language but also in the domain of sexuality and heteronormativity (Jackson, 2003). Considering the crucial importance of being included in informal academic networks, issues concerning heterosexual tensions and the role of homosexuality would be interesting research angles.

Future research could also involve a cross-cultural comparison of appointment practices, such as a comparison with the American tenure track model. In the Netherlands, upward mobility depends not only on the individual merits of an academic, but also on the available positions (*formatiebeginsel*). Tenure track offers young academics the possibility to climb to more senior positions more easily if they perform suitably well. Recently, university boards in the Netherlands have been discussing and experimenting with the tenure track system. However, since only a limited number of talented academics are admitted to the tenure track system, it is not clear whether it would impact on gender relations in academia. Nevertheless, the introduction of the tenure track system is often seen as one option for appointing more female professors in the Netherlands (van Balen, 2001). In the USA, the tenure track system is the principal academic career system. It would be interesting to investigate this system from within, and discuss the daily experiences of male and female academics. By investigating the gendered consequences of this system, we might understand whether implementing the system in the Netherlands would produce advantages.

Other international comparative studies on different appointment systems could also be fruitful, particularly including countries which have larger numbers of female professors such as Finland, Portugal or Turkey. Van Balen (2001) already gives some clues that cultural differences in the status of the profession, the academic system and government policies affect the upward mobility of female academics. Husu (2000) and De Milliano (2005) have used data from the Finnish appointments system to demonstrate the existence of a different way of recruiting the academic elite: more open, and with less internal assessments. Although Husu (2001) emphasizes the 'false' image of Finland as paradise of gender equality, it would be interesting to compare the Finnish way of recruitment with the Dutch situation more closely because both countries have different gender regimes (Walby, 2004). Different countries also have varying culturally bounded gender stereotypes.

The research methodology of this dissertation was confined to general statements of recent appointment procedures. Although I sought to keep the information as detailed as possible, I did not have an overview of some appointment cases that I could consider from multiple points of views. So, in addition to the current extensive research study, some case studies and the research method of participant observation could be added to this research. In this way, an even better view of micropolitics by committee members could be obtained, and decisions could be analyzed from different points of view.

However, more research is needed into the various practices of social inequality which reproduce or reinforce an unequal distribution of power, or practices that resist and counteract equality measures. Conducting these studies in countries with different gender regimes and stereotypes will make more knowledge available to reflect on mechanisms of equality. If the academic system is to remain successful in the future, it needs to address a wider range of talents, including at the highest levels. It is not only women who will benefit from that.

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# Nederlandse samenvatting

Dit proefschrift gaat over de wijze waarop de meest invloedrijke wetenschappers worden benoemd. Het bestuderen van benoemingspraktijken van hoogleraren vergroot de kennis over het academische evaluatiesysteem en geeft een verklaring voor de langzame toename van gendergelijkheid in de hoogste functies aan Nederlandse universiteiten. Benoemingen van hoogleraren worden beschouwd als cruciale gebeurtenissen in de reproductie van genderongelijkheid in academische organisaties. Hoogleraarposities vormen immers een toegangspoort tot de machtige posities die de standaarden van het academische veld organiseren, inclusief de huidige constructies van wetenschappelijke kwaliteit. Ondanks het feit dat diverse universiteiten, de overheid en tweede geldstroom financiers als NWO de laatste jaren extra geld vrij hebben gemaakt voor stimuleringsbeleid voor vrouwelijke wetenschappers, verloopt de doorstroom van vrouwen naar hogere functies via reguliere procedures zeer moeizaam. Met elf procent vrouwelijke hoogleraren behoort Nederland tot de hekkensluiters van Europa; alleen Duitsland, België en Malta laten we achter ons (She figures, 2006; WOPI, 2007).

Al enige tijd wordt onderzoek verricht naar de oorzaken van het lage aantal vrouwen in hogere posities aan Nederlandse universiteiten (o.a. Portegijs & Brugman, 1998; Noordenbos, 1999; Brouns, 2000; Dekker, 2000; AWT, 2002; Bosch, 2002) en ook aan buitenlandse universiteiten (o.a. Valian, 1998; MIT, 1999; Schiebinger, 1999; Husu, 2001; Rees, 2002). Hoewel we steeds beter zicht krijgen op de individuele, structurele en culturele elementen die de stelselmatige uitval van vrouwen in de academische loopbaan veroorzaken, is er weinig bekend over de processen die spelen bij de hoogleraarbenoemingen en dus bij de laatste toegangspoort van het wetenschappelijke carrièrepad. Hoe verloopt de zoektocht naar



kandidaten, wie zijn daarbij betrokken en welke criteria worden hierbij gehanteerd? Dit onderzoek heeft de ambitie deze black box iets te openen en aanbevelingen aan te reiken voor een genderneutrale werving- en selectie aan universiteiten. Hoofdvraag van dit proefschrift luidt: Welke genderpraktijken zijn verknoot met de werving en selectie van hoogleraren in het Nederlandse academische veld?

Dit onderzoek heeft een unieke mogelijkheid geboden om een kijkje te nemen achter de schermen van de wetenschap. Traditioneel ligt de nadruk bij het bespreken van benoemingsprocedures op het meritocratische principe waarbij talent zich uiteindelijk zal bewijzen en wetenschappelijk kwaliteit vanzelf bovenkomt. Selectie wordt gezien als een opeenvolging van voorgeschreven stappen die gevolgd moeten worden voor een beslissing genomen kan worden. Met betrekking tot de doorstroom van vrouwen naar topposities is men van mening dat de jaren van achterstand voorbij zijn vanwege de positieve actiemaatregelen voor vrouwen die langs deze weg een inhaalslag hebben kunnen maken. Dit discours is sterk en wordt gedeeld door zowel beleidsmakers, bestuurders, wetenschappelijke staf als vrouwelijke kandidaten.

Dit onderzoek heeft aangetoond dat dit discours van gendergelijkheid aan de universiteit niet altijd in overeenstemming is met de complexe dagelijkse praktijk. Hiervoor heb ik een multidisciplinaire benadering ontwikkeld uitgaande van inzichten en concepten uit drie academische disciplines: wetenschapsstudies, organisatiestudies en genderstudies. Deze benadering bouwt voort op het sociaal constructivistisch feminisme (Lorber, 2005), waarin een genderanalyse draait om het bekijken van sociale praktijken waarin betekenissen van vrouwelijkheid en mannelijkheid impliciet of expliciet een rol spelen. Dit proefschrift heeft verschillende verschijningsvormen laten zien waarin gender zich manifesteert in academische benoemingspraktijken van hoogleraren. Deze praktijken zijn de implementatie van transparantie- en emancipatiebeleid, het zoeken naar en identificeren van talentvolle kandidaten (gatekeeping), en de constructie van wetenschappelijke kwaliteit.

Om deze genderpraktijken te laten zien, zijn meerdere deelstudies verricht. De eerste studie bestaat uit een cijferanalyse van nieuw benoemde hoogleraren aan 13 Nederlandse universiteiten in de periode 1999-2005. De tweede studie bevat een inhoudsanalyse van 971 benoemingsrapporten van zeven Nederlandse universiteiten. Gegevens zijn verzameld omtrent het aantal mannelijke en vrouwelijke kandidaten, de samenstelling van de benoemingsadviescommissie alsmede gegevens omtrent het type werving en type leerstoel. Door middel van statistische analyse is inzicht verkregen in het percentage succesvolle sollicitaties van mannen en vrouwen en kenmerken van benoemde hoogleraren in

de periode 1999-2003. In de derde studie is gekozen voor een verdieping van een beperkt aantal casussen uit vier wetenschappelijke gebieden (alfa, bèta, gamma, medisch). In totaal zijn 64 interviews gehouden met leden van benoemingsadviescommissies (vice-decaan, voorzitter, personeelsadviseur/ambtelijk secretaris, mannelijke en vrouwelijke leden). Alle geïnterviewden is gevraagd een beschrijving te geven van hun ervaringen in het benoemingsproces. Belangrijke onderwerpen waren de wijze van rekruteren (open versus gesloten), het informele zoekproces, de selectiecriteria, en de samenstelling van de profielschets.

Uit mijn analyses blijkt dat er voldoende mobiliteit is om nieuwe generaties wetenschappers te laten doorstromen naar topposities; in de periode 1999-2005 werden 3.322 nieuwe hoogleraren benoemd, onder wie gemiddeld 12 procent vrouwen. Hoewel dit minder is dan verwacht mag worden op basis van langjarige trends onder promovendi en het aandeel vrouwen op lagere posities in de wetenschappelijke staf (UHD's en UD's), kunnen we ook constateren dat er duidelijk sprake is van een positieve trend. In de periode 1999 tot 2005 is het percentage vrouwen onder nieuw benoemde hoogleraren opgelopen van 7 procent naar 14 procent. Echter, in de alfa, gamma en medische discipline wordt nog een groot vrouwelijk potentieel onbenut gelaten (hoofdstuk 2).

#### Transparantie, accountability en gendergelijkheid

Mijn analyses laten zien op welke wijze universiteiten omgaan met de roep om transparante procedures, die volgens voorgaand onderzoek (Allen, 1988; van Balen, 2001; Rees, 2004; EU, 2008) nodig zijn om meer vrouwelijke hoogleraren te kunnen benoemen (hoofdstuk 3). De roep om transparantie en accountability wordt door universiteiten hoofdzakelijk beantwoord door het instellen van werving- en selectieprotocollen. Deze protocollen bieden richtlijnen en checklists voor de te volgen procedure en geven aan welke stappen door betrokkenen gevolgd moeten worden. Slechts enkele protocollen bevatten referenties naar gendergelijkheid, zoals het expliciet zoeken naar vrouwelijke kandidaten en het opnemen van ten minste één vrouwelijk lid in de benoemingscommissie. In de praktijk worden deze protocollen echter nauwelijks gehanteerd. De interviews met commissieleden bevatten vele concrete voorbeelden van flexibele interpretaties van de regels en richtlijnen. Deze worden vrij eenvoudig terzijde geschoven wanneer snelle beslissingen gemaakt moeten worden om een 'excellente' kandidaat te behouden. Het hoge percentage gesloten benoemingen (64%) wijkt af van het formele beleid dat uitgaat van open werving. Tevens bestond bijna de helft van de commissies (44%) alleen uit mannen, terwijl uit mijn onderzoek blijkt dat in commissies met

vrouwelijke commissieleden ook meer vrouwelijke hoogleraren worden benoemd. De gebrekkige naleving van de werving- en selectieprotocollen kan worden verklaard uit de weerstand tegen meer bureaucratie en het beroep op het meritocratische principe. De protocollen blijven een papieren tijgerin wanneer universiteitsbesturen geen druk uitoefenen op of consequenties verbinden aan de naleving van de protocollen. In de meest extreme gevallen werkten de beleidsmaatregelen zelfs contraproductief; commissieleden gebruiken micropolitieke technieken en strategieën om transparantie te 'faken' terwijl ze het systeem naar hun hand zetten.

Naast het feit dat beleidsmaatregelen inzake transparantie, accountability en gendergelijkheid nauwelijks zijn geïmplementeerd, kunnen sommige elementen in het benoemingsproces moeilijk geformaliseerd of transparant gemaakt worden. Micropolitiek is de realiteit: iedere speler in het proces heeft een eigen agenda welke kan interfereren met het doel om openheid te creëren en de procedures te formaliseren. Het benoemingsproces is een mix van strikte regelgeving en een meer subtiel en plooibaar proces rond personen, criteria en reputaties in een politieke arena. Micropolitieke processen doen afbreuk aan de pogingen om genderpraktijken bloot te leggen. De pogingen zouden echter meer vruchten afwerpen als meer consequenties worden genomen wanneer beleid door betrokkenen niet op de juiste wijze wordt uitgevoerd, en commissieleden meer rekenschap moeten afleggen voor de genomen beslissingen.

#### Genderpraktijken in de werving

Het vierde hoofdstuk richtte zich op genderpraktijken in een specifieke fase in het benoemingsproces: het zoeken en identificeren van potentiële kandidaten. Een groot deel van de hoogleraren (64%) wordt geworven in gesloten procedures via (in)formele netwerken door zogenaamde scouts. Volgens respondenten is scouten noodzakelijk om in een concurrerende omgeving excellente wetenschappers aan te trekken. Scouts zijn academici op invloedrijke posities die betrokken zijn bij het besluitvormingsproces en het actief identificeren en uitnodigen van kandidaten. Zij bekleden een gatekeeping positie aangezien zij bepalen welke kandidaten worden genomineerd en welke uitgesloten blijven; ze controleren de informatiestromen en toegang tot de vacante posities. Maar gatekeepers beïnvloeden ook de instandhouding of (re)productie van genderongelijkheid. Ik onderscheid drie genderpraktijken die voornamelijk negatief uitwerken voor vrouwelijke kandidaten, en één praktijk die gendergelijkheid bevordert.

De eerste praktijk heeft betrekking op homogene mannelijke netwerken van scouts. Vanwege de ondervertegenwoordiging van vrouwen op hogere academische posities zijn scouts overwegend mannen, die hun wervingsbeslissingen

in hoge mate baseren op gepercipieerde gelijkheid. Nominatie op basis van similarity is een belangrijk aspect tijdens het benoemingsproces; commissieleden zijn vanwege onzekerheidsreductie op zoek naar mensen die ze kennen en waarin ze vertrouwen hebben. Vrouwen maken minder deel uit van de (in)formele netwerken van scouts, worden gezien als 'nieuw fenomeen', als minder voorspelbaar en meer risicovol. Ten tweede is er sprake van een incomplete zoekactie. Doordat slechts enkele gatekeepers binnen hun eigen homogene netwerk zoeken, is de kans aanzienlijk dat kandidaten buiten de netwerken over het hoofd worden gezien. Dit geldt voornamelijk voor academici op de grensvlakken van disciplines en voor opkomend talent direct onder het niveau van hoogleraar. Ten derde trekken mannen meer profijt van de masculiene support netwerken die kandidaten helpen om zichtbaar te worden of zichtbaar gemaakt te worden. Vrouwen zouden zich te weinig in de juiste netwerken begeven en onvoldoende zichtbaar zijn in besturen en commissies, waardoor ze ook onzichtbaar blijven in de netwerken van gatekeepers voor hoogleraarposities. Deze drie genderpraktijken zijn onbewuste mechanismen die leiden tot een kloon-cultuur in academische benoemingen en blijven in hoge mate onbereflecteerd.

Echter, gatekeepers hebben een duale functie. Aan de ene kant zorgen zij voor uitsluiting, en aan de andere kant bieden zij kansen en faciliteren insluiting. Als invloedrijke scouts zich sterk maken voor het vinden en benoemen van vrouwelijke hoogleraren, kan het scout systeem ook voor vrouwelijke kandidaten uitkomst bieden. In gesloten wervingen wordt ook vrouwelijk talent gescout en direct benoemd, bijvoorbeeld via persoonsgebonden leerstoelen. Hoewel vrouwen dus ook voordeel kunnen halen uit de huidige wijze van rekruteren, is de vraag of deze voordelen opwegen tegen de nadelen. De oprichting van speciale leerstoelen of programma's voor vrouwen is niet voldoende om de onevenwichtige samenstelling in de hoogste regionen van de universiteit op te lossen. De 'reguliere' route naar de top bevat nog steeds obstakels in de vorm van moeilijk toegankelijke netwerken van gatekeepers. Het reflecteren op en aanpakken van de cultuur in deze reguliere procedures, waar mannelijke homogene netwerken en support systemen onbewust verantwoordelijk zijn voor de genderongelijkheid, is daarom essentieel. Anders blijft de benoeming van vrouwen op speciale leerstoelen een tijdelijke oplossing en kan het zelfs leiden tot een apart benoemingsspoor voor vrouwen.

#### De constructie van wetenschappelijke excellentie

Genderpraktijken zijn ook te ontdekken in de constructie en beoordeling van wetenschappelijke kwaliteit en excellentie (hoofdstuk 5). Om het begrip 'excellentie' te analyseren, heb ik gebruik gemaakt van het concept symbolisch kapitaal

van Bourdieu (1986; 2004). Excellentie wordt gezien als een vorm van symbolisch kapitaal omdat het aangeeft wat in het academische veld als het meest waardevol wordt gezien en de hoogste status geeft. Het symbolisch kapitaal van excellentie kent drie pijlers: het professioneel kapitaal - ervaring op het gebied van onderwijs, onderzoek, bestuur en praktijkervaring - , het individueel kapitaal - o.a. persoonlijkheid, gedragskenmerken, inzet en motivatie - en het sociaal kapitaal - sociale netwerken, informatie en sociale support. De selectiebeslissingen zijn voornamelijk gebaseerd op het professioneel kapitaal van een kandidaat dat is ingebed in andere relevante criteria rond individueel en sociaal kapitaal. Mijn analyse laat zien dat het kapitaal van mannelijke wetenschappers systematisch als meer legitiem wordt gezien, en meer symbolisch kapitaal genereert dan het kapitaal van vrouwelijke wetenschappers.

Het professioneel kapitaal dat wordt vereist heeft betrekking op publicatielijst, werfkracht en andere vormen van professionele erkenning (prijzen, stipendia). Wetenschappers met een (omvangrijke) deeltijdaanstelling of tijdelijke contracten zijn met name bij de lengte van de publicatielijst in het nadeel. In de meeste gevallen zijn commissieleden niet bereid om rekening te houden met deeltijdwerk of loopbaanonderbreking bij het hanteren van de strikte output-criteria. Deze normering heeft dus een onbedoeld gendereffect. Tegen de achtergrond van het gegeven dat deeltijdwerk veelal ten koste gaat van de onderzoekstijd kan de beschikbaarheid in termen van tijd een doorslaggevende factor zijn in het carrièreverloop.

Hoewel het niet officieel deel uitmaakt van de criteria in de profielschets, vormt het individueel kapitaal van een kandidaat een belangrijk criterium voor selectie. Het heeft te maken met 'het niet verstoren van de status quo', 'niet te bescheiden zijn of te moeilijk' en een 'klik' tussen de kandidaat en de commissie. Beeldvorming over het verschil in inzet, motivatie en ambitie tussen vrouwen en mannen keert regelmatig terug in de interviews. Het stereotype beeld van de 'Nederlandse vrouwelijke academicus' is een part-time werkende, met zorgtaken belaste vrouw die de ambitie ontbreekt om een hogere positie te bekleden, die moeite heeft om leiding te geven en zichzelf te bescheiden en voorzichtig presenteert. Hoewel uit de praktijk blijkt dat vrouwelijke hoogleraren dezelfde hoeveelheid uren maken en hun prestaties kenbaar maken, blijft dit beeld hardnekkig, waardoor ze gepercipieerd worden als minder ambitieus dan mannen. Bovendien zijn de dominante leiderschapsstijlen sterk geënt op een gedragsrepertoire dat traditioneel meer aan mannen wordt toegeschreven.

Door de opmars van het scout systeem is het sociaal kapitaal van doorslaggevend belang geworden voor kandidaten om te worden voorgedragen voor een hoogleraarpositie. Een uitgebreid netwerk vergroot de kansen dat geraad-

pleegde wetenschappers met de naam van een potentiële kandidaat naar voren komen. Dit vergt niet alleen een uitgebreid netwerk, maar ook zichtbaarheid en gearticuleerde ambitie bij de invloedrijke wetenschappers in dit netwerk. Vanwege de uitsluitingmechanismen van informele masculiene netwerken, zijn vrouwen in mindere mate geïnformeerd over vacatures, impliciete en expliciete eisen en krijgen ze minder aanbevelingen van invloedrijke wetenschappers.

Niet alleen de optelsom van deze drie kapitaalvormen - professioneel, individueel en sociaal - leidt tot genderongelijkheid in benoemingen, ook de toeschrijving van symbolisch kapitaal in zijn geheel heeft een gendereffect. Over het algemeen krijgen mannen eerder de status van 'excellent' toegeschreven, iets dat wijst op dubbele standaarden in de beoordeling van mannelijke en vrouwelijke kandidaten. Een analyse van benoemingsrapporten liet zien dat de standaarden hoog worden gehouden voor vrouwelijke kandidaten, die schapen met vijf poten moeten zijn om iedere verdenking van positieve actie te vermijden. Het is onrealistisch om aan te nemen dat alle 3.322 hoogleraren excellent zijn op alle fronten, en uitzonderingen bleken ook vaak voor mannelijke kandidaten te worden gemaakt. De data geven verschillende voorbeelden van mannen die niet excelleerden op alle fronten, terwijl vrouwen werden afgewezen omdat ze niet uitmuntend waren op alle punten. Het discours van excellentie wordt als het ware in de praktijk voor mannen een vorm van geschiktheid, terwijl vrouwen excellent moeten blijven.

#### Genderpraktijken in wetenschappelijke disciplines

De academische context varieert tussen vakgebieden en disciplines, verschillen betreffen bijvoorbeeld de toegang tot additionele geldstromen, de hoeveelheid beschikbaar personeel, de interne culturen en het takenpakket. Drie wetenschapsgebieden zijn onderzocht die variëren met betrekking tot de inrichting van het benoemingsproces, het vereiste kapitaal van de kandidaat en genderpraktijken in deze procedures. Ik heb drie genderpraktijken onderscheiden: de ideologie van de meritocratie (alfawetenschappen), de ideale wetenschapper (natuurwetenschappen), en vrouwen als 'de Ander' (medische wetenschappen).

Ondanks het feit dat vrouwelijke kandidaten in de alfawetenschappen in elke carrière-stap onevenredig uit het systeem vallen, is de meerderheid van de respondenten ervan overtuigd dat gender geen rol speelt in benoemingen en evaluaties. Echter, het verschil tussen vrouwelijk potentieel (26%) en het percentage vrouwelijke hoogleraren dat is benoemd (17%) is substantieel. De ideologie van meritocratie verhult deze genderpraktijken: het enige dat telt is wetenschappelijke kwaliteit en gender doet er niet toe. Echter, de omgeving is zeer politiek en wetenschappelijke kwaliteit laat zich uitermate moeilijk objectiveren. Dat maakt

beslissen op basis van merites nauwelijks mogelijk. In de alfawetenschappen bestaat nauwelijks consensus over een betrouwbaar systeem voor de beoordeling van wetenschappelijke kwaliteit, hetgeen zorgt voor veel discussie over de constructie van de excellente wetenschapper en de te hanteren criteria. Voorgedragen kandidaten moeten tactisch en strategisch kunnen opereren, de juiste connecties hebben, de subtiele regels van het spel kennen, en binnen de cultuur van de groep passen. Verwantschap met de huidige traditionele, masculiene elite leidt tot een hogere kans om benoemd te worden op basis van het meester-gezel systeem. Vrouwelijke kandidaten verliezen de competitie gedurende het gehele benoemingsproces; bij het uitnodigen van kandidaten, tijdens de eerste selectie en met name tijdens de interviewfase wanneer oordelen worden geveld over welke persoonlijkheid het beste bij de cultuur van de afdeling past. Vrouwen hebben meer succes in nieuwe disciplines zoals media en technologie of visuele antropologie die minder worden gekenmerkt door een traditionele academische cultuur.

De kleinste discrepantie tussen het vrouwelijk potentieel en het aantal benoemde vrouwelijke hoogleraren is te vinden in de bètawetenschappen. Dit komt overeen met de, over het algemeen, positieve houding ten opzichte van vrouwen en aandacht voor emancipatiekwesities in dit vakgebied. Vrouwelijke kandidaten worden vaker op de shortlist geplaatst dan verwacht kan worden op basis van hun percentage onder sollicitanten. Echter, de kans dat vrouwen op de shortlist uiteindelijk benoemd worden, is substantieel lager dan die van mannen en respondenten wijten dit aan het (gepercipieerde) gebrek aan professioneel kapitaal. Vrouwen zijn in het nadeel aangezien de evaluatie van professioneel kapitaal geen gelijke uitgangspunten kent. Wetenschappers die niet het traditionele carrièrepad volgen, lopen de kans dat ze te weinig professioneel kapitaal opbouwen en daardoor niet als excellent worden bestempeld. Hierbij moeten twee kanttekeningen worden gemaakt. Ten eerste zijn vrouwen gemiddeld ouder op hun publicatiepiek waardoor ze vanwege leeftijd vaak de competitie met mannen verliezen en ten tweede hebben vrouwen in dit door mannen gedomineerde veld last van genderstereotypen (zie hoofdstuk 5). Hier treden de dubbele standaarden in werking waardoor vrouwen om excellent gevonden te worden beter moeten presteren, meer inzet moeten tonen en een beter cv moeten hebben.

Nergens lekt de pijn zo hard als in de medische wetenschappen. Ondanks een substantieel vrouwelijk potentieel (22%), bestaat het percentage benoemde vrouwelijke hoogleraren slechts uit negen procent. De redenering dat vrouwen niet solliciteren voor hoogleraarposities kan worden weerlegd, aangezien 77 procent van de hoogleraren is benoemd via gesloten netwerken, en dus is uitgenodigd om te solliciteren. De analyse van het interviewmateriaal laat zien dat een groot gedeelte van het vrouwelijk talent niet wordt herkend. De medische

wetenschappen worden getypeerd door een hoog maatschappelijk afbreukrisico en relatief veel middelen. Kandidaten worden beoordeeld op hun vermogen leiding te geven aan een competitieve en stressvolle praktijk van wetenschap en medische zorg. Vrouwen worden niet als vanzelfsprekende keuzes beschouwd voor hoogleraarposities en sommige mannelijke respondenten denken zelfs dat het teveel gevraagd is van een vrouw. Beeldvorming omtrent vrouwelijke wetenschappers kan leiden tot twijfels bij commissieleden omtrent de loyaliteit en inzet van vrouwen voor het beroep. Hetzelfde geldt voor het traditionele masculiene type leiderschapsstijl dat men prefereert; waardoor vrouwen soms minder geschikt geacht worden voor een positie als afdelingshoofd of hoogleraar.

De inzichten in de verschillende genderpraktijken in academische disciplines laten zien dat gender verschillende verschijningsvormen aanneemt in variërende omgevingen, dat de genderproblematiek situationeel en contextafhankelijk is, en dat beleid moet worden afgestemd op de specifieke context om effect te genereren.

#### Maatschappelijke en wetenschappelijke bijdrage

Dit proefschrift combineert en confronteert inzichten uit verschillende wetenschappelijke disciplines en draagt daardoor bij aan organisatie- en wetenschapsstudies en aan genderstudies. Door een genderperspectief te hanteren in organisatie- en wetenschapsstudies is het allereerst mogelijk om ogenschijnlijke neutrale organisatieprocessen te onthullen als genderpraktijken. Door gender te operationaliseren als een praktijk waarin gender gedaan wordt, krijgen we meer inzicht in de wijze waarop organisatieprocessen verknoopt zijn met beelden van mannelijkheid en vrouwelijkheid. Deze studie levert vooral een bijdrage aan de inzichten over de werking van netwerken in organisaties door te kijken naar hoe gender in netwerken wordt gedaan. Netwerkstudies laten substantiële verschillen tussen mannen en vrouwen zien, zowel in de structuren als in de effecten van netwerken (Smith-Lovin & McPherson, 1993; Ibarra, 1997; van Emmerik, 2005), maar bieden nauwelijks zicht op hoe deze verschillen tot stand komen en hoe ze gendergelijkheid kunnen bevorderen of tegenwerken. Het conceptualiseren van gender als een sociale praktijk heeft de mogelijkheid geboden om te kijken hoe academici zich gedragen in netwerken, en hoe dit netwerkgedrag verknoopt is met gender. Dit proefschrift heeft bovendien zowel de insluitende als de uitsluitende mechanismen van netwerken laten zien.

Ten tweede heb ik theorieën rond hegemoniale en informele machtprocessen geïntroduceerd in wetenschapsstudies. De meeste wetenschapsstudies beschouwen wetenschappelijke kwaliteit als een objectief, meritocratisch principe dat gender-

neutraal is. De formele en informele machtsprocessen die verweven zijn met benoemingspraktijken zijn in dit onderzoek zichtbaar gemaakt door middel van het concept micropolitiek. Dit concept refereert aan strategieën en technieken die door individuen en groepen worden gebruikt om hun belangen te behartigen (Hoyle, 1982; Morley, 2006). Dit perspectief heeft aangetoond dat benoemen niet alleen een technische activiteit is, maar ook een politiek proces waarin onderhandelingen plaatsvinden tussen verschillende actoren.

De 'practice turn' in gender-in-organisatie studies heeft belangrijke inzichten opgeleverd in empirisch en theoretisch opzicht (Poggio, 2006). Dit proefschrift heeft het inzicht opgeleverd dat een myriade van intentionele en onintentionele genderpraktijken is verknoopt met organisatieprocessen, die elkaar versterken, afzwakken of bestrijden in verschillende situaties en variërende contexten. Genderpraktijken die leiden tot gendergelijkheid (intentionele beleidsmaatregelen) of tot ongelijkheid (onintentionele genderstereotypen) lopen door elkaar. Hierdoor wordt duidelijk waardoor intentionele pogingen om gendergelijkheid te bereiken, stranden in nog sterkere (onbewuste) praktijken die verantwoordelijk zijn voor de productie en reproductie van genderongelijkheid aan universiteiten en organisaties.

Het maatschappelijke doel van dit onderzoek was het inzichtelijk maken van benoemingspraktijken en mogelijke oorzaken aandragen voor de lage vertegenwoordiging van vrouwen onder hoogleraren. Aanbevelingen liggen in eerste instantie op het reflecteren op genderpraktijken die op dit moment onbewust een rol spelen in academische benoemingen. Verder is een aantal concrete aanbevelingen gedaan in de vorm van het trainen van commissieleden, het bewust zoeken naar vrouwelijk talent, het (beter) implementeren van transparante procedures, het vergroten van de accountability van beslissers, en het rekening houden met verschillen tussen disciplines.

#### Tot slot

Over het algemeen kan ik concluderen dat er sprake is van impliciete mechanismen in benoemingsprocessen die consequenties hebben voor vrouwelijke kandidaten. In de meeste gevallen zijn het geen directe vormen van genderdiscriminatie, maar is er sprake van onbewuste mechanismen die het genderonderscheid aan de top van de universiteit reproduceren. Deze mechanismen werken als een soort macht van de vanzelfsprekendheid, een gedeelde en meestal onbereflecteerde opvatting van de werkelijkheid die het dagelijks leven in organisaties op effectieve wijze reguleren, zonder dat deze processen expliciet naar voren komen of openlijk worden waargenomen.

Streven naar benoeming van de besten aan de top van deze instellingen betekent een streven naar een evenredige vertegenwoordiging van mannen en vrouwen. Pas wanneer een kritische massa onder vrouwen is bereikt – en dat is al gebeurd onder studenten en aio's – kan sprake zijn van een werkelijk neutrale selectie, waarin de sekse van vrouwen net zo vanzelfsprekend is als de sekse van mannen. Talenten zijn niet beperkt tot één sekse, en er is een groeiend bewustzijn van de noodzaak om meer vrouwen te benoemen in besluitvormende en machtige posities in de wetenschappen. Het streven naar gender equality is onderdeel van het streven naar excellente wetenschap. Het zal in ieder geval bijdragen aan een aantrekkelijk en pluriform klimaat aan de Nederlandse universiteiten.

# Curriculum Vitae

Marieke van den Brink was born on 3 April 1978 in Bommel. She started studying communication studies at the Fontys University of Professional Education in Eindhoven in 1996. After graduating in 2000, she continued her education at the Free University of Amsterdam at the Department of Culture, Organization and Management. She wrote her Master's thesis on gender practices in the academic Earth Sciences study programme and obtained her MA degree in Social Sciences in 2003 cum laude. She subsequently became a researcher and junior lecturer at the Free University of Amsterdam where she conducted research on the upward mobility of female physicists in the Netherlands and supervised students writing their Master's thesis. From 2004 to 2006, she was employed at the University of Groningen to conduct research commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences in cooperation with program manager Dr. Margo Brouns. This results of this research were published in 2006 under the title 'Gender and Excellence'. In 2005 she was invited by Professor Martha Foschi as a visiting researcher at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver on the subject of double standards in academic evaluations.

Since 2006, she has been conducting her PhD research at the Radboud University Nijmegen at the Institute for Gender studies and the Nijmegen School of Management. While working on her dissertation, she has published several national and international articles in both scientific and popular journals, including *Employee Relations* (2006), the *Dutch Journal for Gender studies* (2007), *Gender Work and Organization* (2009) and organisation studies (forthcoming). She has also participated in a number of international conferences and workshops, including the Conference on Gender Equality on Higher Education (2005, 2007), *Gender, Work and Organization* (2005, 2007), European Group of Organization Studies (2006, 2008), and the Academy of Management Meeting (2008). She is editor of the *Dutch Journal of Gender Studies* and associate editor of the international journal 'Gender Work and Organization'.

In 2006, she was granted the 'Frye Stipendium', which is awarded to promising young female researchers to help further their scientific career. In 2008, she also received the Katrien van Munster stipendium, for the enhancement and recognition of the scientific career of female scientists. In 2009 she was awarded the research prize 'Praemium Erasmianum' in recognition of an extraordinary dissertation. She currently works at the Nijmegen School of Management as a post-doctoral researcher and is affiliated with the Institute for Gender studies at the same university.

