



**Doctoral School of
Sociology and
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THESIS SUMMARY

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**Gender equality in academic governance:
Organizational approaches and collective attitudes**

Doctoral Dissertation

Supervisors:

Dr. Henriett Primecz, PhD

Dr. Beáta Nagy, CSc

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Department of Sociology

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INTRODUCTION

International data shows that women's share in decision-making positions remains scarce (World Economic Forum, 2020), despite the adoption of diverse gender-equality approaches across the globe, ranging from non-compulsory organizational initiatives to affirmative actions, such as gender quotas. In Latin America and the Caribbean region, female enrollment in higher education and their subsequent participation in the labor force and in middle management has increased (Marchionni, et al., 2019). Nonetheless, their presence at governance boards still accounts for only thirteen (12.7) percent (Credit Suisse Research Institute, 2021).

Colombia represents a curious case ranking 22 out of 149 countries studied in the Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum, 2020) and being at the same level with Western Europe in terms of educational attainment and health and survival. Still, the country remains one of the most unequal in terms of political empowerment, economic participation and opportunity when compared to the average rankings of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2016).

This dissertation focuses on Colombian public universities, because they have one of the lowest female representations at boards despite being listed as organizations regulated by the national gender quota. To date, less than five (4.6) percent of all accredited universities in Colombia have a woman as rector, half of them in public universities (SNIES, 2020). Thus, public universities leadership is still male-dominated in Colombia (UNESCO-

IESALC, 2020). Furthermore, the structural complexity of universities, which combines a wide range of functions, services, funding sources, and regulatory regimes, turns them into an ideal context for comparative analyses. Not to mention the notorious mismatch between official reports indicating compliance with the quota versus diverging findings from empirical data (Solano Cahuana, in press). Thus, further assessments are needed to determine the actual state of affairs among these organizations.

Considering public universities' poor performance in terms of women's representation in decision-making positions, individuals' reluctance to go on record was anticipated. To overcome that limitation, this study concentrates on cases that have already achieved gender parity. This way, university actors might be more willing to discuss the performance and approaches of their organizations. Not to mention, the benefits linked to selecting successful cases to inform future practices.

The strategic selection cases entailed a methodical examination of management reports from all public universities in the country, which revealed how only three out of thirty-three public universities had successfully reached gender balanced distributions at their board of directors by 2020. Unfortunately, in one of the three selected cases, available reports were missing a substantial amount of data from governance boards between 2010 and 2015; and the response rate from directive staff members was extremely low. Thus, the case had to be excluded from further analysis.

Research goals and questions

Affirmative actions, such as gender quotas promoting positive discrimination often triggers resistance, which could impede their implementation especially when there is skepticism or lack of commitment among critical actors with decision-making power. Therefore, insights from the organizational community in general and from directive staff members can provide valuable evidence of the organizational dynamics, (latent) resistance or, as it was expected in this study, supportive perceptions towards different organizational approaches to gender equality.

To build an overall picture of the current gender equality status in sampled settings, the first research question explores the gendered dynamic relation of institutional continuity versus institutional change manifested in the division of work within governing boards and among other directive positions, over a decade. Then, written directives, indicators, and organizational approaches to gender equality are examined to identify implementation and evaluation processes. Afterwards, the study takes a closer look at individual perceptions and collective ideologies (Marshall, 1993). The objective is to identify gender-bias perceptions and to establish what approaches are favored and to what extend supportive/resistance tendencies can influence organizational outcomes. See Table 1 for a representation of variables considered and their link to specific questions and sources of data.

Table 1. Scheme of research questions

Research Question	Variables	Sources of data
<i>Has the board distribution identified in 2020 also applied to previous years and does it extend to all directive level seats?</i>	Women’s share at boards and among all administrative seats at the directive level	Internal statistical reports between 2010 and 2020
<i>Does the wording of organizational standards, indicators and systems incorporate explicit gendered implications?</i>	Requirements and functions to administrative seats at the directive level	Documentary review
<i>How are gender equality policies and strategies being implemented, monitored and evaluated?</i>	Description of organizational approaches implemented	Documentary review Semi-structured interviews
<i>What are people’s attitudes towards gender (in)equality and to what extent do they support or resist organizational approaches?</i>	Attitudes towards gender inequality and towards different organizational approaches to the issue	Surveys Semi-structured interviews

The research responds to scholarly suggestions for comparative research on affirmative actions for gender equality in academic governance (Voorspoels, 2018b). It also aims at contributing to the formal evidence in Latin America on influential factors behind women’s underrepresentation in academic decision-making bodies, with a particular focus on the potential of collective attitudes to foster or restrict favorable outcomes.

The paper is organized as follows: first, the issue of gender inequality worldwide and within the specific organizational context of Colombian public universities is introduced, followed by the research goals and questions proposed. Then, the study’s background and justification are

provided through a description of the Colombian gender quota and its effectiveness in public universities. Afterwards, the literature review addresses main barriers to women's share in decision-making roles. The paper continues with a revision of the theoretical framework proposed and the methodology used. Finally, key findings are described followed by concluding remarks in terms of theoretical implications and recommendations for further research.

BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

Historically, the accepted notion of gender in western culture was based on the doctrine of separate spheres, where men were immersed in public affairs while women focused on domestic pursuits (Korabik, 1999). But that notion has led to inequalities in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, and decision-making opportunities. In Colombia, this inequality issue was targeted by the quota law (Ley 581, 2000) enacted 22 years ago. and 16 public universities are listed as regulated autonomous entities.

The Colombian gender quota

Concretely, the Colombian quota law edicts a 30 percent in women's participation in decision-making positions within all public organs and branches. The regulation applies to all levels of decision-making, which in the context of Colombian universities refer to directive and academic boards and to all free appointment and removal positions (e.g., vice rectors, deans, office and division heads). The regulation does not apply to

appointments based exclusively on merit nor to positions designated through popular elections, such as the representative members of directive bodies. Non-compliance is held accountable for misconduct penalized with a suspension of up to 30 days. Institutional performances are assessed on an annual basis and officially reported by the Public Administrative Department (Ley 581, 2000. Articles 4-12).

Gender quota effectiveness in Colombian universities

In Colombia, a comparative analysis of the government and public universities' record displayed divergent rates of female representation, which raises questions about the quota's potential to foster gender equality. It appears that having an adequate quota size and defined enforcement mechanisms are not enough to ensure favorable results. In fact, the highest women's share was found at universities whose sole gender-equality approach is the publication of sex-disaggregated reports, followed by universities that do not implement any policy nor supplementary strategies (Solano Cahuana, in press). Thus, further revisions of the influential role of supportive versus opposing attitudes towards gender equality organizational approaches are necessary. The suggestion aligns with the belief that an actor-centric analysis could help identify issues, power relations and resistance to policy change (Verge & Lombardo, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The central premise stated in this research agrees with Shawn Andrews assertion that “the reasons for the gap between men and women are

multifactorial, deep-seated, and have existed for generations” (Andrews, 2016, p. 36). From an individual perspective, the main influential factor behind women’s underrepresentation in decision-making bodies is work-life balance, claiming that women’s employment continuity is affected by interruptions linked to family duties (Eagly & Carli, 2007a). Thus, women are viewed as inappropriate and unreliable for high responsibility roles (England, 2005). Other variables include an assumed lack of relevant knowledge and skills required to advance to higher leadership positions as well as occupational segregation (Catalyst, 1996; Davies-Netzley, 1998).

Yet, in terms of qualifications, statistical evidence shows that the pipeline for women leaders has expanded over the last 50 years and scholarly research states that occupational segregation is the result of systems and policy choices that reflect gender stereotypes and biases (Zhavoronka, et al., 2022), not the outcome of women’s self-exclusion, insecurities, lack of motivation, or lower ambitions (Yates & Hughes, 2017).

To face this issue, the liberal approach promotes awareness trainings, family reconciliation policies, neutral job profiles, recruitment, promotion and evaluation systems based on meritocracy. But in many cases, these interventions address inequality as an all-inclusive issue that dilute gender with other inequality determinants (e.g., race, age, social class, etc). Meanwhile, the radical approach entails a political dimension that promotes positive discrimination such as gender quotas, which could bring about negative perceptions and resentment. Robin Ely and Debra

Meyerson (2000) divided these interventions into four frames:

The first one aims at *fixing women's* deficiencies through training, mentoring, and networking programs to help them blend with the organizational culture and gain acceptance. The second option promotes *valuing the feminine* by recognizing and accepting gender-based behavioral differences and management styles as equally beneficial for the company. These measures generally involve diversity trainings. Next is the intervention to *create equal opportunities* through work-family balance policies and/or preferential treatment for underrepresented groups and impartial evaluation systems. The last one *revises the organizational culture* by identifying and changing gender beliefs and unconscious bias manifested in discourses of masculinity, false neutrality, and oppressive organizational practices. The problem with the first three options is their lack of impact on the organization's structure and practices, and their potential reinforcement of gender stereotypes. The main limitation of the last frame is people's resistance to change.

Recent research in organizational settings displays a proclivity for radically oriented interventions involving direct scouting and preferential treatment for recruitment processes (Voorspoels, 2018a), or the implementation of work-life reconciliation policies (Utzeri, 2018). But since these interventions are often counterproductive, many women reject them.

An integrative perspective also emerged to incorporate the role of the social environment in the formation of people's stereotypical perceptions to the

assessment of organizational approaches and change (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Eagly & Carli, 2007). The central conception here is the persistence of unconscious or *implicit bias* often expressed through in-group favoritism (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Banaji & Greenwald, 2013), such as the *homosocial reproduction* phenomenon (Byrne, 1971).

From a policy dimension, the most well-known process linked to this perspective is *gender mainstreaming*, which analyses how gender inequality is perpetuated by the historical preferences of established regimes (Daly, 2005). Some of the instruments suggested are gender-sensitive trainings, the engagement of the organization's participants through consultations, and the use of accountability mechanisms for the implementation of equality approaches. Thus, policy is no longer focused on women but on *gendered structures* which promotes the destabilization of existing inequitable processes (McNutt, 2010).

Gender Organization Systems (GOS)

As part of the integrative perspective, the notion of *Gender Organization Systems* advocates for a comprehensive assessment of individual experiences, perceptions and expectations; environmental factors, societal ideologies and stereotypes; the organizational culture (Fagenson, 1990). This holistic perspective coincides with Joan Acker's interpretation of organizational gender inequality as a compound of individual, environmental, and structural factors (Acker, 2006a), thus, her theory of gendered organization is the main framework of reference for this study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Acker's theory of gendered organizations

Joan Acker attributed women's limited advancement to structural barriers ingrained in organizational practices, ideologies, and distributions of power. Her theory offers a comprehensive assessment of the issue through five interrelated processes that produce gendered structures. The first process refers to structures that place men in roles with more responsibilities and decision-making power than those assigned to women. The second process discusses the pervasive role of gendered images and symbols in the justification and legitimacy of the leader portrayed with male-attributed characteristics. The third process addresses group interactions, where people "do gender" through communication, by enacting patterns of dominance and subordination (West and Zimmerman, 1987). In fourth place is the individual gender identity that leads to the selection of "appropriate" behaviors according to socially internalized roles, perceptions, and expectations for a particular gender. Lastly, is the process referring to overt gendered directives and procedures that may lead to the control, segregation and exclusion of specific groups.

These five processes provide a strong theoretical basis, but they leave aside important assessment variables, such as the institutional continuity versus its changes overtime, as well as the influential role of the historical context, of collective resistance to change, and the attitude of critical actors in the success or failure of gender equality initiatives. Therefore, a supplementing approach, emanating from the new institutionalism frame is also included.

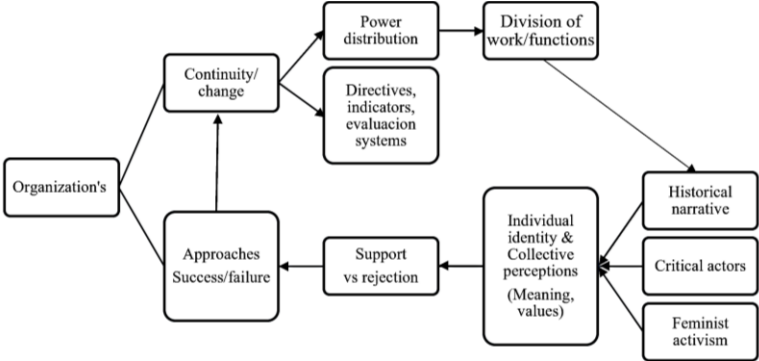
The new institutionalism also assumes that people's actions can determine the flow of events in a larger social system. Thus, institutional outcomes are rooted on the distribution of preferences and resources, and the constraints imposed by the rules of the game, which are developed and transmitted through socialization. In this sense, new institutionalism agrees with Acker's approach to organizational theory where preferences and meanings develop through the conjunction of education, indoctrination, and experience. Thus, making it difficult for institutions to remain neutral provided that their members are driven by individual preferences and exogenous expectations (Schmidt, 2010).

Feminist Institutionalism

The most acute disadvantage of new institutionalism is its oversight to the relationship between gender dynamics and institutional processes. In response, feminist institutionalism emerged in the mid-2000s to provide greater understandings of gender, power relations, and the institutional conditions under which change initiatives succeed or fail. Within this frame, the influential role of social actors with power to initiate reforms or mobilize others is key to help explain the ways in which institutions can be sites of resistance and obstruction to gender-positive movements and to gendered legislation. In that regard, feminist institutional theory can work in unison with the notion of **critical actors** (Childs and Krook, 2009) to provide the most encompassing theoretical focus on the gendered nature of organizations.

Nonetheless, feminist institutionalism is still a work in progress that intends to supplement other approaches rather than to propose an independent theoretical framework. Therefore, it is merged with the more established macro-level theory of gendered organizations.

Figure 1. Integrated elements of mixed theoretical approaches



Source: Author’s own schema.

Moving clockwise in figure 1, this study assesses first the dynamic relation of institutional continuity/change manifested in the division of work of Colombian public universities that have successfully reached a gender-balanced distribution. Therefore, it reviews the organization’s historical narrative that plays a role in the formation and recreation of collective ideologies. This initial assessment also considers written directives in terms of application requirements and evaluation proceedings set for directive level positions alongside their functions.

Then, policies and non-compulsory initiatives and actions are analyzed

alongside supportive and resistant attitudes to determine collective perceptions and ideologies on the subject. Lastly, the perceptions of critical actors (from the directive level) were elicited through interviews, so that more in-depth explanations could be obtained, since they play an important decision-making role that can heavily influence the outcomes. The premise is that understanding organizational gendered practices, norms, and values will allow for the formulation of recommendations for the design or adjustment of measures aiming at more sustainable effects (Acker, 2006a).

METHODOLOGY

Case study design

To generate an in-depth and multifaceted understanding of women's scarcity in academic governance, this study applied a **multiple case study** design that combines methods and sources to examine universities with balanced gender distributions at their highest hierarchical levels in order to understand what they did, how they did it and what factors may have influenced their outcomes to be able to replicate them.

The two universities selected had different approaches to gender equality in terms of policies, but their hierarchical structure is similar. For instance, in both cases the board of directors represents the highest echelon of the hierarchy followed by the academic council and the rector. The vice rectors and extension directors represent the middle level, and offices and divisions complete the ladder. The term "division" applies only to sections under administrative (and financial) vice rector. The size of the Board of

directors is also similar in both cases composed by ten members that include the rector, delegates of the Minister of Education, of the country's president, and of the regional governor, alongside representatives of students, teachers, graduates, the Academic Council, the productive sector and of the university's ex-rectors. However, within the academic council, U1 is larger than U2, with eight vice rectors and over 20 faculty deans, as opposed to the two vice rectors and five deans in U2.

Data and methods

The selection of cases and research subjects entailed purposive sampling by choosing information-rich cases that match the established criteria of outstanding gender equality outcomes at the organizational level. Secondary data involved organizational reports, statistics, boards' meeting minutes, written policies and programs that were gradually collected for over two years about the timeframe between 2010 and 2020. During that time both cases would have gone through several changes of government.

Survey participants included 242 academic and administrative staff members and semi-structured interviews included 15 staff members from the directive level whose ample professional experience at the university, first-hand knowledge of the university's practices and approaches, and decision-making power can provide valuable organizational insights. Also, because their skepticism or lack of commitment could obstruct the implementation of policies and strategies and foster resistance among their subordinates.

All interviews took place online through Skype, Google meet, and zoom, which helped overcome limitations related to face-to-face interviews amid COVID-19 restrictions. Spanish was selected as the language of communication to avoid misunderstandings and potential limitations with English language proficiency. Survey responses were compiled using Google forms and analyzed through descriptive statistics.

Access to interview and survey participants was achieved through institutional emails available at each university's website and through snowball sampling. Hence, the recruitment process was independent from institutional gatekeepers. Every interview took between 30 and 60 minutes and all conversations were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Selected cases are labelled as U1 and U2 for anonymity purposes.

Data analysis

Findings were initially described on a case-by-case basis. Then, a cross-case perspective was included to identify emerging patterns and themes that could indicate commonalities and/or differences. The first step taken was the **documentary review** of the gender distribution within governance boards and administrative positions with directive functions over a decade. Then, the specific functions of these directive roles and the specific requirements to attain those positions were also examined. The idea was to evaluate any potential variation in the levels of responsibility attributed to every position and any variation in terms of decision-making power. After that, gender equality organizational approaches (e.g., policies and actions)

were examined to identify their content, implementation systems, and assessment/report protocol. The perceived relevance of these institutional practices was further assessed through **surveys and interviews**.

Main demographic characteristics from interviews and surveys comprise the following: older academic staff members from the directive level and from the faculties of engineering, architecture, economy, social, and administrative sciences were more willing to participate in the study. The age of most participants (51+ years old) might also explain why the majority of the responses came from those with graduate degrees. For the category of gender, participation was balanced. Survey’s responses also indicated different attitudes towards organizational approaches according to levels of importance attributed to specific equality polices and less coercive strategies on a 5-point Likert scale (see Table 2)

Table 2. Gender equality polices, initiatives and actions

Policies	Non-compulsory initiatives/actions
Institutional anti-discrimination and equal opportunity policies for recruitment and promotion (ADP)	Educational actions on inclusion, equal opportunities, and non-discriminatory practices (EA)
An obligation to have 30% of directive boards made up by members of another gender (Q)	Faculty representatives responsible for equal opportunities programs (FR)
Flexible work-arrangements (FW)	Networking opportunities (N)
Maternity paternity leave (MPL)	Leadership/management trainings (LMP) Recognition of people and units promoting diversity and equality (R) Career advancement sponsorship (S) Inclusion and diversity campaigns (AC)

Source: Author’s compilation.

Simultaneously, to evaluate collective perceptions about gender inequality issues, modern sexism subscales were established to determine subconscious gender stereotypes and denials of inequality/discrimination patterns. The scale comprised different statements about men and women’s social roles, appropriate behaviors, and current conditions as member of the society. The level of agreement manifested for given statements would help determine whether and to what extend gender stereotypes and biases are still present in people’s mentality (see table 3).

Table 3. Manifestations of modern sexism (MS)

	Statement	Category
1	Women should be protected by men.	Gender
2	Men are less likely to fall apart in emergencies.	stereotypes
3	Men are more suited to leadership than women.	
4	Discrimination of women is no longer a problem in this country	Gender stereotypes denial
5	Society treats men and women the same way	
6	Better measures should be taken to achieve (gender) equality in the workplace	Denial (Reverse coding)

Source: Voorspoels (2018b)

Since observed cases were selected for their balanced gender distributions. Primary data from online surveys was evaluated according to the following assumptions:

1. Sexist perceptions’ ratio will be low among surveyed participants from both universities.
2. Support for non-compulsory equality initiatives and actions will be high among both communities but only participants from U1 –

which has a gender-specific equality policy – will be highly supportive of gender quotas.

3. Female participants will be more supportive of gender quotas than male participants will be.

The structure used for the analysis of interviews, follows the scaffolding guidelines of the qualitative analytic hierarchy proposed by Spenser, Ritchie, & O'Connor (2003), where the interpretation of meaning moves along different stages of data management to sort and synthesize the data in order to facilitate descriptive and explanatory accounts.

Afterwards, coding categories were established using the NVivo software to label and sort out the data. Subsequently, in the descriptive accounts phase, identified analogous themes were translated into English and clustered into four main dimensions to help summarize and synthesize their association with the last two proposed research questions (see table 4 in the following page).

Finally, in the explanatory accounts phase, patterns of associations within the data were identified to determine similarities and differences among participants' experiences and perspectives depending on the characteristics of the organization they belong to and depending on individual gender identities. Lastly, the link to theoretical referents and their implications for successful development of policies and of less coercive practices is addressed.

Table 4. Interviews' coding categories

Questions	Topic	Dimensions	Coding categories
How are policies and strategies implemented, monitored and evaluated?	Organizational practices	Actions and strategies	Description, evaluation and report of policies and non-compulsory initiatives and actions
What are the collective attitudes towards gender (in)equality and towards different organizational approaches to the issue?	Collective and individual attitudes	Personal barriers	(EP/IS) Supportive (EP/IS) Resistance Work-life balance, skills-motivation, and occupational segregation
		Social barriers	Gender stereotype references / implicit bias. Accept/deny patriarchal order, discrimination, or gender-based inequality
		Organization (<i>gendered</i>) barriers	Direct scouting, merit-based promotion and recruitment, no difficulties over promotion

Source: Author's compilation of emergent patterns and scholarly referents.

MAIN FINDINGS

Procedure and requirements to be granted tenure

- In U2 doctoral degrees are preferred but not mandatory and it offers more options to accumulate points for research production, (e.g., supervision of students' theses, conferences' participation).
- More than half of U2's tenured staff is permanently represented by women.

Functions and requirements of directive level' seats

- The rector and vice rectors have management, supervision and assessment functions, and participate in governance boards.

- Faculty deans constitute an assisting branch, but they also lead administrative processes related to academic quality control and development and the designation of program coordinators.
- Division, office directors, and the general secretary offer technical support and assist administrative processes.

Organizational approaches

- U1's gender policy centers on non-compulsory actions diluting gender equality issues with other inequality determinants, which is also the approach taken by U2, despite not having a gender policy. Thus, both cases have liberal and integral approaches to create equal opportunities, to recognize differences and to enhance collective awareness.
- None of the interventions currently in place at both cases addresses gender underrepresentation at the directive level and no specific system is in place to assess the impact of these initiatives.

Gender distribution within directive bodies

- Contrary to case U2, the balanced gender distribution identified at U1's boards of directors by 2020 does not match its performance in preceding years nor does it spread to other boards and administrative positions at the directive level. Thus, the university does not truly comply with the quota regulation.
- Since the minimum rate required by the quota can be easily reached with female delegates of external entities; U2's recurrent presence of women as elected board representatives indicates collective support for women in positions of authority and decision-making.
- Top five female-dominated seats among directive bodies are usually linked to offices, divisions and to the position of general secretary, which entail supportive rather than leading functions. This is particular

true to case U1, since women's share in U2 is also high among positions with management, supervision and assessment functions.

Perceptions of gender inequality

- Only female interviewees from U1 refer to constraining factors for professional advance. They also considered their own trajectory as being harder when compared to that of their male counterparts and acknowledged the persistence of a patriarchal order inside the university. The male group see their university as totally inclusive and impartial – this was also the shared perception at U2.
- Only a few female respondents acknowledged their lack of interest in directive roles, but the majority declared to have deliberately pursued them, thus challenging the statements proposed in the literature.

Attitudes towards organizational approaches

- The extended academic and administrative communities of both universities support both non-compulsory initiatives and policies.
- Female survey respondents were more supportive of gender quotas than male respondents. Overall, gender quota was the least favorite option, particularly among male interviewees.
- Most male interviewees either view gender policies as irrelevant or manifested indifference towards them.

CONCLUSIONS

- Some requirements at U1 to attain directive's roles might limit people's promotion since doctoral degrees and a prolific research production might not be attainable for some groups. Particularly women, due to exogenous circumstances.
- No evidence of explicit gendered wordings was identified in the description of functions for directive positions. However, the recurrent designation of women in directive positions that entail supportive

rather than leading function and seem to reflect stereotypically female attributed characteristics also raises doubts about an underlying gendered ideology emanating from critical actors in charge of the free appointment and removal of directive staff.

- In U1, figures of authority in charge of the free appointment and removal of directive members are usually represented by men as opposed to the state of affairs in U2, which has been historically led by women.
- Survey findings discard gender biased collective perceptions and lack of support among the extended communities of both cases. Respondents support both policies and non-compulsory equality initiatives and actions, but among interviewees the enactment of equality policies was mainly supported by women.
- It seems the outcomes identified are a combination of the historical background of the universities, the unintended effects of specific requirements to obtain tenure, potentially biased perceptions of critical actors at the directive level towards female aspirants and toward gender equality initiatives inside the university, and the direct appointment and removal process for the designation of directive roles, which could be leading to homosocial reproduction with positive results in case U2 but negative ones in case U1.
- The findings align with the statements proposed by the feminism institutionalism and the gendered processes listed by Joan Acker (1990). In the sense that *gender-differentiated divisions of work and functions* persist even inside organizations with a great female share among governance boards and directive roles. Those divisions are usually justified on each organization's historical narrative leading to the formation of individual identities and collective perceptions about gender appropriate positions and about the relevance of equality policies and strategies.

- U1's gender distribution inside governance boards do not reflect a structural change at the organizational level since its BoD's equal representation do not extend to other directive positions.
- The results also dismissed the statement about women's self-exclusion from high responsibility roles, in fact, most of the female interviewees described a deliberately pursuit of directive roles even at the expense of their household responsibilities. Still, their professional trajectories appear to be more entangled than the trajectories described by the male participants.

The present dissertation adds to the developing literature on resistance to gendered change in institutions, arguing that the historical background and the concept of critical actors can help explain a more receptive attitude towards gendered change and consequently a more successful implementation of equality strategies without enforcing coercive approaches to increase women's representation.

The relatable characteristics of selected cases as organizations regulated by a gender quota and their professional promotion processes resembling those of many other public universities in Colombia, enhance inferences (generalizability) about the current status and potential outcomes of other quota-regulated organizations in the country.

Then, other public universities in Colombia may improve by making sure that during the next appointment of directive staff, the distribution is more balanced between men and women, who comply with the requirements. Since it has been demonstrated that women's scarcity at the top of the hierarchy is not truly a matter of inadequacy among female staff members,

nor is it a matter of collective rejection of female leaders, but of the individual choice of critical actors, whose perceptions of suitable candidates to directive positions might be influencing the outcomes of the university in terms of gender equality.

One of the suggestions proposed is the adjustment of gender policy's enforcement mechanisms and evaluations processes, such as the revision of restricting requirements to become permanent staff members. The inclusion of a gender quota does not constitute a wild option either.

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