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Women in Engineering, Science and Technology:
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Chapter 8

"We Don't Have the Key to the Executive Washroom":
Women's Perceptions and Experiences of Promotion in Academia

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ABSTRACT

This chapter reports on a pilot study looking at the progression of academic women at one UK University. The chapter focuses on the promotions process and criteria as one important issue emerging from that research. Earlier research has shown that women are less likely to break into institutional networks which allow them to access information not only on formal and objective promotion criteria but also on hidden criteria and the way the 'academic game' is played. One result of this is that some academic women may have an inaccurate view of promotion criteria and processes. At the university studied by the authors, the Human Resources department has sought to make the promotion process more transparent and, officially at least, it no longer depends purely upon research achievements. However, these changes will not necessarily result in easier progression for women academics. The authors' study confirms that there is still a mismatch between what women think the criteria for promotion are, what the formal criteria are and how those criteria actually operate. Reliance on incomplete or inaccurate information about promotion criteria, coupled other factors, such as women's reluctance to promote themselves actively and traditional barriers to promotion such as caring responsibilities, puts women at a disadvantage when they attempt to progress into more senior positions within universities. Reform of promotions procedures needs to look beyond re-writing the substantive criteria for promotion and look to improving understanding of what is involved.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This chapter is based on the findings of a small scale research study carried out in 2008. The study considered the progression of women in higher education and focused on academic staff at the University of Bradford in the United Kingdom. The research outlined the European and national law relevant to this area before examining the university's own policies in detail. The majority of the study then focused on the lived experience of academics at the University exploring issues around promotion and progression, work life balance, mentoring and perception of policies amongst others through in-depth empirical work comprised of semi-structured interviews with male and female academics employed at the University (n=30). In addition to the interviews, some basic analysis was also made of statistics provided by the university. While the study did not specifically concentrate on the SET (science, engineering, and technology) disciplines, many of our respondents did in fact fall in that category. We interviewed academics in the engineering design and technology department as well as colleagues from life sciences, informatics, psychology and the school of health. Out of a total of 30 respondents, 17 were from SET disciplines while the others came from disciplines such as law, management, social sciences and languages. However, the analysis of our data showed no differences in responses by discipline.

This chapter focuses on one of the key themes emerging from the research: the promotions process in Higher Education. The emphasis is on promotion within and between the Lecturer and Senior Lecturer grades. This is partly because it was those promotions that most of our respondents talked about and also because these decisions are made internally, whereas assessors from other universities are involved with promotions to Reader and Professor. Promotions criteria in Higher Education are supposed to be transparent and clear to those employed in relevant institutions. The Higher Education Role Analysis (HERA) used to define roles within universities in the UK is supposed to allow "employers [] to ensure their pay and grading structures are designed to recognize the value of roles and ensure equal pay for work of equal value" (Educational Competencies Consortium Ltd 2007 (ECC)). A national role analysis was carried out, resulting in the development of national role profiles in UK Higher Education. These can be mapped onto a single national pay spine to ensure fairness and equality across the sector as a whole. The University of Bradford has adopted the single pay spine and the associated role descriptors. However this research casts doubts on the transparency of criteria and role profiles and the extent to which they are made explicit to university staff and/or applied consistently. In addition, as Deem and Morley (2006) note "although this methodology may deliver equal pay for equal work, […] it may also restrict promotion opportunities since these often now depend on moving to a new job rather than upgrading an existing one" (p190).

The move to a single pay spine might also explain why we detected no disciplinary differences within our data. Academics working in SET disciplines are subject to exactly the same promotions criteria as those working in the social sciences and humanities and as such they have very similar views of those criteria and processes. Nonetheless the empirical work presented here takes as its focus those interviews conducted with colleagues in the SET disciplines.

The chapter first considers academics' perceptions of what the promotion process involves and their experiences in planning for and applying for promotion. It then turns to the university administration's own explanation of what the promotions process requires and involves. These are discussed, along with some "hidden" criteria for promotion. We then consider the implications of some significant differences we found between participants' and managers' understanding of the promotions process. We will conclude that it is

Table 1. Respondents by gender

	Male	Female
Number	5	25
Percent	16.7%	83.3%

unclear whether these differences have their roots in a failure to properly educate women academics about what they need to do in order to achieve promotion or whether the perception of women academics is correct but not accurately reflected in the university's formal criteria. Another factor is that this study was carried out at a time when the university had only just implemented some major changes to the procedures for promotion (including re-naming it as regrading) and this may have impacted on participants' knowledge of the process and criteria. Whichever of these explanations is correct, our findings suggest that attempts to reduce the imbalance between male and female academics at senior levels within the university are unlikely to succeed.

METHODS

The research strategy of this project employed a qualitative socio-legal methodology. It involved the analysis of law and policy from institutional to European level. This analysis was then complemented with in-depth empirical work comprising of semi-structured interviews with male and female academics employed at the University.

The empirical worksought to gain in depth knowledge and understanding of women academics in the University of Bradford. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were carried out with male and female academic staff at the University of Bradford at all levels of an academic career (n =30). The interviews covered areas such as

- Background Data
- Career trajectory
- Reasons for choosing to work in academia
- Advantages and Disadvantages of life as an academic
- Future plans
- Perceived barriers to career progression
- Views on promotions criteria and processes
- Public perception of women academics
- Institutional culture

In order to protect the confidentiality of our respondents we are unable to provide a full profile of our sample. However, the details in Table 1 and Table 2 may be of interest.

We did not find any striking differences according to seniority in the answers given and the gender differences were also minimal with male and female respondents identifying similar issues in women's progression.

Analysis of the empirical data was carried out using the software package Nvivo7. Interviews, which mainly took place in the staff's offices and ranged from 45 minutes to 2 hours, were recorded and the recordings were transcribed and entered. The data was split (or coded) thematically as the

Table 2. Respondents by seniority

	Numbers			Percentage		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Lecturer or below	16	1	15	53.3%	3.3%	50%
Senior Lecturer or equivalent	3		3	10%	0%	10%
Reader/Professor/Senior position	11	4	7	36.7%	13.3%	23.3%

themes arose from the interview data and was then analysed in accordance with those themes.

As a qualitative study this work did not seek to make representative claims or present statistics or statistically significant data. The figures highlighting the lack of senior academic women are well rehearsed elsewhere. Instead this study aimed to understand the experience of academics at the University of Bradford and then situate that experience within the wider literature. It provides a detailed case study which highlights areas for future qualitative and quantitative research.

WOMEN ACADEMICS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD

The Equality Act of 2006 places a general duty on all public authorities in England and Wales, when carrying out their functions, to eliminate discrimination and harassment that is unlawful under the Equal Pay Act 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975; and to promote equality of opportunity between men and women. The university appears, on paper at least, to take this duty seriously. 'Confronting inequality: Celebrating diversity' is one of The University of Bradford's strap lines. The university's equality policies and schemes reflect a formal commitment to promoting equality. The policies examined as part of this study were found to be comprehensive and well thought out. The main gender equality policy and scheme is well supported by a number of other policies dealing with issues such as harassment and bullying as well as maternity, paternity and adoption leave and flexible working.

However, this does not translate into equal number of male and female academics in senior positions or indeed into a perception of equality within the institution (Deem and Morley 2006). Perhaps unsurprisingly, statistics we were provided with by the University show that the most marked gender differences arise at the more senior

level. Out of the 444 members of academic staff below professorial grade 43% (189) are female. At professorial level, however, 76% are male. At Senior Lecturer level the proportion of men is 65%, and at Reader 88%. At Lecturer level however the genders are almost evenly split with men making up 51% of the total. The figures broadly match those of other studies (Forster 2000). Ackers and Oliver (2005) note that "[an] inverse relationship exists between the level of feminisation and seniority as women fail to progress in science careers at an equivalent rate to their male peers" (p3).

In spite of Fisher's proclamation 17 years ago that "[n]o organisation these days can afford to waste valuable brain-power simply because it is wearing a skirt (Fisher, 1992, p. 46) the figures suggests that women are less successful than men in achieving promotion, first to Senior Lecturer level and then to more senior grades (Forster 2000; AUT 2004). The university supplied us with the figures for the promotions round held in 2007. More men (87) applied for promotion than women (59) and men were more likely to be successful. 74% of men who applied were granted a promotion whereas only 66% of women were successful.

The main purpose of this study was, however, not to conduct detailed statistical analysis but rather to gain an insight into the experience of staff at the institution. While it must of course be recognised that there are disciplinary differences even within the SET disciplines and that different factors are likely to affect people differently as they progress through their life course and career trajectory, a number of common themes emerged.

In order to get a picture of the attributes and characteristics that women academics valued in their colleagues and the standards they were measuring themselves against, we asked respondents about their 'ideal' academic. It is clear that there was no single picture of an ideal academic, and different people placed their emphasis on different skills. We also asked respondents about their own decision making around promotion and about their

experiences of applying for promotion. We got a strong sense that academics across the university felt daunted by the complexity of the promotions process; although information is available, our respondents did not find it easy to understand and to navigate. The difficulties were possibly increased because of the recent introduction of new promotions systems and criteria. We also found significant differences in respondents' perception of what the promotions criteria are – these varied not just from school to school but also within schools and departments. We detected an apparent mismatch between what people thought the criteria were, what the criteria actually were and how the criteria then operated on the ground.

The next sections in this chapter will explain in more detail what academics said about promotion in their interviews. We have dealt separately with views about what is needed in order to be promoted, and with what happened when our respondents actually tried to get promoted.

WHAT WOMEN TOLD US ABOUT PROMOTIONS CRITERIA

Researchers have found that lack of information about promotions procedures and criteria are not confined to new academics (Metcalf et al 2005). Our study also found confusion about the criteria for promotion. This confusion was not limited to junior academics but can be found across the seniority spectrum. Many respondents expressed anxiety about what exactly was expected of them. Our respondent Andrea for example commented "*No, I don't [know what I need to become a senior lecturer], I know that's where I want to be, but I don't know what I need to do to be there…"'*.

Many interviewees felt that there was a mismatch between the work the university expected them to carry out and the work that they were actually rewarded for in terms of promotion and progression. So while the university's focus was on teaching, widening participation and student

engagement and these activities generally took up a substantial amount of academics' time, the reward and promotions structure was thought to be focused mainly on research activity. This focus on research in itself has been seen in previous studies to put women at a disadvantage (Forster 2000) but most academics still regard research outputs as the most important criteria for promotion. The quotations given below illustrate the point.

Researcher: What do you think it is in your discipline that gets people promoted, what's the key thing that has to be on the CV?

Interviewee: Undoubtedly, papers in peer reviewed, excellent, well-read journals. [Michelle, Lecturer, Female]

What does the institution reward? It rewards researchers who can bring in big research grants. It doesn't particularly reward teachers for good teaching […] because if you want a promotion to senior lecturer then you have to have a research track record [Shannon, Lecturer, Female]

Debate about progression in academia is ongoing particularly in the context of recognising and rewarding teaching and learning (Parker 2008, Young 2006, Collins and Palmer 2007Gibbs and Habershaw 2002). This debate was not lost on our respondents and some mentioned that promotions criteria were beginning to change or that the emphasis or weighting of them was shifting; some thought towards teaching, some towards managerial skills and others to a more rounded approach:

So at Professorial level I've no doubt that we have to move from a focus on research. Now we have changed […] some of the criteria, we've changed it so it's more about teaching excellence, it's about knowledge transfer, KTs, consultancy, it is wider [Daniel, Senior, Male]

However, even though a shift in emphasis and the availability of different career paths through academia was recognised at very senior level and welcomed at the lower levels of seniority, it appears that few believed that this shift in emphasis was actually being translated into practice. Three crucial issues emerged. Firstly, managers, most often academics themselves, do not necessarily have up to date and reliable information about how to apply promotions criteria in individual situations and are thus unable to give clear and constructive advice. Secondly, academics who are unsure of what exactly the criteria are and cannot get clear guidance from their managers, are unable to work strategically towards achieving those criteria or may believe they do not meet the criteria when in fact they do. Thirdly, as well as the criteria set down in HERA or those identified at departmental or school level, there are additional hidden criteria which operate in parallel with the formal criteria but which are far less transparent. These issues are explored further below but the quotation below highlights the problem women academics face:

There's a phenomenal repeat message from the females about how they went for promotion and they have the most research and you know, everything else they outperform guy X and guy X got the job and they asked for feedback and none of them got feedback. So I think the criteria might be different or the experience of the criteria might be different between the male academic and female [Nicole, Junior, Female].

What Women Told Us about their Experiences of Preparing for and Applying for Promotion

Researcher: How did you find the criteria?

I think it's still written in gobbledegook, I'm a plain speaker. I just find it really interesting that on the one hand the institution is saying that they want

people to apply for a promotion, they advertise that this is going to happen. The information session run by the institution was a week before submission. So those 2 things do not go hand in hand. So they're saying one thing, when they actually mean something totally different. And that's my impression. If you really, really want to support people to do something you don't give them the information a week before, the amount of evidence that they want needs to go in, even down to when you've got to write your list of publications. We use Harvard referencing here, that's not Harvard referencing, so I had to redo it all. [Shannon, Lecturer, Female]

The personnel website of the University of Bradford devotes quite a significant amount of web space to matters related to promotions. Staff can access detailed information about the pay and grading structure, role descriptors and the promotions process and timetable. Nonetheless our respondents did not necessarily feel that they were well informed about the process and the applicable criteria, nor did they feel confident in going through it. There was a common perception that the promotions process was time consuming and involved complex paperwork. A number of our respondents actually felt unable to spare the time from the 'day job' to complete the required paperwork and those who did often found the process stressful. Sarah's comments encapsulate the feedback we received on the process: "*It was hard work, bureaucratic, lots of box ticking*". [Sarah, Lecturer, Female]

Michelle touches on a further issue which many respondents raised:

I don't want to want to be knocked back; I don't want to put a lot of time into something that I can see is going to be knocked back because I know I haven't got the quality publications recently [Michelle, Lecturer, Female]

She highlighted that she did not want to just 'have a go' at going for promotion but rather wanted to be sure that she met the criteria and would be successful when she applied. She did not want to go through being rejected or knocked back. Two related points emerge. In the view of some respondents, there was a gendered dimension to reluctance to submit a speculative application, and that men were less concerned about rejection and more comfortable with self-promotion (Bagilhole and Goode 2001). ' *I do think women are less willing to put themselves forward maybe because they're afraid of being hurt, you know'* [Stephanie, Lecturer, Female].

Further, those who were aware of the promotion criteria, for the most part felt it difficult to relate them to the work that they did or were frustrated with the application paperwork because it did not allow them to accurately portray what they felt was important. The criteria, said our respondents, are based on process and form and are *"a very traditional way of looking at it"*. [Elizabeth, Senior Lecturer, Female]. The application form used applied a restrictive view of the promotions criteria and thus did not allow applicants to portray *"a full enough or a round enough description of [themselves] and all the things [they] were doing"*. [Sarah, Lecturer, Female]

THE UNIVERSITY'S FORMAL PROMOTIONS/ REGRADING CRITERIA

The University has two distinct procedures for promotion, one applying to promotions within and between the Lecturer and Senior Lecturer roles and one applying to promotions to Reader and Professor. The focus of this section is on the former.

The University of Bradford has recently overhauled its promotions procedures. All staff have been placed on a single pay spine, over 260 role at the university evaluated, and new role descriptors

introduced. This is part of a national initiative for pay modernisation. The new system was used for the first time in 2007. Most of the respondents interviewed for this research had not yet applied for promotion under the new system, but some had and others commented on it more generally. Given that one of the themes we detected in our interviews was lack of awareness of promotions procedures, the fact that many respondents failed to comment on the new process was instructive in itself.

The new procedure is initiated when the academic and their manager agree, at an annual Performance Review meeting, that the academic's "role" has undergone significant development, i.e., the academic has taken on additional responsibilities or developed new skills. (Regrading is not concerned with *potential* to perform at a higher level: unless that higher level has already been achieved, the position cannot be regraded.) The academic and manager then agree a new job description for the role. If the manager feels that the role has developed to the level of a higher grade, as defined by the HERA role descriptor, the new job description is forwarded to the Dean/Head of Planning Unit for approval and the manager submits an application to the School/Planning Unit Annual Promotions committee.

As can be seen, the academic's line manager has a central role in the promotions or regarding process. This is the person who carries out annual Performance Reviews, at which targets for further development are set. The line manager is also often the person who allocates administrative responsibilities. This is important because not all criteria for regrading can be satisfied simply by doing one's existing role well. If the role descriptor for a higher grade requires evidence of successfully completing a particular task, then the academic needs the opportunity to take on that task. However, in setting targets or planning an individual's future development, the manager is not concerned purely with the personal and career

development of the academic: according to the document "Promotions Exercise 2008",

It is for management to determine how roles are to be developed in the context of strategic and operational requirements within Schools/Planning Units and across the institution. The potential development of any role, along with any associated development plans, should, therefore, be discussed in that context during the performance review (University of Bradford 2008 p1 emphasis added).

While formally there is no "rationing" of regrading, the operational needs of a particular school or planning unit are likely to have this result. If there is no need for more staff to carry out the higher level tasks required for the higher grade, then a staff member will not receive the opportunity to work at that higher grade and therefore will not be regraded.

The support of the manager is also required for any application to reach the School promotions committee: "All evidence submitted in support of a case must be verified by the appropriate line manager. No case for promotion will be considered unless the supporting evidence submitted has been verified" (University of Bradford 2008 p2). If the School committee approves the application, it is put forward by the School to the University committee. Self-submission to the School/Planning Unit committee is not possible but self-submission to the University committee is permitted where the School/Planning Unit committee does not approve the application.. The final decision on promotion is made by the University committee. The manager is therefore a gatekeeper for development and promotion opportunities.

Our findings echo those of Deem and Morley (2006) one of whose respondents articulates well what many respondents told us:

My experience of going through the promotion process... flushed out an awful lot of issues to do with gender... if you wanted to be promoted... you

needed... managerial profile roles which were significant... the head of department decided who was going to get those roles... and that... operated as a way of blocking women from being promoted unofficially (Female academic, Cityscape) (p191).

Our respondents regarded publication of research as critical to promotion but it is not clear that the formal criteria in the role descriptors actually give research this central role. There are different HERA role descriptors that are intended to capture different academic career paths – that is, research focussed, administration focussed and all-rounders. However, all role descriptors are written in a very general way and are not discipline specific, let alone lecturer-specific. The result is language that seems strained as a description of what a lecturer or senior lecturer actually does. One of the elements in the HERA role descriptor for grade 9 (lecturer) and grade 10 (senior Lecturers) academics is "service delivery". At grade 9, the "[m]ain focus of role is responding to the needs of others and delivering an agreed service", with the academic "on occasions exploring the needs of students and others and adapting services to meet them." At grade 10, the focus changes to "being proactive in developing the service by approaching customers, exploring needs, developing new services" and the academic "will have responsibility and may be the lead role, for contributing to setting standards or determining the quality of the service to be provided". There are references to research, but there is no reference to *publication* of research at all. The closest that the grade 9 description comes to the perceived all-important requirement of publication, is that "Role holders will be conducting individual and/or collaborative research or scholarly projects and applying knowledge from projects to teaching/external activities." At grade 10, "role holders will be generating new approaches, developing new insights and contributing to the development of knowledge and practice in own field/educational strategies". If their focus is research, they will

also be "principal investigator or collaborating on research projects and contributing to the development of research strategies". This language is far removed from the descriptions of what is required we heard from our respondents.

This suggests either that the respondents were out of date in their perception of what promotion involved or that the "official" criteria did not tell the whole story and that, in reality, research remained the main route to advancement, regardless of what the documentation stated. In either case, doubt is cast upon the transparency of the promotions process.

HIDDEN CRITERIA AND OTHER BARRIERS TO PROMOTION

As well as the formal criteria there are informal or hidden criteria which seem to be influence reward and promotions within the university. These criteria are subtle and relate to issues around expected workloads, value attributed to certain approaches to work and the importance of networking. We will consider these issues in turn.

Working Time and Work Life Balance

The long hours culture is a health and safety issue and is not consistent with a work life balance. It may also impact on progression: if conventions about how much work is required in order to advance within the university assume that long hours will be worked, employees who are either unwilling or unable to work long hours may be less likely to progress their careers.

Work load and the difficulties of achieving a satisfactory work life balance concerned our respondents, most of whom felt that it was impossible to carry out an academic job in a standard working week of around 40 hours.

I'm not sure it is possible, not if you want good research and good teaching. Ones got to give if

you stick to 40 hours a week [Andrea, Lecturer, Female]

Studies looking at SET disciplines have long noted the high number of hours worked by scientists (Ackers 2003, Ackers and Oliver 2005) and a long hours culture was also prevalent within the institution studied. This was felt most keenly by those respondents with caring responsibilities. Respondents who managed to work a "standard" working week were few and far between. Moreover, many failed to take all the annual holidays or statutory holidays to which they were entitled. A number referred to coming to work when sick, in order to keep up with their workload. These findings are consistent with those of other studies. Ackers and Oliver (2005) make the point succinctly: "Scientists with children and mothers in particular, are less able to commit these kinds of hours and achieve an equivalent level of productivity" (p3). Caring responsibilities, either in relation to children, partners or other family members clearly do have an impact on how academics can manage their work and family life and as Forster (2000) points out "[t]he arrival of young children often coincides with the age when [scientists] are still expected to make an impact in their chosen fields through high quality research and a regular output of publications" (p319). Their interviews also confirmed "[t]he persistence of gender differences in the proportion of time spent on forms of unpaid/family work in the home restricts the ability of scientists with families, and women in particular, to devote a similar amount of time to their research"(Ackers and Oliver 2005 p3). While things are clearly better than they were in the past and caring responsibilities are being recognised more, it seems there is some way to go before academic institutions can be considered a family friendly place to work.

Gendered Approaches to Work

As various theorists have noted, there is a normative masculinist culture within academia that can disadvantage women (Wolffensberger, 1993). Forster (2000) talks of a 'deeply ingrained male view of performance' (p316) and Bagilhole (1993) notes that 'Universities are prime examples of Lipman-Blumen's (1976) ``homo-social'' institutions, being established and run by men. From this it follows that the rules pertaining to appointment are male driven and are evaluated according to male standards' (p 447). We were therefore interested in comments about a gendered approach to career planning

Many respondents agreed that it was too much of a generalisation to say that men viewed work and progression in a certain way while women did so in another. At the same time, many identified a gendered dimension in the way that the way academics approach their career:

I mean I don't want to make universalising statements about anything you know, but I think, I think men just tend to be more career focused and are having to think the next 2 or 3 steps ahead really, and I'm not saying that no women do that but I think women perhaps tend to be more invested in the job that they're doing at the moment and have perhaps more of a sense of responsibility. I know have a huge sense of responsibility towards students. [Karen, Lecturer, Female]

Some respondents commented that men were generally better at protecting their research time and were less likely to spend significant amounts of time devoted to pastoral care and the 'caring side' of teaching and learning (Martínez Alemán 2008). The quotation below gives an indication of the value assigned to these kinds of roles by the institution.

Women are much more open to doing that pastoral role, naturally, than men, they are perceived as

sympathetic, etc, and again the loading there is not advantageous… [Julie, Senior, Female]

Given that the respondents also thought that research was the key to promotion, they were likely to regard this as an approach to work that helped men obtain promotion and hindered women's efforts.

When asking the questions about gendered approaches to work and promotions we were very aware that we were inviting respondents to generalise and draw out stereotypes and we were surprised to find that in many cases these stereotypes seemed to still be translating into practice. Overall respondents agreed that there were male and female characteristics and that we all had both to a greater or lesser extent.

I still think there is maybe a masculine style and a feminine style and it doesn't matter whether you are a man or a woman, it's whether you adopt those things and there is probably a sliding kind of scale [Crystal, Senior, Female]

The question of male and female characteristics and approaches to work often led on to a discussion about management styles and the value of having more women at the top level. This is relevant to the question of promotion in various ways: it provides an indication of whether women academics were motivated to progress to senior positions, what that motivation was, and what they thought had helped other women achieve promotion. Our respondents were overwhelmingly of the opinion that just having more women in more senior positions was not the answer; the key was having the right women there. There was a feeling that those women who had made it to the top level had to act in what was considered a 'male' way to get there.

I think in order to get on you have to take on that patriarchal role. The majority of the senior management are still men which has an impact

on who is employed.[…]. I think that you do have to prove yourself more than your equal male. You have to be better at being a man than they are. [Elizabeth, Senior Lecturer, Female]

The answers we received in response to this set of questions were interesting for a number of reasons. They highlight the importance of different approaches to working and the operation of stereotypes or perceptions of skills and approaches which may determine which roles are allocated to certain members of staff. These roles then in turn may impact on progression. The interviews also highlighted that there are different approaches to work and that these may be gendered to a certain extent. The value then assigned to these approaches is what impacts on progression (Martínez Alemán 2008; Lapointe Terosky et al 2008). Roles perceived as 'female' such as pastoral care, personal tutoring, representation on equality committees or heavy first year teaching loads were assigned less value for promotions purposes than roles perceived as 'male' such as research committee memberships, links with outside organisations/industry or postgraduate teaching roles. It seems, the more prestigious the role, the more likely it is to be seen as and thus filled by a male. Or conversely, if a role is seen as female and mostly filled by women it will lack recognition and prestige. This is clearly problematic if promotion truly is based almost entirely upon research, but it is still problematic if it is wrongly thought that it does. Women academics who believe their involvement in teaching and pastoral care is irrelevant to promotion may not apply for promotion. Line managers who share the view that teaching and pastoral care are unimportant may not support promotion applications by women who spend a lot of their time on teaching and pastoral care. Members of promotions committees looking at applications for regrading may be less willing to accept strong performance of a pastoral or teaching-related administrative role as evidence of the competencies required. The pervasiveness of gender stereotypes therefore has the potential to influence the operation of promotions criteria quite independently of the content of those criteria themselves.

The Old Boys Networks – Alive and Well?

The importance of networks as a factor in career progression cannot really be overstated. It appears crucial for two reasons. Firstly networking increases the profile and visibility of the academic concerned both within the institution and further afield; "The main currency...is reputation" (Becher 1990 p. 52). Academics who are well connected within their institution can rely on support from colleagues and those with networks outside the institution 'look good' for the university. The university's formal promotions criteria do include criteria that are outward looking - for example, networking is mentioned in both grade 9 and 10 academic role descriptors - and our respondents showed some awareness of the importance of this. Rebecca makes the point below in relation to promotion to professorial level but similar views were expressed in relation to moving from lecturer to senior lecturer

I actually think that the thing that does you well for being promoted is being a known face and sitting on committees, networking. Of course you have to have enough research to be seen as valid but I actually think that the networking, […] probably counts more than the research career, up to the chair level. [Rebecca, Senior, Female]

Secondly there is some evidence to suggest that many positions are awarded on the basis of informal networks even where departments go through the seemingly objective process of advertising and interviewing for a position (Gardiner et al 2007). Bagilhole and Goode (2001) claim that men and women rarely relate to each other as equals in professional circumstances and without access to

networks and senior mentors, female academics have little chance of progressing in the same way men do. Networks provide access to information about promotions rounds, available positions and importantly to the way the academic game is played. It is common for academics to use job offers from other universities to fast-track internal promotions applications (retention report) and so developing networks outside an academic's own institution might be relevant to promotion even if there are no formal criteria relating to national or international reputation. Talking to 'the right people' at the right time can significantly increase the chances of a successful promotions application.

It does still so often come down to a kind of old boys network and sort of dodgy handshakes under toilet doors and stuff. ... there are cliques in the place and if you're in then you're ok, but if you're out then you're not [David, Senior, Male]

This culture of cliques or networks is seen to disadvantage women who are less likely to have access to these networks. Ackers and Oliver (2005) suggest that "To the extent that networks play an important role in the career progression in science, differential access to and ability to generate such networks is a factor shaping the career progression of scientists with family/personal responsibilities and of women in particular"(p8). Handley (1994) has argued that women often find themselves on the periphery in organisations including universities and continues "[g]iven this situation it is not surprising that women are often excluded from the informal network and hence may not have immediate access to relevant information or the decision making network within the organization" (p12). She further notes that "The woman who is not part of the informal network does not receive information vital to understanding organizational life "(p12). According to Thanacoody et al (2006) "White (2003) claims that Australian universities continue to be "boys clubs" and that the skills needed for a successful academic career is part of

a socialisation process that some men and virtually no women participate in" (P539). It would appear from our research as well as other studies (Bagilhole and Goode 2001) that this is not a phenomenon peculiar to Australian universities. Our respondent Jamie sums this idea up succinctly in the quotation below from which the title of this chapter has been taken:

We don't have the key to the executive washroom, which is critical [Jamie, Senior Lecturer, Female]

The importance of networks lies not only in the visibility they give those within them or in the rather sinister idea of dodgy handshakes and deals made in 'executive washrooms' but also in the support and leadership they can provide. Many of our respondents talked about the importance of having support, strong and positive leadership, mentoring, role models and the management of staff. One of the perceived problems with the promotions criteria and process was the lack of transparency as discussed above and there was a sense that some of that could be overcome if the academic was well managed and supported. If the applicant cannot find out for herself what is required, a good mentor should assist and guide. Networks then are key to progression not only because there seems to be a hidden promotions criteria of 'being well connected' but also because networks allow academics to access information about procedures, processes and expectations that are not captured in any policy or formal document. It allows them to form a more accurate perception of what is expected to gain promotion regardless of what the formal criteria say. Women at all levels are not naturally part of these networks reinforcing what Lapointe Terosky and colleagues (2008) call the "Plexiglas room", making it hard for women to break into male dominated senior positions and forcing them to learn the 'academic game' by themselves.

While networks can provide some of these functions there is no guarantee that they will or

that those excluded from them will have access to alternatives. In order to fill this "gap", many universities have introduced a more formalised mentoring scheme (Gardiner et al 2007). Mentoring was seen as having the potential to play a big part in helping staff make the most of their careers at all levels (Gardiner et al 2007; Thanacoody et al 2006, Joiner et al 2004, Heward et al 1997). Thanacoody et al (2006) in their study of Australian and Mauritian contexts suggest that "Senior male mentors act as the gate-keepers in both cultural contexts providing female academics with access to resources and networks that enable them to move up the university hierarchy" (p550).

The University of Bradford operates a mentoring system, and we asked respondents both about their experience of it and about more informal mentoring they may have received. As our respondent Karen as well as a variety of scholars (Gardiner et al 2007; Thanacoody et al 2006, Joiner et al 2004, Heward et al 1997) have noted "*If the university seriously wants to address the issue [of gender equality] then the mentoring process is key"* [Karen, Lecturer, Female] Gardiner et al (2007) note that emotional and personal support is important but "they are not sufficient in terms of a large investment in time and money in a well-run mentoring scheme. As such, positive career outcomes also need to be established" (P429) Most respondents felt that they were well supported emotionally but other types of support were not so forthcoming. Sylvia highlights the problem, saying "Oh, *my mentor was lovely but my mentor didn't have the right skills and lacked the expertise to support me* [Sylvia, Lecturer, Female]

The mentoring role could be much better used by women and our respondent Rachel considered why there is not the same mentoring network amongst women as there seems to be amongst men. In other words, if there is an 'executive washroom' for men why is there not an equivalent for women?

I think often getting to the top in a historically male dominated position, women have to go through things that change them in order to fit in and get promoted and get up there and by the time they get up there and they have that autonomy or a possibility, they've become changed, they've denied themselves. You kept hidden all the things in you that might help other women get there, in order to get there yourself and by the time you get there you're so changed and these things are so hidden, you don't think to do any backtracking to make it a little bit more appropriate for women to come up after you, which is not what the men do. The men do the old school thing, that's why the other men climb up, but when women get there they don't do it, so they don't because that's the very thing that they don't like about men, they don't do that because they are women, nothing is changed on the way up for the next woman who has to climb up that way. I can understand why women do it, but if we don't make changes, it's like rebuilding the wheel every time. Every woman who breaks through that ceiling, it's not like it gets a little bit weaker; it's like we are closing the door behind us and putting all the same locks back on it instead of using that influence to consider how we might make things different and more enabling down that chain [Rachel, Lecturer, Female]

The HERA role descriptors give no indication that research takes primacy over other skills in applications, and this might suggest that the problem of a research focus perceived by Forster (2000) has in fact been removed. However, the reality is more complex, because the HERA role descriptors do not capture the way in which the reward and promotion system is perceived by academics working in the institution. There is a prevalent perception that research is the key to promotion and that long hours and less of a focus on pastoral care and teaching and learning are therefore a necessity. Being in the right networks or "having the key to the executive washroom" were also seen as important in helping academ-

ics achieve promotion. In the next section of this chapter, we will look at the implications of this apparent mismatch between perceptions and reality for the efforts of women academics to achieve promotion.

PROMOTIONS CRITERIA AS A TOOL FOR PERSONAL CAREER PLANNING

The preceding sections highlight the problems faced by academics seeking promotion and draw attention to the fact that some of these problems are likely to affect women and men differently thus putting women at a disadvantage when seeking career progression. Confusion about what the criteria are and how they operate is however worrying for another reason. In order to undertake any meaningful career planning academics need to plan strategically, taking on those roles and responsibilities which will assist them in promotion while avoiding those that will hinder them. A lack of transparency or a misunderstanding of what is required to progress can therefore have disastrous consequences for academics. If for example a new lecturer with a particular strength and interest in teaching and learning believes that they can achieve promotion on the basis of excellence in that area with less emphasis on research activity, they are likely to focus their attention on teaching and learning matters. If the criteria in their department are then interpreted and applied in a way that emphasises research, the new lecturer is likely to have to spend a significant amount of time and energy changing the focus of their activities, if indeed this is possible or desirable on a personal level.

As the section above on networks has highlighted, women are likely to benefit less from mentoring and networks within the institutions which could help them to work strategically towards achieving both the formal and hidden criteria

for promotion. In order for a promotions system to eliminate bias against particular approaches to an academic career, it has to have criteria which allow for career paths with different emphasis through academia and those criteria then have to be internalized by women academics; for them to be able to internalize the system, it has to be transparent and clear and unconflicting guidance from managers has to be given. Given the gate keeping role of line managers, it is not sufficient for academics themselves to fully understand the official criteria and their application as line managers may be interpreting them differently or be applying some of the hidden criteria discussed above. In other words managers themselves need to internalize the criteria and the extent to which line and senior managers have truly embraced the official transparent criteria which should allow for various pathways through an academic career remains questionable. In Bagilhole's (1993) words "…appraisers often reflect prevailing social expectations and attitudes which reinforce stereotypical expectations and assessments of women" (p. 435).

TRANSPARENCY AND FAIR PROCESS

An explicit goal of the new promotions process at the University of Bradford was to improve transparency. Lack of transparency in university systems has been criticised in earlier studies. Metcalf et al (2005) found that "The transparency of the procedures varied. It was clear that stated procedures and criteria were not universally followed and that staff had varying ideas on what these procedures and criteria were. …Many staff who had not yet considered promotion were unaware of the procedures and criteria. However, some other staff appeared not to know the actual procedure or criteria. A head of department in a new university thought this was, in part, the fault of the university, saying 'The criteria are

not always clear" (p180-181). It was hoped that the adoption of HERA role descriptors, a system of performance reviews and greater scrutiny of what happened at promotions committees would result in greater transparency and fairness at Bradford: our study suggests that this may not yet have happened

In one respect, the Bradford procedures are fair and transparent: the role descriptors used for the regrading process are available to all through the university's intranet. This study did not interview line managers about how they decided whether to recommend a candidate for promotion, nor did it consider the decisions made by promotions committees at School or University level. It is not possible to say, therefore, whether line managers and committees themselves followed the formal criteria. However, some of our respondents doubted whether they did.

It's a bit disturbing that there are areas where there are quite staggering differences in practice, I'm not thinking particularly of personnel, but quite staggering differences in practice across the university schools. [Julie, Senior, Female]

Another respondent mentioned a committee making use of a department-specific checklist:

April: [The promotions panel] literally have bullet points and if you meet them all, they have to think of a really good excuse not to give you it [...] if I meet each of these bullet points then I have a really good chance [April, Lecturer, Female]

This checklist was shown to the panel member: it was not the HERA role descriptor and was not a document available on the Faculty's own website. The respondent then added that she herself only received a copy when she attended the promotions panel meeting.

But in any event, publication of job descriptors and transparency at the point when a decision is made about promotion are not the only requirements for a system that is genuinely fair or transparent. Promotion in academia is slow and many years may pass between each promotion: there are seven increment points in the Lecturer B band on the Bradford pay structure, and four further optional increments above that, suggesting it would not be unlikely for promotion from Lecturer B to Senior Lecturer to take seven or more years. Decisions made over a number of years are crucial to whether that promotion will occur. The belief, whether correct or not, that the true criteria differ from the formal criteria, adds to the complexity of individual academics' career planning.

Transparency and fairness therefore require an academic to have access to and a clear understanding of promotions criteria throughout their career, not just at the moment when a decision is made about whether they now satisfy them. A decision to reject an administrative post in favour of retaining research time, or a decision to focus on teaching rather than research, may not at the time be clearly a decision that is about promotion, but if those decisions are made without adequate information or support, then no amount of fairness in the University promotions committee will rescue the application. Many of our respondents lacked this kind of information; as indicated earlier in this chapter, they were not very familiar with the HERA job descriptors, did not know much about what promotion involved or required, and their picture of what they needed to do was often incomplete or at odds with the university's formal criteria. The authors themselves completed the university induction process in, respectively, 2006 and 2007: promotion was not covered during the two day induction. Whether the problem is that that the formal and informal criteria are different, or that there is widespread ignorance of the formal criteria, this points to a lack of transparency.

The other way in which our findings cast doubt upon both transparency and fairness is embedded in the whole idea of 'regrading' rather than promoting academics. As noted earlier, regrading is a

retrospective process, and in order for an academic to be regarded they need to have already taken on new responsibilities or developed new skills, above those they possessed on appointment. The new promotions procedure is closely allied to an annual performance review system, but there are various ways in which this aspect of promotion lacks transparency and can result in unfairness. The university's guidance to staff preparing for annual reviews contains a number of things "to think about"; these do not include reviewing the role descriptor for the next role and considering what might be done to develop the skills not currently demonstrated. Academics are asked about their own perception of the previous year's performance, their objectives for the forthcoming year, and any training they need. There is no overlap in the language of performance review documents and those of role descriptors. As a result, the performance review system is a haphazard method of educating academics about what promotion requires, and assisting them to meet it, and yet it is through this system that decisions are made by line managers about whether to recommend a particular academic for promotion.

Another source of potential unfairness lies in the way in which line managers and Heads of Schools allocate administrative roles. Our respondents were clear that not all administrative jobs were equal: some were seen as the key to advancement, others as the "kiss of death". Given that regrading requires a lecturer to be performing the job of a senior lecturer, and that administrative responsibilities are central to this (at least, according to the job descriptors), lack of transparency in the allocation of these jobs is a precursor to a lack of fairness in the eventual promotions process itself. One respondent said about her appointment to a senior position in her School, that a senior manager just "put his arm around me" and said that she should be given the position. "*So in terms of getting that job, it wasn't fair and it wasn't open, but he wanted me urgently*

to play that role, to have some authority." [Amber Senior, Female]

Finally, our respondents often commented on their reluctance to put themselves forward, to take the risk of failure or rejection. This is not solely a problem at the time when a promotions application is made: an aversion to risk, will also mean that some women academics do not volunteer for the very tasks that they need to be doing in order to be promoted. This is also the point at which difficulty with taking on additional workload, because of caring responsibilities, may impact. The promotions committee may be gender blind, but gendered decisions both by women academics and their line managers filter out many cases for promotion before they ever reach those committees.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This chapter has attempted to highlight a further aspect of women's progression in academia by drawing attention to the way in which formal and hidden criteria operate in promotion in a UK institution and highlighting the impact the perception held by academics of criteria can have on their chances of gaining promotion. In order to fully understand how to address the continuing underrepresentation of women in senior positions in academia more work needs to be done on understanding how promotions criteria are perceived. The mismatch we detected between what the criteria are, what they are perceived to be and how they are applied needs to be understood fully so that it can be addressed. Our research indicates that the issues raised in this study are fundamental to promotion in academia. Other studies cited in this chapter would suggest that ours is not the only institution to face these issues but further research in this area would increase our understanding of how inequalities can be better addressed.

CONCLUSION

Our study reinforces the results from previous work on women in academia. It also however goes further by considering how academic staff perceive promotion and rewards processes in one institution in the UK.

We found a mismatch between what academics think the criteria for promotion are, what the criteria actually are and how the criteria then operated on the ground. This mismatch can have particularly serious consequences for women academics for a number of reasons. Research shows that women are less likely to break into institutional networks which allow them to access information not only on formal and objective promotions criteria but also on hidden criteria and the way the 'academic game' is played. This results in female academics having a perception of promotions criteria and processes which may actually not be accurate or which is formally accurate but which operates differently in their schools or departments. This, coupled with women's reluctance to promote themselves actively and traditional barriers to promotion such as caring responsibilities, puts women at a disadvantage when attempting to progress into more senior positions within universities.

The effect of the HERA role evaluations on the promotions process is to create a one-size-fits-all job description for academics. There are two ways in which this may impact on women in SET disciplines. The first is SET specific. The nature of an individual academic's job in reality may differ across academic disciplines: for instance, not all disciplines have a culture of collaborative or inter-disciplinary work. If concepts of the academic role that are not actually universal are embedded in role descriptions, those working in academic disciplines that do not conform may be disadvantaged. The second impact of the process is that it may potentially discriminate against women more generally. The difficulties our respondents encountered with balancing home responsibilities with work and their general risk-averse approach

to promotion may mean that they are even less likely to pursue regrading. If taking on a major administrative role is a precondition of regrading, rather than something that follows promotion, women who are uncertain about their promotion prospects may conduct a personal risk assessment and choose not to take on that role, because the cost is too high when eventual regrading is so uncertain. It is not possible to conclude whether the move to a single spine will have these effects as yet, as the process is in its infancy, but it is something that should be studied in more detail in the future.

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ENDNOTE

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