ADVANCING THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL SCIENCE and

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Relations

IN NEW ZEALAND

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Table of Contents

**Executive Summary2**

Barriers2

Strategies4

**Introduction5**

**Section One - Barriers6**

Leaky Pipelines6

Chilly Climate8

Culture of Research11

Double Bind13

Gender Roles14

Chronological Crunch15

**Section Two - Workshops17**

***Participants’ experiences***17

***Strategies for change*** 20

**Section Three – Concluding Remarks 25**

**References and Further Reading………………………………………………………………………………………………….28**

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the “Advancing the Status of Women in Political Science in New Zealand” workshop, held on Monday 26th November 2012. The workshop discussed barriers impeding the progress of female political scientists within the New Zealand discipline, and considered multiple strategies to overcome them. It is hoped that both the workshop and this report’s recommendations provide momentum for continued efforts to improve the status of women in the discipline. The executive summary will discuss the most significant barriers and strategies highlighted in the workshop.

It should be noted that the barriers identified here were not reported uniformly across all departments in New Zealand; some departments seem to be doing better than others, although women from all departments in New Zealand identified at least some of the barriers below. Hence, the strategies arising from the workshop were thought likely to benefit all departments, and accord with strategies identified in similar reports published in other countries.

# Barriers

*Leaky Pipeline:* The status of women in the field of political science in New Zealand reflects the status of female academics generally; while there has been some enhancement in terms of their numeric composition of the discipline, there remains much room for improvement. Whereas women comprised only 6.8%[[1]](#footnote-1) of the discipline between 1975-1980, they now constitute 32.6%.[[2]](#footnote-2) However, this presence is not evenly distributed across various rungs of the academic ladder. Specifically, female undergraduate and postgraduate students outnumber their male colleagues, but the reverse becomes true immediately upon entry into academia. The gap between men and women is least significant at lecturer level (36.8% female representation),[[3]](#footnote-3) but becomes much more pronounced at professorial and associate professorial levels (22.45% female representation).[[4]](#footnote-4)

*Chilly Climate*: Some female students and academics reported feeling less confident interacting with male supervisors and colleagues, respectively. With regard to the latter, there was some perception that inhospitable environments derive from the existence of “old boys’ clubs” at both a departmental and discipline-wide level across New Zealand. Such environments have the potential to significantly impede a female political scientist’s ability to successfully network, the likelihood of her being encouraged to publish, and opportunities for her promotion. Furthermore, the nature of such discrimination in some New Zealand departments has become subtle rather than overt, problematizing its identification and resolution.

*Culture of Research*: Definitions of success within the political science discipline in New Zealand, as globally, continue to have gendered implications to the detriment of female academics. Problematic definitions of success have been aggravated by the introduction of Performance Based Research Funding. More research needs to be done to increase our understanding of how the current research climate might impact differently on men and women.

*Double Bind:* The double bind has two distinct manifestations in the discipline across New Zealand – one with regard to the effects of students’ perceptions of both professionalism and femininity, and the other with regard to departmental culture. The former occurs because of often unconscious conflicts between societal definitions of femininity and those of professionalism. Such conflicts have the potential to make it more difficult for female political scientists to meet student expectations than it is for their male colleagues, affecting mechanisms such as student evaluations. Similarly, there is a double blind phenomenon for women in the context of administrative policy making. Women, due to pregnancy and early child-care needs, require policies such as flexible leave, stopped tenure clocks (or leave periods acknowledged for PBRF), and family leave. However, the very same policies, and women’s need to speak out to get those policies enacted, end up stigmatizing women. This defeats the intended purpose of such policies.

*Gender “Roles”*: Female political scientists reported that they felt more likely to be pigeonholed into service roles, which are perceived as less important than research outputs. However, even when women take up positions of institutional power, their power can be devalued when they are possessed by women. Furthermore, the “ideal academic” remains a male construction, and multiple career paths (for example, incorporating breaks) must be recognized as legitimate career choices. Some women reported that they felt there was a double bind for women for women here as well: the model academic continues to be based around a typical male lifestyle (which does not suit women who choose to have children, or who have other caring roles), but even when women do try to conform to a ‘model academic’ role they are not always taken as seriously as their male-counterparts, or when they are, it counts negatively against them in terms of perceived collegiality.

*Chronological Crunch*: The most professionally demanding periods of a female political scientist’s life are likely to intersect with the years of her heaviest family responsibilities. Early female academics in New Zealand are less likely than their male colleagues to feel that their partners are supportive of their work, and are more likely to feel that childcare is a constraint on their career in terms of reduction in hours and time off work.

# Strategies

Participants considered multiple strategies through which to counter the aforementioned problems. A comprehensive list of ideas can be found later in this report – however, seven ideas in particular were judged to be feasible and effective:

1. There is a need to ensure that departments, programs, or schools provide an open and welcoming environment for female faculty and students. Achievement of this first step facilitates the pursuit of further change. Some suggestions as to how this might be done are included later in this report. (See p. 20)
2. There must be greater transparency in practices at the level of departments, schools, or programs, particularly with regard to recruitment and promotion protocol.
3. Remits can be a powerful tool in collating evidence. Thus, Human Resources departments ought to undertake gender audits of faculties and provide appropriate strategies for the improvement of identified inequalities.
4. “Best practices” relating to women in political science internationally should be identified and disseminated. See the references section at the end of this report.
5. The creation of “women in leadership” in-house programs within universities, or cross-departmentally was favoured by many participants. Some universities already operate such a programme, although not all participants were aware of the programme, or knew of any women in their Department who had been invited to participate. *Mentoring* is critical to professional development, and female students and academics are less likely to be mentored than their male colleagues. Mentoring databases may assist in countering this. Thus, a database of individual research interests at the level of the NZPSA may be created, listing individuals willing to mentor in their areas of expertise, and facilitating their connection with students or young academics harbouring similar interests
6. Different criteria for measuring a success programme and model academic ought to be encouraged. For example, heads of schools or departments can proactively reward, and thereby encourage, actions such as collegial behaviour.
7. Participants supported the creation of a blog or website at the level of the New Zealand Political Studies Association, detailing events and new research pertinent to improving the status of women in the discipline within New Zealand. Such an endeavour would require an editorial team and regular contributors.

Introduction

The “Advancing the Status of Women in Political Science in New Zealand” workshop took place on Monday 26th November 2012. It was held at Victoria University, Wellington, to coincide with the 2012 New Zealand Political Studies Association conference. Small grants for the workshop were kindly provided by *Political Science*, the School of History, Philosophy, Political Science and International Relations at Victoria University of Wellington, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Victoria University of Wellington, and the William Evans Trust at Otago University. The workshop was organised by Dr Kate McMillan of Victoria University of Wellington and Dr Carla Lam of Otago University. Aysser Al-Janabi provided invaluable administrative and organisational assistance. Kate McMillan and Carla Lam would also like to thank Aysser Al Janabi for writing the first draft of this report.

The workshop’s aims were to explore reasons for the under-representation of women in the academic discipline of political science and its sub-fields in New Zealand, as well as to consider strategies to improving the status of women in the discipline. Particular emphasis was placed on structural impediments to progression, in addition to barriers individually faced. A website was established prior to the workshop to house details on the event, as well as relevant literature on issues of women in the discipline and across academia. The website is still accessible.[[5]](#footnote-5)

The workshop ran as a full-day event in three blocks. The morning session consisted of five presentations on diverse aspects of the status of women in political science and academia generally, whereas the afternoon sessions consisted of two workshops on barriers and strategies, facilitated by Victoria University of Wellington Associate Dean, Dr Kathryn Sutherland. Forty-three female academics and students attended the workshop, the first of its kind in New Zealand, and many participants expressed wishes for the convening of similar events in the future.

Section One – Barriers

Global research on the status and progress of women in academia has identified multiple barriers to continued success and improvement. This section of the report will analyse these barriers and identify the ways in which they have manifested within a New Zealand context. Below, six barriers are discussed – the “leaky pipeline”, the existence of a “chilly climate”, a problematic “culture of research”, the “double bind” of gender and professional identities, standardized gender roles, and the “chronological crunch”.[[6]](#footnote-6)

# Leaky Pipeline

The under-representation of women in academia is a fact beyond dispute, and much literature has sought to explore this phenomenon.[[7]](#footnote-7) The problem of under-representation occurs in two different ways: women not only constitute a minority of academics in most fields, but they are also more likely to occupy lower rungs of the professional ladder than their male counterparts. This seems to be the case despite increased numbers of female undergraduate and postgraduate students. Moreover, the phenomenon can be observed globally – for example in the UK, women comprise less than a third of political scientists overall, and only 12% of professorial roles.[[8]](#footnote-8)

The “leaky pipeline” has emerged in the literature as a popular metaphor to explain the wide-spread under-representation of women in all branches of academia. A functional pipeline assumes no leaks or barriers – but this is manifestly not the case in academia. Thus, the metaphor is designed to explore why a healthy “stream” of women at entry-level into the profession has not translated into an equally healthy level of representation at its highest levels. It seeks to identify the points of a career trajectory at which leaks are most likely to occur, as well as to explain the reasons for such “leaks”. Although the metaphor is heavily employed in pertinent literature, it best explains the status quo when considered in tandem with other barriers, explored later in this report.

The relevance of “leaky pipeline” to the New Zealand context was affirmed by Sandra Grey and Suzanne McNabb in a presentation entitled “Women in the Academy in New Zealand.” They noted that the pipeline in New Zealand is most susceptible to leaks between the completion of a PhD and the first academic position. Thus, women outnumber men in the attainment of Bachelor degrees across tertiary institutions, and there are greater numbers of female students enrolled at Honours, Masters and PhD levels in the “society and culture” fields of academy (of which political science is a part). However, the transition from study to academia profession witnesses the beginning of a gender gap, and from the outset, there is no parity.

Thus, despite their prevalence as students, women comprise 46% of the total academic workforce, but hold 22.45% of professorial and associate professorial positions domestically.[[9]](#footnote-9) Such significant under-representation is masked within departments by two factors: first, the presence of female administrative staff can conceal departmental gender disparity; and second, female academic staff are more likely to hold unsecured or part-time positions. The latter factor has become particularly important of late – heightened financial constraints on departmental expenditure have led to the creation of more part-time rather than full-time positions, and women have increasingly found themselves in such roles.

In a second presentation entitled “Women and Political Science in New Zealand: The State of the Discipline”, Jennifer Curtin presented raw data from a recent study, which established that the status of New Zealand women in the academy generally reflects the status of New Zealand women in the field of political Science. Her research, published in the July 2013 issue of *Political Science,* marks the first detailed study to be undertaken on the issue.[[10]](#footnote-10) She reported that although there has been significant and visible progress in terms of women as a proportion of the discipline, barriers continue to exist.

Between 1975-1980, women comprised only 6.8% of the discipline; this rose to 12.5% between 1996-2002, and Curtin noted that such a jump reflects trends observed in other countries such as Australia, Canada, the UK, and the USA (although the New Zealand “jump” occurred much later than in all the aforementioned countries).[[11]](#footnote-11) Presently, only 29 of 89 political scientists in New Zealand are female,[[12]](#footnote-12) or 32.6%, which falls below the 46% representation mark across academia outlined by Grey and McNabb. Furthermore, women are more likely to be employed in the lower echelons of the profession – the gap between male and female achievement is at its lowest at entry levels, and widens with each successive rung up the ladder, culminating in a significant disparity at professorial level. Thus, while 36.3% and 35.1% of women are lecturers and senior lecturers respectively, women only hold 26.7% of professorial and associate professorial positions. Although this final statistic is marginally better than the 22.45% average across the academy, it remains below that of women as a proportion of the discipline, which is 32.6%.[[13]](#footnote-13)

This is compounded by an asymmetry of female representation across political science departments across the country. Thus, the Massey, AUT and Lincoln departments lead the way in terms of percentage of female academics, whereas others such as Otago, Auckland, Victoria and Waikato fall behind. Importantly, the percentages of female political scientists in the latter four departments all fell below the 32.6% national representation margin. Women constitute 28.6% of the department at the University of Otago, 25% at the University of Auckland, 22.2% at Victoria University, and only 11% at the University of Waikato.[[14]](#footnote-14) The reasons for such cross-departmental disparity are unclear. One hypothesis is that departments falling into the former category are more interdisciplinary than the rest, but this assertion has yet to be validated by research.[[15]](#footnote-15)

# Chilly Climate

Much international research has also pointed to the existence of a “chilly climate” for women in the academy – that is, a perception by female academics that the institutional climate is easier for their male colleagues to navigate, and, additionally, presents a number of obstacles to women academics.[[16]](#footnote-16) The “chilly climate” is thus a second metaphor that has evolved from pertinent literature to explore issues of female academic under-representation. In a 2004 report on “Women’s Advancement in Political Science”, the American Political Science Association explained the phenomenon with reference to institutional climates that are “inhospitable” to female students and staff, whereby the provision of opportunities for professional development and mentoring is gendered.[[17]](#footnote-17) Furthermore, there is a lack of female access to formal and informal professional networks, resulting in exclusion from “unofficial flows of information” within departments, further impeding progress.[[18]](#footnote-18)

The international research also indicates that female students feel less able to interact with their supervisors, and female academics feel they have to “earn” the respect of their colleagues. They are correspondingly less likely to report being encouraged to publish or to receive help publishing, or to receive information about the political science job market. However, the problem of “chilly climates” is as much in their invisibility as in their results. Specifically, male academics rarely recognize the existence of such a climate, and often believe that their “institutional environments” are hospitable to female colleagues.[[19]](#footnote-19) More problematically, female academics are likely to internalize feelings of unhappiness with their institutional climate, and are prone to blame themselves for poor supervision or inhospitable treatment to which they have been subjected.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Presentations and discussions throughout the workshop reinforced the salience of this barrier to the institutional environment of political science faculties in New Zealand. In a presentation on the importance of networking, Professor Elizabeth McLeay spoke extensively of how chilly climates impeded the professional development of female political scientists in New Zealand. For example, many “old boys’ networks” continue to exist within the field, subtly precluding women from many research, funding and publication opportunities. This was affirmed by Kathryn Sutherland’s presentation on “Success in Academia”, which explored the experiences of female early career academics in New Zealand universities. Sutherland noted that 84% of males identified access to important networks as a pivotal factor to their professional success, whereas only 36% of women reported experiencing similar benefits from networks.[[21]](#footnote-21)

McLeay noted that academics are exposed to multiple layers of networks in their career, and that some are more difficult to navigate than others; in New Zealand, she noted that female academics had particular problems in the navigation of specialist networks. This is problematic, as successful infiltration of these networks is especially imperative to professional success. McLeay argued that the recognition derived from a heightened profile in one’s specialist field is likely to lead to more extensive publication, invitations to speak, and opportunities for international recruitment. However, old boys’ networks continue to dominate formal and informal specialist networks in New Zealand, problematizing development opportunities for women. Furthermore, although some specialist networks have been chaired by female academics, gender parity has generally failed to trickle down into their structure.

However, intra-departmental climates are equally “chilly”. Sutherland argued for the extension of the famous adage that “it’s not what you know, but who you know” – specifically, it is equally important to know *how to know* who to know. Such knowledge must be taught and learned, and cannot be gleaned from a textbook. Thus, if an early career academic is not acculturated into the social knowledge of their academic environment, they may be significantly disadvantaged throughout their career. Sutherland noted that 84% of male academics felt that they had experienced such guidance as someone’s “protégé”, whereas only 35% of women reported experiencing such mentoring.

Morning presentations thus affirmed that intellectual merit and research output are not the sole determinants of professional success – rather, the institutional climate, and an individual’s perception of how it receives them, can similarly contribute to the success or hindrance of career trajectories. However, the difficulty of navigating departmental culture lies in the changing nature of discrimination, from overt to more subtle forms. This problematizes the identification of discrimination, and renders countering it a more challenging task. However, it is equally important to acknowledge that overt discrimination continues to exist; Sutherland noted that 25% of early female academics had experienced cases of overt discrimination in their professional life. Conversely 0% of their male counterparts reported such experiences.[[22]](#footnote-22)

# Culture of Research

International research has confirmed the existence of a “culture of research” that is more conducive to the success of male academics than their female counterparts, particularly through the provision of greater opportunities.[[23]](#footnote-23) Specifically, the American Political Science Association noted that such cultures “offer insufficient opportunity and support for col­laboration, peer work-shopping of drafts, idea-sharing, and networking across, and within, institutions.”[[24]](#footnote-24) Definitions of success within political science are also narrow and rigidly entrenched, to the detriment of female academics, and are reinforced by the institutional mechanisms through which performance is assessed.

Sutherland highlighted the differences between professional and personal definitions of success within the field, and noted their gendered implications. Institutional definitions of success are performative and quantifiable – for example, research output and grant funding. Comparatively, individual determinants of success were more likely to be intangible and non-performative, with a greater emphasis on matters such as teaching, researching, and striking an appropriate work life/family life balance. Although female academics are often concerned with the latter, institutional barometers of success focus almost exclusively on the former.[[25]](#footnote-25) McLeay similarly argued that there has been a commercialization of university life, where research output is the predominant gauge of success in New Zealand academia – thus, efficient work and quick-fire publication now pervade departmental cultures.[[26]](#footnote-26)

In countries like the UK, such cultures of research are facilitated by research-based performance assessment/funding grants such as the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). These arguably privilege masculine practices within academia, such that the definition of quality carries invisible gendered connotations. In New Zealand, Performance Based Research Funding (PBRF) was highlighted as a comparable component of this barrier. PBRF is a scheme designed with a heavy research focus, constructed to allocate funding on the basis of research performance.[[27]](#footnote-27) Quality is assessed through a combination of research degree completion, the amount of external research funding an institution receives, and the evaluation of individual research performance. Grey and McNabb argued that PBRF does not operate in a gender-neutral way; its research-output focus disadvantages women to achieve lower scores than men, and given that funding and promotions are heavily contingent on PBRF scores, the system significantly affects chances of female promotion. Additionally, more men presently qualify for and are entered into PBRF – roughly 4203 men to 2532 women.[[28]](#footnote-28) Moreover, pregnancy and maternity leaves are not adequately factored into PBRF assessments. Grey and McNabb argued for the need to recognize multiple types of scholarly contributions. Thus, teaching and dissemination of information must be recognized as a pivotal element of a contemporary academic’s career. Unfortunately, in New Zealand, working as a public intellectual is treated with much less prestige than production of formal publications. Indeed, one may be penalized for focus on such matters – promotions may be withheld due to a perceived lack of research focus.[[29]](#footnote-29) However, McLeay argued for the importance of these roles, despite their consistent undervaluation, in that working as a public intellectual brings a researcher into contact with governmental bodies, media, and NGOs. It can be extremely beneficial to talk to people from outside the academic profession, and it may demonstrate that one’s work is publicly relevant and noteworthy. Likewise, it may also open up other doors – for example, it has benefits in networking, and in invitations to speak.[[30]](#footnote-30)

McLeay argued for the importance of agency in countering these problems. Thus, while structural impediments must be brought to the fore and countered, it is equally important to capitalize on one’s intellectual and emotional prowess in bettering one’s situation. For example, it is pivotal to actively seek out involvement in specialist networks pertinent to one’s research interests. McLeay noted that publication and delivery of papers at conferences is insufficient to succeed – rather, further engagement with peer groups is pivotal to familiarize other academics with one’s work. This can be achieved by judicious networking decisions – for example, attending specialist rather than general workshops and conferences. This facilitates working, and the smaller size of such gatherings is conducive to greater visibility. It is equally important to embrace selectivity – thus, female academics should not shy away from only choosing networks that consolidate one’s existing output, which have established publication records, and which are financed well enough to pay fares or subsidize publications.[[31]](#footnote-31)

However, another troubling dimension exists within the aforementioned “culture of research”, in that within political science, some subject areas are more highly valued than others. Kantola has argued that women “perceived the existence of hierarchies in different topics”, and discussed the “narrow, traditional terms” in which political science is understood.[[32]](#footnote-32) Feminism is thus considered a marginal ideology across departments, rather than as a legitimate theoretical perspective commanding respect. Comparatively, male students researching self-understood “marginal” topics did not experience similar insecurities, and “felt that their research topics were widely accepted irrespective of their uniqueness.”[[33]](#footnote-33) Troublingly, such attitudes towards feminist theory are passed down to new generations of students through the curricular marginalization of feminist perspectives, (including the disestablishment of women’s studies programmes), an issue highlighted by participants in the afternoon sessions.[[34]](#footnote-34)

# Double Bind

The double bind refers to the dual burden encountered by female academics in the course of their responsibilities. Specifically, they must be both professional and yet “womanly” – however, because the former is often constructed as excluding the latter, female academics will invariably “come short” in at least one regard.[[35]](#footnote-35) This often comes to light in standard mechanisms such as student evaluations. Thus, students generally expect female academic staff to be more nurturing, and punish them in evaluations if they perceive that such gentleness is not forthcoming. However, because of this same expectation, women are also perceived to be less “respectable” or “professional,” regardless of their degree of expertise in their field. Men, however, are not subject to these different expectations, *qua* male and *qua* academic. Thus, female academics are judged upon several grounds which their male colleagues do not have to endure, and each outcome demonstrates a cost that women academics alone must bear.

However, the double bind also manifests itself through other means – thus, even though there are policies which are capable of counteracting the particular pressures female academics have to face, they may be censured for using them. Thus, although the existence of family leave is an important dimension of employment policy, and ideally facilitates the participation and progression of women in their discipline, women may in fact be subtly criticized for *using* these policies. This creates a problematic environment, where the struggle for the achievement of favourable policy initiatives is counteracted by the construction of taboos around using them. Furthermore, speaking out about such problematic cultures does not facilitate solutions, because women perceived to actively seek or promote such measures are likely to be perceived as hostile by their male colleagues. In the afternoon workshops, many participants expressed a hesitation to pursue formal complaint mechanisms for precisely these reasons. This is further demonstrative of the “double bind” in which female academics find themselves – both remaining quiet and speaking out entail considerable costs.

# Gender “Roles”

Monroe *et al*. have argued that “positions lose their aura of status, power and authority when held by women. These positions often become treated as a service or support roles until they are re-occupied by men.”[[36]](#footnote-36) Likewise, Valian argues that women are pigeonholed into time-demanding positions because they are perceived as less likely than male colleagues to resist. Thus a belief that “women will not behave in an entitled manner” means that they will often be relied on to carry out “institutional housework”, in the manner of what several participants referred to as the “department wife”.[[37]](#footnote-37)

Furthermore, the ideal academic itself remains a construction, and gendered male. The role demands extensive travel – both short-term for study, and long-term for work – a maintenance of networks, and the expenditure of long hours. Grey and McNabb thus noted that it is imperative to reconceptualise the definition of academia to change prevailing attitudes towards women in political science, and academia as a whole. Presently, most universities perpetuate only one way to be an academic, focused on research production. Grey and McNabb noted the importance of adding value, and recognizing multiple career paths – thus, paths incorporating breaks, or work in the private sphere must be recognized as valid career choices. Likewise, teaching and disseminating information are both important components of an academic’s career, and must be recognized as such. Suggestions that such a problem can be countered by ceasing care work altogether are indicative of significant devaluation, which is problematic given that such work is more likely to be carried out by female academic staff.[[38]](#footnote-38)

However, McLeay argued that although this problem was largely institutional, agency in these matters remains possible. For example, women must be prepared to take leadership positions, such as chairing the meeting rather than taking the minutes. They must also be comfortable with actively demonstrating a reluctance to assume the role of “department wife” and its corresponding duties.[[39]](#footnote-39)

There were discussions amongst participants later in the afternoon that it was important to revalue such roles rather than to abdicate them entirely.

# Chronological Crunch

The chronological crunch is often explained in terms of a temporal overlap. The years in which female academics encounter the most significant research, publication and service pressures tend to intersect with the years of most stringent family responsibility. Family responsibilities are made more difficult by the fact that most professional women tend marry professional men, whereas academic responsibilities are exacerbated by the aforementioned commercialization of university life, explored by McLeay.

Timperley noted that women who choose academia as a career suffer personally as well as professionally. Many men in academia marry and have children, but feel that such choices do not necessarily hamper their careers. This is often a manifestation of wider cultural features – thus, male academics are more likely to have partners capable of and willing to stay at home, and to shift location in pursuit of more lucrative positions. Comparatively, female academics do not enjoy similar freedoms with regard to their partners. Thus, if promotion occurs, it is likely to mean advancement in the same department of the same university.

These findings were corroborated by Sutherland, who reported that female early career academics in New Zealand experienced the problem of such barriers. Thus, whereas 81% of young male academics in her study felt that their partners were supportive of their work, only 32% of young female academics reported feeling the same. This by no means suggests that 68% of female academics have unsupportive partners – rather, Sutherland noted that the interviewees simply did not *speak* of their partners as being so. Likewise, only 37% of male academics suggested that childcare was a constraint on their career, in terms of reduction in hours and time off work, whereas 64% of female academics reported feeling such a restraint.[[40]](#footnote-40) Many male academics seem to enjoy the privilege of a partner at home who can keep a house running. Many female academics, on the other hand, are expected to simultaneously perform these functions, as well as juggling their careers.

Section Two

The afternoon sessions comprised two workshops, both facilitated by Dr Kathryn Sutherland, which encouraged participants to contribute their own experiences and ideas to the discussion. The value of this session was in demonstrating the links between theory and practice across departments in New Zealand, and many theoretical trends were affirmed by anecdotal evidence.

# Workshop One - Barriers

The first workshop focused on the issue of barriers. Participants were divided into smaller groups and were asked to discuss two questions. One, does a given barrier, of the list discussed in “Section One” of this report, apply in New Zealand? Two, if so, to what extent does it apply? Following the group element of the session, participants reconvened for a wider discussion session.

*Chilly Climate*

Participants were unanimous in agreeing that a chilly climate permeated political science departments across New Zealand. Chilly climates operated through both overt and subtle means – thus, although bullying was outlined as a possible result, invisible manifestations such as gender-specific hierarchies may also result. Participants agreed that invisible means of exclusion were more prevalent in political science departments. For example, chilly climates often permeated faculty cultures, such that gendered language or comments were the norm, and the gender impact of choices or policies was either subject to concealment or indifference. Furthermore, institutional features such as PBRF were deemed to encourage the chilly climate, compromising departmental collegiality.

A particularly troubling result of chilly climates is the extent to which female staff have accepted the burden of chilly climate results. Most participants expressed a willingness to bring attention to overt instances of bullying and gender discrimination. However, given that most exclusion is subtle and informal, women often unnecessarily blamed themselves for exclusionary results, often attributing a lack of progression to personal shortcomings. Departments failed to recognize that women may be more reluctant to apply for promotion due to a lack of encouragement, which was often more readily forthcoming for male academics. Implicit bias was also noted as a potential issue (see references below for research findings on implicit gender bias)

Participants noted that a lot of variation exists between departments with regard to the effects of the chilly climate. The possibility of developing “best practices” was thus suggested. Participants also warned against the danger of presuming that the presence of women eased the way for the presence of more women. Specifically, it was important to acknowledge that women were equally capable of creating and contributing to a chilly climate – and participants noted that it was particularly difficult to articulate this perception.

*Double Bind*

The double bind manifested in two distinct ways – amongst colleagues, and amongst students, with discussion focusing on the latter. Students expect female academics to be more compassionate and “nurturing,” but penalize them for being so. This most often manifests in student evaluations, where gendered perceptions may dictate the grades assigned by students, which in turn may affect intra-departmental perceptions of staff, and affect opportunities for promotion.

Participants argued for multiple mechanisms of teaching evaluation – two possibilities were attendance records and teaching workshops. With regard to standard teaching evaluations, participants argued that it may be handy to analyse assessments with colleagues, and to construct a narrative that accounts for variations. Furthermore, there was also a call for recognition of the existence of multiple binds – thus, the progression of female academics in their field is affected not only by gender, but also by other considerations such as ethnicity and sexuality.

*Gender Devaluation*

Participants agreed that although service roles constitute a significant element of departmental work, their operation is far from gender-neutral. Specifically, this is fast becoming invisible and unpaid work, despite the fact that it is both highly important and considerably time-consuming. Participants expressed the view that because women are more likely to assume such duties, and because such duties are generally under-valued, the significant contribution of female academics in their area sometimes remained unacknowledged by their colleagues. The effect of such commitments on a female academic’s ability to research thus remains unspoken.

There were mixed responses as to how such problems could best be tackled. Some argued that female academic staff should grow more comfortable with refusing such roles. Alternatively, it was possible to distinguish between different *types* of service roles. For example, some service was more strategic than the rest, and female staff should be willing to make such distinctions and assume responsibilities on that basis. However, others argued that female staff should not be forced into “not caring”. Specifically, many reported enjoying service work, and believed that it contributed to the improvement of the discipline. The latter group advocated changing attitudes to service work above all else.

*Research Culture*

A male-orientated research culture was deemed to exist across departments in New Zealand, manifesting in several ways. Some participants said rigid views about the type of research that constitutes political science tended to overlap with areas helmed by men, such as highly theoretical “classical” political science. These are valued much more highly than areas likely to be helmed by women, such as interdisciplinary research, qualitative research, and feminist research. Participants identified this as a barrier to both the status of women within the discipline, as well as an impediment to the development of the discipline itself. Furthermore, it was argued that the discipline is too competitive and reliant on discourses of critique. Thus, the most acceptable way of engaging with other academics and their work is unfortunately to “demolish” it. Such a research culture is not only difficult to perform, but it is equally difficult to learn, although it remains “expected knowledge” for participants in the discipline. This is a particular problem for female academics, given that women are less likely to participate in the informal networks that facilitate the learning of such behaviours, particularly when they are new.

Roughly half of participants indicated that this barrier affected their own work, and several strategies were floated as potential solutions. For example, women’s writing groups within departments were suggested as a mechanism to both facilitate research as well as operating as support networks. This could serve as a pivotal networking opportunity for postgraduate students and early-career academics, and it can build confidence to submit to journals. However, other problems that arise from this barrier are more difficult to counter. For example, the research culture determines much of how funding is allocated through PBRF – thus, it may be necessary to frame one’s work in different ways to be eligible.

*Chronological Crunch*

The chronological crunch is typically understood as a conflict, whereby the stages of an academic career with the heaviest research and publication demands coincide with the years of heaviest familial duty. However, participants argued that the “chronological crunch” is a problem warranting much wider construction than it presently receives. Although this barrier is frequently understood in terms of problems created for female academics by having children, the “crunch” also affects women that do not - for example, women may be expected to shoulder the burden of caring for older relatives.

Participants argued that New Zealand universities’ leave policies are frequently strict and inflexible and a number of participants reported that they found them difficult to navigate. Furthermore, participants called for a greater recognition of the economic factors that may influence the choices of female academics, such as the casualization of the workforce, as well as extensive cuts being made to departments. Participants noted that the already tenuous position occupied by female academics within departments renders them highly likely to be affected by such institutional changes. Change can only be achieved by altering “old world” presumptions that familial responsibilities must necessarily impinge on the professional capabilities of female academics. Such change must be spear-headed by gathering and promoting evidence and analysis disproving such presumptions.

# Workshop Two – Strategies for change

The second workshop focused on the development of strategies to improve the situation of women within the discipline. Participants were asked to reflect on the different things that individuals, departments, universities, the NZPSA, the government/society, and the discipline internationally could do to tackle the aforementioned barriers.

The seven strategies deemed most feasible by participants were:

1. There is a need to ensure that departments, programs, or schools provide an open and welcoming environment for female faculty and students. Achievement of this first step facilitates the pursuit of further change. Some suggestions on ways in which Departments and Programmes can foster a sense a collegiality and a female-friendly work and study environment can be found here: <http://www.aps.org/programs/women/reports/bestpractices/female-faculty.cfm>.
2. There must be greater transparency in practices at the level of departments, schools, or programs, particularly with regard to recruitment protocol. Temporary appointments are particularly likely to be undertaken without attention to normal appointment protocols, and with little accountability.
3. Remits can be a powerful tool in collating evidence. Thus, Human Resources departments ought to undertake gender audits of faculties and provide appropriate strategies for the improvement of identified inequalities. Human Resources ought to be required to develop a target for the employment of female faculty at various levels. As long as the target remains unachieved, Senior Management Teams should be required to account for the on-going under-representation of women in academic positions in the university. Similar targets ought to be instituted within Politics and International Relations Departments / Programmes.
4. “Best practices” relating to women in political science internationally should be identified and dispersed. Please see the reports and links in the references section below for details of such practices.
5. The institution of “women in leadership” in-house programs within universities, cross-departmentally. *Mentoring* is critical to professional development, and female students and academics are less likely to be mentored than their male colleagues. There should be an expectation within each Political Science and International Relation Department that mentoring be available to all staff members, and appropriately targeted to the particular needs of the staff member concerned. The NZPSA could have a role to play in creating databases of individual research interests at the level of the NZPSA, listing people willing to mentor, and facilitating their connection with students or young academics with similar interests.
6. Collegial behaviour ought to be rewarded within departments, schools, or programmes. For example, heads of schools or departments can proactively reward, and thereby encourage, collegial behaviour.
7. Participants supported the creation of a blog or website at the level of the New Zealand Political Studies Association, detailing events and new research pertinent to improving the status of women in the discipline within New Zealand. Such an endeavour would require an editorial team and regular contributors.

*Personal Level*

Personal strategies emphasized the agency of individual female academics, and fell into multiple categories – with regard to self, with regard to colleagues, and with regard to junior women. At a personal level, the need for proactivity and assertiveness was highlighted. With regard to one’s professional development, it is important to “pick one’s battles” in appreciation of one’s own limits, but to equally grow comfortable with bargaining for positions of power – for example, by using other offers of employment as a bargaining chip. It was also important to refrain from relying on gendered language in one’s own work – for example, words like efficiency and impact, or certain metaphors, are managerial, serving to reinforce gendered climates and research cultures within a department.

However, it is equally important to be proactive in matters beyond individual professional development. Within departments, senior female academics should keep an eye out on details or developments for more junior women, be they faculty members or postgraduate students. Grey and McNabb theorized this as “travelling in packs”. Furthermore, it is critical to proactively participate and use groups within institutions to seek change, and to locate and spread analytical data and research on gender inequities.

*Department/School/Programme Level*

Strategies at this level revolved around restructuring practices to ensure that female academics do not feel disadvantaged as a result of their gender within their departments, schools, and programmes. Most measures seek greater transparency in departmental practices. For example, some departments don’t meet very often – thus, establishing regular meetings and creating departmental agendas can facilitate change. It becomes easier to discuss matters such as recruitment initiatives and processes. Transparency can also manifest in other ways – for example, sharing successful or unsuccessful promotion applications can assist female colleagues and postgraduate students in their own future applications.

In addition to seeking transparency, changing departmental cultures was also highlighted as a priority. Thus, participants argued for the importance of promoting awareness of issues of gender, ethnicity, or culture, and for the need to reward different things. The provision of clear and specific information for women seeking maternity leave, for example, such as how maternity leave or part-time status impacts on research and study leave entitlement, would be helpful. Participants called for a reclaiming of collegiality – in turn, heads of departments or schools could reward and encourage individuals who successfully achieve such outcomes. Likewise, participants called for identification and dialogue surrounding activities that pressured women to assume the “department wife” role, such as potluck dinners. A component of intra-departmental cultural change could be the identification of sympathetic colleagues, and in particular, sympathetic male colleagues within the department. However, it is equally important to grow comfortable seeking support through external channels – for example, the Tertiary Education Union (TEU) and the New Zealand Political Studies Association (NZPSA).

*University-Wide Strategies*

University-wide strategies fell into two components – leadership, and monitoring. With respect to the former, the notion of university-wide women’s associations was suggested. Such higher committees can take responsibility for gender audits of university policies, or general audits of women across faculties. Alternatively, gender audits may be conducted by human resources teams, who may also take responsibility for reporting progress on the status of women within universities, and to advocate for gender equity in appointments. Such strategies speak to a greater need for visibility at an institutional level on such issues.

However, there are also non-managerial mechanisms of promoting female participation at various levels within the university. At a departmental level, participants advocated creating women in leadership in-house programmes, and the resurrection of gender studies. At a post-graduate level, mentoring was seen as imperative.

*NZPSA Level*

Strategies at the level of the NZPSA were geared towards practical rather than cultural initiatives. Many recommendations were monetary in nature – for example, the establishment of seed funding, or the funding of prizes to recognize female input or feminist-orientated publications. Additionally, given the extent to which mentoring was highlighted as an important strategy throughout the workshop, the NZPSA was identified as an avenue for change. Specifically, databases of research areas, and of academics willing to mentor, could be established to facilitate the linking of experienced academics with their entry-level counterparts and postgraduate students.

More explicitly gender-oriented strategies were also suggested. For example, it was noted that the organization should formulate a policy statement that supports equality. More tangibly, participants expressed interest in the regular occurrence of events such as the workshop – NZPSA could provide funding, and scheduling could be controlled such that the workshop does not conflict with others (for example, in 2012, the women’s workshop conflicted with the postgraduate workshop). Between such workshops, momentum of women’s events could be maintained through the establishment of a blog or a website. This could be a place to promote pertinent events and new research. The NZPSA could again assist with funding, and regular contributors as well as an editorial team would need to be found.

*National and International Level*

National-level strategies fell into two categories – cultural or societal, and governmental. With respect to the former, the effects of “Tall Poppy Syndrome” were recognized as having a gendered effect, in that women in leadership positions are more readily criticized than their male counterparts. More generally, the stigmatisation of feminism was highlighted as a significant barrier to advancing the status of women. The discomfort some young women feel in identifying as feminists diminishes the wider visibility of gender issues by making conversations difficult. There is some hope that this is changing.

Comparatively, governmental strategies revolve around changes to policy, particularly to parental leave. Participants argued that such leave must be reclassified as an investment rather than an expense, and that the government must spearhead a greater emphasis on the importance and value of paternal leave. Likewise, changes must be made to Performance-Based Research Funding – its present operation is too strict, and recognizes very narrowly defined forms of achievement.

Participants agreed that any international initiatives can only be successful if they are built on the foundations of strong local and national initiatives. Thus, global exchange of departmental and institutional best practices can be published by relevant interest organizations – however their publication is dependent on their successful implementation domestically. It is also important to identify leaders and levers of power, and participants noted that the International Political Science Association had a modified agenda with women in power.

Section Three – Concluding Remarks

The “Advancing the Status of Women in Political Science in New Zealand” workshop is one of many similar events held in other countries for similar purposes. Such workshops or conferences have done much to shed light on the particular problems faced by female academics, and on the specific ways in which these problems manifest across political science departments globally. Thus, although each workshop highlights the uniqueness of each context, it also affirms that there are many points of similarity across departments, universities, and countries. This growing dataset of international findings is central in demonstrating that female academics face significant hurdles in their career, and collection and communication of such data is pivotal in verifying this state of affairs to faculties and tertiary institutions. Additionally, such a global corpus of work facilitates the identification of solutions or best practices that may be imported into different contexts.

Too often, focus remains on questions of numerical representation, which does not accurately convey the extent of the problem. The New Zealand workshop demonstrated that difficulties for female academics permeate multiple aspects of their professional and personal lives, and manifest in departmental cultures or atmospheres, female rates of publication, invisibility of feminism in the curriculum, and a struggle to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Further recognition must also be given to the inter-sectionality of barriers – thus, factors such as sexuality or ethnicity create further difficulties when they operate alongside the gender barrier.

The status of female academics in the New Zealand political science discipline has undergone several improvements since the mid-twentieth century. Numerically, they constitute a greater proportion of the discipline than ever before, and the convocation of the workshop itself is perhaps a testament to this fact. However, significant barriers remain. Women are well-represented at undergraduate and PhD level, but this gradually declines along the academic trajectory, such that women are significantly under-represented at professorial and associate-professorial levels. Female students who do make the transition to an academic career often report a “chilly climate” in their departments and faculties, which compromises their ability to successfully carry out the formal and informal networking critical to career progression. The persistent relevance of “old boys networks” continues to be a particular issue for female academics.

Furthermore, prevailing research cultures are heavily gendered in their implications – “success” in the political science discipline in New Zealand is a performative and quantifiable term, and teaching or service roles are consistently undervalued. This is problematic given that women are sometimes expected to gravitate naturally to the latter set of tasks. Such problematic definitions of success are further entrenched by the policy of PBRF, which does not operate in a gender-neutral manner. An important improvement to the status of women in the discipline is thus necessarily the revaluation of different forms of work. However, this is difficult, because even positions of power or authority are devalued if held by a woman.

The status of women in political science is thus intrinsically linked to issues of the status of women in academia generally, which are in turn linked to issues of the status of women in society at large. Female political scientists in New Zealand must therefore also grapple with problems that result from issues far beyond the scope of the discipline itself, such as the expectations that women must strike a work-life balance irrespective of additional burdens that their male colleagues do not encounter. Additionally, female academics are expected to comply with definitions of femininity and professionalism that are constructed to conflict with each other.

Although particular barriers may be more relevant in some departments or faculties relative to others, the collective operation of all barriers contributes to the wider problems faced by female academics within the discipline of political science in New Zealand. The problem is thus cultural rather than simply numerical, and therefore much wider and deeper than it is often understood to be. However, the identification of problematic cultures is a necessary first step to their alteration. Furthermore, the daunting extent of barriers must not be allowed to veil the agency of female academics in seeking change, and change can be pursued at multiple levels simultaneously (for example, personally, departmentally, or governmentally).

Participants in the “strategies” session brainstormed a multitude of ways in which change can be pursued, acknowledging that some strategies were more feasible than others. Strategies identified as “feasible” were nonetheless diverse and represented scope for complementary actions at multiple levels. Within departments, participants identified the need for a heightened emphasis on collegiality, transparency in mechanisms (especially with regard to recruitment), and the value of rewarding different things (for example, a commitment to collegiality). Within the New Zealand discipline, the need for continuous communication was highlighted – thus, participants favoured the creation of an NZPSA-level website pertinent to the field, with regular contributions. At a university-wide level, strategies highlighted the need to increase visibility of issues faced by female academics, through Human Resources audits and in-house leadership programs for women. Wider strategies involved mechanisms such as global exchange of best practices.

Although each strategy considered on its own represents an incremental change, their efficacy lies in their combination. They demonstrate a multi-faceted effort to changing the status of women in political science in New Zealand, in that they seek to collate data on inequality, spread it, and use it to seek institutional change. Furthermore, the key to success does not lie simply with the range of strategies employed, but also with the persistence with which change is sought. Thus, perhaps above all else, changing the status of female political scientists within the New Zealand discipline is contingent on the continued dedication of women themselves to the endeavour. The workshop was a valuable opportunity to affirm this dedication, and provide a platform for further cooperation.

References and further reading

For an extensive list of writings about women in political science and academia more generally see: <http://wipsworkshop.weebly.com>

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**Interesting links:**

On implicit bias

<http://philosophy.rutgers.edu/graduate-program/climate/133-graduate/climate/529-climate-of-women-implicit-bias>

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