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# Exploring women's academic careers in cross-national perspective

Women's  
academic careers

## Lessons for equal opportunity policies

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – In recent years, several countries and/or higher education institutions have adopted equal opportunity policies to promote women's access to the upper levels of the academic career structure. The purpose of this paper is to argue that there is no universal solution to the glass ceiling that women face within academia. Insofar as the feminisation process evolves according to a variety of models, according to national and occupational context, the solutions adopted in one context may prove to be ineffective elsewhere.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Analysis of the different models of occupational feminisation is based on a secondary analysis of the sociological literature on the subject, combined with recent data on women's access to academic positions in France and Germany.

**Findings** – Although there are similarities in the structure of the academic labour market across countries and in the rate of feminisation of the most prestigious academic positions, the precise mechanisms through which women gain access to an academic career vary significantly from one national context to another. This cross-national variation would tend to suggest that there will also be variation when it comes to defining the most effective policy measures for increasing women's access to the upper echelons of the academic hierarchy. Indeed, different models of gender equality in academia may lead to very different results with regard to existing gender relations.

**Originality/value** – The paper uses the available sociological literature on the feminisation process to examine how different measures adopted to promote women's access to the highest echelons of the academic career structure may have different effects on the reproduction and/or transformation of the dominant sex/gender system.

**Keywords** Academic staff, Career development, Equal opportunities, Gender, France, Germany

**Paper type** Conceptual paper

### Introduction

In this paper, I will attempt to unravel some of the issues at stake in the feminisation process of academic occupations. The paper is based on my participation in a European Commission funded project on gendered careers in academia (Latour and Le Feuvre, 2006; Le Feuvre and Latour, 2007) and on collaborative research carried out previously on the feminisation of other higher-level occupations, including medicine, banking and law (Crompton and Le Feuvre, 2000, 2003; Crompton *et al.*, 1999; Lapeyre and Le Feuvre, 2005; Le Feuvre, 1999, 2001; Le Feuvre and Lapeyre, 2005). The paper posits that the academic context provides a particularly interesting case study for analysing gender relations in employment (Finch, 2003), but also suggests that there is significant cross-national variation in the ways in which academic careers are



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gendered and, therefore, in the type of policy measures that could be adopted to promote women's access to the highest levels of the academic hierarchy.

I will begin by presenting how the under-representation of women amongst academic staff of different grades has been – or could be – analysed from different theoretical sociological perspectives, before going on to some general considerations about the degree of women's access to the highest echelons of academia in two different national contexts, i.e. France and Germany. Cross-national variation in the rates of women's access to the most prestigious academic positions leads us to question the impact of societal-level “gender contracts” and occupational-level “gender regimes” (Connell, 1987) on women's academic careers. In the light of the specific characteristics of the academic labour market in different national and historical contexts (Musselin, 2005, 2008), I question whether it is possible to conclude that the academic labour market is cross-nationally gendered in a particular way (Finch, 2003; Fogelberg *et al.*, 1999). I then consider the need to work from the hypothesis that a similar quantitative level of occupational feminisation may actually be produced by specific social mechanisms in different national and occupational contexts. If this is the case, a certain number of issues arise concerning the potential effects of measures adopted to promote greater gender equality in the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge in an increasingly global context (Bart, 2000; Finch, 2003).

### **Gender relations and the feminisation process**

In this paper, the term “feminisation process” is used in a strictly descriptive sense. It simply refers to the entry of women into those occupational groups from which they were previously excluded – by law or in practice. There has been considerable theoretical debate as to the precise significance of women's increased access to the upper echelons of the labour market, and one of the aims of this paper is to provide a summary of the different interpretative frameworks that have been developed to make sense of this empirical phenomenon. From this point of view, research carried out on other professional occupations may shed some light on the conditions under which women are currently entering academic careers in increasing numbers, but also on the conditions under which the glass ceiling continues to block their access to the most prestigious positions within this professional field (Noordenbos, 2002; Ollagnier and Solar, 2006; Siemienska and Zimmer, 2007).

In order to analyse the gender equality issues surrounding women's access to the academic professions, I propose to start with a relatively simple definition of gender. Rather than using this term as a synonym for sex or as a relatively immutable social structure, I find it more useful to think of the sex/gender system as the result of a two-fold process (Kergoat, 2000), which can be historically located and which is open to change over time.

To begin with, gender is synonymous with a “total social organisation of labour” (Glucksmann, 1995), based on the relatively systematic differentiation of two mutually exclusive gender categories (male/female; masculine/feminine), based on what the French anthropologist Nicole-Claude Mathieu (1991) has called the “similarity taboo”. This implies that the social attributes of members of each of these categories have to be differentiated, although the outcomes of this process may be significantly different in varying national/historical contexts. Exactly what men and women should be or do thus varies over time and place, but the idea that they should be and do radically

different things is what constitutes the structural and symbolic basis of the differentiation process.

Secondly, in order for gender to operate as a socially significant process, these binary-differentiated groups or categories need to be organised hierarchically, with the specific attributes of the male/masculine placed above those of the female/feminine (Bourdieu, 1990, 1998; Héri-tier, 1996; Löwy, 2006).

When analysing women's exclusion from or limited entry to the centres of male/masculine power, such as the academy, it is therefore essential to consider both these aspects of the sex/gender system (Le Feuvre, 2007). This is a relatively straightforward task when accounting for women's historical exclusion from the male-dominated sectors of the labour market, and much of the existing literature has attempted to theorise gender on the basis of this exclusion. The task becomes somewhat more complex when the feminisation rates of these male bastions start to increase and when research no longer centres exclusively on the mechanisms through which women are excluded, but also attempts to comprehend the conditions under which they are potentially included in these professions.

Based on previous research on the feminisation process in cross-national perspective, I have attempted to classify the different theoretical perspectives that can be found in the sociological literature on women's access to a wide range of professional or managerial occupations. It should be stressed here that these are not my own analytical categories, but rather a summary of the different perspectives identified in the existing literature, principally in English and French. Broadly speaking, it is possible to identify at least four different interpretative frameworks in existing research on women's entry to relatively prestigious professional groups. From an ideal-type point of view (Schnapper, 1999), these perspectives differ radically in the degree of expected change to the dominant academic "gender regime" (Connell, 1987) to be brought about through the feminisation process (Table I).

Each theoretical perspective leads to relatively different conclusions as to:

- the mechanisms which enable women to negotiate entry into these professions;
- the consequences of this feminisation in terms of the two dimensions of the sex/gender system; and
- the continuity or transformation of professional practices to be expected as the rate of feminisation increases.

The first and perhaps most widely adopted perspective, which I have termed the "patriarchy approach", insists on the relative stability of the sex/gender system over time and concludes that the entry of women into male bastions reflects the almost unlimited capacity of masculine domination to reappear under new guises (de Singly,

Theoretical perspective/expected outcomes	"Patriarchy"	"Feminitude"	"Virilitude"	"De-gendering"	<b>Table I.</b> The potential outcomes – stability (=) or change (+) – of the academic feminisation process according to different theoretical perspectives
In terms of gender differentiation	=	=	+	+	
In terms of gender hierarchies	=	+	=	+	
In terms of professional practice	=	+	=	+	

**Source:** Based on Le Feuvre (1999, p. 158)

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1993; Pateman, 1989). Several sub-theories can be collated under this heading. Some authors suggest that women only gain access to those professional groups that have become less attractive to men (Reskin and Roos, 1990), while others insist on the fact that women are systematically placed in subordinate positions within the professions they finally manage to enter (Bourdieu, 1998). In other words, internal vertical segregation replaces the previous male exclusionary practices and prevents women from gaining access to the most prestigious echelons of existing professions and/or to the most prestigious occupations. Here, the feminisation process is generally synonymous with different forms of “deprofessionalisation” (Cacouault, 2001; Lane *et al.*, 2002). Thus, both dimensions of the sex/gender system continue to operate unchanged and men maintain their monopoly over the macro-level economic and symbolic power structures. They continue to define the criteria for “professional excellence” and to guarantee that women are excluded from the specific processes of recognition and rewards that prevail in a particular professional field (Thomas, 1996). The apparent signs of change to the sex/gender system that the increased presence of women may suggest are interpreted as a mere camouflage of structural stability in the sex/gender system. I have termed this the “*plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose*” perspective on occupational feminisation. In the case of academia, this model would be illustrated with statistical data on the under-representation of women in Grade A academic positions and with the results of studies of the persistence of male-oriented criteria for professional promotion and recognition (Collinson *et al.*, 1990; Wenneras and Wold, 1997). The theoretical basis for this interpretive model is found in the work of materialist feminists and neo-structuralist sociologists (Bourdieu, 1998; Delphy, 1998, 2001).

A second category of researchers takes a different angle on the feminisation process. They suggest that women are able to gain access to these professional groups on the basis of their specific social attributes. I have grouped the authors who develop this broad type of analysis under the heading “feminitude approach”, since they suggest that the differentiation dimension of the sex/gender system (the similarity taboo) can be maintained, whilst the hierarchical organisation of the binary sex/gender categories is challenged. Many of the authors who adopt this perspective tend to adopt a relatively uncritical view of gender differences, generally taking for granted the fact that women live in heterosexual couples, act as primary carers and that their career trajectories are necessarily subordinated to their domestic responsibilities. However, rather than seeing this as a systematic handicap on the career front, some authors suggest that women can take advantage of their “difference” to develop specific feminine niches within these prestigious occupations. Thus, it is argued, when faced with “greedy institutions” (Currie *et al.*, 2000), women develop specific patterns of professional practice, which are particularly adapted to the needs or desires of their female clientele or user-groups (Menkel-Meadow, 1985, 1989). Rather than seeing these specificities as a source of professional exclusion or subordination (as in the previous model), authors who adopt this perspective argue for a conception of “equality in respect of difference”, based on theoretical perspectives developed in the so-called “French feminism” tradition (Irigaray and Whitford, 1991), often combined with insights from socio-psychology or psychoanalysis.

A third category of authors adopt the concepts developed around the notions of “inverted socialisation” or the so-called “third sex” perspective used by the

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Franco-Canadian anthropologist Bernard Saladin d'Anglure (1992). In a more culturalist tradition, they also analyse the characteristics of those women who have succeeded in gaining access to a series of "male bastions". However, in this case, the accent is placed on the degree to which these women may be gendered in a masculine way and therefore find it relatively easy to adopt the practices that have been defined as the basis for professional success by previous generations of men. This perspective is based on the idea that the feminisation process is due to (a minority) of women behaving in ways that were previously seen as restricted to men. The feminisation process has little impact on the nature of professional practices, since the condition for entry to the occupation is to reproduce the existing (masculine) norms, despite the fact that these are usually discriminatory for the majority of women . . . and even some men (Guillaume and Pochic, 2007; Knights and Kerfoot, 2008). Thus, although the hierarchical principle of the sex/gender system is maintained, the differentiation dimension is weakened or transformed by the mere presence of women who have "got what it takes" to make a successful career in a traditionally male domain. However, insofar as these women are generally expected to confirm their "exceptional" status by remaining single and/or childless, they do not really resemble their male colleagues as much as some popular stereotypes would suggest. Also, despite possessing all the personal and professional qualities usually associated with members of the opposite sex, these so-called "surrogate men" are often the brunt of criticism, particularly from their subordinate male and female colleagues, for their perceived lack of femininity or their autocratic behaviour. In the academic literature, the figure of the "surrogate male" is often associated with the female pioneers in male-dominated professions (Cacouault, 1984; Crompton and Harris, 1998).

Finally, a fourth perspective on the feminisation process is inspired by constructivist perspectives on the possibilities offered to "do" or "un-do" gender (Butler, 2004; Connell, 2002; Lorber, 2000; West and Zimmerman, 1987). Here, authors tend to interpret the progressive entry of women into previously male-dominated occupations as the result rather than the cause of a transformation of the macro-level gender contract. Often inspired by the debate around the progressive "democratisation" of gender relations and the individualisation process in contemporary societies (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992), they suggest that women are able to enter these professional groups once the founding principles of the sex/gender system have already been weakened. Late modernity offers the opportunity to transgress both dimensions of the sex/gender system by producing the social conditions for a progressive in-differentiation of male and female behaviour and the loss of legitimacy for all forms of biological essentialism and inequality. Interestingly, this perspective opens up analysis of the effects of the feminisation process on the professional practice of men too, since it suggests that, under the combined effects of women's access to academic credentials and the restructuring of intimate relations, men are unable to maintain the kind of professional commitment that was associated with the traditional "male breadwinner/female carer" gender contract (Crompton, 2006). As women gain academic credentials and demand the right to develop their own careers in the face of increasingly individualised and unstable domestic living arrangements, men find it increasingly difficult to find partners who are willing to provide the kind of unpaid and largely invisible support that has been historically associated with the building of a "successful career" in these



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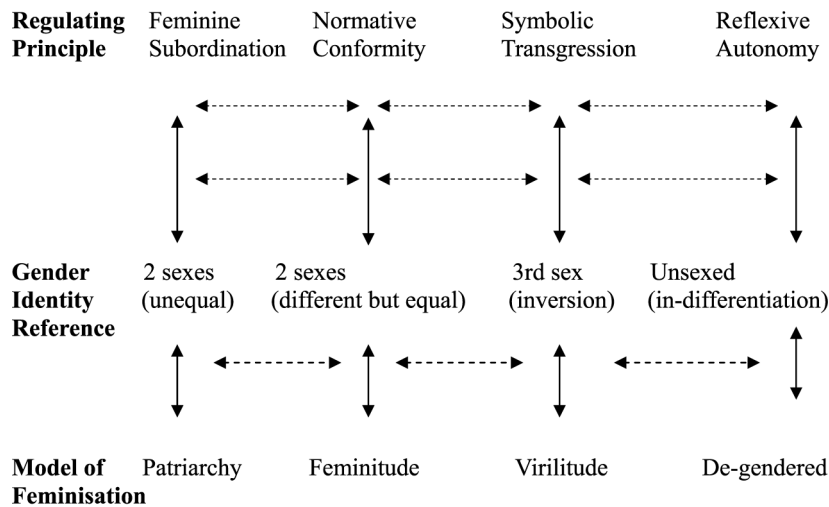
professions (Finch, 1983; Lapeyre, 2006; Lapeyre and Le Feuvre, 2005). Thus, the criteria for professional success and recognition are modified for both sexes, insofar as men and women are faced with the tribulations of combining a professional career with their potentially multiple domestic care obligations. According to the authors who adopt this perspective, it is important to recognise the signs of common experiences across the sex/gender divide, as social actors develop practices that are neither “male” nor “female” in essence.

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### **Identifying the different occupational feminisation models**

When researching the experiences of women in traditionally male-dominated occupations, it is fascinating to note the extent to which these competing theoretical frameworks are mobilised by interviewees who are invited to reflect upon their own experiences or those of women in their immediate professional environment. However, as in much of the academic literature, women’s personal accounts of working in a male-dominated occupation often refer to more than one of these interpretative frameworks in the course of a single interview. This observation has led me to develop the idea that there is no single rationale to the entry of women into male-dominated professions, not over time, in specific societal locations or in particular occupations. In order to understand the precise mechanisms at work in a given case, it is therefore essential to consider the cross-national similarities and differences in the gendering of particular occupation groups (Acker, 1990). I would defend the hypothesis that the rate and pattern of feminisation of a given occupational group results from the combination of different processes and, therefore, has potentially contrasting effects, both from the point of view of challenging the material and symbolic foundations of the sex/gender system and from the point of view of professional practice. In other words, I would suggest that the statistical rate of feminisation provides a relatively poor indication of the degree to which women’s entry into and distribution within a profession are likely to reflect the reproduction, the partial reconfiguration or the transformation of the sex/gender system as we know it. In order to examine this question in detail, it is necessary to collect qualitative data on the social processes that underpin such quantitative changes over time.

In Figure 1, I have attempted to illustrate the dimensions of the different models of feminisation identified in the academic literature. Each of the four ideal-typical models can be associated with a particular type of gender relations and to a dominant regulating principle. Thus, when women enter a male-dominated profession on the basis of the similarity taboo and the principle of feminine subordination/masculine domination, the process will produce the results predicted by the “patriarchy” interpretive perspective presented previously. On the other hand, conformity to the differentiation dimension of the sex/gender system will produce results that are in line with the “femintude” model of feminisation, based on the maintenance of what could be called a “modified male breadwinner model” (Lewis, 2002), where the feminisation process rests on women’s continuing role as main or sole carer and domestic supervisor and to the adaptation of their professional practice to the demands of the private sphere, whilst men continue to benefit from the informal “career support services” provided by women. This model will ultimately lead to the elaboration of “women specific” career paths, potentially reinforced by certain types of equal opportunity measures, based on the idea that women’s relationship to the labour market is



Source: Based on Le Feuvre (2003, p. 159)

Figure 1.  
Ideal-typical models of the  
feminisation process

necessarily mediated by their caring roles in the private sphere, whereas men are necessarily focussed on their careers (Crompton and Le Feuvre, 2000).

Alternatively, the symbolic transgression of this pattern of the sexual division of labour, through the alignment of the female newcomers to the pre-existing masculine norms of professional performance and excellence is indicative of the “virilitude” model of feminisation and requires reference to an “inverted” gender identity on the part of the women concerned. Here, the feminisation process results from the – voluntary or constrained – distancing of the women concerned from the dominant “male breadwinner/female carer” models of femininity and family formation.

Finally, the “de-gendered” model of occupational feminisation rests on the adoption of a radically different vision of gender, where men and women are conceived as potentially interchangeable actors in both the professional and the domestic spheres. Here, women’s access to the previously male-dominated professions is accompanied by a redefinition of the criteria of professional achievement and success for both sexes and by the erosion of the pre-existing founding principles of the occupational hierarchy.

### Interpreting the data on women’s academic careers

In the light of the existing statistical data on women’s academic careers (European Commission, 2007), it is no doubt tempting to conclude that the “patriarchy” model of occupational feminisation provides a pretty convincing interpretative framework for the situation of women in academia in contemporary Europe. However, I find this spontaneous line of analysis somewhat unsatisfactory. It is undoubtedly true that women all over the world are victims of discrimination and of the effects of patriarchal stereotypes and that their academic careers are less “successful” than those of their male counterparts. However, there are considerable differences, both between countries and – within the same national context – between disciplinary fields, and there are also signs of considerable change over time. To conclude that patriarchy has always



existed and will continue unchallenged is not only depressing; it also leads to a lack of political motivation for change (Krefting, 2003). The questions that nevertheless remain are:

- What pattern of change should we work for?
- Which model of occupational feminisation do we want to promote, and what are the most effective actions in bringing about certain forms of gender equality in academia?

If we restrict our objectives to increasing the statistical rates of feminisation of top-level academic occupations, we run the risk of encouraging the promotion of women to these positions precisely under those patterns of feminisation which are the least likely to bring about a profound and lasting transformation to the existing sex/gender system.

To illustrate this point, let us compare the situation of female full Grade A professors in France and Germany. The *SHE Figures 2006*, published by the European Commission (2007), show that the academic feminisation process follows the all too familiar “scissor curve” pattern in both countries (see Figure 2), with a similar glass ceiling index: 1.9 in Germany, 2.0 in France. However, this similarity masks significant differences in the structure of the academic career ladder in each national context and in the processes through which women have gained a foothold on the academic career ladder to date.

Firstly, it is clear that the academic career structure varies quite considerably between these two countries: Grade A academics represent a significantly smaller proportion of the total academic workforce in Germany than in France. Thus, one-third of male academic staff occupies a full professorship in France, compared with less than



**Figure 2.**  
Proportions of men and women in a typical academic career, students and academic staff, EU-25, 1999-2003

Source: European Commission (2007; Figure 3.1)

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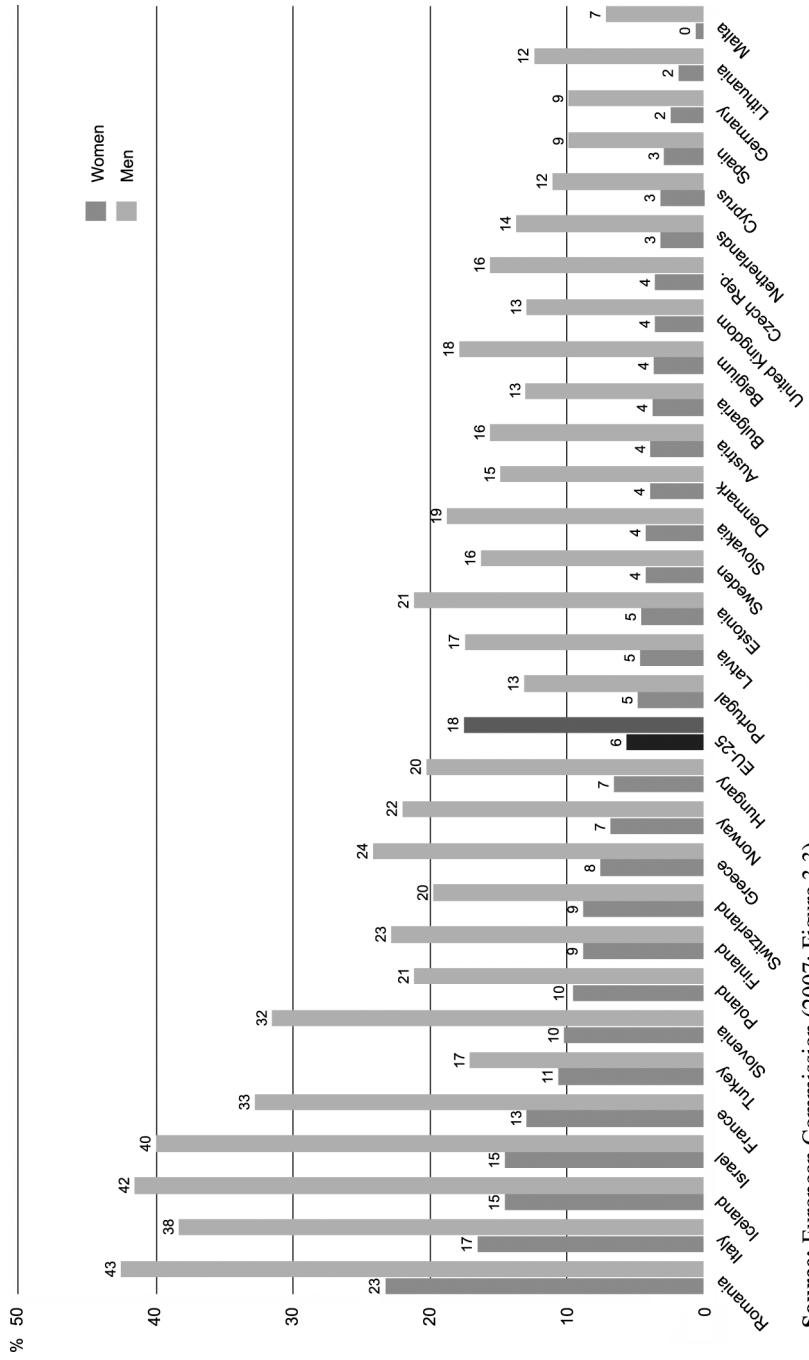
10 per cent in Germany. The equivalent figures for women are 13 per cent and 2 per cent. As a result, in most disciplinary fields, women represent at least twice as many Grade A professors in France than in Germany, although the variations according to discipline follow a similar pattern in both countries (Figure 3 and Table II). Results from the research carried out under the WIEU Research Training Network shed some light on the different social processes at work in each of these national contexts (Sieminska and Zimmer, 2007).

According to Zimmer *et al.* (2007), “The typical male German professor is a family man with at least two children. Almost all male professors (90%) who took part in the study were married or were living with a partner in a stable relationship. The vast majority of the male respondents (82%) were indeed heads of the household. In contrast to their male colleagues, only half of the female professors had at least one child. Moreover, one-fifth of all female professors was single or had never been married and did not live in a relationship. An additional 13% of the women were separated or divorced” (p. 236).

The domestic arrangements of female university professors in France appear in stark contrast to the situation in Germany. Only 9 per cent of the Grade A female respondents were single, although 12 per cent were separated or divorced. In fact, male professors were almost as likely as their female counterparts to have been through a failed marriage (27 per cent of all male professors, as against 29 per cent of all females), but they were much less likely to have remained single (1.5 per cent, as against 12 per cent of the women). In terms of parenthood, the contrast was also striking. Male professors in France were slightly more likely than their female counterparts not to have had any children at all (13.4 per cent, as against 12.5 per cent of the women professors). They were also less likely than women to have had two or more children (64.2 per cent of the male professors, 68.8 per cent of the women professors). There is also a high level of homogamy within academia in France: less than 10 per cent of the male professors live with a full-time housewife; 23 per cent of male university professors live with a fellow academic and a further 27 per cent are married to a secondary or primary school teacher. However, an astounding 43 per cent of female full professors live with an academic (this is also the case for 32.4 per cent of the Grade B female academics and for 18 per cent of their male counterparts).

The question of the work-life interface is obviously posed in rather different terms for women academics in France and Germany (Crompton *et al.*, 2007), not only because high-level female academics are more likely to have children in one national context than the other, but also because the societal gender contracts impose different norms on women's economic activity patterns (full-time, continuous careers being the dominant norm for university-educated women in France, discontinuous, part-time employment in Germany). The results of the French WIEU study show that the question of work-life balance (Le Feuvre and Lemarchant, 2007) is not necessarily a purely feminine preoccupation (Latour and Le Feuvre, 2006). There is a relatively small gender gap between the number of Grade A and Grade B academics who declare that they often experience difficulties in reconciling the demands of their job with their family responsibilities. This is the case for 44 per cent of Grade B men, for 59 per cent of Grade B women (+ 15 per cent), for 36 per cent of Grade A men and for 53 per cent of their female counterparts (+ 17 per cent).

**Figure 3.**  
Percentage of Grade A  
among all academic staff  
by sex, 2004



Source: European Commission (2007; Figure 3.3)

	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C	Grade D	Total
EU-25	15.3	32.2	42.0	43.3	36.4
Austria	9.5	16.2	35.6	37.9	29.7
Belgium	9.0	20.7	33.1	46.6	32.7
Cyprus	10.2	17.2	37.5	33.5	31.0
Czech Republic	10.3	22.1	40.2	48.8	34.0
Denmark	10.9	24.4	37.6	42.7	31.8
Estonia	17.2	37.1	56.6	66.6	49.2
Finland	21.2	46.6	52.9	42.8	40.9
France	16.1	38.7	–	39.3	32.9
Germany	9.2	16.1	25.9	35.6	29.2
Greece	11.3	22.7	31.9	39.4	29.0
Hungary	15.4	30.9	46.0	36.7	36.3
Italy	16.4	31.4	43.8	–	31.2
Latvia	26.5	37.0	65.0	–	57.7
Lithuania	12.1	37.4	49.5	59.9	49.1
Malta	2.3	31.7	14.2	25.0	36.6
Netherlands	9.4	14.2	27.0	39.4	31.4
Poland	19.5	27.4	41.0	–	34.9
Portugal	20.9	34.4	43.4	50.4	41.8
Romania	29.1	49.1	–	55.2	42.9
Slovakia	13.5	31.5	48.5	54.3	41.1
Slovenia	12.9	25.8	39.3	47.9	31.4
Spain	17.6	36.1	52.2	50.6	42.1
Sweden	16.1	38.6	40.0	50.0	42.5
United Kingdom	15.9	31.2	46.1	46.1	41.2
Bulgaria	18.0	34.9	–	52.4	43.8
Iceland	15.1	29.9	53.0	–	33.8
Israel	10.6	21.6	33.6	44.7	24.6
Norway	15.7	28.2	45.5	48.8	37.6
Switzerland	16.5	23.3	33.8	41.3	30.8
Turkey	25.5	27.4	40.5	41.6	35.7

**Notes:** Exceptions to the reference year: TR, 2000; FR, 2001; AT, 2002; CY, NO, PT, 2003; FTE instead of HC: NL, IL (2001). Data unavailable: IE, LU. Grade C unavailable: BG, FR, RO. Grade D unavailable: BG, FR, IT, LV, IS, PL. BE: sum of BE – FL + BE – FR. Data estimated: SI. Data are not necessarily comparable between countries due to differences in coverage and definitions

**Source:** WIS database, DG Research, EU-25 calculated by DG Research. Reproduced from European Commission (2007; Table 3.1)

**Table II.**  
Proportion of female  
academic staff by grade  
and total, 2004

Thus, not only have women been less successful in gaining inroads into academia in Germany than in France, they have also seem to have done so on the basis of a different model of occupational feminisation. According to Zimmer *et al.* (2007), the career aspirations of female academics in Germany “set them apart from the still widely accepted female role model within German society” (p. 236). This would not seem to be the case in France, where the career paths in academia are more compatible with the dominant pattern of women’s activity rates in general (Le Feuvre and Andriocci, 2005). Subject to further empirical investigation, one could argue that the “viriltude” model of feminisation may provide a useful interpretative framework in the German case, explaining the low retention rates of women who embark on an academic career

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(Blackwell and Glover, 2007), whereas the “feminitude” or “de-gendered” models seem to better capture the experiences of French female academics.

### Conclusions

Given the systematic under-representation of women in top-level academic positions across a wide range of national contexts (European Commission, 2007), it is tempting to conclude that the mechanisms which produce this phenomenon must be identical over time and space. In this paper, I have tried to show that the feminisation of occupational groups does not necessarily follow a universal model. The exclusion/inclusion of women from the academy can be achieved through several distinct mechanisms and their admission does not always result in a significant transformation of the material and symbolic foundations of the sex/gender system as a whole. In order to elaborate effective equal opportunity policies, or to improve the effectiveness of existing measures (Morley, 1999), I would suggest that it is necessary to understand more fully the precise mechanisms that underpin the feminisation process in specific national and professional contexts. It is also important to clearly define the model of feminisation that we want to promote in academia, since each of the ideal-typical processes outlined in this paper have contrasting effects on the degree to which the existing sex/gender system is reproduced, reconfigured or transformed.

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