# Barriers and facilitators for women academics seeking promotion

## Perspectives from the Inside

Lyn Francis & Virginia Stulz
Western Sydney University

In this paper, we discuss findings from a research project in which barriers to and facilitators for promotion with women academics were explored. Four focus groups of women academics at an Australian university were held. Data including responses to semi-structured questions were analysed and interpreted using coding and thematic analysis. We found that multiple barriers and facilitators still exist in the university sector for women applying for promotion, covering structural, organisational, and individual levels. The barriers for promotion included workloads and huge expectations, the multi-pronged promotion process, competition, not being valued, juggling family life and not wanting to risk happiness. Facilitators for promotion included mentoring and collaborative nurturing, giving back to others including the university and flexibility.

*Keywords: Barriers and facilitators for promotion, women academics.*

### Introduction

Women currently constitute 50 per cent of the population in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016), 50 per cent of the workforce (Workplace Gender Equity Agency, 2017) and 56 per cent of students in Australian universities (Universities Australia Executive Women, 2018). While the number of women employed has increased in Australia there remains an overall gender pay gap and less than 50 per cent of women in senior management positions (Commonwealth Government of Australia, 2017). The presence of women in the academic sphere has increased exponentially in the past 50 years with women making up most of the tertiary sector workforce yet their representation in upper level positions in academia remains underwhelming (Bell, 2016; Dobele et al., 2014; Eddy & Ward, 2015; Jarboe, 2017; Madsen, 2011; Pyke, 2013). While it is to be applauded, there has been a constant increase in the number of women representatives at senior management levels in Universities (Universities Australia, 2017) and a steady increase in gender balanced representation on academic board committees, women nevertheless remain poorly represented in the top tier roles. Equal gender representation across all levels of academia is crucial to ensure leadership and innovation that is representative of the population, inclusive and diverse (Jarboe, 2017). Universities as educators of our future workforce leaders have been called upon to set an example in increasing representation of women in senior leadership positions yet women do not always claim senior appointments, with 84 per cent of men claiming senior appointments compared to 16 per cent of women as at 2016. Universities are now targeting academics claiming senior appointments such as professorial and senior executive positions by providing mentorship programs and professional development support that will enable women to apply for promotion and succeed (Universities Australia Executive Women, 2018).

Evidence in the literature indicates that, while equal opportunity policies are in place in academia, women are still

not being awarded promotions, regardless of their workload or achievements (Dobele et al., 2014; Treviño et al., 2015). A 2000-2013 review of the literature suggested a paucity of research in this area and suggested future research focus on the impact of gender in higher education (Gómez et al., 2016). While the literature is expanding regarding gender inequality in leadership positions, the precipitants and causes of the issue remain a point of conjecture (Airini et al., 2010; Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2014). In higher education, cultures cultivate networks that exclude women, especially in leadership roles (Burkinshaw & White, 2019).

With this project we aimed to identify and explore barriers and facilitators, as perceived by female academics employed at one university in Western Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, who are, or have considered, applying for an academic promotion.

The research questions for this study were:

1. What barriers do academic women face when applying for a promotion?
2. What facilitators might help academic women in applying for a senior position?

## Background

There are numerous barriers and facilitators that academic women face in their journey towards promotion. These barriers and facilitators consist of various levels that include structural, organisational and individual factors. The structural barriers that women face include professional relationships developed in their networking with colleagues and mentoring they provide or receive during their career. The organisational levels that women face include issues that are related to women's harassment, bullying and patriarchal values that are bestowed upon them. The individual levels that women face include work and family issues and gender stereotypes that align with the role of women as mothers raising families. These multi-factorial levels will be discussed in this review of the literature.

## Barriers to promotion faced by academic women at the structural level

While universities and the wider community try to increase the female presence, specifically in senior leadership positions, issues continue to arise due to the structures and requirements of universities and ability to secure funding. Without adequate funding, academics are unable to conduct significant research and subsequent publications, important prerequisites for senior leadership positions (White, 2015a). The short turnaround time of spending the revenue related to the research means that research projects have a fast-paced approach that tends to be of short duration and lacks the ideal of fundamental, robust research that is long-lived (Ylijoki, 2013).

Women in senior management positions in universities find it difficult to balance their roles between management and research. They often provide support and solve other people's problems at the expense of having time for their own research (White, Carvalho & Riordan, 2011). The uneven distribution given to teaching and research affects career progression because teaching is absorbing and highly marginalised whilst publications and research work is more important for career progression. Research is valued at the expense of teaching. Workplace relationships contribute to career barriers in pursuing success that pertain to a lack of collaboration amongst colleagues working together in research and a workplace milieu that promotes competitiveness rather than collegiality (Santos, 2016). Women tend to be disparaging about a shallow performance-driven culture that is heavily regulated and leads to anxiety about 'production'. Arguably research should be considered as a core activity rather than being additional to teaching (Fletcher et al., 2007).

Women may feel that their intrinsic motivation and academic freedom are being violated if their performance is measured by predetermined quantitative as opposed to qualitative measurements (Kallio & Kallio, 2014). Performance management discourages novelty and innovation and leads to bland research (Kallio et al., 2016). Some academics now regard universities as merely other workplaces that were previously seen as communities of scholars. Workload has increased due to previously managed administration tasks being transferred to teachers and these deteriorating working conditions lead to reduced levels of autonomy in work and less academic freedom (Yljoki, 2005). These administrative tasks include producing self-assessments, mission statements and strategic plans that are considered futile. As a result, academics have little time to engage in research (Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013). In Australia, the ongoing discourse of managerialism permeating the university executive, is often unevenly distributed within the organisation (Göransson, 2011).

## Barriers to promotion related to a gendered organisational culture

The literature suggests that bullying and discrimination against women continue to occur in the academic sphere, depleting confidence levels and eliminating supports that are prerequisites to promotion (Monroe et al., 2008; Pyke, 2013). A UK study found British Universities continued to have specific social events and outlets which remained off limits to women while new male colleagues were explicitly invited, consequently providing men with more opportunities to develop networks and garner support (Fisher & Kinsey,

2014). Other researchers have found apprehension about having women in senior positions within the university system (Afiouni & Karam, 2014) and policies may cement the problems of re-positioning women in more senior positions (Fitzgerald & Wilkinson, 2010).

It has been suggested that gender plays an integral role in gatekeeping practices and women are disadvantaged, as it is often men who are in gatekeeper roles (Brink & Benschop, 2014). Barriers have been identified in the promotion process, for example, gender bias was found in letters of recommendation for promotion with letters in support of women containing more 'negativity, hedges and faint praise' than their male counterparts which was found to have an impact on the applicant's evaluation (Madera et al., 2018 p.11). If women have a greater propensity to enter teaching roles compared with men, they may have a deficit of knowledge about research skills compared with men (Fletcher et al., 2007). Managerialism in its conflicted attitude to gender equity and diversity, may in fact, re-emphasise the discrimination of women in working towards promotion (Teelken & Deem, 2013).

*Barriers have been identified in the promotion process, for example, gender bias was found in letters of recommendation for promotion with letters in support of women containing more 'negativity, hedges and faint praise' than their male counterparts...*

Some academics will delay seeking promotion due to the perceived demands of senior leadership positions and difficulties in meeting these demands in the context of competing family commitments (Hardy et al., 2016). In fact, some women may never pursue academic roles in preference taking on leadership roles that may occur accidentally or out of altruistic reasons through commitment to the university (Acker, 2014). Women are more likely to engage with leadership roles in alignment with changes in universities that harbour valuing knowledge, teamwork, inclusivity of various disciplines and feedback (Blackmore, 2014).

Pyke (2013) reported that women who did not aspire to promotion identified increased paperwork or workload, as well as a change in their position as disincentives for promotion which would result in them no longer being able to engage in enjoyable aspects of their current position. Women are prone to contribute to their own downfall as they are distracted by conflicting demands on their time (Burkinshaw, 2015). Young women have been reluctant to embrace the university organisational culture in order to pursue their academic careers (Burkinshaw & White, 2017). Interestingly, recent literature has identified that the notion of the 'boys club' is still prevalent in universities and may be acting as a barrier for women to gain promotion to senior positions (Fletcher et al., 2007; O'Connor, 2011; Brink & Benschop, 2014; Fisher & Kinsey, 2014; Morley, 2014; Fritsch, 2015; White, 2015a; Santos, 2016).

## Barriers to promotion faced by academic women at the individual level

Significant barriers to promotion for women reported in the literature include family responsibilities and career interruptions such as child bearing and caring for children or ageing parents and trying to strike a work / life balance (Monroe et al., 2008; Airini et al., 2010; Devine, Grummell & Lynch, 2011; O'Connor, 2011; Pyke, 2013; Bell & Yates, 2015; Morley & Crossoard, 2015). The literature suggests that family or carer responsibilities cause interruptions in a woman's career, resulting in a sporadic or intermittent trajectory along their career pathway (Pyke, 2013). Some academic women with children feel a heavy burden when they are not always available for their children and may feel as though they are missing out on their children's growing processes (Santos, 2015). Women's aspirations to gain professorial positions may negatively impact women's academic careers as domestic expectations are not recognised (Ozbilgin & Healy, 2004).

Importantly, in an Australian study, Pyke (2013) found that women who were aspiring to apply for promotion to a senior academic level did not have children, their children were older, or their partner played the primary carer role. Research has further indicated the need for academics to be willing and able to conduct research in the international space to achieve promotion, a task made more difficult by family responsibilities (Fritsch, 2015; Hardy et al. 2016) with travel requirements posing time, energy, resources and financial constraints. Santos (2016) found that academics defined successful careers as being able to establish a healthy work-life balance and that this was more important for younger women than men. Alternatively, work life balance can be just as difficult for younger men as for younger women, especially when trying to negotiate part-time work (White, 2015b; Padavic, Ely & Reid, 2019).

## Facilitators to promotion that may assist academic women at the structural level

One significant facilitator for promotion identified frequently throughout the literature is the implementation of mentoring (Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2010; Fritsch, 2015; Harris, Ravenswood, & Myers, 2013; Pyke, 2013). Mentoring has benefits of advancing careers and performance and provides a positive contribution to career success (Kirchmeyer, 2005). As previously discussed, a lack of networks and support for

an individual can act as significant barriers to promotion so it follows that a support system that includes mentoring has a facilitating effect. Harris et al. (2013) went so far as to utilise a fairy tale metaphor, describing higher positions in universities as the 'Ivory Tower' and having mentors play the role of the fairy godmother. Mentoring is seen as important for gaining access to established research circles and contacts (Fletcher et al., 2007).

One way of attaining excellence for women in their academic career is a strategy that involves collaborating with more senior dedicated scholars that enable them to co-publish with them resulting in increased citation of their publications. Persistence is also a virtue for women who are publishing, and this can be a large component of the game of transitioning from rejection to publication when addressing editors' comments. The rewards of excellence in academia translate to job mobility, peer esteem and better career prospects (Butler & Spoelstra, 2012). Women have reported the advantages of networking with colleagues as a method of integrating into the research culture (Fletcher et al., 2007). However, there seems to be a shift from this collegial way of working to a new managerialist form that resonates with a top down approach (Göransson, 2011).

Promotion models are the norms and rules that guide academics into their individual choices and career paths and can ultimately change over time. For example, the opportunity of applying for a new position at another university to pursue promotion may also mean tougher competition for that position. Some academics who have reflected on their career choices refuse to focus their life on publishing, alternatively, emphasise their desire to maintain their work on interesting subjects at a pace that suits them (Dany, Louvel & Valette, 2011).

## Facilitators to promotion that may assist academic women at the organisational level

Facilitators for promotion for women include supportive policies and legislation, aiming to encourage universities and organisations to support women in achieving senior leadership positions (Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2010; White, 2015a). Equal employment opportunities have been found to be a primary facilitator for promotion for women (Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2010). Indeed, some universities place more importance on collegial characteristics such as listening, consensual-decision-making and people skills that are traditionally seen as feminine skills, but not recognised as specifically feminine (O'Connor & Carvalho, 2015). Women make positive contributions to university decision-making at senior levels of management and are renowned for making decisions sensitively, being more pragmatic and fairer in all processes (White et al., 2011).

## Facilitators to promotion that may assist academic women at the individual level

Young women in Santos' (2016) study found that they were able to separate their work and personal life as an academic as they achieved more flexibility in their hours of work schedule, especially if they had young children in their early careers. Similarly, Fletcher et al. (2007) also found that women enter this type of profession as their perception is that family responsibilities are more successfully managed and flexible. Some academics have immersed themselves in research and appreciate the time it takes to slowly think and write and rewrite as a testimonial to their own dedication, engagement and enthusiasm as a researcher (Ylijoki, 2013). Many academic women enjoy their job and the financial security it brings. Other academic women have found that mothering may not be meeting their needs and is exhausting, whereas academic work provides meaning in life, a sense of purpose, autonomy and personal achievement (Santos, 2015).

## Methodology

Four focus groups were undertaken with women academics to explore challenges and possible resolutions to issues regarding promotion for women in academia in one university. Each focus group was specific to a particular group based on seniority in academia. The aim of running the focus groups was to illicit responses to research questions regarding perceived barriers to applying / obtaining senior academic positions. A secondary aim was to determine what support might assist in reducing / overcoming obstacles identified.

Focus groups were an ideal and meaningful source of data collection for this research regarding the focused topic of barriers or facilitators perceived by women interested in or actively seeking promotion in academia. Focus groups were the preferred method for collecting data as groups may give rise to insights of not just the individuals present but revelations and solutions might then be identified by other participants in the group (Quinn Patton, 2002; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). Focus groups usually entail participants who come from a similar cultural and social background or alternately share similar interests or knowledge (Liamputtong, 2009). Participants in this research often responded to others in order to express their own ideas about the phenomena of interest providing additional insightful perspectives about issues regarding promotion (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015).

One advantage of holding focus groups for this research was that a number of participants could be interviewed simultaneously in the limited time available (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). Focus groups usually include between four and 12 participants (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015, Krueger & Casey, 2015). In this research the size of the focus

groups varied from two to five participants. In line with other researchers (Minichiello, Aroni & Hays, 2008), we would argue the small groups were effective for the study topics in question, being barriers and facilitators for promotion, as the participants were more likely to emphasise their viewpoint and not be swayed by others as could be the case in larger groups. The researcher could observe the collaborative sense making and the divergence or convergence of expressed viewpoints during a focus group (Wilkinson, 2008). The exploration of one phenomenon, in this research, barriers and facilitators for promotion in academia, from multiple viewpoints may assist in developing a more detailed and many-sided account of that topic of interest and allow comparisons to be made (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005).

## Recruitment and sample

Following approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (No. H12298) a request seeking interested academics was promoted twice on the E-update Daily News. This resulted in over 100 emailed responses, however very few respondents requested further information. Posters inviting participation in focus groups were then distributed across all campuses. Following this response, information sheets and consent forms were emailed to interested academic staff. Participants self-selected which campus they preferred, and which focus group they would attend based on their level of seniority.

The four focus groups were undertaken at two campuses. Two focus groups were offered to women who were senior level academics and two were offered to lecturer level academics (less senior). Unfortunately, on two of the set dates industrial action occurred and the numbers of participants was lower than anticipated. Due to the limited time and budgetary constraints, further focus groups were unable to be arranged. Semi-structured open questions were asked of the participants with prompts utilised when required (see Text Box 1).

One researcher (the first author) convened (moderated) the focus groups. Although complete objectivity is not possible (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015), the moderator provided an introduction before each focus group affording some contextual background. The moderator acknowledged being an Early Career Researcher with prior experience in arranging focus groups who was a relatively recent employee with the university and had an interest in, but was not currently seeking, promotion. A supportive leadership style (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015) approach was utilised in the focus groups with a friendly, equitable and open approach provided to all group members.

Additional information was provided at the focus groups regarding access to counselling services including the Employee Assistance Program and an external provider. Participants consented to the use of recording devices following an invitation to ask any questions of the moderator regarding this research. There were no concerns or emotional distress reported by academics participating in the focus groups concerning their university work, although a couple of participants complained about exhaustion regarding workloads.

Although the number of participants was lower than anticipated (see Table 1) the focus groups were lively, vibrant and the rich data provided insight into this relevant topic. Timeframes for focus groups ranged from 40 to 96 minutes. Demographic questions included age, number of children, years spent in academia and discipline (see Table 2).

***Textbox 1 – Semi-structured interview questions***

I am interested in your opinion and/or experiences regarding academic career progression.

I'd like to start by asking what motivated you to come along to the group today?

What obstacles do you see as being in the way of progressing your academic career?

Tell me more about these barriers?

What may help to overcome these barriers?

What may assist you to progress/apply for a promotion? ...how can [name of university] provide support?

How do you feel about your career progression?

Why aren't you applying for a senior academic promotion?

Is there anything you would like to add?

***Table 1 Number of participants in focus groups***

| | *Focus Gp 1 for Senior Academics* | *Focus Gp 2 for Senior Academics* | *Focus Gp 3 for Lecturer Level Academics* | *Focus Gp 3 for Lecturer Level Academics* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| No of participants | 2 | 5 | 3 | 2 |

***Table 2: Characteristics of participants***

| *Age* | *Children yes/no* | *No of children under 18* | *How many years in academia* | *How many years at the current university?* | *What is your discipline?* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30- 59 years (Average age 45) | 8 yes 4 no | 5 with children <18 years of age | 2 – 30+ years (Average years in academia 12 yr) | <1 to 30 years | 5 STEMM 7 Non-STEMM |

A summary of findings was emailed to participants who requested this, with no requests from participants for any changes. This project was not specifically targeted towards academics employed in STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Medicine) fields, however five participants represented STEMM areas and seven from non-STEMM areas. The themes identified for all focus groups was similar with some differences between the senior and less senior academics that will be discussed further. All participants who attended were interested in seeking promotion in the future or were currently seeking promotion. Some of the participants knew each other but issues of power and control were managed as senior and less senior staff were in separate focus groups (Krueger & Casey, 2015). In order to ensure the confidentiality of participants is protected, no further characteristics of participants are included in this paper.

## Data analysis

A brief literature review was undertaken prior to undertaking the focus groups with a more thorough search for literature taking place following thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was utilised to identify core themes from the data. The data included full transcripts of recordings in addition to notes and reflections taken by the moderator (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Riessman (2008) suggests that set standards or criteria should be avoided in relation to the validity of qualitative research, however for research findings to be considered trustworthy, a researcher should be able to demonstrate they followed a systematic method of data collection and analysis that was guided by ethical considerations and theory. In this research project the moderator used hand written notes recorded before (for example, the positions of academic staff around the interview table and placement of recording devices), during (short points of interest and insights) and after each focus group that included a recorded reflection, which were all utilised during the analysis process. Cross-checking of themes was undertaken by the second co-author (who was more senior than the first author) for this paper. If there was any disagreement regarding a theme, the authors discussed their perspectives considering the data.

The process of thematic analysis was assisted by a qualitative data analysis program NVivo (12) developed by QSR International. NVivo allowed the researchers to look very closely at the data (Krueger & Casey, 2015) in order to clarify and categorise themes (called codes in NVivo) that were identified by the researchers (Bazeley, 2007; Bazeley, 2009). The transcribed recordings were initially listened to by the moderator with missing parts of the interviews or incorrect sections replaced. After the full transcribed interviews were imported into NVivo the data was read several times with notes taken during this process to identify possible categories. Segments of the text were highlighted and examined in order to determine the underlying meaning. Initial categories / codes were arranged into visual mind maps on the NVivo program to assist with synthesis and refining and all codes were defined and named. These were then further classified, and re-coded as necessary with any duplications identified and preliminary analysis recorded (Creswell, 2014). Following identification and description of the main themes, the differences and similarities were then compared between the four focus groups outlined in the findings section, below. This is followed by a discussion of the main themes / categories in light of the existing literature (Bazeley, 2009).

## Findings: Barriers encountered in promotion processes by academic women

Both barriers and facilitators to seeking promotion were identified following coding and thematic analysis of the data.

### Structural barriers

#### *Workloads and huge expectations*

The escalating levels of workloads that resulted in reduced levels of energy and increased levels of stress and burnout was the most prominent theme in this project. Several of the participants had reached their limit and capacity in what they could achieve due to excessive workloads which meant that subsequently, they avoided applying for promotion. Among the comments from participants were the following:

Senior level academic focus group:

'I think that expectation is there, that if you're going to keep your job, if you're going to get the next job, then you have to be working all the hours that God gives you…'

'Yeah, sacrifice your life essentially.'

Lecture level academic focus group:

'You never catch up.'

'Yep.'

'You've never done enough. You've never submitted enough grant applications. You've never written enough journal articles. You haven't done enough research. You haven't got - and it's - you are never meeting the expectations that people have of you. That's how I feel. I feel like I am so behind.'

Academics said they invested so much time already that there was no incentive for future application to a higher level of promotion. Some participants feared additional workloads and stress with any promotion process was just far too time consuming and too difficult to address.

As one lecturer level academic stated:

'I was really interested in this research, because, I guess, for me, I sometimes sit and reflect and I think am I interested in going further than where I am now? Do I actually have the capacity to do that? I feel like so much of me is already invested at this level. I just don't know that I have any more to give.'

The number of excessive hours being worked was a common theme identified by many academics. The number of hours paid versus the number of hours actually worked within an academic's week was highlighted as a financial conflict, as the 35-hour week often equated to 50-, 60- or 70-hour weeks.

Lecturer level academic:

'...already I'm working 15 hours a week for free. Is it I become a Senior Lecturer and suddenly I'm working 30 hours a week... for free? So technically I'm actually taking a pay cut to have this position?'

The risks to health while working long hours was identified by some participants who made decisions not to take on additional promotional opportunities.

Senior level academic:

'I work - I make sure I don't work more than a 50-hour week otherwise I get health consequences. Lately I've tried to keep it to about 45...'

### *The multi-pronged promotion process*

Most academics considered the promotion process to be onerous, unclear and open to interpretation. Several academics stated that they would need to step out of their current role in which they performed well to attend to roles the university considered more important towards promotion. Academics did not always feel they were acknowledged for the value and the effort directed towards their current roles. This is demonstrated in the following comment:

Lecturer level academic:

'Not worth it [promotion]... Now that doesn't mean I'm not open to it, it doesn't mean that I can't, but I know it says for [more senior promotion] and what I would need to do to get that. At the moment...I couldn't even keep reading the document. I would need to completely change - I would need to step down from being [in governance role] for starters and I know that but that's what I happen to be good at...To be promoted I actually need to leave that and do some other things that the university regards as important...'

Some academics considered they lacked the competitive edge to apply for promotion and never felt they had achieved enough to apply.

Lecturer level academic stated:

'...they'll say, men get promoted over women on a regular basis, because men just throw caution to the wind...Just chuck it....and they're like, I am good enough for this and I'll go for it, whereas women are like, no, no, no, I need to address this specific criterion.... So, we tend to hold back until we're ready and so that's...like, there's no way that I'll meet these criteria...'

The requirements for the promotion process and the need to meet the three levels of achievement i.e. namely teaching, research and governance was reported as being difficult to achieve.

As outlined by one senior level academic:

'I think the promotion process and selection criteria is a barrier...Previously you had to show certain levels of achievement across at least two of the three criteria. Now, they want a well-rounded academic. However, we are a teaching focused university, but they will still in the back of their heads always put the focus on...on your research productivity...Then when they question your research productivity and you say it's because I've been doing all this teaching...it's, well, the teaching can take care of itself now. You should be doing research. But in what hour of what day...would you like me to do that?'

### *Competition versus Collegiality*

Participants highlighted that it can, at times, be colleagues that pose a barrier in professional progression. 'Unfortunately, there are people that try and – not block you necessarily, but there's people that aren't always supportive to help you with that progression...' It was further indicated that this competition amongst colleagues was felt more keenly with colleagues who were women. 'There's no collegiality, it just seems to me to be, again, intrinsically, a female thing and most of my mentors in the school are male'.

Academics perceived the university encouraged competition rather than collaboration due to the limited resources available such as grants, 'there's all these silos.... this university loves this divide and conquer thing, right'. Other academics highlighted that the structure of the university as a multi campus environment that did not contribute to being able to collaborate. 'I think the multi campus nature of our school... and it keeps expanding and moving. It really dilutes that opportunity to have that collegial nature.'

On the other hand, some academics worked together in teams with senior staff included in order to obtain grants or write publications together and used this towards promotion.

As stated by a senior level academic:

'...having a Professor has really helped my career, but also actually the early career researchers that I'm working with, so we did team together. We're friends. We said, right, each of us is going to write a grant. We're going to put everybody on it. Each of us is going to write a publication. We're going to put everybody on it...'

## Organisational barriers

### *Not being valued, recognised or acknowledged*

Several academics stated that the expectations of working at a higher level without being remunerated were off-putting regarding applying for promotions. Academics identified little acknowledgement of difficult workloads from managers and felt their individual contributions were not recognised.

Senior level academic:

'That intrinsic feeling of worth, that what you do is valued, is felt as though as if it's a contribution to the university and they see that that's a good thing. Whereas I don't think I might - I do work 12-hour days and it's just always well why can't you do this, we need this done. We need that stat. It's like what is it? - and I've just worked seven days straight like this.'

Some academics identified the lack of senior staff's recognition and incentivising staff already working at the level for which they would be applying.

A lecturer level academic stated:

'Just - sometimes I wish that our 'student feedback on teaching' (SFT) was actually read by someone who was in a position to give us that recognition... Who's actually reading them and going, you know what? This person is consistently doing an amazing job. They deserve some recognition.'

Other academics noted the absence of gender equity in the workplace.

A senior level academic stated:

'We don't have any representation, any female representation or any gender and equity value.'

However, another senior level academic stated:

'Yet this project is being funded by a vice-chancellor's gender equity fund. So, there are things.'

### *Grooming the rock-star*

There was a perception by several academics that some staff are more valued than others and are provided with additional support and opportunities for both university awards and promotions. Some academics suggested that the Dean / supervisor decided who would be supported for promotion and everyone else was refused the opportunity even if that academic felt they had the same or better qualifications than the person promoted. There were also several comments regarding favouritism and being groomed for the awards and the promotions processes. Some academics were being mentored and assisted including both men and women while others doing their work are ignored. As one senior level lecturer states:

'The other topic that comes up ...quite a bit is little cliques of rock stars who seem to have tremendous levels of support and recognition and they're almost being groomed by senior staff...I can watch this happening in front of my eyes. Some of it is exciting and motivating and some of it's really having a terrible effect on everyone else's motivation because they feel like there are these favourites, they feel like there's these rock stars.'

## Individual barriers

### *Always juggling decision making: Work vs children*

Some participants struggled juggling work and meeting the needs of their children whilst also attempting to meet the requirements for promotion and career progression.

Lecturer level academics stated:

'...the natural challenges of juggling motherhood with working. Even in terms of things that look good on the CV like international conferences and doing fellowships at international universities or all kinds of international travel, even domestic conferences are a challenge.'

'When I'm in the car or at work smashing things out, I'm thinking about all the things I should be doing at home with my kids, but when I'm with my kids, all I want to do is check my emails to see what I'm missing.'

Senior level academic:

'If you want to be an associate professor or professor, then you'll make your kids and your husband book time with you on your days off. But if you want to spend time with your family, then you need to be content with being at a certain level.'

### *Not wanting to risk happiness in current role*

Some academics did not want to apply for a promotion as they did not want to risk no longer enjoying their career. Remaining happy in their career was more important than applying for more senior roles.

Senior level academic –

'I think a successful career is one where you're happy. That's really important to me. I don't have that goal to - I've got to be a professor to be successful in my career. I just have to be doing work that I'm really committed to and feel passionate and happy. '

Senior level academics highlighted the requirements for promotion included expectations that you would sacrifice your family life, happiness and disrupt any work / life balance. This prevented future promotions as academics chose health and happiness over future promotion.

'...if you want to push your name forward, as in get ahead, then you almost have to....accept that you're going to be working in

the evenings and you're going to be working on the weekends to be able to get yourself - your name on as many things as you can, and that's not for me...(different academic) 'Well, yeah, it's not healthy. So for me I chose not to push myself to that extent because then I won't be happy, and that's the bottom line.'

## Facilitators encountered in promotion processes by academic women

### *Structural facilitators: Mentoring and collaborative nurturing*

Participants identified the need for collaboration to undertake research and for women academics to support each other in a collaborative and supportive way and recognised the importance of mentors providing support for the promotion process.

Senior level academic:

'So it's almost like we need that community of women, a community of women that are there to support other women because only other women can relate to what you've just said and go, oh my goodness, I can absolutely imagine how that would be, to be blocked out when you're the person leading this thing. So that sort of feels like that's a thing that's needed for academics, is other women to support each other.'

Several academics identified the need for promotion and specific mentoring programs to assist women academics who apply for promotion, including the provision of guidance and support as well as the actual application process.

Senior level academic:

'There's the mentoring program, which the university runs, which is really beneficial and that's really what helped me to be confident enough to go for a promotion because I would go and talk to my mentor who would look at what I've got and go, are you mad? Of course, you should go.'

A good mentor identifies your abilities even if you are not aware of them and supports academics to go for promotion

Senior level academics saw their role as including mentoring unlike lecturer level academics who sought mentoring.

### *Organisational facilitators: Giving back*

Senior level academics stated there were many factors they enjoyed in their current role and that a successful career also meant they could contribute to others including the university. This also meant more autonomy and choices regarding where they could go in their career and the following comments reflect this:

'Well I think there's a lot that I'd like to give back to the university and that's always been the way I've worked. I believe that we commit that to our profession – give back to our profession, that's part of what you do as an academic.'

'I think making an impact, making a difference is definitely important for me...To society or whatever your field is, whatever your area of interest is...To the stakeholders in your field. I'm not talking about policy or whatever it is.... But yeah, to people in society.'

Senior level academics acknowledged the importance of making a difference and mentoring less experienced staff. On the other hand, lecturer level academics sought more support and wanted more of a work / life balance:

'Successful career... Thriving in your position...Allowing to develop... Your work supporting you, so that you can thrive and develop...Having a good work / life balance, where you can still thrive. What's a successful career? Being able - feeling motivated that you can actually get to the next step, to the next level up. Yeah, having a balance. The three areas that we have to focus on, governance, teaching and research, having a good spread and actually making a difference in all of those areas.'

I think the fact that we live in this world and have a life to live, it'll be nice with a successful career if you have the proper financial payment I suppose. I think finance also defines success. Anything - I mean, academia is probably not the best, but again I enjoy the job, so hence...I stay in it. I am really satisfied with the job itself, but I guess there's room for movement.'

### *Individual facilitators: Flexibility*

Other academics at both lecturer level and senior lecturer role appreciated the flexibility of their work life.

As one lecturer level participant states:

'This university has offered me a great deal of flexibility in terms of my working arrangements which makes it possible to effectively juggle motherhood and working, which so many of my friends who had children around the same time haven't been able to achieve in other work places. I am just so extremely grateful for that. I really, really am. There's no expectation that you have to arrive at nine and stay until five. You can organise your work schedule around what your family needs. On any of the rare occasions when I have to say to my supervisor, no I can't make that meeting because there's nobody else to pick up the children, there's not an eyelid battered. Despite the fact that she doesn't have children herself. '

Another senior level lecturer commented:

'That's one positive thing is the flexibility around the working hours.'

## Discussion

This paper supports existing evidence that there remains a multitude of factors that include barriers and facilitators for women applying for promotion in the workplace. These factors are faced by women at the structural, organisational

and individual levels. These findings have been reported in this research study and will be discussed further considering the existing literature. Barriers to promotion will be discussed initially followed by facilitators.

### *Barriers to promotion faced by academic women at the structural level*

The increasing workloads was the most prominent theme identified for academics in this study and reportedly resulted in increased levels of stress and burnout and subsequent reduced energy levels. Extensive workloads contributed to academics feeling unprepared to tackle any tasks associated with applying for promotion. Similarly, Pyke (2013) found that women were less likely to aspire for promotion due to increased workloads. Barrett and Barrett (2011) identified that large schools spend most of the time on teaching and this leaves little time to devote to research, which often means that women are spending time after hours working on research. Ideally, universities should allocate workloads equally, so that academic staff working at lower levels should also have the opportunity to expand their roles into other areas such as research and governance that will count towards their future promotion. This distribution of work should be equitable to ensure that academics are not working extensive hours past the normal working week and enables academics to work towards a well-rounded portfolio of their achievements (Barrett & Barrett, 2011). Levels of out-of-hours academic work has been shown to be high, although increased accessibility to technology enables academics to work anytime and may encroach into leisure time (Barnett, Mewburn & Schroter, 2019).

Excessive workloads prevented academics from applying for future promotions as it was deemed that the time taken to prepare for promotion was not a realistic option. The rapid growth of managerialism in Australia over the past 20 years has encouraged women towards applying for promotion although they may be railroaded into assuming demanding governance roles that exhaust them and leave no room or time for important work that will eventually contribute towards their promotion (Teelken & Deem, 2013). Academics in this study identified the pressure of never having done enough to even consider applying for senior positions and this leads to a vicious circle of not being able to apply for adequate funding to conduct significant research that ultimately leads to the inability to procure senior positions which resonates with White's (2015a) findings discussed earlier.

Most academics considered the promotion process to be unclear, did not feel that they had achieved enough to apply and they would need to step out of their current role in order to work towards promotion. The requirements for the promotion process and meeting the three levels of achievement, such as teaching, research and governance were reported as a difficult process. Similarly, Barrett and Barrett (2011) also highlight the breadth of work across these specific three areas as criteria for applying for promotion. Dobele et al. (2014) found that junior academics juggle large teaching workloads that leaves insufficient time and resources to be able to attend to their own research.

Academics identified colleagues as a barrier to career progression and perceived that they were encouraged to work in isolation due to the competitive nature of grants and promotions. The geographical locations of the multi campus sites within the university also made it more difficult to collaborate. This study highlighted that being a community of scholars is a possible facilitator, for example, working together in groups to write grants, promotional documentation and papers. Research by MacFarlane (2016) suggests that collegiality has been outweighed by the competitive pressure for individual academics to meet performance targets and provide external evidence to support claims for success which also results in academics feeling isolated.

### *Barriers to promotion faced by academic women at the organisational level*

Academics in this study identified the lack of achievement and recognition for the substantial workloads that they had endured. The working culture was identified as non-nurturing. Similarly, Pyke (2013) also identified the work organisational culture as being pivotal to advancing career development and that a lack of support or bullying in the workplace were contributory factors in not progressing further.

One of the main themes for this study highlighted gender inequity as an inevitable component of being unrecognised as women that contributed substantially to their lack of career development. Fritsch (2015) highlights that women are often judged by their personal appearance or behaviour, rather than their achievements or qualifications. Ranieri et al. (2016) identify one of the themes in their scoping review of the literature as career discrimination that is based on gender. The feminisation debate places women in the minority, but this will change as women's participation levels are on the increase in universities (Morley, 2011). The continuing gender gap in pay poses a significant barrier towards women's career advancement (White & Burkinshaw, 2019). Despite the move of universities to introduce policies to eradicate gender inequity, this has not been translated into achieving just that.

Academics identified the complete lack of recognition and up to the point of being ignored, even if they had performed well in their career, whereas other academics were groomed and promoted all the way, almost being favoured over others' reputable achievements. Other research (O'Connor, 2011) has found that women do not 'feel valued'. The supervisor or Dean was instrumental in this process as academics who were nominated for recognition including awards or opportunities for promotion were often those who were continually in the

limelight. Academics being groomed by those above were perceived to be given additional support and mentored towards promotion. This is a finding that has not been previously addressed in the literature.

### *Barriers to promotion faced by academic women at the individual level*

Academics felt restricted in applying for promotion due to family responsibilities. In the past decade, Barrett and Barrett's (2011) study identified that women's family responsibilities often precluded them from engaging in research and if they were to achieve in that space, this implied doing that work after-hours. Women's nature of work was often associated with fractional and part-time employment that further precluded them from applying for promotion (Barrett & Barrett, 2011). In the current climate, family responsibilities such as caring for children or ageing parents still contribute to this disparity of promotion in the workplace (Airini et al., 2010; Bell & Yates, 2015; Monroe et al., 2008; Pyke, 2013). More importantly, travel abroad including lengthy stays in another country also contribute to advancement in promotion to professorial positions (Fritsch, 2015) and this factor could also prevent women with families and children applying for such advancement in their career. This geographic mobility has been identified as an essential component of advancement of careers (Fritsch, 2015; White, 2015b; Zippel, 2017).

Academics identified that family were aware of their work responsibilities encroaching into their home and family life environment. They identified the dichotomy of family members viewing them as always being at the computer and if spending time with family at home, the omnipresent thoughts that they should be working and answering emails that they had not attended during the work week. Pyke (2013) also reports on the abilities of women being able to seek promotion that could be restricted by responsibilities of family care, that included physical care and emotional well-being of family members. Similarly, Ranieri et al. (2016) also identified work-life balance as one of the themes scoped in their review of the literature and identified the imbalance between extreme workloads and the responsibilities of child-rearing with women often challenged in applying for promotion due to accommodating children and their husband's careers (Eddy & Ward, 2015).

Academics identified risking their happiness in their current position if they were to apply for a higher promotion. This finding is unique as other studies have not revealed this important revelation, although Caprile (2012) alluded to the choice of life-course factors. Academics identified the distinction between being available for family when at home and keeping work life separate to family life. The importance of work-life balance and happiness surpassed the benefits of promotion which they envisaged aligned with higher workloads and longer working hours. Women and men should be able to work to their potential whilst maintaining work-life balance (Bagilhole, 2013). Academics in this study identified the risks to health if they continued to work long hours and decided against taking on additional promotional opportunities which resonates with Santos' (2016) study which found that academics defined successful careers as establishing a healthy work-life balance.

### *Facilitators to promotion faced by academic women at the structural level*

Academics identified the need for collaboration with partners to undertake research and supporting each other in a collegial way. Academics also recognised the importance of mentoring within the university environment and that a mentor would identify and encourage those skills and attributes that they were not aware of themselves. Available current mentoring programs need to be enhanced, better advertised and targeted for women seeking promotion. Academics also identified that supporting the application process of promotion was an inherent component of mentoring. The academics in this study also emphasised the importance of senior level academics seeing their role as including mentoring unlike lecturer level academics who sought mentoring.

Ranieri et al. (2016) identified in their scoping review of the literature that work environments that included mentoring had a major positive influence on academics seeking promotion and that a supportive supervisor was also important to early career researchers. They also found that the literature focused on the barriers to effective promotion and found a gap in the literature that provided positive incentivisation and motivation to continue in academia (Ranieri et al., 2016). In addition, Pyke (2013) identified the importance of a having a mentor in the academic working environment as an integral component of one's career aspirations. Diezmann and Grieshaber (2010) suggested mentoring was a catalyst for success for women applying for professorial roles.

### *Facilitators to promotion faced by academic women at the organisational level*

Academics in this study showed that a successful career also meant that they could contribute to others in the university and that they were providing some unique contribution back to the university. Similarly, other literature (White et al., 2011) found that women also contributed positively to their university decision-making. Academics in this study highlighted that more autonomy and choices scaffolded their career including support from their supervisor or Dean that has a positive practical contribution for other academics pursuing their promotion.

### *Facilitators to promotion faced by academic women at the individual level*

Previous studies (Ylijoki, 2005; Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013) have highlighted the lack of autonomy and academic freedom that has been forced upon academics due to high intensive administration tasks, and managerialism that has reduced senior academics' power (Göransson, 2011), however senior level academics in this study stated that they valued their autonomy. This study also found that academic women appreciated the flexibility of academic life that they experienced that resonates with young women in Santos' (2016) study being able to juggle young children and work in their early careers. Conversely, women who take advantage of this flexibility may be caught up in a 'flexibility stigma' that results in their careers being derailed and further embedding gender inequality and ultimately may lead to different career trajectories (Padavic et al., 2019; White & Burkinshaw, 2019).

### *Limitations and future research opportunities*

The participation rate in focus groups was lower than expected. Several reasons provided by academics included industrial action, childcare issues, sick children, illness in academics and 'being busy'. This project only offered live focus groups for participants, despite several staff requesting on-line and telephone interviews, that may have increased the response rate. Due to time and budgetary constraints additional focus groups were unable to be arranged. There were insufficient participants to identify differences between the STEMM and non-STEMM areas regarding barriers and facilitators to applying for / obtaining promotions.

There is an identified need for future research that includes extending the scope of the seeding grant to include interviews with all identified gender groups who are successful senior academics and professional staff across other schools and universities in addition to senior management staff in the private sector. Comparisons across the sectors can then be explored providing further opportunities to enhance our knowledge regarding barriers and facilitators to promotion to more senior positions for staff who are academics or professional staff members.

## Practical implications

### *Structural*

Policies need to address a clear and transparent process of promotion to ensure that there is no bias toward any academic staff members.

### *Organisational*

Women academics at all levels need to be acknowledged and seen to be valued not just when they receive awards or promotions. Women at senior lecturer levels acknowledged that their role included mentoring less-senior academic staff and they saw their role as giving back to the community. Less-senior academics were seeking mentoring specific to promotion and working in a collaborative way with others to write grants, promotional job applications and publications. The tertiary sector would be wise to consider supporting collaborative mentorship arrangements for staff seeking promotion as a means of overcoming some of the barriers with more senior staff utilised to formally assist in this role.

### *Individual*

Women should be provided with more flexibility in their working patterns so that they are able to maintain better management of their family. Offering part-time employment should not preclude women from applying for more senior positions. Consideration should primarily involve the contribution of the woman's work, rather than how many hours she has worked in her current role.

## Conclusion

There are numerous reasons why women might choose not to seek promotion in academia including structural issues that include excessive workloads and other colleagues, organisational issues that include lack of recognition and gender inequity issues and individual issues that include family and work life balance. Facilitators for overcoming barriers to promotion need to be considered for women in the workplace in light of the findings from this study.

***Dr Lyn Francis is currently the Academic Course Advisor in the postgraduate Master of Nursing (Professional Studies) at Western Sydney University and research areas include domestic violence, gender equity, workplace bullying, health law and consent.***

***Associate Professor Virginia Stulz is currently working in a conjoint position and is currently Chief Investigator on four research projects in her district that investigate innovative models of midwifery care and improving birth options for women.***

*Contact: v.stulz@westernsydney.edu.au*

## References

Acker, S. (2014). A foot in the revolving door? Women academics in lower middle management, *Higher Education Research & Development Vol. 33*, pp. 73-85.

Afiouni, F. & Karam, C. M. (2014). Structure, agency and notions of career success: a process oriented, subjectively malleable and localized approach. *Career Development International 19*, 548-571.

Airini, Collings, S., Conner, L., McPherson, K., Midson, B., & Wilson, C. (2010). Learning to Be Leaders in Higher Education: What

Helps or Hinders Women's Advancement as Leaders in Universities. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership 39*(1), 44-62. doi: 10.1177/1741143210383896

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). *3235.0 – Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, 2016.* ACT: Retrieved from http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3235.0Main+Features12016?OpenDocument

Bagilhole, B. (2013). Shaping an Academic Belonging: The Interloper Syndrome by Gender and Class, in B. & White, K. (eds.), *Generation and Gender in Academia*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 46 – 64.

Barnett, A., Mewburn, I. & Schroter, S. (2019). Working 9 to 5, not the way to make an academic living: observational analysis of manuscript and peer review submissions over time. *British Medical Journal 367*(16460). doi: 10.1136/bmj.16460

Barrett, L. & Barrett, P. (2011). Women and academic workloads: career slow lane or Cul-de-Sac? *Journal of Higher Education 61,* 141-155. Doi: 10.1007/s10734-010-9239-3.

Bazeley, P. (2007). *Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo.* London UK: Sage Publications Ltd.

Bazeley, P. (2009). Analysing qualitative data: More than 'Identifying Themes'. *Malaysian Journal of Qualitative Research 2,* 6-22.

Bell, S. (2016). *Ivory Towers and Glass Ceilings: Women in Non-traditional Fields*. 109-123. doi: 10.1007/978-981-10-0315-8_7 Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sharon_Bell4/publication/309354777_Ivory_Towers_and_Glass_Ceilings_Women_in_Non-Traditional_Disciplines/data/580ab77708aecba934f9689c/Ch7-Glass-Ceilings.pdf

Bell, S., & Yates, L. (2015). *Women in the Science Research Workforce: Identifying and Sustaining the Diversity Advantage*. Melbourne L.H. Martin Institute University of Melbourne. Retrieved from https://womeninscienceaust.org/2014/06/15/women-in-the-scientific-research-workforce-identifying-and-sustaining-the-diversity-advantage/

Blackmore, J. (2014). Wasting talent? Gender and the problematics of academic disenchantment and disengagement with leadership. *Higher Education Research & Development 33,* 86-99.

Brink, M., & Benschop, Y. (2014). Gender in academic networking: The role of gatekeepers in professorial recruitment. *Journal of Management Studies 51*(3), 460-492.

Burkinshaw, P. (2015). *Higher Education, Leadership and Women Vice Chancellors fitting in to communities of practice of masculinities.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Burkinshaw, P. & White, K. (2017). Fixing the Women or Fixing Universities. *Administrative Sciences 7*(30), 1-14.

Burkinshaw, P. & White, K. (2019). Networking and gender equality in academic leadership, in Antoniou, A. Cooper, G. & Gatrell, C. (eds.), *Women, Business, and Leadership: gender and organisations,* Cheltenham UK: Edward Elgar, pp. 159-174.

Butler, N. & Spoelstra, S. (2012). Your excellency. *Organization 19,* 891-903.

Caprile, M. (2012), *Meta-analysis of gender and science research,* National Hellenic Research Foundation, Brussels: European Commission.

Commonwealth Government of Australia. (2017). *Australia's gender equality scorecard; key findings from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's 2016-2017 reporting data.* Retrieved from https://www.wgea.gov.au/newsroom/media-releases/australias-latest-gender-equality-scorecard-released-0

Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research Design* (4th Ed.) Sage Publishing, California USA

Dany, F., Louvel, S. & Valette, A. (2011). Academic Careers:the limits of the 'boundaryless approach' and the power of promotion scripts. *Human Relations 64,* 971-996.

Devine, D., Grummell, B. & Lynch, K. (2011). Crafting the Elastic Self? Gender and Identities in Senior Appointments in Irish Education. *Gender, Work and Organization 18*(6), 631 – 649. doi:10.1111/j.1468-0432.2009.00513.x

Diezmann, C. M., & Grieshaber, S. J. (2010). *Gender equity in the professoriate: A cohort study of new women professors in Australia.* Paper presented at the HERDSA Conference, Melbourne. Retrieved from https://eprints.qut.edu.au/41176/1/41176.pdf

Dobele, A. R., Rundle-Thiele, S., & Kopanidis, F. (2014). The cracked glass ceiling: equal work but unequal status. *Higher Education Research & Development 33*(3), 456-468. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2013.841654

Eddy, P. L., & Ward, K. (2015). Lean In or Opt Out: Career Pathways of Academic Women. *Change: The magazine of higher learning 47*(2), 6-13.

Fisher, V., & Kinsey, S. (2014). Behind closed doors! Homosocial desire and the academic boys club. *Gender in Management: An International Journal 29*(1), 44-64. doi: 10.1108/gm-10-2012-0080

Fitzgerald, T. and Wilkinson, J. (2010). *Travelling towards a mirage? Gender, leadership and higher education.* Post Pressed: Mt. Gravatt, Qld.

Fletcher, C., Boden, R., Kent, J. & Tinson, J. (2007). Performing women:the gendered dimensions of the UK new research economy. *Gender, Work & Organization 14*, 433-453.

Fritsch, N.-S. (2015). At the leading edge – does gender still matter? A qualitative study of prevailing obstacles and successful coping strategies in academia. *Current Sociology 63*(4), 547-565. doi: 10.1177/0011392115576527

Gómez Cama, M., Larrán Jorge, M., & Andrades Peña, F. J. (2016). Gender differences between faculty members in higher education: A literature review of selected higher education journals. *Educational Research Review 18,* 58-69. doi: 10.1016/j.edurev.2016.03.001

Göransson, A., (2011). Gender quality and the shift from collegiality to managerialism, in Bagilhole, B. & White, K. (eds.), *Gender, Power and Management,* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 50 – 77.

Hardy, A., McDonald, J., Guijt, R., Leane, E., Martin, A., James, A., Jones, A., Corban, M. & Green, B. (2016). Academic parenting: work–family conflict and strategies across child age, disciplines and career level. *Studies in Higher Education 43*(4), 625-643. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2016.1185777

Harris, C., Ravenswood, K., & Myers, B. (2013). Glass slippers, Holy Grails and Ivory Towers: gender and advancement in academia. *Labour & Industry: a journal of the social and economic relations of work 23*(3), 231-244. doi: 10.1080/10301763.2013.839084

Howe-Walsh, L., & Turnbull, S. (2014). Barriers to women leaders in academia: tales from science and technology. *Studies in Higher Education 41*(3), 415-428. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2014.929102

Jarboe, N. (2017). *WomenCount Australian Universities.* Retrieved from https://women-count.org/portfolio/womencount-australian-universities-2016/ (accessed 7 March 2019)

Kallio, K.-M. & Kallio, T. J. (2014). Management-by-results and performance measurement in universities - implications for work motivation. *Studies in Higher Education 39,* 574-589.

Kallio, K.-M., Kallio, T. J., Tienari, J. & Hyvönen, T. (2016). Ethos at stake: Performance management and academic work in universities. *Human Relations 69,* 685-709.

Kirchmeyer, C. (2005). The effects of mentoring on academic careers over time:testing performance and political perspectives. *Human Relations 58*, 637-660.

Krueger, R. & Casey, M. A. (2015). *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research,* California USA: Sage Publications.

Liamputtong, P. (2009). *Qualitative Resarch Methods* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press, Melbourne, Australia:

MacFarlane, B. (2016). Collegiality and performativity in a competitive academic culture, *Higher Education Review 48*(2) 31-50.

Madera, J. M., Hebl, M. R., Dial, H., Martin, R., & Valian, V. (2018). Raising Doubt in Letters of Recommendation for Academia: Gender Differences and Their Impact. *Journal of Business and Psychology 1-17.* doi: 10.1007/s10869-018-9541-1

Madsen, S. R. (2011). Women and Leadership in Higher Education. *Advances in Developing Human Resources 14*(2), 131-139. doi: 10.1177/1523422311436299

Minichiello, V., Aroni, R. & Hays, T. (2008). Group interviewing:from focus group interviews to consensus groups. In: Minichiello, V., Aroni, R. & Hays, T. (eds.) *In-depth Interviewing.* 3rd ed. Sydney, Australia: Pearson.

Monroe, K., Ozyurt, S., Wrigley, T., & Alexander, A. (2008). Gender Equality in Academia: Bad news from the trenches, and some possible solutions. *Perspectives on Politics 6*(2), 215 -233.

Morley, L. (2011). Misogyny posing as measurement: disrupting the feminisation crisis discourse, *Contemporary Social Science 6*(2), 223-235. DOI: 10.1080/21582041.2011.580615

Morley, L. (2014), Lost leaders: women in the global academy, *Higher Education Research & Development 33,* 114-128.

Morley, L. & Crossouard, B. (2015), *Women in higher education leadership in South Asia: rejection, refusal, reluctance, revisioning,* Brighton UK: University of Sussex, Centre for Higher Education and Equity Research.

O'Connor (2011). Where do women fit in university senior management? An analytical typology of cross-national organisational cultures, in Bagilhole, B. & White, K. (eds.), *Gender, Power and Management. A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Higher Education,* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 168-191.

O'Connor, P. & Carvalho, T. (2015). Different or similar:constructions of leadership by senior managers in Irish and Portuguese universities. *Studies in Higher Education 40,* 1679-1693.

Ozbilgin, M. & Healy, G. (2004). The gendered nature of career development of university professors: the case of Turkey. *Journal of Vocational Behavior 64,* 358-371.

Padavic, I., Ely, R. J. & Reid, E. M. (2019). Explaining the Persistence of Gender Inequality: The Work-family Narrative as a Socila Defense against the 24/7 Work Culture. *Administrative Science Quarterly 1-51*, DOI: 10.1177/0001839219832310

Pyke, J. (2013). Women, choice and promotion or why women are still a minority in the professoriate. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management 35*(4), 444-454. doi: 10.1080/1360080x.2013.812179

Quinn Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). California, USA: Sage Publications.

Ranieri, V., Barratt, H., Fulop, N., & Rees, G. (2016). Factors that influence career progression among postdoctoral clinical academics: a scoping review of the literature. *BMJ Open 6*(10), 1-7 doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2016-013523

Reid, K., Flowers, M., & Larkin, M. (2005). Exploring lived experience. *Psychologist 18*(1), 20-23.

Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences.* Boston College USA: Sage Publications Inc.

Santos, G. G. (2015). Narratives about work and family life among Portuguese academics. *Gender, Work & Organization 22*, 1-15.

Santos, G. G. (2016). Career barriers influencing career success. *Career Development International 21*, 60-84.

Stewart, D. W. & Shamdasani, P. N. (2015). *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice,* California USA: Sage Publications.

Teelken, C. & Deem, R. (2013). All are equal, but some are more equal than others: managerialism and gender equality in higher education in comparative perspective. *Comparative Education 49*(4), 520 -535. DOI: 10.1080/03050068.2013.807642

Treviño, L. J., Gomez-Mejia, L. R., Balkin, D. B., & Mixon, F. G. (2015). Meritocracies or Masculinities? The Differential Allocation of Named Professorships by Gender in the Academy. *Journal of Management 44*(3), 972-1000. doi: 10.1177/0149206315599216

Universities Australia. (2017). *2016 Selected Inter-institutional gender equity statistics.* Retrieved from https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/uni-participation-quality/Equity-and-Participation/Women-in-universities/Selected-Inter-Institutional#.XIBUMigzYdU

Universities Australia Executive Women. (2018). *Best Practice Recruitment Guidelines to Fast Forward the Advancement of Women in Australian University Executive Appointments.* Retrieved from https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Case-Studies-Best-Practice-Recruitment-Guidelines-19-Dec-2018-1.pdf

White, K. (2015a). Are we serious about keeping women in science? *Australian Universities' Review 57*(2), 84-86.

White, K. (2015b). *Keeping women in science.* Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing.

White, K. & Burkinshaw, P. (2019). Editorial, *Special Issue of Social Sciences on Women and Leadership in Higher Education*.

White, K., Carvalho, T. & Riordan, S. (2011). Gender, power and managerialism in universities. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management 33,* 179-188.

Wilkinson, S. (2008). Focus Groups. In Smith J. (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (2nd ed.), Sage Publications, London, UK. pp. 186-206.

Workplace Gender Equity Agency. (2017). *Australia's gender equality scorecard; key findings from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's 2016-2017 reporting data.* Commonwealth Government of Australia. Retrieved from https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2016-17-gender-equality-scorecard.pdf.

Ylijoki, O.-H. (2005). Academic nostalgia: A narrative approach to academic work. *Human Relations 58,* 555-576.

Ylijoki, O.-H. (2013). Boundary-work between work and life in the high-speed university. *Studies in Higher Education 38*, 242-255.

Ylijoki, O.-H. & Ursin, J. (2013). The construction of academic identity in the changes of Finnish higher education. *Studies in Higher Education 38,* 1135-1149.

Zippel, K. (2017). *Women in Global Science: Advancing Academic Careers through International Collaboration,* California: Stanford University Press, Stanford.